



The Genia Schreiber University Art Gallery

and Michel Kikoïne Foundation

The Yolanda and David Katz Faculty of the Arts

Tel Aviv University

Art, Archeology and Ecology: The Palatial Courtyard of Herod's the Great in Caesarea Maritima (Israel), Comes Alive

An update: July 6, 2020

In October 2020, the **Tel Aviv University Genia Schreiber art gallery** will launch an innovative scientific artistic project supported by **ARPAMED** – a revival of Herod's ancient garden in Caesarea. The project, originally planned to open in Spring 2020 was postponed due to the Covid19 pandemic; fortunately, it will come alive in the coming months, with an added contribution of the Dan David Foundation, who has agreed to become a sponsoring partner of this work. The garden and the exhibition it is part of – titled Plan(e)t – will run through the end of May 2021 at least.

Plan(e)t opened at the TAU art gallery in January 2020. Over the course of two months (before closure due to the Covid-19 crisis), this exhibition has drawn more than four thousand visitors as well as great appraisal in local media. Addressing the pertinent subject of nature and sustainability, the exhibition is evermore relevant in days of a global pandemic, impending recession and imminent climate change. We are thrilled to re-open the exhibition (currently closed to the public) with the pioneering outdoor project of Herod's ancient garden in Caesarea.

The artistic revival of Herod's garden brings together contemporary art and cutting-edge archeological research conducted by TAU scholar **Dr. Dafna Langgut**, examining power relationships in royal botanical structures, contemplating their ecological costs. It exhibits the garden as a site of human control over nature, one that registers geographical paths of political exchange and influence. The work is designed and executed by artist and landscape architect **Relli de Vries**. As such, this project turns archeological findings into a vivid reality, by forming a multi-sensual experience. It invites visitors to contemplate questions of sustainability within a long historical perspective, pondering the future viability of such archaeological findings.

Dr. Langgut has developed a chemical process for extracting fossil pollen from archeological plaster, which she uses in order to identify the types of plants that grew in Herod's spectacular gardens 2000 years ago. Inspired by the Roman elite, Herod adopted a building technique

intended to challenge Nature and to demonstrate that the king rules over his environment and can design it as he sees fit, even under the most difficult conditions. In his garden at Caesarea, Herod planted exotic plants that were out of their natural environment and had to survive under challenging conditions. The ancient garden as a cultural phenomenon has, therefore, pressing importance in today's culture as well: it forces us to question the extent to which we exploit nature, and how unsustainable our practices are, in the long run.

This inaugural project has great educational and pedagogical import, and therefore can affect wide and diverse audiences. The construction work of this garden commences in two weeks, and we are thrilled to launch it with a celebratory opening event on October 21st 2020. We maintain a close connection with our French partner, **Dr. Rachid Cheddadi** (ISEM UMR 5554 CNRS Université de Montpellier) who is following the project closely. Finally, we are happy to announce additional support to the project by the **Dan David foundation** that will also contribute to its realization.

We are as grateful as ever for your support of the project, and we'd be delighted to provide additional materials, upon request, and to see you among us during the inauguration if travel restriction will be lifted by then.

Best regards,

Dr. Sefy Hendler, Director
Dr. Tamar Mayer, chief curator
Genia Schreiber University Gallery