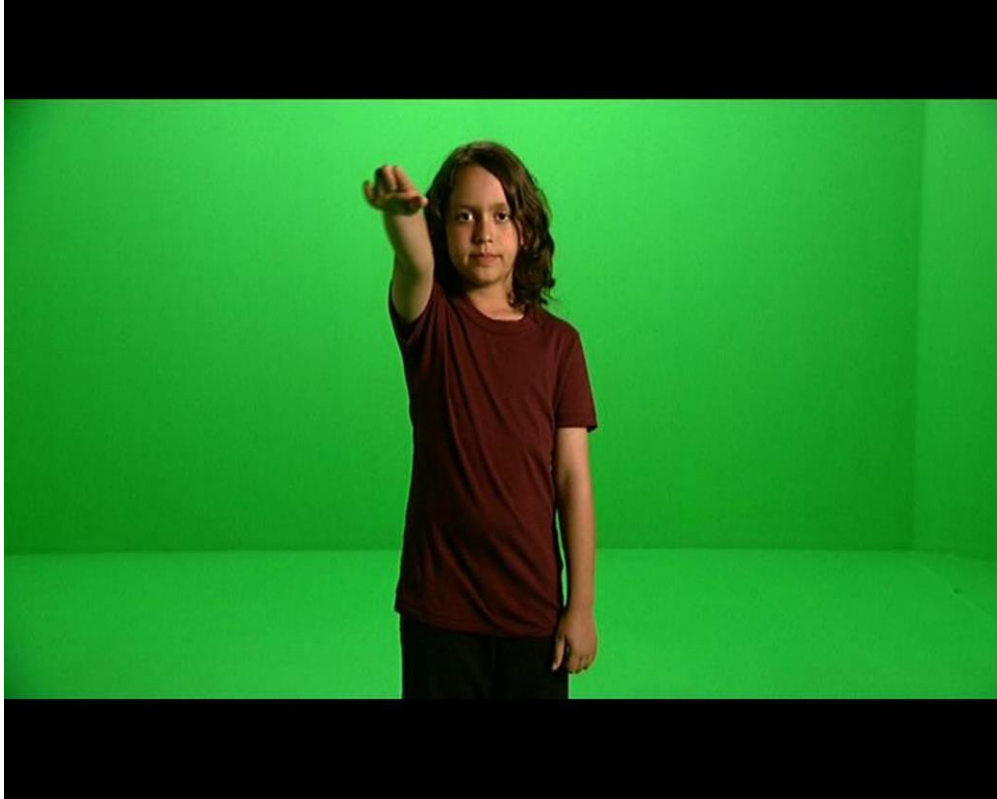


Staring Back at the Sun: Video Art from Israel, 1970-2012
An Exhibition and Public Program
Touring Internationally, 2016-2017



Roe Rosen, still from *Confessions Coming Soon*, 2007, video. 8:40 minutes.

Video, possibly more than any other form of communication, has shaped the world in radical ways over the past half century. It has also changed contemporary art on a global scale. Its dual “life” as an agent of mass communication and an artistic medium is especially intertwined in Israel, where artists have been using video artistically in response to its use in mass media and to the harsh reality video mediates on a daily basis. The country’s relatively sudden exposure to commercial television in the 1990s coincided with the Palestinian uprising, or Intifada, and major shifts in internal politics. Artists responded to this in what can now be considered a “renaissance” of video art, with roots traced back to the ’70s. An examination of these pieces, many that have rarely been presented outside Israel, as well as recent, iconic works from the past two decades offers valuable lessons on how art and culture are shaped by larger forces.

Staring Back at the Sun: Video Art from Israel, 1970-2012 traces the development of contemporary video practice in Israel and highlights work by artists who take an incisive, critical perspective towards the cultural and political landscape in Israel and beyond. Showcasing 35 works, this program includes documentation of early performances, films and videos, many of which have never been presented outside of Israel until now. Informed by the international

history of video art, the program surveys the development of the medium in Israel and explores how artists have employed technology and material to examine the unavoidable and messy overlap of art and politics. Divided into four historic and thematic sections curated by three curators and one artist, *Staring Back at the Sun* sheds light on the unique ways in which artists appropriated televised material, investigated the concrete or symbolic state of forced separation, and used video as a means to explore the intimate overlap between personal identity and the metanarrative of Zionism.

Part I 1970–80: Early Experiments in Time-Based Art

Curated by Ilana Tenenbaum

Total running time: approximately 64 minutes

The first section of *Staring Back at the Sun* focuses on experimental film and video made in the 1970s, when artists were beginning to explore the formal aspects of the moving image. Some of these artists worked primarily in other mediums, particularly painting, and their videos can be seen as extensions of these material investigations. Other artists were interested in the nature of the moving image, from its production to its reception, with several works featuring television screens. Although largely abstract or based on material investigation, these works are also informed by seismic shifts in Israeli society at the time, particularly the aftermath of the 1967 Six Day War, the 1973 Yom Kippur War, and the 1977 elections.

Michael Druks, (b. 1940, Jerusalem, Israel, based in London)

Play-Box London, 1975, 7:56 minutes (excerpt of 22:41)

Play-Box London documents a live performance in which the artist placed himself between the camera and a television set, took off his clothes and put them on the television, sat on it, used parts of his body to hide the faces of the figures talking on-screen, placed a potted plant in front of it, and more. His prosaic actions interrupt the viewing, and seem to playfully interact with the figures on-screen who seem to "react" to his actions. By interfering with and erasing one layer of representation with another, Druks exaggerates the incoherent and fragmented nature of television programming *ad absurdum*, critiquing the impact of mass media on social patterns and the construction of the self. Druks is one of a few Israeli artists who left Israel in the early 1970s to pursue a career abroad. This work is one of his most iconic early pieces and is a direct continuation of similar videos made in Israel featuring local politicians on-screen.

Buky Schwartz, (b. 1932, Jerusalem, Israel - 2009)

Videoconstructions, 1978-80, 10:01 minutes (excerpt of 29:40)

Video Constructions (1978-1980) features screen-based "optical illusions" using geometric structures as captured from the perspective of a stationary camera. Schwartz's movement within the geometric structure generates ambiguity and confusion between three-dimensional space and the two-dimensional illusion conjured by the screen. With that, Schwartz explores and literally embodies the tension between representation and illusion, one of the foundational qualities of the medium of video.

Benni Efrat, (b. 1936, Beirut, Lebanon, based in Tel Aviv)

Relay, 1974, 3:48 minutes

Relay was originally projected on two screens, side by side. On the left screen Efrat looks at the camera after turning it on. He then turns and runs towards the open field, his figure disappearing into the horizon, while he approaches the second camera, placed one kilometer away, still turned off; when he approaches it, Efrat turns on the second camera and runs back to the first camera, turns it off, and then again runs to the second camera and turns it off. In this piece, Efrat gives shape to the basic act of filmmaking through the operation and functionality of the camera. While in cinema the camera performs these actions actively, in this structuralist film, Efrat turns the tables – performing this action with his body instead of the camera, actively drawing the viewer's attention to the act of filming.

Avraham Eilat, (b. 1939, Tel Aviv, Israel, based in Ein Hod, Israel and Dusseldorf, Germany)

Run, 1971, 3:36 minutes

Run, created in London in 1971, is based on meticulous and detailed editing, comprised of short shots of running towards the camera. Eilat sliced the black and white footage into tiny segments, and overlaid them onto their negatives. In the printing process, he incorporated another film that features frames in different colors. The result is a six-minute sequence of what originally took 15 seconds. Due to its slow syntax, the image disintegrates into its smallest components, drawing attention to each and every detail of the simple act of running. The isolated images have painterly qualities, generating tension between the moving chronological sequence and the quality of the individual image.

Yair Garbuz, (b. 1945, Givatayim, Israel, based in Ramat Gan, Israel)

Lists, 1974, 2:10 minutes (excerpt of 20:00)

In *Lists*, painter Yair Garbuz ruptures cinematic narrative by using multiple brief shots, one after another like a visual pulse, merging sketches for paintings, doodles, grids, checker boards, fences, balconies, display windows, etc. The reiteration of various surfaces in the film underscores the flatness of the screen. In this visual torrent, Garbuz incorporates images of handwritten lists of words associated with filming and editing mechanics such as "focus," "shot," etc. The film is accompanied by a soundtrack comprised of romantic and melodic tunes that stand in contrast to the hectic stream of images. The viewer's natural desire to create a narrative is challenged by its constant disintegration while the fast editing demands their concentration, drawing attention to the viewing process and the act of filming, which is also emphasized by the words occasionally written on the screen.

Gideon Gechtman, (b. 1942, Alexandria, Egypt - 2008)

Exposure, 1975, 3:43 minutes

Working on the intersection of body art and conceptual art, Gideon Gechtman's oeuvre centers on illness and his own personal history of disease. *Exposure* was performed in front of a video camera without an audience. In addition, Gechtman shot still photographs in 30 second intervals of the taped performance from a screen. After the videotape was lost he created a new film based on the still photographs he had taken, constituting the second version of *Exposure*

included in this exhibition. In the video performance, Gechtman shaved all his body hair, even his eyelid hair and eyebrows. The piece, created shortly after Gechtman underwent open-heart surgery, extends the original act of shaving the chest area in preparation for the surgery to the artist's entire body. This act of shaving, which exposes the surface of the body while stripping away personal identity, transforms sickness into an expanded metaphor. The video was originally presented alongside body fluids, medical reports, and photographs of Gechtman hospitalized, leading to what can be considered a ritualistic amplification of the elements of illness, anxiety, and death that can further be read through a collective lens with allusions to the Holocaust and the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

Tamar Getter, (b. 1953, Tel Aviv, Israel, based in Tel Aviv)

Golem, 1974-5, 3:36 minutes (excerpt of 6:18)

In *Golem* (1974-1975), a woman draws a circle on a wall using her left hand, while her other outstretched arm serves as a compass. Once the circle was completed, she attached a rope to its center, wrote the word "Golem" in it, covered her head with a white cloth, and wrapped the rope around her neck, until it was the same length as her arm. She then remained standing next to the drawing, tethered to the circle by the rope around her neck. The work's title, "Golem," recalls the Jewish legend of the Golem of Prague that tells of a lump of clay brought to life by a rabbi in a time of great distress to the Jewish people. The video is an early example of the artist's position on the process of creation and its mystic dimension, which became a central theme in Getter's later work. The figure in this video also recalls a person condemned to death and underscores the body's imprisonment within a delineated area, evoking violent and morbid associations that could be read as the repression of the female body through social norms.

Michal Naaman, (b. 1951, Kvutzat Kinneret, Israel, based in Tel Aviv)

Peeling, 1974, 4:23 minutes

Peeling is an early example of Naaman's interest in materials and in the act of covering and uncovering. Known primarily as a painter, Naaman has investigated skin in her works from the 1970s until today, with some paintings resembling dry pieces of shed skin that were reattached symmetrically. The removal of glue in *Peeling* parallels Naaman's use of masking tape in her paintings, where grids of tape overlap and undergird layers of paint.

Raffi Lavie, (b. 1937, Tel Aviv, Mandate Palestine - 2007)

Geranium, 1974, 4:13 minutes (excerpt of 10:00)

In *Geranium*, Raffi Lavie, known primarily as a painter, explores the abstract qualities of film. The piece features overexposed film footage of Tel Aviv shot on an overcast. Lavie further distressed the film by treating it with bleach, resulting in an abstraction of the city views and drawing attention to the material qualities of the film. It opens with a composition by Paganini and continues with a conversation in which John Cage recounts several stories, interrupted by noise, music, and eventually, gunshots. Later, we hear Lavie himself, in a recorded radio program, discussing outdoor sculpture in Tel Aviv. At times, the soundtrack of the images creates surprising pairings, for example, when Cage talks about two monks, the camera captures two black-clad ultra Orthodox Jews.

Dov Or-Ner, (b. 1927, Paris, France, based in Kibbutz Hatzor, Israel)

Pharavizia, 1980, 2:23 minutes (excerpt of 6:22)

Pharavizia follows the journey of Or-Ner and a cow from Kibbutz Hatzor, where the artist lives, to the Kibbutz Art Gallery in Tel Aviv. Or-Ner spent two weeks in the gallery with the cow, feeding and milking her while a television set remained on for the duration of the performance. Viewers could watch the artist and the cow during the gallery's regular opening hours, and the event was documented in still photographs that are incorporated into the film. The meeting of kibbutz agricultural represented by the cow and the symbol of industrial, globalized culture – the television -- ridicules both and presents open-ended questions about their future. It is interesting to compare this work to Joseph Beuys's seminal *I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974) in which Beuys spent three days in a gallery with a coyote. While Or-Ner dismisses the possibility of an authentic interaction with nature, represented by the cow, Beuys's piece stresses the coyote's mythical status in Native American culture as the "spirit of freedom." The wild, mythical animal is replaced by a thoroughly domesticated farm animal whose sole purpose is to serve man. Next to it, he places a TV set – a symbol of a different kind of consumption – consumer culture.

Henry Shelesnyak, (b. 1938, New York, US - 1980)

Circus, 1979, 4:43 minutes (excerpt of 14:00)

In *Circus*, Shelesnyak juxtaposed television footage comprised of bodies in motion – figure skating, skiing, football matches, beauty pageants, etc., along with film featuring planes taking off and footage filmed from fast moving vehicles. These were spliced with footage of a bay view, the home of the artist's parents in Maryland, drinking tea in the garden, and other calm, domestic scenes. The result is a video in which movement itself becomes the subject of the image, forming a visual score, reiterated in different arrangements and tempos and in swift transitions, with the volume turned up to add to the visual cacophony. Shelesnyak's work points at the fundamental properties of television viewing, which shifts between films, programs, ads, and different channels, which he was exposed to as a child in the United States before moving to Israel, and later for a few years as a student in London.

Joshua Neustein, (born 1940, Danzig, Poland, based in New York)

Progression Succession, 1972, 3:31 minutes (excerpt of 20:16)

Progression Succession features the artist's hands writing while a second set of hands erases what he has written. Neustein attempts to write a list of concepts arranged in alphabetical order, never completed it due to its constant erasure. The interrupted yet recurring act of writing and erasure captures the structure of consciousness and its incongruence with language.

Micha Ullman, (b. 1939, Tel Aviv, Israel, based in Ramat Hasharon, Israel)

Place, 1975, 10:08 minutes (excerpt of 20:00)

Place was an early video in which Ullman investigates the material he is most associated with as a sculptor: sand. The video, filmed without an audience by Uri Bar Zemer, depicts Ullman generating formal transformations in a pile of sand. Through acts of sweeping, dragging, and throwing sand, he created ephemeral landscapes that form momentarily before returning to their initial state as a pile of sand. The volume of the pile was determined by the volume of the artist's

body, endowing his actions with a morbid dimension, as if he were sweeping away his own corpse. Ullman's extensive preoccupation with sand as a symbol of ephemerality and precariousness, leads ultimately to a meditation on creation and destruction.

Moshe Gershuni, (b.1936, Tel Aviv, Israel, based in Tel Aviv)

Crawling, 1970, 0:32 minutes

In *Crawling*, the artist is seen crawling down a sand dune while dressed in an Israeli army uniform. The manner in which this act was filmed already took into consideration the structure of the television screen: the image of the crawling artist was doubled and inverted, creating an X whose diagonals bisect the screen as if cancelling and voiding the action itself, by extension critiquing Israeli militarism.

Part II 1980–97: An Art Form Coming Into Its Own

Curated by Ilana Tenenbaum

Total running time: approximately 30 minutes

The second part of *Staring Back at the Sun* showcases how developments in digital image processing and post-production tools impacted what little experimental video was being made in the 1980s and early 1990s. In Israel, the media and the communications sector as a whole developed and expanded rapidly. Visual culture became more collage-like as seen in these works, yet art at the time focused primarily on drawing and painting. The few artists working with video posed questions about digital production within the expanded technological possibilities of the medium, often literally expressed through the depiction of the video camera and the television monitor, symbols of its production and reception processes.

Miri Nishri, (b. 1950, Bogota, Colombia, based in Tel Aviv)

Blue Blue, 1980, 6:32 minutes (excerpt of 19:10)

In *Blue Blue*, Miri Nishri examines the material possibilities of video. She presents a series of intercut scenes: images of vertical and horizontal “rolls” typical of video malfunctions at the time, hands that attempt to press the frame downwards, and two clenched fists pushing against each other that seem to apply pressure to the screen or the television frame itself. The horizontal and vertical rolls are typical “glitches” of that period’s broadcasts and echo the early work of Joan Jonas, especially *Vertical Roll* (1972). The rolls, and the fists pushing against the screen also echo the violence often present in the televised programming itself. Other scenes refer to the work’s own camera movements, which shift in different directions as if inspecting the screen’s physicality. The soundtrack features various musical pieces, excerpts from an album of Dada sounds, as well as recordings of Raffi Lavie discussing painting criticism and video art during his class at the Midrasha School of Art. Nishri’s images are tied to the television, cinema, and performance art of the 1970s and early 1980s, and consciously reflect upon each medium’s potential, while also pointing to the artificiality of the mass media by quoting from its aesthetic language and “glitches.”

Irit Batsry, (b. 1957, Ramat Gan, Israel, based in New York)

The Roman Wars: 1983, 1983, 6:00 minutes

The Roman Wars: 1983 combines footage from television broadcasts such as news and weather forecasts with the artist's own actions, recorded by three cameras simultaneously. The work combines shots from the studio, television broadcasts that bring the "outside" into the studio's intimate space, Tel Aviv street scenes, the local rock music scene, the Penguin nightclub, a sing-along, as well as segments of a Hollywood film on Roman wars. She live-edits the footage from the different cameras while draped in a shawl similar to the onscreen Roman commander's cape, her body and hand gestures echo his movements. The Roman wars are an analogue to the Lebanon War, which erupted not long before this piece was made, and the reference to the fall of the Roman Empire reflects the feelings of disintegration common in Israel at the time. The Hollywood film's epic dimensions are mimicked by Batsry's "pathetic" on-screen performance, which serves to critique the glory of war.

Dan Zakhem, (b. 1958, Tel Aviv, Israel - 1994)

The Babel Party: A Fictitious Political Party, 1984, 3:42 minutes

For *The Babel Party*, Dani Zakhem collaborated with Esther Zakhem to create a fictitious election campaign, with both of them running as candidates during the 1984 elections. The campaign was complete with logos, commercials, street ads, a public "speech," and a ride down the street in an open car as the crowd cheers on. The work points to the power of propaganda and to the influence a leader might gain using advertising strategies to convey importance, even if his message is meaningless. The "Babel" party, whose name means Babylon in Hebrew, harks back to the biblical myth of the Tower of Babel, serving as a critique of the arrogance displayed by many Israeli leaders at the time, and also hints at a possible collapse resulting from political, social, and economic fragmentation.

Motti Mizrachi, (b. 1946, Tel Aviv, Israel, based in Tel Aviv)

Healing, 1980, 4:35 minutes (excerpt of 20:00)

Healing (1980) is comprised of a series of "ritualistic" actions and gestures that engage with the masculine and feminine body by incorporating symbolically charged images. Urination, covering the body with sand, repeatedly spreading his hands, etc. reoccur throughout Mizrachi's body of work. The images and the presence of the naked body are ritualistic, provocative, and evocative of ancient healing rituals. For Mizrachi, video is a means of creating a sequence and then interrupting it unexpectedly, which, along with the intensities of image and sound, he saw as therapeutic.

Hila Lulu Lin Farah Kufr Birim, (b. 1964 Afula, Israel, based in Tel Aviv)

No More Tears, 1994, 2:42 minutes

No More Tears features an egg yolk slowly rolling over the artist's arm, into and back out of her mouth, towards the other arm, and back. The tension of keeping the yolk intact adds to the seemingly erotic pleasure on display that connects passion for food with passion for sex. This "pornography" challenges the stereotype of women as nurturers and givers of life, as symbolized by the egg yolk.

Ran Slavin, (b. 1967, Jerusalem, Israel, based in Tel Aviv)

Omni Presence, 1995/1997, 3:15 minutes (excerpt of 8:39)

Omni Presence is composed of images of the ceiling of an airport superimposed with a self-portrait composited and repeated to create a digital environment in which the human, or the natural, loses its vitality and becomes a mechanical mark inside an ominous space of neon, billboard-like light. Slavin multiplied his own image to match the perspectival depth of the terminal ceiling. The figures are all identical, but each spins on its own axis in a different direction, at different speeds and durations. The piece's soundtrack is also composed of natural sounds – birdsongs and raindrops – that are interspersed with the sounds of neon lights switching on and off. Slavin's work points to Western consumer society's enchantment with the sterile, surreal aesthetics of industry, that can trap us into a digital nightmare or make us lose our sense of individuality.

Nana and Boaz Zonshine, (b. 1962, Beer Sheva and 1963, Beer Sheva, Israel, based in Clil)
Untitled, 1996, 1:30 minutes

In *Untitled*, an image of Tel Aviv's beach, taken from the water looking towards the shore, is superimposed onto a shot of where the ground would be at the Wailing Wall. A row of people praying at the wall lines the beach so that it seems as if the water is lapping at their feet. Video editing has made possible the erasure of geography – shortening the distance between Tel Aviv's coast and the heart of Jerusalem, also metaphorically condensing the ideological span between religion and nature, or religion and secularism. The work can also be read as a foreboding future; a flood engulfing the country or the pushing of Judaism into the sea.

Part III 1997–2005: *The Rise of the Medium*

Curated by Sergio Edelsztein

Total running time: approximately 62 minutes

By the end of the 1990s and early 2000s, a group of young artists, including Guy Ben-Ner, Doron Solomons, Boaz Arad, Yael Bartana, Sigalit Landau, Roe Rosen, and many others had established video as the dominant medium in Israel. These artists came of age when visual culture in Israel changed radically. The economy was liberalized in the mid 1980s and brought with it a slew of consumer goods, enabled more accessible travel abroad, and expanded Israeli television from one, state-run black and white channel to hundreds of international channels, from CNN to MTV, and a new Israeli commercial TV channel that was the first to broadcast advertisements. The economic expansion that took place in the late 1980s and 1990s coincided with the first Palestinian uprising, or *Intifada*, followed by the Oslo Peace Process that came to an end with the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, and further political precariousness. From early on, most of the leading artists of this generation engaged with the day-to-day political realities of living in the Middle East as the basis of their practice. When the second *Intifada* broke out in 2000, they were well positioned formally and conceptually to react to a period of radical social unrest. This third section illuminates the maturation of video as a medium in Israel, and the almost immediate requirement that it reckon with a violent, tumultuous reality being played out in the Middle East and on televisions around the world.

Guy Ben-Ner, (b. 1969, in Ramat Gan, Israel, based in Tel Aviv)

Moby Dick, 2000, 12:39 minutes

Ben-Ner's early work was inspired by Buster Keaton, and aimed to have no separation between the stage and family life. Keaton's pared-down production suited Ben-Ner, who found himself simultaneously the director, cameraman, lead actor, and stuntman. Ben-Ner's interest in early film originally stemmed from his curiosity about slapstick comedies that, in turn, originated from his interest in body art and the work of artists such as Bruce Nauman, Vito Acconci, and Dennis Oppenheim – all of whom he visually "quotes" freely. In *Moby Dick*, all these interests and strategies crystallized into his own personal language. In this work, Ben Ner re-enacts the famous saga in his kitchen, with he and his family playing all the characters in the work, with basic home appliances as props, while the entirety of the language and the narrative serves as an anarchistic collage of scenes and images appropriated from other artists and classic films.

Doron Solomons, (b. 1969, London, UK, based in Tel Aviv, Israel)

Father, 2002, 13:35 minutes

Solomons worked as an editor in the news department of Israel's first commercial television station in the mid 1990s. As the second Palestinian uprising, or *Intifada*, broke out in 2000, Solomons became increasingly exposed to raw footage of carnage and violence, and the problem of mediating this material to the public became a major professional concern. In addition, as a father, he felt anxious and impotent regarding his daughters' safety. This is the twofold subject matter of *Father*, a work in which the artist expresses the existential fears shared by parents on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The work comprises a mosaic of video languages, some ready-made, others performed for the camera. "Reality" is portrayed through images from the news interspersed with repeating footage from vehicle safety ads, a metaphor for a father's protective instinct. In a futile attempt to save his daughter from becoming a victim or a victimizer, *Father* inter-spaces a series of performative vignettes in which the artist-father himself assumes the character of a magician, trying to enact a series of pedagogical-magical tricks including rules, force, concealing, and lying, but all in vain since he is revealed to be a pathetic and powerless trickster.

Ruti Sela & Maayan Amir, (b. 1974, Jerusalem, Israel and b. 1978, Hadera, Israel based in Tel Aviv)

Beyond Guilt (#1), 2003, 9 minutes

Ruti Sela and Maayan Amir based their practice on their ability to extract political statements from people they approach randomly. In the video trilogy *Beyond Guilt* (2004-2005), they set up risqué and intimate situations, with the first part, shown here, focusing on interviewing young Israelis in a nightclub restroom. The resultant conversations reveal the effects of growing up in an aggressive society, where military service radically shapes the character and behavior of each generation to the point where it manifests even in their intimate relationships and sex lives.

Yael Bartana, (b. 1970, Kfar-Yehezkel, Israel, based in Berlin and Tel Aviv)

Kings of the Hill, 2003, 7:45 minutes

Kings of the Hill documents 4x4 jeeps and SUVs driven as sport over small sandy cliffs. Tire treads criss-cross the worn hills as men with big cars attempt to mount them. As the title suggests, these are small conquests of hills, heaps of sand meaningful only to those who have set them as their object of desire. The work is a rumination on colonialism, suggesting that perhaps Israel is still the desolate wasteland early Zionists tried hard to make fertile. Israel might still be just a heap of sand, with fancy cars attempting to break through the rough terrain.

Boaz Arad, (b. 1956, Afula, Israel, based in Tel Aviv)

Gefilte Fish, 2005, 10:54 minutes

In *Gefilte Fish*, the artist's mother teaches the viewer how to prepare a quintessential Ashkenazi, or Eastern European, dish while inadvertently commenting on prejudice against Sephardic Jews (those from North Africa and Arab countries). Arad films a close up of his mother's hands as she cooks, while intermittently including shots of himself with his mother's voice superimposed onto him, as if lip-synching her words. Arad recounts a family tradition to explore the deep historical roots of national stereotypes and how prejudice is "inherited."

Gilad Ratman, (b. 1975, Haifa, Israel, based in Tel Aviv)

Che Che the Gorgeous, 2005, 9:22 minutes

The figures that populate Ratman's early works are often hybrids of man and animal. *Che Che the Gorgeous* is composed of three parallel and interspersed narratives: one of cocoons with human heads struggling to break free on a dry desert landscape, another depicting a group of people recording the grunts and voices of the cocoons, and yet another in which a young man performs a cover version of the pop song, *Forever Young*. The work parallels the idea of youth and the process of coming-of-age with the creation of art and music, all of which are suggested in the video to be somewhat artificial and coerced.

Part IV 2005–2012: State of Amnesia: Recent Video from Israel

Curated by Yael Bartana and Avi Feldman

Total running time: approximately 61 minutes

Radical innovation in video art in Israel over the last decade has made it the most significant creative period in the country's artistic history. While most nations can cite painting as the origin point and standard-bearer for their artistic traditions, Israel could say the same for the moving image. The final section of this program highlights works made about the political and social reality in Israel today and how artists grapple with the seeming status quo of a nation in perpetual conflict.

Avi Mograbi, (b. 1956, Tel Aviv, Israel, based in Tel Aviv)

Mrs. Goldstein, 2006, 9:00 minutes

Mrs. Goldstein opens abruptly with a film clapperboard reading: "Massacre in Hebron – Testimony of Miriam Goldstein, Wife of Baruch Goldstein, the Hebron Mass Murderer." Mograbi asked three actresses to play the wife of the infamous fundamentalist who killed Muslim worshipers in the 1994 Massacre at the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron. Avoiding

documentary material or brutal images, the video examines the banality of evil as portrayed via a figure who symbolizes the colossal moral deterioration of a wide sector of Israeli society. By asking three actresses to don this character, Mograbi suggests that she could be anyone, and that the essence of evil, indifference, and what lies beneath the performance of the self is part of us as individuals and as a society.

Rona Yefman [and Tanja Schlander], (b. 1972, Haifa, Israel, based in New York)

Pippi L. Strongest Girl in the World! at Abu Dis, 2006/2008, 3:43 minutes

In this work, the beloved character of Pippi Longstocking pushes against the separation wall dividing Israel and Palestine. The eight-meter tall concrete wall dwarfs the character, who attempts to tear it down with her imaginary superhuman strength. Women passing by encourage her with a smile, playing along as they recognize the character's iconic red braided hair and freckles, and her seemingly futile, childish wish to change something that seems impossible.

Yossi Atia & Itamar Rose, (b. 1979, Jerusalem, Israel and b. 1979, Tel Aviv, Israel based in Tel Aviv)

The State of Judeo-Arabia, 2007, 4:33 minutes

Yossi Atia and Itamar Rose worked collaboratively on facetious mockumentaries based on the seeming absurdities of daily life in Israel. For *The State of Judeo-Arabia*, they interviewed residents of the Palestinian town of Tayibe, which sits on the Israeli side of the Green Line, about an imaginary, yet not unlikely, situation in which by the year 2020 there will be an Arab majority in the State of Israel. While the participants are encouraged to use crayons to draw an optimistic flag – half Palestinian and half Israeli – the children's song in the background tells a different story. The lyrics of this cheery children's song begin with "in the country of the midgets...the army is dressed for war," and goes on to describe how the fictive army identifies a common enemy and happily heads to war. By means of prodding, controversial role-play, and improvisation, Yossi and Itamar manage to manipulate the participants into taking part in a fabricated performance bearing a striking affinity to current affairs.

Roe Rosen, (b. 1963, Rehovot, Israel, based in Tel Aviv)

Confessions Coming Soon, 2007, 8:40 minutes

In *Confessions Coming Soon*, the artist's son stands in front of a green screen reading an English passage from a teleprompter that he does not understand, describing his own manipulation by his father. The boy stars in what he says is a "trailer" for a scandalous exposé revealing Rosen's horrific confessions of evil, perversion, sacrilege, and deception. Rosen is described as criminal and deceptive, unafraid to use the boy to promote his work and ideology. Since the artist's son reads aloud a text he never encountered in a language he does not speak, the boy's misarticulating leading to a systematic dissonance between meaning and language. Mixing Jewish mysticism within the format of a confession (a practice related more to Christianity than Judaism), the boy is manipulated into performing the Nazi salute as part of his father's exploitation, while continuing to represent his father. The work reflects on Israel's younger generations inability to break away from the past or from the ideologies of their predecessors.

Dor Guez, (b. 1980, Jerusalem, Israel, based in Tel Aviv)

(Sa)Mira, 2009, 13:40 minutes

(Sa)Mira features an interview with a young psychology student working as a waitress in a Jerusalem restaurant. Casually dressed, she speaks Hebrew and sounds and looks like a “typical” Israeli. Yet, Samira describes an experience that highlights her alienation as an Arab. She is requested by her managers to Hebracize her name as her real name displeases the customers, echoing a custom practiced in the last two centuries around the world in which immigrants changed their names to assimilate into their adoptive societies. In Israel, this practice was deeply entrenched from the first wave of Jewish immigration in 1882 until a few decades ago. Today, this practice has mostly faded, yet Guez’s work suggests that it has rather shifted from a Zionist gesture to a racist imposition on non-Jews.

Nir Evron, (b. 1974, Herzliya, Israel, based in Tel Aviv)

A Free Moment, 2011, 4:00 minutes

Nir Evron’s *A Free Moment* consists of one pre-programmed robotic shot using a 35mm film camera mounted on a unique motion-control head. Following a single-track dolly, the camera's choreography is composed of three simultaneous rotations that together pan the Tell el-Ful palace. Located on a hill in northeast Jerusalem, the palace was commissioned by King Hussein of Jordan in 1966, but its construction was halted by the 1967 Six Day war during which Israeli forces battled Jordanians on that very hill. Left behind on the deserted hilltop, the abandoned ruin is a neglected monument to its former potential glory. In his video, Evron further intensifies the duality embedded in the space as he literally and cinematically turns it upside down. As such, the work can be read as an invitation to shift perceptions and consider new ways of reviving the building, perhaps in a future shared by all the people of the region.

Nira Pereg, (b. 1969, Tel Aviv, Israel, based in Tel Aviv)

ABRAHAM ABRAHAM SARAH SARAH, 2012, 4:10 minutes

Originally presented facing one another, the diptych *Abraham Abraham* and *Sarah Sarah* (both 2012) center on Hebron’s Cave of the Patriarchs, a site holy to both Jews and Muslims that has been divided between the two since 1994, when a shooting massacre carried out by far-right fundamentalist Baruch Goldstein, killing 29 Palestinian Muslims who came to pray. Each year, full use of the restricted chambers is given to Jews on special holidays. Pereg documents the change of hands, drawing our attention to the mundane act of clearing the space and its walls from all signs attributed to either Jewish or Muslim worship. Plastic chairs are piled atop one another, banners are rolled up, and carpets are laid out in *Abraham Abraham*, documenting the Jewish handover to the Muslims, while *Sarah Sarah* offers a mirror image of parallel actions when the Muslims pack up and hand over to the Jews. These preparations are interspersed with shots of Israeli soldiers, who also have their own choreographed regularity, and whose presence signals the fragility of the Jewish-Muslim separation.

Sigalit Landau, (b. 1969, Jerusalem, Israel, based in Tel Aviv)

DeadSee, 2005, 11:39 minutes

In *DeadSee*, Landau confronts the Dead Sea, also known in Hebrew and in Arabic as the Sea of Death, with its antidote – a living embryonic human body nestled among five hundred sweet watermelons. Landau directs us beyond our immediate vulnerability and residue through an image of vitality and beauty. Unlike Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970), a spiral earthwork in Salt Lake City, Utah, *DeadSee* documents a temporary construct, a "performative earthwork" that speaks to the delicacy of this specific salt sea, already severely damaged by climate change and commercial exploitation.

About the Curators:

Yael Bartana is a Berlin-based artist best known for videos that explore the relationship between documentary and fiction. Her work engages with cultural and collective identity in relation to social phenomena such as ceremonies and rituals.

Sergio Edelsztein is Director and Chief Curator of the Center for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv, which he founded in 1998. He has curated numerous exhibitions in Israel and internationally, including Israel's pavilion at the 24th São Paulo Biennial (1998) and the Israeli pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2005 (Guy Ben Ner) and 2013 (Gilad Ratman).

Avi Feldman is an independent curator and writer based in Tel Aviv, Berlin and Dresden. He was the Director and Co-curator of Vdance International Video and Dance Festival at the Tel Aviv Cinematheque, and has worked as Associate Curator for avant-garde film at the Jerusalem International Film Festival, and the Petach Tikva Museum of Art.

Ilana Tenenbaum is an independent curator based in Haifa, Israel. Previous positions include Chief Curator of Contemporary Art at the City Gallery in Kfar Saba, Israel and Founding Director and Curator of the New Media Center at the Haifa Museum of Art. Her curatorial work focuses on the research and documentation of video art, including projects such as *Videostoria*, the first exhibition series to systematically survey the history of the projected image in Israeli art.

Chen Tamir (Organizing Curator) is Curatorial Associate at Artis and Curator at the Center for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv. She was recently listed by artnet as one of 25 women curators on the rise and by Artslant as one of 15 curators to watch in 2015.

About Artis

Founded in 2004, Artis (pronounced *ahr-tiz*) is an independent nonprofit organization that broadens international awareness and understanding of contemporary visual art from Israel. Through five program areas (Public Programs, Grants, Research Trips, Artist Career Development and Video Profiles), we support artists – regardless of religion, race or ethnicity –

who take creative and intellectual risks, and who address important challenges through their practice. We champion innovation, experimentation and artistic excellence and support freedom of speech and expression for all people. Artis works internationally with headquarters in New York and Tel Aviv.

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