

## **SOME ASPECTS OF THE WORK OF NAHUM TEVET**

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While Nahum Tevet was preparing the Volume! exhibition -from the first visit to the space in the spring of 2007 to the planning of his roman work- he also created two great public installations in Tel Aviv, the city where he lives and works. That tells us a lot about his way of working.

The different levels through which the work of Tevet has been from time to time analysed and contextualized, highlight some unquestionable aspects of his production: the relation with architecture, with minimalist aesthetics, with contextual and political spheres of great impact in the most recent history. The works that Tevet has produced along the last 30 years, continuously recalls the history of art, the matrixes of a revised Post-Modernism and some spurs produced by very complex intellectual and expressive boosts: cultural, historical and environmental synapses leading to some typical compositive codes and dialectic dynamics.

*Ursa Major with Chairs and Boats* (2009), the last work Tevet made in the lobby of the new Head quarter of the First International Bank of Israel, shows itself through the entrance glass-window on the main street of Rothschild Boulevard. It's a great circular wall-sculpture made of some tens of formal units calling the public to unhinge the trajectories of the pre-existent space. The great glass-windows' vertical modules are contradicted by the morphology of the sculptural insert, which breaks the rhythm of the structure and highlights its typical qualities. Through his vertical work Nahum Tevet communicates with the opposite square. So the urban fabric becomes his privileged interlocutor, the context for processes of social interaction. The visibility of this work on the hall's great wall wouldn't have had the same effect if it was realized on the floor, as many of the other great labyrinthine installations of the artist. In this work, Nahum Tevet looks back to his wall sculptures of the Eighties, as *Ursa Major with Eclipse* (1984) or *Jamma'in* (1986), made of object unities' spirals of great chromatic impact.

The colour, made through industrial subtle paints, is a characteristic element of Nahum Tevet works and it marks the mirror rhythm of his labyrinths, following the modularity of forms and sketching perspectives out. It relieves the construction meticulousness and at the same time strengthens it. Colours, taken out from everyday objects or from 1950s furniture of schools, hospitals or public offices.

When the chromatic element is absent, as in his other recent public work in Tel Aviv (*Silent Water*, 2008), it's substituted by a uniform and compact leaden grey, modulated only by the different forms of the wooden elements. This is an open

structure, a just sketched labyrinth of sculptural unities, which leaves the public unarmed and with no visual references.

The relation with the viewer and with the public, the constant interaction with the visitor, shows the work's interaction with the surrounding world. Since the beginning of his activity, in the Seventies, the dialogue with the viewer has always led to the realization of "seductive traps calling and expelling us" from the work. First the wall-"paintings", two-dimensional mirror, geometric elements realized in unconventional spaces which try to adopt the architectural codes of the gallery or of the "white-cube". But in the Seventies in Tel Aviv there were only apartments or rooms occasionally occupied by the artists who tried to compensate for the loss of places for aggregation and expression. Half public and half private space with a half-caste soul, without identity and distant from the commercial character of the art gallery.

So the work of Tevet begins to follow the times and the spaces of its becoming, the building's slow industriousness, but also new potentialities and new places where express the minimalist essentiality of its beginning. The first logic parameter of the artist is his studio, his workshop. Nahum Tevet's work never was born properly for a certain place, it's never site-specific, but it's held inside a container with ever-different potentialities. Even when his works are re-produced in the distance of time, they always keep their formal balance. The work's paraphrase follows what has previously happened in other contexts and places challenging the visitor to look at the work from different angles. Hence the work of Nahum Tevet slowly arises: it's proud, compact and without cracks. It's a continuous research along the thread of a lucid, articulated and philological thought. The work gets straight to the point and doesn't accept compromises. It follows the slow rhythms of its becoming and the dynamics of a regular and never accidental microcosm, marked by its own gestures, rites and rules. The widening of the space and the thickening of the composition and of the work's potentialities go together with a recurrent maniacality and with the production phases, which are more and more scattered through time. The manuality, which doesn't leave anything to chance, is an essential component in the building of the work. The artist acts as he was enslaved to a previously imposed and unchangeable order although he constantly aims to experiment the final result. The work is never subjected to the space but draws energies, angles, points of view and new sources of light out of it. The wooden matter, in constant temperature and humidity, hardens the thermometer of its past and the soul of its seemingly gelid and alien geometric architecture with the axis' minimum bends, the little cracks, the surface's light scratches. Organisms made of hundreds of piled modular elements build the structure, the line and the forms with different dimensions and tones. So the skeleton of the architecture never breaks up nor falls into

temptations. The essentiality of the first compositions begins its transformation through the assemblages, the rational construction of a mnemonic archive of modular repetitions translated into forms. A *unicum* of different nucleus and parts, always re-elaborated, strengthened, enlightened, up-rooted inside the sculptural unities' thickening, which in the last works becomes easy, minimal and clean. This is an uninterrupted process, which ahistorically goes through the Israeli events and begins to appear abroad, in the first international exhibitions in Germany, U.S.A. and France. But the artist mainly works in his country -which has consecrated him through many awards- and in his city, also through his didactic activity at the Bezalel Academy of Tel Aviv, through his museum projects and his public interventions.

His natural gift for public spaces characterizes his largest works and represents the double face of a coin constituted by fragmented souls. A *forma mentis* typical of his work and naturally connected to the origins, which have always reaffirmed and strengthened its fundamental idea of the need for a constant appropriation of gestures, spaces and times. Through the self-ruled microcosm of its own DNA, the work of Nahum Tevet seems to be able to filter the feverish rhythms of a fierce and performing system. It lowers the tones and brings the conversation back to a dialectic, interlocutory, curious and open relationship in the great agora.