

Turning a street into an inspired body of work

A prizewinning young artist helps us to interpret the world around us



• SARAH LEVI

Iudeaea Navalis (Yehuda Hayamit) is the name of the street in Jaffa that artist Alma Itzhaky lives on. It is also the title of her series of paintings currently on display at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art that won her the Rappaport Prize for a young artist in 2014.

Each year the Rappaport Family foundation awards two artists – one young and one established – a grant and a solo exhibition at the Tel Aviv Museum a year after the prize is awarded. The purpose of the prize is to encourage young artists to push the boundaries of contemporary art with new and fresh ideas.

This body of work features 35 original large-scale paintings depicting intimate and fleeting glimpses of Itzhaky's everyday life in south Tel Aviv. Her work is presented alongside that of artist Ido Bar-El, the Rapaport prizewinner for an

established artist.

Itzhaky was born in 1984 and has spent her entire life working, learning and living in the city. Active in the Israeli art scene for over a decade, her medium of choice is oil paints. Her style has its roots in the tradition of figurative painting and strives to relate this tradition to an Israeli context. A lover of learning gifted with the ability to paint from an early age, she earned a Fine Art degree from Midrasha Faculty of the Arts at Beit Berl College at the age of 21 and went on to complete her master's degree in philosophy at Tel Aviv University. From this creative and educational base she has produced images so unique and striking that they earned her the coveted prize.

The paintings Itzhaky offers her audience are the culmination of work spanning three years. As she explains, "I do not work thematically and I don't have a concept in mind, but I do work and paint

in my studio. The curator [Noa Rosenberg] and I chose works that tended to focus on the things that are close to me, such as my immediate environment."

Itzhaky achieves something in her paintings that transcends the standard expectations of contemporary art and painting. In a time when most artists are inclined to reflect their realities through the photographic medium, painting somehow became the medium in which artists reflect their inner subjectivity.

She had to really connect with her environment so that she could return to her studio and create each of her works. As she describes: "I do try to be objective, it's less about me and more about the world. I paint what I can and how I can, it's not really a matter of choice."

Although these images evoke a feeling of snapshots celebrating the daily life of the working class and the ecstasy of the mundane that has been prevalent in classical documentary photography

