



(photo: Ziv Sade)

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Adam Berg's *Wormholes* at Inga Gallery, Tel Aviv

Art/ "The Cave Man": An interview
By Ruth Patir

Adam Berg's new show deals with biology, mysticism and wormholes. That 's what happens when you are a gifted artist with a PhD in philosophy of science.

In his new show, *Wormholes*, Adam Berg wishes to take you in a time tunnel - a journey between the intellectual and the scientific, the fictional and the abstract – and all with a wink and with self-consciousness about the limits of the artwork. The new show is the outcome of the artist's ongoing investigation into biology and is comprised of a main video projection, sculptural objects, paintings on canvases that are extended onto the gallery walls and pictograms of drawings. All of which defy classification into a single medium. All the works displayed, as Berg recounts, were generated as one totality and are interconnected, but the video is the spinning narrative, and the rest of the works are its family members.

Adam Berg – who at one point was a nominee for heading the fine art department in Bezalel Academy– appears hard to identify as local. After decades of living in various cities he's finally settled.

For the past decade Berg has lived and worked in Los Angeles, and also had been lecturing at Calarts and Otis.

Berg had studied art in Rome, Architecture in Toronto and has a PhD in philosophy of science from the University of Haifa, a vast body of knowledge that seems to inform his practice as an artist.

The film's narrative, the show's main video projection titled *Wormholes*, is a tour de force into deep time wherein we encounter a clan of Neanderthals dressed in furs and move in an imaginary space that is both real and animated and to their side appears a string quartet that are filmed as well in the caves and accompanies the film soundtrack and its unfolding.

Let's start with the film. What can you tell about it?

"The film was shot in two locations: the one in Israel were the Neanderthals cave sites in the Carmel mountains and other in Bronson's caves in Hollywood that were the location for many science fiction films.

The two places came together through a sort of a passage, a wormhole, or a time tunnel. But I also shot some of the footage in green screen studios and managed to generate a "third place" or location in time that intertwines the artificial and the natural, and that is in fact a new place."

What brought to film the caves?

"I'm interested in filming in nature and convey a cave that is not only of shadows, like Plato's cave, but also of sounds. And unlike the last work that exhibited in Israel (*Correspondence* at Barbur Gallery) which directly dealt with the political reality of the fence in Bili'in, in other words, a work that focused on a specific place and time, this time around I wanted to relate to time in the deep sense, a time that is not limited or delineated by historical context. I had in mind the notion of culture in terms that exceed modern or postmodern perspective and are rooted in a deep understanding of culture as part of the biology of the organism."

In the gallery in which the video is projected there are three large sculptural works: one adjacent to the projection is a basalt rock sliced into layers, referencing a geological dating of strata. Another work is also comprised of layered strata, but this time out of birch wood and etched stainless steel mirror onto which a fragment of a small meteorite is resting; this meteorites appears to be an abstraction of human diagram, but it's real.

"It was very important for me to introduce a real cosmic material into the show," explains Berg, "and combine it with technological components."



(photo: Aviad Bar-Nes)

I find in your works a shared growing interest among young artists here and around the world in some concerns such as the caves and metaphysical and mystical aspects of the art object.

“I don’t think that my work is mystical in the religious sense of the word since it does not serve a single idea or purpose. But I can address your point by referencing something that I published recently in LA, a somewhat poetic text that is titled “The Cosmic and the Metabolic” and in which I recount an essay written by Smithson and Bochner on the Planetarium, and by which they contextualize minimalist art like that of Donald Judd and juxtaposed say a cube to a galaxy. There is a continuous historical revision in art and we have grown tired of this nonsense of cultural fixity and we understand better today that “big art” is not actually art.

We understand that there is something real and of value in the intimate and associative encounter offered by art that exceed the festival and spectacle driven aspects. In a way it’s the same as not wanting to give up taste in food or have only friends on Facebook. The need of the metaphysical is a real need, the need in the fully physical and not its reduction to some aspects of the real.”