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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Winchester School of Art

**Saying It Through The Maternal Body:
understanding maternal subjectivity through art practice**

By

Yonat Nitzan-Green

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

February 2010

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

WINCHESTER SCHOOL OF ART

Doctor Of Philosophy

SAYING IT THROUGH THE MATERNAL BODY:
UNDERSTANDING MATERNAL SUBJECTIVITY
THROUGH ART PRACTICE

By Yonat Nitzan-Green

In referring to psychoanalyst and theorist Julia Kristeva's claim that the maternal body has no subject, this research aimed at finding answers to the following question: in what ways might a maternal subjectivity be understood through art practice? The research focused on three themes: fragmentation, invisibility and boundaries. Initially, these themes were researched in the context of the maternal body and the abject. The engagement with the maternal body has led to expanding the inquiry to include kibbutz childhood memory, in general, and bodily memories, in particular. This has led to revealing a childhood trauma. It was established that fragmentation, invisibility and questions of boundaries are rooted in trauma. Trauma has been further explored, to be revealed as a sequence of traumas, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and intergenerational trauma, which span private and public spheres. The methodology *research in action* has been developed through the use of the 'observer-participant' position, as well as the methods of persona and performative acts. Installation has been developed as a shared space, where traumatic memory has been re-visited and audience became witness. The research contributes to new knowledge in the field of trauma, in the contexts of maternal subjectivity, kibbutz childhood and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The text provides a critical reflection for the practice, both construct this research.

*Saying It Through The Maternal Body:
understanding maternal subjectivity through art practice*

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Glossary

ima – The main research method, which is based on a persona and performative acts, invented and developed throughout the research. *ima* is derived from *invisible mother-artist* and the word *mother* in Hebrew, my language of origin. This method was used in order to deconstruct the cultural constructs *Motherhood* and *artist*, as well as *Kibbutz childhood*. Invisibility refers to a sense of disappearance that prevailed in my experience, both in the Kibbutz childhood and the maternal.

Performative act – The main research method, performed by *ima*. Performative act includes mimicry, repetition and a documentation tool such as a video camera. Performative act is distinguished from performance in the fact that it has been used as a *tool* that was incorporated in the final product, rather than a product in itself.

This method was inspired by both the ethnolinguist Richard Bauman's definition of performance and the American post-structuralist philosopher Judith Butler's essay *Performative Act and Gender Constitution*.¹

Richard Bauman articulated performance as the following:

[A]ll performance involves a consciousness of doubleness, through which the actual execution of an action is placed in mental comparison with a potential, an ideal, or a remembered original model of that action. Normally this comparison is made by an observer of the action – the theatre public, the school teacher, the scientist – but the double consciousness, not the external observation, is what is most central [...] Performance is always performance *for* someone, some audience that recognizes and validates it as performance even when, as is occasionally the case, that audience is the self.²

The performative act is based on doubleness: the *self* invented an *other*. Within the self there are two entities. This doubleness allows a comparison, as well as a conceptualisation of difference. As soon as 'I' becomes 'we' there is already an observer who is also an audience. This audience functions as a witness and thus recognises and validates actions performed by the *self*.

¹ Judith Butler, *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution*, pp. 120 – 134, in Huxley M. and Witts N. (Eds.) (1996) *The Twentieth Century Performance Reader*, 2nd Edition, London and New York: Routledge. 2005.

² Marvin Carlson, 'What Is Performance' in Michael Huxley and Noel Witts (eds.), *The Twentieth Century Performance Reader*, 2nd Edition, Routledge, London and New York, 2005, pp. 149-150. Carlson refers to the definition of performance, articulated by the ethnolinguist Richard Bauman in the *International Encyclopaedia of Communications*.

Practicum – According to Donald Schön, this term is ‘a place which simulates the conditions of practice, but which allows the practitioner space and time to appreciate the nuance and interconnections between theory, intuition and practice.’³ The practicum is a synthesis between two situations: the studio and the ‘real world’.

Triangulation – ‘The use of two or more methods of gathering information on an issue.’⁴ This term comes from geography. ‘[...] triangulation was a measuring technique used by navigators and surveyors for pinpointing a location from two or more different positions.’⁵

Kibbutz – Israeli communal settlement. The idea of kibbutz is founded on Marxist ideology of social justice and equality, opposing a political and economic system of class. The first Kibbutz, Degania (Cornflower), was built in 1909, by *Zionist Pioneers* who came from Russia and Romania:

members were to own nothing beyond personal possessions; all profits made by the kibbutz were put into a common pot and this pot provided for the needs of all the members, including their food, and the education of their children, who slept and ate separately from their parents.⁶

The words *Kibbutz Galuyot* originated from the mystic branch of Judaism of the middle ages, conveying the idea that when the Messiah will come, Jews from all over the world will return to their ancient land of Israel. The Enlightenment movement in 18th century Europe on the one hand, and Pogroms (a communal violence against a particular group. This term is used often to denote violence against Jews) and anti-Semitism on the other hand, have led to the creation of *Zionism*. *The Zionists*, at the end of the 19th century, had called for the return of Jews to the land of Israel, in order to build a home for the Jewish people. They rebelled against the religious home and bourgeois way of life, and had aspirations to build a new and better world. The words *Kibbutz*, *group* and *to gather* have the same root in Hebrew, indeed the idea of a group is central to both Judaism and Zionism. It encapsulates both the power of unity and the idea of protecting the individuals within the group.

³ Bairbre Redmond, *Reflection in Action, Developing Reflective Practice in Health and Social Services*, Ashgate Publishing Company, Aldershot, Hampshire, 2006, p. 36.

⁴ C. Gray and J. Malins, *Visualizing Research, A Guide to the Research Process in Art And Design*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2004 p. 31.

⁵ Ibid, p. 31.

⁶ Martin Gilbert, *Israel, A History*, Black Swan Transworld Publisher, London, 1999, p. 27.

Kibbutz childhood – I refer to the 1960s. In this text, there are other people's memories and reflections of their kibbutz childhood experiences from similar times, however, the research findings and analysis are based on my own experience as it reflects through my art practice. Other people's accounts reinforce my conclusions.

The Children's House and *The Parents' Room* – people in the kibbutz lived in separate houses from their children. The children lived in a Children's House and their parents lived in their small houses, called The Parents' Room.

Trauma – According to Freud, trauma is a condition which involves a risk to life. There are two characteristics: surprise or fright and a 'wound or injury'.⁷ Trauma is characterised also through dream analysis. Freud writes, '[...] dreams occurring in traumatic neuroses have the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident, a situation from which he wakes up in another fright.'⁸ The amount of excitations that reach into one's psyche is controlled by a shield which protects it from being flooded. In Freud's words,

We describe as 'traumatic' any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield. [...] Such an event as an external trauma is bound to provoke a disturbance on a large scale in the functioning of the organism's energy and to set in motion every possible defensive measure [...]. There is no longer any possibility of preventing the mental apparatus from being flooded with large amounts of stimulus.⁹

⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, translated and edited by James Strachey, The Hogarth Press and the institute of psycho-analysis, (1950), 1974, p. 6.

⁸ Ibid, p. 7.

⁹ Ibid, pp. 23-24.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Research Question and Aims

The maternal body, according to the theorist and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva, is the site where bodily materials cross the boundary of the body, for example, the event of birth. The abject is a feeling of horror and fear when these boundaries are crossed, with regard to social conventions of what is accepted and what is rejected. As children, we learn to control our bodily boundaries as this is a condition for social acceptance. However, as mothers we return to this process of being between body and society through our maternal bodies.

Elizabeth Gross' critique of Kristeva's refusal to theorise the subject of the maternal body is used as this research's starting point. According to Gross: '[i]n refusing to accord a sex to the maternal body, Kristeva seems to accept an essentialist notion of maternity as a process without a subject [...] Kristeva's resistance to the idea of an identity for woman is politically problematic.'¹⁰ Gross' argument has inspired the research question, which is: in what ways might a maternal subjectivity be understood through art practice? This question has led to an investigation of the maternal, as well as a deconstruction of kibbutz childhood identity, based on my own experience.

My art practice, which led this investigation, has been shaped by a dialogue between theory and practice. Materials such as graphite powder, PVA glue, emulsion, as well as found objects, video and projections have all been incorporated in the art form of an installation. Methods of practicing and researching have been developed; central to them are performative acts, performed by a persona called *ima* (Invisible Mother Artist). Performative act is a method informed by Judith Butler's '*Performative Acts and Gender Constitution*,'¹¹ and will be discussed more elaborately in the first chapter. The persona *ima* is informed by the writings of Clarisa Pinkola Estes' *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, 1998, and will be discussed shortly in this chapter, as well as throughout the text. Materials, methods and installation have all been theoretically articulated and are discussed throughout the text.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Gross 'The Body Of Signification' in John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin (eds.), *Abjection, Melancholia and Love, The Work of Julia Kristeva*, Routledge, London, 1990 p. 98.

¹¹ J. Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution' in Michael Huxley and Noel Witts (ed.), *The Twentieth-Century Performance Reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005 1996.

The research references a number of women artists who explored questions related to motherhood, thus, contributed to the understanding of maternal subjectivity within the field of art. The first example is Mary Kelly's *Post Partum Document* (1974-79). Kelly introduces a subject in dialogue with the maternal body through a dialogue between the artist's art practice and Jacques Lacan's 'mirror' theory. Lacan's theory explains the process of the child's entering into the symbolic order, with the acquisition of language, thus becomes a subject. Kelly's work and its contribution to this research will be further discussed in the first chapter. A second example, which will be discussed in the first chapter, is Susan Hiller's *10 months* (1977-79). By writing about her artwork and relating it to her maternal experience Hiller introduced the idea of an observer/participant position. This idea is not new; however, its association with the maternal body charges this term with a new meaning. This position informs the theoretical foundation for the method of performative act, used in this research. Finally, a third example is Bobby Baker's *Drawing on a Mother's Experience*, 1988. Baker employs parody in her performance as a device for the deconstruction of motherhood.

It was my aim, by building on these explorations, as well as on my own maternal experience and studio work, to a) find new understanding of maternal subjectivity through an engagement with theories and art practice and b) as an outcome of reading theory and studio practice expand art practice possibilities. These are closely entwined with each-other. By practice I mean art works, methods of working and researching. This practice is informed by exploration of my sexuality, the unconscious and power relationship. It is supported by various theories, mostly Kristeva's abject theory.

1.2 The Research Methodology

Research in Action methodology has been used in order to find answers to the research question and the questions which followed as the research evolved. A systematic approach has been implemented from the outset of the research. This included a daily studio practice, development of methods of inquiry, data collection, analysis and processing. Tacit knowledge has been re-visited through a variety of methods, primarily performative acts performed by a *persona* called *ima*. *ima* is informed by the writings of Clarisa Pinkola Estes' *Women Who Run With the Wolves*, 1998, which explores and analyses women's psyche, supported by a Jungian psychoanalysis. A method of writing diaries in the stream of consciousness has been deployed as a strategy to enable a way into my own unconscious (Cross reference, appendix I, p. 178). This was also a device to bridge and integrate between an essentialist approach and

a post-structuralist approach, both present in the research and will be further discussed in the first chapter.

1.2.1 Data Collection, process and analysis of research findings

Here, I would like to expand on my approach to collecting and processing data, as well as analysing research findings. I refer to two ‘objects’: the archive and the compost, both construct part of the research in action methodology.

At an early stage of the research I was aware that this is an enquiry of the ‘self’, in the field of identity. This awareness grew with the compilation of my archive (Cross reference, appendix I, p. 179). Following the *Archive* conference at the John Hansard Gallery,¹² I realised that, since becoming a mother, I have been ‘practicing’ using an archive without being fully aware of it until this point. While my archive practice before the research included an intuitive data collecting, as well as occasional re-visits, during the research it developed to regular collecting and re-visits in which old information was re-examined within the growing research context. I saw the archive as an expansion of a personal diary and included it as part of the research methodology. In that sense, it is true to say that the methodology emerged from the practice rather than selected at the beginning of the research.

The archive not only served the purpose of storing information, but was used as an opportunity to test the themes of fragmentation, questions of boundaries and invisibility, within the context of researching my maternal subjectivity. For example, data was moved from folder to folder, different themes were juxtaposed and new meanings were examined. It can be described as a *mobile* archive. Kristeva’s theory of abject, which supports the development of the three themes mentioned above, and will be discussed elaborately later on, was tested, too, through the archive. For example, with regard to information, questions were asked, such as: what kind of information is kept, and what kind is thrown away, rejected? Thus, the archive was used as storage for the data collection, as well as partial processing and analysing. Further processing and analysing took place through the methods of performative act and persona, as well as the artworks.

Similar to the archive, there was the compost, an object and a practice that began at the early stages of my becoming a mother. This, too, has been used as a means for critical reflection, as well as a source for artworks, which continued throughout the research. Like Archive, compost, too, has been considered with regard to the abject in the sense that it is an

¹² *Archive Conference*, John Hansard Gallery, University of Southampton, Southampton, 25.6.2002.

extension of my body. At the first research presentation, these two practices were described by *ima* as follows: ‘archive preserves the past while compost preserves the future’.

Conceptual knowledge has been articulated in artworks, its validity tested through exhibitions, open-studio events, as well as tutorials. The first part of the research was dedicated to exploration and data collection through experiments. This led to constructing the second part of the research as a series of Open Studio events in which ideas were tested with the help of a participatory audience. Further exhibitions and presentations contributed to the consolidation of the research. Critical reflection was practiced throughout the research in a cyclical way. This was done by writing, presentations and tutorials. Writings included reports from conferences, books and exhibitions, as well as associative writing. The latter was used as an *open way* to the unconscious, which included dreams, poetry and experiments with words. In regular re-visits of these diaries patterns were identified, links were made and a deeper self-understanding has been reached. This understanding will be elaborated throughout this text.

1.2.2 Research definition

According to Anne Douglas,¹³ practice-led research fits one of the three following definitions:

- It is a personal research which strives to explore and reveal a certain project first to the researcher herself, then to the public.
- A research as a critical practice which challenges practice itself, aims at finding new creative, experimental and critical approaches.
- A formal research which aims at developing professional practice and skills.

In considering the above definitions, the research that has been done here fits the first and perhaps the second definitions. It is a Constructivist research, which is described as follows:

[An] alternative research paradigm (to positivism, for example), which is characterized by a relativist ontology (realities exist as personal constructs), a subjectivist epistemology

¹³ Anne Douglas, Karen Scopa and Carole Gray’s ‘Research through practice: positioning the practitioner as researcher’. Working paper in Art and Design 1, Retrieved on 2.3.2009 from URL <http://www.herts.ac.uk/artdes/research/papers/wpades/vol1/douglas2.html>, ISSN 1466-4917. University of Dundee, UK, 2000.

(contextual and relative), and a hermeneutic (interpretative) and dialectic methodology. Where positivist inquiry aims to explain, constructivist inquiry aims to understand.¹⁴

Indeed, by taking on this research project, it was my intention to expand my understanding of maternal subjectivity and, in that way, to contribute to the wider field of research of maternal subjectivity. The research is informed by psychoanalysis; however, first and foremost it is a visual research. As such, it is also informed by other fields of knowledge such as literature. Gaston Bachelard's phenomenology of the poetic image has been most helpful in writing this critical reflection. According to Bachelard:

In all psychological research, we can [...] bear in mind psychoanalytical methods for determining the personality of a poet, and thus find a measure of the pressures - but above all of the oppressions - that a poet has been subjected to in the course of his life. But the poetic act itself, the sudden image, the flare-up of being in the imagination, are inaccessible to such investigations.¹⁵

Bachelard's phenomenology reinforced psychoanalysis' limitation when art is considered. The point is that what is left outside, or beyond psychoanalysis, has not been forgotten or deserted. Rather it has been, at least in part, theorised through phenomenology of the poetic image. Bachelard's theory has been used in conveying that aspect of the research that cannot be explained through psychology or psychoanalysis, in other words, imagination, inspiration and intuition. In writing diaries in the stream of consciousness my own unconscious has been explored, however, I attached a minimal psychological interpretation. Rather, I observed the juxtapositions which emerged, and applied a poetic understanding to them. Intuition was not only included, but re-affirmed. This method of investigation has been chosen because of my restricted psychological knowledge, on the one hand, and my experience as an artist who practices poetic thinking in her work, on the other hand. Artworks can certainly be critically analysed. However, psychoanalysis is not the only form of analysis.

While the research refers mostly to psychoanalysis, based on Freud's theory and the feminist theories which followed, within a post-structural context, Clarisa Pinkola Estes's

¹⁴ C. Gray, and J. Malins, *Visualizing Research, A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2004, p. 198.

¹⁵ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston Massachusetts, U.S.A., 1994, pp. xvii-xviii.

Jungian analysis of women's psyche has informed the method of a persona. Pinkola Estes writes:

In archetypal symbolism, clothing represents *persona*, the first view the public gains of us. Persona in a kind of camouflage which lets others know only what we wish them to know about us, and nothing more. But there is an older meaning to *persona*, one found in all the MezoAmerican rites, one well known to *cantadoras y cuentistas y curanderas*, healers. The persona is not simply a mask to hide behind, but rather a presence which eclipses the mundane personality. In this sense, persona or mask is a signal of rank, virtue, character, and authority. It is the outward signifier, the outward display of mastery.¹⁶

A dialogue with Pinkola Estes' ideas has been carried out through diary writings, as well as materials. The persona *ima* includes the ideas of healing and empowerment as will be shown later on.

¹⁶ Clarisa Pinkola Estes, *Women Who Run With the Wolves*, Rider, London 1998, p. 92.

2. Chapter One: The Maternal Body and Subject

At the beginning of this chapter the research question is discussed through looking at Elizabeth Gross' writings about Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject. Next, the research's location is established with regard to feminist writings and artists. Third, the methodology, methods and the researcher's position are explained. The first three case studies follow. In term of chronological progression, the first case study marked the beginning of the exploration of representation, while the third case study elaborated the exploration. The second case study is a further development of the research, as it was done two years later. I chose to put it next to the first case study to show its origin.

The three case-studies which will be discussed in this chapter are:

First Case study: *ima's Drawing – (Accumulative)*, Drawing, 2002

Second Case study: *ima's Drawing - Radio Report*, DVD (76 seconds), 2004

Third Case study: *ima's Logo (Coffee Painting)*, Performative act, 2003

2.1 Elizabeth Gross' critique of Kristeva's theory of the abject

Elizabeth Gross' 'The Body of Signification' has been the main text which helped me understand the French philosopher Julia Kristeva's theory of the maternal body and the abject. Kristeva writes:

Frozen placenta, live limb of a skeleton, monstrous graft of life on myself, a living dead. Life [...] death [...] undecidable [...] My removed marrow, which nevertheless acts as a graft, which wounds but increases me. Paradox: deprivation and benefit of childbirth. But calm finally hovers over pain, over the terror of this dried branch that comes back to life, cut off wounded, deprived of its sparkling bark.¹⁷

Julia Kristeva theorised the maternal body, according to Elizabeth Gross, as 'a space and a series of processes.'¹⁸ Kristeva's position is that 'the maternal is not to be confused with the position and role of a *subject*, for it is a process without a subject. Pregnancy [...] does not

¹⁷ Julia Kristeva, 'Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini', in *Desire in Language*, translated by Leon S. Roudiez, New York, Columbia University Press, 1980, p. 237.

¹⁸ Elizabeth Gross 'The Body of Signification' in John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin (eds.), *Abjection, Melancholia and Love, The Work of Julia Kristeva*, Routledge, London, 1990 p. 95.

involve the mother's agency or identity.'¹⁹ According to this perception, a woman's profession, personality, or network of friends does not make a difference to her pregnancy. As Gross writes: [p]regnancy occurs at the level of the organism, not the subject.'²⁰ Gross explains:

Inhabited neither by one being nor by two, pregnancy is more a filter or cipher than an act or decision. To presume pregnancy is the act of a subject, [Kristeva] claims, is to posit a master (the fantasy of the omnipotent phallic mother) which may produce in the subject a psychotic identification.²¹

Pregnancy is a situation of being in between one or two beings. As such, it is like the abject. Kristeva developed her theory of the abject in *Powers of Horror* (1982), building on Freud's 'position in *Totem and Taboo* and *Civilization and its Discontents*, where he claims that civilization is founded on the sacrifice or expulsion of pre-oedipal polymorphous pleasures and "impure" incestual attachments to parental love objects.'²² The distancing of one's bodily materials, which are connected to the drives, from one's self is the condition for social acceptance. The social is founded on Freud's Oedipus model and Lacan's elaboration of this model and language. The child's entering into society through the acquisition of language, is conditioned on his or her ability to control his or her body. According to Gross:

[w]hat is new about Kristeva's position is her claim that what must be expelled from the subject's corporeal functioning can never be fully obliterated but hovers at the border of the subject's identity, threatening apparent unities and stabilities with disruption and possible dissolution.²³

Kristeva writes:

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 95.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 95.

²¹ Ibid, p. 95.

²² Ibid, p. 86.

²² Ibid, p. 95.

²³ Ibid, p. 87.

It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.²⁴

Here I ask, what is a subject? The French post structural psychoanalyst and theorist Jacques Lacan claimed that ‘neither the unconscious nor sexuality can in any degree be pre-given facts, they are constructions; that is, they are objects with histories and the human subject itself is only formed within these histories.’²⁵ This idea is supported by the phenomenological philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty who claims that ‘[m]an is a historical idea and not a natural species.’²⁶ Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* claims that “‘woman’”, and by extension, any gender, is an historical situation rather than a natural fact.’²⁷ The unconscious and sexuality are culturally and historically constructed objects and the human subject is formed within these historic objects. The term *sexuality* in this research is understood in a psychoanalytical perspective to mean not the biological sex organs, or drive. In Juliet Mitchell’s words:

[Sexuality] can never be equated with genitality nor is it the simple expression of a biological drive. It is always psycho-sexuality, a system of conscious and unconscious human fantasies involving a range of excitations and activities that produce pleasure beyond the satisfaction of any basic physiological need.²⁸

The term *unconscious* comes from Freud’s psychoanalytic theory. It is a psychic system that contains repressed events with no direct access to consciousness. However, there are manifestations of these repressed events in dreams or speech slips which psychoanalysis can interpret. The human subject, according to Lacan, is formed through its relationship with language.

²⁴ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror, An Essay on Abjection*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1982, p. 4.

²⁵ Juliet Mitchell (ed.), *Jacques Lacan, Feminine Sexuality*, Published by George J. McLeod Limited, Toronto, Canada, 1982 p. 4.

²⁶ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Routledge, London and New York, 2006, p. 198.

²⁷ Judith Butler, ‘Performative Acts and Gender Constitution’ in Huxley M. and Witts N. (Eds.) (1996) *The Twentieth Century Performance Reader*, 2nd Edition, London and New York: Routledge. 2005, pp. 121-122.

²⁸ Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (eds.), *Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne Feminine Sexuality*, 1982, p. 5.

The human animal is born into language and it is within the terms of language that the human subject is constructed. Language does not arise from within the individual, it is always out there in the world outside [...] Language always “belongs” to another person. The human subject is created from a general law that comes to it from outside itself and through the speech of other people, though this speech in its turn must relate to the general law.²⁹

Kristeva’s position is based on Lacan’s conception of the subject. Kristeva critiqued Lacan’s statement that ‘There is no such thing as Woman’ as a ‘scandalous sentence’,³⁰ explaining it in the light of patriarchal culture as follows: ‘Indeed, she does *not* exist with a capital ‘W’, possessor of some mythical unity – a supreme power.’³¹ Here, Kristeva referred to the stereotypes with which western culture constructed women. Kristeva pointed out the Hegelian distinction ‘between female right (familial and religious) and male law (civil and political),’ emphasising that ‘female right is designated, for the moment, by a blank.’³²

Elizabeth Gross critiqued Kristeva’s theory of the abject and the maternal body, arguing that by not theorising the person who goes through these socio-bodily experiences, in other words, the subject of these experiences, the perception of *woman* will continue to be essentialist, based on sexual, biological difference. Gross writes:

[Kristeva] is content to attribute an irreducibly biological basis to pregnancy while refusing an identity or agency to the pregnant woman. While it may be accepted that pregnancy is not the act of an agent but a series of (largely biological) processes the woman is subjected to, she also refuses to designate an agency to acts of nurturance and socialization undertaken by most mothers. In refusing to accord a sex to the maternal body, Kristeva seems to accept an essentialist notion of maternity as a process without a subject: [...] If the maternal is the space and time, in Freud’s words [...], if it is teleologically directed towards the reproduction of the species, Kristeva’s resistance to the idea of an identity for woman is politically problematic. [...] in Kristeva’s work, women have no special link to the maternal body.³³

²⁹ Ibid, p. 5.

³⁰ Julia Kristeva, ‘Women’s Time’ in Toril Moi (ed.), *The Kristeva Reader*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986, p. 205.

³¹ Ibid, p. 205.

³² Ibid, p. 205.

³³ Elizabeth Gross ‘The Body of Signification’ in John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin (eds.), *Abjection, Melancholia and Love, The Work of Julia Kristeva*, Routledge, London, 1990 p. 98.

As a mother and an artist I asked: in what ways might maternal subjectivity be understood through art practice? I propose to study my art practice as a ‘link to the maternal body’.³⁴

This proposition is supported by Gross, who writes:

[...] anti-social elements [...] recur and threaten the subject not only in those events Freud described as the “return of the repressed” – that is, in psychical symptoms – they are also a necessary accompaniment of sublimated and socially validated activities, such as the production of art [...].³⁵

2.2 Three waves of feminism

The first wave of feminists, the suffragists, strove to be equal with men in social duties and rights. According to Kristeva: ‘[i]n the beginnings, the women’s movement, as the struggle of suffragists and of existential feminists, aspired to gain a place in linear time as the time of project and history.’³⁶ What supported their action was, in Kristeva’s words, ‘the *logic of identification* with certain values: not with the ideological [...] but, rather, with the logical and ontological values of a rationality dominant in the nation-state.’³⁷ This logic led to achievements such as ‘abortion, contraception, equal pay, professional recognition,’³⁸ however it also ‘globalizes the problems of women of different milieux, ages, civilizations or simply of varying psychic structures, under the label “Universal Woman”.’³⁹ Kristeva claims that this approach allows us to think of ‘generations of women’⁴⁰ only as ‘a succession, as a progression in the accomplishment of the initial programme mapped out by its founders.’⁴¹ The second generation of feminist emerged, according to Kristeva, ‘after May 1968.’⁴² These feminists ‘had an aesthetic or psychoanalytical experience.’⁴³ Kristeva writes:

³⁴ Ibid, p. 98.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 87.

³⁶ Julia Kristeva, ‘Women’s Time’ in Toril Moi (ed.), *The Kristeva Reader*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986, p. 193.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 194.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 194.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 194.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 194.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 194.

⁴² Ibid, p. 194.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 194.

[E]ssentially interested in the specificity of female psychology and its symbolic realizations, these women seek to give a language to the intra-subjective and corporeal experiences left mute by culture in the past. Either as artists or writers, they have undertaken a veritable exploration of the *dynamic of signs* [...].⁴⁴

While the first feminist wave engaged with the linear time of history, the second wave had engaged with ‘the archaic (mythical) memory and, on the other hand, the cyclical or monumental temporality of marginal movements.’⁴⁵ The logic which supports the second wave feminists is that of separation. Kristeva writes: ‘[...] by demanding recognition of an irreducible identity, without equal in the opposite sex and, as such, exploded, plural, fluid, in a certain way non-identical, this feminism situates itself outside the linear time of identities.’⁴⁶ Kristeva recognises a new generation of feminists emerging in Europe, whose aim is to be included in the linear historic time and, at the same time, to refuse, in Kristeva’s words, the ‘subjective limitations imposed by this history’s time on an experiment carried out in the name of the irreducible difference.’⁴⁷ There is a progress in feminists’ agenda such as political, economic and professional equality; however, Kristeva points out that ‘sexual equality [...] remains stricken by taboo in Marxian ethics as well as for reasons of state.’⁴⁸ According to Kristeva:

The struggle is no longer concerned with the quest for equality but, rather, with difference and specificity. It is precisely at this point that the new generation encounters what might be called the symbolic question. Sexual difference – which is at once biological, physiological and relative to reproduction – is translated by and translates a difference in the relationship of subjects to the symbolic contract which is the social contract: a difference, then, in the relationship to power, language and meaning. The sharpest and most subtle point of feminist subversion brought about by the new generation will henceforth be situated on the terrain of the inseparable conjunction of the sexual and the symbolic, in order to try to discover, first, the specificity of the female, and then, in the end, that of each individual woman.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 194.

⁴⁵ Ibid, pp. 194-5

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 194.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 195.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 196.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 196.

The third wave of feminists needs to attend to the question of sexual difference and its relation to language – the symbolic contract – and meaning. It needs to conceive difference, not from a point of exclusion but engagement.

Here, I ask, what difference? The difference between the sexes has been theorised by Freud in connection with meaning. Kristeva explains:

[...] castration is [...] the imaginary construction of a radical operation which constitutes the symbolic field and all beings inscribed therein. This operation constitutes signs and syntax; that is, language, as a *separation* from a presumed state of nature, of pleasure fused with nature so that the introduction of an articulated network of differences, which refers to objects henceforth and only in this way separated from a subject, may constitute *meaning*⁵⁰.

What lies under language is a psychological process of separation of the child from his or her mother. This separation is imagined as a shift from a state of plenitude to a state of lack. This shift triggers a desire to be fulfilled. Difference has been theorised only with regard to the sexual, biological aspect. Within this conception the penis, according to Kristeva, became ‘the major referent in this operation of separation, gives full meaning to the *lack* or to the *desire*, which constitutes the subject during his or her insertion into the order of language.’⁵¹ The articulation of female’s specificity and of each individual woman may be achieved when the conception of difference will expand, when the penis (phallus) will not be difference’s and meaning’s only main signifier. The new generation of feminists would, according to Kristeva, address the question ‘What does this desire for motherhood correspond to?’⁵² Kristeva writes:

Freud’s affirmation – that the desire for a child is the desire for a penis and, in this sense, a substitute for phallic and symbolic dominion – can be only partially accepted, what modern women have to say about this experience should none the less be listened to attentively.⁵³

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 198.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 198.

⁵² Ibid, p. 206.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 206.

I accept, on the one hand, Lacan's and Kristeva's position that the human subject is constructed through the histories of sexuality and the unconscious. As such, there can be no pre-given subject. On the other hand, I agree with Gross' critique regarding the necessity to theorise the subject of the maternal body. Building on Kristeva's theory of the maternal body and her analysis of feminism, in particular the third wave feminism, my aims have been to understand maternal subjectivity located in experience, in which my own unconscious and sexuality became subjects for investigation as cultural, historical constructs; to develop artistic practice as a cultural *tool* for investigation and deconstruction. By subjectivity, I refer to the following definition: 'The quality or character of being subjective [...] the ability or tendency to present or view facts in the light of personal or individual feelings or opinions.'⁵⁴ Indeed, rather than aiming at articulating a person or subject, I aimed at understanding and articulating a quality which is central in my maternal and art practice, in a synthesis with Kristeva's theory of the maternal body and the abject.

2.3 The Research Methodology: Research in Action

The methodology Research in Action was used. Donald Schön termed knowing-in-action, reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action and practicum. 'Knowing-in-action' is 'the implicit knowledge that underpins and accompanies action, the characteristic mode of ordinary practical knowledge.'⁵⁵ According to Schön:

When [...] tacit knowledge produces surprising results [...] an opportunity occurs for the practitioner to reflect on action that has been [...] automatic and spontaneous. This reflection may occur within the action itself, leading to 'reflection-in-action' or subsequent to the action, in 'reflection-on-action.'⁵⁶

This methodology includes Schön's conception of the practicum, as a place which enables a synthesis between theory and practice. This methodology has been put into practice through the methods of persona and performative act.

⁵⁴ Lesley Brown (ed.), *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993, p. 3119.

⁵⁵ Bairbre Redmond, *Reflection in Action, Developing Reflective Practice in Health and Social Services*, Ashgate Publishing Company, Aldershot, Hampshire, 2006, p. 36.

⁵⁶ Donald Schön in Bairbre Redmond, *Reflection in Action, Developing Reflective Practice in Health and Social Services*, 2006, p. 36.

2.3.1 Research in action and the methods of persona and performative act

Referring to Schön's definition of practicum, *ima* asks: 'what is this place? Is it located in a building, as a studio or laboratory? Or is it a group of locations?' *ima*'s practicum is in plural, not confined to one place but in fact open to many places, spaces and times.

Data collection, as well as processing was done both at the studio and in the real world:

home, friends' houses, Tesco car-park, during visits to Israel, family holidays at various other places, exhibitions etc, in short, at every place or time that the everyday provides.

In Schön's model of 'practicum' there is collaboration between 'a skilled coach' and a practitioner. Collaboration is part of the practice; however, the distinction between 'a skilled coach' and a practitioner is less clear. I try to understand these terms through my practice and my experiences. The practicum, a skilled coach and collaboration will be further discussed in chapter four.

Tacit knowledge is being reflected upon through *ima*, a method of resistance. For example, breastfeeding played a major role at the beginning of my maternal experience. I have insisted on feeding my children where and when they needed to be fed. Thus, I found myself performing this private and intimate act in places such as airports, banks, galleries, shopping centres, restaurants, etc. By turning an everyday action into a performative act, a method which will be explained shortly, I revealed both to myself and to the 'audience' the social convention that expects women to hide away from public visibility while breastfeeding, and thus resisted this social expectation. The performative act of breastfeeding in public places revealed to me a collective tacit knowledge, otherwise hidden. As soon as one assumes this position, physically, one is being 'framed' culturally, within a stereotypical gaze. Such a gaze positions all breastfeeding women under one unifying category, as 'mothers'. This gaze is blind to difference, thus erases subjectivity. The positioning of breastfeeding women under one category leads to social expectations. By thinking about breastfeeding as a performative act I removed myself, in my own awareness, from this 'frame'. Instead, I perceived myself as a performer, imitating a 'mother', a social construct which I found intriguing, at the time.

The method of a persona has led me to develop a method of performative acts. Judith Butler's 'Performative acts and Gender Constitution'⁵⁷ informs this method. Butler analyses

⁵⁷ J. Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution' in Michael Huxley and Noel Witts (ed.), *The Twentieth-Century Performance Reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005, pp. 120 - 134.

the process in which gender identity is being constructed through performative acts. Although the research does not engage in the question of constructing gender identity, but in understanding maternal subjectivity, it raises similar questions regarding the relationship between the private and the public and how an identity or a sense of self is being constructed. Butler refers mostly to the phenomenological theory of act, which ‘seeks to explain the mundane way in which social agents *constitute* social reality through language, gesture, and all manner of symbolic social sign.’⁵⁸ Butler writes about everyday actions, which are ‘bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds,’⁵⁹ and has the ability to ‘constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.’⁶⁰ The acts she considers are stylized and repetitive, in Butlers’ words, ‘[...] it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*.’⁶¹

With regard to repetition, Butler refers to the anthropologist, Victor Turner, who researched ‘ritual social drama’.⁶² Turner suggests that

social action requires a performance which is *repeated*. This repetition is at once a re-enactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation.⁶³

According to Butler, ‘The formulation of the body as a mode of dramatizing or enacting possibilities offers a way to understand how a cultural convention is embodied and enacted.’⁶⁴ This research aims at revealing cultural conventions and the way the identity of the mother is constructed through them. The idea of embodiment has led me to consider the body as a tool of investigation. If the maternal body embodies cultural conventions, than it can be turned into a tool that investigates itself and the conventions which are imposed on this body.

Motherhood can be understood as a social action in which already established meanings are re-enacted and re-experienced. I take, for example, the act of dish washing

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 120.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 120.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 120.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 120.

⁶² Ibid, p. 127.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 127.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 126.

(Cross reference, appendix I, p. 180). By simultaneously doing this act and reflecting on it, a cultural convention has been revealed. On this occasion, I became aware that I occupy two roles at the same time: the nurse (me-ta-pe-let) who looked after the children at the kibbutz (during my childhood) and the mother (at present). A documenting tool, such as a pen and paper, was added to the body as an extension of this investigating tool. In employing performative acts, *ima* enables both *knowing-in-action* and a *reflection-in-action*. The method of performative act enables also a reflection *on* action, which takes place subsequent to the action. In *Diary of washing dishes*, the reflection-on-action has led to a second action in which some pages of the diary were translated to Arabic. This has ‘opened’ a space to consider the role of the mother as a social agent.

2.3.2 The position of observer/participant

Cells fuse, split, and proliferate; volumes grow, tissues stretch, and body fluids change rhythm, speeding up or slowing down. Within the body [...] there is an other. And no one is present, within that simultaneously dual and alien space, to signify what is going on. ‘It happens, but I’m not there’. ‘I cannot realize it, but it goes on’.⁶⁵

For Kristeva the subject, in the experience of pregnancy, had been positioned as an *outsider of its own body*. In terms of psychoanalysis, Kristeva writes:

Pregnancy seems to be experienced as the radical ordeal of the splitting of the subject: redoubling up of the body, separation and coexistence of the self and of an other, of nature and consciousness, of physiology and speech. This fundamental challenge to identity is then accompanied by a fantasy of totality – narcissistic completeness – a sort of instituted, socialized, natural psychosis.⁶⁶

If the subject is outside of her own body it is because, in the experience of pregnancy, there seems to be a split between nature and consciousness, physiology and speech, ‘separation and coexistence of the self and of an other’.⁶⁷ In other words, a psychosis, a challenge to the unity

⁶⁵ Kristeva, ‘Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini’ in *Desire in Language*, 1980, p. 237.

⁶⁶ Julia Kristeva, ‘Women’s Time’ in Toril Moi (ed.), *The Kristeva Reader*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986, p. 206.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 206.

of the subject's sense of identity. A different account of pregnancy, by artist Susan Hiller, suggests a position of observer/participant. Referring to her work *10 Month* (1977 – 1979) (Fig. 1: Susan Hiller, *10 Months*, Installation, 1977-79. Cross reference appendix III, p. 198) Susan Hiller wrote:

In the first half, the texts that I chose to use were subsidiary to the physical. I was dwelling on the physical changes, [...]. But in the second half of my pregnancy I was quite tormented and perplexed by a number of things, for example, by observing myself, being a participant and an observer, [...] and I began theorizing, reading a lot, trying to understand what I was going through.⁶⁸

This is not a psychoanalytical position. It may be informed by anthropology, Hiller's profession prior to becoming an artist. It is this position of observer/participant, *outside* and *inside* put together, which inspired me and thus forms an important part of the methodology. It has to be absolutely clear that an un-involved observer position is not possible in the research. The research looks at the situation and dynamic of occupying both positions, with the aim of developing *tools* with which to understand and utilize this position. One such a tool was writing as a performative act in the diaries *5 minute writing in the stream of consciousness*. This technique enables an engagement with 'material', which comes from within, such as dreams. Descriptive writing has been used in order to document an observed action, as well as to analyse ideas. Writing created a space and a place, in which a meeting between outside and inside positions occurred. One becomes one's own observer as one documents one's self.

The French philosopher, Henry Lefebvre, theorised the *everyday*. Lefebvre made it clear that to examine the *everyday*, to position it as a topic for investigation, is already to critique it and therefore to work toward change. This is particularly useful for feminist theoreticians as it is women and mothers who generally find themselves trapped in the daily routine of domestic work and child care activities in the home. As Kristin Ross pointed out:

⁶⁸ Susan Hiller, 'Dedicated to The Unknown Artist, an interview with Rozsika Parker, pp. 26 – 30. From: Barbara Einzig (ed.), *Thinking About Art, Conversations with Susan Hiller*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2000, p. 50.

Certainly the everyday consisted of that which is taken for granted: the sequence of regular, unvarying repetition. But in that very triviality and baseness lay its seriousness, in the poverty and tedium lay the potential for creative energy.⁶⁹

From a position of *observer/participant*, *ima* knows that every time an action is being acted there is a surprise element. As *ima*'s position is located in the *everyday*, repetition is imbedded in *ima*'s aesthetic language. The performative act infiltrates and filters the continuous, repetitive *everyday*; it enables the re-finding of the creative potential, thus refines the *everyday*. According to Schön, 'This awareness and development is far more than trial and error behaviour and, [...] within the practice, becomes a unique and skilled learning process.'⁷⁰

In discussing the phenomenology of the poetic image, the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard writes:

Knowing must therefore be accompanied by an equal capacity to forget knowing. Non-knowing is not a form of ignorance but a difficult transcendence of knowledge. [...] In poetry, non-knowing is a primal condition; [...] the entire life of the image is in its dazzling splendour, in the fact that an image is a transcending of all the premises of sensibility.⁷¹

This quote contributes to an understanding of the position of observer/participant. Like poetry, in art not knowing is a primary condition for a birth of a work. Within the research these two forces, the demand to know and the demand to forget knowing, are of equal importance. When I participate with materials and creative process, I do not always know in advance what the next stage will be. This participation is the inside position. In a performative act, there is a reflection-in-action, in other words, a co-existence of knowing and not knowing. In the process of participation, in my opinion, we exercise both our ability to know and to forget knowing.

⁶⁹ Kristin Ross 'French Quotidian' in Lynn Gumpert (ed.), *The Art of the Everyday – The Quotidian in Postwar French Culture*, NYU P/Grey Art Gallery Study Center, New York 1997, p. 20.

⁷⁰ Bairbre Redmond, *Reflection in Action, Developing Reflective Practice in Health and Social Services*, Ashgate Publishing Company, Aldershot, Hampshire, 2006, p. 37.

⁷¹ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston Massachusetts, U.S.A., 1994, pp. xxxii- xxxiii.

2.4 Feminist artists - background

To begin this critical reflection of the research, it is necessary to discuss briefly three important works; two of which were done during the 1970s and one that was done in 1988. These are Judy Chicago's installation *The Dinner Party* (1979) (Fig. 2: Judy Chicago, Emily Dickinson Plate (Study for *The Dinner Party*) 1977 – 1978. Cross reference appendix III, p. 199; Fig 3: Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, Installation, 1979. Cross reference appendix III, p. 200), Mary Kelly's *Post Partum Document* (1974 - 1979) (Fig. 4: Mary Kelly, *Post Partum Document*, Installation, 1974 – 1979. Cross reference appendix III, p. 201) and Bobby Baker's performance *Drawing on a Mother's Experience* (1988) (Fig. 5: Bobby Baker, *Drawing on a Mother's Experiences*, Performance, 1988. Cross reference appendix III, p. 202). *The Dinner Party* was a large scale collaborative project spread over five years and involving more than four hundred people. It comprised of a triangular table, handmade tiles, needlepoint runners and china painted porcelain plates, each dedicated to a famous woman in Western history. Imagery was based on women's sexual organ, the vagina. Chicago has theorised women's experience, looking at the connection between women's biology and culture. She concluded that a woman artist, by asserting her sexuality as a hallmark of her iconography, 'establishes a vehicle by which to state the truth and beauty of her identity.'⁷²

Reflecting on Chicago's installation Amelia Jones writes, 'Using these forms and materials was a way [...] of reclaiming them and valuing the femininity with which they were associated.'⁷³ The contribution of Chicago's installation to this research lies in its assertion of the creativity of women both as life givers and as potential producers of new cultural forms of expression; new in the sense that women's bodily experience has been given a *voice* as it has been articulated by a female artist. However, a literal representation of women's sexuality is not where the interest of the research lies. Central to the critique of Chicago's *The Dinner Party* was that it unified and universalised women's experiences, based on biology which is a fixed, pre-determined fact. In doing so, Chicago was accused of excluding other women's experiences, such as lesbians or women of African origin and their histories. As such, it was labelled as 'essentialist'. Art historian, Amelia Jones, referred to this term as '[...] the unifying presentation of women's experience as "essential" or biologically determined.'⁷⁴

⁷² Amelia Jones (ed.), *Sexual Politics, Judy Chicago's Dinner Party in Feminist Art History*, University of California Press, 1996, p. 96.

⁷³ Ibid, p. 99.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 24.

However, according to art historian Rosemary Betterton, feminists from various cultural fields have recognised that a closer investigation of female bodies leads not to determinism, but to diversity in which ‘particular lives are lived in particular bodies’.⁷⁵ It is here that *a door* has opened to this research. A close participation with, and observation of, my maternal experience has led to the investigation and a deconstruction of a particular kibbutz childhood experience and traumatic memories.

Mary Kelly’s *Post Partum Document* has been informed by Post-structuralism. Flavia Rando wrote:

Poststructural theory posits sexual difference as an unstable and vulnerable concept – constructed using certain metaphors of the body – and liable to reconstruction, problematizing the notion of fixed identity and the discrete categories: ‘man’ and ‘woman’.⁷⁶

While some artworks produced during the 1970s were categorised as ‘essentialist’, a feminist post-structural approach became dominant during the 1980s. Poststructuralist theorists such as Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Julia Kristeva, employ psychoanalysis as a ‘tool’ to engage with the complexity of the relationship between the subject, body, power and society.

Mary Kelly’s *Post Partum Document* was a long term project in which the artist produced documentations of the evolving relationship between mother and child, based on the artist’s own life experience, as well as psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s model of socialisation. In line with Griselda Pollock’s call to avoid literal representations of the female body, Kelly employed a strategy of distancing by presenting fragments, rather than a whole picture, conveying the idea that motherhood is a ‘set of socially constructed relationships’.⁷⁷ In implementing a post-structural approach, Kelly aimed to emphasise the point that women are not naturally nurturers, as they are portrayed in the tradition of western culture. Kelly used scientific charts, numbers, documentation of conversations, objects related to her environment and texts from her diary.

⁷⁵ Rosemary Betterton, *An Intimate Distance, Women, Artists and The Body*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996, p. 15.

⁷⁶ Flavia Rando ‘The Essential Representation of Woman’ in *Art Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 2, Summer 1991, p. 48.

⁷⁷ Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock (eds.), *Framing Feminism, Art and the Women’s Movement 1970-1985*, Pandora Press, London and New York, 1987, p. 157.

Reflecting on Kelly's installation, art critic Laura Mulvey wrote at the time it was exhibited, 'the complexity of the language [...] and the many different ideas presented simultaneously did place a great burden on the spectator.'⁷⁸ While I agree with this criticism, at the same time it is here that Kelly's installation contributes to the research; in opening the dialogue between art practice and theory in the context of maternal subjectivity. Laura Mulvey wrote at the time when *Post Partum Document* had been exhibited for the first time:

Traditionally, the ability to produce children and the emotional relationship that ensues has been held up as the reason for women's lack of creativity. Now, with the women's movement, it is beginning to be possible to bring motherhood, with all the deeply traumatic emotion and unrecognised elements involved, into the kind of examination it desperately needs. Mary Kelly's exhibition [...] is a crucial contribution [...]. As an artist she forces into public view the unacceptable combination of roles mother/artist – a slap in the face for old guard concepts of the artist as freewheeling genius; as a feminist she focuses on the contradictory emotions that necessarily come with motherhood, which have been almost taboo as a subject for art in male dominated culture.⁷⁹

This research aims to expand on these traumatic, contradictory, unrecognised emotions in motherhood by focusing on fragmentation, boundary and invisibility as central themes in my own maternal experience. Kelly referred to Freud's terms of castration and fetishism. Kelly writes:

According to Freud, castration anxiety for the man is often expressed in fantasy as the loss of arms, legs, hair, teeth, eyes, or the penis itself [...] castration fears for the woman [...] takes the form of losing her loved objects, especially her children; the child is going to grow up, leave her [...]. In order to delay, disavow, that separation [...] the woman tends to fetishize the child: by dressing him up, by continuing to feed him no matter how old he gets.⁸⁰

Kelly suggests considering

⁷⁸ Laura Mulvey ' "Post Partum Document" by Mary Kelly' in Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock (eds.), *Framing Feminism, Art and the Women's Movement 1970 – 1985*, 1987, p. 203.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 203.

⁸⁰ Lucy Lippard, 'Construction of sexual difference' (1982) in Mary Kelly, *Post-Partum Document*, University of California Press, California 1999, p. xx.

The mother's memorabilia - the way she save things [...]. My work proceeds from this site; instead of first shoes, first words set out in type, stained liners, hand imprints [...] all these are intended to be seen as transitional objects; not in Winnicott's sense of surrogates but rather in Lacan's term as emblems of desire. In one way, I have attempted to displace the potential fetishization of the child onto the work of art; but I have also tried to make it explicit in a way which would question the fetishistic nature of representation itself.⁸¹

Kelly's use of objects and text as substitute for the female body contributes towards further investigating mother/artist in wider contexts. In reflecting on Kelly's *Post Partum Document*, the following question arises: is it possible that the use of fragments points towards an implicit maternal trauma in Kelly's case? This question will not be answered in this text; however, I suggest it in order to highlight my intention to build on Kelly's work. Kelly stated that she 'attempted to displace the potential fetishization of the child onto the work of art,'⁸² in other words, to process that feeling of potential loss, or separation from her child, through the art work. I would like to widen the understanding of a process of loss in the context of the maternal through my own practice.

Kelly aimed to 'question the fetishistic nature of representation itself.'⁸³ I read it as an attempt to expand the understanding of what lies beneath representation as a compensation for loss. Kelly used a language of fragments strategically, in my opinion, in order to create a distancing, a strategy to undermine the culturally perceived identification of the mother with her child, as if they are one whole unit, as well as an identification of the audience with the mother, which will reinforce this cultural false perception. This research suggests that fragmentation is rooted in traumatic experience. At the same time, it also suggests that the use of fragments and fragmentation in artistic practice can provide richness and a potential for healing and transformation, as it opens possibilities of expression, viewed from a wider cultural, historical context.

The position used in this research is a synthesis between essentialism, which is, turning inwardly to explore one's body, the body which experienced pregnancy, birth and raising children. At the same time a post-structural approach has been used, in which the body is considered not only in the biological context, but culturally, historically and

⁸¹ Ibid, p. xx.

⁸² Ibid, p. xx.

⁸³ Ibid, p. xx.

ethnically. In her discussion of Judy Chicago's work, Jones identified a 'real need to open up the question of "female experience"'.⁸⁴ This research builds on Jones' understanding.

Bobby Baker is a performance artist who addresses the experience of motherhood through her work. In *Drawing on a Mother's Experience*, Baker used food such as milk, fish pie and Guinness, a plastic sheet and her own body to create a live drawing. Her actions were accompanied by an explanative commentary, such as placing 'a large sheet of plastic, "to keep the floor clean"'.⁸⁵ During the performance she told her audience about the birth of her child and other related events. In her performance, Baker breaks taboos in a way that seems, on first impressions, to be comical. At a certain stage, she lies on the plastic sheet, which is covered with food, then gets up and dances. Baker's performance is described as follows:

Accompanied by Nina Simone's Baby Love, she does an awkward dance, while also clearing up the plastic sheet and stuffing it into her plastic bags along with all the other things [...]. The ironic self-presentation, the deliberate "messiness" of the piece, and the comedy generated by her seemingly spontaneous commentary all contribute to a carefully crafted exploration of Baker's experience of motherhood.⁸⁶

Baker's exploration of motherhood is done through parody, as she imitates herself as a mother. She uses a persona in her performances, a technique which enables reflection on motherhood, not only for the artist but for the audience.

Deirdre Heddon writes:

In each performance there is [...] a persona, and it is this persona that Bobby Baker the performer, performs. In the construction of her performed 'self', Baker self consciously observes herself, and with the security of some distance is able, in a theatrically 'knowing' way, to make fun of what she sees. Her very process, then, admits to the gap between who she is outside the performance, and who she plays: "I step on stage, I start performing, I become something else".⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Amelia Jones (ed.), *Sexual Politics, Judy Chicago's Dinner Party in Feminist Art History*, University of California Press, 1996, p. 98.

⁸⁵ http://ahds.ac.uk/ahdscollections/docroot/nrla/b/88_Baker.html The Archive of the National Review of Live Art, Date accessed 8.7.2009.

⁸⁶ http://ahds.ac.uk/ahdscollections/docroot/nrla/b/88_Baker.html The Archive of the National Review of Live Art, Date accessed 8.7.2009.

⁸⁷ Deirdre Heddon in Jo Gill (ed.), *Modern Confessional Writing*, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, London, 2006, p. 142.

Baker's use of humour, parody and, most of all, a persona has paved the way for my practice as a 'mother-artist'. A persona is an acknowledgement of some gap within the self and, simultaneously, as a method it allows an investigation of this gap. Since, as Kristeva theorised the maternal body, a pregnancy is an in-between situation, it can be understood as a gap: 'Inhabited neither by one being nor by two, pregnancy is more a filter or cipher.'⁸⁸ However, while Baker uses performance as her main method for deconstructing motherhood, I use performative acts in my investigations. This method will be further discussed throughout the text.

⁸⁸ Elizabeth Gross 'The Body of Signification' in John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin (eds.), *Abjection, Melancholia and Love, The Work of Julia Kristeva*, Routledge, London, 1990 p. 95.

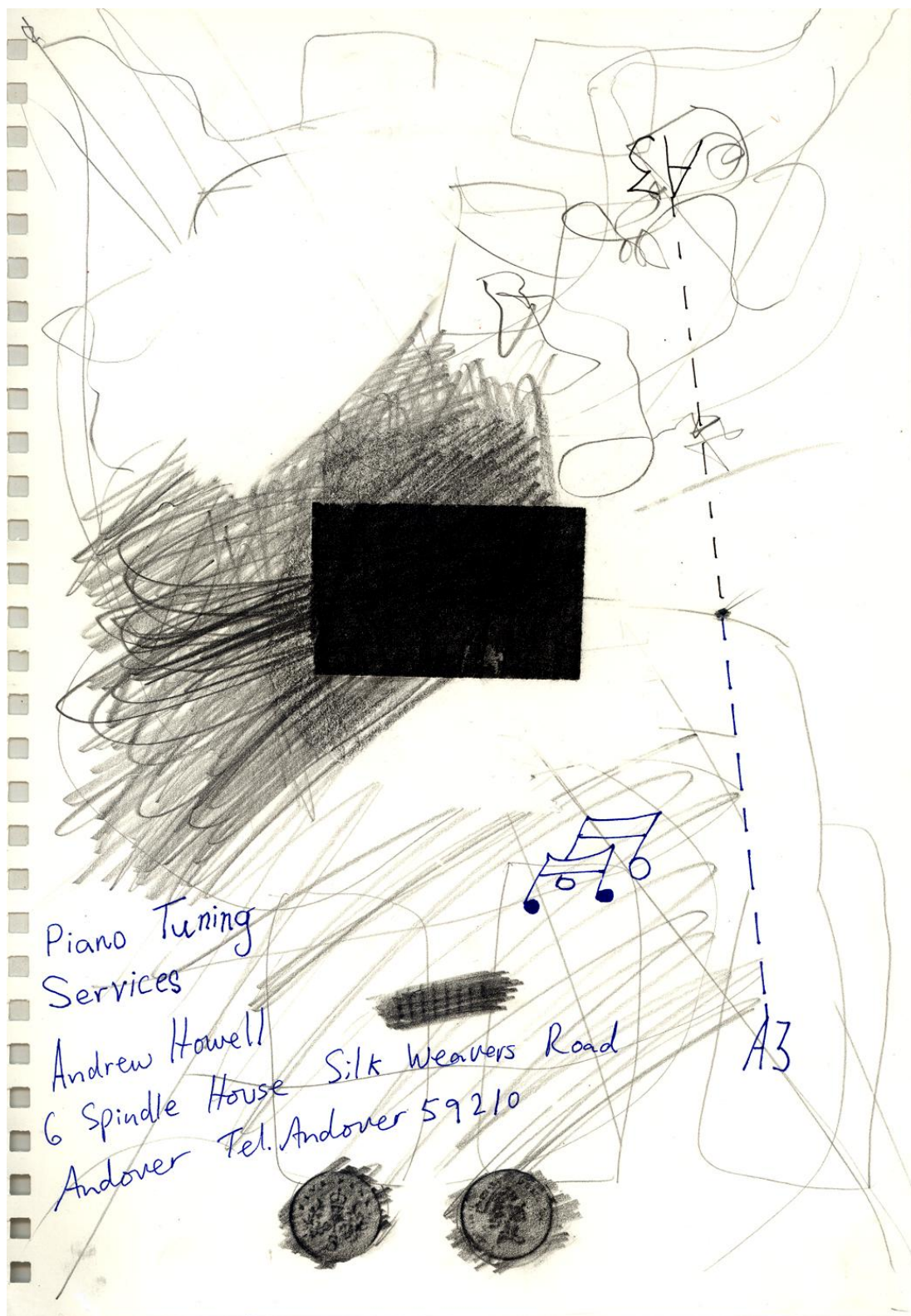


Fig. 7: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *ima's Drawing (Accumulative)*, Drawing pencil and pen on paper, 17x25cm, 2002

2.5 First case study: *ima's Drawing – (Accumulative), Drawing, 2002*

Culture named it 'pregnancy', 'foetus', 'birth', 'baby', 'mother' (Fig. 6 : Julie Penfold, *Yonat Nitzan-Green's Placenta*, Photograph, 1994. Cross reference appendix III, p. 203). What lies behind these words? What kind of place-fragment is the placenta?⁸⁹ What new discoveries can be made by a person who went through pregnancy, birth and raising children about those experiences, the world and the self? These questions have been narrowed down, articulated in the following question. What is the relationship between the maternal body and the subject? The research is a dialogue between practice and theory. This relationship will be discussed throughout the text.

ima's Drawing – (Accumulative), 2002, (Fig. 7): Looking at this drawing I see all kinds of marks made by pencil or pen. There is a rectangle off the centre, filled with graphite. There are layers of lines, revealing the action of filling it. The rectangle's borders are made of straight lines. This is contrasted by freely drawn, unfilled rectangles drawn at the top and the bottom of the paper. Other lines are drawn randomly. On the top left, above the filled rectangle, there seems to be an 'empty' shape. At the bottom centre, there are two marks that were made by the technique of brass-rubbing showing two sides of a five penny coin. Just above, there is a mark which was done in the same technique, revealing small vertical lines. Near the bottom left, an address of a piano tuner is written in clumsy hand-writing, in a blue pen. Next to the address, two musical notes have been drawn in pen. A letter and a number: A3 are written twice, at the bottom and at the top, where it is written up-side-down. A diagonal broken line drawn partly by pen, partly by pencil, connects the two.

ima's Drawing – (Accumulative) has been done over a period of a few weeks. During this time, an A5 piece of paper was positioned in the kitchen of my home, visited and revisited, gradually accumulating marks. Marks that came from the everyday, not so much connected to each-other, rather connected through the duration of time. One can find connections between the different marks. For example, the filled, geometrical rectangle suggests a 'hole' in the paper, thus, dialogues with the 'empty', free shape above. *ima's Drawing – (Accumulative)* functions as a kind of a map. For example, the letter and number:

⁸⁹ Placenta – 'the vascular organ formed in the uterus of most mammals during pregnancy, consisting of both maternal and embryonic tissues and providing oxygen and nutrients for the fetus and transfer of waste products from the fetal to the maternal blood circulation.' From: Patrick Hanks (ed.), *Collins English Dictionary*, Collins, London & Glasgow, p. 1119.

A3 creates a connection with the real A3 road or, alternatively, a paper size. In that sense, they can be understood as a sign. But while a map is a recognised symbolic object, this drawing may be perceived as a surface for possibilities. By this, I mean that the way to 'read' it is open to interpretation, unlike reading a map. The process of pregnancy may also be seen as a surface for possibilities; it is reflected in this action. The accumulation does not mean covering the page. It refers to the accumulative nature of the *mother-artist* experience. Once recognised, this experience shapes the practice as continued in and with time.

I interpret this drawing through other drawings, which all belong to the same series (Cross reference, appendix I, p. 181). All related through the intention to explore maternal time, thus they were done in a domestic environment. The intention is revealed through the title, which documents the time that it took to make each of these drawings. I became aware that time is not visible in the work itself. If it was not for the title, one could not guess that this is an exploration of time. It led me to film the drawing. This will be discussed as the second case study.

2.6 Representation and embodiment

Author and art critic Kate Linker writes, 'It has become axiomatic that questions of signification cannot be divided from questions of subjectivity, from the processes by which viewing subjects are caught up in, formed by, and construct meaning.'⁹⁰ Linker critiques deeply rooted patriarchal conventions, in which the sense of vision, meaning and the perception of the self are all bound up together in a set of thoughts, which historically ignored women's experience. From a patriarchal perspective one's appearance becomes her identity: identical to all other pregnant women, she becomes the same. However, an inside position reveals that in the experience of pregnancy one is aware of inner life by touch, rather than look. The terms 'same' and 'difference' will be discussed later in this chapter. Rosemary Betterton investigates the shift from the female body's representation to subjectivity, 'what it means to inhabit that body: from the problem of looking (distance) to the problem of embodiment (touch).'⁹¹ The research is located within this field of investigation. According to Freud and Lacan, the sense of vision is central in the complex mechanism of gaining

⁹⁰ Kate Linker, Representation and Sexuality, in Brian Wallis (ed), *Art After Modernism: rethinking representation*, published by the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, in association with David R. Godine, Publisher, Inc., Boston, 1996, pp. 392.

⁹¹ Rosemary Betterton, *An Intimate Distance, Women, Artists and The Body*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996, p. 7.

identity and a social position within the patriarchal order; a social order, which includes symbolisation and language, which positions women as lacking the main signifier – the phallus.

Lacan locates a necessary condition for symbolization, enabling communication with others: it is only through absence, through loss of the experiential plenitude associated with the maternal body prior to subjection to the paternal order, that representation can occur. Representation, then, is loss, is lack, and with it is initiated the play of desire.⁹²

ima's Drawing – (Accumulative) is an indexical drawing, where by the actual object of the coin has left its imprint in the paper. It is an example of an alternative to representation, which is based on the concept of lack. The object appears in the drawing both in image and in a residue of its own materiality. Artist Barb Bolt pointed out a renewed interest in the indexical in contemporary art. Bolt refers to Tony Bond in 'A Paradigm Shift in Twentieth Century Art' (1998), who argues that

interest in the index was stimulated by an avant-garde reaction to the crisis in mimetic representation. As a result of this crisis, artists came to use real objects and elements instead of illusionism. Secondly, there is a renewed interest in medieval beliefs in the force of the index.⁹³

An indexical painting carries a residue of the represented object, in materiality or energy. In this sense, it cannot be a representation, for a representation stands as a substitute for the object, which is not present.

⁹² Linker, Representation and Sexuality, in Brian Wallis (ed), *Art After Modernism: rethinking representation*, 1996, pp. 397.

⁹³ Barb Bolt, 'Painting is not a Representational Practice', in Rosemary Betterton (ed.), *Unframed*, I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, London and New York, 2004, p. 54.



Fig. 8: Wall in the studio, 2004



Fig. 9: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Archive*, Open Studio, 2004



Fig. 10: Yonatan Nitzan-Green, *ima's Drawing – Radio Report*, DVD Stills 1- 4, 2004

2.7 Second case study: *ima's Drawing - Radio Report, DVD (76 seconds), 2004*

The first part of the research was dedicated to collecting data and compiling it in folders, as an archive. The next stage was to use the collected data in a visual way, in order to take the enquiry into maternal subjectivity forward. I wanted to deepen my own understanding of representation. I therefore, took the decision to build a self-standing wall, on which archival items were displayed (Figs. 8, 9). The drawing *ima's Drawing – (Accumulative)* was one of these items. Building on Rosemary Betterton's writings, as mentioned earlier, I looked for a way to create work which will embody, rather than represent. This drawing was filmed, using the method of a performative act (Cross reference, appendix II).

The film was edited and resulted in another work entitled *ima's Drawing - Radio Report, 2004*, (Fig. 10), (Cross reference, appendix II). The sound used in this drawing is a radio report from an Israeli station, which was manipulated in order to negate the content of the words, yet keep the man's voice. This human voice merges with a mechanical rhythm and texture. Here, time becomes part of the drawing by using video.

2.8 The terms 'same' and 'difference'

Based on Deleuze's philosophy of difference, Dorothea Olkowsky develops a new ontology of change. Olkowsky claims that Deleuze has found a crack in the thought, in Aristotle's notion of being, from which difference can be thought of as a concept and real.

According to Deleuze, it is Aristotle who, to a far greater degree than Plato, refused to recognize difference and who is thus accountable for the establishment of the hegemonic reign of representation and the social and political practices that it rationalizes [...] [if] organic representation is taken to be the only intelligible regime of thought and visibility, then hegemonic and rigid social and political practices embrace representation to justify their existence.⁹⁴

Representation as a concept, which is based on lack, is less relevant to the maternal experience, than a representation which includes the embodiment of the body. The experience

⁹⁴ Dorothea Olkowski, *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation*, University of California Press, Berkeley, USA, 1999, p. 18.

of pregnancy is an addition. It 'wounds but increases me,'⁹⁵ in Kristeva's words.

Representation in western thought is based on vision, yet maternal experiences are based to a large extent on touch and the other senses. A drawing, which includes a residue of the object, reflects the bodily experiences of pregnancy and birth, in which mother cells can be found in baby's body and visa-versa. In order to understand better the concept of representation, it is important to consider time. Dorothea Olkowsky demonstrates that according to Aristotle,

Time doesn't exist. Because in order to say that something exists, one has to prove that it exists now. Time can be thought of only if it can be counted. 'Before' and 'after' are nothing, therefore the thing which is countable is 'now'. According to Aristotle, we count 'now' as a succession of 'nows', where each 'now' is different, but there is something general which unites all the 'nows', which is identical.⁹⁶

The accumulated indexical marks in *ima's Drawing (Accumulative)* create a history for this drawing, which includes the recent past and the present moment. In this perception, which is inspired by the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1945), history is not a fixed static object, belonging to a fixed time, past. Rather, it is dynamic, integrating and interacting with time. Time is conceived not as a countable, identical 'succession of "nows"'.⁹⁷ According to Bergson, time is a *duree*, 'a dynamic continuation of a past into a present and toward a future.'⁹⁸ Bergson used musical melody as a metaphor to explain his idea:

melody is actually an indivisible multiplicity changing qualitatively in an ongoing movement [...] each note interpenetrates the next note, the first and second note continuing into the third note, the first, second and third into the fourth, and so on, each phase of the passage of the melody [...] functioning as a qualitatively different moment, each pushing into the next in a single movement which eventuates in the complete melody [...]. With each note also something new comes into existence. Against the background of subsequent notes, which together form a qualitatively distinct ensemble, an unpredictable new note emerges, which then forms with the subsequent notes a new qualitatively distinct ensemble.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Julia Kristeva, 'Motherhood according to Giovanni Bellini', in *Desire in Language*, translated by Leon S. Roudiez, New York, Columbia University Press, 1980, p. 237.

⁹⁶ Olkowsky, *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation*, 1999, p. 21.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁹⁸ Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Cinema*, Routledge, New York and London, 2003, pp. 13-14.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

What happens if we think about time not only as countable ‘now’ points? Bergson thought about the concepts of *quantity* and *quality*. According to Bergson ‘[t]o think of a quantity is to treat qualitatively different elements as homogeneous and simultaneously co-present entities.’¹⁰⁰ Difference is erased in that way of thinking. The shift from one mode of thinking (quality) to the other (quantity) produces invisibility. The use of the name *mum* prioritizes same over difference. This demonstrates the extent to which women become invisible.¹⁰¹

The critique of representation showed the way women were allocated the position of ‘difference’, or ‘other’, only in comparison to the main stream, a position that has always been occupied by men, in a patriarchal society. Social norms were determined and fixed by the main stream. Referring to Aristotle, organic representation, according to Deleuze, is constituted within a four-part judgment model of Identity, Opposite, Analogy and Resemblance, where difference is excluded. If, within this model, difference will stand out, the model will break. Olkowski writes: ‘[...] difference is no more than difference within identity [...]. What gets constituted in Aristotle is thus, the very ruin of difference itself.’¹⁰² Bergson’s concept of time is a varied duration in which difference can be considered and in which women, as well as other groups, can gain visibility, through theorizing unique experiences, in culture.

In *ima’s Drawing - Radio Report* a fragmentation occurred as the paper and image separated from each-other. Both ‘same’ and ‘difference’ co-exist in the duration of the time of the video projection. This proximity creates a distortion. Same is manifested in the repetitive sound, as well as in the coin on the left which is unchanged. Difference is manifested in the gradual change the coin on the right goes through. This change begins with an image of a coin and ends with an image that may suggest a vagina. Both male and female co-exist in *ima’s Drawing – Radio Report*, in a kind of mocking representation. It is this co-existence that the research is focusing on, as part of the cultural - sexual exploration of ‘self’ and ‘other’; a co-existence that includes ‘same’ and ‘difference’. *ima’s Drawing – (Accumulative)* allowed time to remain invisible, while adding sound and movement to the drawing made time and difference visible. However, the time represented through sound and

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 13.

¹⁰¹ It can be argued that the same applies for men, however it is still the case that in western society women’s workplace is at home, caring for children, while men’s work places are varied, not necessarily at home, thus the title Dad functions differently from the way it defines women.

¹⁰² Dorothea Olkowski, *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation*, University of California Press, Berkeley, USA, 1999, p. 18.

projection is looped, unchangeable. Indeed, this research of a *mother-artist's* experience is, in fact, a research of another perception of time. Here, a perception that is based on 'same' produces distortion. The concept of 'difference' is based on Aristotle's perception, that is, a difference only with regard to the main form, culturally recognized as the right form. The distorted coin on the right mockingly represents a woman.

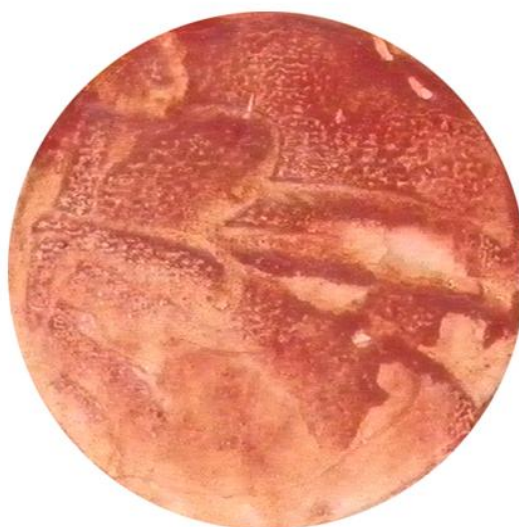


Fig. 11: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *ima's Logo (Coffee Painting)* Painting
Gouache, PVA glue on paper, 8.5x8.5 cm, 2003

First stage 7.3.2003

10:07 – Start to paint 'Vasalisa's Doll'¹⁰³

10:15 – Painted the base, mixed Primary Yellow, Ultramarine and Alizarin Crimson until a coffee-like brown is created

Photographed the painting 10.3.2003

Second stage 12.3.2003

09:12-09:25 – Spread a white-pink layer on the first layer, using a pallet knife. Mixed Ultramarine Deep, Primary Yellow and Alizarin Rose Madder with White Zink.

Third stage 14:45-14:56 – Mixed Ultramarine, Primary Yellow and Alizarin Crimson Diluted with water, let the liquid flow over the second dry layer. Photographed the painting.

Fourth stage (A few days later)

13:41-13:44 – spread another layer of PVA glue

¹⁰³ Clarissa Pinkola Estes, *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, Rider, London, 1998, pp. 71-76.

2.9 Third case study: *ima's Logo (Coffee Painting)*, Performative act, 2003

ima's Logo (Coffee Painting), (Fig. 11), are small circular paintings, which were made as a performative act, using an outline of a mug as a template. These paintings were made in family environment, both at home and during travelling. In some cases, a text documenting the moment was also produced (as in the example above). This act came about as a response to the invisible aspect in the daily maternal experience, mostly of domestic and caring activities. Vasalisa's Doll refers to the story 'The Doll in her Pocket: Vasalisa the Wise'. This story is used to discuss female intuition. The doll was given to the child by her mother on her death-bed, as a protection. According to Pinkola Estes:

The doll is the symbolic homunculi, little life. It is the symbol of what lies buried in humans that is numinous. It is a small and glowing facsimile of the original self. Superficially, it is just a doll. But inversely, it represents a little piece of soul that carries all the knowledge of the larger soul-self. In the doll is the voice, in diminutive, of old La Que Sabe, The One Who Knows. [...] it is our helper which is not seeable, per se, but which is always accessible.¹⁰⁴

The persona *ima* engages with questions of invisibility. As a method, it is informed by Pinkola Estes' writings as a form of intuition which is invisible, but always accessible.

ima: 'Looking at the residue after drinking coffee one morning and giving it a personal interpretation, it occurred to me that this action bears similarity with looking at a painting, which is recognised in art conventions. I identified a kind of a painting which is linked with functionality and which echoes maternal body processes in terms of qualities such as flow, leak, same, difference and change.'

The maternal body has been theorised as dwelling with the *abject*. The abject, according to Kristeva, is ambiguous – undecidedly inside and outside the body, dead and alive, autonomous and engulfing.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 85.

Food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection. When the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of milk [...] I experience a gagging sensation, and still farther down, spasm in the stomach [...] *nausea* makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. "I" want none of that element, sign of their desire; "I" do not want to listen, "I" do not assimilate it, "I" expel it. But since the food is not "other" for "me," [...] I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself*. [...] It is thus that *they* see that "I" am in the process of becoming an other at the expense of my own death.¹⁰⁵

Kristeva refers to sensations of gagging and revolt which emerge when bodily fluids cross the surface of the skin and more importantly, the accepted social codes. Abjection is 'the body's acknowledgement that the boundaries and limits imposed on it are social projections'.¹⁰⁶ The transition from the pre-symbolic to the symbolic is the site of the abject. In order for the child to be accepted by society he or she needs to learn to expel and disassociate part of themselves. These parts are not entirely outside, object, neither are they entirely inside, subject. It is this in-between state that patriarchal social conventions reject. Food, corpse and sexual difference are the three categories of abjection. Referring to sexual difference, Kristeva pointed out that menstruation marks this difference, as follows:

Menstruation does not simply differentiate female from male; rather it marks the differences between men and *mothers* (or potential mothers). The horror of menstruation links women to a (presumed) natural maternity without acknowledging women's sexual specificity.¹⁰⁷

In other words, maternity un-theorized may lead to a feeling of potential loss of self identity.

ima: 'Paintings as fragments with no definite whole became part of my visual language. I started to make small circular paintings in a ritual-like way. A stencil of a cup was used to mark the initial beginning. Then I painted a thin layer of brown paint. This symbolised both coffee as a cultural reference and earth (grounding orientation). Another white-pinkish layer was spread over, using a pallet knife. Here was a reference to cream or skin. Next I poured a diluted brown layer and when it dried, a layer of PVA glue had been spread over the painting, to give it a shining, reflective presence.'

¹⁰⁵ Julia Kristeva, 'Approaching Abjection', in Amelia Jones (ed.), *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 2003, p. 390.

¹⁰⁶ Elizabeth Gross 'The Body of Signification' in John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin (eds.), *Abjection, Melancholia and Love, The Work of Julia Kristeva*, Routledge, London, 1990 p. 90.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p. 92.

Many *Coffee Paintings* were made over a year. In a later stage, they were made as *ima's Logo* and were painted over texts or images, as well as digitised moving images. Some *Coffee Paintings* can be seen as a web site in www.pva.org.uk/yng (the site was made for the first PhD presentation). It was important to include time in the work. The 'everyday' became evident through repetition imbedded in these paintings. They were made as functional, performative acts.

ima's Logo (Coffee Painting) is a self-portrait of the *mother-artist* in the sense that it helps to articulate the maternal experiences. These paintings are based on ritual, a cultural form which includes all three forms of times: the linear, the cyclical and the monumental, generational time, the latter is described by Kristeva as nearer to our perception of space. According to Kristeva:

As for time, female subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure that essentially retains *repetition* and *eternity* [...] On the one hand, there are cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature and imposes a temporality whose stereotyping may shock [...] On the other hand, [...] there is the massive presence of a monumental temporality, without cleavage or escape, which has so little to do with linear time [...] that the very word 'temporality' hardly fits: all-encompassing and infinite like imaginary space.¹⁰⁸

As a non-functional act, ritual breaks the linear flow of time, as time and functionality are tied together in our consciousness. However, the repetitive dimension paradoxically reinforces ritual's place within linear time. On the one hand, ritual connects us to a primordial, ancient time, yet on the other hand it is located within linear time, at the present. While ritual by the Shaman-artist had a clear function within the community in primitive societies, a role which Joseph Beuys brought back to life in the 20th century by re-enacting the artist as Shaman,¹⁰⁹ *ima's* ritual serves no communal function. It is, rather, a mimic of

¹⁰⁸ Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time' in Toril Moi (ed.), *The Kristeva Reader*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986, p. 191.

¹⁰⁹ 'Throughout his career, Beuys was surrounded by questions and controversy: Was he [...] a sham or a shaman?' Mark Rosenthal, *Joseph Beuys, Actions, Vitrines, Environments*, Tate Publishing, London, 2005, p. 10.

herself as a *mother-artist as a Shaman-artist*. As such, she is out of place, without context. *ima*, in other words, is a mere parody.

Mimicry is central to the structure of parody. According to Homi K. Bhabha, 'the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence.'¹¹⁰ In Bhabha's analysis, mimicry effectiveness is by producing a slippage, which is its difference. According to Bhabha, 'mimicry conceals no presence or identity behind its mask.'¹¹¹ Logo represents the rule of the 'same', however, in the context of the maternal experience it is absurd, for this experience is located in change.

Anthony Storr claims that childhood rituals indicate a beginning of autonomy for the child from his or her parents, for 'as soon as the child begins to act his own rituals he demonstrates his ability to defend himself from the dangers of both the outside world and the inner world, instead of demanding his parents' protection.'¹¹²

Gaston Bachelard writes:

Being is round [...] images of full roundness help us to collect ourselves, permit us to confer an initial constitution on ourselves, and to confirm our being intimately, inside. For when it is experienced from the inside, devoid of all exterior features, being can not be otherwise than round.¹¹³

Ritual activity in adulthood has been analysed by Freud as a defence mechanism, protecting from and preventing a suppressed knowledge from emerging and threatening the unity of the ego. On the other hand, for the artist, according to Storr, ritual activity functions as a means to reach inner knowledge, which was suppressed.¹¹⁴

The importance of these paintings is twofold. First, as parody, this act revealed that there is no such a thing as a *mother-artist*. Second, this performative act includes a therapeutic dimension of marking autonomy within the family, a point which will be further

¹¹⁰ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995, p. 86.

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 88.

¹¹² Anthony Storr, *The Dynamics of Creation*, Sifriat Poalim Publishing House Ltd., Tel Aviv, Israel, 1986, p. 111.

¹¹³ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston Massachusetts, U.S.A., 1994, p. 234. Elaborating on the phenomenology of roundness, Gaston Bachelard referred to Karl Jasper's book, *Von der Wahrheit* (p. 50) 'Every being seems in itself round', p. 232, Bachelard rephrased it as 'being is round'.

¹¹⁴ Storr, *The Dynamics of Creation*, 1986, p. 120.

elaborated on in the following chapter. It asserts Barb Bolt's claim that painting is not necessarily representational. Bolt writes:

In the exchange between "bodies-image", real effects are produced. In this dynamic productivity the performative act of painting produces ontological effects, which are not of a representational kind.¹¹⁵

ima's Logo (Coffee Painting) was included together with all other domestic and caring duties of the *mother-artist*. It is important to emphasise that these paintings are not a representation of the everyday. Rather, the everyday is imbedded in each of these fragments. This performative act paved the way to deepen the research. It expanded the investigation of time by including the 'everyday' as part of the work. It opened the question of contexts and context-less, which will be discussed in the following chapter. It enhanced the concept of repetition, which is found both in the maternal experience and in trauma, and will be discussed in the third chapter. It forms the foundation for understanding maternal subjectivity in this research. This foundation is not static, solid or fixed. Rather, it is located in change, in accumulation, in which both difference and same co-exist.

¹¹⁵ Barb Bolt, Painting is not a representational practice, in Rosemary Betterton (ed.), *Unframed*, pp. 41.

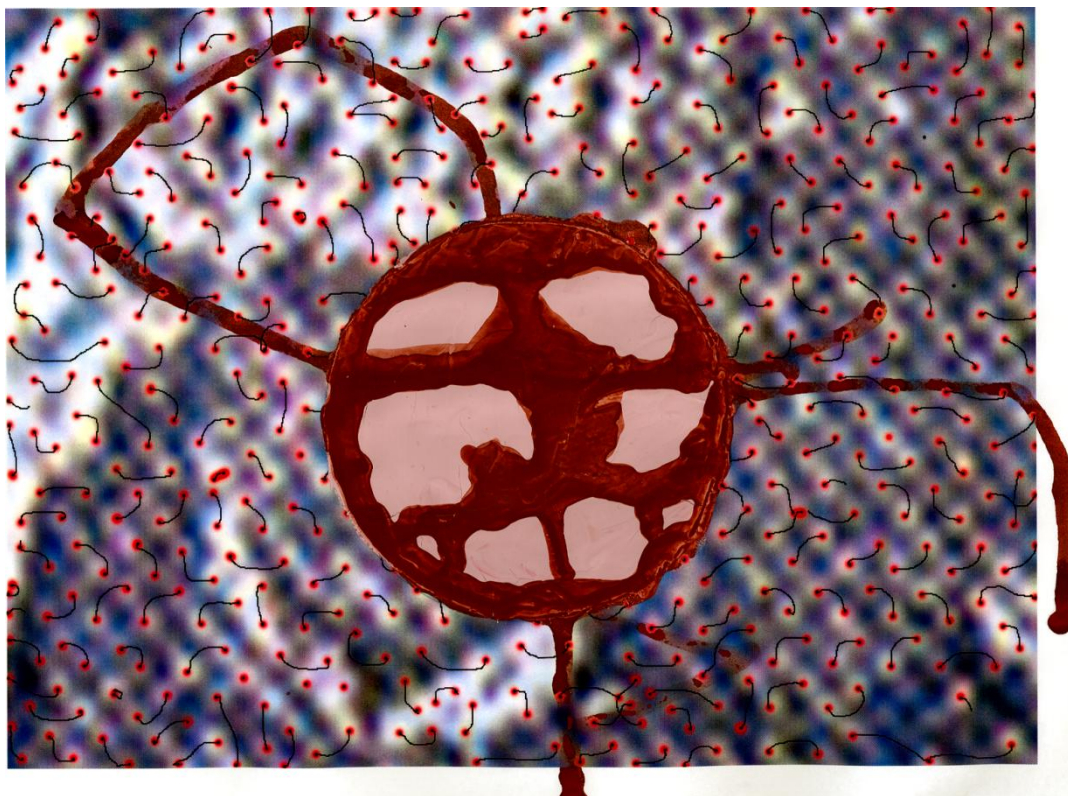


Fig. 13: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *ima's Logo with a Palestinian refugee* Painting
Gouache, PVA glue, computer print, 2003

Texts referring to kibbutz, Israeli childhood memory, appeared alongside the paintings. It was translated into both Arabic and Hebrew (Cross reference, appendix I, p. 182). The cultural reference will be further discussed in chapter two. These paintings were stored in an archive folder as well as in a digital form. In the form of video, these paintings change slowly, emphasising their surface. Later, in the film *Landscape Great Britain*, 2006, (*Landscape GB* hereafter) the surface seemed to be disconnecting from the filmed object, becoming the surface of the film itself, due to speeding up the flow of images. *Landscape GB* will be discussed in the third chapter. The subject's (*ima*'s) 'territory' has been explored in *Coffee Paintings*. On the one hand, *ima*'s logo was placed on different textual contexts, such as on a newspaper cutting report of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (*Fig. 12: Palestinian Occupied Territories*, Newspaper photograph, 2003. Cross reference, appendix III, p. 204. Also *Fig. 13*), in other words, a territory which is located both in current affairs and in a psychological, personal context. On the other hand, the paintings revealed a lack of context, like a symbol which can be moved between different contexts and meanings. This reflected the subject as fragmented, context-less.

Caroline A Jones stated that the point of research is to find. The process of finding is in the accumulated discourse.¹¹⁶ Knowledge production is a goal for research today. It is this philosophy that the research embraces. I agree with both, the perception of research as accumulated discourse, which deepens understandings; and with networks and links as replacing the usually isolated studio practice, offering flexibility in developing and sharing ideas and knowledge; in ways and methods of practice and finally, as a way to reach the wider public. The accumulative nature of my PhD research and the accumulative maternal experience mirror each-other.

The answer to the question posed at the beginning of this chapter, what is the relationship between the maternal body and the subject is as follows. There is a maternal body who, through performative acts communicates with no one, since this relationship is

¹¹⁶ Caroline A Jones is Associate Professor of the History of Art at MIT, Boston, U.S.A. She talked at the conference: *Encounter, Curiosity and Method: The Making of Practice*, 27.10.2006 at Tate Britain, which addressed PhD research practises. In this context, she pointed out the construction of a huge American network that scientists, as well as artists, can tap into. This is the 'final' critique of an isolated studio. A question was asked with regard to distributive verses performative. Is distribution another way of performing? The answer was that new media art is releasing more control to the user. Virtuality grew in the 90s. Now the physicality becomes increasingly important to the process of meaning. Another speaker asserted that knowledge is not what we are producing, but finding. Re-search – you are going back or again to the search which implies that something is already there. She suggested instead of 'I' find, 'we' find (referring to Picasso's famous saying: 'I don't search, I find').

defined by parody. For, in order to understand maternal subjectivity through practice, there is a need first to deconstruct the subject of the maternal body, this cultural stereotype in which subjectivity is trapped. In order to do this, this stereotype has been re-enacted, allowing tacit cultural knowledge to be externalised, become visible and then deconstructed.

The methodology, Research in Action, has been developed to articulate further the position of observer/participant as acts. Performative acts, in which I mimicked myself as a 'mother-artist', exposed an ambivalence that can be articulated both as a difference and as distance. 'I' am mimicking 'myself', but actually this is not 'me', but the construct which western society has formed, the construct in which 'I' has been trapped. If the subject of the pregnant body finds herself locked in a social gaze, which positions her in the category of the 'same', then a strategy of subversion is appropriate. This, indeed, is the rationale behind the decision to mimic one's self. Adding a video camera to this active observation contributed to the creation of distance. Distance is produced only when an action or an object has been anchored down, even if only for a moment; then a space for reflection opens-up. Chapter one discussed what is not me. The next chapter casts its look toward the past, striving to decipher further maternal subjectivity, by expanding this enquiry to consider mother-child relationship in the context of kibbutz childhood.

3. Chapter Two: Kibbutz childhood Memory

In this chapter, kibbutz childhood memories will be discussed with relation to my art works. The main text that supports this discussion is the Israeli art historian Tali Tamir's *Togetherness* (2005), an exhibition and a catalogue (with the same title). Tamir researched art and artists of kibbutz origins for over ten years, mostly through curatorship and writings. Installation will be considered through reading a conversation between Russian artist Ilya Kabakov and Russian philosopher Boris Groys, as well as the educationalist and children's art researcher Malka Hass's writing. The method of performative act will be discussed with relation to Judith Butler's 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution'. Analysis of kibbutz childhood memories and their connection with the maternal will be discussed through the following:

Fourth case study: *ima's Story*, DVD (16 minutes), 2002

Fifth case study: *ima's Yellow Painting*, Installation, 2004

Sixth case study: *ima's Home-Made Land*, Performative Installation, 2005

3.1 Research Methodology: Kibbutz Childhood Revisited

If we want to grasp an event we must not show it [...], we must not pass along the event, but plunge into it, go through all the geological layers that are its internal history (and not simply a more or less distant past).¹¹⁷

The methodology of research in action is supported by a practitioner-researcher position, that is, a position that is informed by a dialogue between an inside and an outside. This position has advantages and disadvantages. The advantage lies in being an insider, being able to revisit a first-hand experience and thus to have access, and a potential to gain new knowledge and new understanding. The main disadvantage lies in a risk of a distorted view, based on unprocessed feelings, a kind of negative residue. This problem has been addressed through the use of multi-methods or triangulation. In other words, three or more methods were used in

¹¹⁷ Gilles Deleuze in Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film, Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2000, pp. 29-30.

order to research a certain point. Accordingly, there are voices of artists and writers who share a similar background, reflecting on their kibbutz childhood experiences.

3.2 'Need' and 'emotional centre': a clash between ideology and personal experience

The Israeli kibbutz born artist Yftach Aloni's installation entitled *Lexicon of Collective Words*, 2005, (Fig. 14: Yiftach Aloni, *Lexicon of Collective Words*, Installation Detail, 2005. Cross reference, appendix III, pages 205 and 211), included a projected computer screen and cards displayed on a long shelf. Fifty words associated with Zionist kibbutz ideology have been programmed in a way in which one word attracted other words by association. Projected, there was a constant movement between a cluster of words piling up then dismantling. On one side of each card a word from kibbutz terminology had been printed and on the other side a personal definition was written. For example, the word Need was defined as follows:

Need is an equation with a default. Need is essentially an actualisation of part of the 'self', therefore, it can never belong to the Kibbutz. It is an actualisation of myself, which is mine only, therefore it is of a betrayal nature.¹¹⁸

According to the Israeli Art historian Tali Tamir, language dominated the ideological space. It was 'the weapon of ideology.'¹¹⁹ However, within the cultural space it created a belief which in turn created action. The action had been left without words and therefore soulless. The more the actions entered the routine of the everyday, the more isolated and disconnected these words became. They formed an independent 'being'. Feeling and identification that originally charged these words and connections between concepts in language and its actualisation in life became empty.

Tamir writes:

From its inception in late 19th century Europe and early 20th century Palestine, Zionist-Israeli society has had a consuming relationship with the idea of the 'group'. Severed from their

¹¹⁸ Yftah Aloni, *Dictionary of communal words*, 2005. Translated here by Yonat Nitzan-Green.

¹¹⁹ T. Tamir, *Together: the Group and the Kibbutz in Collective Israeli Consciousness*, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv, 2005, p. 174.

parents' homes and living in a hostile cultural environment, the survival of the first generation of Zionist pioneers depended on the formation of close-knit groups which in many ways replaced the lost intimacy of the Jewish community in the Diaspora.¹²⁰

However, from a psychological perspective Tamir revealed that, a 'prevalent strand in Israeli sociological discourse today talks of a society denuded of its collective ethos, a society that has failed to "supply" coherent identity to its different constituent particles.'¹²¹ This notion of a failure to 'supply' a coherent identity has been investigated within the scope of this research by examining questions of fragmentation, boundary and invisibility. The question of identity has been addressed through exploring and analysing autobiographical details, making works relating both to present and past and developing practice based on these three themes.

Idit Levavi-Gabai, an Israeli artist of kibbutz origins, testified, in an interview with Tamir, her own feelings, referring to her emotional centre (*Fig. 15: Idit Levavi-Gabai, Inside-Out Room, Installation View, 2005. Cross reference, appendix III, p. 206*). 'I feel it in movement, it doesn't have one fixed or clear place: [it is] in the corridor, in the yard, in the sky, on the pavement – between all the places.'¹²² According to Freud, 'separation from mother [...] can be traumatic [...] especially when a child is removed to a strange place with strange people.'¹²³ For 18 years, the child shared living space with fourteen other children, moving from one Children-House to another, every two or three years. The possibility of a family life, in which the children live with and cared for by their own parents had been denied.

American psychologist, Spiro, who researched kibbutz method of child-rearing, writes:

Although the parents do not play an outstanding role in the socialisation of their children, or in providing for their physical needs [...] parents are of crucial importance in the psychological development of the child [...] They provide him with a certain security and love that he obtains from no one else.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 206.

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 206.

¹²² Ibid, p. 146.

¹²³ John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, Vol. 1, Pimlico, London, 1997, pp. 10-11. John Bowlby, a British psychologist developed the theory of attachment at the end of the 1960s.

¹²⁴ American psychologist Spiro, 1954 in T. Tamir, *Togetherness: the Group and the Kibbutz in Collective Israeli Consciousness*, 2005, p. 316.

Certain security and love are the themes that this research has explored by deconstructing kibbutz childhood. According to Tamir, psychological researches have shown that ‘the presence of the mother in the kibbutz was well rooted in her child’s consciousness.’¹²⁵ It was, however, an invisible presence. Here, the connection between my childhood experience and *ima* became clear. What kind of communication took place between mother and child under these circumstances? The American psychologist Bruno Bettelheim pointed out an emotional impairment in the kibbutz system of education.¹²⁶ While Bettelheim’s research was published in 1968, according to Dr Moshe Sner, this book has not yet been translated into Hebrew. Aloni defined intimacy as follows:

Intimacy is nothingness. Forbidding. It is forbidden to cuddle myself, it is forbidden that I and my self will share one small space, which is only mine. It is no look, no touch. I is the shadow of my self. I is the accidental loneliness. There is no one to hold you before you fall, no one that will call you: come to me. Intimacy is the enemy, it makes it sacred to be loyal to my self, and thus it robs “mine” from “us”.¹²⁷

The psychologist, Ruth Sharabani, found in her research of the 1970s that the concept of group stands in contrast with the foundations for an intimate relationship. She also found that the plurality of women who looked after the children had damaged the process of attachment between mother and child. This point will be further discussed in the next chapter, in the context of trauma.

Kibbutz born Avraham Balaban wrote:

The nurses were with us from the moment we rose till after supper, when our parents came to take us to their rooms; they fed us three meals a day, bathed us and put us to bed in the afternoon and at night, and supervised us in the sandbox and playground. Yet when they were

¹²⁵ T. Tamir, *Togetherness: the Group and the Kibbutz in Collective Israeli Consciousness* 2005, p. 75. Translated by Yonat Nitzan-Green.

¹²⁶ Bruno Bettelheim, *Children of the Dream: Communal child-rearing and its implications for society*, New York: Avon, 1970. Dr Sner’s lecture in *Togetherness* Conference, July 2005.

¹²⁷ Yftach Aloni, *Lexicon of Collective Words*, 2005. Translated here by Yonat Nitzan-Green. In the translation the word ‘is’ is used to replace the word ‘am’ for the reason that ‘am’ is the word ‘mother’ in Hebrew. In writing ‘I is’ instead of ‘I am’ loneliness and the separation from the mother is made clear.

reassigned to different work, all that remained of them was a dim memory, acknowledged with an awkward smile when we came across them somewhere in the kibbutz.¹²⁸

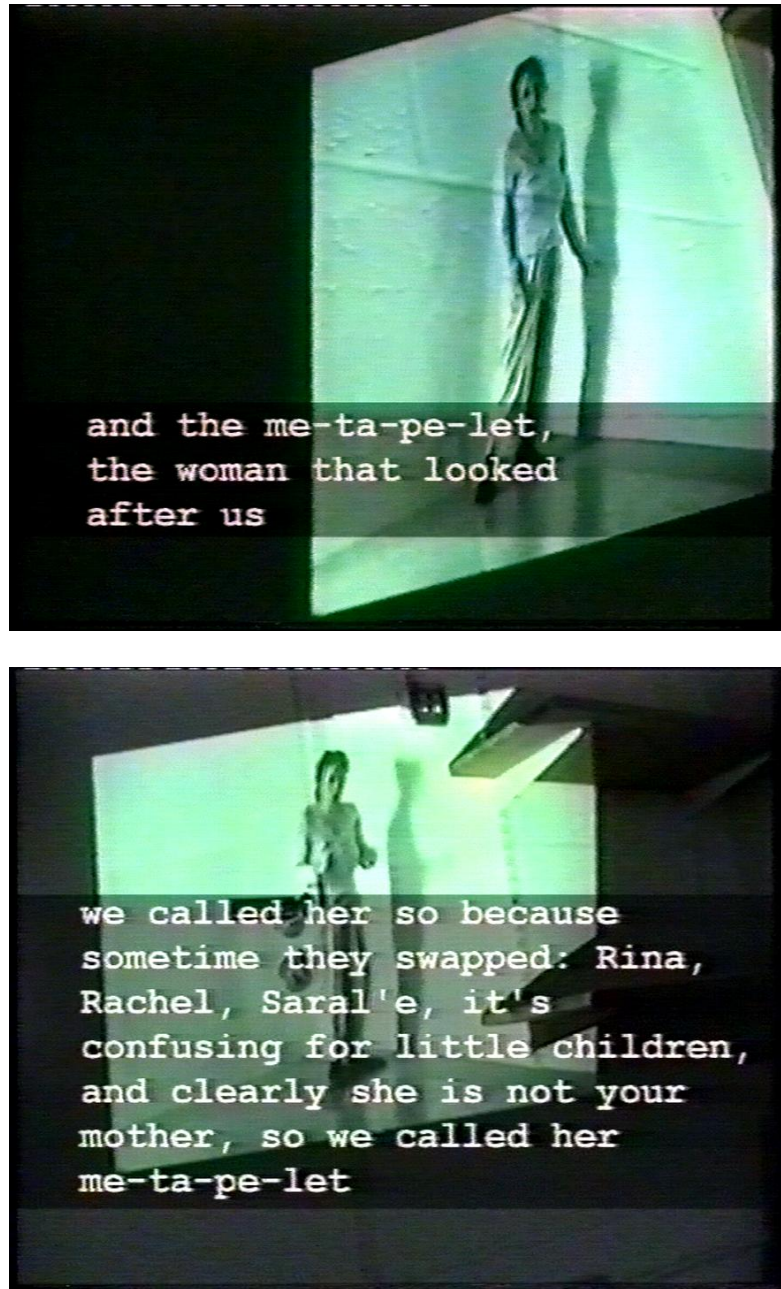


Fig. 16: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *ima's Story*, DVD Installation Stills 1 – 2, 2002

¹²⁸ Avraham Balaban, *Mourning a Father Lost, A Kibbutz Childhood Remembered*, Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, Inc., London and New York, 2004, p. 13. Balaban is professor of Modern Hebrew literature at the University of Florida.

3.3 Fourth case study: *ima's Story*, DVD (16 minutes), 2002

ima's Story (Fig. 16), (Cross reference, appendix II), marked the beginning of the research. It mapped the research's *territory*, both in terms of context and methodology. *ima's Story* is a performance, which was filmed and presented as an installation. The installation included a chair, which was placed in front of a standard size television screen on which the film was shown. This work explores the state of being in-between space and time. It was made *after* the MA Painting show, at the *outskirts* of the installation *Mobile Studio*; *after* the dismantling of the installation, and *before* another studio was built for the next student; and in my new studio, which was an office up until then. In other words, it inhabited an in-between space-time. After, outskirts and before are all words which emphasise the situation of being in-between.

In-between space-time is informed, metaphorically, by the idea of a trace, or a 'left-over', which connects with compost and the abject. Previous works have attempted to articulate this in-between space-time. For example, the series of post-cards, entitled *5 minute sculpture...*, (1999) (Cross reference, appendix I, p. 183), depict a food left-over which was photographed as it was placed on the roof-window of *ima's Mobile Studio* (the title of my car at that time). This was the beginning of the investigation of *ima's territory*. Images were photographed in different locations. However, the visual information disclosed only the food left-over item on the background of the sky, while other information regarding the location was negated.

ima's Story shows glimpses of my past, as *ima* recounts her history. Thus, memory emerges here, in between time and space, as a fragment, a left-over, as an abject. The mapping of the research's territory means an engagement with memory and identity. This identity has been deconstructed, re-articulated through an aesthetic of fragmentation, boundaries overlapping and invisibility. These themes will be further discussed later on.

It was a critical point in which the topic *mother-artist* has turned from being *me* into being an object ready to be researched. It was reflected in the action of dismantling the installation *Mobile Studio*. The moment of dismantling the installation is, in fact, rich with possibilities. It is a real moment in which the subject experiences a state of being in-between times, spaces and places. It is a vulnerable moment in which memory appears unexpectedly. Both the possibilities that present themselves when dismantling an installation and the unexpected appearance of memory will be further discussed later on. The process of making this work included projecting on various surfaces and filming these projections

simultaneously. It was very physical, confirming the presence of my own body. Indeed, it is this relationship between the body and image, memory and identity which has been explored.

The close proximity of the words *person* and *persona* conveys the idea that identity includes its concealment.¹²⁹ *ima's Story* is autobiographical. It is simply and briefly told, in a report-like fashion. Two questions emerged here: first, are Yonat and *ima* the same? Second, what is *ima*, beyond the simple answer of a persona? Regarding the first question, the pronunciation of this word, 'ima', *splits me*, for on the one hand it designates *my mother*, who was not with me most of the time, yet on the other hand it addresses me as the mother of my children. In other words, I embody some kind of negation. This leads to the second question mentioned above. The persona *ima* is an embodiment of a phantasm. It is informed by the absence of my own mother during childhood. I will return to these questions shortly. The second question is considered here with relation to Kristeva, as follows.

Kristeva theorised women's positions in western society. Kristeva pointed out that women's relationship with social codes is more complicated than men's.

Kristeva writes:

Sexual difference – which is at once biological, physiological and relative to reproduction – is translated by and translates a difference in the relationship of subjects to the symbolic contract which is the social contract: a difference, then, in the relationship to power, language and meaning.¹³⁰

The third wave of feminism, according to Kristeva, needs to address this difference by articulating female subjectivity. In Kristeva's words:

The sharpest and most subtle point of feminist subversion brought about by the new generation will henceforth be situated on the terrain of the inseparable conjunction of the sexual and the symbolic, in order to try to discover, first, the specificity of the female, and then, in the end, that of each individual woman.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Person – '[C13: from Old French persone, from Latin persona mask, perhaps from Etruscan phersu mask]' Persona – '(in Jungian psychology) the mechanism that conceals a person's true thoughts and feelings, esp. in his adaptation to the outside world. [Latin: mask]' Patrick Hanks (ed.), *Collins Dictionary of the English Language*, Collins, London & Glasgow, 1985, p. 1094.

¹³⁰ Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time' in Toril Moi (ed.), *The Kristeva Reader*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986, p. 196.

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 196.

The process of socialisation, according to Freud, is based on a successful detachment of the child from his or her parents. This process, which has been articulated from men's experiences of the world, positions women in a more vulnerable relationship with the social rules. Kristeva writes:

[...] there is also the connivance of the young girl with her mother, her greater difficulty than the boy in detaching herself from the mother in order to accede to the order of signs as invested by the absence and separation constitutive of the parental function. A girl will never be able to re-establish this contact with her mother – a contact which the boy may possibly rediscover through his relationship with the opposite sex – except by becoming a mother herself.¹³²

Kristeva's reflection on her own maternal experience reinforces her theory regarding girl – mother relationship.

Recovered childhood, dreamed peace restored, in sparks, flash of cells, instants of laughter, smiles in the blackness of dreams, at night, opaque joy that roots me in her bed, my mother's, and projects him, a son, a butterfly soaking up dew from her hand, there, nearby, in the night. Alone: she, I and he.¹³³

I ask 'what happened to me when I became an *ima*/mother?' In place of mother-daughter coming together there is a hole, an emptiness, a lack. The Portuguese writer Fernando Pessoa wrote about one of his fictitious persona, Bernardo Soares, 'He is semi-heteronym [...] because his personality, although not my own, doesn't differ from my own but is a mere mutilation of it.'¹³⁴ *ima* is defined accordingly as a mutilation of my *self*, or the opposite. This answer opened up a consideration of the relationship between *self* and *other*. Are they analogues to a relationship between whole and parts? Between one part and another? Or between fragments? In answer to these questions, it was my contention that the relationship

¹³² Ibid, p. 204.

¹³³ Julia Kristeva, 'Stabat Mater' in Toril Moi (ed.), *The Kristeva Reader*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986, p. 172.

¹³⁴ Fernando Pessoa, *The Book of Disquietude*, Carcanet Press Limited, Manchester 1991, p. x.

between *self* and *other*, viewed in the context of kibbutz childhood, are analogues to relationships between parts or even fragments. There is a perception of a whole bound by the boundaries of time. This will be elaborated on within the discussion of the work *Host-Guest* later on.

The relationship, which the persona *ima* creates, is distinguished from a tradition of dichotomy, gender-based relationship that other artists employ in their use of a persona, from Marcel Duchamp as *Rose Selavy* to the Israeli London-based performance artist Orit Ashery, who uses *Marcus Fisher*, a male Hasidic Jew as her persona. Figure 17 (*Fig. 17: Yonat Nitzan-Green, Marcus Fisher, Yonat Nitzan-Green and ima*, 2002, Digital image with Orit Ashery. Cross reference, appendix III, p. 207) shows *ima* manifesting as a yellow stain. This is a digital manipulation of an original photograph in which Ashery invited guests to pose and be photographed on the family bed of artist Laura Godfrey-Isaacs, as part of *Home*, a continuous project which explores and critiques relationships between private and public spheres. (See also Orit Ashery, *Say Cheese*, Performance, 2001. Cross reference, appendix III, p. 212. Orit Ashery's letter. Cross reference, appendix III, p. 213. E-mail exchange between Orit Ashery and Yonat Nitzan-Green. Cross reference, appendix III, pages 214 - 215).

3.4 Performative act

Judith Butler writes:

What does one do with early childhood? Or rather, what does early childhood do with us? There are psychoanalysts who think they might tell us a story about how it goes, or that we might learn to tell the story about how it goes. And there are others, Lacan most prominently, who tell us that this early time, if it is a time, is foreclosed, that whatever we will say about it will be belated, phantasmatic, untrue. So not only is early childhood a loss, it is that about which we are at a loss for words, a loss that also compels a representation of a certain order. But how can it be represented? We can certainly tell stories, but we cannot recuperate the loss through a story. The "I" who would narrate its early childhood has to take account of how that "I" comes into being, and so it must account for the emergence of the "I" who speaks, who tries to tell its story. But the "I" was not always on the scene, recollecting itself. What is this scene? What do we do with this scene? What does it do with us?¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Brian Massumi (ed.), *Bracha L. Ettinger, The Matrixial Borderspace*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 2006, first page.

Agreeing with Judith Butler's assertion that 'I' doesn't know her origin because 'I' had not always access to language, I ask the following questions: first, who is the 'I' that examines her childhood? In order to answer this question, a complex way of examining one's own childhood has been developed, which involves the enactment of meaning. This will be discussed further shortly. Second, what is she made of? The complex way mentioned above involves exploration of materials and relationship, for meaning derives from both, enactments and engagement with materials. Third, what thinking patterns, moulds, or conditioning did she absorb? The complex way, which has been developed during the research, included writing in the stream of consciousness. This revealed patterns absorbed in childhood. Patterns understood here as motives which repeat themselves. These motives appeared in dreams, or within the stream of associative, uncensored thoughts. Forth, does she tell her story, or is it being dictated by her conditioning? The complex way of investigating childhood memories is based on the *self* telling stories to the *other* and the opposite. The *other* includes the audience too. For example, *ima interviews guest*, is a series of interviews, which were done as a performative act (Cross reference, appendix I, p. 184). Fifth, how can I distinguish between 'I' and the patterns, or moulds which form me? The answer emerges from a long process which includes the stages mentioned above. In other words, a careful consideration of the relationship between functional and symbolic actions, as well as materials; and the identification and deconstruction of patterns, which have been internalised during childhood.

The complex way of researching is a method of performative acts, performed by *ima*, which became the strategy for the research. In order to understand the choice of performative acts as a strategy, I will discuss briefly Judith Butler's essay *Performative Act and Gender Constitution*,¹³⁶ and show how her ideas contribute to the development of this method.

Drawing from theatrical, anthropological and philosophical discourses, but mostly phenomenology, Judith Butler considers the way gender is constituted through performative acts. Butler's aim is to prove that gender identity is culturally constituted, rather than a stable identity, thus it can be constituted differently. There are three points to make.

First point. This research does not discuss questions of gender identity. It does discuss, however, questions of identity formation with relation to the maternal and kibbutz childhood.

Second, it is necessary to explain what Butler considers as a performative act.

¹³⁶ Judith Butler, *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution*, in M. Huxley and N. Witts (eds.), *The Twentieth Century Performance Reader*, 2nd Edition, Routledge, London and New York, 2005, pp. 120 – 134.

Butler refers to Simon de Beauvoir's claim 'one is not born, but, rather, *becomes* a woman.'¹³⁷ Butler writes, 'In this sense, gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a *stylised repetition of acts*.'¹³⁸ Performative acts, according to Butler, are stylised and repetitive. The word 'stylised' refers to 'the stylization of the body [...] the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.'¹³⁹ These daily repetitive acts constitute the illusion of a stable identity. Butler refers to 'corporeal acts', acts that directly relate to the body, based on phenomenology, which distinguishes between the materiality of the body and its cultural signification. Butler writes,

In order to describe the gendered body, a phenomenological theory of constitution requires an expansion of the conventional view of acts to mean both that which constitutes meaning and that through which meaning is performed or enacted. [...] the acts by which gender is constituted bear similarities to performative acts within theatrical contexts.¹⁴⁰

Third, is to explain how I understand performative acts and how they have been used in the research. Based on the above description, I understand performative act as follows: 1. it is an act which repeats in the duration of time, in the everyday life. 2. It has a theatrical dimension in the sense that it is aimed at an audience. Based on the definition of performance, written in the glossary, that audience may even be the self. 3. Performative act is an enactment of meaning. 4. It has an aesthetic dimension. Butler's performative act is understood phenomenologically, as being performed within the context of history. Butler writes, 'Merleau-Ponty maintains not only that the body is an historical idea but a set of possibilities to be continually realized.'¹⁴¹ These are historical possibilities and, according to Butler, the realization is dramatic. Butler writes:

¹³⁷ Ibid, p. 120.

¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 120.

¹³⁹ Ibid, p. 120.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 122.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 122.

The body is not a self-identical or merely factic materiality; it is a materiality that bears meaning [...] and the manner of this bearing is fundamentally dramatic. By dramatic I mean only that the body is not merely matter but a continual and incessant materializing of possibilities¹⁴²

How does my understanding of performative act contribute to the research? As stated at the beginning of this discussion, this research investigates questions of maternal and kibbutz subjectivities, excluding problems of gender constitution. However, it appears that there are similarities. Like gender, maternal and kibbutz subjectivities are not fixed, but culturally constructed. As a mother I found myself positioned within the functional, everyday; as such, I became engaged with and defined by repetitive, mundane acts. The element of repetition became central in my living experience and has led me to look for a method of practice that fits into this experience, on the one hand, and deconstruct it, on the other. Here, based on repetition, I found Butler's idea of performative act compatible with my everyday life experience. The element of illusion, embedded in gender identity, had been appropriated to deconstruct mother and kibbutz identities, by imitating daily, functional actions. In *ima's Story*, for example, the body of the performer imitates a chair and the position of the woman giving birth. While the discussion of gender identity considers clothes and appearance, I chose to use documenting devices such as a video camera. In both cases, a visual expression is produced. In choosing to use performative act as a research method, my body is ultimately included. This body is both surface and materialisation of possibilities as a maternal body, as well as a remembering body.

3.5 Boundaries between life and art - I

The use of performative acts led me to ask, how are art activities distinguished from ordinary ones? This question has been addressed by Barry Schwabsky, who linked it with questioning the relationship between aesthetic and ethic. Schwabsky points out a tradition of separation between art and life, beginning with Kierkegaard's claim that the aesthetic viewpoint is 'surpassed by ethical one'; Diderot's claim that if 'there was an ethics specific to artists or to art [...] it could well be in conflict with ethics as generally understood [...]'; Kant, Lyotard and Thierry de Duve all considered relationships between aesthetic and ethics. Schwabsky observes that 'the partition between the realms of aesthetics and ethics, between art and

¹⁴² Ibid, p. 122.

everyday life, has come to seem more and more permeable, even invisible'. This question emerged, according to Schwabsky, from the 'readymade', a moment in art history which created the 'problem [...] of the distinction between art objects and ordinary ones.'¹⁴³ This question has surfaced with the emergence of motherhood in my experience. I am suggesting that performative act and installation, as a method for investigation and an art form, respectively, are 'rooted' both in the maternal and in kibbutz childhood experiences. Boundaries between life and art will be further discussed shortly.



Fig. 18: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Yellow Painting*
Work in progress, 2004

¹⁴³ All quotations in this paragraph are from Barry Schwabsky "Subject x" Notes on Performative Art' in *Art/Text* 60. 1998, pp. 40-41 (pp. 40-43).



Fig. 19: Yonat Nitzan-Green *Yellow Painting* – Installation Detail,
Oil on Canvas, 2004 (with a photograph of post boxes
kibbutz Heftzi-bah, 1986)



Fig. 20: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Red Painting*, Oil on canvas, Open Studio 2004

3.6 Fifth case study: *ima's Yellow Painting, Installation, 2004*

The exploration of *self-other* in the context of the archive led to the creation of a private space behind a wall, in which a painting was made. The concepts of *public-private* had emerged. The painting was constructed of cotton fabric and canvas unevenly cut (Figs. 18, 19). It formed a collage-like shape. This was a yellow monochrome and similar to *Red Painting* (Fig. 20), another dark shape was painted as a *disturbance* in the monochrome. This disturbance will be discussed elaborately in the following chapter. The painting had emerged with the surfacing of kibbutz childhood memories, instigated by the archive, which was displayed on the other side of the wall. A personal memory of bed-wetting had emerged, together with a dark memory of an invisible presence of the Holocaust, which was the child's close environment.¹⁴⁴ This will be further discussed in the third chapter, in the context of traumatic memory and intergenerational aspects of trauma. A kibbutz peer-group photograph was enlarged, pixelated and printed on cotton fabric, then hung near the painting, on an adjacent wall. Two masks, associated with the Jewish holiday Purim,¹⁴⁵ were covered with plaster and hung; finally the whole private space was filmed (Cross reference, appendix II).

This installation is reminiscent of the 19th century author Charlotte Perkins Gilman's story *The Yellow Wallpaper*¹⁴⁶ where the topics of the maternal, creativity and madness have been explored in the context of patriarchal prohibitions. Both *Archive* and *Yellow Painting* were filmed, however the former was filmed from a tripod, excluding movement of the body, whereas the latter was filmed by holding the camera and moving, thus the movement of the body was embedded in the film itself. Time and the movement of body in space have been investigated, paying attention to the dichotomy *private-public*. The maternal body and the subject were brought together through bodily qualities of rhythm, flow and abject. Memory

¹⁴⁴ Many kibbutz members had arrived as refugees and survivors from the death camps. Other members, which came before WWII, had lost their families most of whom remained in the countries of origin.

¹⁴⁵ Purim commemorates a biblical story found in Ester's Scroll, in the *Old Testament*. This story tells the survival of the Jews from ethnic cleansing in Persia. The way it is celebrated is by wearing costumes, re-telling the story, as well as acting other stories.

¹⁴⁶ Sandra M. Gilbert and Sussan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1984. This story tells of a woman suffering from a postpartum psychosis. Her husband, a physician, treats her according to the accepted methods of the time. He confines her to a room and forbids her to write. For he feels that, as the narrator says 'with my imaginative power and habit of story-making, a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies, and that I ought to use my will and good sense to check the tendency', p. 89. The sick woman finds herself in a room with nothing but old, yellow wallpaper. She begins to see a figure behind the wallpaper. The pattern on the wallpaper becomes like bars. There is a woman behind the paper. A 'yellow smell' of decay spreads all over the house. The woman and the smell creep around in the house and outside in the garden. At the end of the story, the narrator and her heroine escape together by tearing the wallpaper.

has been located in a combined action of looking and moving. This coming together of the maternal body and subject has been articulated, at a later stage, as trauma, and will be discussed in the next chapter. While, in crossing boundaries, Gilman's heroine finds her escape through madness, the issue that emerges at the installation, the *disturbance*, is trauma, another form of crossed boundaries.

3.7 Boundaries between real-life and art - II

Russian-born artist Ilya Kabakov and the Russian philosopher Boris Groys discussed the art form of installation. Their discussion centred on installation, in the context of art history. Kabakov considers the installation as a progression from painting. This consideration helps to develop a deeper understanding of installation in the context of life and its relation to art. Groys claims that the installation is 'fairly ill-defined'.¹⁴⁷ Kabakov considers installation as the fourth stage of the development of painting. Kabakov said:

In Western understanding of the term [...] fine arts have passed through three phases [...] the icon, the fresco and the painting [...] the icon is connected with a metaphysical, highly significant, symbolic subject separated from this world [...] a sacred subject. The fresco is presented as an enormous panorama depicting a chain of events shown simultaneously as our gaze passes over the room containing them: that is, a story laid out in frames. The painting is a radical alteration of the fresco in the sense that attention is fixed on a single frame of the fresco [...] story is replaced by spectacle, that is, by theatre, and [...] we see space that has broken through from the other side of the wall – that is, a window.¹⁴⁸

Kabakov claims that painting is 'a lady good for everything',¹⁴⁹ meaning, today painting can be anything as 'it has exhausted all the possibilities of its window-existence',¹⁵⁰ and now installation is 'the fourth shift is plastic art'.¹⁵¹ Installation is an art form in which the boundaries between life and art are blurred. According to Kabakov:

[T]he entire history of painting is founded on the possibility of illusion. Painting was born in times when illusionism and illusion were among the most tempting means of living – masks

¹⁴⁷ Borys Groys, *Ilya Kabakov by Boris Groys*, Phaidon Press, London, 1998, p. 258.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 258.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 258.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 258.

¹⁵¹ All the quotations in this paragraph are from Groys, *Ilya Kabakov by Boris Groys*, 1998, p. 258.

of all kinds, pretence, appearance, dressing up and masquerades [...] Painting educated us to feel that an illusion exists in the world, which is an inseparable part of the universe and the world.¹⁵²

While painting incorporates illusion as it interprets reality, using paint, colour, and painting tools, installation uses objects that come from everyday life to create a reality. Yet it seeks to be distinguished from reality, removed from it, even if only by a small distance. Kabakov calls installation ‘anti-illusionist art’.¹⁵³ However,

something is created from these buckets, poles and completely real three-dimensional objects that is absolutely unreal, absolutely other [...] all the elements are known, yet what is put together is not the sum of these objects – it is a completely unknown new entity.¹⁵⁴

Looking at my childhood, the question emerged: where and when had the boundaries between real and act, in the sense of artificiality, been blurred? In *Host-Guest*, 2004, a performative installation in which *ima* had invited the painter Noriko Suzuki-Bosco to show paintings in *ima*’s studio (a work which will be discussed more elaborately in the third chapter), the issues of invisibility and performative act emerged with the childhood memory of a daily visit to The Parents’ Room. These three hourly daily visits were performative, leaving little room for natural behaviour. Although the child had access to games, toys, books and records she was only a guest, her parents were playing the role of the hosts. The Parents’ Room was experienced as a temporal space, bound by *walls* of time, as visits were allowed strictly in the allocated time, between half past four and half past seven. This shed light on the choice of using performative acts as a research method. Performative act is understood in this context as a second nature, as rooted in my early kibbutz childhood experience, in the most psychologically significant place. This, and other fundamental childhood experiences, related to space, place and social interaction are time-based. They, therefore, correspond with the medium of video and installation, as time-based.

¹⁵² Ibid, p. 259.

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 259.

¹⁵³ *ibid*, p. 259.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 259.

Boris Groys claimed that '[t]he installation [...] resurrects the quality of the painting as story which the painting itself has lost.'¹⁵⁵ According to Kabakov, painting became 'Madam Object, who can be anything you like in different circumstances.'¹⁵⁶ If installation is reality, the question is how does installation resurrect the painting's lost story quality? Groys explains:

[a] painting consists of ideas, of embodied ideas, and possesses an ideal space, whereas an installation consists of things and its unity is material. This is the reason for its lack of durability [...] Since the meeting of all these things suggests a definite secret [...] the viewer is drawn into a kind of detective process in which he has to guess the nature of this intrigue and through which he creates, constructs the unity of the installation, its unity of meaning, unity of interpretation.¹⁵⁷

Materiality, the inclusion of audience in the installation and installation's temporality are central in my perception of installation and will be discussed further in the following chapters. My understanding of installation is informed by the daily visits to The Parents' Room, an experience which is bound by time and which was internalised during the childhood years. The artist Lily Markiewicz writes:

Installations too exist in this dual reality, not as mere reflections of it but as interventions in time and space. As such, they map out a territory which, although largely consistent of familiar elements, signifies neither their usual function nor their usual habitat.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 261.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 258.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 261.

¹⁵⁸ Markiewicz 1993: Unpaginated in Rosemary Betterton, *An Intimate Distance, Women, Artists and the Body*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996, p. 162.



Fig. 21: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Junkyard near a Children's House* (kibbutz Heftzi-bah) Photograph, 1995

3.8 Installation and rubbish

The following discussion focuses on rubbish as a concept. It is discussed from two different approaches, one is educational and the other is art history. My works are then considered in relation to these two approaches.

The method of a Junkyard (*Fig. 21*) was developed in the 1980s, in kibbutz Sdeh Eliyahu, Israel, by the educationalist Malka Haas. This method is informed by the psychologist Jean Piaget, who claimed that active exploration through play 'is fundamental to the development of thought.'¹⁵⁹ According to Haas '[...] in early childhood education there is no distinction between working, playing and learning.'¹⁶⁰ Piaget believed that 'children are not empty vessels to be filled with knowledge but active builders of knowledge - little

¹⁵⁹ Malka Haas, *Children in the Junkyard*, A Presentation given at Bank Street College of Education, New York City, U.S.A., July 21 1993, p. 2.

¹⁶⁰ Malka Haas, *Children in the Junkyard*, A Presentation given at Bank Street College of Education, New York City, U.S.A., July 21 1993.

scientists who are constantly creating and testing their own theories of the world.’¹⁶¹ The search to understand the ways children learn has led Haas to develop the method of the Junkyard. Haas writes:

This play-space is full of “junk” items. These represent not the broken, rusty, dirty remnant of human activity, but all the multifaceted richness that life has to offer. Although the space of the junkyard is unstructured, its content is steadily monitored and cared for by the teacher, otherwise it turns into a rubbish heap.¹⁶²

The Junkyard is an extension of the child’s play/work/learn area. Although it is not structured, it is based on a careful consideration of the child’s safety and abilities. It mirrors unexpected juxtapositions that children do in the absence of knowledge of social conventions, on the one hand. On the other hand, social conventions are taught, for example, that Junkyard is an outdoor activity, distinguished from indoor activity. It enables a safe yet stimulating environment for learning, stemming from the recognition of the richness of life. This recognition is shared by Boris Groys, who claims that the author Raymond Roussel ‘opened the way to the entire methodology of the “ready-made” and the installation.’¹⁶³ Groys reflects,

[...] rubbish is given to the world free of charge. What you throw out always has the form of a sacrifice. [...] you give the rubbish away for nothing, like a holy sacrifice. [...] rubbish is precisely that in which the most diverse things, which are separated in normal life, meet.¹⁶⁴

Groys’ reflection reinforces Haas’s method of the Junkyard, as it represents a creative potential. While Groys discusses rubbish’s place in the art world, Haas’s perception of rubbish belongs to the field of knowledge of education. On the other hand, Kabakov’s

¹⁶¹ (<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,990617,00.html>). Date accessed 20.6.2009. Seymour Papert, ‘Child Psychologist Jean Piaget’, Monday March 29, 1999. Seymour is a professor at M.I.T.

¹⁶² Malka Haas, *Children in the Junkyard*, A Presentation given at Bank Street College of Education, New York City, U.S.A., July 21 1993, p. 2.

¹⁶³ Raymond Roussel, *Impressions from Africa* in Boris Groys and Ilya Kabakov: A Dialogue on Installation, p. 261. In his book, Roussel described the way in which domestic European objects reached Africa and were used as sacred magical object in the African culture.

¹⁶⁴ ‘Boris Groys and Ilya Kabakov: A Dialogue on Installations’ in Boris Groys, *Ilya Kabakov by Boris Groys*, Phaidon Press, London, 1998, p. 261.

perception of rubbish comes from his autobiographical experience in the Ukraine. The New York art critic, Amei Wallach, writes,

Ilya Kabakov's art was radical in the Soviet Union of the 1960s and 70s because it appropriated the language of bureaucracy in order to deconstruct the reality of a society in which nothing worked and lies were the lingua franca; where the thwarted, the self-deceiving and the protein-starved walked muddy streets strewn with the debris of never-completed projects, and lived in communal apartments where they were forced to share a noisome kitchen and an unspeakable toilet with twenty other families.

Kabakov's use of rubbish is directly connected to all those things that Haas excludes from her conception of rubbish. It is the remnant of human activity and life, it is the abject. I borrowed from Haas and Groys the perception of rubbish, not only as a metaphor for the richness of life, but as an opportunity to re-consider materials and materiality. Materials viewed in the context of rubbish, according to this perception, maintain a strong link with everyday life, on the one hand. On the other, the un-expected juxtapositions found in rubbish offer the possibility to create new meanings that reflect back on the everyday, thus can lead to a new understanding of the everyday. From Kabakov, I borrowed the conception of rubbish as linked with the abject. *Yellow Painting*, as mentioned before, is informed by an un-pleasant memory, which relates to the body. Bed-wetting has led to a feeling of humiliation; as one could not hide it when life was shared with thirteen other children. It led to a feeling of disgust with one's own body. It also led to a feeling of rejection, both in the rejection of one's body, as well as the group, the nurses and the parents, all expressing rejection in one way or another. The colour of the painting, its collage quality and its location behind the wall created an associative link with the memory of the Holocaust. This point will be elaborated on in chapter three.

My practice had been inspired by Haas' perception regarding children's development, in which there is no distinction between working, playing and learning. Installations were created in the studio environment in which the element of play was an important part (Cross reference, appendix I, pages 185 - 187). This practice is in sympathy with Melanie Klein's theory of child psychoanalysis.¹⁶⁵ Melanie Klein (1882 – 1960) was Freud's pupil. Freud discovered that symptoms have meanings, which led to the discovery of the unconscious

¹⁶⁵ Hanna Segal, *Melanie Klein*, Fontana/Collins, Glasgow, 1979, p. 45.

processes: repression and symbolism. Klein further developed the four defence mechanisms, which Freud had discovered: projection, introjections, identification and splitting. Klein, under the influence of Karl Abraham, developed child psychoanalysis, using play as means of communication, interpretation and analysis.

The use of performative acts, making videos and installations and writing daily in my diaries, where writing in the stream of consciousness took place for a few years, have led not only to the emergence of memory from the unconscious, but to its deconstruction. Intuitive analysis of my writings, actions and works was reinforced by psychological counselling, which I took for two and a half years during the research. Although these weekly counselling meetings were not officially included in the research, they contributed significantly towards gaining an understanding of my past and present.

Materials were taken from daily experiences, and the 'art world', such as sugar, coffee, composted earth, cotton, and found objects, as well as paper, water-colour, emulsion, oil paint, fabric, photographic images, video and sound. The use of a wide range of materials created a meeting point. Just as the collection of documents forms the archive, a collection of materials forms the compost. As mentioned before, both archive and compost exist as objects, as well as metaphorically. This led to a critical reflection of my works, in the context of rubbish. It is important to emphasise that the object of compost is made of organic materials produced by familial left-over food and its interaction with nature. The compost as a metaphor is extended here to include all kinds of materials.

Referring to French historians who researched the private space in western culture (Philippe Aries and a group of French historians wrote *The History of Private Life* at the beginning of the 1990s), Tamir pointed out the difference between privacy and intimacy. 'Privacy defines the relationship between an individual and a space whereas intimacy is the potential for emotional activity which comes to life in that space.'¹⁶⁶ According to Tamir, intimacy was interpreted as a 'danger to the public' during the 1920s in Israel. Public places were clearly marked, whereas private places had been left blurred and undefined.

The action of making a painting behind the wall created a private space, which then fulfilled the potential for intimacy in the act of painting. The 'self' appeared as a disturbance in the monochromatic painting. On one side of the wall there was *Archive*, informed by the *information wall*, a kibbutz term (Lu-ah Mo-da-ot), a recognised public site, which no longer exists in this form. This site, similar to the installation, was constructed as a two-sided wall in

¹⁶⁶ Philip Aries in T. Tamir. *Togetherness*, 2005, p. 68.

which the other side provided a hiding place for children in games, such as ‘hide and seek’ or ‘It’. Indeed, private and intimate activities took place side by side with a public, communal place. Kibbutz post boxes were located near the information wall. Their trace is echoed in *Yellow Painting* through similar rhythms.

The French philosopher, Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962), wrote about the quality of intimacy in drawers, chests and wardrobes. Referring to Henri Bosco’s *Monsieur Carre-Benoit a la champagne* he wrote:

Forty-eight drawers! Enough to hold an entire well-classified world of positive knowledge. M. Carre-Benoit attributed a sort of magic power to these drawers [...] they were “the foundations of the human mind”.¹⁶⁷

These small spaces are ‘hybrid objects, subject objects. Like us, through us and for us, they have a quality of intimacy.’¹⁶⁸ They embody ‘the reign of order. Order is not merely geometrical; it can also remember the family history.’¹⁶⁹ Indeed, this public kibbutz site, which combined information and intimacy re-appeared in the installation as a vessel of memory.

ima’s Yellow Painting was a filmed installation. Vision was restricted in the space of the installation. The body was positioned very close to the painting. A distanced overall view was denied. Vision had to be negotiated with movement of the body. This reflected a feeling of constraint of both body and vision.

Regarding the look of the *other* (the mother) as central in the process of forming identity, the mother was not with her child most of the time. The *peer-group* took her place. This group returned a *blind* look to the subject, confirming her partial visibility, partial invisibility. This will be explained shortly. Performative acts, which are inclusive, position the subject in her own body; therefore they confirm, reaffirm and reinforce the sense of a coherent self, although not whole. The sense of coherence is constructed in the duration, changeable time as an on-going process.

¹⁶⁷ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 1994, p. 77.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p 78.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 79.

Performative acts, acted by *ima*, which is a persona and a position,¹⁷⁰ were used as methods for investigation. The word *position* portrays *ima* specifically with regard to these qualities: place, situation and mental attitude, as the research questions directly and indirectly the social status of artists who are also mothers; as it investigates being between places; as it strives to articulate relationship between the maternal body and subject.

Central to living as one amongst others in a group, was a fixed position within the group, as well as a constant engagement with power: one's power against the group, one's power within the group. As one amongst others in a group there was also a fixed visibility. One is visible only from the angle that the group *agrees* to see, in a dynamic whereby each individual contributes his or her view point, which is fixed. The nature of a group is to resist change. Professor for communication Tamar Katriel has researched the relationship between language and culture. In *Togetherness* conference Katriel talked about crystal and how this word was applied in forming group identity in Israeli society.¹⁷¹ According to the predominant kibbutz perception, a fixed group is better and more stable against outside influences. A fixed visibility to a living organism is another word for invisibility. The installation *Yellow Painting* opened up a space of reflection, which included subjectivity as it negotiates being between public and private, partial visibility and a restricted movement.

¹⁷⁰ Position – 1. The place, situation, or location of a person or thing...5. Military. An area or point occupied for tactical reasons. 6. Mental attitude; point of view; stand...7. Social status...[C15: from Late Latin position a positioning, affirmation, from pon, to place, lay down].’ From: Patrick Hanks (ed.), *Collins Dictionary of the English Language*, Collins, London & Glasgow, 1985, p. 1143.

¹⁷¹ *Togetherness* Conference at Tel-Aviv Museum of Art, 7.7.2005.



Fig. 22: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Home-Made Land*, Performative Installation, 2005



Fig. 23: Yonat Nitzan-Green, The Children's House (Gan ha-e-la) (1947 – 1999)/
The Misgav family home (Since 2004), kibbutz Heftzi-bah, 2005, Details 1-2



Fig. 24: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Home-Made Land*, Fund-raising (with composted earth) 2005

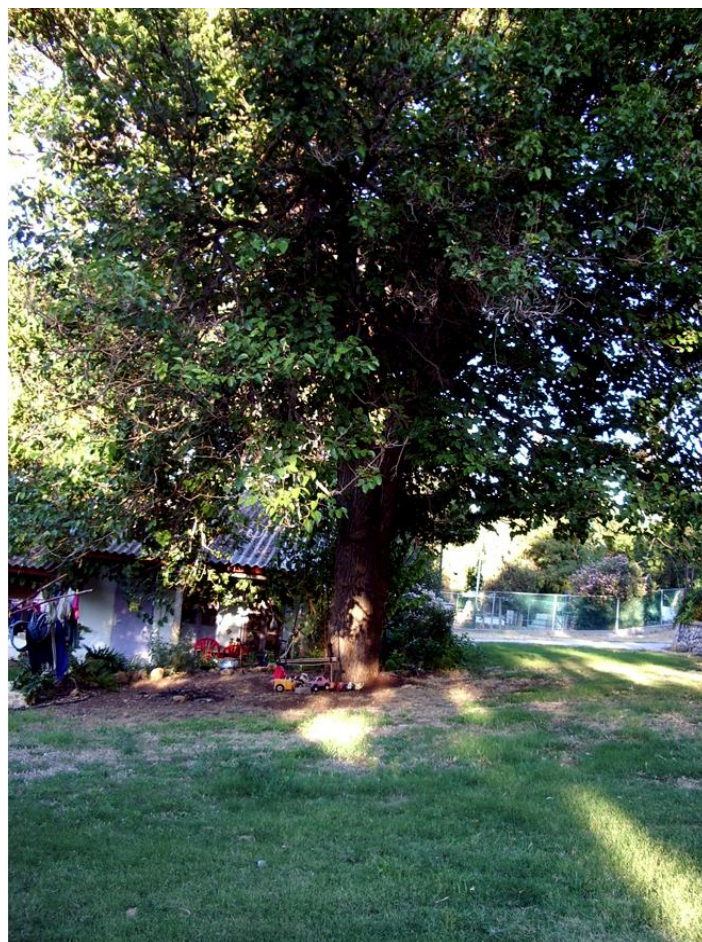


Fig. 25: *The Green Music Room* (1950's – 1974)
(The place where the music room used to be)
kibbutz Heftzi-bah, 2004

3.9 Sixth case study: *Home-Made Land*, Performative Installation, 2005

The installation, *Home Made Land* (Fig. 22), (Cross reference, appendix II), included places, spaces and times, as it comprised two rooms, a corridor, and performative acts, dialoguing with kibbutz childhood memory. One room contained a self-standing wall and numbered circles painted on the floor. Each numbered circle corresponded to a film. The audience held a portable DVD (P-DVD) and was instructed to watch the films from different locations, according to the numbers. The films shown on the P-DVD depicted the kibbutz children's house and its environment (Fig. 23). In effect, it was a performative map. Above the self-standing wall, a motion sensor had been placed and, when activated, a distorted sound, originating from a recording of the quartet in the kibbutz environment, was heard.

The second room contained shopping bags full of composted earth, as well as moving images shown through video projectors and a camera monitor, depicting different aspects of a compost heap. The corridor, between the two rooms, was used for placing a steel bed frame. It created a dialogue with an image of a child's cot placed in a corridor, which appeared in one of the films. Coffee powder was scattered in some of the bags, thus a smell of coffee was included.

This smell connected with the childhood memory of visiting my father while he practiced his violin.¹⁷²

ima: Nathan, Uri-Lavan, Judith and my father (*The Gilboa Quartet*) practiced in the Green Music Room, which stood next to the children's house. I would lie in bed, listening to my father, as he was tuning his violin. All the other children were still fast asleep. I used to think this was the most beautiful music in the world, the sound of birds and the tuning of my Father's violin. As soon as I was dressed I used to go there. He would let me have a sip from his hot, black coffee.

A slow moving image of him playing as part of the quartet was shown in the second room. Other moving images depicted the site of the compost. Two masks were used as pictures/screen and a moving image of compost was projected on them. The films shown on the P-DVD were accompanied by kibbutz ambient sounds and formed a connection with

¹⁷² The Green Music Room 1950's – 1974.

sounds from the compost environment. Boundaries between places and times thus became blurred. A performative act of selling composted earth as fund raising to support *Bat Shalom*, an Israeli-Palestinian feminist organization, had taken place a few weeks after the installation had been dismantled (*Fig. 24*). This performative installation raised the question of boundaries, for example, where and when does it end? I see it as linked with trauma and intergenerational aspects of trauma, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

The white numbers painted on the floor are echoed in the following memory. Kibbutz born Avraham Balaban referred to a case when he fell ill. His parents invited him to sleep at their home.

I lay that evening on my parent's porch, and Mom suggested that I stay for a few days. It felt strange to lie on Mom's bed in the little room [...] At ten Father came home from doing the work roster, and was surprised to find me there. I had only ever slept with them once before [...] In the darkness I heard the sound of the kettle boiling, a teaspoon tinkled, the radio announcer's pedantic voice, a chair being dragged and the shuffle of Father's slippers. These sounds didn't prevent me from falling asleep, and listening to them was like connecting dots to make up a picture. The picture I got was clear enough for me to say to myself, as I dozed off, that I liked the sounds of home, that they were making me sleepy. Strangely enough, as soon as the picture became plain, the sounds duplicated themselves like echoes and turned into a recollection, a dim one to be sure but quite certain, of many other evenings when I did not actually sleep there.¹⁷³

This is an example of bodily memory constructed through illness and sound. Balaban remembers both the unusual event of sleeping in the parents' room, which was accompanied by a good, 'right' feeling, and the many nights of sleeping away from home. Balaban writes:

In those far-off years the intense awareness of the absent mother, who appears only to leave again, flew in the face of the kibbutz projects. "A child cannot long for what it has never had, it cannot miss what it has ever known," the lecturers at the ideological seminars and the training courses for children's nurses persuaded one another.¹⁷⁴

'[...] Though one grew up without her, memory pieced together the few contacts, filled in the gaps and composed the image of the absent mother. Though one grew up without a home,

¹⁷³ Avraham Balaban, *Morning a Father Lost, A Kibbutz Childhood Remembered*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., U.S.A., 2004, p. 14.

¹⁷⁴ Balaban, *Morning a Father Lost, A Kibbutz Childhood Remembered*, 2004, p. 13.

memory built up an image of it.’¹⁷⁵ This is an example of the nature of memory, as a construction made of fragments of real events together with fantasy. Another example is best demonstrated in *Fig. 25*, in which the place still exists, yet the object itself, the Green Music Room, is missing, thus a space for memory, made of real and fantasy, has been opened-up, facilitated in the photograph.

Balaban writes:

Throughout my childhood Mom was a children’s nurse and did not get home before she’d sent “her” children to their parents after supper and laid the tables for the next morning’s breakfast. When she came home she would chat with Father, or rest a little, then we’d walk together to the children’s house where she put me to bed. She would thus take me from a place where she was not to another place where she wouldn’t be. Only on the dark dirt path between them was she wholly mine, and when she sat on the edge of my bed to sing me a lullaby.¹⁷⁶

My kibbutz childhood was shaped by a utopian ideology. This led me to pose the following question. What kind of dialogue is being formed between present and past? Listening carefully to this dialogue has led to the emergence of a traumatic experience and memory, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 13.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 10.

4. Chapter Three: Trauma

The discussion of trauma will be focused on the maternal, as well as the psychological aspect of kibbutz childhood in this chapter. The following texts support this discussion: Janice Cheddie's 'Listening to Trauma in the Art of Evelyn Nicodemus', Elizabeth Gross' 'The Body of Signification', Julia Kristeva's 'Mothering According to Giovanni Bellini', Rivka Levkovitz's *Two Homes of the Kibbutzes' Dream*, Julia Chaitin and Shoshana Steinberg's "'You Should Know Better": Expressions of Empathy and disregard Among Victims of Massive Social Trauma'. A historic, national and ideological aspect of kibbutz childhood will be discussed, supported by Michel Foucault's essay 'The Subject and Power', (1982), in the fourth chapter. Two works are discussed in this chapter, as follows:

Seventh case study: *Culture of Trauma*, installation, 2006;

Eighth case study: *Landscape GB*, DVD, 2006.

These works will be further discussed in the fourth chapter, in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.

Two narratives are present in this research. They are the maternal experience and kibbutz childhood memories. Central to both, are questions of boundaries, fragmentation and invisibility. The exploration of these three themes in perusing the research question has led to the emergence of a traumatic experience and memory, manifested in the installation *Culture of Trauma*. This chapter addresses the question, what kind of dialogue is being formed between present and past? Its aim is to provide a wider understanding of maternal subjectivity by looking at my kibbutz childhood experience and making connections with my own experience as a mother.

4.1 Research Methodology: The Act of Re-visiting

The methodology of Research in Action is based on actions that enable investigation, processing, analysing and consolidation of the research. The kind of action in this research has been articulated as a performative act, a method of investigation which enables reflection on the action while it is being acted, as well as after the act. In other words, it is a method that relates to and connects present and past. Re-visiting the past through a performative act is a constructed activity, distinguished from spontaneous memory. I am visited by a recurring

memory; therefore an appropriate method of investigation, constructed of repetition and documentation, has been implemented.

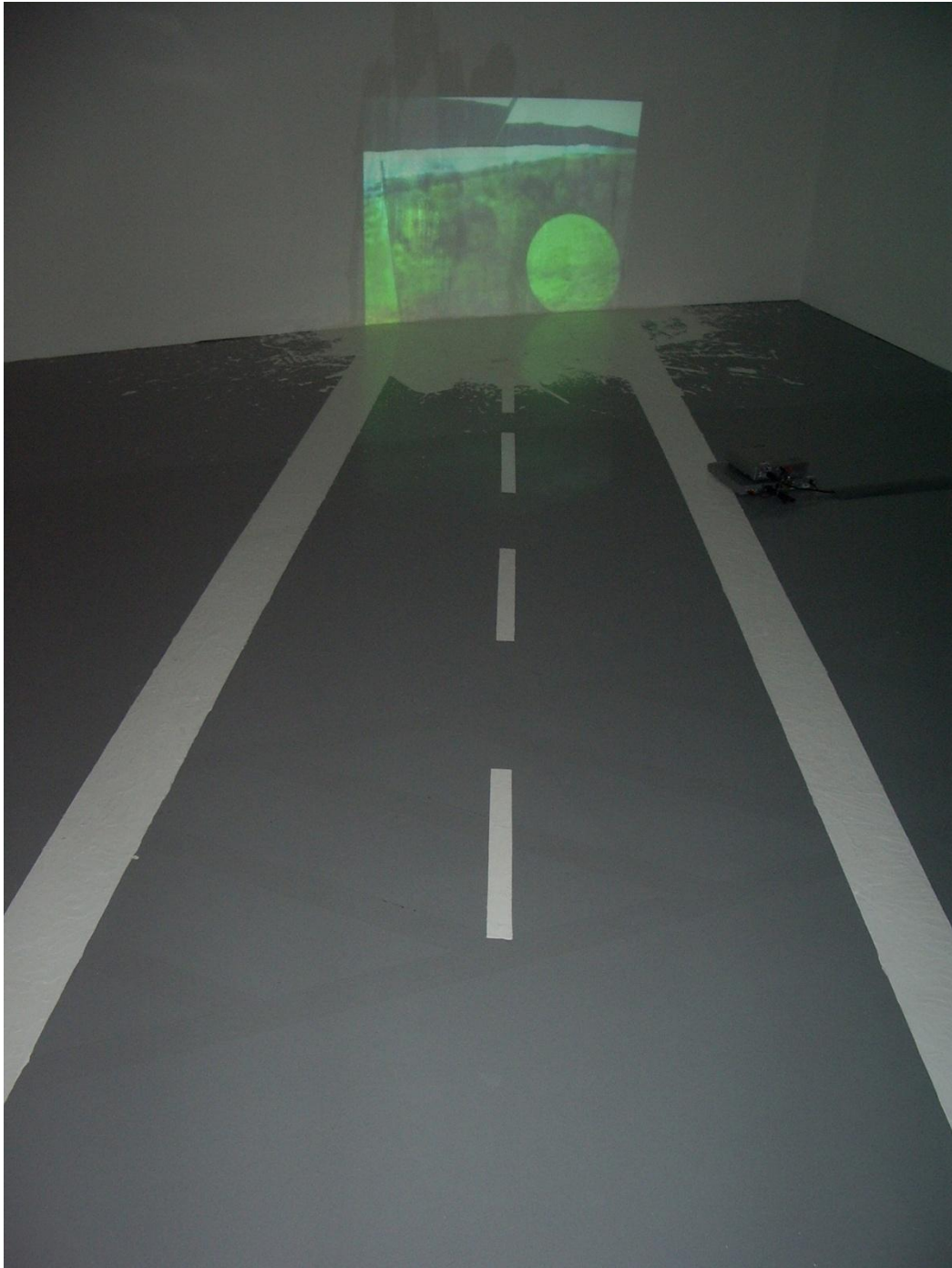


Fig. 26: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Culture of Trauma*, Installation View, 2006

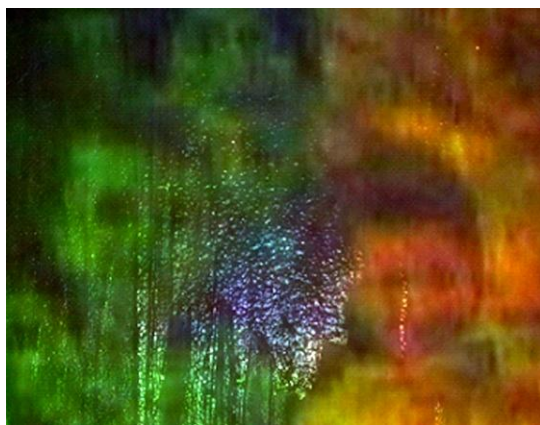
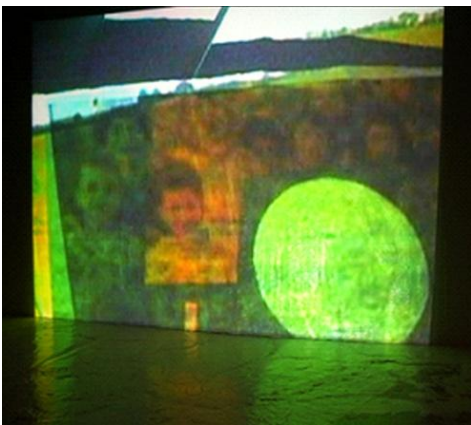
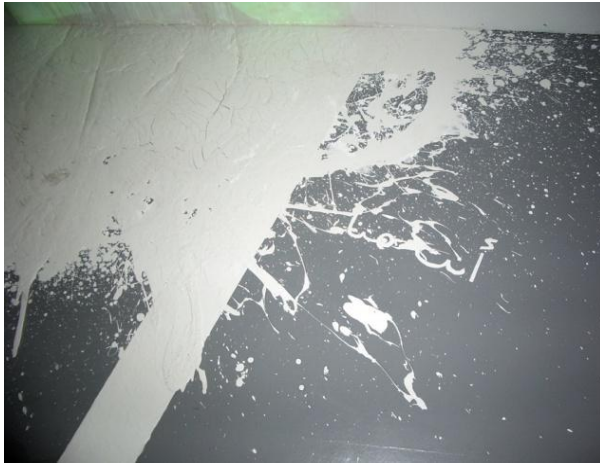


Fig. 27: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Culture of Trauma* Installation Details 1 – 4, 2006



Fig. 28: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Culture of Trauma* (with the film *Landscape GB*)
Installation, 2006

4.2 Seventh case study: *Culture of Trauma*, Installation, 2006

The installation *Culture of Trauma* (Figs. 26, 27), (Cross reference, appendix II) included a projection of a film *Culture of Trauma* on a wall splashed with white emulsion and PVA glue, and a painting resembling a road, which was painted across the whole floor, using the above materials. This painting refers to a car accident (1986), in which ten children were killed, my 15 year old brother amongst them. On the floor, there was a large puddle-like mark, a number and the words 'you are here' written in Arabic. These elements were placed at the meeting point of the painting and the projection. This suggested a collision of personal and collective traumas, as the number was associated with the memory of the Holocaust and the words in Arabic were associated with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In an adjacent corridor, the film *Landscape GB* was shown (Fig. 28), which was included in the installation. *Culture of Trauma* is informed by a chain of traumas, spreading across private and public realms.

4.3 Trauma definition

Trauma is defined as: 'physical injury or wound, or a powerful psychological shock that has damaging effects. [...] [From Greek *trauma* a wound].'¹⁷⁷ According to Janice Cheddie, Freud was the first to introduce trauma into the cultural field. With reference to Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Cheddie defined trauma as

a flooding of the psyche with excess amounts of stimuli from an external event. This results in repetition of the traumatic event through flashbacks, nightmares, a breakdown of the systems of representation – loss of language resulting in silence and paralysis.¹⁷⁸

What we are dealing with here, according to this definition, is a territory marked by containment/non-containment, which can be understood from the description of the psyche as being flooded. This implies a relationship between external and internal spaces. The external space is the place of the external event, which later invades the internal space. There is a repetitive action of flashbacks and nightmares. A breakdown of systems of representation can

¹⁷⁷ Andrew M. Colman, *Oxford dictionary of Psychology*, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 776.

¹⁷⁸ Janice Cheddie, 'Listening to Trauma in the Art of Evelyn Nicodemus in *Third Text*, Vol. 21, Issue 1, January 2007, p. 83.

be understood as the following sentences: ‘nobody can understand what I went through,’ or ‘I don’t know how to say it,’ or ‘I can’t find the words.’ In other words, there is an unbridgeable gap between experience and the subject of this experience. There is a lack of knowledge regarding the use of the available tools of communication (how to), or a lack of tools that will enable communication of the experience. The communication is vital, in my opinion, firstly to the subject him/herself, then to others. I perceive it as an inner noise or muteness, in other words, an interruption in thought processes. I imagine representation as a surface, which allows communication. In trauma, this surface is broken. Instead, there is a bubbling, splitting surface where boundaries collapse.

4.4 Kristeva’s concept of the abject, the maternal body and *Culture of Trauma*

Kristeva theorised the relationship between the body’s exterior and interior, basing her theory on Freud’s and Lacan’s conceptions of identity. The body’s exteriority means the relationship between the body and social conventions. The body, social conventions, theories, art works are all containers. We create containers in order to understand the world we live in; to live in order. With the idea of containers, comes the idea of boundaries. In psychoanalytic terms, the transition from the pre-symbolic, pre-oedipal, to the symbolic is conditioned by training the child to regulate his/her boundaries. The boundaries of the body are crossed by bodily materials such as faeces, urine, vomit, tears and saliva, which need to be controlled by the subject as a condition of social acceptance. These materials, which are part of ‘me’, cannot be fully contained by the body, on the one hand, yet cannot be fully expelled. They need to be expelled, but there is always a possibility of not succeeding. ‘I’ need to reject part of myself. Abjection is the sensation of fear, disgust and horror of the possibility of losing control of these bodily processes, which leads to social rejection and to the subject’s collapsed sense of identity, since there is a danger of being engulfed by these parts.

In pregnancy, birth and raising children, it can be said that one is often more material and process, as one is involved in domestic and caring activities, and less a subject, in the sense that one’s intellectual expression becomes secondary. However, this view comes from a lack of knowledge and understanding of maternal subjectivity, supported by the Cartesian dichotomy of mind versus body. The effort in this research is to open up the maternal experience in order to find a way in, which will enable the reaching of new knowledge and an expansion of understanding; to do so through building cultural ‘tools’ in which the maternal body is included. Elizabeth Gross explains Kristeva’s analysis of maternity as follows:

Like abject, maternity is the splitting, fusing, merging, and fragmenting of a series of bodily processes beyond the will or control of the subject. The woman-mother finds that it is not her identity or value as a woman which maternity affirms, but her position as natural or as a hinge between nature and culture. Pregnancy betrays any tenuous identity she may achieve as a subject and a woman. In pregnancy, she is positioned as space, receptacle, matter; in lactation and nurturing functions, she takes on the position of part-object, complement, and anaclitic prop. In a sense, 'she' is a screen onto which the child's demands are projected and from which images are introjected. 'She' does not exist as such.¹⁷⁹

In the absence of an adequate theory of maternal subjectivity, biological processes, reinforced by social institutions' perceptions seem to dominate, indeed 'frame' one's life. The person who is subjected to these processes needs to re-assert her position, both in relation to one's body and in relation to social conventions.

Boundaries in *Culture of Trauma* were informed by Kristeva's theory of the abject. For example, the floor painting was done using stencils, which created a dialogue between *inside* and *outside*, introducing the idea of containment/non-containment. Paint had been poured or applied by knife, reflecting domestic, maternal bodily functions. This articulation of boundaries as a dialogue, or a conflict, between containment and non-containment has paved the way for a traumatic memory to emerge in the space of the installation. A dialogue/conflict between containment and non-containment refers both to Kristeva's theory of the abject and to Freud's definition of trauma as an event which cannot be fully contained, as a flooding of the psyche.

4.5 Mother-child relationship according to Freud, Lacan and Winnicott; Kibbutz childhood

According to Freud, the child forms its sense of unified 'self' through identification with others, mostly his or her mother, the closest and most significant person to the child. This sense of 'self' is based on illusion; it 'belies the child's own lived experience.'¹⁸⁰ The child's lived experience is fragmented, as information comes from both visual and tactile perceptions.

¹⁷⁹ Elizabeth Gross 'The Body of Signification' in John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin (eds.), *Abjection, Melancholia and Love, The Work of Julia Kristeva*, Routledge, London, 1990, p. 96.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 82.

Lacan identified in 1953 ‘three levels of mental functioning: the Symbolic (or discursive), the Imaginary (or perceptive), and the Real (by which he meant the inner, psychic reality of the individual, and not what is objectively real).’¹⁸¹ Lacan called the Symbolic ‘The law of the Father,’ from an understanding that the child is born into a ‘symbolic, cultural structure.’¹⁸² Lacan termed the ‘mirror stage’ as part of the imaginary, between the ages of six and eight months. Until that age ‘the ego resides in a perception of the Other (usually the mother).’¹⁸³ It is when the child sees his or her reflection on another surface, that she/he can comprehend herself/himself objectively. Lacan elaborated on Freud’s theory, developing his theory of the ‘mirror stage’. This is

the mode of imaginary identification which structures its narcissistic relations with others. Through the fantasy of a cohesive, stable identity, facilitated by its specular identification with its own image, it is able to position itself as a subject within the space of its body.¹⁸⁴

While Freud explained that the child forms its cohesive sense of self, its ‘ego’, through the metaphor of the ‘little man in the head’, the site where the erotogenic surface of the body is projected, Lacan believed that the sense of cohesive self comes from external reflective source, in which the child’s image is caught up. This image is internalised by the child. Both Freud and Lacan based their theories on image, on a complex mechanism, in which the sense of vision is central to the emergence of a unified sense of ‘self’.

According to Freud, the search for meaning is rooted in the child’s relationship with his or her mother. The game *Fort/da* is the child’s attempt ‘to master the trauma of the mother’s absence.’¹⁸⁵ Lacan’s theory explains the connection between the process of gaining psychical cohesion and the desire for meaning. According to Lacan, ‘the subject is incapable of adequately integrating the fragmented sense of its corporeality provided by its senses with the completion, cohesion and totalization of the visual image of the body.’¹⁸⁶ This leads to a

¹⁸¹ Laurie Schneider Adams, *The Methodologies of Art, An Introduction*, HarperCollins Publisher, Inc., New York, U.S.A., 1996, p. 206.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, p. 207.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 208.

¹⁸⁴ Elizabeth Gross ‘The Body of Signification’ in John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin (eds.), *Abjection, Melancholia and Love, The Work of Julia Kristeva*, 1990, p. 82.

¹⁸⁵ Laurie Schneider Adams, *The Methodologies of Art, An Introduction*, 1996, p. 207.

¹⁸⁶ Elizabeth Gross ‘The Body of Signification’ in John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin (eds.), *Abjection, Melancholia and Love, The Work of Julia Kristeva*, 1990, p. 83.

psychic desire for ‘the triad of others, the ego and the object;’¹⁸⁷ the object is first the mother, then the phallus as the signifier of meaning. In the process of symbolisation, the child will perceive itself as having the phallus, as a subject-boy, or as being the phallus, as an object-girl.

While Lacan articulated the ‘mirror stage’ as the child’s perceiving its sense of self, based on an image from an external reflective source, Donald W. Winnicott believed that the child perceives itself through the look of the mother. Winnicott identified the origin of creativity in mother-child dyad. He described the notion of a ‘transitional object’ as an object that the infant gets attached to between the ages of four to twelve months. Together, the ‘transitional object’ and the ‘transitional phenomena’ serve the purpose of symbolization. This is part of the process of separation of the infant from his or her mother. For the child, the ‘transitional object’ is part of himself. It reassures the child at times when the mother is absence. The transitional object and phenomena are what forms the base for creative activity in later life. ‘The transitional object becomes the paradigm of all art which always has a transitional aspect.’¹⁸⁸

In kibbutz childhood, the mother wasn’t present, yet still occupied the position of the significant other. In my view, the child formed his or her sense of *self* based on a collective gaze, granted by the peer-group. The child identified with the group, not with the mother. The *self* in kibbutz childhood might, therefore, be a construct of a group. As demonstrated in chapter two, the gaze of this group was fixed, based on a tacit collective contract, which positioned the needs of the group before the individual’s needs. This sense of *self* is, thus, constructed of partial visibility and invisibility. For a child to be invisible is to not exist. This is, in my understanding, the collective kibbutz childhood trauma.

The film *Culture of Trauma* is a meditation on a peer-group photograph in which my face originally appeared, only to disappear as it was covered by a window-like circle, rendering the face behind as invisible. What lies behind the experience of being both single and plural in maternal and kibbutz contexts? Trauma is the result of an event, which is bigger than one’s psyche. Bigger in the sense that the psyche is flooded, is unable to contain this event. The film *Culture of Trauma* is structured as a looped slow, breath-like movement, appearing at first glance as a still photograph. A photograph of my peer-group has been used in order to deconstruct kibbutz childhood. I will return to describing this process shortly.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, pp. 83-84.

¹⁸⁸ Laurie Schneider Adams, *The Methodologies of Art, An Introduction*, 1996, p. 201.

However, it is interesting to juxtapose Roland Barthes' meditation on the photograph of his mother, after her death. In reading Barthes' *Camera Lucida* from a psychoanalytic perspective, the surface of the image is sublimation for the mother. Barthes "'punctures'" ("pricks") the surface of the image rather than the 'mother', and thus avoids the danger of incest and castration.¹⁸⁹ His punctum is a transitional phenomenon.

Barthes writes in *Camera Lucida* that the punctum is what he adds and what is already there. The photograph of his mother is the ultimate transitional object for Barthes. It binds her to him umbilically despite the finality of her absence, for it records her presence in time and in space. It reassures him that she is alive, even though she is dead, just as the transitional object – and the *fort/da* game – reassures the child that the absent mother is present, or can be made present.¹⁹⁰

Here, the peer-group replaces the mother. The surface of the photograph is 'punctured' by a series of actions, which release traumatic memory. As a transitional object, it functions in this research not as a reassurance that the peer-group is still present, but as an object that enables the healing processes. A deconstruction of the peer-group enables a critical reflection and analysis of the various components and their relationship. Furthermore, it is a process which clarifies the position of the individual within the group, thus expands understanding of one's childhood.

¹⁸⁹ Laurie Schneider Adams, *The Methodologies of Art, An Introduction*, 1996, p. 219.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 219.



Fig. 30: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Peer-group*, Collage, 2006

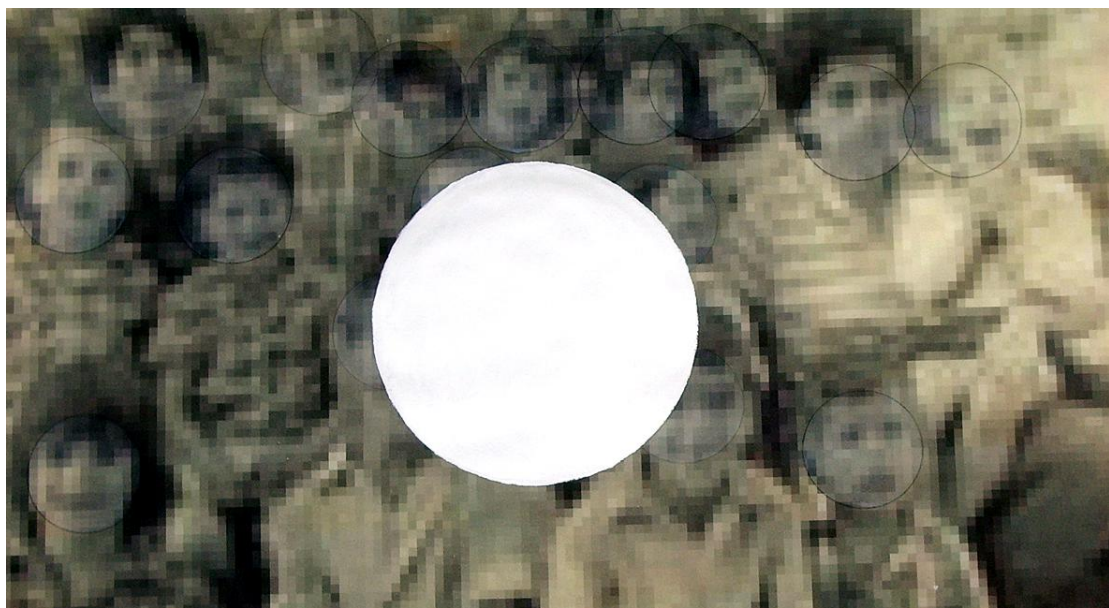


Fig. 31: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Peer-group with White Circle*,
cotton computer print, emulsion, pencil, PVA glue, 2006



Fig. 32: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Peer-group*, Work in progress
cotton computer print, chair, rubber sheet, frame, canvas, 2006

4.6 The process of deconstructing kibbutz childhood, based on the peer group photograph

A childhood photograph depicting my peer group, including myself, surfaced from the archive and became the focus of my attention (*Fig. 29: Gideon Ben-Daat, Peer-group, kibbutz Heftzi-bah, Photograph, 1965. Cross reference, appendix III, p. 208*). I looked at each face, saying to myself the children's names, my non-biological 'brothers' and 'sisters'. Each face 'returned' its knowing look, as if to say: 'you are Yonat'. I asked, what lies behind this knowledge? It led me to think about knowledge itself. I placed the photo on the wall in my studio. For a while almost nothing happened. The only thing that persists was an uneasy feeling of being 'framed'. I asked myself, how can I reveal what I do not know? This led to the decision to make visible what is known. I wrote the name, marital status and place of living on top of each face. This made me aware that some of the details might not be accurate, as marital status or place of living might change. I realised that, although I feel that I know each person (in the photo), I do not know much about them at present. In writing details that may not be true, a 'door has opened' to target the photograph with questions, such as what is true and what is not true?

Still, these faces looked back at me, knowingly. I felt that I could not escape this knowing, which fixed me: you are Yonat. I am a structure of knowledge, which is only partly known to myself. Embedded in 'me' are psychological, historical and cultural knowledge, which I seek. But, how can I reach this knowledge? I searched for a crack, metaphorically speaking, to allow something to begin leaking... I continued by scanning the photograph, enlarging it, then arranged it in a form of collage, on the wall (*Fig. 30*). In doing so, I revealed both stable knowledge (names, for example) and unstable knowledge (place of living or marital status). This undermined the photograph as a cultural representation that supposedly reports the 'truth'. A crack had been revealed, something began to leak...

This action reflected the maternal experience of pregnancy, not only in the act of enlargement, but in a shift from the subject being single to the subject being plural, echoing Kristeva, pregnancy 'wounds but increases me.'¹⁹¹ Observing the photograph further revealed similarities of clothes; all sleeves are folded above elbow. It led to a decision to print the image on cotton fabric (*Fig. 31*) and attach it to a prepared canvas, using a yellow thread, to

¹⁹¹ Julia Kristeva, 'Motherhood According to Giovanni Bellini', in *Desire in Language*, translated by Leon S. Roudiez, New York, Columbia University Press, 1980, p. 237.

create a kind of a patch (*Fig. 32*). This act re-positioned and re-contextualised painting from the territory of art history to a personal historic territory, as it already began to resonate with Holocaust memory. Not my personal memory, but a memory that was passed on through the kibbutz and Israeli collective ambivalent impulse of remembering and forgetting.¹⁹² Pencil was used to mark each face with a circle, using a cup as a template. A thin layer of PVA glue covered each circle. This connected with the ritual of *Coffee Painting*, where questions of context/lack of context emerged.

Trauma affects one in a destructive way, to the point that one loses one's language, as well as ability to represent one's self. Trauma studies from Freud, through Lacan's re-reading of Freud continued through the 1980s and '90s. The various studies have analysed the structure of trauma, the sites of trauma and its magnitude. A new term has been developed, which is Post-Traumatic-Stress-Disorder (PTSD). The Holocaust has been used as a focus for many of these researches.¹⁹³

Julia Chaitin and Shoshana Steinberg, both social psychology researchers from Ben Gurion University, Israel, examined the psychological effects of the Holocaust on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They focused on intergenerational aspects of trauma and re-examined the idea that people who went through massive social trauma, such as war, should be more sensitive to the suffering of others. They found that trauma passes to the next generations. Some of its manifestations are a lack of trust in other people and a fear of getting close to people outside the family. Quoting other research, Chaitin and Steinberg write: 'victims of humiliation, degradation, and violence often displace the anger they feel toward their aggressor on others.'¹⁹⁴ They explain that 'although defence mechanisms are protective, they usually involve self-deception and may seriously hamper effective resolutions of the problem.'¹⁹⁵ As a result, people form a sense of self that is centred on a perception of victimhood. I will return to the discussion of intergenerational trauma in the next chapter.

¹⁹² In the past two decades, interest in the Holocaust grew not only in Israel but around the world, including many studies, visits to Auschwitz concentration camp, literature and public discussions. However, the time discussed in this research addresses my childhood, in which the Holocaust was hardly mentioned. More precisely, the Holocaust was mentioned in specific contexts such as the school curriculum, or in the yearly memorial day.

¹⁹³ Janice Cheddie, 'Listening to Trauma in the Art of Everlyn Nicodemus in *Third Text*, Vol. 21, Issue 1, January 2007, p. 83.

¹⁹⁴ Julia Chaitin and Shoshana Steinberg, "'You Should Know Better': Expressions of Empathy and Disregard Among Victims of Massive Social Trauma', *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 17:2, p. 200 (pp. 197-226), on-line publication, September 2008. This refers to Bar-On, 2007 and Lindner, 2002.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 201.

Kristeva theorised menstruation as part of the abject. As a mark of difference between the sexes, the sensation of horror lies in the disconnection between motherhood and woman's sexual specificity.¹⁹⁶ The repetitive maternal cycle is reflected in the looped film. The articulation of my practice as an expression of my maternal subjectivity had paved the way for a repetitive traumatic memory to emerge in the installation. One of the symptoms of trauma is repetition. Kibbutz life was based on repetition and rituals. Time was strictly used. Time forms an important part of the collective kibbutz identity, for meetings between child and mother were part of the socially constructed use of time. Thus, it can be said that the 'self' is formed on this particular temporality.

I understand expression as an action that gives form to and makes visible something that is hidden inside one's own psyche. Construction is a more complex action, which includes the processing of expression through making connection with other theories, then creating a synthesis. In *Culture of Trauma*, memories and feelings were expressed. The shapes that emerged and the process that led to this expression enabled me to create connections with cultural and psychoanalytical theories. It is through this process that maternal subjectivity might be understood.

4.7 Eighth case study: *Landscape GB*, Film, (2 minute), 2006

Landscape GB (Cross reference, appendix II) is a film that not so much depicts as transmits a succession of army signs, filmed around the village of Barton Stacey. The film is based on a performative act of filming while jogging. It was made with the intention of accessing and deconstructing my personal-national identity. As a result, two works have been produced. First, *ima's March* (this work will be discussed in the fourth chapter) and second, the film *Landscape GB*. This film was edited according to rhythm, rather than vision. The result is a very rapid movement in which images appear and disappear constantly, as they are wrapped in a distorted image-movement that sabotages the sense of vision; a movement in which traces of the running body are still present. Linearity and non-linearity co-exist in this rapid movement.

The film *Culture of Trauma* was made by filming a slowed down version of *Landscape GB* while it was projected on the printed image of the peer-group. As a result, the white circle that covered my face became transparent-like, creating an image of a landscape

¹⁹⁶ Elizabeth Gross 'The Body of Signification' in John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin (eds.), *Abjection, Melancholia and Love, The Work of Julia Kristeva*, Routledge, London, 1990, p. 92.

that is visible behind the group, as well as through it, as the white circle turned into a hole or a wound. (Cross reference, appendix II).



Fig. 34: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Host-Guest*
Installation, Open Studio, 2004,
Details 1-2 (compost slide projected
on Suzuki-Bosco's paintings)

4.8 Space and trauma

In this discussion of trauma and maternal, kibbutz subjectivity space is significant. As demonstrated before, public places were clearly marked, whereas private ones were left undefined in the early days of the state of Israel. In the kibbutz, this was a norm that only changed three decades ago. Based on my experience, I believe that a condition where privacy and intimacy are denied leads to emotional emptiness and negligence. This belief is reinforced by psychotherapist and social worker Rivka Levkovitz's *Two Homes of the Kibbutzes' Dream* (2008), in which the experiences of three generations of childhood and motherhood in the kibbutz have been explored and analysed. Levkovitz based her study on conversations, treatment sessions, and psychological researches. While public spaces were well looked after, private and inner spaces were forgotten. For example, babies in the kibbutz were looked after by a nurse, while the mother worked elsewhere and was allowed to come and feed her baby every four hours, for a short period of time. At night, another woman looked after the baby. Levkovitz looked at this system and considered its effects with regard to the Object Relation theories of Klein, Winnicott, and Anna Freud, to name but a few. With regard to the mother-child relationship, Levkovitz writes:

[...] the mother is the first object of attachment for the baby. She is the provider, the carer, the one who holds, understands and empathises with her baby. She is the supportive presence, which allows going away from and coming back to [...], she is the real other outside the baby [...]. The mother [...] enables a total dependency for her baby. If this condition is fulfilled, the baby can experience his own feelings and live in fantasy in relation to his or her environment [...] with time his or her ability to be alone, as well as with others, will develop.¹⁹⁷

The mothers' presence at this crucial stage of development was minimal. The nurse could not provide the same level of care as the mother. According to Levkovitz, the absence of the mother

can explain the feelings of lack, pain, desertion and alienation which surfaced during therapy sessions, these express the earliest difficulty of children in a kibbutz. Children who during the early years of their development were not raised by a mother as one permanent, facilitating

¹⁹⁷ Rivka Levkovitz, *Two Homes of the Kibbutzes' Dream, Childhood and Motherhood in the Kibbutz – three generations*, Carmel Publishing, Jerusalem, Israel, 2007, pp. 181-182. All quotations from this source have been translated from the Hebrew by Yonat Nitzan-Green.

and accessible person, but by many nurses, without a continuity of care, and without the possibility of creating a primary, qualitative connection.¹⁹⁸

Theoreticians, such as Winnicott, researched what happens to children who were separated from their mothers too early. The baby has no containment, the possibility to be fully dependent is denied and, as Levkovitz explains, ‘there is a failure in forming connection with the mother at the narcissistic stage, in which the baby has to be at the centre.’¹⁹⁹ The baby may experience it as a

breakdown in the connection [with the mother], a discontinuity in his existence. For the baby – a breakdown, desertion or the loss of a mother can be a catastrophic experience, [...] a physical and sensual traumatic tear.²⁰⁰

This experience can be interpreted by the baby as

a loss of part of his or her body [...] a “black hole” in the emotional landscape. He may sense a disconnection, a leak, a treacle, a scatter, dismantlement, a loss of boundaries and a danger of falling into a bottomless abyss and a disappearance.²⁰¹

At one of the sessions of my own counselling, after a long period of establishing trust with my therapist, Judy Gaskell, I have created a connection with my early childhood memories. The memory did not come through words, but through a cry. Judy described it at the time as a ‘wail’. I was not sure what she meant, but understood the general idea. Now, reading Levkovitz’s analysis, I revisited this episode and wondered what words will describe that cry. I found my answer in the words of Levkovitz: the baby ‘experienced stress, suffering, anxiety, rage, shock, panic, horror, desperation, helplessness, meaningless, nothingness and chaos.’²⁰² These words describe accurately that cry. Indeed, I had to come to

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 182.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 191.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 191.

²⁰¹ Ibid, p. 191.

²⁰² Ibid, p. 191.

term with the fact that I am one of these children that this book discusses. As a baby I was deserted, to a large extent, by my mother, due to the kibbutz system.

My inner space came literally to life with motherhood, in the sense that previously it was not dead, but unfelt and unknown. The psyche is like an inner container which, according to the definition of trauma, is flooded. It can be said that the search for maternal subjectivity is metaphorically like a torch which illuminated this inner, neglected space (Cross reference, appendix I, p. 188).

Kristeva's theory of the abject is relevant to the understanding of subjectivity, because it shifted the cultural discussion from the mind/body dichotomy to the field of thought, which considers body/society relationship. Gross writes:

In place of the mind/body dichotomy, the fundamental connectedness of the mind to the body, the creation of a psychical 'interior' for the body's object-like status, the mapping of the body's interior on its exterior and its exterior on its interior, all need to be theorized.²⁰³

Kibbutz boundaries were artificially fixed; always attuned to the need of the group. The denial of a nucleus family had led to the denial of organic boundaries.²⁰⁴ One was positioned and judged according to axis of being 'in-order'/'out-of-order'.

Boundaries were determined and regulated by social rules. Tamir writes, 'these "mother groups" were not only nurturing "body", but also ideal image regulator, collective conscience and supervisory authority.'²⁰⁵ What kind of space does the subject inhabit under these circumstances? Let us consider the spaces that the child used, first the Children-House and second the Parents' Room. Tamir describes the Children-House as follows:

The 'children's home' itself, architecturally austere, serial and efficient, contained all the functions of daily life: from bedrooms (four children per room), bathrooms and dining rooms, through to classrooms; the maximum exposure of the individual and the annihilation of the private and intimate within it.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Elizabeth Gross 'The Body of Signification' in John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin (eds.), *Abjection, Melancholia and Love, The Work of Julia Kristeva*, Routledge, London, 1990, p. 82.

²⁰⁴ By organic boundaries I mean boundaries that emerge within a nucleus family, out of mutual acts of listening to each member of this unit and his or her needs; through the possibility of negotiating family rules.

²⁰⁵ Tali Tamir, *Togetherness: the Group and the Kibbutz in Collective Israeli Consciousness*, 3.6 – 3.9 2005 Exhibition and Catalogue, Published by Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 2005, p. 205.

²⁰⁶ Tamir, *Togetherness: the Group and the Kibbutz in Collective Israeli Consciousness*, 2005, p. 205.

This was a communal building in which the child was made to feel at home; this was home. The kibbutz born architect Hagai Tamir revisited the Children's House in which he grew-up. Hagai Tamir writes:

The Children's House was an attempt at an extreme equalised architecture. This was manifested in absolute identical rooms [...] all the doors, windows and blinds are of the same kind, to the smallest detail. Life in the Children's House was centred along the corridor [...] an open passage that led to nowhere, yet allowed full control. There was not a private or intimate corner in the Children's House, however, as children we could identify special places, such as the end room, a bed near the window, or a cornered shelf for the clothes.²⁰⁷

What emerges from these texts is the understanding that in kibbutz ideology, which was based on Marxist socialism and a belief in equality, sameness was promoted and difference was erased. Equality and same had one, identical meaning. The corridor, as, in Tamir's words, 'an open passage which led to nowhere' was echoed in the installation *Culture of Trauma*, its muteness broken by visual noise, which came from the monitor showing the film *Landscape GB*. Here Bachelard's words resonate:

The poetic image [...] is not an echo of the past. On the contrary: through the brilliance of an image, the distant past resounds with echoes, and it is hard to know at what depth these echoes will reverberate and die away.²⁰⁸

Next to consider here is the Parents' Room. This emerged as a topic following a performative act that took place two years earlier in my studio. *Host-Guest*, 2004, was an Open Studio event in which *ima* hosted a guest, the painter Noriko Suzuki-Bosco (Fig. 33: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Host-Guest*, Installation with Suzuki-Bosco's paintings, Open Studio, 2004. Cross reference, appendix III, p. 209). A wall had been specially erected in order to accommodate Suzuki-Bosco's paintings, which depict fragments of life with children from a mother's perspective. They were made from a close, daily observation of her daughters. They are small

²⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 23. Translated from the Hebrew by Yonat Nitzan-Green.

²⁰⁸ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston Massachusetts, U.S.A., 1994, P. xvi.

and have a compelling simplicity. This event included several interviews with Noriko, which were done in the space of the exhibition, as well as a performance in which *ima* interviewed Noriko outside a Newsagent's shop in Winchester (Cross reference, appendix I, pages 189 - 191). A comment was made in response to this show: 'the guest is at home, but where is the host?' which has led me to consider the question of invisibility.

I looked for ways to make myself/*ima* visible, yet encountered a contradiction, since invisibility is inherent in the persona. This has led to project slides from the compost on Noriko's paintings (*Fig. 34*), in which her paintings became only partially visible. As mentioned before, compost was used as a metaphor for the self; more precisely, it stands for the abject, as an extension of the maternal body. The self is manifested through a trace imprinted in a long chain: the hand which held the knife, which peeled the vegetable with a certain energy, which was cooked at home, which was chewed and spat by the child. Time was articulated through the qualities of appearance and disappearance in the form of the projected compost slides. It is in this context that we can understand invisibility, as well as being between places. Maternal subjectivity is informed by this kind of time.

In a conference, the artist Lily Markiewicz read her essay 'Some Thoughts on Feeling-at-Home'.²⁰⁹ Markiewicz said, 'I opt for an approach that positions "dwelling" as an activity that is neither bound to a specific topography, nor to a sense of belonging.'²¹⁰ Markiewicz referred to her installation as a place of affect, in which boundaries of time and space dissolve, leading to displacement of the audience. 'What follows is a sense of being without a place/space, "becoming unaccommodated", yet not disassociated.'²¹¹ Markiewicz talked about a traumatic memory that does not locate in the past, but instead, is experienced in a non-chronological, non-territorial way and at every possible point of the present.²¹² This talk, as well as the *Host-Guest* event, led to a consideration of the Parent's Room as a space in which the child was, to repeat Markiewicz's words, 'unaccommodated, yet not disassociated'.

The sentence: 'the guest is at home, but where is the host?' signified for me a place where presence and absence co-exist. The paintings were lit in a way that emphasised their object quality. As such, they are given to the effects of time like any other object in the

²⁰⁹ Art 'After Landscape' memory, place and identity, 5-6/11/2004, Leeds University, Conference.

²¹⁰ Art 'After Landscape' memory, place and identity, Conference paper (pages un-numbered).

²¹¹ Ibid

²¹² Markiewicz referred to Benjamin's Gleichzeitigkeit (of past in present).

world. Past and present were included in this representation; the painted images and the shadow were of equal importance.

4.9 Maternal Trauma

Ruth Quiney wrote about the ‘maternal trauma’, ‘as shocking dislocations of an original, pre-maternal “true” self,’²¹³ as it is portrayed by a genre of writers called ‘confessional writers’.

The events that cause maternal trauma are pregnancy and birth. The question is how such extraordinary events in which life emerges can be causes of trauma? At the ‘heart’ of the matter is the clash between these events and the lack of socio-cultural terms with which to express and process them. Quiney writes:

The physical shock of bodily invasion, erupting fluidity and mess accompanies the socio-cultural dislocation and bewilderment of writers who have previously inhabited an affluent middle-class realm in which the demand of the body may be consigned to a minimal space out of public view. Pregnancy and childbirth magnify those demands [...].²¹⁴

One finds oneself dislocated with regard to the relationship of self, body and society. Amber Jacobs suggested another alternative to the Oedipal model, and critiqued psychoanalytical practice as follows:

The lack of attention to the mother’s place within the structural laws of the human order means that psychoanalysis remains complicit with the reproduction of a model that relegates the mother to the realm of the imaginary.²¹⁵

A strategy of subversion is employed in this research. This strategy is based on the imaginary; elaborates the imaginary; takes the freedom hidden within the position of the imaginary. It is within this position, relegated by society, that the persona *ima* had emerged. Culture doesn’t provide *tools* with which to express, process and reach new a understanding

²¹³ Ruth Quiney, ‘Confessions of the New Capitalist Mother: Twenty-First-century writing on Motherhood as Trauma in *Women: a cultural review* Vol. 18, No. 1, 2007, p. 20.

²¹⁴ Ibid, p. 28.

²¹⁵ Amber Jacobs, ‘Towards a Structural Theory of Matricide: Psychoanalysis, The Oresteia and the Maternal Prohibition in *Women: a cultural review*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2004, p. 19.

of maternal experiences. Therefore, what is available is an ‘imaginary self’, an ‘alter-ego’, an ‘abject’ or ‘a trace of the original self’.

As part of her discussion of kibbutz childhood trauma, Levkovitz relates to Winnicott’s term ‘false self’.²¹⁶ Levkovitz explains:

The “false self” develops as a reaction to the mother or environment, which demands that the baby adjust to their requirements, instead of the mother and environment adjusting to and fulfilling the baby’s needs. The “false self” is obedient and lives out of a reaction to the environment, not out of spontaneity that integrates with the world, creates and gives the baby a sense of being. The role of the “false self” is to fulfil the requirements of the environment and hide the real self, thus defending himself.²¹⁷

Based on this, it can be deduced that the method of a persona has earlier origins in kibbutz childhood trauma. The ‘false self’ is a defence mechanism, which has been appropriated as a method for researching maternal subjectivity. In my opinion, in appropriating an almost in-born quality, a defence mechanism, as a research method, there is an opportunity for healing a deep emotional wound. The film *Landscape GB*, can be seen as a reaction to the environment, however this reaction has been motivated and produced by performative acts, which re-assert the relationship between the environment and the subject. Levkovitz’s words, which I found so accurately described my cry at the therapy session, also describe the emotional content that informs this film: stress, suffering, anxiety, rage, shock, panic, horror, desperation, helplessness, meaningless, nothingness and chaos.

According to Gross:

Kristeva claims that, on the one hand, maternity positions the woman in a kind of corporeal contiguity with her own mother, satisfying the infantile desire to give/bear her own mother a child: here, maternity functions in a ‘maternal-homosexual axis’. The baby comes to represent the mother herself, and she, her own mother, in a vertiginous identification which brings the mother into contact with her own mother’s maternity.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ D.W. Winnicott, *The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment*, Karnac Books, London, 1990, pp.140-152; in Rivka Levkovitz, *Two Homes of the Kibbutzes’ Dream, Childhood and Motherhood in the Kibbutz – three generations*, Carmel Publishing, Jerusalem, Israel, 2007, p. 117

²¹⁷ Ibid, p. 117.

²¹⁸ Elizabeth Gross ‘The Body of Signification’ in John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin (eds.), *Abjection, Melancholia and Love, The Work of Julia Kristeva*, Routledge, London, 1990, p. 96.

Here, Kristeva points to a psycho-biological position. However, she also positions the mother in a symbolic position, 'in which her body is marked as phallic or castrated according to masculine criteria.'²¹⁹ Maternity, according to Kristeva, is both a production of 'social matter' and 'a breach or rupture in the symbolic.'²²⁰ Kristeva writes, 'women cannot be: the category woman is even that which does not fit into being. From there, women's practice can only be negative, in opposition to what exists [...].'²²¹

The subject and the body are linked in maternal trauma. What was my mother's maternity experience? Mothers from the first and second generations, according to Levkovitz, expressed 'guilt and regret [...]' 'we have neglected [...] threw away [...] left the children''²²². For mothers of the second generation, in particular, there was double displacement, first, as daughters, second as mothers. The kibbutz system of communal sleep has changed, so now children sleep at their parents' homes. In that context, Levkovitz writes: '[...] these mothers, who were born and grew up in the system of the communal sleep, didn't have an internalised and familiar model of parenting, based on the family. It was the second time of creating something out of nothing.'²²³

4.10 Maternal trauma – a Jungian perspective

The investigation into the subject of the maternal body emerged from one's personal maternal trauma. There was no cultural representation, nor cultural, historical continuity with which one can have a dialogue as a mother-artist. The first few years, since becoming a mother, were spent in dark frustration, regarding my own artwork. Keeping the 'art world' separate from other daily actions led to a spiritual, emotional and mental 'dead-end'.

It was only with the intuitive decision to merge the two 'worlds', which 'I' became: the world of artist and the world of mother, that a significant breakthrough took place. Left-over, uncooked food, in other words a compost material, was incorporated into the painting, together with 'art world' materials, graphite powder and PVA glue.²²⁴ Another decision was taken not to end the painting on the paper, but to continue using the camera to explore and

²¹⁹ Ibid, p. 96.

²²⁰ Ibid, p. 96.

²²¹ *The Kristeva Reader*, (ed.) Toril Moi, Blackwell, Oxford 1986, p. 166.

²²² Levkovitz, *Two Homes of the Kibbutzes' Dream, Childhood and Motherhood in the Kibbutz – three generations*, 2007, p. 221.

²²³ Ibid, p. 231.

²²⁴ Clarissa Pinkola Estes, *Women Who Run With The Wolves*, 1998, p. 231.

articulate new compositions and meanings. The work began in 1996 and was finally completed in the form of a book called *Compost* in 1999.²²⁵ It included images from the painting, as well as images from my personal, maternal environment, and from the kibbutz Heftzi-bah archive. This work was informed by the Jungian psychoanalyst Clarissa Pinkola Estes.

According to Pinkola Estes, the Wild woman or Wild Mother is represented as Baba Yaga, a folklore fictional character who is responsible for both death and renewal.

Metaphorically, she is the abject. Pinkola Estes writes:

Baba Yaga is instinctive nature in the guise of the witch. Like the word *wild*, the word *witch* has come to be understood as a pejorative, but long ago it was an appellation given to both old and young women healers, the word *witch* deriving from the word *wit*, meaning wise. [...] the ogress, the witch, the wild nature, and whatever other *criaturas* and integral aspects the culture finds awful in the psyches of women are the very blessed things which women often need most to retrieve and bring to the surface.²²⁶

Pinkola Estes introduces the term the ‘unmothered’. She writes:

A mother must be mothered in mothering her own offspring. Though a woman has an inalienable spiritual and physical bond with her offspring, in the world of the instinctual Wild Woman, she does not just suddenly become a fully formed temporal mother all by herself.²²⁷

In the kibbutz, mothers and their children did not live together. Children were raised by other women in a functional atmosphere. There was a warm and loving atmosphere, mixed with criticism and censorship that came from the community, but the mother and father had very little time to be with their children. Regarding intuition, Pinkola Estes writes:

It is not intuition which is broken, but rather the matrilineal blessing on intuition, the handing down of intuitive reliance between a woman and all females of her lines who have gone before her – it is that long river of women that has been dammed.²²⁸

²²⁵ Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Compost*, book, 1999.

²²⁶ Pinkola Estes, *Women Who Run With The Wolves*, 1998, p. 89.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

Intuition has led to the combining of the different aspects in me, which from a ten-year perspective, is recognised as a healing process. According to Pinkola Estes: ‘[...] if she is unmothered, her instincts have not been sharpened.’²²⁹ A person who’s basic instinct has been injured ‘instead of aiming toward new life, [...] sits down in a psychic pool of glue. Lack of fleeing when it is absolutely warranted causes depression.’²³⁰ I read Pinkola Estes’ book after making this work. The above quote illuminates clearly my own maternal experience as a young mother. It shed light on my choice of material in this work.

4.11 Intergenerational trauma

On reflection, the decision not to end the painting echoes both a new perception of time, which may be the result of maternal experiences of pregnancy, birth and raising children; and a reference to intergenerational trauma. This is based on Chaitin’s and Steinberg’s discussion of the long term effects of trauma. These authors explain trauma according to Keilson.²³¹

Instead of looking at trauma as an “event” that has “consequences,” Keilson (1994) views trauma as a process with lifelong sequences [...] This can explain why trauma often continues throughout life and it also helps us understand why some individuals develop symptoms years after the original trauma. Keilson’s concept also has implications for intergenerational transmission of trauma. That is, since there is no “post” in trauma, descendants of victims may also be affected by the original traumatic situation.²³²

The trauma passes from one generation to the next. This is an on-going experience, which is, in my opinion, intuitively reflected in the decision not to end the painting.

²²⁸ Ibid, p. 87.

²²⁹ Ibid, p. 186

²³⁰ Ibid, p. 231

²³¹ H. Keilson, Sequential traumatising in children, Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1994 in Julia Chaitin and Shoshana Steinberg, “You Should Know Better”: Expressions of Empathy and Disregard among Victims of Massive Social Trauma’, *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 17:2, p. 223 (pp. 197-226), on-line publication, September 2008.

²³² Julia Chaitin and Shoshana Steinberg, “You Should Know Better”: Expressions of Empathy and Disregard among Victims of Massive Social Trauma’, *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 17:2, p. 201 (pp. 197-226), on-line publication, September 2008.

Chaitin and Steinberg discuss the trauma of the Holocaust and not a kibbutz childhood trauma or a maternal trauma; however, I decided to include this quote because within the context of this research all three categories are relevant.

Compost was a beginning of the exploration of the three themes, invisibility, fragmentation and questions of boundaries, which became central in the research and the practice that emerged.

4.12 Disturbance and Interference

The film *Landscape GB* was edited based on the principle of imitating the domestic action of making a salad, in which frames were mixed. This created the effect of very rapid change and movement. The army signs, which in the first version of the film appear every eight or ten seconds, appear continuously in the second version, sometime overlapping. This creates a bubbling, over-flowing surface. It led me to read about the concept of haptic visuality. Haptic is a physiological term, which was appropriated by Alois Riegl around 1893. According to the feminist film theoretician, Laura U. Marks:

Optical visuality depends on separation between the viewing subject and the object. Haptic looking tends to move over the surface of its object rather than plunge into illusionistic depth, not to distinguish form so much as to discern texture. It is more inclined to move than to focus, more inclined to graze than to gaze [...].²³³

I asked myself whether the short film *Landscape GB* is haptic or optic. The rapid movement of the image creates a sense of surface, which constantly clashes with fragments of illusionistic, optical space. It is haptic in the sense that it affects the brain. The image, in other words, threatens to invade the spectator's body. In another installation, TV monitors were positioned around the school, showing the film *Landscape GB*. A warning sign was placed next to each monitor by the school administrator, to alert people to the fact that this film can trigger epilepsy.

The trauma therapy EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing) is based on rapid eye movement (REM), a natural biological function that takes place while

²³³ Laura U. Marks, 2000:62 in Rosemary Betterton (ed.), *Unframed, Practices & Politics of Women's Contemporary Painting*, I.B.Tauris, London 2004, p. 124.

dreaming and helps to process emotions. Professor Chris Brewin, (University College London) proposed Dual Representation Theory (DRT):

The situationally accessible memory system (SAM), which is located in the emotional part of the brain called the amygdala, interferes with hippocampal function, disrupting encoding in Verbally Accessible Memory (VAM). It is this impairment in VAM that accounts for increased intrusions. EMDR plays a critical role in transferring information from the non-hippocampally (amygdala) dependent SAM memory store to the hippocampally-based VAM and completing the processing of the trauma.²³⁴

Here, the interference or disturbance is articulated and explained in a physio-psychological professional language. It also explains a new way of helping people who suffer trauma. Work on both films and the installation was centred on processing traumatic memories. *Landscape GB* is informed by this process. The method of writing in the stream of consciousness allowed the re-visiting of the unconscious. This, in turn, enabled childhood memories that were suppressed to come to the surface of the consciousness and become known to me. What is common to both, the writing and making this film, is a flow that seems to emerge from an inner bodily memory. This flow collides with, and thus disturbs, the sense of vision. The subject has to negotiate her way in the world through this impairment. The interference appeared earlier in a series of paintings called *Red Painting*, 2004. These are monochromatic, yet a dark mark appears in each one of the paintings. *Red Painting* referred to menstrual blood and explored the way the subject locates herself within the context of feminine sexuality. The dark mark appeared again in *Yellow Painting*, 2004. Here, the subject and the body were explored in relation to private and public places. The installation *Yellow Painting* was manifested as a group of short moving images, which combined vision and movement, both restricted. In other words, the interruption was extended to include a painted mark and a disrupted visual moving image. These have paved the way for the making of *Landscape GB*.

The film *Landscape GB* appeared in the film *Culture of Trauma*. What meaning can be gained from this situation, in which one work appears, or reflects in another work? This has ‘opened the door’ to thinking about the relationship between works, as well as between works and audience, as a way to expand understanding of the mother-child relationship and

²³⁴ <<http://www.cognitivetherapy.me.uk/emdr.htm>> From: Michael Cameron BABCP and UKCP registered Cognitive Behavioural Therapist (CBT) and Counsellor.

maternal subjectivity. In terms of rhythm, there is a contrast: one film is fast, the other is slow. In terms of imagery, both imply an emotional wound. In the installation, the two films appear in close proximity to each-other, as well as the first appearing in the second film itself. These three points bear similarity to the mother and child relationship: the mother's body is slow, whereas the child's body is fast. The emotional wound can be interpreted as intergenerational trauma. The closeness, too, can be compared to the closeness of the two bodies. In considering the works and audience relationship, it appears that the installation opened two spaces: one is wide, inviting a meditative viewing and reflection, while the other (narrow corridor) invites the audience but restricts the viewing time. The space of the installation can be described as an ambivalent space which needs to be negotiated. The maternal body and its subject are present through imagery constructed by movement in vision, a trace of a performative act.

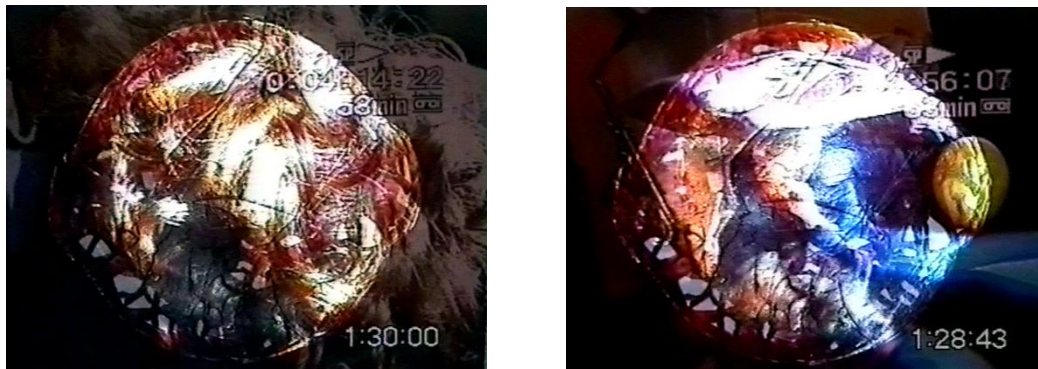


Fig. 35: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Watching The Family Watching*, DVD Diary, DVD Stills 1 – 2, 2003

4.13 Video, the maternal body and trauma

The video diary *ima Watching the Family Watching*, (Fig. 35), 2003, took place over a period of few months. This was a performative act of filming my family while they were watching TV or films projected on the wall in our living-room. Filming was done by myself and my young children, from both eye-level, and body level. This was a way to continue the visual articulation of maternal experience: flow, leak, control/lack of control, different conceptions of time. A strategy of negation was employed, preventing the sense of vision from dominating the work, allowing bodily movements and expression to imprint their traces. At a later stage, the diary was projected onto a *Coffee Painting*, in order to explore the relationship between painting and film. The painting anchored and stabilized the erratic movement of the film. The shiny surface of the painting reflected back light, which interfered with the projected image. Like *Red Painting* and *Yellow Painting*, it too had paved the way for *Landscape GB*.

‘Haptic perception is usually defined by psychologists as the combination of tactile, kinaesthetic, and proprioceptive functions, the way we experience touch both on the surface of and inside our bodies.’²³⁵ In the installation, *Culture of Trauma*, the maternal body is not represented, but present in an indexical manner, both in the materiality of the floor painting and in the films, through movement and rhythm. The movement of the running body and the hand holding the camera has left its imprint in the film. Rhythm, which comes from listening to echoes of maternal trauma, echoes of childhood trauma, echoes of trauma of past generations, of persecutions of Jews in the Holocaust; echoes of trauma of the other, the Palestinian suffering and injustice, entwined with the birth of Israel.

In *Culture of Trauma*, the position of trauma in my psyche has shifted from an event, which is located in a fixed past, to an action, in which present and past are dialoguing in the space and time of the installation. Installation is perceived here with reference to Lily Markiewicz’s statement ‘as interventions in time and space.’ Traumas have been listened to and acted out, actualised in material and vibrations of light. In editing both films according to rhythm, rather than vision, the auditory sense has been used.

From referring to Judith Butler’s question, ‘What does one do with early childhood? Or rather, what does early childhood do with us?’ to her claim that ‘the “I” was not always on

²³⁵ Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of The Film, Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2000, 162. The author refers to 19th century art historian Alois Riegle’s distinction between Haptic and Optical images.

the scene, recollecting itself,²³⁶ it is through materials, body and movement that a deeply suppressed childhood trauma, together with other traumas, can be reached.

The subject may not be able to tell his or her story because this story-event happened before words were formed in the subject's mind. However, the body stores memory, using all senses which are available to the child from the early stages of development, and this memory can be awoken through the creative process, in which the body (of the artist-child) is involved, particularly in this research, through installation and performative acts.

4.14 Body memory

Deborah Fausch writes on contemporary architectural theory, discussing strategies for feminist architecture. She uses the term 'feminist architecture' strategically, as a stance for women, with regard to a history 'linked to a hatred of the feminine.'²³⁷ She makes it clear, however, that this term is not an essentialist claim. In other words, it does not 'frame' women stating that they ought to have a relationship with a certain type of architecture. Fausch points out a tradition of architecture centred on the sense of vision, the Western tradition that promotes and links the capacity of thought and the value of ideas with sight, light and vision. This tradition distances itself from the body, which has been perceived as 'mere matter'.²³⁸ Fausch suggests considering the body within the architectural context in a way that will 'give validity to a sense of the self as bodily – a sense that may be shared by both sexes.'²³⁹ The bodily, Fausch explains, 'is feminist.'²⁴⁰ She writes: '[...] not that a concern with the body is a guarantee of nonoppressive attitudes, but that nonoppressive attitude would include a regard for the bodily. It is to claim that women can have a body without *being* the body.'²⁴¹ By feminist architecture, Fausch suggests that the body will be perceived 'as a necessary instrument in absorbing the content of the experience.'²⁴² Fausch uses Le Corbusier's chapel at La Tourette as an example of feminist architecture, 'whose dark, high, oblong shape must be experienced more by the reverberation of sound and the movement of the body than by

²³⁶ Brian Massumi (ed.), *Bracha L. Ettinger, The Matrixial Borderspace*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 2006, first page.

²³⁷ Deborah Fausch, 'The Knowledge of the Body and the Presence of History, Toward a Feminist Architecture' in Amelia Jones (ed.), *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 2003, p. 426.

²³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 426.

²³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 427.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 426

²⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 426.

²⁴² *Ibid*, p. 427.

sight [...].'²⁴³ Another example is Welcome Park, designed by Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown, in Philadelphia. These architects used miniaturisation in order to provoke a 'hyperawareness of the body.'²⁴⁴

It is within the context of architecture and the embodiment of knowledge that Fausch writes about memory. According to Fausch:

Preliterate Greeks knew that all of the senses and emotions must be engaged in order to remember; thus they inculcated important cultural knowledge with rhyme, rhythm, dance, song, and story. All knowledge was body language.²⁴⁵

By integrating body and knowledge, the Cartesian categorisation of 'body', on the one hand, and 'mind', on the other, can be bridged. In Fausch's words:

Such a rapprochement of subject and object, ideal and material, mind and body, in a new, postliterate form of mixed whole could thus be said to "produce" a feminist subject whose strategy is the embodiment of knowledge.²⁴⁶

4.15 Separation

A conversation fragment: Gilad (son, age 9) and Yonat (mother), 22.03.2001.

Gilad: 'Mummy is a famous island and Gilad is an island with tourists that want to come to mummy. When Gilad is holding mummy a lot there're more bridges for the tourists to get on mummy, but when Gilad is not holding mummy a lot there're less bridges for the tourists to come.'

Kristeva writes: 'Abjection preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which the body becomes separated from

²⁴³ Ibid, p. 427.

²⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 428.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 429.

²⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 431.

another body in order to be [...].'²⁴⁷ Abjection, therefore, can be understood as a psychical container of memory. Such a container requires constant attention, movement, and dialogue with other containers. As such, it is utilised as a base on which my practice is formed, in this research. This practice is a *vehicle* to process, understand, and communicate experience. The ability to 'speak', both in visual terms and in words, about maternal trauma, as well as other personal and collective traumas, facilitates the healing process. The development and use of this practice may establish a positive position for women in historical and cultural considerations. It is through this practice, in which sexual specificity is explored and articulated, as a dialogue between artworks, and the maternal body, that maternal subjectivity is understood.

Considering the relationship between theory and practice, with regard to the separation of one body from another, from the phenomenology of the poetic image, Gaston Bachelard writes:

The phenomenology of the poetic imagination allows us to explore the being of man considered as the being of a *surface*, of the surface that separates the region of the same from the region of the other. It should not be forgotten that in this zone of sensitized surface, before being, one must speak, if not to others, at least to oneself. And advance always. In this orientation, the universe of speech governs all the phenomena of being [...] By means of poetic language, waves of newness flow over the surface of being. And language bears within itself the dialectics of open and closed. Through *meaning* it encloses, while through poetic expression, it opens up.²⁴⁸

This quote is useful to consider in the context of a dialogue between theory and practice. Going back to chapter one, Kelly's *Post Partum Document* is a good example. While meaning is located and enclosed in Lacan's psychoanalytic theory of child development, Mary Kelly's poetic expression opens up the possibility to re-consider meaning through the relationship between theory and practice. Similarly, this research is founded on a dialogue between theories and practice, in a dynamic whereby objects, ideas, thoughts and actions are juxtaposed; in-depth listening is utilised; meaning that is enclosed in texts opens up in the space of installation. The artworks and practice are analysed, using a feminist, psychoanalytic contextual perspective. Feminist methodology is centred on the idea that

²⁴⁷ J. Kristeva, *Power of Horrors: An Essay in Abjection*, Columbia University Press New York, 1982, pp. 9-10.

²⁴⁸ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Beacon Press, Boston Massachusetts, U.S.A., 1994, p. 222.

gender stands at the core of art and art production's analysis. Feminist critique agrees with a Marxist approach, which sees art work as connected to its time, to the socio-economic situation of that time. It 'questions assumptions of traditional art history about the nature of art and the criteria by which it has been judged.'²⁴⁹

The answer to the question, 'what kind of dialogue is there between present and past?' is as follows. There is a dynamic 'dialogue' between present and past, defined by abject and trauma. The present is visited and re-visited by past memory unexpectedly, constantly threatening the subject's sense of unity. The past is being deconstructed and rearticulated from the perspective of the present. This leads to the expansion of one's understanding, with regard to the process of identity formation. This process was affected by psychology, which was regulated by Zionist ideology. The subject is in dialogue with private and collective traumatic experiences. At the 'heart' of kibbutz childhood trauma, there are complicated relationships of the child, the (absent) mother and the group, in other words, a subjectivity that is woven through plural private and public relationships; a subjectivity based on relationships with others; a subjectivity that demands negotiation of boundaries; finally a subjectivity that incorporates a sense of invisibility. This chapter explored maternal and kibbutz childhood traumas. It was revealed that the self, which emerged in kibbutz childhood, was a product of the public interfering with the private. In that sense, there is similarity with maternal trauma, in which the private, the body, is being 'framed' by public perceptions. The next chapter looks at subjectivity with regard to the 'other' in the context of the national-political.

²⁴⁹ Laurie Schneider Adams, *The Methodologies of Art, An Introduction*, HarperCollins Publisher, Inc., New York, U.S.A., 1996, p. 79.

5. Chapter Four: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

This chapter will look at the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as it emerged from an engagement with and analysis of kibbutz childhood, from a historic, national and ideological aspect. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is considered in the way it informs the research question: in what ways might maternal subjectivity be understood through art practice? Here, the way the public, political realm affects the private realm will be considered. Methodology will focus on the following terms: practicum, collaboration and a skilled coach; first, as they were theorised by Donald Schön and second, as they are being interpreted from the perspectives of a kibbutz childhood, maternal and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Irit Rogoff 'Gossip as Testimony, a Postmodern Signature'²⁵⁰ will provide the theoretical framework with which to interpret the ninth case study (see below). Michel Foucault's essay 'The Subject and Power'²⁵¹ will provide the theoretical context for the tenth and eleventh case studies. Bracha Ettinger's and Jacques Lacan's terms of the Gaze, as well as Ferdinand de Saussure's analysis of the sign, will be discussed and related to the following works: *ima's Logo (Coffee Painting)*, *Home-Made Land*, *Culture of Trauma*, *ima's March* and *Landscape GB*. Ninth case-study: *Azmi Bishara's Postcard*, Painting, 2003, Tenth case-study: *Azmi Bishara's Postcard*, Installation, 2004, Eleventh case-study: *Wall Israel/Palestine*, Performative act, 2007.

5.1 Victimhood and intergenerational trauma

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is complex. Feelings of ambivalence, shame, anger, fear, hatred and despair slowly surface in Israeli consciousness, however suppression and denial still prevail. Palestinian history was not recognised in the collective Israeli consciousness during my childhood. It is only in recent years, with the first and second Intifada (Palestinian uprising) that Palestinians emerge in Israel as an entity with history.

²⁵⁰ Irit Rogoff, 'Gossip as Testimony, a Postmodern Signature', in Amelia Jones (ed.), *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 2003, pp. 268-276.

²⁵¹ Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power' in Brian Wallis (ed.), *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, in association with David R. Godine, Publisher, Inc. Boston, 1996, pp. 417-434.

According to Julia Chaitin and Shoshana Steinberg, in their research of empathy among victims of massive social trauma:

Holocaust memory serves as one of the major unifying pillars of identity (Auron, 1993; Levy, Levinsohn, & Katz, 2000) [...] the Holocaust is an event that ties Jewish Israeli history to Palestinian history (Rosenthal, 1999).²⁵²

Chaitin and Steinberg have worked with German, Israeli and Palestinian groups. They write:

victimhood obstructs conciliation and empathy because a person enmeshed in victimhood does not really listen to the other, does not recognize the other's pain, and does not take responsibility for the pain they have caused (Nadler, 2002).²⁵³

Conflicts surfaced within the various discussion groups, which they ran during their research. Invisibility is explained within the national-political context as a consequence of an intergenerational trauma, as follows:

When past extreme victimhood is combined with an ongoing sense of extreme insecurity, as in the case of the Jewish Israelis who have always lived in the shadow of war, subjective perceptions tend to become even more biased. That is, not only do victims use their energy to focus on their pain, but the pain of their enemy (in this case, the Palestinians) becomes almost invisible.²⁵⁴

Against suppression and denial the following skills have been used, as part of the methods of persona and performative act, to allow the attainment of new knowledge, understanding and a deeper awareness: listening to gossip and anecdotes, conducting interviews, translating text from Hebrew to English and Arabic, fund-raising and communicating with the feminist organisation Bat Shalom, which supports Palestinian-Israeli

²⁵² Chaitin, Julia and Steinberg, Shoshana (2008) "'Yon Should Know Better': Expressions of Empathy and Disregard among Victims of Massive Social Trauma', *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 17:2, 197 – 226, p.218.

²⁵³ Ibid, p. 218.

²⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 220.

dialogue, documenting and collecting conversations with friends and people in Israel and reading relevant texts.

5.2 Research Methodology: Practicum, collaboration and a skilled coach

Donald A. Schön identified a potential for new knowledge within a skilled practice.

According to Bairbre Redmond: ‘Schön has examined the components of skilled practice and [...] has attempted to demonstrate the knowledge inherent in these spontaneous intuitive performances of action.’²⁵⁵ Schön developed the idea of practicum (see Glossary), which is centred on a skilled coach and the practitioner. Schön made a distinction between a teacher and a coach, based on John Dewey’s work, which claimed ‘that the student needs not to be taught, but to be coached.’²⁵⁶ By this, he means that the practitioner, in Dewey’s words:

Has to see on his own behalf and in his own way the relations between means and methods employed and results achieved. Nobody else can see for him, and he can’t see just by being ‘told’, although the right kind of telling may guide his seeing and thus help him to see what he needs to see (Dewey 1974:151).²⁵⁷

‘The reflective practitioner’, according to Schön ‘needs to make his learning explicit, where “the process has a form, an inner logic according to which reflection on the unexpected consequences of one action influence the design of the next one”’²⁵⁸.

In my maternal experience I looked closely at the notion of ‘interruption’. For example, while I washed dishes after a meal, my (then) toddler called me. I stopped this domestic chore reluctantly, not because I enjoy cleaning, but because I wanted to finish it. I walked to the other room, where he was standing by the window, looking at the colours of the sunset. He wanted to share it with me. We watched together, then I pointed out the fact that we are facing east and suggested that we go and look at the sunset from the window that faces west. My youngest son joined us, too. Later, just before carry on washing the dishes, I wrote this encounter on an envelope (the first piece of paper I found), titling it ‘Interruption’ (Cross reference, appendix I, page 192).

²⁵⁵ Bairbre Redmond, *Reflection in Action, Developing Reflective Practice in Health and Social Services*, Ashgate Publishing Company, Aldershot, Hampshire, 2006, p. 36.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 38.

²⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 38.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 38.

On reflection, it made me realise that this notion is relational. While I experience it as an interruption with regard to the domestic action, I also experienced it as an event that adds to the quality of my mothering practice, an enriching event in which my sons and I shared something beautiful. Thus, I found interruption to have two contrasting aspects; one evokes a feeling of annoyance, while the other evokes a pleasurable feeling. This little anecdote is an example that demonstrates Schön's theorisation of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. This event, which took place 12 years ago, informed the method of performative act. I have identified an opportunity to reconsider knowledge, which up until then was only tacitly known to me. The 'interruption' becomes explicit in this method. For example, in *'ima interviews guests'* a casual conversation is being interrupted by adding a documentation tool (Cross reference, appendix I, p. 193). The practicum is a place for reflection. It bears similarity to a studio as 'a place [...] which allows the practitioner space and time to appreciate the nuances and interconnections between theory, intuition and practice (Schön 1987: 36-40).'²⁵⁹ Building on Schön's writings, if interruption is facilitated within the research practice as a method, then these interconnections can be reflected upon in other places, as a practice of active reflection.

Schön distinguished between a 'teacher' and a 'coach'. I ask myself how to understand the terms 'coach' and 'practicum' in the context of the research. Collaboration has been identified in Research in Action between a *skilled coach* and the practitioner. However, the definition 'collaboration' in this research has been expanded as follows: in the context of the maternal collaboration, it is a daily practice between mother, children and social institutions such as schools, for example. In the context of kibbutz childhood, there was a daily collaboration rooted in the communal life-style. The term *skill* has been questioned. For it is recognised that many skills are exchanged in this daily collaboration. Children's innate capacity to learn through play has inspired the method of a persona. For example, my game was to pretend that I am a journalist, interviewing people. I used it tactically to collect data from my guests.

5.3 The theorization of gossip in order to destabilise established structures of knowledge

The art historian, Irit Rogoff, explored the idea of gossip as an alternative to a narrated history, as a post-modern practice. Rogoff writes:

²⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 36.

I do not wish to cleanse gossip of its negative associations [...] and turn it into an acceptable cultural artefact, but rather to argue that we can find in it a radical mode of postmodern knowledge which would serve us well in the reading and rewriting of gendered historical narratives.²⁶⁰

Rogoff joins others in an effort to find ‘new structures of knowing [...] which are [...] informed by the conjunctions of subjectivities, pleasures, desires and knowledges.’²⁶¹

Structures of knowing that will reflect both, who is telling the story and the reader and his or her cultural, psychological and historical conditioning. The notion of history, in terms of experts objectively telling the truth, has been questioned by philosophers and writers, including feminist thinkers. According to Rogoff:

so many of the struggles of feminist history and theory – to contemporize history and to insist on its constitution from the perspective of the present, the efforts to unyoke it from the authority of empirically sanctified “experts” and the effort to write the subjectivities of both writers and readers into the text through perceived and imagined structures of identification, as well as the perception of “community” that coheres around these identifications – already exist within the very definition of gossip.²⁶²

Rogoff points out that gossip, like the notions of nagging, embarrassment and ambition, are associated with women. She writes: ‘[...] as long as they remain outside theoretical activity, as long as they are not critically activated and mobilized, they remain in the form of essentialized, feminized “human frailties”.’²⁶³ It is vital to destabilize these structures, which suppress, discriminate or exclude knowledge. Rogoff writes:

For me that is the point of theoretical activity, to locate that which is outside the paradigms and to activate that condition of exile as a form of critical, political mobilization. The politics of this particular critical, theoretical activity address the gendered, racial and sexualized

²⁶⁰ Irit Rogoff, ‘Gossip as Testimony, a Postmodern Signature’, in Amelia Jones (ed.), *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 2003, p. 269.

²⁶¹ Ibid, p. 268.

²⁶² Ibid, p. 269.

²⁶³ Ibid, p. 270.

exclusions and discriminations which come into being in the *choices* of what is of sufficient importance to be theorized.²⁶⁴

Rogoff suggests that gossip can be helpful in the rewriting of histories of Modernism, by shifting critical attention ‘towards an investigation of narrativity and [...] structures of spectatorship.’²⁶⁵ Rogoff’s argument helps the process of clarifying the relationship between the methods and the means used in this research. Recognising the fact that the Palestinian narrative has been suppressed in Israeli consciousness, I read historical researches, but also paid attention to what was circulating on a private, personal level. Rogoff’s writing assisted in the gaining of a deeper understanding of that process of research.

ima is a method that is defined by a dialogue between present and past. As a performance, it is always in the present, however, with a documenting tool this method expands to include both times, present and past. Thus, this method enables the discussion of history and its constitution from the present and from a reconsideration of the past. In *Azmi Bishara’s Postcard* (ninth case-study) gossip has been used as a way to gain a deeper understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The process of making this work will be described and analysed later on.

This gossip sheds light on the subjectivities of both the one who tells the ‘story’ and the one who listens to it. It exposes an identification process. *ima* has been used as a strategy of resistance, since it can assume any identity, thus escapes being ‘framed’. In the case of *Azmi Bishara’s Postcard*, the ‘story’, told by a friend, addressed me implicitly as ‘one of us’, in a worldview that divides the Israeli population in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’, meaning the Palestinians. This worldview defines the ‘story teller’ himself, and threatens to ‘frame’ his listener, by a cultural, social, psychological and historical conditioning. In this case, *ima* enabled me to assume the position of a ‘curious tourist’, emotionally detached from the reality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In using a performative act, I could employ reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, two terms which will be further discussed shortly.

²⁶⁴ Ibid, pp. 270-271.

²⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 271.

5.4 Ninth case-study: *Azmi Bishara's Postcard, Painting, 2003*

'Azmi Bishara (an Arab-Israeli member of parliament) built a house in the upper part of Nazareth, where the majority are Jewish inhabitants, while in fact he lives in another house at the lower part of the city which has an Arab majority.' This information was related to me by an acquaintance, in one of my visits to Israel. For a reason that was not clear to me at the time, except a feeling that there may be something interesting here, I decided to take a photograph of this house. I photographed the new house and immediately two people drove their car nearer and inquired in a friendly way about the purpose of this action. I gave a vague answer and they drove off.

Back at the studio, this material was processed as follows: a) a postcard, which depicts different parts of Israel in a touristic representation, was selected as a suitable format; b) a computer copy of the postcard was made, on which the above anecdote was printed, and an image of Bishara's house was inserted in different areas of the postcard; c) *ima's Logo (Coffee Painting)* was painted over as a performative act of exploration of *ima's* territories and contexts. I called this work *Azmi Bishara's Postcard*, (Fig. 36).

5.5 An Initial interpretation and analysis

The image of Bishara's new house functions as a sign, which appears in a ghostly fashion in different cities. It dialogues with the text, suggesting possibilities of interpretation beyond the content of the written text. One interpretation may be to view it as an act of de-colonialization. Another may be to see it as a memorial for the erasure of the Palestinian people's history. Part of the image is concealed by *ima's Logo*. This reinforces the interpretation of the image, as addressing a being that is positioned between appearance and disappearance. In stamping her logo, *ima* designates her own territory, as positioned in-between appearance and disappearance, thus a link is created between the maternal and the national-political.

5.6 Gossip - a critical reflection on *Azmi Bishara's Postcard*

I identified the initial information, which led to this work as gossip. It may or may not be true. However, it bears truth both about the teller of this gossip and about the listener. It reveals feelings of vulnerability, lack of confidence, suspicion, a perception which divides the world into 'us' and 'them', tension and echoes from the past, when Jews lived as a minority

amongst Christian or Muslim communities, a deep seated fear. In this sense, it reveals some truth about the subjectivities of both, the one who tells the gossip and his listener. I can identify with the teller of this anecdote; however I choose not to do so. This position of identification needed to be destabilised. The use of *ima* enabled a critical distance, in which reflection can be facilitated. It enabled me to shift myself away from the place in which I was positioned, both by my own cultural conditioning and by my gossip teller. As a persona, I can be the other to the one who tells the story. This allows some immunity. As shown in the previous chapter, the ‘false self’ is a form of defence mechanism. I can still empathise with both, the teller of this gossip and the one who is the subject of this gossip, the ‘other’, at the same time. This is, indeed, an inside and an outside position. This informs the persona as a research method.

The act of taking a photograph was a performative act, in which *ima* became a ‘curious tourist’ and came face to face with her audience (Azmi Bishara’s body guards, or perhaps Israeli security services). Collecting data was done in this case through the method of performative acts. This already enabled an active reflection at the early stages of the research. When I collect data, the data ‘collects’ me, in other words, action that is done with an enhanced awareness has the potential to affect me. Enhanced awareness is achieved by creating an intervention and an interruption.

The choice of a postcard as a suitable format comes from the recognition of the postcard as a popular representation in which the ‘other’, the Palestinian narrative or presence, has no manifestation. In other words, this representation includes an invisible aspect, one which *ima* is able to ‘see’, as one invisible recognises another. It is here that an ethical dimension is revealed. This will be further discussed in the context of Bracha Ettinger’s Matrixial theory, later on.

Bishara wrote an essay in which he pointed out the invisibility of Palestinian villages in the Israeli road marking system. I read Bishara’s essay shortly after it was published, in 1992. The process of making this work led me to reread Bishara’s text in order to expand the understanding of Palestinian invisibility from my own maternal and kibbutz invisibilities. Bishara writes:

In the public space there are streets. They connect between places, not spaces, because they are all part of one space. The green signs show the traveller his or her direction between places such as Shlomi, Acer, Naharya, Quiryat Shemona and Tiberius. The Arab villages do

not exist in the public space of the “green sign”. They are marked by smaller white signs placed in the immediate location, in front of the village entrance. The village is not marked from other direction.²⁶⁶

Bishara mourns the colonization of Palestine. Palestinian invisibility, maternal and kibbutz invisibilities all connected with the aspect of colonialism. This will be discussed shortly.

5.7 Lacan’s psychoanalysis and the subject

Lacan theorised the process in which the human animal is turned into a human subject through the acquisition of language. This process takes place in the first few years of the child’s life. In the introduction to Lacan’s *Feminine Sexuality*, the psychoanalyst Juliet Mitchell writes:

Lacan dedicated himself to reorienting psychoanalysis to its task of deciphering the ways in which the human subject is constructed – how it comes into being – out of the small human animal. It is because of this aim that Lacan offered psychoanalytic theory the new science of linguistics which he developed and altered in relation to the concept of subjectivity. The human animal is born into language and it is within the terms of language that the human subject is constructed. Language does not arise from within the individual, it is always out there in the world outside, lying in wait for the neonate. Language always ‘belongs’ to another person. The human subject is created from a general law that comes to it from outside itself and through the speech of other people, though this speech in its turn must relate to the general law.²⁶⁷

This research strives to understand maternal subjectivity, which is tightly bound with kibbutz childhood. In order to do so, there is a need to combine psychoanalysis with a social analysis. Foucault’s subject, in the discussion that follows shortly, is thought of in the context of social power relationship. This conception of subject is different from Lacan’s psychoanalytical conception of subject.

²⁶⁶ Azmi Bishara, ‘Between Place and Space’ in *Studio Art Magazine*, Tel-Aviv, 1992, p. 6.

Translated by Yonat Nitzan-Green.

²⁶⁷ Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (eds.), *Feminine Sexuality, Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne*, W.W.Norton & Company, New York and London, 1982, p. 5.

5.8 Power and the subject according to Michel Foucault

The French post-structuralist philosopher Michel Foucault, in 'The Subject and Power' aims at creating 'a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects.'²⁶⁸ It is important to note, at this stage, that here the subject is being considered in a political, rather than in a psychoanalytical context. Foucault writes: 'The role of philosophy is to prevent reason from going beyond the limits of what is given in experience; [...] to keep watch over the excessive powers of political rationality.'²⁶⁹ Foucault's analysis of the subject is useful in considering kibbutz childhood, which was shaped by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Foucault points at three 'modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects.'²⁷⁰ First, are modes of inquiry that 'try to give themselves the status of sciences.'²⁷¹ His example is 'the objectivising of the speaking subject in *grammaire generale*, philology, and linguistics.'²⁷² Second, are 'dividing practices'. By this, Foucault means 'The subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others,'²⁷³ for example, 'the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminals and the "good boys".'²⁷⁴ The third mode is 'the way a human being turns himself into a subject.'²⁷⁵ It is this third mode that Foucault is analysing in this essay.

Foucault analyses the pastoral power as individualizing and totalizing. This form of power emerged with Christianity, which 'brought into being a code of ethics fundamentally different from that of the ancient world.'²⁷⁶ Christianity arranged itself as a church and developed the practice of people serving others as pastors. Pastoral power relates to the individual as well as the community in many ways, such as assuring salvation in the next world, sacrificing itself for the good of the community, taking responsibility for the community and the individual within, and basing itself on confession. In Foucault's words:

²⁶⁸ Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power' in Brian Wallis (ed.), *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, in association with David R. Godine, Publisher, Inc. Boston, 1996, p. 417.

²⁶⁹ Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power' in Brian Wallis (ed.), *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, 1996, p. 418.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 417.

²⁷¹ Ibid, 417.

²⁷² Ibid, 417.

²⁷³ Ibid, 417.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 417.

²⁷⁵ Ibid, 417.

²⁷⁶ Ibid, 422.

This form of power is salvation oriented (as opposed to political power). It is oblativ (as opposed to the principle of sovereignty); it is individualizing (as opposed to legal power); it is coextensive and continuous with life; it is linked with a production of truth-the truth of the individual himself.²⁷⁷

In a later development, the state replaced the church.

Although kibbutz society is secular, it has been founded on Jewish ethics, which are similar in many ways to Christian ethics. However, Judaism does not practice confession. In my understanding, therefore, there is even less room for prescribed or un-prescribed individualism. The kibbutz's leaders encouraged the sacrificing of individual needs for the good of the community, and claimed responsibility for both the community and its individuals. Rivka Levkovitz, in the discussion of three generations in the kibbutz, asked why the second generation did not rebel against the first generation, as regards raising children communally, particularly the separation between children and their parents during the night. She relates this to Hanie Biran's research (1990), which pointed to a split separating the two generations. According to Biran

The kibbutz at the beginning needed to use a wide range of defence mechanisms of split, in order to keep the new ideology pure, clear and rigid. The split had been designated in order to protect the collective through the narrowing down of living spaces of the individual.²⁷⁸

According to Michel Foucault:

When one defines the exercise of power as a mode of action upon the actions of others, when one characterizes these actions by the government of men by other men – in the broadest sense of the term – one includes an important element: freedom. Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments, may be realized [...] slavery is not a power relationship when man is in chains.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Ibid, 422.

²⁷⁸ Rivka Levkovitz, *Two Homes of the Kibbutzes' Dream*, , 2007, pp. 257 – 258.

²⁷⁹ Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power' in Brian Wallis (ed.), *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, 1996, p. 428.

Sometimes the chains that bind a person or a whole nation are made of existential fear. Personal and public traumas and traumatic memory have been identified and located in kibbutz childhood and maternal experience. The question of power arises. First, is the question of what can a traumatized *self* do? Traumatized *self* here means both personal and national *self*. During the research, these traumas have been recognised; feelings of victimhood were allowed to surface to one's consciousness. Victimhood will be further discussed shortly.

In analysing power, Foucault looked at groups who oppose social conventions. For example, feminism opposes 'the power of men over women.'²⁸⁰ I think of other examples that I had in the past or still have a connection with, such as What Doctor Don't Tell You (WDDTY) - a group who opposes the uncontrolled power that the medical profession exercise 'over people's bodies, their health, and their life and death.'²⁸¹ Education Otherwise (EO) is a group who opposes the state system of education, thus educate their children at home. I think about the Arab-Israelis, a minority group of Palestinians who live within the borders of Israel and are subjugated to Israeli state law. This law denies them the assertion of their individuality, such as a collective marking of the Nakba, the catastrophe of Palestinians losing their country. Finally, I think about myself as being 'framed' under the title of 'kibbutznikit', or 'mother', which subjugates me to a system that tries to fix my identity and individuality.

According to Foucault, these are 'anarchistic'²⁸² struggles in which an individual's status is being asserted. Foucault writes:

[...] on the one hand, they assert the right to be different and they underline everything which makes individuals truly individual. On the other hand, they attack everything which separates the individual, breaks his links with others, splits up community life, forces the individual back on himself, and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way.²⁸³

Foucault explains the subject as follows:

²⁸⁰ Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power' in Brian Wallis (ed.), *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, 1996, p. 419.

²⁸¹ Ibid, p. 420.

²⁸² Ibid, p. 420.

²⁸³ Ibid, p. 420.

there are two meanings of the word “subject”: subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.²⁸⁴

The contemporary groups mentioned above, according to Foucault, aim at attacking:

Not so much “such or such” an institution of power [...] but rather a technique, a form of power. This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects.²⁸⁵

Bishara has been constantly challenging Israeli state law and social conventions with regard to the Palestinian – Israeli power relationship. According to Foucault,

‘The term “power” designates relationship between partners.’²⁸⁶ Bishara’s action can be seen as an empowering performative act of defying social expectations by questioning demographical facts. I perceive this act as performative because it has two aspects: functional and symbolic, as well as the fact that it is positioned between the private and the public. As such, it is an act that is aimed at an audience.

²⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 420.

²⁸⁵ Michel Foucault, ‘The Subject and Power’ in Brian Wallis (ed.), *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, 1996, p. 420.

²⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 425.



Fig. 37: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Azmi Bishara's Postcard*, Installation, Open Studio, 2004

5.9 Tenth case-study: *Azmi Bishara's Postcard, Installation, 2004*

The postcard print was enlarged (75 A4 parts) and placed on the studio floor. A reading lamp was placed in one corner, inviting the audience to 'read' the work, as well as hinting at a necessity to reread history. *Azmi Bishara's Postcard*, installation (Fig. 37), was exhibited as part of the Open Studio event. This was a turning point in the practice, from making objects such as *ima's logo (Coffee Painting)*, to making installations, which dialogued with the notion of place.

Bishara writes:

Even villages which do not exist anymore were pushed away from the public space, from the signing of memory. They received new names, of Hebrew villages, but left their marks, such as Prickly Pear trees, stone-fences and bricks of ruined houses [...] Arab villages have no monuments.²⁸⁷

Gaps in Israeli consciousness are illuminated, made visible in Bishara's text. In *Azmi Bishara's Postcard*, installation gaps and fragments are present. This reflects the Palestinian-Israeli reality; a reality in which a whole is made out of lack, remains and loss. In this reality, in my opinion, going back to the way it was before is not possible.

5.10 Historic analysis: colonialism and displacement

In the process of enlargement, a transformation occurred from object to place. This action of enlargement reflects a change in the maternal body and the status of its subject. From being perceived as object in the patriarchal society, to being perceived as a place. But what kind of place? As shown in the previous chapter, the subject in kibbutz childhood had been displaced: in the Children's House, one was away from one's parents. The too early separation from the mother has been discussed in the context of trauma. In the Parents' Room one was, in Markiewicz's words, 'unaccommodated, yet not disassociated'.

In the experience of pregnancy, one's body is being colonised, both in the sense that another body is being developed and settled in one's own body; and in the sense that social

²⁸⁷ Azmi Bishara, 'Between Place and Space' in *Studio Art Magazine*, Tel-Aviv, 1992, p. 6.

institutions intervene with this body. In Kristeva's words: 'Within the body [...] there is an other. And no one is present, within that simultaneously dual and alien space, to signify what is going on.'²⁸⁸ Kristeva demonstrates a feeling that a woman might have of helplessness within patriarchal terms. This may represent the voice of the victim, while Susan Hiller's position toward her pregnancy of being an 'observer/participant' may represent an empowered voice. It seems to me that from this point an emphatic position with other colonised subjects can be held. This point will be further considered with relation to Bracha Ettinger's theory shortly.

Re-visiting Zionist ideology revealed contradictions. How can there be a legal colonising scheme? Following the first and second Zionist congresses, the Jewish Colonial Trust bank had been established in London on 20 March 1899. Its aim was 'to promote, develop, work and carry on industries, undertakings and colonization schemes [...] in particular of the Jewish race into Palestine, Syria and other countries in the East.'²⁸⁹ The definition of colonialism is 'the policy and practice of a power in extending control over weaker people or areas.'²⁹⁰ The Palestinians were described as 'non-Jewish', therefore rendered politically and culturally invisible. Their rights were in legally preserving their assets, but not in change or development, which are the framework for culture and economic growth. David Ben Gurion, at the time (1918) a Zionist activist leader and later became the first Israeli president, wrote:

According to an estimate of Professor Karl Ballord, the country's irrigable plains are capable of supporting a population of six million, to be sure under conditions of intensive cultivation and using proper modern irrigation methods. It is on vacant lands that the Jewish people demand the right to establish its homeland. [...] However we must remember that such rights are also possessed by the inhabitants already living in the country – and these rights must not be infringed upon. [...] In analysing the rights and interests of the Jews and non-Jews of Palestine, we note a characteristic difference between the two. The non-Jewish rights consist of *existing* assets, material or spiritual, which require legal guarantees for their preservation and integrity. The Jewish interests, which also include some existing assets, consist mainly of the *age-old* opportunities offered by the country, the economic and cultural potential of this semi-desolate land [...] The non-Jewish interests are conservative; the Jewish interests are revolutionary. The former are designed to preserve that which exists, the latter – to create something new, to change values, to reform and to build.²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ Julia Kristeva, 'Motherhood according to Giovanni Bellini', in *Desire in Language*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1980, p. 237.

²⁸⁹ In Martin Gilbert, *Israel, A History*, Black Swan, GB, 1999, p. 18.

²⁹⁰ Patrick Hanks (ed.), *Collins Dictionary of the English Language*, Collins, London & Glasgow, 1985, p. 299.

²⁹¹ In Martin Gilbert, *Israel, A History*, Black Swan, GB, 1999, p. 38.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is about land. Archaeology is another site where the conflict prevails, however there are Israeli-Palestinian archaeological collaboration too. Figure 38 (Fig. 38: Galia Agmon, *Hotel Ruins* Roman era, Jaljulya Palestinian village, 2006, Photographs 1-2. Cross-reference, appendix III, p. 210) shows the neglect of Palestinian asset.

Homi Bhabha writes, 'Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed recognisable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.'²⁹² Through the performative act of *Coffee Paintings*, which was done as ritual, a childhood memory emerged of drinking coffee as a kibbutz, Israeli social, cultural ritual. A hidden desire to be like the locals – Palestinians - has been identified, symbolised by practicing this ritual. This can be seen as the pioneers' attempt to integrate in the Middle Eastern culture, yet they preserved and created their own secular Jewish identity. Therefore, the difference between the two cultures remained, unmistakeable. The difference of the *other* remained invisible. It was only a difference in comparison to what became the dominating secular Jewish culture. In other words, the ritual of drinking coffee is a cultural construct of a colonial kind.

²⁹² In the above quotation Homi Bhabha is referring to Samuel Weber's writing. Bhabha writes, '[...] mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge' in Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995, pp. 85-86.



Fig. 39: Synagogue Floor *Beth-Alpha*, Byzantine era, Postcard
kibbutz Heftzi-bah

5.11 Historic analysis: re-claiming my subjectivity through childhood memory and art practice

The connection between a postcard and a place has been internalised in my consciousness and re-surfaced as childhood memory. An ancient synagogue floor had been discovered in kibbutz Heftzi-bah in the 1920s. In 1928, settlers in Kibbutz Heftzi-bah, while digging a drainage ditch,

came across an extraordinary mosaic. On it they could make out the signs of the Zodiac and Hebrew letters. They hastened to contact Sukenik – who had lectured to them seven years earlier on the importance of archaeological finds – and sent a young kibbutznik to Jerusalem to inform him of their discovery. In January 1929 Sukenik travelled north, accompanied by his eleven-year-old son, Yigael, to excavate what he realized was an ancient synagogue. As members of the kibbutz helped Sukenik with the excavations, a new dimension was added to Jewish life in the National Home. “Suddenly [...] those people saw things that were never so tangible before. There was suddenly a feeling that this very parcel of land – for which they had suffered so much – wasn’t just any piece of land but the place where their fathers and grandfathers had lived and died fifteen hundred or two thousand years before. All their work now had a different significance. Their history had been uncovered, and they could see it with their own eyes”.²⁹³

This site has been excavated and became a tourist attraction. It appears on postcards in other tourist attractions around Israel (*Fig. 39*). As children we played daily near this site, immersed in its ancient mystical power, feeling part of this endless time - space. It is important to note that kibbutz is a secular community. The words ‘synagogue’ and ‘pray’ were almost completely alien. The mystical power, therefore, is related to the phenomena of finding something cultural from an unknown past, buried in the ground. However, in order to discern my own subjectivity from this kibbutz’s togetherness, this childhood memory needed to be deconstructed.

A dialogue between one non-place and another is reflected in the installation. On the one hand the site of the ancient floor is a hybrid, an in-between different dimension of time. It is not a place that can be inhabited; it is visited, the movement within the site is restricted as one must not step on the mosaic floor, but walk around it. This was mirrored in the installation. On the other hand, the postcard is a transient object, a reminder of places out

²⁹³ From: Martin Gilbert, *Israel, A History*, Black Swan, GB, 1999, p. 57-8.

there. This kind of dialogue, as acknowledged above, belongs to childhood memories. However, under these memories lies another story: the emotional centre is ‘between all the places’, according to Levavi-Gabai. Balaban’s mother moved ‘from a place where she was not to another place where she wouldn’t be.’ In the installation, this dialogue, in other words a sense of displacement, has been extended to include the invisible other, Palestinians and the Palestinian narrative. This dialogue has been invested with additional meaning, as *ima* replaced the synagogue floor with a postcard. Thus, a sacred, eternal place has been replaced by a transient object, which is a sign of a place. Signs will be discussed further, shortly.

5.12 Historic analysis: private history as an artist

Another work, which used the format of a postcard, was done previously. *5 minute sculpture near home*, 1999 (Cross reference, appendix I, p. 183), was a performative act and a series of five postcards. Each postcard depicted left-over food, which was placed and photographed from the roof window of *ima’s mobile studio* (my car). Each title of the five postcards was translated into Hebrew and Arabic by my mother and her Palestinian colleagues (all worked at the time in Oranim Collage of Education, Israel). This work was significant because it recognised and articulated both maternal and the Palestinian invisibilities. By translating the postcard titles, the presence (or potential presence) of Arab speaking audiences has not only been acknowledged, but accommodated; both in the exhibition space and in my own psyche. Space and place have opened up through the creative processing of language and practice, offering a temporary accommodating place.²⁹⁴ This work also ‘opened up’ a shared space between my mother and me. This space is shared with the ‘other’, Palestinian, in the context of invisibility.

5.13 Bracha L. Ettinger’s theory of the matrix

First, I will briefly introduce some aspects of Ettinger’s theory. Second, I will focus on her understanding of the connection between aesthetic and ethic. Third, I will show how her theory informs my works. When reading psychoanalysis, I am aware of my shortcomings as I am not a psychoanalyst and therefore limited in my ability to explain and elaborate. To remedy this, I use other writers’ understanding and aim to create my own understanding through juxtaposing and integrating the texts and my practice.

²⁹⁴ The word ‘place’ in Hebrew has two meanings. One is a physical place and the second is another name for God. It signifies the importance of being, as connected with the idea of presence.

The Israeli artist and psychoanalyst Bracha L. Ettinger develops a theory of the matrix. This theory considers the womb, as well as other prenatal processes. It does not oppose Freud's Oedipus model, but rather complements it. In her theory, Ettinger suggests a new conception for subjectivity and its relation to the other, which creates a connection between aesthetic and ethic. Ettinger writes:

The term "matrix" is already in use with the meaning "original register" (*Larousse*). I wish to infuse it with new meaning by restoring to it its ancient feminine/maternal etymology – from the Latin for uterus, womb – in a way that echoes Freud's phantasy of intrauterine existence in the maternal womb.²⁹⁵

Here, Ettinger acknowledges that the womb has already been considered before, in psychoanalytical thinking. Ettinger proposes to rethink the womb as a place that will be considered from both inside and outside. Ettinger writes: 'But I also want to focus attention on bodily specificity of the female in the Real. Here, "matrix" means womb outside as well as inside, not only as the infant's originary container.'²⁹⁶ Ettinger thinks of the womb not as a 'basic passive space,'²⁹⁷ but as:

a dynamic borderspace of active/passive co-emergence *with-in* and *with-out* the uncognized other. The matrix is not a symbol for an invisible, unintelligible, originary, *passive receptacle* onto which traces are engraved by the originary and primary processes; rather, it is a concept for a *transforming borderspace of encounter* of the *co-emerging I* and the *neither fused nor rejected uncognized non-I*.²⁹⁸

Ettinger's theory is in dialogue with both Freud's and Lacan's theories. The matrix is not an alternative to their theories. Art historian Griselda Pollock writes:

²⁹⁵ Brian Massumi (ed.), *Bracha L. Ettinger, The Matrixial Borderspace*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 2006, p. 64,5.

²⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 64,5.

²⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 64,5.

²⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 64,5.

One of Bracha L. Ettinger's foremost contributions has been to produce an analysis of the *unconscious structuring of psychoanalysis itself within a phallic paradigm* without rejecting psychoanalysis or even, ultimately, Oedipus.²⁹⁹

Ettinger explains the terms *I* and *non-I* as follows:

I take the feminine/prenatal meeting as a model for relations and processes of change and exchange in which the *non-I* is unknown to the *I* (or rather uncognized: known by a noncognitive process), but not an intruder. Rather, the *non-I* is a *partner-in-difference* of the *I*.³⁰⁰

Ettinger suggests a co-existence of 'I' and 'non-I' in which, on the one hand, the 'I' does not recognize the 'non-I', yet on the other hand, the 'non-I' is not an intruder. In other words, already in the womb there is a difference, which she calls a feminine difference. The womb is a shared place, which includes difference. This difference is distinguished from a phallic difference, articulated from men's perspective. In Ettinger's words:

[...] we are trying to take up the Freudian distinction concerning pleasure/displeasure affects prior to repression, along with his ideas on the limits of the concept of repression, in order to say the following: difference comes before it exists and leaves psychic traces before repression. And there is an-other, a borderline repression, a matrixial repression beyond the repression generally admitted in psychoanalysis. The phallic sexual difference is therefore not the only unconscious sexual difference.³⁰¹

Although Ettinger considers the womb, it is not a 'womb theory' or a theory for women.

Pollock explains:

The reference to pregnancy and intrauterine experience is not an attempt to valorize the womb over the penis in some kind of inversion or gender hierarchy. Rather, it is a way of thinking co-emergence through the implications, for theories of subjectivity, sexuality, and art, of a new model of relation, intersubjectivity, and transsubjectivity. In this model, there never was

²⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 2,3.

³⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 64,5.

³⁰¹ Ibid, 70,1.

a celibate, singular subject becoming all on its own, reducing its maternal partner to a mere envelope, a nonhuman anatomy, physiology, or environment. Matrixial theory does not essentialize pregnancy as the very core of a woman's femininity. That would in fact render the womb a phallic object: something that can be possessed or lost. It does, however, elevate its retheorized concept of matrixial feminine sexual difference to the level of a general dimension, element, or sphere in human subjectivity.³⁰²

5.14 Ettinger's theory of the matrix – aesthetic and ethic

I read Ettinger's theory from the position of an artist. For example, when she considers the womb from both inside and outside, I perceive the spatial dimension of this idea. When I read the idea of the *I* and the *non-I* as sharing a space that includes difference (the 'non-I' is distinguished from the 'I', yet not an intruder), I think about my own pregnancy and about ambivalent elements, which come with mothering. Many terms in Ettinger's theory make sense to me, based on both my mothering and art practice, which I have attempted to decipher through the research journey. Pollock writes:

To make art, and with it, to think theory "after Auschwitz," is to struggle with trauma's wounding and repression, with memory and oblivion [...] If Ettinger's writings address the question of sexuality and the gaze, they do so specifically to locate the feminine as a difference fundamental to thinking the conjunction of the aesthetic, the political, *and* the ethical today.³⁰³

Ettinger's theory establishes a connection between aesthetic and ethic. Ettinger explains the psychoanalytic term 'objet *a*' as follows: 'the *OBJET a* is the trace of the part-object and, in my view, of the archaic Other/mother, both of which are linked to pre-Oedipal impulses and are considered *forever unattainable*.'³⁰⁴ The *objet a* is a term that Lacan used to theorise the separation of the child from his or her mother. This separation produces a lack, which in turn produces a desire. The *objet a* is 'a psychic entity,'³⁰⁵ according to Ettinger. Lacan's theory of phantasy is explained by Ettinger as follows:

³⁰² Ibid, p. 4,5.

³⁰³ Ibid, p. 8,9.

³⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 40,1.

³⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 40,1.

Subjectivity is not only the effect of the passage between the signifiers of language, but also of basic splits and separations that incite the subject unconsciously to desire the lost part-object, the unreachable symbolic Other and [...] the lost archaic real Other/mother. Thus subjectivity is fatally intermingled with lacking psychic objects, “holes” in the Real, Imaginary, and Symbolic.³⁰⁶

Ettinger writes:

[The] subject and *objet a* are [...] inseparable [...] When the subject appears the *objet a* disappears, and when the *objet a* finds a way to penetrate to the other side (as in art) or to reappear as hallucinations in the Real, signifying meaning [...] disappears and goes into hiding.³⁰⁷

Objet a is the gaze that sees me but I cannot see it. In Ettinger's words: ‘The gaze is the *objet a* – the cause of desire in the *scopic* field.’³⁰⁸ The way I understand this is as follows. The initial separation of the two bodies at birth creates a sensation, as if something fundamental is missing for the child. This sensation triggers a desire to fill this ‘hole’ by something that is the object of desire. This may be the mother, which is distinguished from the archaic mother. The archaic mother is the idea of wholeness, perhaps a memory of ‘oneness’. It may be the mother's breast as part-object, as suggested by Melanie Klein and others, in Objects relations theory. Later, it becomes a desire for meaning. The subject is constructed in language, according to Lacan. This is what Ettinger means by describing it as ‘Subjectivity is not only the effect of the passage between the signifiers of language.’³⁰⁹ Lacan theorised the ‘mirror stage’, in which the child forms a coherent image of him or herself, based on a reflection of his or her own image from another reflective surface. Dino Felluga explains:

By viewing himself in the mirror, the subject at the mirror stage begins his entrance into culture and language by establishing his own subjectivity through the fantasy image inside the mirror, an image that the subject can aspire towards throughout his life.³¹⁰

³⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 40,1.

³⁰⁷ Ibid, pp. 40,1-42,3.

³⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 42,3.

³⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 40,1.

³¹⁰ <<http://www.purdue.edu/guidetotheory/psychoanalysis/lacangaze.html>>. November 28, 2003. Felluga, Dino. "Modules on Lacan: On the Gaze." *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory*. Date accessed 26.6.2009. Felluga is associate professor in the English department, Purdue University, U.S.A.

Lacan theorized the scopic field and continued to develop the concept of the gaze.

Lacan complicates this understanding of the narcissistic view in the mirror by distinguishing between the eye's look and the Gaze. Gaze [...] refers to the uncanny sense that the object of our eye's look or glance is somehow looking back at us of its own will [...] We may believe that we are in control of our eye's look; however, any feeling of scopophilic power is always undone by the fact that the materiality of existence (the Real) always exceeds and undercuts the meaning structures of the symbolic order.³¹¹

Ettinger writes: 'We look for the gaze, we long for it, we desire to be looked at by the gaze. But the gaze is hidden from us.'³¹² The *objet a* is the unattainable object of desire. In the matrix theory, Ettinger offers another kind of gaze as follows:

The matrixial *objet a* is a poietic aesthetic object. It is not aesthetic in the sense of being an object to *look at* or *listen to* while the "influence" flows from the artwork to the spectator, but in the sense of an object participating in the act of creating that by which *we will be looked at*, where activity is not control but a bringing into being, and where passivity is not subjugation but a donation that allows for exposure. The *I* does not control the object/*objet a* or the Other during the co-emergence with an-other unknown *non-I*. Because it is matrixial, the gaze is not only a remnant, exposed in the present, of past relations-without-relating, but also *a glimpse of the forever future* created in the now. Thus even though I am both passive and active and the object is behind and ahead of me, the *I* makes an interior and exterior space for the *non-I*.³¹³

The term poietic is explained as 'the producing/creating aspect of the aesthetic object.'³¹⁴ Here, Ettinger proposes the idea that the artwork can see us. This gaze does not come from an active object, which is separated from a passive subject. Rather, from an encounter that is mutual in nature. The word 'activity' in this relationship does not mean control; it is given a new interpretation as 'bringing into being.'³¹⁵ Passivity is given a new interpretation as a

³¹¹ Ibid

³¹² Brian Massumi (ed.), *Bracha L. Ettinger, The Matrixial Borderspace*, 2006, p. 42,3.

³¹³ Ibid, p. 88,9.

³¹⁴ Ibid, p. 220,1.

³¹⁵ Ibid, p. 88,9.

‘donation that allows for exposure.’³¹⁶ The word ‘exposure’ here means more than the visual, in my interpretation. Ettinger suggests relationships which are not defined by control and subjugation. The gaze is a ‘remnant [...] of past relations-without-relating.’³¹⁷ This may be relationships based on physical distance. I perceive Ettinger’s ideas as almost a poetry, rather than a psychoanalytical theory. My understanding of her ideas is intuitive. The relationship between the subject and the object as an art work is one of mutual participation in which both subject and object come into being.

Regarding trauma, Ettinger writes:

In art today we are moving from phantasy to trauma. Contemporary aesthetics is moving from the phallic structure to the matrixial sphere. We are carrying, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, enormous traumatic weight, and aesthetic wit(h)nessing in art brings it to culture’s surface. [...] The beautiful as accessed via artworks in our era [...] carries new possibilities for affective apprehending and produces new artistic effects where aesthetics converges with ethics [...] The aesthetic is trauma’s transformed affectability in wit(h)nessing in/by art, beyond time and in different sites and spaces, yet it has ethical and even therapeutic consequences. The new healing potential offered by the idea of wit(h)nessing is ethical, yet profoundly aesthetic, or transferred by aesthetic means.³¹⁸

The quest to understand maternal subjectivity has led me to revisit kibbutz childhood. From there, to re-think cultural identity and its integration in history and present day reality, a reality that is typically ambivalent, entwined with traumas and traumatic memories, both personal and political.

³¹⁶ Ibid, p. 88,9.

³¹⁷ Ibid, p. 88,9.

³¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 147-8.



Fig. 40: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *ima's March*
 Performative Installation, Details 1 - 3
 P-DVD, composted earth, TV monitor,
 sacks, coffee powder, rubber sheet
 2006



Fig. 41: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *ima's March* – Work in progress
2006, (in the studio)

5.15 *ima's March*, performative DVD installation, which led to *Landscape GB*

During daily journeys to and from her house, *ima* noticed that the army signs appear to be *looking* at her in a stereotypical way, *identifying* her as an Israeli who lives in a foreign country. These army signs positioned her in a fixed identity, as belonging to a place defined by army-culture.

On 8th March 2006, the feminist organisation, Bat Shalom, arranged a march from one Check Point to another, east of Jerusalem. The march coincided with International Women's Day. Its aim was to identify with and protest against the suffering inflicted on the Palestinian people by the Israeli state. This provided an opportunity to deconstruct identity. In using a digital camera, combined with a functional action of running, *ima* sought out a way to de-position herself by re-positioning the signs. Re-positioning the signs in a perceptual way; in a way that will disturb the sense of vision; a way that will *see* the signs together with the subject who is looking at and being looked by these signs; from the subject's body movement and memory, rather than the eyes only.

Here, *ima* recognised herself as a feminist through the wish to join in with a feminist demonstration. The idea of a march has resonance with previous works: the installation *Home-Made Land* 'opened' a space for the action of walking as part of experiencing the work. We can see a line of development from artwork as an object (*ima's logo*), to a place (*Azmi Bishara's Postcard*), to a form that combines movement – walking - and looking (*Home-Made Land*).

ima's March (Figs. 40, 41) (Cross reference, appendix II) - once the performative act of running and filming was done, the clips were viewed, with the intention of carrying on the project of deconstructing *ima's* identity. A second performative act followed, in which *ima* hosted a Palestinian friend, asking him to comment on the clips in his native language, Arabic, from a tourist perspective. For example, one comment was 'I don't know if this road is leading to the kibbutz or to my village, it looks the same.' The clips were then re-arranged into a DVD and were shown on a portable DVD player, as part of the performative installation *ima's March*. Laura U. Marks writes: 'Many intercultural works rely on idiosyncratic, personal narrative, because these provide a slim thread back into the strata of

history.’³¹⁹ The performative act enabled a shared space, which includes the personal voice of the other. These, in turn, allowed for a re-connecting with history.

5.16 *Landscape GB*

Back in the studio, the process of deconstruction continued. This film was edited ‘like a salad’ (*ima*’s remark). This film was called *Landscape GB*. At the final stage of the research, the question of victimhood and trauma surfaced and became explicit in the works *Culture of Trauma* and *Landscape GB*. It became evident that the understanding of maternal subjectivity is entwined with a complex and un-resolved history which is also a continuous present-day reality. What follows from one’s identity deconstruction was a re-articulation of the question. Rather than ask, as I did before, how does the way I was brought up affect my practice, the question is how does one’s practice understand one’s subjectivity, in which, in Bachelard’s poetic words, childhood memory re-vibrate. These reverberations were made visible, informed by a childhood trauma. The first question was formed from a victim’s position, in which ‘I’ is the effect of other’s action and decision. In that sense, ‘I’ is powerless, subjugated to a system of power. The re-phrasing of this question is the voice of a responsible ‘I’. There is a continuous dialogue between inside and outside, between a powerless victim and a responsible ‘I’. The untreated object (army signs before the work was made) positions and fixes one’s identity, whereas the treated object (army signs in the artwork) contributes to the understanding of subjectivity. This is supported by Ettinger’s theory of the matrix: ‘The matrixial *objet a* is a poietic aesthetic object [...] participating in the act of creating that by which *we will be looked at*.’³²⁰

³¹⁹ Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of The Film, Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2000, p. 30.

³²⁰ Brian Massumi (ed.), *Bracha L. Ettinger, The Matrixial Borderspace*, 2006, p. 88,9.

³²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 220,1.

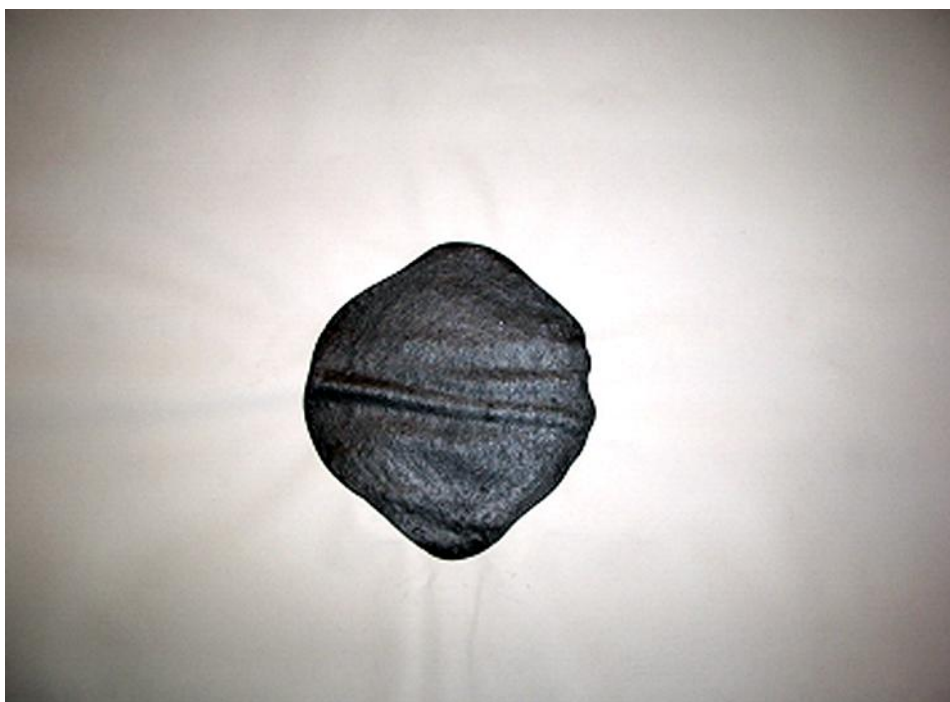


Fig. 42: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Stain*, Drawing
graphite powder, PVA glue on paper, 84 x 60cm, 2002

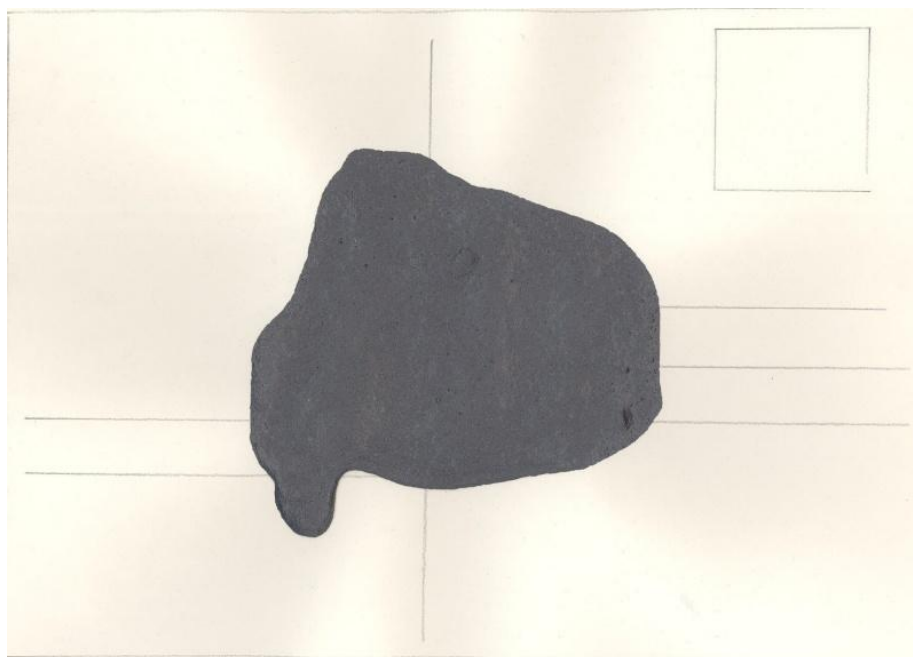


Fig. 43: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Liquid Postcard 1* Drawing
graphite powder, PVA glue, pencil on paper 17x25cm, 2002

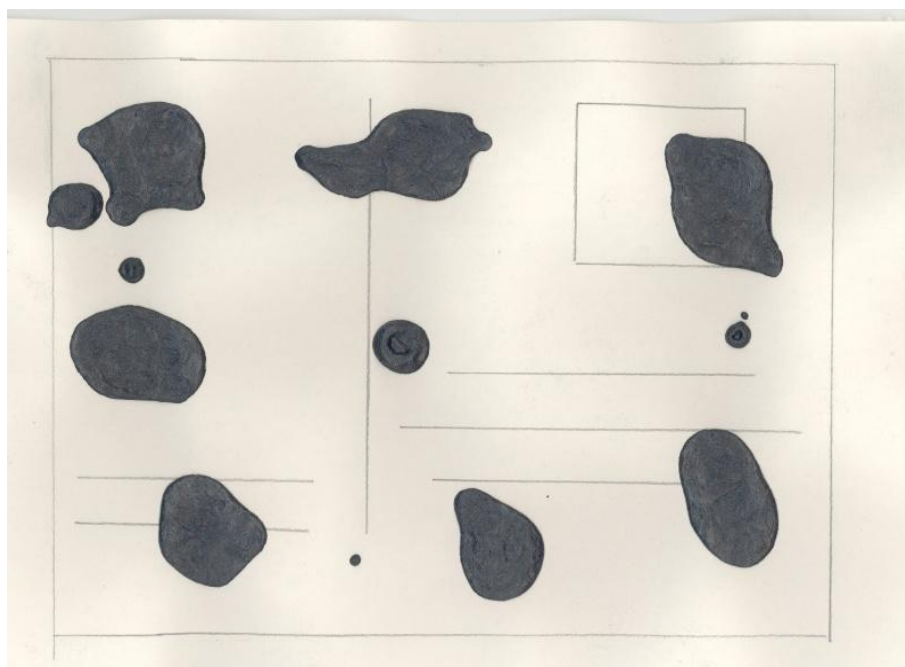


Fig. 44: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Liquid Postcard 2* Drawing
graphite powder, PVA glue, pencil on paper 17x25cm, 2002

5.17 Representation: sign and materiality

The Swiss linguist structuralist Ferdinand de Saussure studied

[t]he structural and common aspects of language responsible for its use as a medium of communication. Signs, which for Saussure are combinations of signifier and signified (something like a concept or element of thought, rather than a thing that is represented), are the product of ‘systems of difference’: a sign has the value that it does in virtue of its place in a network of other possible choices. In his famous phrase, “there are only differences”. A word has its place in a sentence or other stretch of discourse (its “syntagmatic” relations) but also its “associative” relations with other words of its family (the terms that might be listed as partial substitutes in a thesaurus, for example).³²¹

Traces of the catastrophe of the Holocaust surfaced in my works, combined with childhood memories. In the Holocaust, Jews were ordered to wear a yellow Star of David as an identity mark, which positioned and condemned them as *walking-dead*. In a very different way in my experience of pregnancy, the body became a mark of identity and positioning, rendering the subject of the pregnant body invisible. In my understanding, a mark is a form of abstraction, in which the particular details are not being considered. Instead, this form of abstraction is based on a perception of the same.

In kibbutz childhood I existed as a symbol. By this I mean ‘something that represents or stands for something else, usually by convention or association, esp. a material object used to represent something abstract.’³²² I was only visible from the perception of the conventions of Zionist ideology, by its cultural tools. These tools were the group, the concept of work (see Glossary), communal living and the Zionist project of life dedicated to building a home for the Jewish people. The private, personal life had been neglected. In that emotional sense I was invisible. I was visible only by being ‘different’, on those occasions when I did not comply with the groups’ demands or expectations to be the same as everybody else. The abject materiality of my body marked me, as mentioned before. In other words, I was visible only on Aristotle’s terms of organic representation. In this model, difference can only be thought of within the concept of the same. I looked closely at this model of identity, opposite,

³²¹ Simon Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1996, p. 340.

³²² Patrick Hanks (ed.), *Collins Dictionary of The English Language*, Collins, London & Glasgow, 1985, pp. 1471-1472.

analogy and resemblance as follows: identity means to be the same. In that respect, there is no difference. Opposite means that difference can only be in opposition to something else, but not on its own terms. Analogy means that difference can only be perceived by comparison to something else. Resemblance means that difference, again, can only be thought of with relation to something else. This is a negative visibility, since difference has not been conceptualised.

Saussure's semiotic system is

[t]he general study of symbolic systems, including language. The subject is traditionally divided into three areas: syntax, or the abstract study of the signs and their interrelations; semantics, or the study of the relation between the signs and those objects to which they apply; and pragmatics, or the relationship between users and the system.³²³

The relationship in language between the signifier and signified have been theorised by Saussure.

Inspired by his conception of sign, I considered the number as a sign that is a combination of signifier and signified in a system of difference, in my art practice. In the performative installation *Home-Made Land*, for example, the numbers were used a) to position the audience in a particular location in the room; b) to position the audience in a virtual location, as they referred to numbered films, viewed on the P-DVD, which referred to locations around the Children's House; and c) as a children's game, thus, to position the audience in that context. In this sense, I understand Saussure's idea: 'a sign has the value that it does in virtue of its place in a network of other possible choices.'³²⁴ The numbers as signs in Saussure's articulation were used in the installation to create a sense of displacement. It worked particularly well when a visitor watched a short film of climbing up the stairs, at the same time that he actually climbed the stairs in the installation. He commented that, for an instance, he felt he was between places.

Emulsion in the installation *Culture of Trauma*, which in the tradition of art history is used as a base for painting, was used for floor painting. A layer of PVA glue covered the

³²³ Simon Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1996, p. 346.

³²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 340.

painting, as well as part of the wall surface, where the projection was. The idea behind this decision was to create fragmentation of painting, whereby material is separated from colour, symbolising death. A memory emerged - Palestinian house painters who worked in the kibbutz occasionally gave me some emulsion for my paintings. Laura U. Marks writes: 'Where meaningful knowledge is located?' It is between cultures, therefore 'can never be fully verified in the terms of one regime or the other.'³²⁵ The words You Are Here were painted in Arabic script, incorporated in the floor-painting. Amongst alternative ways to express and produce knowledge, according to Marks, is 'the very lack of images or memories, itself a meaningful record of what can be expressed.'³²⁶ These quotations are relevant in the context of the invisible presence of the Palestinians and their suffering in my childhood landscape. This childhood was a Palestinian-free zone. One makes a special effort to increase awareness of the 'other' (Palestinian) invisibility. The painted number in *Culture of Trauma* is related by association to the memory of the Holocaust, yet its materiality is associated with the intimacy of the body, the domestic and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Here, memory was used in bringing material from the past – emulsion - to the present. The past is therefore revisited from the point of consciousness of the present, through materiality. This echoes Foucault's quotation of Kant's philosophical question: 'What are we?'³²⁷ While the Cartesian question: Who are we? implies a universal subject, according to Foucault:

Kant's question appears as an analysis of both us and our present [...] Maybe the most certain of all philosophical problems is the problem of the present time and of what we are in this very moment. Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and to build up what we could be to get rid of this kind of political "double bind," which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures.³²⁸

This act of revisiting the past is enabled through materiality and imagination. In that sense, in the installation we 'build up what we could be.'³²⁹

³²⁵ Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of The Film, Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*, 2000, p. 24.

³²⁶ Ibid, p.24.

³²⁷ Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power' in Brian Wallis (ed.), *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, 1996, p. 423.

³²⁸ Ibid, pp. 423-424.

³²⁹ Ibid, p. 424.

In focusing one's attention on a mark called *Stain* (Figs. 42, 43, 44) bodily processes and the way they define the *Self* became clear. A series of drawings was made, using pencil, graphite powder and PVA glue. These drawings were informed by seriality, linearity, and inner formal tension. This work corresponded with *ima*'s bodily and domestic environments. The mark evolved into a circular shape in *ima's Logo (Coffee Painting)*; appeared in *ima's Red Painting*, referring to women's menstrual blood; appeared in the installation *Yellow Painting*, referring to autobiographical memory in which the *Self* was marked, defined by the abject of its body and where public and private merge:

L. 'what do you remember from the Six Day War?'

i. 'You tell first'

L. 'I remember that I was in the Baby House [...] my mother probably worked there [...] all of a sudden an Egyptian plane passed above us, do you remember? There was one plane in the sky and everybody ran to the shelters and somebody pushed a baby in my arms and said 'run', the shelter was under the Baby House and I ran with the baby, this is all that I can remember'

i. '[...] are you sure that it wasn't in Yom Kippur?'

L. 'Not at all [...]

i. 'I remember that I was laying in the kindergarten and heard the teacher and nurses, Sarah'le, arriving [...] speaking outside very excitedly, and simply took all of us to the shelter, there were lots of slugs, I was with my pyjama, wet from pee [...] cold and shivering, this is what I remember'.³³⁰

The stain reappeared in the installation *Culture of Trauma* as a mask or wound/window. Finally, the stain evolved to a constant, erratic flow in the film *Landscape GB*, where the circular outline is constantly crossed. The image is held and contained by the rectangular frame of the LCD TV monitor. With a connection to a woman's body, this may suggest an echo, a trace of memory from the process of birth. The mark and its evolution brought together both a personal autobiographical memory with national traumatic memories of Israeli wars and the Holocaust. Processes of women's bodies connected with psychological processes related to kibbutz childhood, as well as Jewish and Israeli-Palestinian history. The stain, or 'mark of shame' (Ot Ka-lon) in Hebrew literature refers to the mark of identity, which Jewish people were forced to wear. It was first enforced by Muslims around AD 720. In 1215, it was enforced by Christians in order to prevent connections between Christians and

³³⁰ From: *ima interviews Guest: Litag Gavish, 14.3.2001*, (Cross reference, appendix I, p. 194).

others, especially Jews. Usually this mark was a yellow circle. This practice lasted in some cases until the 18th century.³³¹

However, the understanding of the stain as a sign in a system of difference has led to its release from its previous single meaning. It was used in my work to convey a sense of displacement and fragmentation. Saussure's semiotics enables the consideration of subjectivity, as it recognises and provides tools with which to understand difference.

The installation *Culture of Trauma* embodied victimhood. Here lies the therapeutic aspect of artwork. The installation functioned as a container in which feelings and memories of victimhood were re-enacted. Audience functioned as witness to a drama, which up until the moment of exhibiting was hidden in the private space of the self, invisible. Once recognised and contained, the effect of flooding the psyche disappears. On a very personal level, the traumatized self finds her voice and is able to rebuild and develop her own system of thoughts using the indexical in which the signified and the signifier are both present. In other words, the maternal body is embodied in the painting and in the film. It is both the maternal body and the remembering body; a meeting of past and present. Finding one's own voice is an act of empowerment; an assertion of one's sense of freedom; enabling an engagement of power relationship with others.

The phallus oriented representation, which is based on mimesis and lack and determined by the sense of vision, does not correspond with maternal experience, as well as kibbutz childhood, as was shown in previous chapters. Such representation is centred on sexual difference, which has been articulated from man's experience in patriarchal society, influenced by Aristotle's philosophy. Such representation is established on the conception of same, in which difference is erased. The lack of theorisation of difference produces invisibility.

What happens when there is a gap between one's own experiences and the way in which these experiences are represented in culture? In other words, when the voice of the individual is not heard, when the *Self* is not seen? Instead there is the domination of a group. This question applies to the maternal, kibbutz childhood, and the Israeli - Palestinian conflict. There was a high degree of identification of the *Self* with the peer group, the kibbutz, the country and with Zionist values. Tamir calls the kibbutz movement The Black Box of the Israeli, Zionist society; which includes 'codes of blindness, closeness and self-denial.'³³²

³³¹ From: Yuval Kamart (ed.), *Judaic Lexicon*, Keter Publisher Ltd., Jerusalem, 1976, p. 16.

³³² Tali Tamir, *Together: the Group and the Kibbutz in Collective Israeli Consciousness*,



Fig. 45: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Wall Israel/Palestine*, DVD Stills 1 – 2
2007



Fig. 46: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *The Separation Wall* (Israel/Palestine)
Photograph, 2007

5.18 Eleventh case-study: *Wall Israel/Palestine, Performative act, 2007*

A 10 metre-long paper was attached to the wall that Israel builds around Palestinian villages in the West Bank (*Figs. 45, 46*), (Cross reference, appendix II). A drawing in the technique of brass rubbing was done in order to create an interaction with the wall. Two video cameras were positioned next to each-other, documenting the event. This was a collaboration between *ima* and friends (Idit Nathan and Nick Davies). This act emerged from the question: what can a person do when confronted with a wall? The separation wall can be seen as the solidifying of all the feelings mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The wall's existence inflicts great suffering on the Palestinian population. It fragments the Palestinian community. It humiliates Israeli soldiers. It embarrasses Israelis, provoking dark memories of the past. It stimulates hatred and despair.

5.19 Indexical and the everyday

ima enables an inner space of being both an observer and a participant at the same time. At *Wall Israel/Palestine*, this space has been extended to include others: friends-participants. Performative act is not a performance. It does not need an audience. It is an intimate action, which is *rooted* in everyday life but has an additional element. In *Wall Israel/Palestine*, the brass-drawing is constructed on the domestic function of scrubbing. *ima* mimics this functional action, shifting it from a private, domestic environment to a public, political environment. The additional element, therefore, can be in shifting places, altering materials or any other intervention, thus creating new contexts and, at the same time, expanding the definition of the *everyday*. The *everyday* is perceived not as an object *outside* the self, but as incorporated into a creative dialogue, which includes place, time, space, *self* and *other*.

Foucault writes:

The exercise of power is not simply a relationship between partners, individual or collective; it is a way in which certain actions modify others. Which is to say [...] that something called Power [...] which is assumed to exist universally in a concentrated or diffused form, does not exist. Power exists only when it is put into action [...].³³³

³³³ Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power' in Brian Wallis (ed.), *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, 1996, p. 426.

The method of performative act is informed by Foucault's analysis of power relationships. The method *ima* is also inspired by Ettinger's matrix as a shared space. Ettinger writes:

In the phallus, we confront the impossibility of sharing trauma and phantasy, whereas in the matrix, to a certain extent, there is *an impossibility of not sharing* them [...] It is art that leads us to discover our share of response-ability in transmissible events whose source is not inside One-self [...] We participate in the traumatic events of the other. What makes the difference is a certain awareness of this, and as a consequence of it an opening up to possibilities for transforming the ways we join in the traumatic events of others.³³⁴

I have used the technique of brass rubbing before. It is a form that brings together the signifier and the signified, an alternative to mimetic based representation. The depicted object is present in the paper alongside its descriptive representation. This critical reflection began by describing a small drawing, which was called *ima's Drawing (Accumulative)*, and was described as a 'surface of possibilities.' From the accumulated marks, the brass drawing of two coins was chosen. It evolved as a looped, moving image, which conveys a kind of 'deaf dialogue' between an object and a vagina-like shape in which one 'coin' is moving and changing, whereas the other remains un-affected, in *ima's Drawing - Radio Report*. It may stand metaphorically as a gender 'deaf dialogue'. The drawing that was done with the wall remained rolled, unopened. This may stand for a dark chapter in the Israeli-Palestinian power relationship. Foucault articulates power relationship as follows:

[...] what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future.³³⁵

What possibilities are there for a person who faces seven or eight metres of cement wall? Is it the case that, for Palestinians, the only way to be a free subject, faced with 'a field of possibilities', engaged in a power relationship, is by becoming a projected image? Regarding the power of the image, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has long been extended to screens, as

³³⁴ Brian Massumi (ed.), *Bracha L. Ettinger, The Matrixial Borderspace*, 2006, p. 90,91.

³³⁵ Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power' in Brian Wallis (ed.), *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, 1996, p. 427.

well as on the ground. As written previously, in the creative processing of words and images lies a potential to construct a place that will facilitate understanding and communication.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Overview of the research question

In this research, I addressed issues connected to the experience of being both artist and mother, by focusing on my own mothering and art practice. The aim was to expand my own understanding of myself and my maternal experiences and by so doing, to contribute to a wider understanding of maternal subjectivity. I proposed to study my art practice as a link to the maternal body. I have studied the problem that Elizabeth Gross pointed out with regard to Kristeva's theory of the abject and the maternal body; the problem of theorising the maternal body, while leaving the subject of these maternal experiences un-theorised. This may lead to the maintenance of stereotypic perceptions of women. I proposed that art works and practice may open a space in which the maternal body and subjectivity meet. My aim was to study this meeting; by this, to expand the understanding of maternal subjectivity.

The research was done through a close scrutiny of social conventions with regard to the maternal body and kibbutz childhood. Kibbutz childhood has been deconstructed and analysed through the experience of the maternal body, by including the body in the works, supported by Kristeva's theory of the abject. This contributed to the understanding of maternal subjectivity, as suppressed childhood memory re-appeared in my maternal experience. Scrutinizing the research methods revealed the connections between kibbutz childhood, maternal body and subjectivity. This enquiry exposed the relationship between private and public, which led to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict being investigated.

6.2 A dialogue between theory and practice

The role of art practice was to lead the research through a dialogue with various theories, mostly Kristeva's abject and the maternal body; to explore, using materials and creative processes, the knowledge that comes from the body – 'what the body knows' and the knowledge that comes from the subject – 'what I know'. Both, it has been revealed, are tightly bound with questions concerning the public and the private.

I found that a dialogue between theories and practice enabled a deep enquiry into maternal subjectivity. The experiences of pregnancy, birth and raising children have left a mark, which is recognisable in my works and in the creative process. This mark became an object given for theoretical thinking. I called it a maternal quality, which is 'rich-rejected'. It

emerged in the early years of my mothering practice (Cross reference, appendix I, p. 195. Ester Watson interview with Yonat Nitzan-Green, 1999. Watson was a doctorate candidate at the time). Kristeva's theory of the abject and the maternal body provided a theoretical, conceptual framework for this maternal quality. I called 'rich-rejected' the biological-physiological materials that I found myself to be in daily contact with, acknowledging both disgust and a sense of fascination. Kristeva's writings have added psychological and historical dimensions. They 'opened' the way to considering my personal history with the idea of the 'rich-rejected', or the abject and the maternal body. It enabled a reflection on 'public' and 'private', more precisely, the way one informs the other. Later on, this theoretical framework was expanded to include Clarissa Pinkola Estes' writings, as well as Bracha Ettinger's theory of the matrix.

I have analysed my kibbutz childhood through Michel Foucault's theory of pastoral power, which considers the relationship between the subject and state institutions, and the technique by which an individual turns into a subject in the sense that he or she becomes subjugated to authority of the state. I have demonstrated, through analysing *Culture of Trauma*, how the child became invisible in the kibbutz peer-group, subjugated to kibbutz rules shaped by a Zionist ideology. The theme of invisibility was anchored in a synthesis of Foucault's, Levkovitz's, and Pinkola Estes' writings, together with creative processes and materials.

Irit Rogoff's discussion of gossip as destabilizing structures of knowledge, such as history, was used in analysing my work, and in particular the methods of persona and performative act. I have explained how, in the event of gossip, there is an implicit exchange in which, by sharing this information, a collective identity is presumed; an identity which subjugates me to a forced and thus false individuality. By using a persona, I was able to put up a boundary in this implicit exchange, thus break it; and to reflect critically on this event. Furthermore, I was able to turn it into material, thus creatively process it in the form of an art work. When this event turned into actual material, then there is an opportunity for interpretation. Difference is intrinsic in the idea of interpretation. Artwork acknowledges and facilitates difference.

I have used Clarisa Pinkola Estes' Jungian analysis of women's psyche through folklore stories to develop the understanding of that maternal quality I called 'rich-rejected'. It enabled me to understand my own feelings, which emerged in the early years of becoming a mother. Feelings such as depression, invisibility, being trapped, but mostly frustration at not

being able to communicate my feelings and thoughts. Pinkola Estes' writings made a particular contribution to my understanding of the choice of materials that I used in my work, prior to, but also during, the research. Here, I would like to explain the connection between words, materials, and feelings. The materials are graphite powder mixed with PVA glue. This mixture creates a mud-like substance. Pinkola Estes discussed injury to basic instinct, which I have recognised as belonging to the kibbutz childhood. Pinkola Estes writes:

When the wildish nature has been nearly exterminated, in the most extreme cases, it is possible that a schizoid deterioration and/or psychosis may overwhelm the woman [...] She may feel suicidal [...] But far more commonly, the woman just goes dead. She doesn't feel good or bad; she just doesn't feel [...] So what happens to women when their vibrant psychic color are mushed all together? [...] when you stir vibrant colors together, you get a color called mud. Not mud that is fertile, but mud that is sterile, colorless, strangely dead, that does not emit light.³³⁶

Indeed, through counselling I have realised that there was a considerable period of time in which I did not feel. I struggled with motherhood and did not find time and energy to make art. These materials appeared, as I wrote before, at the moment when I took the decision, intuitively, to combine art materials with domestic and bodily materials. Later, they were used in my drawings, then reappeared in the installation, which concluded the research (Cross reference, appendix II). Clarissa Pinkola Estes' writing, which was read after the early work had been done, clarifies these works by re-enforcing the feelings that inform them. Earlier, I mentioned a sequence, which begins with an event, to its analysis through the concept of gossip, to its interpretation in materiality by the artist. I would like to add to this sequence the possibility of interpretation by the audience/viewer, which is inherent in the materiality of the work.

According to Pinkola Estes, 'Jung speculated that the instincts derived from the psychoid unconscious, that layer of psyche where biology and spirit might touch.'³³⁷ Pinkola Estes explains the etymological meaning of the word instinct thus:

³³⁶ Clarissa Pinkola Estes, *Women Who Run With The Wolves*, 1998, p. 250.

³³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 230.

the word *instinct* derives from the Latin *instinguere*, meaning “impulse,” also *instinctus*, meaning “instigation,” to incite or impel via an innate prompting. The idea of instinct can be valued positively as an inner something that when blended with forethought and consciousness guides humans to integral behaviour.³³⁸

Instinct can be understood as closely linked with action: to instigate, ‘to incite or impel.’³³⁹ I want to understand maternal subjectivity by making a connection between Pinkola Estes’ explanation of instinct as something impelling to action and Kristeva’s theory of the maternal body as ‘space and processes.’³⁴⁰ If, according to Gross’s reading of Kristeva, the maternal body is ‘a series of (largely biological) processes,’³⁴¹ but not totally biological processes, then this can be interpreted as a small gap with a potential to find some new understanding. I want to make the connection between process and action. I will discuss it in the context of methodology and methods.

6.3 Methodology and methods

The aspects of aesthetic and ethics implicit in the idea of the ‘rich-rejected’ became explicit during the research, mostly through the methods persona and performative act. These methods and the position of the researcher can best be understood as connected both to the maternal and to kibbutz childhood.

According to Pinkola Estes, Baba Yaga represents ‘the power of annihilation and the power of the life force at the same time. To gaze into her face is to see *vagina dentate*, eyes of blood, the perfect newborn child and the wings of angels all at once.’³⁴² The maternal body, according to Kristeva, is associated with life and death. Pinkola Estes’ writes: ‘[...] the witch, the wild nature, and whatever other *criaturas* and integral aspects the culture finds awful in the psyches of women are the very blessed things which women often need most to retrieve and bring to the surface.’³⁴³ Kristeva explained the difficulty of thinking about a subject with the maternal body due to the social perception of women. Pinkola Estes’ writings complement Kristeva’s, however, Pinkola Estes, like many other feminists, represent

³³⁸ Ibid, p. 231.

³³⁹ Ibid, p. 231.

³⁴⁰ Elizabeth Gross ‘The Body of Signification’ in John Fletcher and Andrew Benjamin (eds.), *Abjection, Melancholia and Love, The Work of Julia Kristeva*, 1990, p. 95.

³⁴¹ Ibid, p. 98.

³⁴² Pinkola Estes, *Women Who Run With The Wolves*, 1998, p. 88.

³⁴³ Ibid, p. 89.

a woman's voice, while Kristeva stresses the need to articulate the specificity of each individual woman; a need to develop conception of difference.

The position used in this research was that of observer-participant, which initially was inspired by artist Susan Hiller's statement, regarding her pregnancy. Kristeva's theory added another layer to this position, revealing a complexity in terms of how the 'inside' of the body and its relationship to the 'outside' may be interpreted. Persona and performative act are methods which were chosen in order to accommodate this position, by including self and 'other' through actions. This allows both empathy and differentiation. These methods enable reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, in which the past can be reconsidered critically through 'tools', methods, which are developing in the present. These methods are informed by research in action methodology, as well as maternal and kibbutz childhood traumas. In that sense, these 'tools' are informed by the past. In my understanding, this is an ethical stance.

Data has been collected and stored in a systematic way, however, that system allowed a place for chance and the incidental, through the recognition of the un-expected element found in the creative process. Chance and the incidental have been articulated as 'interruption'. Focusing on interruption as a theme, it was connected to the domestic, maternal experience, first, in its simple meaning, as it stops a flow of action; second, as a maternal trauma, as it displaces the woman who became the subject of maternal experiences. Interruption has been explained in the context of kibbutz childhood, as the trauma of early separation of the child from her mother. Interruption has been incorporated in the methods of persona and performative act, transformed from being an element that is associated with trauma and displacement to an element that enables new learning to occur.

Performative acts are actions based on collaboration and participation, not only with other people, but with objects, and processes; these can be traced in the materiality of the works. Maternal experiences were the trigger of and the force which moved this enquiry.

6.4 Further research

Relating to Freud and Lacan, Mary Kelly aimed to displace the fetishism of the child by the mother by shifting it into her installation in *Post-Partum Document* in order to reconsider the 'fetishistic nature of representation itself.'³⁴⁴ I have shifted a traumatic memory to the space of the installation, thus understand this space as reflective and

³⁴⁴ Lucy Lippard, 'Construction of sexual difference (1982) in Mary Kelly, *Post-Partum Document*, 1999, p. xx

therapeutic, as a ‘container’ for traumatic memory. This is re-enforced by Janice Cheddie who asks, as part of her discussion of trauma,³⁴⁵ how the traumatised subject tells their story and how silence and narratives shape the artwork. Cheddie suggests that listening as an act of reciprocity is an ethical act, in which artist (‘witness’, ‘survivor’) and audience (‘becoming witness’) become culturally visible.

Installation as a space which facilitates both trauma and difference is a cultural format in which maternal subjectivity may be further explored and developed. The research’s question originated from Gross’ critique of Kristeva’s theory of the abject, however the research was limited by my lack of knowledge and understanding in psychoanalysis. A further interdisciplinary research of maternal subjectivity, which will include the two disciplines of art and psychoanalysis, is recommended.

Final word

Half way through my MA Fine Art course Beth Harland and Stephen Cooper asked if I am interested in taking a practice-led doctorate. I was thrilled. I felt at the time that there are so many questions which need researching, regarding my maternal experience; that only one year of MA studies could never fully cover. Now, after seven years of conducting this research, I feel that, at last, I managed to come to some new understanding regarding my maternal subjectivity. I hope that this research will be useful to other researchers in related fields of enquiry. I thank from the bottom of my heart to both Stephen and Beth for giving me this opportunity.

³⁴⁵ Janice Cheddie, ‘Listening to Trauma in the Art of Everlyn Nicodemus in *Third Text*, Vol. 21, Issue 1, January 2007

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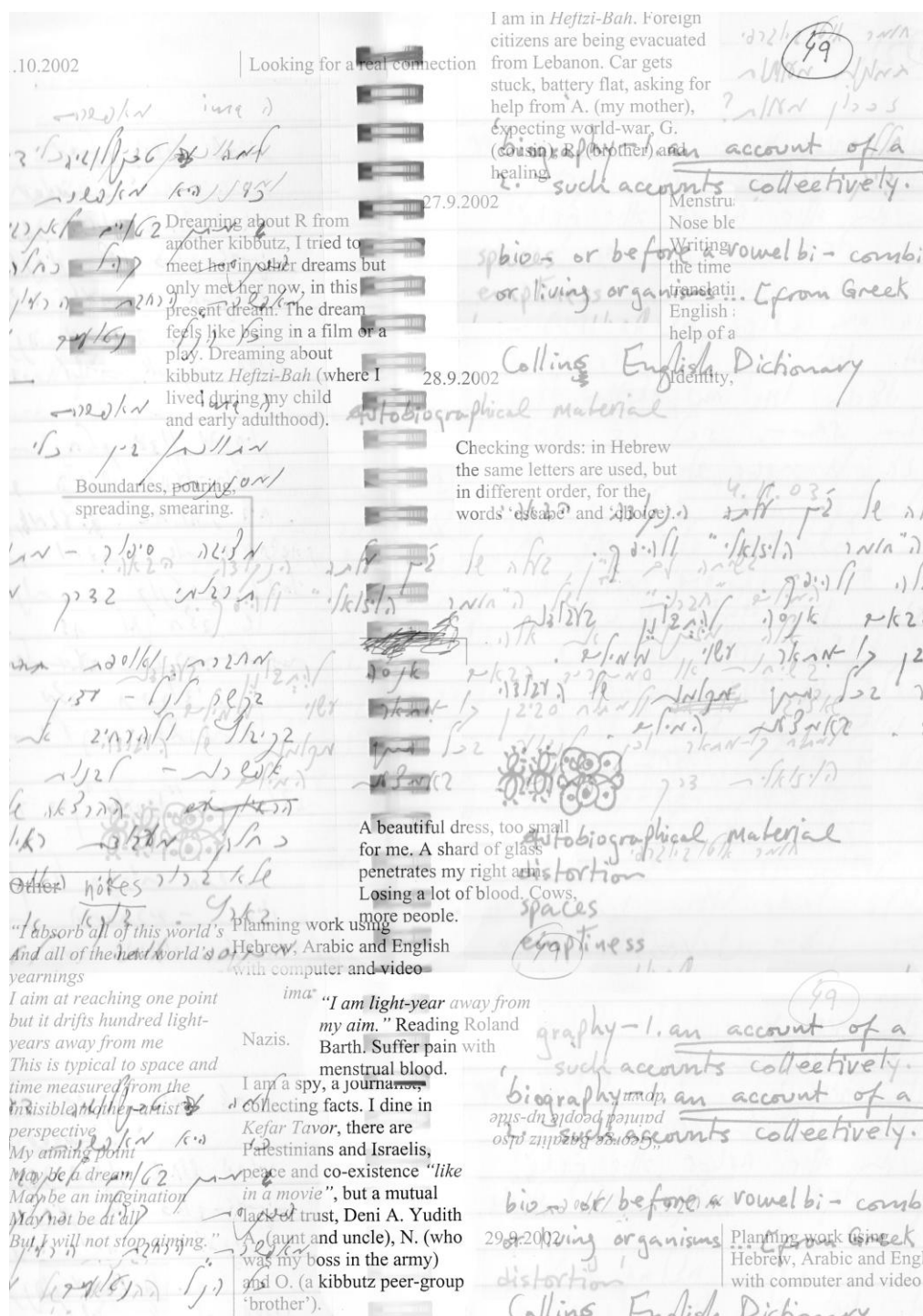
Bangkok Dangerous, Directors Oxide Pang and Danny Pang Chun, Thailand, 2002

Divine Intervention, Director Elia Suleiman, 2002

Appendix I: archive items

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Yonat Nitzan-Green, *ima's 5 minute writing in the stream of consciousness*

‘A method of writing diaries in the stream of consciousness has been deployed as a strategy to enable a way into my own unconscious.’

Cross reference, main text, p. 13.

A List of Archive Folders

1. *Letters From Lamees 1990s*
2. *Letters From Yonat to Grandparents 1980s – 1990s*
3. *Education 1992 - 2009*
4. *Women-Artists Group Exhibitions 1990s – 2003*
5. *Curated Exhibitions and Family Life 1990s*
6. *Questions That Children Asked About Their Paintings 1991 - 1993*
7. *Breast-feeding 1992 - 1998*
8. *Compost 1992 - 2008*
9. *Guest Interviews by ima 1991 - 2008*
10. *Artists Newspaper Articles 1980s – 1990s*
11. *Texts For The Research 2002 - 2008*
12. *Reading in Coffee Painting – ima's Logo 2003*
13. *'5 Minute Writing In The Stream of Consciousness' Diaries 2002 - 2005*
14. *MPhil/PhD Tutorials with Supervisory Team 2005*
15. *ima 1999 – 2008*
16. *Conferences 2002 - 2008*
17. *Kibbutz 2002 - 2008*
18. *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict 2002 - 2008*
19. *Photo-Diary 2002 - 2008*
20. *Writings about my works 2002 – 2008*
21. *Azmi Bishara's Postcard 2004*
22. *Visual Research (PhD Conference and Exhibition) 2004*
23. *PhD Conference 2005*
24. *PhD Conference 2006*
25. *PhD Conference 2007*
26. *How to Write a PhD Practice-Led PhD 2007-2008*

'At an early stage of the research I was aware that this is an enquiry of the 'self', in the field of identity. This awareness grew with the compilation of my archive.'

Cross reference, main text, p. 14.

17.06.2001

16:41 - arranging clean dishes in cupboards, giving a teaspoon to Mayron, finding The History of Painting and helping Gilad to find Wistler's Mother

16:59 - filling the sink with hot water and soap, wearing gloves

17:17 - emptying the sink and taking off the gloves

17-6-1-1-1
 השעה - وضعت أدوات المطبخ في أماكنها وأعطيت
 ملعقة صغيرة إلى مايرون، وجدت عن تاريخ
 لوحة زيتية ومساعدة جيلاد لإيجاد لوحة
 أم المصفر.

16:41 - أملأ الحوض بالماء الساخن وصابون، أرتد
 قفازات على أواني المطبخ

16:59 - تفريغ الحوض وغسل. قفازات الغسيل

17.06.2001

16:41 - ארגן כלים נקיים בארון, נתתי כפית למהירון, מצאתי היסטוריה של ציור

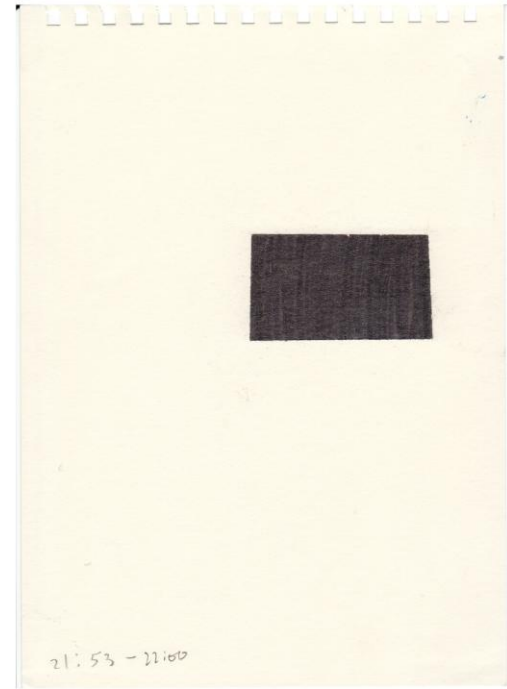
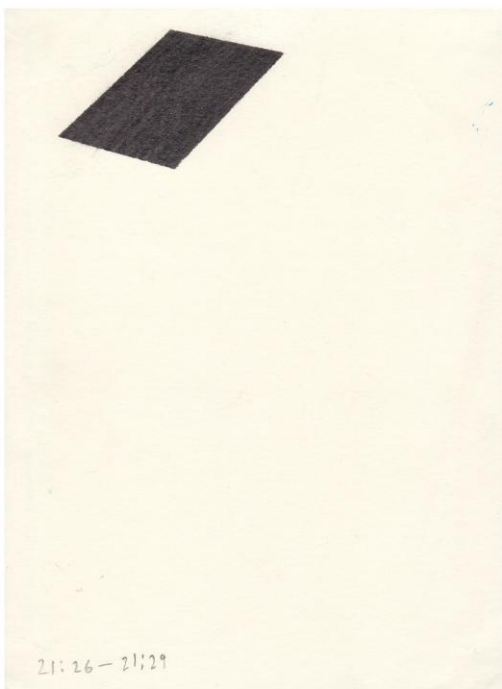
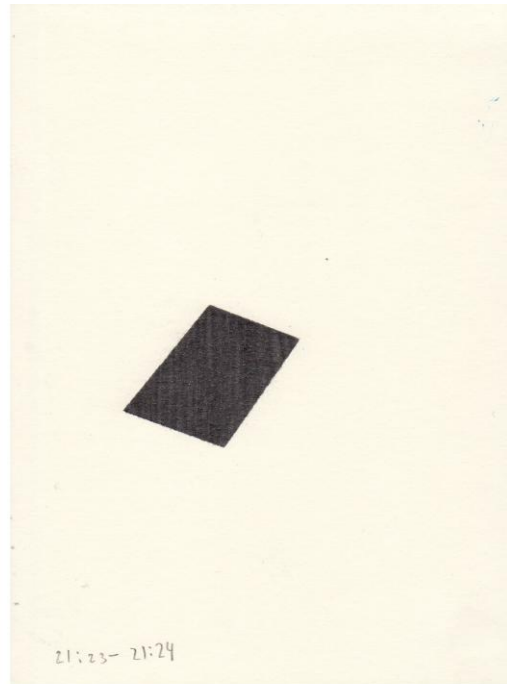
16:59 - מילאת את האמבטיה במים חמים וסבון, ארגנתי את הכלים
 ארגנתי את הכלים בארון, נתתי כפית למהירון, מצאתי היסטוריה של ציור

17:17 - ריקנתי את האמבטיה וסילקתי את כפיתי. ארגנתי את הכלים

Yonat Nitzan-Green, *A diary of washing dishes*, Performative act, 2001

'Motherhood can be understood as a social action in which already established meanings are re-enacted and re-experienced.'

Cross reference, main text, p. 28.



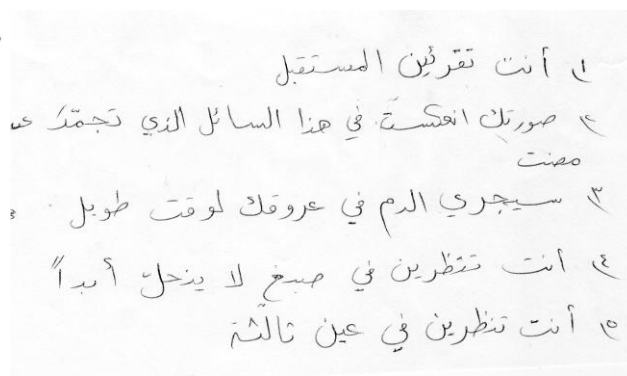
Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Time drawings 1 – 4* (02:00-02:10, 21:23-21:24, 21:26-21:29, 21:53-22:00), Pencil on paper, 2002

‘I became aware that time is not visible in the work itself. If it was not for the title, one could not guess that this is an exploration of time.’

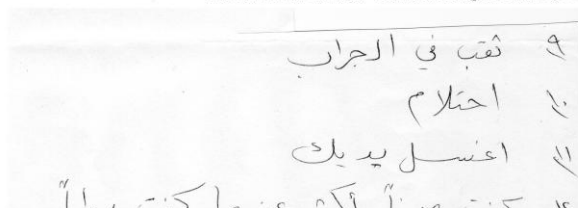
Cross reference, main text, p. 39.

Translated sentences

1. 'You are looking into the eye of the future'
2. 'Your look is reflected in this liquid which froze about ten days ago'
3. 'The blood in your vessels will carry on flowing for a while longer'
4. 'You are looking at a stain which will not wash away'
5. 'You are looking into the third eye'
6. 'Leaking tap'
7. 'Boiling soup'
8. 'Screaming T.V.'
9. 'Hole in a sock'
10. 'Wet dream'
11. 'Wash your hand'
12. 'I was more flexible when I was wet'
13. 'Kiss'
14. 'Home-work'
15. 'House-work'
16. 'Dish-washer'
17. 'Good morning'
18. 'Good night'
19. 'Go up-stairs'
20. 'Hand-wash'
21. 'When you are looking at me I'm blushing'
22. 'I am reading your mind'
23. 'From your mind to my mind'
24. 'From my mind to your mind'
25. 'I'm flowing with your stream of thoughts'
26. 'I'm floating with you'
27. 'I'm floating on a stain of oil'
28. 'I'm floating on a broken surface'
29. 'I'm floating in the frying-pan'
30. "' " " " soup'
31. 'I'm floating in the bath'
32. 'You are looking at someone who have lost his/her memory'
33. 'Once I was more flexible'
34. 'I am fixated'

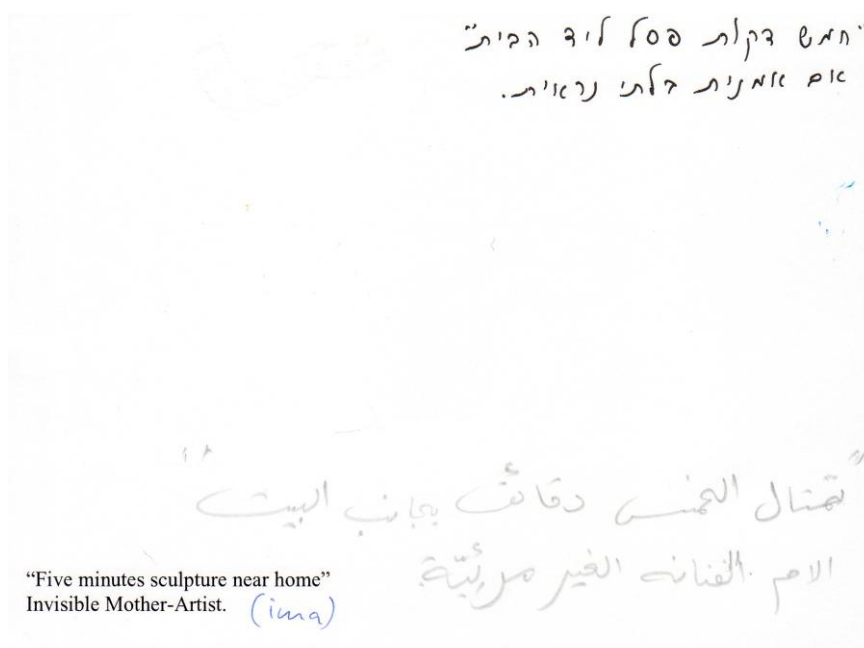


1. אתה מסתכל לתוך עיני העתיד. - You are looking into the eye of the future
2. המבט שלך משקף בנזול הזה שקפא בערך לפני עשרה ימים. - Your looking is reflected in this liquid which froze about ten days ago
3. הדם בכליך ימשיך לזרום זמן ארוך. - The blood in your vessels will carry on flowing for a while longer
4. אתה מתבונן בכתם שלא ישטף. - You are looking at a stain which will not wash away
5. אתה מתבונן בעין השלישית. - You are looking at a third eye



'Texts referring to kibbutz, Israeli childhood memory, appeared alongside the paintings. It was translated into both Arabic and Hebrew.'

Cross reference, main text, p. 53.



Yonat Nitzan-Green, *5 minute sculpture...*, Postcard one out of five, 1999

‘A food left-over was photographed as it was placed on the roof-window of *ima*’s *Mobile Studio*.’

Cross reference, main text, p. 60.

‘Each title of the five postcards was translated into Hebrew and Arabic by my mother and her Palestinian colleagues (all worked at the time in Oranim Collage of Education, Israel).’

Cross reference, main text, p. 142.

ima interviews guests 1990 – on-going

1992 – Interview with Jane Coomber (midwife)

1999 – Yonat Nitzan-Green interviewed by Ester Watson (MPhil student, Sheffield University)

2000 – Interview with Gilad and Mayron Nitzan-Green (about Action-man)

2001 – Interview with Litag Gavish

2001 - Interview with Neta Agmon

2001 – Interview members and residence from kibbutz Heftzi-bah, in collaboration with Malcolm Green

2002 – Interview with Eti and Maureen

2003 – Interview with Lilian Wisberger

2003 – Translated an interview with Shosh Beker from the Hebrew to English.

2004 – Interview Noriko Suzuki-Bosco

2004 – Interview Stav and Ofer

2005 – Interview with Aza Nitzan

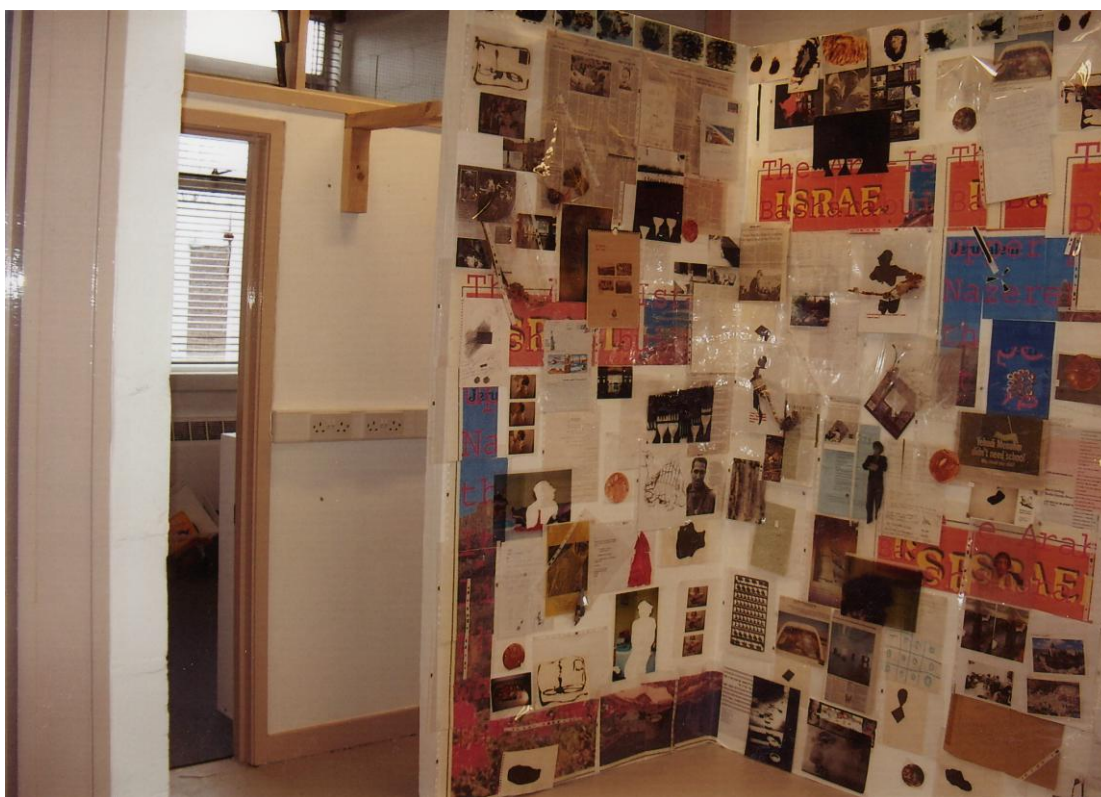
2007 – Interview with Lamis Khoury

Yonat Nitzan-Green, *ima interviews guests*: A list

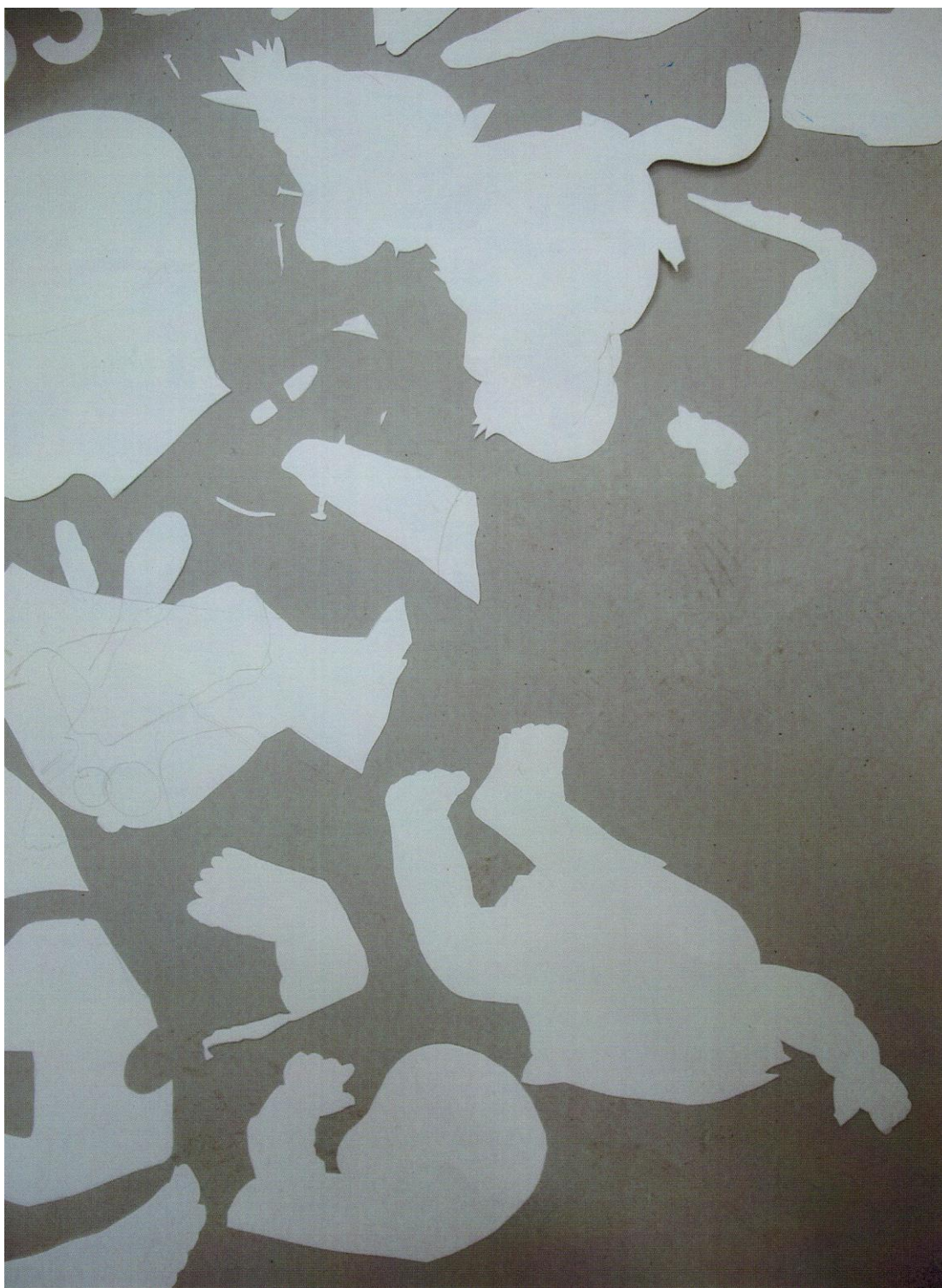
‘*ima Interviews Guest*, is a series of interviews, which were done as performative acts.’
Cross-reference, main text, p. 64.



Studio environment 2003 – 4



Studio environment (*Yellow Painting* installation – work in progress) 2004
Cross-reference, main text, p. 75.



Studio environment (*White paintings* – work in progress) 2006
Cross-reference, main text, p. 75.

Yonat Nitzan-Green's 'ima's 5 minute writing in the stream of consciousness'

The following text was written originally in Hebrew and has been translated by *ima*. First page is associative writing whereas Second page includes quotes from Clarissa Pinkola Estes' *Women Who Run With the Wolves* and my comment

First page - 13.3. 2004

Self Hatred

I hear negative voices
 "you can't emerge from mediocrity
 You will not succeed
 You have no chance
 You are zero
 You are not real, just pretend
 You are interested only in how you look
 You are not deep
 You are only touching the surface
 You can't commit yourself
 You can't persist
 You can't paint"
 And here I really cry, cry
 The heart breaks to pieces
 Each piece melts
 And turns to liquid
 Tears, blood, urine and heart
 All turn into one opaque and thick liquid
 Mud
 Something ugly
 Which can't separate from itself
 Can't crystallise
 Can't define itself
 Can't build itself
 Something which leaks and penetrates
 All the places, the forbidden places,
 Touches all the corners, the dust and spider web
 All the neglected corners inside
 Everything is one, big negligence
 Dust, spider-web and mouldy things
 Things which are not relevant any more to anyone
 ...

Then ima was born
 The hero-in, the clown
 Facilitator
 ima who protects
 with her arms
 receptive
 full of energy
 supports
 understands
 believes in my power
 ima which allows
 absurdities and contradictions to exist
 ima who collects paint brushes
 goes upstairs and meditates with her brushes
 Every paint brush is made of...

Pinkola Estes describes the signs of a damaged animus as a process of self doubting as follows: 'We can recognize when we begin to question our ability, and especially our legitimacy to think, or act, or be' .Ibid, p. 313.

As a persona ima is my animus. It enables to persecute an idea from its conception to its actualisation in material and form, in physical presence. It withstands inner voices which negates my abilities, for these voices address Yonat, not ima. It is the power to bridge between the inner and the outside worlds.

Second page - May 2003

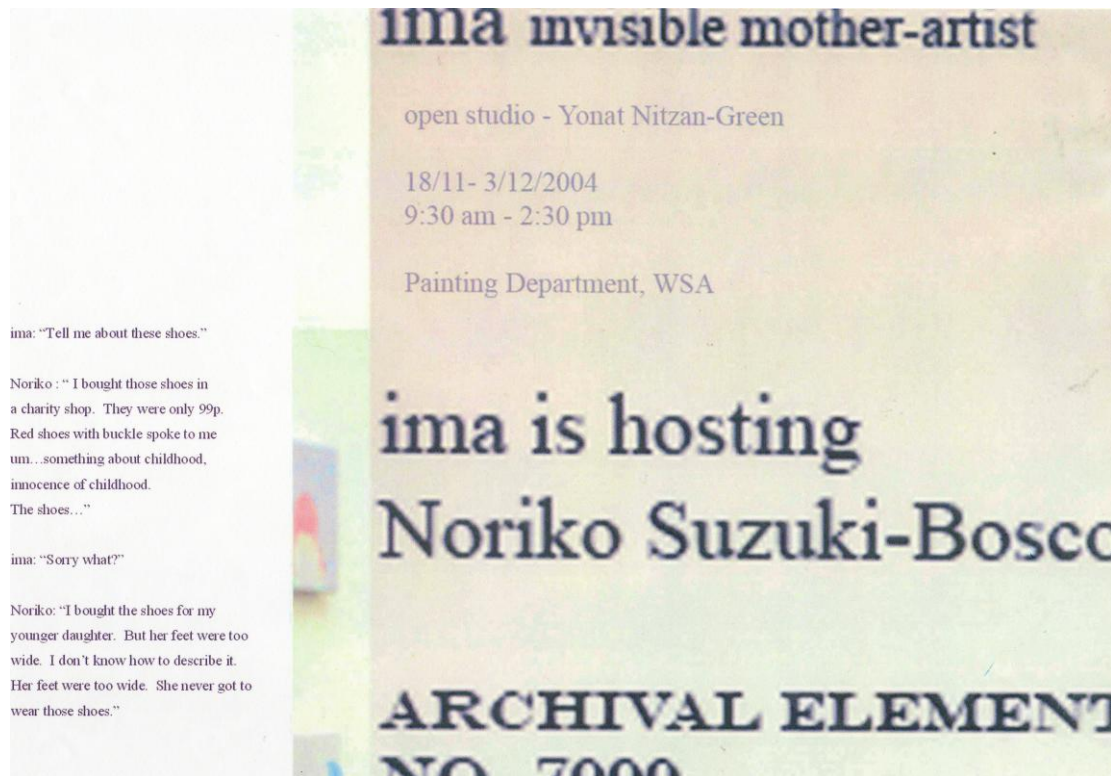
The psychoanalyst Clarissa Pinkola Estes rejects the Jungian definition of animus as a masculine force. Based on other women psychoanalysts including her own psychoanalytical practice Pinkola Estes claims that 'the revivifying source in women is not masculine and alien to her, but feminine and familiar'. Clarissa Pinkola Estes, *Women Who Run With The Wolves*, Rider, London, 1998, p. 310.

Animus can best be understood as a force that assists women in acting in their own behalf in the outer world. Animus helps a woman put forth her specific and feminine inner thoughts and feelings in concrete ways - emotionally, sexually, financially, creatively, and otherwise - rather than in a construct that patterns itself after a culturally imposed standard of masculine development in any given culture. Ibid, p. 310.

Yonat Nitzan-Green, *ima's 5 minute writing in the stream of consciousness*

'The search for maternal subjectivity is metaphorically like a torch which illuminated this inner, neglected space.'

Cross-reference, main text, p. 106.



Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Host – Guest (with Noriko Suzuki-Bosco)*, 2004
(Poster for Open Studio event *Host – Guest*)
Cross-reference, main text, p. 108.

ima: The 'Red' painting really interests me. I thought about it at night, before I took the slides. How the Japanese flag is in there...

Noriko: It's actually, not a Japanese flag but an apple, my daughter was holding an apple, a very very large apple. We were back in Japan last Christmas and my parents received a box of apples from their friend. We opened the box and inside were the biggest apples I've ever seen in my whole entire life. They were as big as my children's faces. (Laughter). The children obviously found it rather amusing to be eating something that were nearly as big as their heads. What is interesting is that I had quit a few comments from people that it looked like a Japanese flag, or hands holding a red ball. I painted it red because the apple was red, but I thought afterwards if I had painted the apple green, for example, what kind of comment I would have received.

ima: um, um-hm

Noriko: I don't think anybody has said it's an apple.

ima: Were you conscious that it looked like the Japanese flag when you were making this painting?

Noriko: I wasn't thinking about it at all.

ima: I wonder if I would have perceived it as Japanese had an English painter would have done this painting...

Noriko: I didn't think about the painting resembling a Japanese flag when I was making it. All I was interested in was painting um... painting um... pair of hands holding a ridiculous, large apple.

ima: To what extent, do you think, the Japanese heritage has influenced your work?

Noriko: Probably not much. But the tonality of the colour that I use is influenced by where I come from.

ima: Until what age did you live in Japan?

Noriko: I grew up in America from 7 to 12 years old. The majority of my life I've been living in Japan.



Host – Guest, 2004 (Noriko Suzuki–Bosco interviewed by Yonat Nitzan-Green/*ima*)
 Photographed by Karen Chard

‘This event included several interviews with Noriko, which were done in the space of the exhibition, as well as a performance in which *ima* interviewed Noriko outside a Newsagent’s shop in Winchester.’

Cross-reference, main text, p. 108.

An extract from INTERVIEWS WITH GUESTS: NETA AGMON
BY ima (Invisible Mother-Artist) 16.05.2001

Carry on talking

I. "We are having a conversation now. Neta came to visit us and let's think what to talk about...(laughter). So meanwhile I'll make us e..."
N. "We talk all the time"
I. "Yes carry on talking now, simple"
N. "Pity you didn't record us secretly"
I. "I do not do things secretly, the truth is that I have a question for you...what do you think about the security situation, give me a forecast"
N. "What will happen in Israel?"
I. "Yes..."
N. "If other nation is repress than buses explode, there's bloodshed, this is what's happening...tell me, is this meat?"
I. "No, it's a kind of vegetarian spread."
N. "Oh, good, this is an imitation of goose liver, isn't it?"
I. "No, it never occurred to me this idea, no, yes, it's the same style. So, Neta, you give us a pessimistic forecast"
N. "Look, I assume that...what is pessimism? What...is this mine? What the price, how far will it go, I don't know, a lot of blood may spilt. You know, blood which flows outside the veins is profane. Blood should flow only inside the veins. A spilt blood is forbidden by all the rules of the religion. Meanwhile, blood is being spilt."
I. "And what, is there something that we can do, the little 'players' in this big 'game'?"
N. "Everything in one's own little yard"
...
I. "You are saying that a change of the private, small, individual is the only possibility."
N. "Yes, that's the only possibility"
I. "That action should come from, the action which will turn into reality needs to come from the level of, not from the level of the leaders but from the level of the individual."
N. "It is all so clear. You can see that all these peace movements don't help."
I. "Everything, what? Please explain. But these peace movements e...do start from the private, don't they?"
N. "They identify evil... outside of them. Where is it? With the Right. With the settlers, do you understand? It is always the evil which is outside of them. Where is it? With...What are you doing?"
I. "I am only em..."
N. "Looks like something good, may be"
I. "Frying few vegetables to put on the pasta. Because pasta just like that it's boring."
N. "Are you making pasta?"
I. "I am making quickly pasta"
N. "Make it for both of us"
I. "For both of us, I'm making, of course, no, sure, it's a snack."
...

Yonat Nitzan-Green *ima interviews guests*: Neta Agmon

'A casual conversation is being interrupted by adding a documentation tool.'
Cross-reference, main text, p. 125.

INTERVIEWS WITH GUESTS: LITAG GAVISH
BY ima (Invisible Mother-Artist) - 14.03.2001

I. "Litag at the moment is making another cup of coffee, that's wonderful, two teaspoons. The thing that interests me is that since we both went to the army we weren't together; I was at Qiriat Shmona when you went to the army and when I had started the army you almost finished your serves time."

L. "That's right"

I. "I suddenly think that I have no idea what did you do in the army. You told me now that you worked in the office of the adviser for Arab matters, so simply it's very interesting. We already gossiped about, what his name, B."

L. "B."

I. "What, was he your commander?"

L. "He was the general commander of all the unit, of all the area"

I. "He wasn't the base commander, but wider"

L. "No, he was, how do you call it, the commander of all the occupied territories accept Gaza, all the Shomron and the..."

I. "What was his rank, Tat-Aluf?"

L. "Yes"

I. "Aa-ha, and you and Y. was your direct officer?"

L. "Yes"

I. "And you worked...and Y. later was the adviser of R."

L. "Yes, security adviser, very interesting, I didn't know that he stayed in that business, Y. what a man, so gentle, very clever, very sensitive, it is strange for an army person, he was actually not an army person, but how do you call it?"

I. "Citizen that works for the army"

L. "Citizen that works for the army"

I. "e...young, therefore, no?"

L. "No, not young"

I. "So many years"

L. "When I was in the army he was probably 40 – 45, maybe not, maybe not, 40"

I. "My commander, N. do you remember him?"

L. "Ye-es"

I. "Was 35 years old"

L. "Uh-ah"

I. "Seemed to me very old"

L. "That's it, also Y. seemed to me old, I mean 40 then seemed to me old"

I. "Were you his direct secretary?"

L. "Yes"

I. "And he had five secretaries that worked for him?"

L. "Were under my command, more or less, another five secretaries"

I. "Ah, you were the manager..."

L. "The office manager, do I know what it means...(laughter). What do I have to do with manager?!"

I. "And what exactly did they do? The heads of...used to come"

L. "No, this was also connected to the secret serves"

I. "Yes"

L. "We were connected to the secret serves, one of the officer that worked with us in the office, e...what was his name, oish, what was his name, used to give me lifts always from Tel-Aviv, he was a secret serves man"

Yonatan Nitzan-Green *ima interviews guests*: Litag Gavish

'L. 'what do you remember from the Six Day War?'

Cross reference, main text (footnote), p. 158.

EW/Where you have a boys' sections and a girls', and the kind of packaging. And I thought this is so ugly I've just got to paint it.

YN-G/Ah-ha.

EW/It didn't work actually. But I'm quite fascinated by this aesthetic it adopts. 'Action', all the-

YN-G/'Power'...I mean sorry.

EW/I thought I would try to do a painting of the packaging.

YN-G/I don't know-

.EW/Attacking it.

YN-G/I thought I'm er [laughter]. I don't know where this painting, I never worked from photographs.

It was strange for me to do something like this. That was one of my ideas was to put on top of something.

[Sounds of Green's children playing].

EW/Was there anything else you wanted to speak about, which we haven't?

YN-G/I'm glad that we spoke about this because this is still living, still unresolved. I think it's ...um...um...yeah I mean just in connection with invisible material that, I'm writing 'rich, rich invisible' or something.' Rich, rich rejected. Rich rejected. Invisible'. I don't know if I wrote it to you, but I wrote it.

EW/Oh right.

YN-G/So that's one of the ideas. I mean when I thought that the mothering experience was coming into the studio and I started to realise that there is such a thing as material that is rejected and it's very, very rich.

EW/Right, yes.

YN-G/That was it [laughter].

EW/That was like the source?

YN-G/It's all around. It's all around, the idea that something really wonderful is happening, so rich material, rich rejected material is here, or is there. Letter in a way, it's the soup! [laughter] I mean it's, it's around, you know? I mean letter for example, you can have very very strong, and you can, letters or

Yonat Nitzan-Green *ima interviews guests*: Ester Watson

(Yonat Nitzan-Green was interviewed by Ester Watson, 1999)
Cross reference, main text, p. 166.

Appendix II: Documentation CD and DVD

CD content:

The Children's Room – Concluding Installation 2008

Concluding Installation 2008

F-16 Installation 2007

Wall at Abu-dis 2008

DVD content:

ima's Story 2002 - Film

ima's Drawing – Radio Report 2004 – Moving Image

Yellow Painting 2004 – Filmed Installation

Archive 2004 – Installation

Archive 2004 – work in progress

Home-Made Land 2005 Performative Installation

Culture of Trauma 2006 - Installation

Landscape GB 2006 - Film

ima's March 2006 - Installation

Performative action with Israel/Palestine wall 2007

Appendix III: illustrations and archive items

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Appendix I – Archive items

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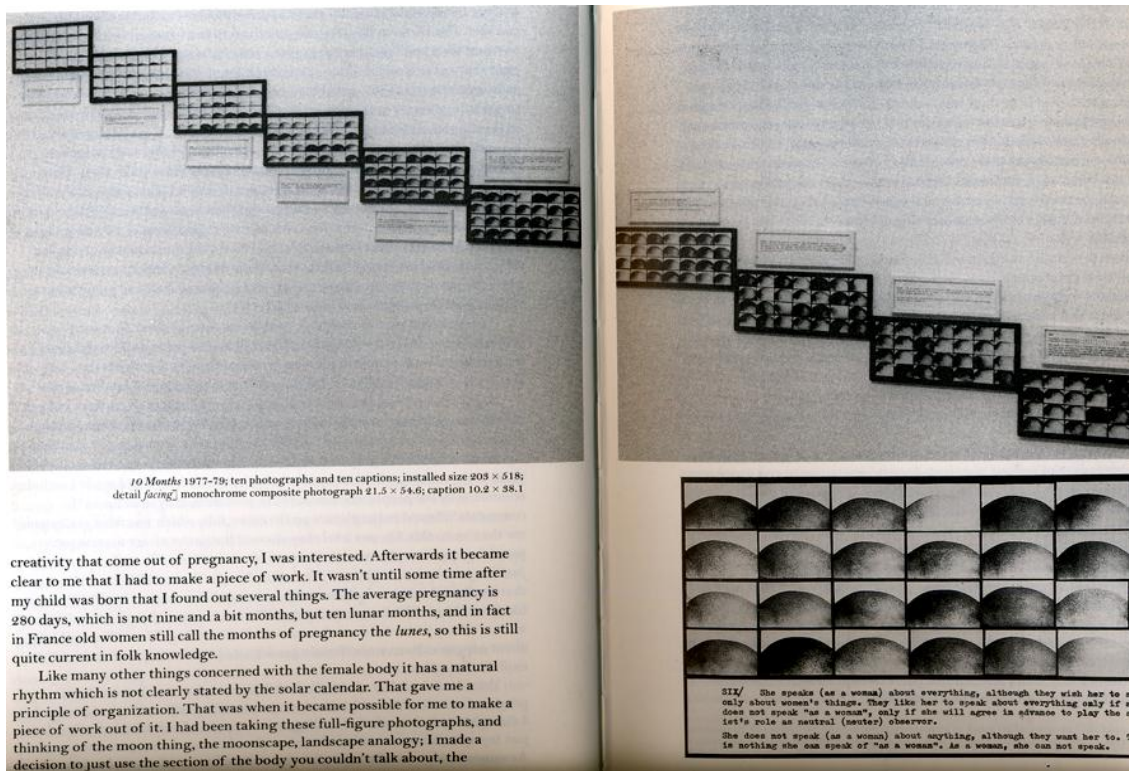


Fig. 1: Susan Hiller, *10 Months*, Installation, 1977-79

Cross reference, main text, p. 29.

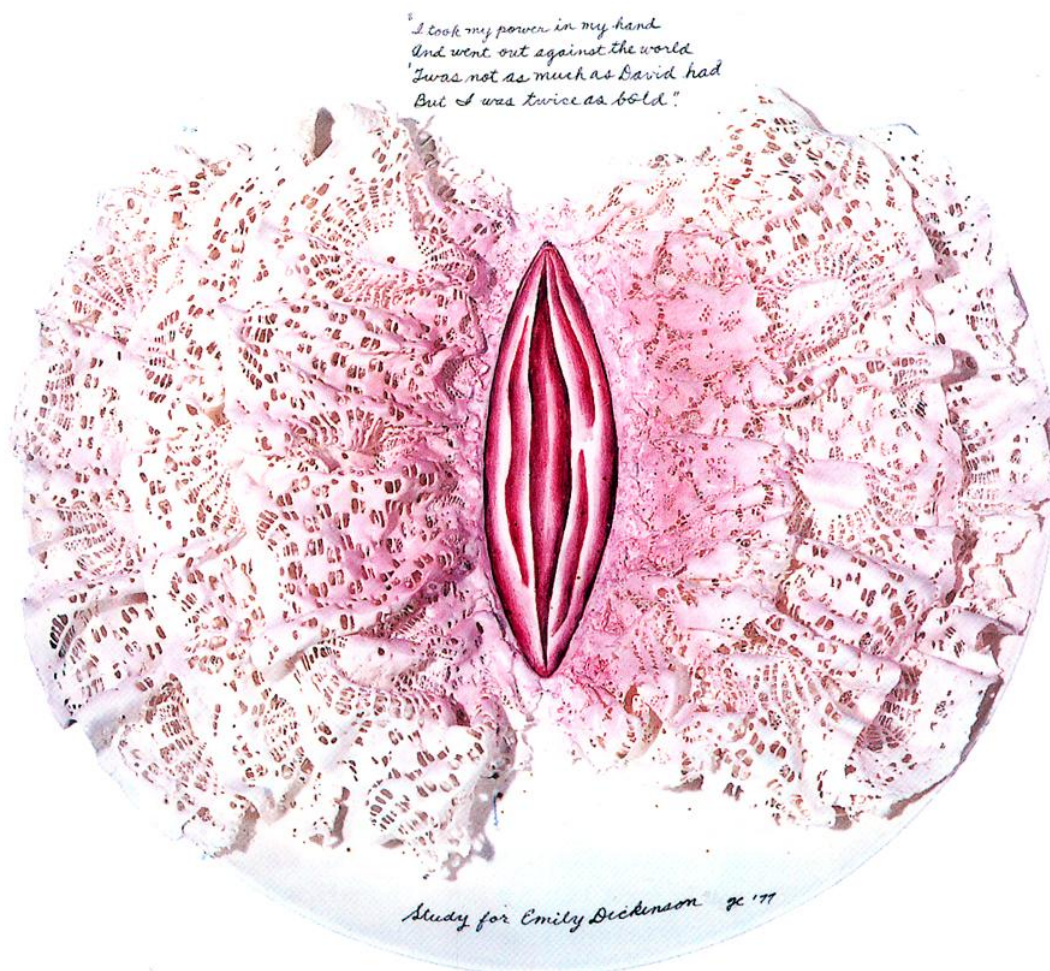


Fig 2: Judy Chicago, Emily Dickinson Plate (Study for *The Dinner Party*)
1977 – 1978

Cross reference, main text, p. 31.

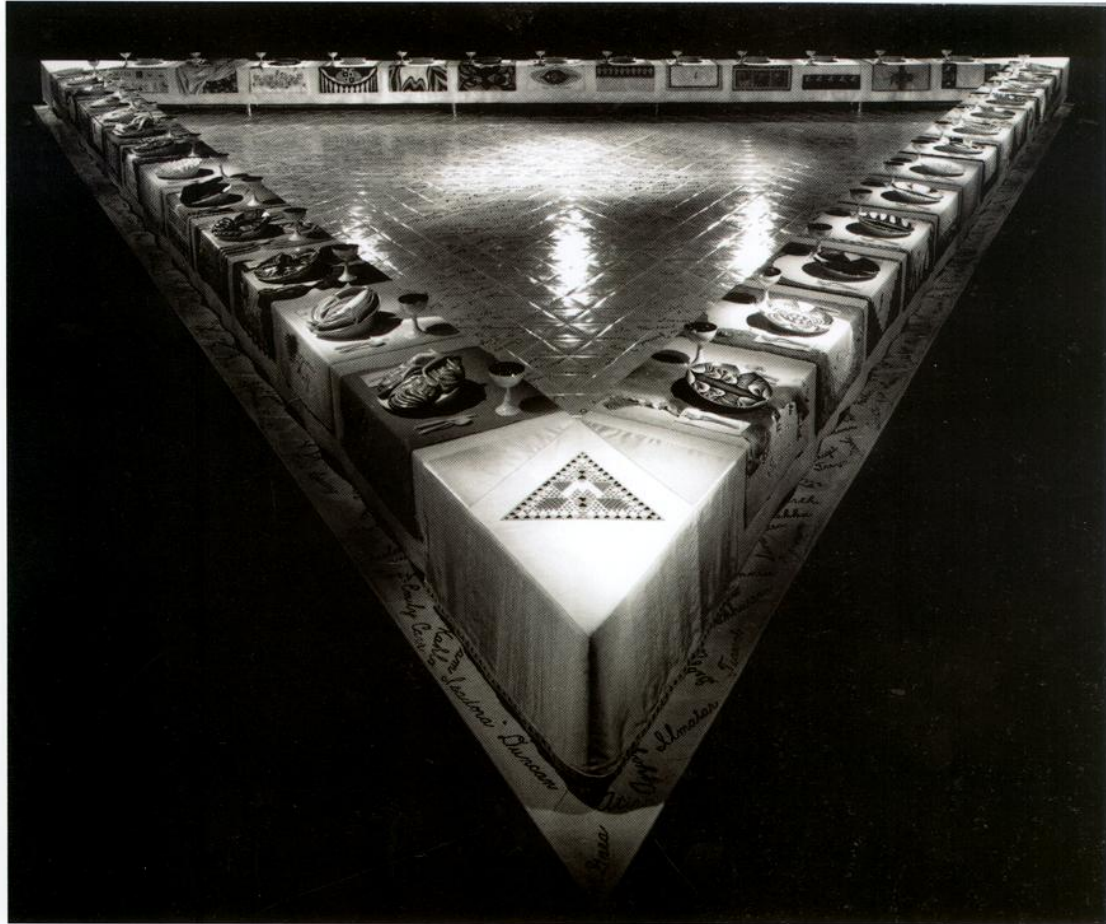


Fig 3: Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, Installation, 1979

Cross reference, main text, p. 31.

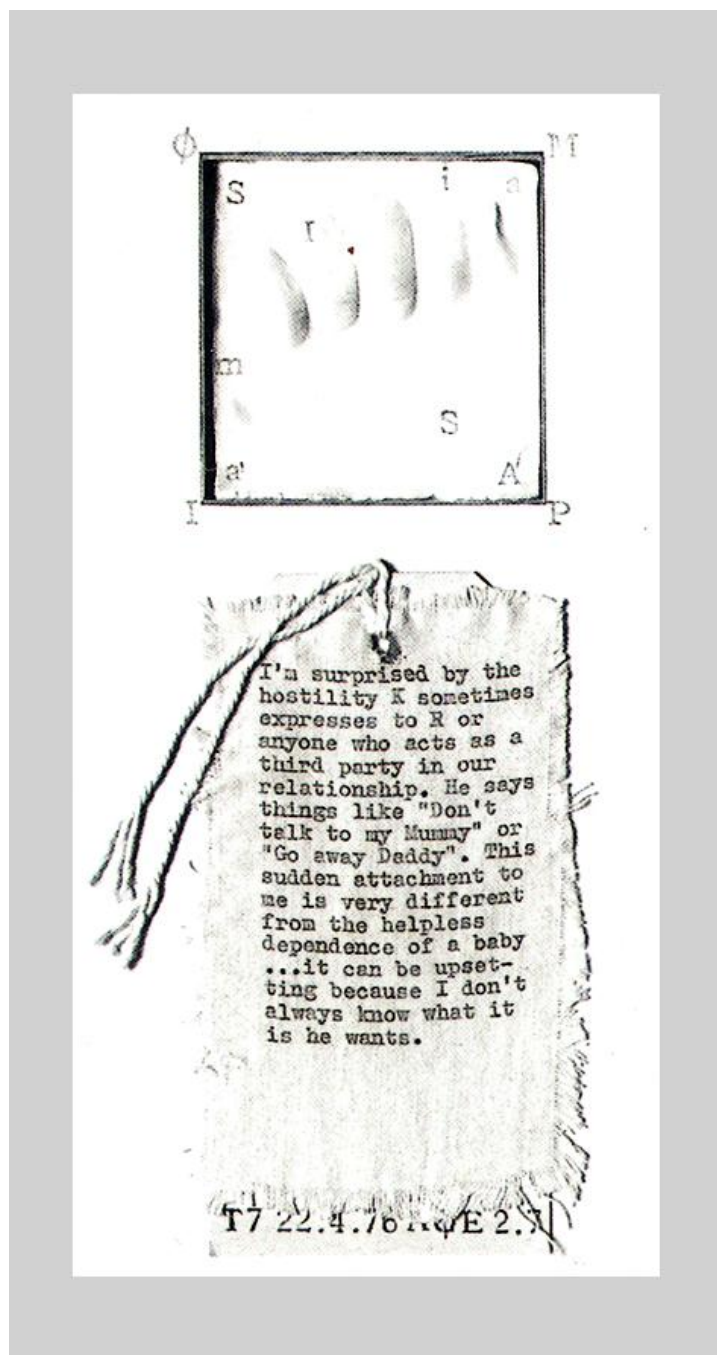


Fig 4: Mary Kelly, *Post Partum Document*, Installation
1974 – 1979

Cross reference, main text, p. 31.

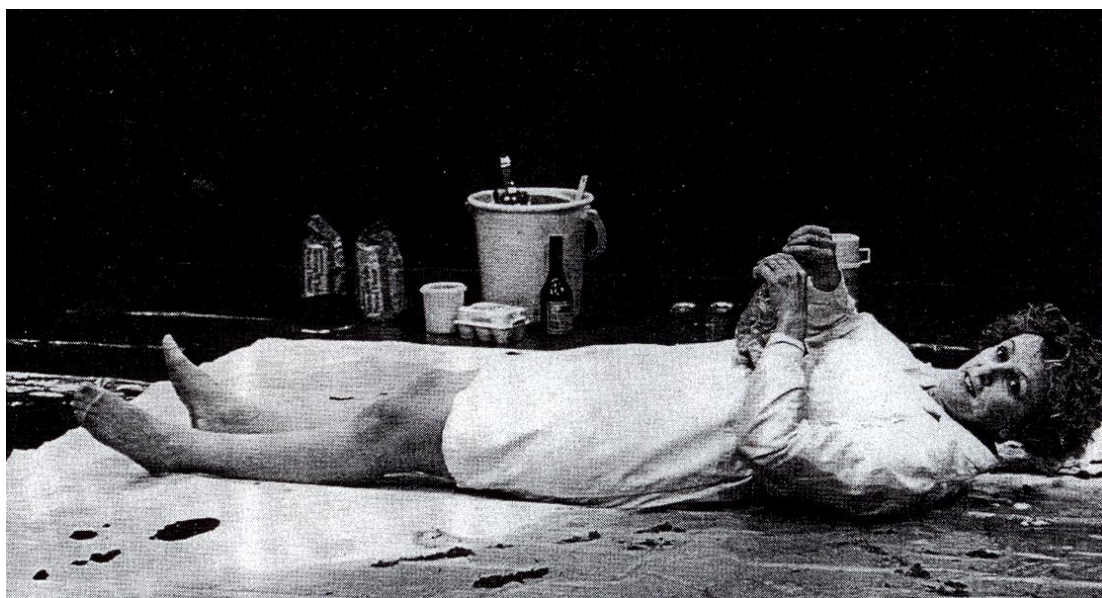


Fig. 5: Bobby Baker, *Drawing on a Mother's Experiences*, Performance, 1988

Cross reference, main text, p. 31.

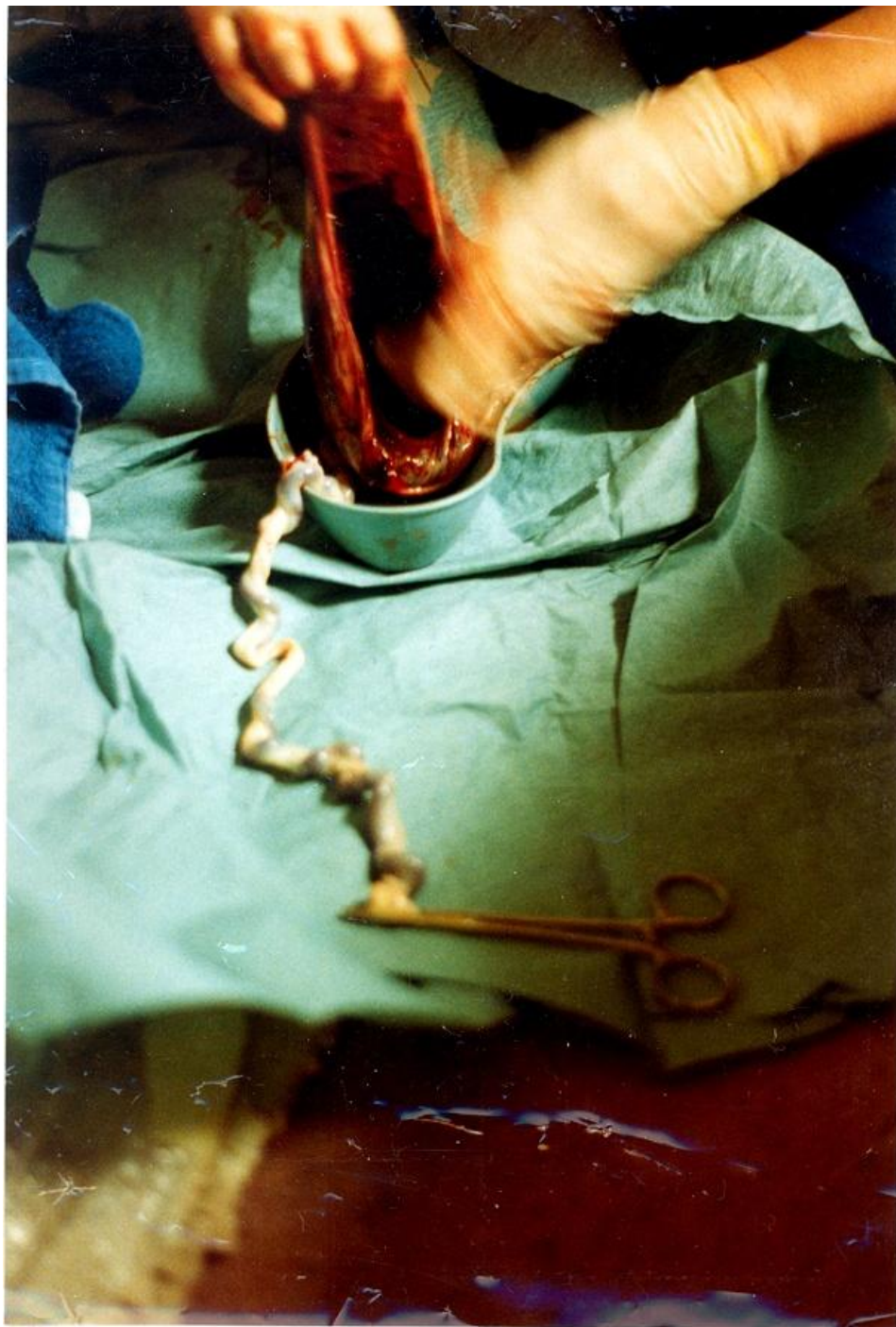


Fig. 6: Julie Penfold, *Yonat Nitzan-Green's Placenta*, Photograph, 1994

Cross reference, main text, p. 38.



Fig. 12: *Palestinian Occupied Territories*, Newspaper photograph, 2003

Cross reference, main text, p. 53.

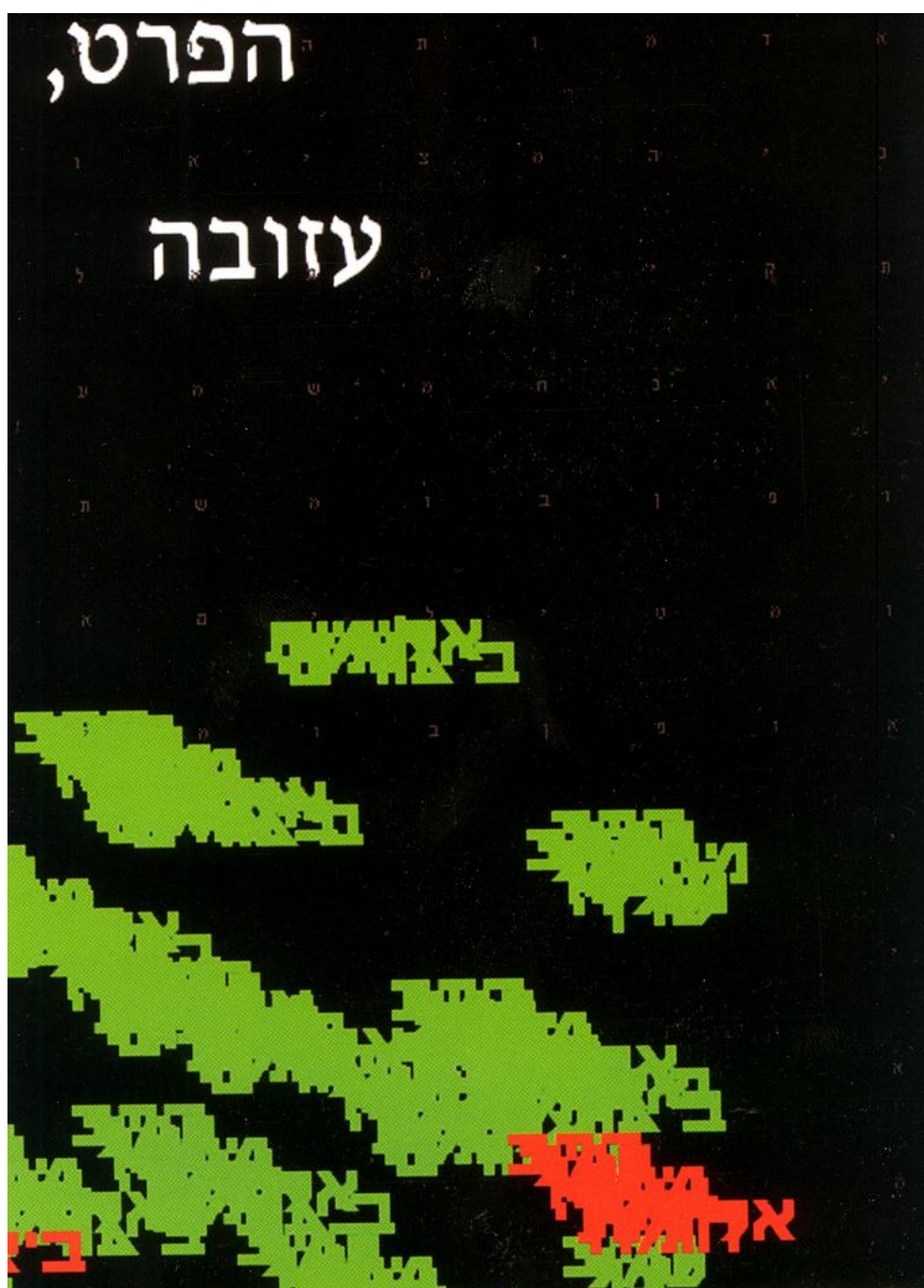


Fig. 14: Yiftach Aloni, *Lexicon of Collective Words*, Installation Detail, 2005

Cross reference, main text, p. 56.



Fig. 15: Idit Levavi-Gabai, *Inside-Out Room*, Installation View, 2005

Cross reference, main text, p. 57.



Fig. 17: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Marcus Fisher, Yonat Nitzan-Green and ima*, 2002
Digital image with Orit Ashery

Cross reference, main text, p. 63.



Fig. 29: Gideon Ben-Daat, *Peer-group, kibbutz Heftzi-bah*, Photograph, 1965

Cross reference, main text, p. 100.



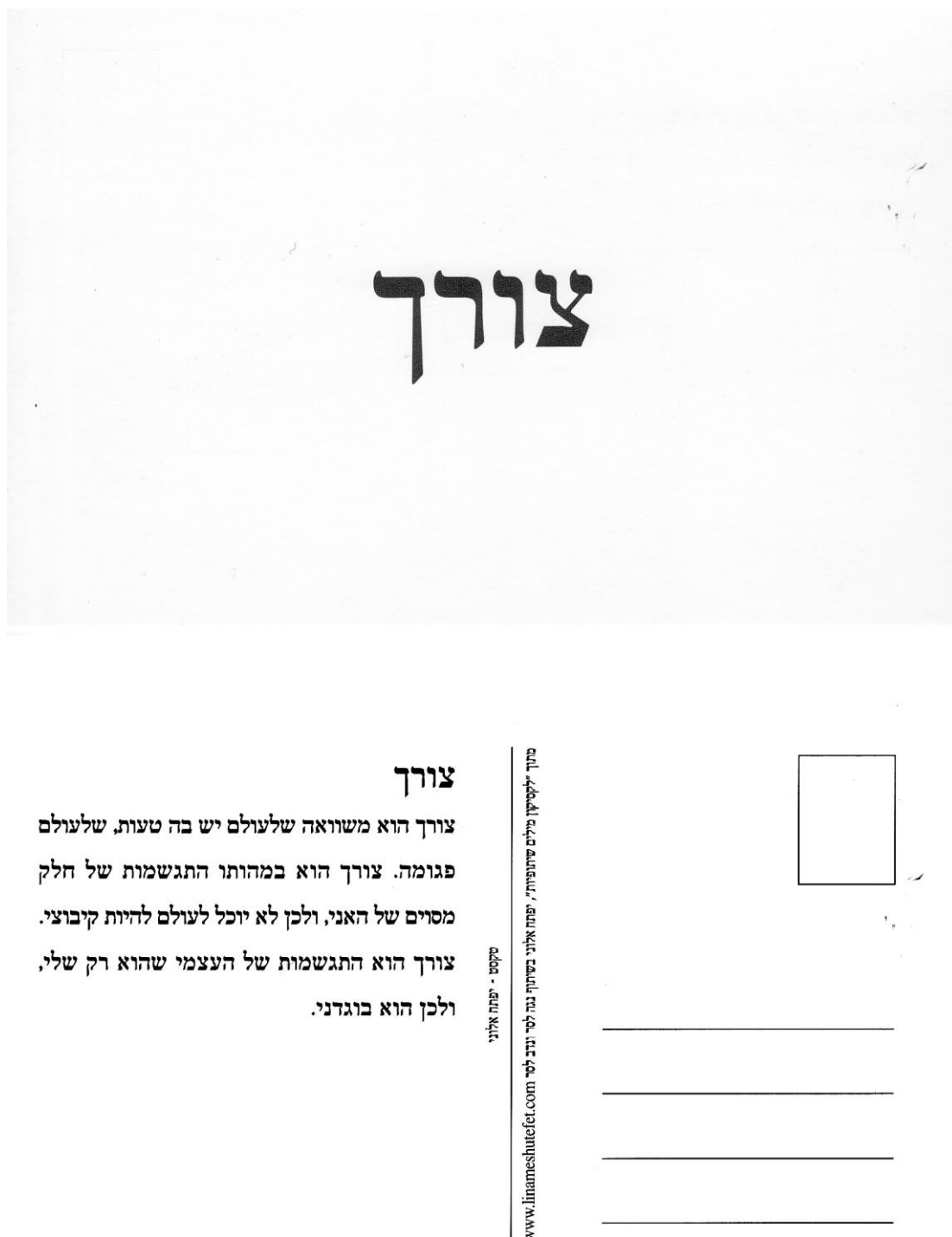
Fig 33: Yonat Nitzan-Green, *Host-Guest*
Installation, Open Studio, 2004
(with Suzuki-Bosco's paintings)

Cross reference, main text, p. 107.



Fig. 38: Galia Agmon, *Hotel Ruins* Roman era,
Jaljulya Palestinian village, 2006, Photographs 1-2

Cross reference, main text, p. 139.



Yftach Aloni, *Lexicon of Collective Words*, installation – detail (postcard), 2005

‘On one side of each card a word from kibbutz terminology had been printed and on the other side a personal definition was written.’

Cross reference, main text, p. 56.



Orit Ashery, *Say Cheese*, 2001

Orit Ashery as *Marcus Fisher* with Yonat Nitzan-Green on Laura Godfrey-Isaac's bed, as part of Godfrey-Isaac's *Home*, 2001
Cross reference, main text, p. 63.



16/11/2001

Dear Yonat,

Thank you for coming to Salon 17 at 'Home' and taking a photo with me and thank you for joining the live chat, sorry we couldn't actually chat. Hope you had a good evening on Friday.

The live-interaction 'Say Cheese' took place for the first time at 'Home' November 2001. Some encounters where intimate and intense, some kinky, some confessional, some a little awkward, and some heart-warming. Like life. Some people came with a concrete idea for a photograph, some wanted me to direct them.

My 'rules' were to be in control of the piece, to do anything participants wanted me to do (apart from serious injury) and always ask participants before doing anything with them. It was important for me not to have any agenda concerning what kind of photos/encounters I wanted, I wanted to be with each participant on their own terms.

The photos made me laugh. Some of the photographs are very beautiful, some say nothing of what has been said or felt - one woman wanted me to tell her that I didn't love her anymore and the fictional verbal exchange became so engaging that it seems we forgot to press the shutter altogether.

I've been thinking about the interaction since it happened, in terms of its development: Should the emphasis be on the photo or the actual encounter? What if the poses will become more structured, preconceived, referencing some 'classic bedroom shoots', (some of Nan Goldin's images come to mind)? should I introduce an option of 'acting' fictional dialogues? How about colour photos?

'Say cheese' will take place for the second time in Berlin, January 2002, in the curator's bedroom, as part of a one person show. (Galerie Stil+Bruch 21stJan -3rdFeb). Some of the photographs from the 'Home' event will be hand- printed for the show/cd-rom in Berlin.

If you Don't wish your photograph/s to be used publicly please let me know soon via email/phone/post. Also if you want to respond to the interaction please email me.

Best regards
Oreet/Marcus

From: "oreet ashery" <oreet@amity.co.uk>
 To: "Yonat Nitzan-Green" <yn101@soton.ac.uk>
 Sent: Monday, December 03, 2001 8:28 AM
 Subject: Re: 'Say Cheese'

> Dear Yonat,
 >
 > iloved the yellow presence.
 >
 > be interested to read a page or two from the diary.
 >
 > I include a text about Marcus to answer your question.
 >
 > best
 > oreet
 >
 >
 > A while ago, a very close friend in Israel became an extreme orthodox Jew,
 > and so contact was prohibited. In homage to him, I made a series of
 > photographic stills of myself dressed as an orthodox Jewish man. The Black
 > and White stills were the starting point
 > of a visual research into the appropriation of fantasy, desire and
 > play
 > within the framework of my own cultural heritage. Researching the still
 > s involved following orthodox men in Jerusalem and discussing, with my
 > father, the various dressing codes and their meanings. With time the
 > right 'look' was created by 'diving under cover' into Stamford Hill, the
 > orthodox Jewish neighbourhood in London
 > . So was born my alter ego - Marcus Fisher. 'Mar-Cus' translated in
 > Hebrew to 'Mr. Cunt'. Marcus finds himself in places where you are not
 > likely to encounter an orthodox Jew, like gay clubs, Soho, the beach, a
 > Turkish men's cafe in Berlin etc. Gradual
 > ly these 'outings' became pre-determined interventions, documented on
 > video.
 >
 > It occurs to me that since my mother ran away from her orthodox family in
 > Jerusalem, Marcus suggests a queer return to that family.
 >
 >
 > I/Marcus started then to incorporate stage/club performances into the