

The sculpted  
paintings of  
Rhea Carmi

**W**hen Rhea Carmi read the essay “Voices of Silence” by French writer and art critic Andre Malraux, she knew her art must reflect the millions of voices that have been silenced in never-ending cycles of inhumanity. The Israeli-born artist and wife for 47 years of a Holocaust survivor provides a deeply felt, highly charged retrospective of sculpted paintings on profound existential themes. In Carmi’s approximately 70 works, the silence of dehumanization is deafening. Her gutsy art frames broad spectrums of soulful

vignettes that she personally experienced or directly knows about.

One series looks like windows blocked by a wall, suggesting total imprisonment; in another series she moves from dehumanization to idealism. In 2004 Carmi witnessed the inspiring scene of thousands of Monarch butterflies migrating from Arizona to British Columbia. Her abstractions tell of perseverance, a trait prevalent in humans and natural creatures.

With the assistance of her husband Meir, who builds the structures, Carmi grinds stone into powder and pigment into color. With acrylic and oil paint, she uses

# Voices of Silence, Voices of Hope

stories in an abstract mode, yet her conclusions are surprisingly optimistic and hopeful.

Carmi works in a non-figurative mode, tempered by subtle suggestions of realism. She tackles subjects such as life and death, imprisonment, futility, disappointment, and such elevating themes as determination, loyalty and love. Through color, line, structure, shape, tone, and composition, she renders heart-wrenching

only the purest natural materials: sand, glue, tar, corrugated cardboard, sawdust, parts of tree bark, wood, seeds, coffee grounds, and burlap. First, she works from the back of the canvas, pushing the structure outward toward the front. At times, she rends the fabric from the front. Her strong work ethic endows each piece with a permanency guaranteeing that each painting will last far into the future, a key element of

Carmi’s Talmudic perception.

The exhibition is a testament to the sensitivity of an artist who, through visual means, brings to life the idea of humanity’s struggles and resilience. The outpouring of her talents and dedication, and more importantly, her tireless probing and questioning, blended with challenging personal experiences, is what truly shapes Carmi’s unique art.☪

## More Information

**WHAT** Voices of Silence, Voices of Hope by Rhea Carmi

**WHERE** Soka University, Founder’s Hall Art Gallery, 1 University Dr., Aliso Viejo, (949) 480-4000; soka.edu

**WHEN** September 15 through December 31

**Rhea Carmi’s work embodies themes of life and death, imprisonment and human resilience.**

