



Left: Orit Hofshi with *Datum Collectanea*, ink and acrylic drawing, carving on pine wood panels (105 1/2 x 430 1/2 in.), 2005. Courtesy the artist

Orit Hofshi

Israeli artist Orit Hofshi works by hand on a very large scale, achieving monumentality while retaining an intimate quality in her prints. I visited her earlier this year in her studio in Tel Aviv, where she was working on new wood cuts for an ongoing series, and what struck me most, knowing the scale of her prints in advance, was the tiny size of her working space (which was half-occupied by shelves of materials, prints, and books). This tension between grandeur and intimacy is, in my opinion, an important feature in her work, since her prints, which can be viewed from a great distance, have the ability to lure the viewer close to the surface, where their subtle textures become apparent.

Hofshi works primarily in wood cut, a technique that has experienced a revival in contemporary printmaking in recent years; its atavistic associations (wood cut is arguably the oldest of the printing techniques) contrast with the visual output of the technologically driven society we live in. Hofshi usually works in a fixed format, using standard-size sheets of pine from a builder's supply store. She creates varied horizontal and vertical matrices with the panels, adding to or subtracting from the grid as she works on the image. Pine is soft but tends to have knots, although the artist doesn't see that as a drawback. Rather, she takes it as a positive condition of the material and uses it to shape her compositions.

Once the matrices are carved, Hofshi inks the panels and lays Okawara paper down on them, taking care that the paper does not become soiled. Then she uses a wood spoon to rub the back of the paper to pick up the ink. This technique allows her to control the intensity of the line in a process somewhat akin to painting or drawing. Sometimes the artist integrates the yet-to-be-printed matrix as part of the work, displaying the wood boards adjacent to the prints.

Hofshi does not seek to represent specific places or historical events. Her iconography—forests, deserts, rivers, and buildings—is drawn primarily from newspaper clippings. Occasionally the artist uses her own photographs, but all of the source material is ultimately

combined and reinterpreted freely during the carving process. For example, *Resilience (Holesov 1944)* (2008) uses a combination of public and personal imagery that underscores Hofshi's ongoing interest in time: its past and present traces. The remnants of a temple—inspired by a found photograph of a Jewish synagogue in the present-day Czech Republic that was destroyed during World War II and that also directly relates to family experience—are recontextualized within an imagined landscape of rocks and rubble from which it seems to emerge, dignified and defiant.

—José Roca



Orit Hofshi, *Resilience (Holesov 1944)*, spoon-printed wood cut (66 x 71 in.), 2008, edition of 4. Courtesy the artist