



Michael Karo

Job title: Founder of Karo Art, specializing in art restoration and conservation

Age: 59

Marital status: Married to Ora, two daughters, three grandchildren, a dog and a cat

www.karo-arts.com or (04) 866-1177

my working week

By YOCHAVED MIRIAM RUSSO

Born: Czech Republic. My father visited Israel in 1958 and decided we should come to the "land of the Jews." It took three years. We arrived in 1961.

Education: University of Haifa, studying art and sociology.

Job description: At Karo Art, we restore two-dimensional artworks – original paintings, etchings, drawings, engravings, lithographs or silk screen – that have been damaged by time or environment. We also do the highest level of conservation framing to prevent loss that might result from air pollution, light, water or humidity.

How did you get into this business? I've always been involved with art. From age six, I was the kid who made the school posters and decorations. When I was in the army, I did drawings for army newspapers.

What was your first job? I was a "gofer" in a bank, cleaning and carrying. From the age of 12, I worked every vacation to buy all the materials for my art.

Years in business: The workshop opened in 1988. Before that I spent 12 years as a human resource manager. Even there, I brought in art industry projects.

How did you make the switch to art restoration? By the

time I was 38, I was established. I owned a home, didn't have any debt, so I could do what I wanted. I took my savings and opened a very small workshop. It built from there. Now I've fulfilled my dream.

What's your best moment? One of my customers, an artist, had made a series of works for an international company. We did the conservation framing, and when he sent them to New York, they were astonished by the work we'd done. "We can't find such quality of work here!" they said. I felt very good about that.

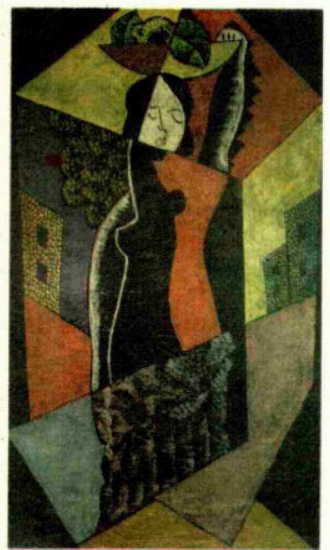
Worst? A student working on a master's degree in art had done several works that had been damaged by water. But she'd used some unusual materials and we were simply unable to restore them – the damage was just too extensive. She was very upset and I found myself taking it personally. It was very difficult.

Does all artwork need conservation framing? No. We work for the Baha'i Center, and because they have such excellent climate control – carefully regulating temperature, light and humidity – they need relatively little. But most homes aren't equipped like that, so precautions need to be taken, especially for precious things like ketubot or historic photos.

Who are your customers? My customers become my friends. They're gentle, cul-



BEFORE



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tured people who love and appreciate art and want it handled properly. I also work for institutions such as the Technion and other universities, and for Machon Shel Olam, preserving and restoring etchings and documents relating to the Jews of Europe during the Holocaust.

Is anything you do controversial? Yes. Today, about 99% of art restorers work to restore the art as close as possible to what the artist created. But some people don't want that – they want the painting to look old. So I always ask them, showing them photos so they can see what I'm talking about. If they don't agree, then I don't do the work. The owner has to be happy.

Have you been surprised when restoring something? It's happened that I've found a painting on the back of the painting I was supposed to restore. One time, it was a painting with more sentimental value than monetary worth, so I restored both. We built a frame and special stand so it doesn't hang on the wall – you can see both sides.

Who's your favorite artist? I like impressionism. Odilon Redon or Rene Magritte, a surrealist artist.

If you weren't doing this, what would you be doing? Maybe I'd be a designer – furniture or artifacts. That's creative, too.

What do you see yourself doing in five years? Exactly the same thing; I'm not interested in expanding. In fact, I've done the opposite. At one point I had seven employees and found myself managing people again. Now my assistants are independent professionals, so I can do my own work, not manage them.

How many hours a day do you work? Too many, according to my wife – about 10 to 12.

What are your fees? For consulting, NIS 750 per hour. In the workshop, NIS 300 per hour.

What's your biggest accomplishment? To establish a workshop that gives good service and has a good reputation.