



Travel

Art In Motion

By Rosally Saltsman

On February 6, Beverly Barkat's solo exhibition *Earth Poetica* opened in Jerusalem at the entrance to the Biblical Zoo's Gottesman Family Aquarium.

The exhibit, which is in collaboration with the Nomas Foundation, focuses on plastic pollution and ocean conservation and centers around a huge sphere of the world, which from a distance, resembles a glistening jewel.

Built from wrought iron with 180 panels, the Earth's landmasses, seas and oceans are clearly delineated in rich colors that catch the light. On closer inspection, it is clear that what looks like a jewel, is in fact plastic waste set in a soy-based resin: bags, wrappers, and plastic netting that are literally covering the globe. Barkat wanted the image of a jewel because she wants something that would draw people in, not push them away.

Barkat, a visual artist who works in mixed media, spent three years collecting plastic waste from all over the world, and cutting it into small pieces. Wherever she exhibited, she collected garbage – Taiwan, London, and the United States – and then brought it home in her suitcase. When Covid interrupted her travel plans, friends and

family pitched in to collect plastic waste and sent her boxes full from all over the world. Plastic waste isn't heavy but it wreaks havoc with the



Beverly Barkat working on "Earth Poetica." (Credit: Leopold Chen)

ecosystem. Her studio floor was literally, and figuratively awash in an ocean of plastic. She included Bamboo in the sculpture because she wanted nature in the exhibit. "We are nature," she says.

The exhibit was originally commissioned by The World Trade Center. Barkat does site specific work – she goes to the exhibition site and

then envisions the art to fill it. Having spent her childhood on the pristine beaches of South Africa, collecting shells on the beach, and then viewing a video where children from poor countries collect plastic waste from the beaches and sell it, Barkat was moved to do an educational exhibit on how plastic waste is destroying the world. Someone suggested first showing the sculpture at the aquarium as the aquarium already has an educational program featuring the damage caused to marine life by plastic waste – sea turtles losing limbs, fish washing up on the beach filled with garbage. It seemed like an ideal fit. And Barkat was eager to show the exhibit first in her home, Jerusalem.

The World Trade Center is patiently waiting another six months for the exhibit to close in Jerusalem before it becomes a permanent exhibit there.

Barkat comes from a family of artists. Her parents, Louis and Lorna Sakalovsky, came to Israel from Johannesburg to teach at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem, where Barkat herself later learned. "It's in my DNA," she says, "and it has a power greater than me."

Her three daughters are also artistic, her

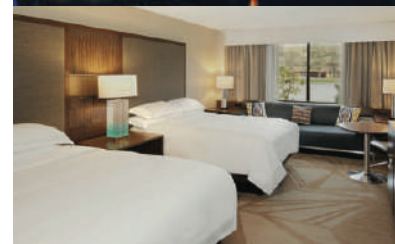
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daughter Noam having done the music for the film about Barkat at the aquarium. "I'm very proud of that," she says. Barkat's daughter Danielle is a multi-disciplinary floral artist and her youngest, Amit, studied baking at the Cordon Bleu in Paris, creating gluten free pastries especially for her mother, who is gluten-intolerant.

Barkat has exhibited in many countries worldwide. She was invited by the Israeli ambassador in Rome to do an exhibit for Israel's 70th anniversary at the Museo Boncompagni Ludovisi. "It was an exquisite space," she said. She had to find something that would go with the ornate frescoes and gold trim, and she chose a 12-panel creation modeled after the *Choshen* and called it, "After the Tribes."

Barkat collected stones and earth from the land of each of the 12 tribes (where possible), North to South, East to West, and combined them with crushed semi-precious stones. The emotion Barkat was trying to convey is: "We are one people. Each tribe is important." She wanted in the exhibit to show the variety of what we have in Israel and the Diaspora, and the variety she chose to represent is people.

Barkat realizes that everyone experiences her art at a different level, depending on many factors such as age, art background, personal experience and world view. "I create emotional art, which will hopefully cause the observer to be moved by the experience." And every exhibit is a different topic with a different medium and a different message.

When I ask if her exhibits take time away from her family, Barkat assures me that they are part of the project. "After the Tribes" went on to



The artist and her creation (Credit: Michael Amar)

be exhibited in Taiwan in October 2019 and her family came with her to help her install it.

Among Barkat's next commissions are an oil painting exhibition at the Rothschild Gallery in Tel Aviv about the movement of horses, and participating at Imago Mundi group exhibition in Torino, Italy. Later in 2022, she will be installing her exhibition "Mass Movement Energy" at the

DaXiang Art Space Gallery.

Barkat's art is full of movement and energy as well as spirituality and the great love she feels for the medium. "I'm passionate about life," she says.

The exhibit will run through the summer at the aquarium before moving to New York.

For more information, visit www.beverlybarkat.com.

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