

# Monaco, 2013

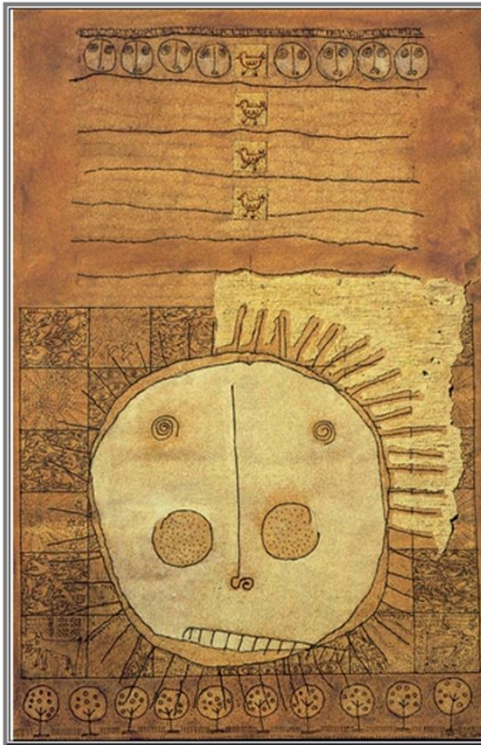
PRINCIPALITY OF MONACO

## AVNER SHER

Upcoming Exhibition: Monaco

April 25-28, 2013: Art Monaco Fair,  
Grimaldi Forum, 10 Avenue Princesse Gr ce, Monaco

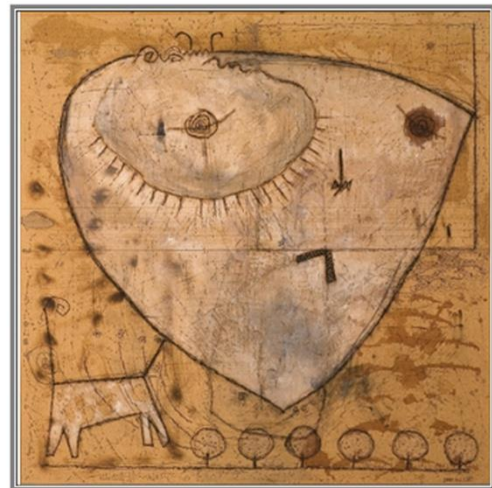
- [Watch Avner Sher talks about his art and family life](#)
- [Read about Avner Sher](#)



"In 2003, Avner Sher - one of Israel's most successful architects of public spaces - debuted a provocative series of works at the venerable Mabat Gallery in Tel-Aviv. It was just a few years past his fiftieth birthday and the constrained, conformed, geometric shapes that had marked the organized articulation of a professional career imploded, giving way to unexplored emotions that had lingered in silence for the better part of a lifetime.

Artists come to their moment of revelation in myriad ways. Chaim Soutine found his masterwork in a Paris abattoir, Dubuffet found beauty within the intuitive gestures of children and the impaired, and, for Christian Boltanski, the anonymous faces of the Holocaust are the object of posthumous honor and reverence. For Sher, the inchoate, lurid and unruly graffiti found in public lavatories goads him to create. Each scratching seemed intended as an attack on the orderliness of public space, each scrawl a leering bit of raucous laughter; childishly offensive and inured to condemnation.

As a catalyst, the public washroom is both extraordinary and banal. It also happens to be a critical component of an architect's craft. In large-scale, complex projects such as courts of law and shopping malls, the incidental space reserved for personal hygiene is where people feel sufficiently anonymous to transmit their wild protests, jokes, obscene drawings and passionate declarations of desire. Confronted with the almost immediate vandalism of these private spaces in his public works allowed Avner Sher to trade the orderliness of point, arc and line for a liberated form of expression wherein aggression, destructiveness and desire present the viewer with an emotional striptease.



Like a tattoo etched on the body, the burnt, scratched and gouged transgression of the visual plane tells multiple stories. One story belongs to the artist: Avner Sher carries the unresolved burden common to many of the Holocaust survivors' second generation. His parents survived Dachau and so he grew up with people whose markings were artless and horrific. The tattoo was a visual code from his childhood and youth, and remains an important reference for understanding the works on the artist's terms: the surface is violated and, once spent, the violating force may reveal beauty. And this story of beauty belongs to the viewer: we are present at the expression of an inner life that is full of anticipation for a better world. We can divine ancient oriental art, unmistakable architectural elements, and evidence of the internet generation. The surfaces hint at our strength, our will to create wholeness and our aspirations for a normal and full life. To quote the artist: "my works are an expression of hope in the face of chaos."