



## Dani Karavan

Dani Karavan was born on 7 December 1930 in Tel Aviv. His education at Bezalel School of Arts in Jerusalem and the art academies of Florence and Paris from 1950 to 1957 was soon followed by contracts for stage designs and murals in Israel. He started with his first mural relief in concrete in 1962, e.g. for the Weizmann Institute in Rehovot. Next came major government contracts for the Palace of Justice in Tel Aviv and the plenary hall of the Knesset. The largest of his early space sculptures was the monument in the Gegev Desert near Beer Sheba from 1963 to 1968. It is a monument for the

Palmach Brigade of the 1947 war, situated in one hectare of seemingly endless desert made of concrete, desert acacias, water and windpipes. A 1971 exhibition in Florence brought Dani Karavan more to the attention of Europeans. After 1975 he worked for museums and institutes in New York and Milan. The 38th Biennial of Venice, 1976, marked his final breakthrough. His participation at the documenta in 1977 and 1988 followed naturally. A major milestone was his coming to terms with the architecture and space of Forte di Belvedere, Florence, and Castello dell'Imperatore, Prato. From then to this day innumerable contracts have kept coming in for assignments from all over Israel, from Geneva, Cologne, Cergy-Pontoise near Paris, Düsseldorf, Los Angeles, Japan, Nuremberg, Berlin and Portbou in Spain. He participated in dozens of competitions and exhibitions.

The driving force behind his work, even part of the work itself, is his global communication with many people, artists, art historians, patrons, human rights activists, friends, foes and especially, again and again, with the widely dispersed members of his family. His words and the inflection of his voice when he speaks in English, French and Italian have a truly fascinating and convincing effect - foreign languages he uses to overcome financial or factual problems, to bring about a consensus between such diverse partners as lawyers, philologists, architects, concrete experts, craftsmen and art historians, to meet tight deadlines.

Time and time pressure are the second driving forces of Dani Karavan's versatile activities. Decisions are postponed until the very last moment, considered and made when it is almost too late - which can be truly nerve-wrecking for the patron. By no means distracted, Dani Karavan manages coordinating up to four projects at a time - the monumental centre being "Axe Majeur" in Cergy-Pontoise (since 1980) - and motivating his up to four employees to ensure maximum precision within the time available.

The third basic element in Dani Karavan's working methods is uncompromising precision concerning materials and dimensions. No matter how small the draft might be, maybe even the size of a postcard, no matter how temporal a model might be, of cardboard or plasticine, no matter how huge the final work - "Axe Majeur" in Cergy-Pontoise covers three kilometres - any deviation above one millimetres is beyond Karavan's tolerance.

Karavan's main challenge and creative source is not an empty canvas or an untouched stone, but space. An awareness for space can be truly observed with Dani Karavan, when he is measuring streets and places with his eyes and body, when felling, sensing for the right proportions during trial erections of this architectural elements. Understanding rural or urban spaces does not stop with the three dimensional, however, it includes omnipresent nature as well, when trees are planted or wind pipes lined up. It includes the location's history contained in the existing buildings or lost signs, such as railroad tracks which had disappeared. And most of all it includes people not as the rulers, but beneficiaries of space. None of Dani Karavan's creation, no matter how large-scale they might be, are meant to be without people. Therefore one will not become lost on the monumental "Axe Majeur", one finds stations along the way.

Dani Karavan is a Jew, reared and educated in Israel somewhat pious and very enlightened. Until he was 25 years old he lived in a kibbutzim, a time that left its mark in his work, such as the frequent marriage of words and plastic shapes, the science of symbolic numbers, the constant exchange of ideas, iterations of subjects which are taught beginning with one's youth.

Dani Karavan never left any doubt that a project in the City of Nuremberg, the city of National Socialist Party Rallies and the "Nuremberg Laws" of late 1935, as well as of the "Nuremberg Trials" of 1945 - 46, meant an artistic and spiritual challenge to him that touched his very being. This is because his work not only consist in shaping space, but also in a dedicated dialog with human time.

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