

• By BARRY DAVIS

There is plenty of color to be had over at the Jerusalem Theatre these days. As you enter by the revolving door, hang a right and mosey over to the whiteboard-backed display area, just off the foyer, and enter a world of scintillating polychromatic flora.

The multi-hued petal spread comes courtesy of Maureen Fain, a longtime Jerusalem-resident South African-born multidisciplinary artist with a rich professional and personal back-drop, and the creative means, skills and seasoned nous to impart it palpably to the public.

The current exhibition on the ground floor of the theater complex is well-named. *Reflective Meditations* says it all although, when you think about it, that could apply to just about any work of art. But, in Fain's case, it is well deserved.

There is so much going on in Fain's watercolors. The paintings are awash, if not swamped, with different shades. But, somehow, there is no sense of being assailed by all the details that, presumably, were painstakingly applied.

*Reflective Meditations* was spawned in trying circumstances. OK, again, one might venture that all creative processes involve some sort of labor pains. However, in Fain's case, the trials were both corporeal and very close to home. "These works were all painted during the last two-and-a-half years," she explains in her exhibition notes. "My darling husband of almost 50 years, Dick, (of blessed memory) was ailing. We were largely confined to our home and I was his sole caregiver."

This, of course, was all being enacted while the outside world was in complete disarray, as lockdown followed lockdown, with all kinds of Health Ministry-imposed strictures on the normal run of things.

Fain has talked about how she doesn't work too hard on her creations. She says the paintings, sculptures and ceramics she produces sort of make themselves. She adds she had a beloved partner in fruitful crime. "I used to call my husband 'the enabler,'" she chuckles. That, she notes, is a direct result of the support Dick provided, on an emotional and



FADED BOUGAINVILLEA (Maureen Fain)

fundamentally existential level. "He was financially successful, so I was free, free of the constraints of having to sell."

That reminded me of one of these proverbial email bottom liners that used to do the rounds. It ran something like: "Dance as if no one is watching you. Love as if you have never been hurt. Work as if you don't need the money." Sage advice and all well worth putting into practice, even if it is easier said than done.

There is, indeed, a feeling of lightness about *Reflective Meditations* with curator Dr. Bat-sheva Goldman-Ida, tellingly, translating the title from the Hebrew "*He'ara*" - Enlightenment. There is, indeed, something light - in the emotional and physical illuminative sense of the word - about the couple of dozen or so strong spread.

BUT ANY idea that Fain just picked up a paintbrush one fine day and set off on her creative path should be summarily scotched. The woman has paid her educational, and hands-on,

dues. Fain hails from Durban, South Africa and graduated, with honors, from Natal College of Art. She took advantage of an overseas study scholarship and spent a year at the Central School of Art, in London, learning about the ins and outs of stage design.

The political situation back in South Africa was not too healthy - apartheid was a constant ugly and violent presence across the country - and Fain duly made aliyah in 1969, settling in the German Colony, then not even a shadow of the desirable real estate stronghold it eventually became.

Ever eager to delve into related fields, Fain earned a degree in art history from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and set about carving her own niche on the Israeli arts scene. Between producing watercolors, oils, sculptures, illustrations and pottery items, she has imparted some of her accrued experience and life wisdom to younger generations, including as a staff member of the Israel Museum, to advanced students in the