

Sgraffito in Israel

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A Brief History of Sgraffito Murals in Israel

The earliest Sgraffito murals we know of in Israel were created in 1925 on two houses near Haifa. Their design is the basic decorative technique. According to our research, Most of the *sgraffito* work in Israel was carried out by some 30 artists in the years 1952-1966. Many of the artists were German immigrants. Most of the murals were created in some 20 kibbutz communities in the north of Israel.

Sgraffito was usually applied to public buildings and served to decorate them as well as to disseminate ideas and motivate citizens to take action and develop their new country. Sgraffito murals as well as other types of wall paintings expressed the ideology, beauty and history of the new nation. This included slogans such as "Let us make the desert green", "Let us build a country based on work labor".

Murals focused on familiar and emotionally relevant biblical stories and landscapes, current Israeli landscapes, scenes from everyday life such as pioneers working at different types of labor, elements from nature or illustrations of children, sports, the arts and cultural life. There was also non-figurative geometrical ornamentation.



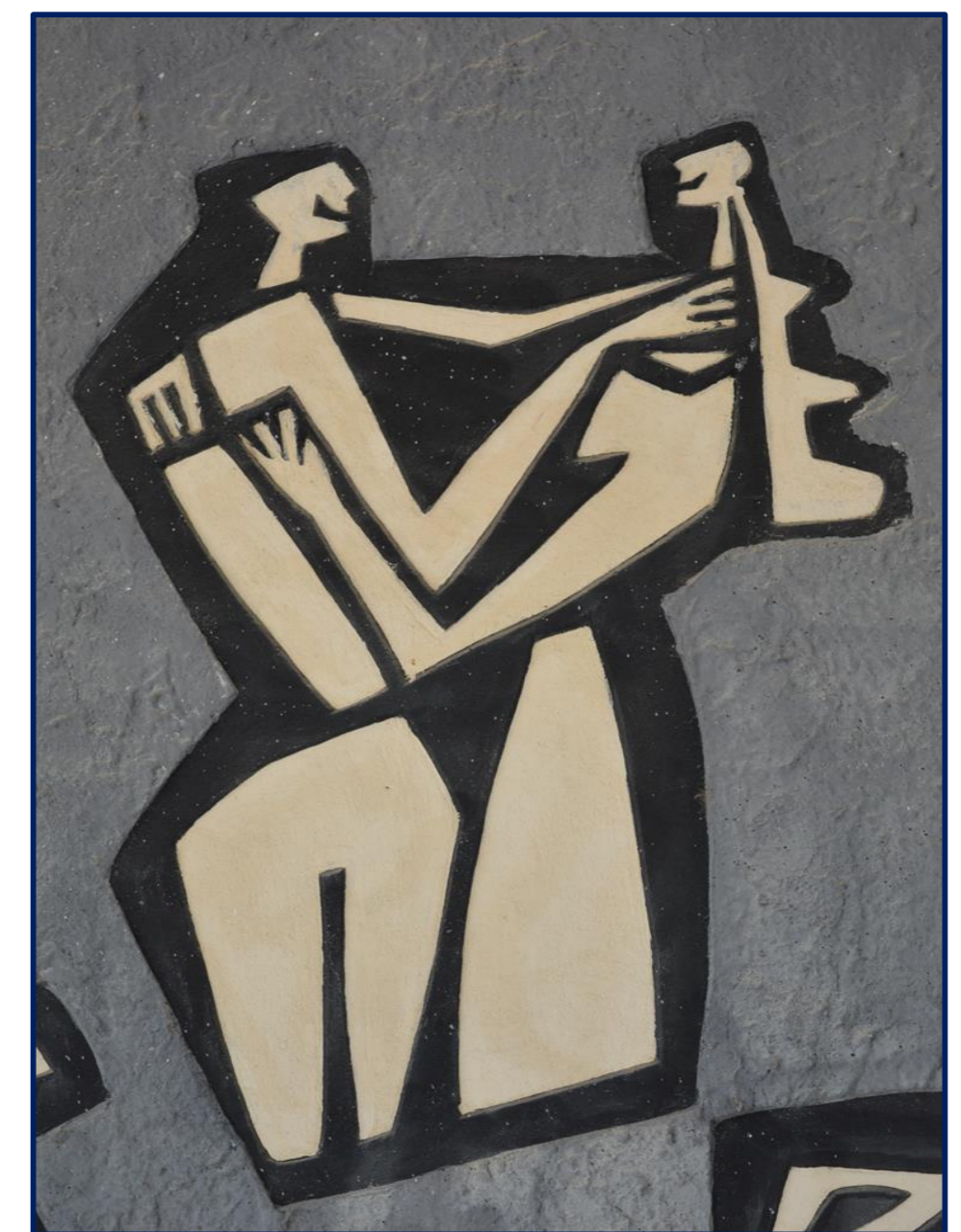
Sgraffito decoration on a house at Haifa, 1925



Pioneers working in industry, Kibbutz Eilon, Artist: Meir Steingold 1952



A residential house in Tel-Aviv. "Floral Sgraffito" Artists: Dan Livni & Ora Livni 1970



"Family life", Artist: Mordechai Gompel, 1965

Case Study – Conservation and Restoration of Sgraffito at Mishmar-Ha'Emek Kibbutz

During June 2017 a conservation team from "Tchelet" Studio was working at a kibbutz in the north part of Israel, on a conservation project of a sgraffito work of art. The sgraffito was created in 1950 by a German artist - Ruda Ralinger, who was a member of the kibbutz. Over the years the sgraffito was damaged, mainly because of negligence and lack of awareness.

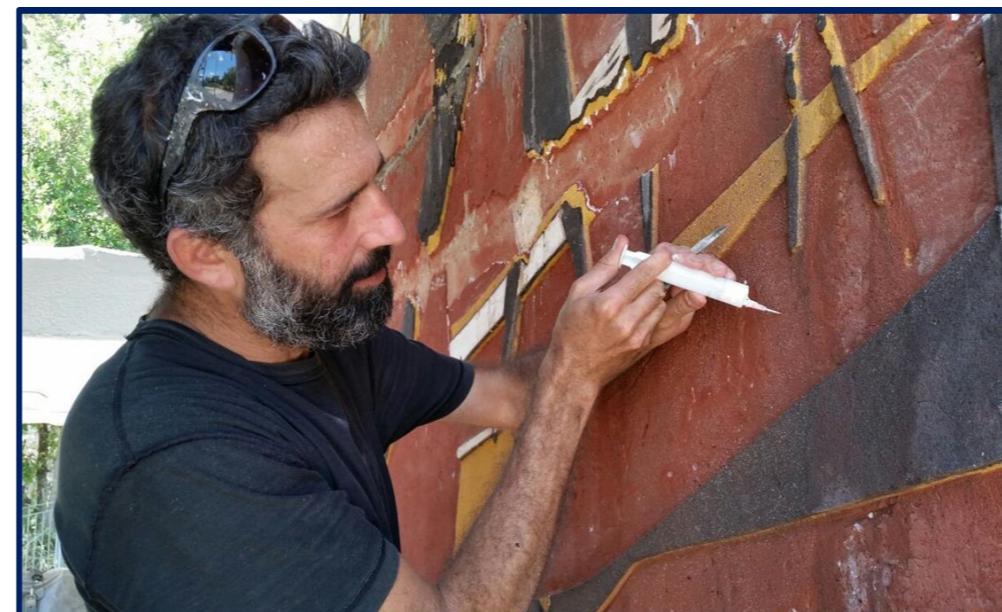
The project begun with cleaning the surface from concrete and dirt drops, than stabilizing and pasting loose parts with Ledan. The conservation and restoration part of the project included completion of parts of the damaged work, while maintaining the layers of plaster, according to the color and thickness of the original work. Restoration of missing elements was carried out by referring to old photos of the sgraffito. At the end of the project, the conservers sprayed the Sgraffito with waterglass (Sodium silicate) and finished by retouching the art to create color uniformity with Keim colors.



Cleaning the surface of the Sgraffito



Maintaining the original layers of the Sgraffito



Laden injection between loose parts of Sgraffito



Restoration of missing elements was according to old photos of the Sgraffito



A photo of the Sgraffito before and after the conservation project.