



*The Art of*  
Menucha  
Yankelevitch

*I first discovered artist Menucha Yankelevitch through one of her lovely paintings which symbolizes the tranquility of Shabbos. Immediately intrigued, I wanted to find out more about this highly talented person who shares my first name.*

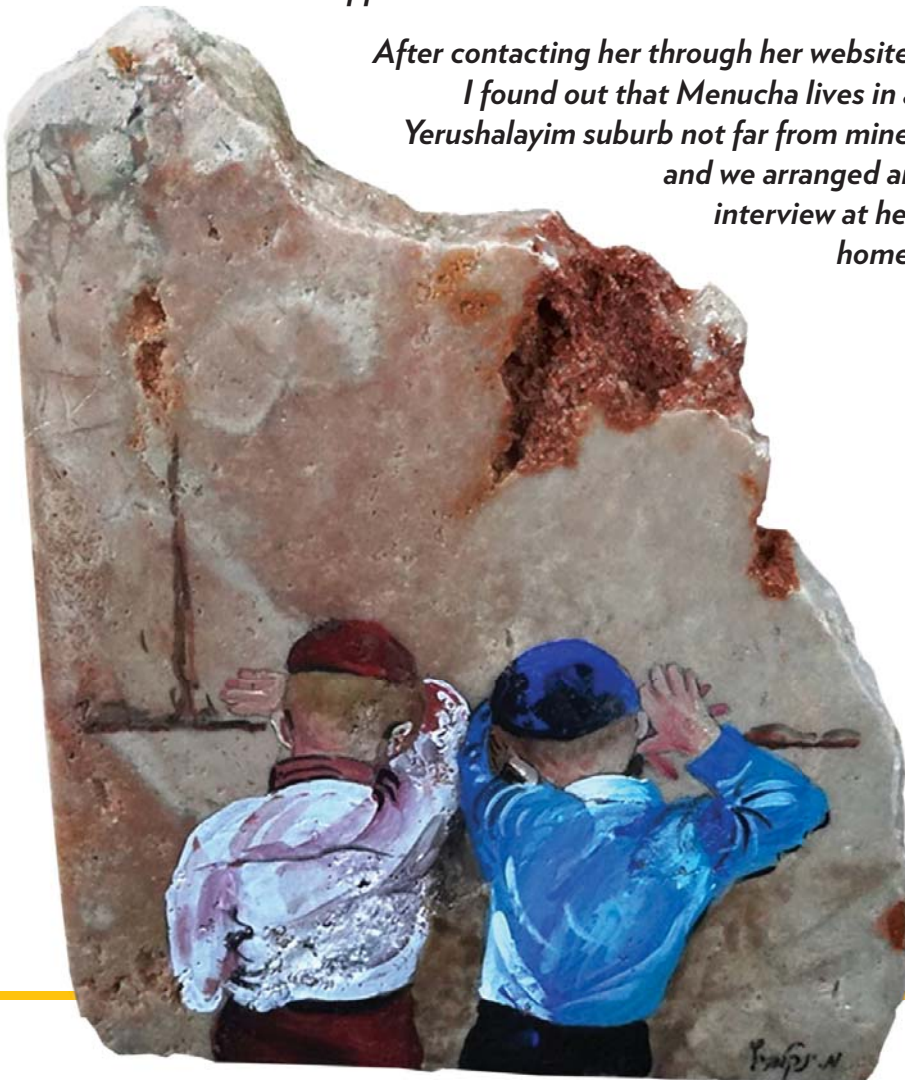
*It turns out that Menucha is a well-known, talented from artist who has exhibited her paintings in prestigious art galleries in Eretz Yisrael and around the world. In recent years she has participated in many group and solo art exhibitions.*

*The most recent, which took place this May, was called MY JERUSALEM, with the "MY" representing Menucha's initials.*

*Visiting the exhibition, I admired dozens of her spectacular paintings done using a variety of techniques. They were presented in a huge modern building, the Beck Science Center in the industrial zone of Har Hotzvim, Yerushalayim.*

*Her evocative scenes of life in the Old City were in sharp contrast to the stark open space of the contemporary lobby and appeared almost as a kiddush Hashem there.*

*After contacting her through her website, I found out that Menucha lives in a Yerushalayim suburb not far from mine, and we arranged an interview at her home.*



*How did you begin your art career?*

I've loved art for as long as I can remember. From the age of 15, I began teaching art to small groups of young girls in the neighborhood. I believe that art is my vocation, a lifelong journey of my soul and the souls of my students. Though I trained under a number of established artists, I learn the most important lessons in my own studio while working on new creations.

*Many of your beautiful paintings are of the Old City and Meah Shearim. Did you grow up in one of those old neighborhoods?*

Actually, I have always lived right here in this relatively new neighborhood of Kiryat Sanz in northern Yerushalayim. I'm a fifth-generation *Yerushalmi* who grew up in the very same apartment since the age of 5. When I got married, my parents moved out and gave the apartment to us, the new young couple, to live in and raise our family.

However, throughout my childhood, I greatly enjoyed visiting my grandparents in the old Batei Ungarin area near Meah Shearim. The ancient alleyways, saturated with story and color, touched my heart and continue to inspire me to this day. My grandfather, Rav Wallis, an expert *tzitzis* maker and owner of the well-known Wallis Tzitzis Factory, encouraged my interest in art.

The fact that I was born to a family who lived in Yerushalayim for many generations has made this aspect a central theme in my paintings. I portray sights of my youth and glimpses of various parts of the city: the Kosel, the Old City, Meah Shearim and more. In my work, I give visual expression to all the sensations and sights I absorbed through the years and bring them to life with the aid of rich color.



### How would you describe your art?

I am a multidisciplinary artist since I work in several media, including oil painting, three-dimensional work with cutouts on cards and parchment, and Judaica painted on Jerusalem stone.

Wherever I find myself — in the street or at home — scenes come alive before my eyes, drawing me deep inside their atmosphere and perception.

I wait for the moment when I can transfer the visual experience onto canvas with the appropriate technique. One thing I love to do is prepare many backgrounds in a range of colors on canvases, some of which I make myself. Then, when the inspiration strikes me to paint something on a particular background, the two fuse together as if they were intended to be that way.

Art revives me like dew revives body and soul. It is an integral, joyous part of my daily life.

My paintings include both realistic representations and abstracts in acrylics, watercolors and charcoal. My art, my family and Jewish life together form a fine combination in which each part enriches and nourishes the others. The delight of creativity brings serenity, energy and joy to my status as a mother. Conversely, my Jewish existence and family life are sources of ideas, style and refinement for my paintings.

In addition to finding great fulfillment in my art, it also provides me with a livelihood and has always supported my husband in learning. I have continued to paint through the years, even when my children were small. They were





to combine it with my home life and family. For example, sometimes I'm in the middle of drawing or painting, it is getting late and I feel like continuing into the night. But I know that I have other roles in the morning and must stop and get my priorities straight.

Like every woman, I have many chores at home. On the other hand, it is very appealing to paint, create or finish projects. I often recall a wonderful phrase my mother loved to remind me of when my children were still small: "Remember that the children are your most beautiful paintings!"

My art is inside my home, always available, and while painting I forget oppressive or stressful things and even physical pain.

It's wonderful to know I have a plan for each new day that comes and that I received a gift from *Shamayim* that must be used correctly.

### Of your many stunning paintings, do you have a favorite?

I like some paintings because of their results, some because of the interesting techniques I used to create them, and others because I worked very hard on them. Some paintings are completed quickly, and others take much longer. I draw and paint and enjoy every moment of creation regardless of whether the painting will sell or not.

### What are you working on currently?

My recent works are characterized by fine impressions of color on a white background alongside broad strokes of color. I attempt to depict the story behind the painting with this minimalist style.

### Menucha, what are your plans for the future?

Thanking the Creator of the World for this wonderful gift, I hope to continue using it in health and happiness so that more Jewish homes will have my paintings adorning their walls. ■

raised alongside the canvases and paintbrushes. Now that they have grown up, I have more flexibility with my work time.

I derive strength from saying *Tehillim* every morning, never missing a day no matter how busy my schedule. I make the time to learn the *halachos* of *kashrus*, *brachos*, the *Yamim Tovim* and *tznius*. I also became involved in a *shemiras halashon* group and check the tests for this group every two weeks.

### Do you also connect with other women artists?

I belong to the "Studia" group of Yerushalayim women artists from all different backgrounds. Through an interesting project run by the Jerusalem Municipality, we offer hospitality to visiting tourists in our homes.

### What has been your most unusual experience while painting?

Once, while painting with friends in one of Yerushalayim's old neighborhoods, one woman ruined a painting on which I had worked for over two hours. Instead of becoming upset by this distressing incident, I dried the picture, which created an interesting background, and placed the canvas on a fence. Then I noticed that the leaves of a nearby bush were



reflected in the background! Suddenly the "ruined" picture appeared far more interesting. I felt delighted that Hashem had approved of my restraint with this incident and repaid me doubly. This experience created an idea for a new artistic project I called "Leaf Silhouettes" that turned out to be so successful it developed into a whole series of delicate leafy paintings.

### What do you find is the most challenging aspect of being a woman artist?

The difficulty is not to get too carried away by my art career and to know how