

Orna Feinstein: "Asherah" at Anya Tish Gallery

By **Donna Tennant** - May 1, 2017



"Asherah," (detail), 2017, Orna Feinstein, Inkjet print on shaped acrylic, Site-specific installation. Photo: courtesy Anya Tish Gallery

To say that Orna Feinstein is driven to create art is an understatement. The number of pieces she produces and the intricacy involved in making them is astonishing. Born in Jerusalem, she moved to Houston with her family in 1984 and was making realist prints until she tired of the genre. In 1997, she and her husband cleared some large trees from a lot they owned, and Feinstein became mesmerized by the natural patterns that were exposed when the trees were cut down. She began making drawings based on the tree rings, and she has been creating work inspired by trees ever since. This influence is not immediately apparent in her abstract work, but the titles do provide clues. All the pieces share one of four titles: *Tree Dynamics*, *Treetopia*, *Plastrees* and *Asherah*. And

the title of the show, "Asherah," refers to the ancient Israeli goddess of nature, whose symbol is a sacred tree and whose name means "grove" in Hebrew.

Feinstein's multi-media pieces involve seemingly endless permutations of concentric circles and stripes that evolve spontaneously, as she experiments with a wide range of materials. *Tree Dynamics #125* (2017) was made by layering laser-cut, printed paper and printed acrylic (she refers to these elements as monoprints) with fabric and thread. The complex linear and circular patterns created by the layering produce a moiré effect that shifts as the viewing angle changes. In the three-dimensional Treetopia series, Feinstein adds a convex bubble of heat-formed, printed Plexiglas to the surface that magnifies what is underneath it. The most dramatic piece in the show is Asherah, an installation of more than 50 printed sheets of Plexiglas formed into cylinders to create a grove of sheer treelike forms printed with black geometric patterns.

Even after 20 years of creating variations on her iconic tree-ring motif, Feinstein still sees an infinite number of possibilities ahead, saying that she has just begun to scratch the surface. She is drawn to geometric compositions for their serenity and balance, two things she strives for in her own life as well. The vibrating patterns and impressions of movement created by the layering of the circles and grids recalls such Op Art artists as Bridget Riley and Victor Vasarely. Inspired by them and by a deep connection with nature, Feinstein plans to continue her journey of exploration and discovery well into the future.

Donna Tennant

Donna Tennant is a Houston-based art writer who writes reviews for various publications, including *art ltd.* and *Visual Art Source*. Other publications she has written for over the past 35 years include the *Houston Chronicle*, *Southwest Art*, *Artlies*, *ARTnews*, and the *Houston Press*. She has also written numerous catalogue essays. She has taught art history at University of Houston–Downtown and Lone Star College and is currently a writer and editor for the Houston Independent School District.