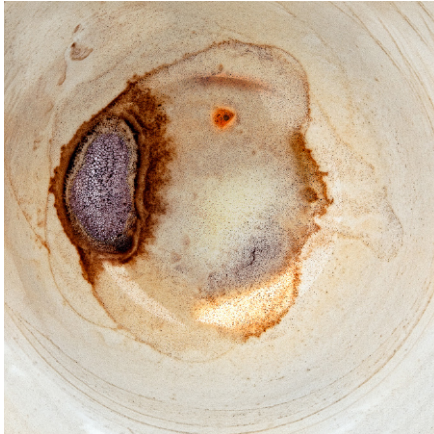
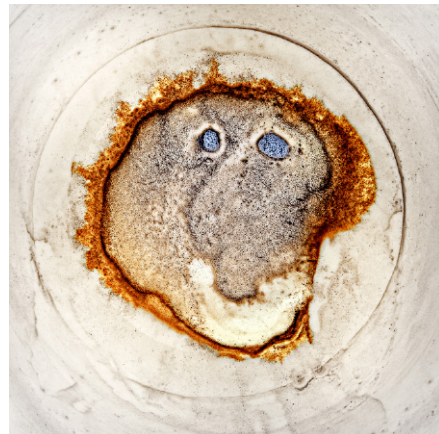


ROTH

coffeegraph®



Melodious, 2012



Mr. Godfrey, 2012

FABRIKEXPO

THE INTERSECTION OF ART, DESIGN & ARCHITECTURE

Los Angeles, January 29 - 31, 2016

ARTIST STATEMENT

coffeegrph® is a child of another creation; it is in a constant process of self-discovery and awareness, juggled through me and made into a new order.

The opportunity to freely and creatively express myself, and for that expression to have birthed meaningful emotions in the lives of so many, is a precious gift for which I am deeply grateful.

I think what happens at a certain point after the initial inception of a coffeegrph, is that the image takes over, and I yield to it. I trust what's being created, even though I'm not certain yet what it is, what I'm expressing or representing.

Why?

Because I'm willing to let it be, knowing that I'm simply unveiling something that was into something that is. It's that "beyondness," in my work that keeps me wanting to return to it. It always makes me wonder about how that simple earth-tone stain at the beginning, did end up becoming what it is now.

I like to be mystified, and I cherish the evolution of this creative journey.

At the stage at which the act of deciphering begins, the art finally becomes the possession of the viewer. Inquiring for meaning beyond the ephemeral look, the viewer is absorbing the art, even if he/she finds a void in the artwork. This is what I refer to as the artistic *ménage à trois*, a state at which we all become part of the same – the artist, his art and the viewer.

For that reason, it becomes essential that the artwork contains something beyond our understanding, or beyond our experience, or something that doesn't harmonize or reconcile with our experience. And that something becomes more and more ours. We come into possession of a mystery, which is something that we don't allow ourselves with most things in our lives.

From you the observer in quest for discovery I would ask that you allow time for contemplation. Enter it with readiness to explore new directions through the door I left open (the title). I hope that not only will you learn to appreciate the abstraction of this art, but that you will be guided to the same discourse from which the art originates finding within it a wealth of personal meaning"

coffeegraph[®]: grounds for a new abstract art form

...the wonder-filled journey of coffeegraph

By Marina Belozerskaya

"Coffee is an organic miracle with extraordinary characteristic and is transcending the quality of ordinary pigments. Its body has the ability to flow and create expressive distortions of form and space through a variety of movements. Layering coffee amalgam creates three-dimensional depth, thus making it the perfect pigment to depict paintings of mythological, allegorical, or anthropomorphic subjects." - Avi Roth

Coffee - the primary medium of Avi Roth's artwork - has along, dense, and layered history that mixes politics, economics, culture and magic. Its origins go back many centuries. As Mark Pendergrast writes in his *Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World*, "Possibly the

Sacred Semblance, Waterways and Estuaries



cradle of mankind, the ancient land of Abyssinia, now called Ethiopia, is the birthplace of coffee... Across the nearby Red Sea, further to the north, Moses led his people to freedom." This history echoes in Avi Roth's Coffeegraphs and especially

in his new series *Babylonia*, (Los Angeles, 2014) Roth has developed a new and unique art form *as layered as its components – coffee, artistry, history, philosophy, emotion, and intellectual curiosity*. Each Coffeegraph is a journey of imagination, reflection, and discovery. Roth begins with a coffee-pigment distilled from roasted coffee and uses a *tiltflow* process to generate patterns and textures on a non-porous surface.

The fine residues in the coffee-pigment scatter to fashion unpredictable but controllable patterns and communicate identifiable forms that are most evident in Roth's *Sacred Semblance, Waterways and Estuaries*, (Los Angeles, 2007).



Elegance of Fear

Although he manipulates his canvas through feelings and insights as he tilts the surface, spreads the medium, water-burns its density, scrapes away or adds further layers, he sees each image as predestined. The emerged patterns stimulate the artist's awareness and its implied meaning is imbedded in the art's title - all part of his moment of unveiling. Once the art is complete, Roth transforms the painting that very in sizes from 5" to 10", into a high-resolution digital file by ways of a custom build section-scanner.

When the "all important spark of inner life" as Kandinsky called it, presents the necessity for color, Roth applies transparent layers of color in Photoshop, like fine oil glazes of old masters. In his *Elegance of Fear*, (Los Angeles, 2006), for example, a purple leaf wells up out of the forehead of a face grimacing with a crooked smile and uneven, unseeing, glowing turquoise eyes. The three touches of color emerging out of the sepia tones of the head convey the magnetic and terrible power of our most primal feelings.



2006), a kind of circular image recalling the biblical prophecy in Deuteronomy 29:23: “the whole land will be a burning waste of salt and sulfur” - an image of the beginning and end of time, of past creation and present distraction.

Although Roth’s art is not influenced directly by other artists, it calls to mind distinctive precedents; for this unique art form, contains within it layers of historical resonance.

Leonardo da Vinci, for example, saw in natural stains a vital source of inspiration: “If you look upon an old wall covered with dirt, or the odd appearance of some streaked stones, you may discover several things like landscapes, battles, clouds, uncommon attitudes, humorous faces, draperies, etc. Out of this confused mass of objects, the mind will be furnished with an abundance of designs and subjects perfectly new.”

Enlightenment and modern era artists took further the marriage of chance natural inspiration and artistic imagination. The



French novelist Victor Hugo used blotting technique to generate sophisticated and phantasmagoric pen-and-ink drawings. His friend Philippe Burty recorded that, “Any means would do for him – the dregs of a cup of coffee tossed

on old laid paper, the dregs of an inkwell tossed on notepaper, spread with his fingers, sponged up, dried, then taken up with a thick brush or a fine one...”

convey the magnetic and terrible power of our most primal feelings.

The genesis of Coffeegrph took place during the Middle East conflict in the summer of 2006. Roth’s emotional turmoil found expression in his first Coffeegrph, *Inferno di Terra Santa*, (Los Angeles,

In the 20th century Surrealists like André Breton praised Hugo’s art for its “unequalled power of suggestion.” “Chance art, as expressive of modernity, is ... uniquely and necessarily modern,” declared Hans Arp.

Francis Bacon told David Sylvester that, “My ideal would really be just to pick up a handful of paint and throw it at the canvas and hope that the portrait was there.”

Abstraction is another artistic current with which Roth’s Coffeegrphs have strong affinity. As Kurt Varnedoe wrote in his *Pictures of Nothing: Abstract Art since Pollock*: “Abstract art has been with us in one form or another for almost a century now, and has proved to be not only a long-standing crux of cultural debate, but a self-renewing, vital tradition of creativity... This is one of abstraction’s singular qualities, the form of enrichment and alteration of experience denied to the fixed mimesis of known things.”

Abstraction Lyrique - a Post-war European movement whose practitioners employed a loose gestural style to create sensuous compositions that conveyed a larger spiritual outlook and a more mystical sensibility than the “action painting” of American Abstractionism- is closest to Roth’s work. *Elevating the Faithless*, (Los Angeles, 2014), from the *Babylonia* series exemplifies this form of expression.

Abstract painting reveals itself through deep contemplation. It invites the viewer to bring his or her own experiences to the encounter and through the merging of memories, feelings, and relationships of both the creator and the beholder gives rise to new responses and interpretations. Roth Coffeegrphs foster this kind of exploration and accrual of meanings.



For example, *Hades and Persephone*, (Los Angeles, 2012) the story of the king and queen of the Underworld united in the seething darkness of their realm can be seen as a rape, a tender union, an emergence out of the realm of death or a dissolution into it — depending on the viewer's history and perception.

For decades Roth has worked as a photojournalist and an art photographer, and his black and white images captured the complex landscapes of faces and cities, experiences and encounters. Always keenly interested in textures, he harnessed shifting focus, highly sensitive film, and eventually digital color manipulation to explore textural effects and their emotional capabilities. Photography has honed Roth's visual acuity and technical mastery. The sophistication and precision of his expertise enabled him to bring Coffeegrath — in all its complexity — to full fruition, and to render texture in newly powerful, evocative, and profound ways.

Roth's sense of historical resonance was also first developed in his photographic works: he portrayed major historical figures—including Golda Meir and Moshe Dayan — and settings, from Jerusalem to Paris to New York. His personal journey from Transylvania to Israel to England to America, with other destinations in-between, gave him a nuanced understanding of both cultural specificity and universality. "It is not to originality that photographs owe their excellence," he asserted, "but to their high degree of universality in what they delineate." The historical and cultural depth of his imagination and references is clear in his Coffeegraths.

Roth the artist has been shaped by his professional and personal experience, by his historical knowledge and his imagination. His combination of expertise and excitement drove him to usher in this new vision. The Coffeegrath is both an emotional enfolding and a distillation of five decades of work and thought. Yet his work also stems from his unconscious mind and partakes of the collective unconscious. He sees Coffeegrath as rising out of the changing conditions of our times, particularly the disruptions of communication and relationships—hampered rather than enhanced by social media.

His *Babylonia* series is, in part, an allegorical evocation of the dispersal of humankind for its sin of overreaching. Yet while they hint at existential grief, Roth's Coffeegraths are also highly poetic. *Thing with Emotion*, (Los Angeles, 2013), for exam-

ple, captures through the literal separation of the head from body the warring duality of our existence, the remove of our rational mind from our sensual body.

A vital component of Roth's Coffeegraths is wonder, which is both personal to the artist — he talks about his "childlike trait of receptiveness that makes me feel I am looking at the world for the first time"— and found at the intersection of nature and art in earlier epochs. One of the greatest ages of wonder were the 16th and 17th centuries, when Europeans embarked on ever more frequent voyages of exploration to new and strange lands and brought back a variety of man-made and natural specimens that dramatically expanded their understanding of science, art, philosophy, and religion. Curiosity cabinets, in which human crafts mingled with nature's creations and with strange things that defied categorization, became de rigueur for rulers and intellectuals. They stimulated inquiry and enlightenment. They were also seen as a miracle of infinite divine creativity. Roth's Coffeegraths are a kind of cabinets of wonder where the organic miracle of coffee takes new shapes and significance by passing through the artist's fingers, eyes, and mind.

As did the Europeans in the Age of Exploration, Roth, at once a curious child and a mature artist, undertakes a voyage of discovery with each Coffeegrath, and his sense of marvel communicates to the viewer. As one looks at his pictures, they open up more and more to the eye and the imagination, moving from harmonies of shapes and colors to stories conjured up by them. This magnetic enfolding reminds us of our ability to create and find wonder with a spark of divine inspiration.

In the end, though, "Like life, art refuses to be categorized, summarized, solved, and closed. It remains difficult to adequately describe and to evaluate. Relative merits may be argued, but finally meaning and value are tied to the particular individual," wrote Gary Garrels in his introduction to *Oranges and Sardines* exhibition at the Hammer Museum in 2008.

Roth's Coffeegraths are a journey into the artist's mind and into human history, an invitation to moral contemplation and an emotional experience, a glimpse into a private realm and a shared passage. The Coffeegrath contains the wonder of the new and a profound sense of time that stretches back to the stories of our origins and illuminates our present. MB

coffeegraph® – uses a rhythmic *tiltflow* process to back-wash pigments made from coffee into off-shoot patterns and textures by way of staining, layering and water burning. This very new art taps ageless underlying themes in its layers of tones, colors, and forms. The art is preserved and its life extended by digitally *section-scanning* the artwork, followed by a *digital-painting* process that may further enhance the organic coffee pigment colors, add additional colors, and accentuate its textures across and between surfaces. The final artwork is printed in a *single-edition* impression on watercolor paper, linen and silk.

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