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PROJECTS

IDO MICHAELI | From Sketch to Fabric

March 16 – April 21, 2017

Opening Reception: Thursday, March 16 | 6 – 8pm

Meislin Projects is pleased to announce From Sketch to Fabric, the first solo exhibition by Ido Michaeli with the gallery. From Sketch to Fabric presents a series of preparatory works from two of Michaeli's major projects, Black Panther Got Loose From the Bronx Zoo (2017) and Ethiopian Curtain of the Ark (2012), as well as the accompanying video for each piece.

The imagery in Ido Michaeli's work is complex and layered – drawing inspiration from various sources of literature and art. His preparatory paintings illustrate the process of incorporating such influences, give insight to the artist's technique, and ultimately lend to the fabrication of hand-woven textile works. Starting with a rudimentary sketch, Michaeli experiments with various compositions, introducing new details with each rendition. The final paintings act as a template for the creation of his tapestries, which Michaeli has produced in factories by expert weavers.

As with many of Michaeli's projects, both of the series on view are based on stories. His most recent work Black Panther Got Loose from the Bronx Zoo, currently in a solo exhibition at the American Jewish Historical Society, was inspired by a 1902 New York Times article titled 'Black Panther Gets Loose From the Bronx Zoo.' The article follows the story of a black panther that escaped captivity from the Bronx Zoo, and after a day of chaos and police hunts, finally swam to freedom down the Bronx River. For Michaeli this story holds a great significance. He read the tale of the escaped black panther as a political allegory, drawing comparisons to historical events such as the Black Panthers and Mizrahi Black Panthers movements, as well as seeing its relevance within our current political climate.

The second series of preparatory works, The Ethiopian Love Story, is based on the biblical encounter between the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. According to Ethiopian epos, the Queen of Sheba traveled to Jerusalem, where she had a brief romance with King Solomon, later giving birth to their son, Menelik. As an adult Menelik traveled from his birthplace in Ethiopia to meet his father. King Solomon was so overjoyed by his son's visit, that he declared there would be two Kingdoms, and gave to Menelik a replica of the Ark of the Covenant – a sacred chest containing scripture. The exhibited preparatory works portray selected scenes from this story, which were later incorporated in an embroidered tapestry, adorning a replica of the Ark of the Covenant.

The Ethiopian Curtain of the Ark, commissioned in 2012 by the Herzliya Museum in Israel, is part of the 'Cloth Merchant' trilogy in which Michaeli takes an ethnographic standpoint exploring traditional crafts of cultures.

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P R O J E C T S

When designing the tableau of these stories, Michaeli researches and draws inspiration from various time periods and artistic movements. Influenced by a series of Medieval Unicorn tapestries on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art Cloisters, Michaeli incorporated elements of these works in his design for the Black Panther tapestry. Similarly, The Ethiopian Love Story is focused on religious iconography and styles traditionally used to illustrate biblical stories.

After finalizing the design for each project, Michaeli enters the production phase, where his paintings are used by weavers as a template during the creation of the textile works. For the production of The Ethiopian Love Story, Michaeli approached the Almaz Factory, an Ethiopian embroidery workshop in Lod, Israel. These expert craftswomen created embroidered scenes of Michaeli's preparatory paintings, which were then sewn together to form the Ethiopian Curtain of the Ark. The Black Panther tapestry was woven on a series of looms at the Good Luck factory in China. By outsourcing the production of the textile, Michaeli relinquishes creative control, aware that the weavers will insert their own artistic sensibilities. In this sense, the project becomes a collaboration between Michaeli and the weavers.

Michaeli intentionally adopts styles and mediums that are traditionally seen as craft. As a result, the finished textile works appear as relics or artifacts. By creating works inspired by historical texts and art historical movements, Michaeli positions his tapestries within a new historical context and narrative. With his Black Panther and The Ethiopian Love Story projects, Michaeli becomes a storyteller of his own.