

ART SPIEL

Reflections on the work of contemporary artists

MAY 7, 2020 BY CATHERINE KIRKPATRICK

Artists on Coping: Keren Anavy

During the Coronavirus pandemic, Art Spiel is reaching out to artists to learn how they are coping.



Keren Anavy by Written in Water (detail), site-specific installation at SPRING/BREAK Art Show 2018, NY, jacket design by Ori Anavy. Courtesy of the artist, photo: Nomi H Rave.

Keren Anavy is a multimedia artist working in drawing, painting, installation and performance. Her process and research-based practice scrutinize the relationship between nature, culture and site. Seeing landscape as a metaphor for political and personal narratives, her interest is how nature can function as a cultural agent in different societies. Anavy has written art reviews in Basis magazine (Hebrew), the New York artistic Director at Radio28, located in Mexico City, and currently a mentor at New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA), IAP. She is working on a site-specific installation planned for display at the Museo de la Ciudad de Querétaro, Mexico, and was selected Artist in Residence at Guild Hall of East Hampton, New York, and at Marble House Project, Vermont. During the Coronavirus pandemic Anavy was invited by ZAZ10TS to share personal messages on the ZAZ Corner Times Square billboards at 41St & 7Av, every night starting May 8 and for the next two weeks from 7PM-8PM.

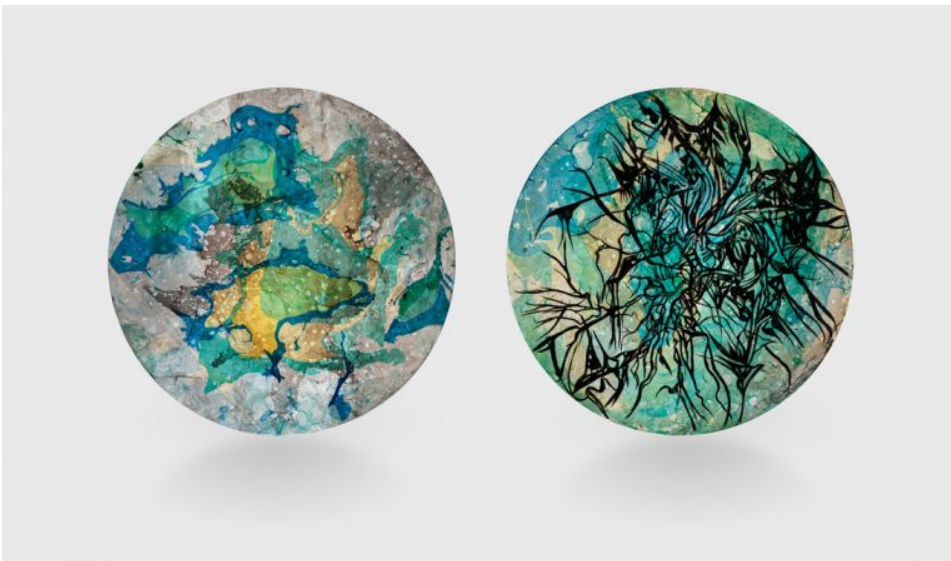


Garden of Living Images, 2018 (detail), ink and colored pencils on transparent Mylar, polyethylene ponds, water with ink, vinyl covers the windows, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist and Wave Hill. Photo: Stefan Hagen.

AS: How are you coping?

KA: I feel I'm in limbo, dealing with a double reality. My immediate family is here in New York, while my extended and elderly, at-risk family is in Israel. Freedom and movement has been banned for all of us, and even if I had been able to travel to them, I would have had to enter a Government-controlled isolation facility for two weeks. So I visit them online.

Strangely, I find comfort in nature more than ever. I manage to go out for a brief hour every day to "pockets of urban nature" as I call them, which makes coping easier. Time has lost its meaning, and the world has stopped, which makes simple things look different and move at a slower pace. For the first time since I moved to New York City four and a half years ago, I feel like I'm really pausing. Despite deep feelings of concern for family members, I face the challenge of trying to concentrate, explore and create, to continue my essential inner journey.



Untitled, 2017, ink and colored pencils on transparent Mylar, Plexiglas, each circle 12" diameter. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Stan Narten.

AS: Has your routine changed?

KA: In normal times, I went to the studio early in the morning. It has a large window with natural light and great views of the Hudson River and Statue of Liberty, which has recently become particularly symbolic. But since the stay in place began, my family's schedule has changed completely, so now I get to the studio towards the end of the day. I try to catch the amazing sunsets out the window, and paint until late night, then return home only to find it on wheels—everyone awake on screens or in the kitchen. In normal times it would look like a party, and I realized there was no point in fighting this reverse routine. Being in my studio and painting is about the only thing that keeps me focused these days.



Folded water, work in progress, 2020 (detail), ink on rice paper, 15X118". Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Stan Narten.

AS: Can you describe some of your feelings about all this?

KA: The main emotion I'm experiencing now is huge uncertainty. My feelings run the continuum from anxiety and worry to black humor. I'm grateful that my family and those around me are healthy and have a roof over our heads. I don't take anything for granted because reality is telling us all the time that things could be worse. I'm filled with appreciation for the rescue workers who face the crisis up close on a daily basis, and for people like teachers who do remote teaching and manage to concentrate on their routine work despite the chaos.



In the Garden, 2016, ink and colored pencils on paper, triptych 70X150". Courtesy of the artist, photo: Stan Narten.

AS: What matters most right now?

KA: Community and patience. To maintain ourselves as a community in the local sense and also the international sense, because only as a community can we stop the epidemic and help its victims. We must pay close attention to lessons we receive as a family, and we must be attentive to each other and to our relationship with nature and the universe.



Utopia, 2020 (detail), documentation of performance, video projection, at APAP, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, New York, in collaboration with Valerie Green/Dance Entropy. Photo courtesy of the artist.

AS: Any thoughts about the road ahead?

KA: I very much hope that programs and projects that are frozen because of the crisis will come back and not dissolve or get lost because budgets have collapsed. In my field, artists have invested their hearts and souls for years in every project, and it's important not to lose this passion because it is literally our life.

The world is now learning the hard way that we are all on the same planet and share a common fate. I have a naive hope that following the crisis countries will be more patient with each other and with the global community.



The Nature of Things, 2020, video projection, documentation from Times Square Billboard, New York, in collaboration with Tal Frank. Courtesy of the artist and ZAZCorner by ZAZ10TS, photo: Zdravko Cota.



Catherine Kirkpatrick is a writer and photographer based in New York. She wrote the introductions to Meryl Meisler's two books, and is currently working on an oral history about recent changes in photography.

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