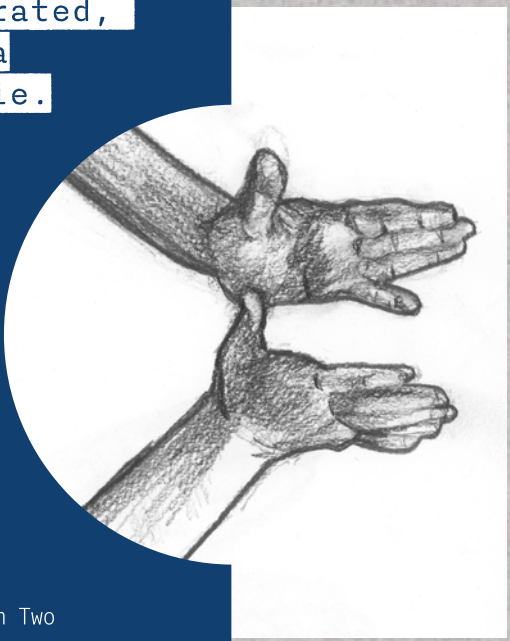
THE GROUP WHO LOVED TO DRAW A FLAG

KHONEN's VOICE.
We're separated,
you're in a
magic circle.



(Dybbuk or Between Two
Worlds, S. Ansky, 1914-1919)
(Neugroschel and Ansky 50)

Riki Stollar

The Group Who Loved to Draw a Flag

Riki Stollar

Ephraim Moses Lilien
Dybbuk, 1910

INTRODUCTION

04

Reflecting on personal experiences of being part of some groups and excluded from others makes me wonder how we connect when we are already clinging. Communities can be either chosen or forced, or both, which raises questions about how these bonds are formed and when we no longer belong.

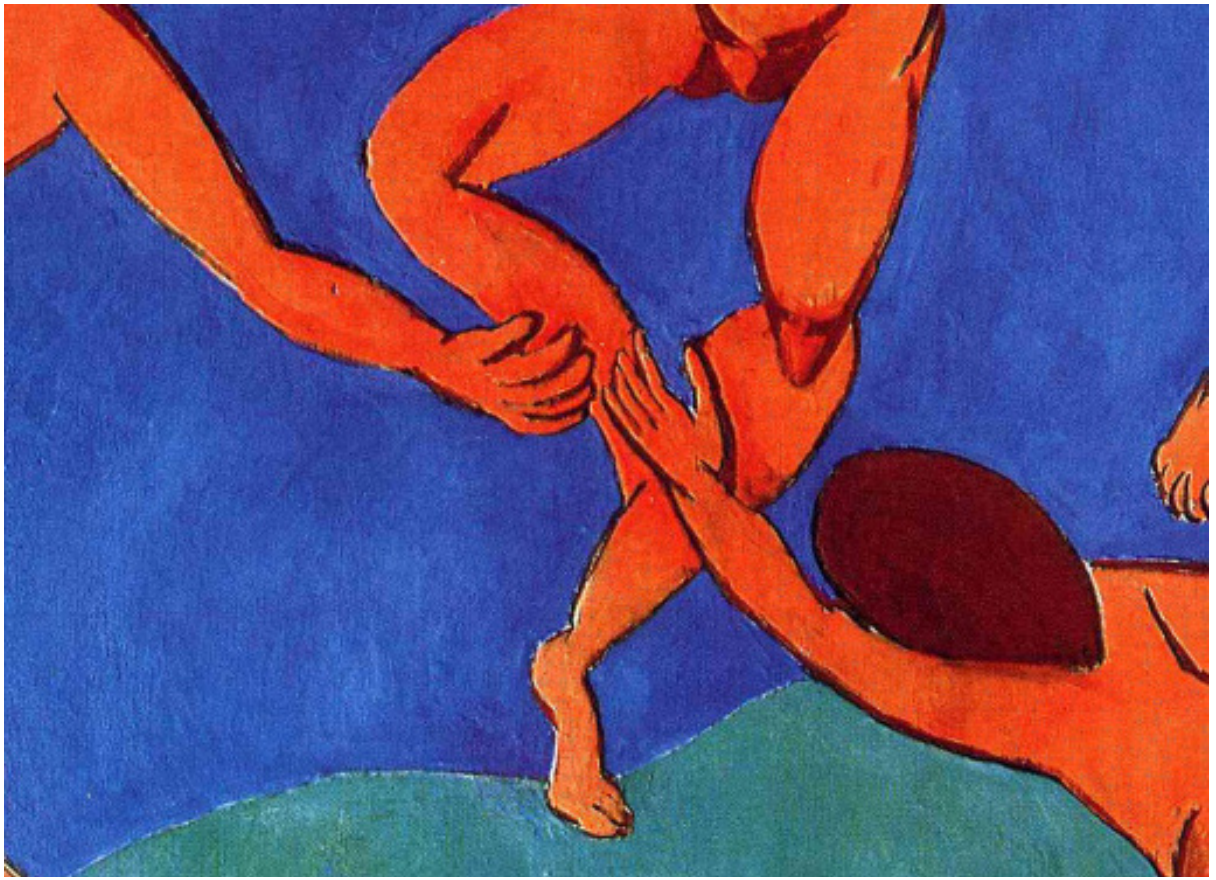
It is helpful to begin by picturing a community as a group sharing joy, labor, and responsibility to delve into the mechanics of gatherings.

> The Dance is the ultimate symbol of the reconciliation of individuals (Artsper Magazine).

An example of this can be seen in Henri Matisse's painting from 1909, the Dance, which depicts naked figures dancing and holding hands in nature, painted in only a few colors. The reduced landscape and lack of details convey the simplicity of the shared experience that creates the celebration of liberated human beings. Similarly, and perhaps influenced by Matisse, a quick search for the word "community" on Google shows vibrant illustrations of schematic humans hugging, dancing, holding hands, and revolving around the planet. Both examples, whether in art or corporate designs, exemplify what we expect from a community - a bond that unites diverse individuals with a shared purpose or place. In fact, the beauty of concepts such as mutual help, solidarity, and joint destiny creates a collective identity one can relate to by doing the same cohesive rituals, displaying the love or comfort of being together. I will claim that co-existence is not a given condition but a fragile structure of bodies. In many ways, seeing the other and the ongoing injustices is to see ourselves with a broken identity and devoid of belonging. As written in the Artsper Magazine blog about Matisse's painting:

In this text, I will explore the phenomenon of two entities absorbing into one another as an inner relationship. Then, I will define the different forces and forms that govern the concepts of space, motion, and their fragile interaction as an external relationship. Third, I will delve into the idea of togetherness and examine the abilities of experience as a space we inhabit. Finally, I will ask what the role of artists is and, mostly, where I position myself by challenging the perception of community, trying to think differently, and finding new perspectives.

Fig. 1.
Henri Matisse
Detail from
The Dance, 1909



WANDERING SOULS

08

A body influenced by another wish to be cleared of it. In Jewish mythology, it is called Dybbuk (דִּבּוּק), originating from the Hebrew word Devek (דֶּבֶק), which translates to glue, meaning the touch of two bodies/objects until they cannot be separated. The story passed from mouth to ear, named the phenomenon of a deceased's soul entering a live body. It suggests that it is not a question of a single being affected by the other but a forced relationship where one seeks shelter in another. It is a spirit that suffers in life and asks for help in death. Additionally, to be cleared from it, the body possessed by that soul is confronted by its agony and must go through a ritual in which it can ascent and rise from this world. Therefore, this myth holds matters of rejection and dependency on humanity, reflecting a common fear of separation and opening a third condition of being with and without. So, relating to the forced connection between people, I ask how we name the glue that keeps a community together.

To explore this question, we can stay in this mystical possibility of mutual consumption. The search for the place of a soul was embedded in a play written by S. Ansky, a socialistic nomad, in 1914. Affected by the brutal pogroms against Jewish people in Russia, he collected the ethnography of a town- folk poems, melodies recorded on phonograph rolls, tombstones copied in charcoal, amulets against the evil eye, and spells from old women (הדיבוק של תיאטרון הבימה חי "אשר")[1]. He created the play The Dybbuk or Between Two Worlds from those ancient sources. Later, movies were also made based on it, such as the movie directed by Michał Waszyński in 1937, which started with the opening titles:

Wherefore, from highest height to deepest depth below has the soul fallen? Within itself, the fall contains the resurrection. All creatures are drawn to the source of The Divine Being. During these migrations it may happen that a wandering soul- a DYBBUK - enters a human being which once it loved. Thereupon these two souls fuse into the mighty "Shir Hashirim", the "Song of Songs" Of Love Eternal, burning like an everlasting light never to be extinguished (Waszyński).

1 This is a generated translation of a quote from an article that's written in Hebrew הדיבוק של "תיאטרון הבימה חי" (אשר ;Google Translate trans.)

With a focus on the play The Dybbuk or Between Two Worlds from 1920, the two souls, Leah and Khonen, plan to marry, but Khonen dies suddenly. Their closeness leads Khonen to possess Leah on her wedding day with another man, and he changes from being her former lover to a dybbuk. For instance, an image from the 1920 premier production of the play in Poland shows Leah, the Messenger character, and Khonen in one of its last acts (The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe). The messenger is standing, his face masked, looking down at Leah while she is unconscious, resting her head on a table with her arms as a pillow as if she collapsed. Behind her, on the right, stands Khonen, holding a black curtain, gazing up with an upset expression. The framing of the image leads our eyes to all the characters, forming a circle of solemn-exhaustion-distress/ conscious-unconscious-pain.
In the play, the romantic relationship causes a kind of possession that can only happen when it is based on trust in the other, and the possessor knows that the possessed will accept their need for help. This becomes an inseparable burden for the possessed, who now carries the pain of two souls, resulting in a being of a multi-souled body. This transformation disrupts the peaceful life, turning it into a monument, dual structures that lean on each other and are simultaneously controlled by each other. Afterward, in the play, Leah undergoes an exorcism to part the couple. It bears responsibility since the goal is to lead the entered soul to rise.

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Fig. 2.
Der Dibek
(The Dybbuk)
1920

In addition, Rachel Elior, a researcher, explains in her article, Possession: "Between the Visible World and the Hidden World: Voices Speaking, Silent Worlds and Silenced Voices"[2] ("הדיבוק: 'בין העולם הנגלה לעולם הנסתר: קולות מדברים, עולמות שותקים וקולות מושתקים' אליאור") more about the purpose of the myth. The myth's role was to address behaviors considered abnormal by society. In many cases, a dybbuk was seen as a disease that required treatment (similar to hysteria, which is usually associated with females and is a mental illness). For this reason, the exorcism ritual aims to connect two worlds, the known and the unknown, the visible (life) and the hidden (death), freeing both characters. Elior claims that the group of living men conducting the ritual signifies the human desire to be cleared from invisible or concealed forces over an individual. In other words, to gain or keep control over us. This ritual performed by a group of men is an attempt to lead the entering soul to rise from the world, thinking of both lovers' sakes, but they encounter a refusal from the soul who wishes to be with its love. Since it resists their power, it exposes that their wish does not align with the couple's wishes. After the ritual, they remain connected despite the group's act, choosing their destiny and separating from society.

The argument in Roy Rappaport's article Obvious Aspects of Rituals, which suggests that a ritual creates a binary distinction between before and after, is challenged by the plot of a failed exorcism. In the story, neither Leah nor Khonen has moved on after the ritual despite Leah being expected to marry another man. Elior argues that the ritual reflects society's expectations of women to marry and determine their readiness for marriage ("הדיבוק: 'בין העולם הנגלה לעולם הנסתר: קולות מדברים, עולמות שותקים וקולות מושתקים' אליאור"). However, the ambiguity of Leah's readiness to marry suggests that she has some power in the decision to change her status. This argument denies the rituals' influence on Leah in determining her relationships. To gain a broader understanding of rituals, we can refer to Rappaport's definitions of them:

> …ritual imposes, or is an attempt (so to speak), to impose logical necessity upon the vagrant affairs of the world (Rappaport and Rappaport 2).

2 This is a generated translation of a quote from an article that's written in Hebrew ("הדיבוק: 'בין העולם הנגלה לעולם הנסתר: קולות מדברים, עולמות שותקים וקולות מושתקים'"; Google Translate trans.; אליאור)

According to Rappaport, rituals are a means of communication that requires participation (Rappaport and Rappaport 11). He suggests that some rituals function as devices for counting and ordering that regulate society (Rappaport and Rappaport 16). He also does not deny the effects it has on one and the qualities it maintains. According to him, rituals offer a structured framework, a sense of vagueness, and adaptability that attracts people to come together. As he claims:

> Reduction from the continuous and complex to the binary through ritual occurrence is also important in the transition of individuals from one state or condition to another (Rappaport and Rappaport 20).

For example, in some of my works, I have explored the tradition of fire inscriptions of Israeli youth movements, including the one I was a member of. The ceremonies involve using large-scale words and symbols written in iron and jute sacks soaked in fuel, typically marking the end of an educational process. This is a kind of transformation in age or level. As I reflect on these rituals and moments, I aim to understand how they shaped our sense of being together. Tamar Katriel has described the moment of lighting the inscription:

> This quiescent and participatory attitude reaches its peak as all participants join in the ritualized act of discerning and admiring the fire inscriptions kindled at the close of the ceremony. The particular form of bonding thus achieved is most telling. Standing side by side, debarred by the dark from making eye contact, not touching, immersed in hushed silence, participants' attention and gaze are galvanized towards the fire spectacle. It is in this shared orientation to a focal source of excitement and authority that they are joined without, however, becoming interpersonally linked (Katriel 450-451).

In one of my works, I use small finger-sized inscriptions without any specific message but with distant thoughts of forgetting. My interest is in the experience of witnessing fire, which can be heroic and violent at the same time, to find the remains of a collective identity formed by ritual and go back to secondary memory, happening next to the fire of a dance of sweating shirts, hair stiff from smoke, hands scratched by metal wire and grasping shoulders. It is a joyful moment for those who feel part of or should feel. This tradition has been banned recently for environmental reasons, exposing the damage made by a group in its becoming. I wonder what else is needed to preserve a community.

RIPPLES

Michel Foucault's text Territory, Population, Security (1978) establishes a few definitions of power mechanisms, starting with discipline as a critical concept. He defines it:

> Discipline is essentially centripetal. I mean that discipline functions to the extent that it isolates a space, that it determines a segment. Discipline concentrates, focuses, and encloses. The first action of discipline is in fact to circumscribe a space in which its power and the mechanisms of its power will function fully and without limit (Foucault 56).

Foucault claims that in order to have discipline, a center needs to be determined. That center is the core of a force that unites around it while it spreads in expanding circles, a movement from the inside to the outside. Such as the movement on the water's surface causes a ripple, spreading the energy from the inner. Scientifically, in a very simplified explanation, a ripple results from a surface trying to regain its flattest shape by small waves. A circle is formed from an equal distribution of strength in a shared effort to preserve harmony. To have a ripple, a stone must be thrown into a river, an animal must swim in a canal, or the wind will send something into the puddle. Something or someone is affecting the water's shape in all these options. However, what happens when multiple ripples occur in proximity? Or when different disciplines encounter?

Concerning the center, the ripples of a discipline can become indiscipline, an open liquid space. So how can discipline become indiscipline? How can this occur, and how can an interdisciplinary approach help us explore it in the context of art and artistic research?

Another example from my education is one of the more significant activities in becoming a member of a national youth movement group: a visit to Kineret Cemetery, where the members of the first Kibbutz and other groups near the Galilee Sea were buried. Their graves represent great stories of people who left their families and comfort lives to cultivate the land and fulfill a socialistic ideal.

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Fig. 3. Arieh Allweil, Natan Ikar tombstone 1920

However, during that educational tour, we, the students, were also exposed to the grave of the 19-year-old Natan Ikar (means Peasant), who committed suicide in 1920. Perhaps his story would have been easily pushed aside or ignored if not for the tombstone made by the artist Arieh Allweil, which made it stand out. This Austrian-born artist, who had been a member of the Bitania group in the same region during those years, left for Austria to pursue art studies in 1921 but returned to Palestina in 1926 and devoted himself to making art. Allweil's description of the tombstone is an expression of hardships:

In the crown of the tombstone appears the mosquito of despair. The one that appears in the literature of the period as piercing the feverish minds of the pioneers. The mosquito's wings are broken. All around him are lightning bolts and an atonement rooster, and everything joins a twisted figure and a tormented face, in which black eyes open like deep holes. The face is with horns, like the face of Satan.

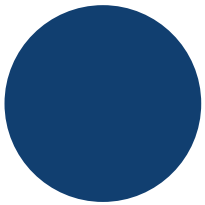
("מביתניה לווינה ובחזרה: התבוננות חדשה בסדרת ההדפסים של אריה אלואיל 'טורא אפורה'" קשת 68).[3]

The conversation that was held next to it with the guide was about the possibility of being lonely, even in a group. The message that

3
This is a generated translation of a quote from an article that's written in Hebrew ("מביתניה לווינה ובחזרה: התבוננות חדשה בסדרת ההדפסים של אריה אלואיל 'טורא אפורה'"; Google Translate trans.קשת)

came across brought up the cracks in the utopian dream but had a subtext of an individual's weakness, highlighting the fragility of the one who could not withstand the challenge or a group who did not wholly invest in her friends. Engaging with Ikar's story through the works of Allewiel raised questions about representations of hopes and failures, redemption, and death intertwine.

Returning to Foucault and the ripples, discipline is a set of guidelines that dictate the correct way of life one should follow. It can either be voluntarily chosen or obligatory but always entails a sort of alertness from a more authoritative body (Foucault 17, 349). Some disciplines might collide, and some may integrate. Different disciplines might dissolve for the same purpose, but some can compete. In all cases, the space's borders become stricter or more apparent. I search for the unclear space, the encounter of forces that collide or merge in a continuous movement. I want to expand to a less dichotomic approach in the search for what exists in the conflicted human space.



For example, a game or maybe a trust exercise in which participants lie down with their heads resting on another's lap and their legs on the ground, being horizontal. Chairs serve as the base while the weight of bodies leans on one another. The foundation of this structure lies in the touch of bodies against bodies and the ground. An outsider, often the guide or team leader, gradually removes the chairs, shifting the weight from the chairs to the participants' legs. Maintaining the body in the air and not falling will become increasingly harder, risking a friend's head hitting the floor. The chairs will leave the circle one by one, and the bodies will become the support. Legs start shaking, and the body's center is drawn to the floor; if all bodies remain suspended in the air when the last chair is removed, it can be considered a group success or triumph. After achieving this heavy floating, legs relax, and bodies collapse. In the game's aftermath, how do you rearrange yourself when you no longer depend? What will you feel or remember? Is it the awkward touch of a head on your lap or the comforting reliance of using somebody else as a crutch? Is there relief in touching the floor and regaining independence?

This game can only be played in a circle. This corresponds to Foucault:

> It must be a geometrical relationship in the sense that a good country is one that, in short, must have the form of a circle, and the capital must be right at the center of the circle (Foucault 28).

According to the quote, the shape of the circle holds a meaning of control. It is a form that encompasses all, making everything visible. Where there is a center, and everyone is at an equal distance from it whether they want to or not. Returning to the game, ultimately, there is no alternative but to fall and break the shape. When everything is in order, there is the feeling of a current where everyone will flow together. However, the flow might be blocked when the shape is no longer arranged. This blockage is where the idea of order is disrupted, and the center becomes a clogged space accessible to some but denied to others. A clog does not signify complete system failure; it means that a thicker material invaded the pipes and fixated. The disciplines would then reshape; they would no longer aspire to unified flat water but aspire to remain wavy, resulting in a conflict of solidifying water. I think that this is not limited to states, cities, or politics, as in Foucault's text, but is relevant to any disciplinary field, including art.

I return to Foucault's text to further understand the discipline's definition. He discusses discipline as a state principal. To deepen that, he mentions the reason- Raison d'État and the acts against them- Coup d'État (Foucault 441). These concepts help us understand how political power operates beyond explicit rules or laws, often through subtle mechanisms of control and normalization. The rules would be the practice, the definition, the system in which we operate, and the how. The reason would be the meaning of it, the why. "Raison d'État" refers to the idea that the state's interests can justify actions, often considered vital for survival or well-being. On the other hand, a "Coup d'État" refers to the sudden and often violent overthrow of an existing government or authority, typically carried out by a small group within the state apparatus. It is an act of seizing control, often against the established order, sometimes intending to install a new government or leader. Foucault brings these concepts concerning preserving the governing method

and existing power structures. Using these concepts, he brings the co-existence of authority and its disruption.

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Fig. 4. William Kentridge, Atlas Procession II 2000

Examining some of William Kentridge's works offers a meaning in which the circle is a mechanical movement of descending, and everyone has the potential to be caught in the disruption. The etching Atlas Procession II depicts shadowy human figures on a round and old map of islands around Indonesia. The monochromatic figures walk with personal and national belongings in an endless cycle of refugees fleeing wars and oppression and longing for home (Princeton University). The drawing has an inner and outer circle, similar to an eyeball or a hole; it represents two terrors at once: our common fear of falling and the full horror of sweated labour down a mineshaft (Cumming). The circle in the artwork can be seen as a form of control, where the figures are caught in an endless cycle of displacement and slavery controlled by the center of power and those who are denied access to it. However, their journey also seems like a dance, a journey for self-determination, or a ritual for remembrance, and it is impossible to determine who is the first or the last. The map in the collage, in a standard paper format of a book page or a poster, implies a context of specific cultures or states. Nevertheless, the reduced figures open it beyond one specific cultural narrative, emphasizing the discipline that maintains this movement.

A gouache painting by Ronen Simantov called The Group[4] depicts a dance of lookalike figures in a circle on paths of agriculture fields that symbolize life and being together ("תעשו חיים': על אמנות ומות"' ברזני). This would also be the ordering of a group as they stand in the center of a space. The distant look on them makes it a memory or an unfulfilled dream. The people are not identified, and so is the field, but the history of the Horah dance of pioneers lingers above in repetitive motion. The Horah dance, based on the Romanian-Bulgarian dance and similar Balkan dances, became popular in Israel with the migration of Jewish people to the country in the early 1900s and the attempt to establish a new folk culture based on familiar traditions (The Jewish Virtual Library). The dance signifies the shared joy and celebration of young people working the land during the day and enjoying each other company in nature.
In sum, Jean-Luc Nancy rethought the being together, the group, and socialistic theories in his book Being Singular Plural. The notions of individuality and identity are challenged by arguing that being is fundamentally intertwined with others. In the context of the artworks discussed in this chapter, it is argued that the disciplines dictate the idea of "being together" and the notion of a "group."

> Philosophy needs to recommence, to restart itself from itself against itself, against political philosophy and philosophical politics. In order to do this, philosophy needs to think in principle about how we are "us" among us, that is, how the consistency of our Being is in being-in-common, and how this consists precisely in the "in" or in the "between" of its spacing" (Nancy 26).

The being-in-common in Nancy's citation emphasizes the significance of the spacing or the gaps "between" (Nancy 4-6). It is the appearance of another being that both do not belong and are inseparable from society. I am interested in understanding what it is to remain in a liquid space, to float in that dirty clog, the between, not as a bystander but as an absorber.

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Fig. 5.
Ronen Simantov
The Group
2011

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This is my translation of a quote from an article that's written in Hebrew ('תעשו חיים': על אמנות ומות"; my translation trans.; ברזני)

Emet[5]
At this moment in time, I am writing with pain. A pain that will leave my body only through the gap between the nail and the skin of the pinky finger in my leg (considered the place where the minor damage would be caused to the body in an exorcism ritual). In the play Dybbuk, the exorcism ritual begins by setting a zone where the soul is invited, only to be eradicated from that area completely.

Rabbi Azriel: We will now summon the dead man to the rabbinical court. But first I want to draw a circle. He is to remain within its circumference and he will not be allowed to leave (Neugroschel and Ansky 42).

I will start with the history of writing this thesis. In another assignment, I asked if an independent art community can exist, free of political or financial influences, and hold another set of values and measurements. Now my answer to that question is no. From this place of pain and loneliness, I will position myself in this new understanding. Referring to the game of leaning on each other, I want to focus on its final stage, which is the group's fall, and for now, I will refer to the group I am a part of and our fall. This is not a new phenomenon; the only thing that has changed is our point of view, and what we witness at the bottom will remain with us. If the fall was sudden, caused by a swift pulling of all chairs together, we would transform from the structure of bodies to a clumsy mess of organs, struggling not to drown under each other's weight. Moreover, if we are left only with ourselves, it will take longer to regain our posture, and the structure's ruins will become our only support. From here, the space we see is anything but safe.

Moving to the Netherlands created new issues and points of view for my "home" problems. A mother who migrated to Amsterdam told me that "kids grow up slower here" after her ten-year-old son heard about Anne Frank for the first time. At first, I was surprised by what I felt was a lack of required knowledge, but after her comment, I was jealous. In both conditions, I was bothered by the overly used, capitalized, and commercialized image of the girl, who was just a couple of years younger than my grandma Rivka, who escaped a mass

killing pit in Ukraine during WW2. Her image did not turn popular, but her name became mine. Because of that lineage, I am forever obligated to a memory. The pindakaas swastika painted on a wall outside of the Hebrew school where I am employed like a Stolpersteine, and it is nothing like it. Their orange-gold hue in a public space is meant to provoke or disrupt a peaceful activity in a public space. Where one was quickly removed by cleaning, the other might lack appearance due to insufficient cleaning. Like the eerie Dybbuk, they preserve the potential or sense of danger.

Another local but older example would be the philosopher Baruch Spinoza. He was born in Amsterdam to expulsed Jewish Portuguese parents. Inspired by his religious education, he confronted it, which led him to be boycotted. The restrictions on Jewish people at the time included a prohibition of publishing writings that were conceived against the Christian religion[6]. These would already mark his otherness by specific laws. But the Jewish community was even stricter, and, together with the Christian establishments, they opposed his ideas and writings and forced him into solitude, marking

(Van Weezel)

him as an epicure. Shaped by his heritage and influenced by his immediate environment, he gave rise to groundbreaking ideas that offered new values of secular society around which people could gather, mainly after his passing.

To sum up, these examples show that lineage can significantly impact an individual's experiences and perspectives. Those who lack knowledge about their ancestry may be ignorant of the struggles, values, and traditions that shaped their history. This lack of knowledge can lead to naivety and make them vulnerable to manipulation and misinformation. On the other hand, having excessive knowledge about one's lineage can also become a burden. It may cause individuals to feel trapped by their heritage and struggle to find their identity beyond their cultural background.

In art history, the why or Raison d'État by Foucault constantly changed or has been confronted. Ideologies between art communities and governments or establishments sometimes clash. However, I would like to explore an inner clash of an art community with herself or art communities with other art communities.

Perhaps one of the things that triggered my questions about it was the visit to Documenta15. I was a new foreign student last year, overwhelmed and anxious, hoping I would make friends or become a friend and not become a representative of my country of origin. I found it hard to absorb the complex discussions revolving around the show. Much more than the conflict between the arbitrary decision to censor some works and the very sensitive acknowledgment of the offensive antisemitic aspects of some, I could not understand why there is no conversation between artists. After a while, I found the reaction of an artist, Guy Briller, called A Forgiveness Journey, who did not initially participate in the show and later became the only self-declared Jewish and Israeli artist in the show. Briller invited artists whose works got censored to conversations, which led to shared performances. It is a simple act of talking about what was and what hurt without the outer forces of institutions (Briller "A Forgiveness Journey").

But this is not easily done. The researcher Zlil Rubinstein has also written about the clash between an individual and a group identity from the experience in her social circles:

This is not a new phenomenon: there have already been left-wing movements that one too many shifts on the dial led them to complete a circle and meet the extreme - from Maoism to Stalinism. The history is known. However, when you are part of it, the feeling is different (יש מפלצות גם בשמאל" רובינשטיין).[7]

Rubinstein highlights in her text that she saw herself as a part of the Global Left community that, in the name of being a part of that community, moved and merged with its rival, leaving her out. With that, something new emerged: the community of the left-outs who share this feeling of exclusion. During this kind of alternation, the common ground we all stand on became slippery, like mud pulling in when attempting to escape. Therefore, there is a difference between standing still and sinking. For some, it is harder to get out if more than the feet are inside the mud, but those with more grip risk getting dirty or even falling. What is their community? How will the mud on their clothes be perceived?

7 This is a generated translation of a quote from an article that's written in Hebrew ("יש מפלצות גם בשמאל"; Google Translate trans.; רובינשטיין)

To draw a comparison with another Jewish myth, the Golem is a man-made clay creature that is granted power. Initially, it was intended to protect a community from blood libels, but it ended up endangering the very community it was created to protect since it desecrated the Shabbat. This unintended consequence mirrors the complexities of authority and power structures discussed by Foucault. The story not only reveals the underlying possibilities for retention. It serves as a reminder of our responsibility towards our creations, our intentions in making them, and our choices of materials and concepts. In this sense, the tale of the Golem is a metaphor for the delicate balance between creation and destruction and the weight of responsibility. Although it originated as folklore, the allegory traveled across time and cultures as an agency to this living human dilemma. For instance, the poet Ursula K. Le Guin wrote in her blog in 2017 about Donald Trump's increasing presence in the media. She believed that people's actions of watching and sharing his performances, even when it was critical, had contributed to this occurrence, comparing it to the Golem:

> The legend of the golem varies according to the teller, but I will follow the version that tells how, in a time of persecution, a rabbi made a mighty giant out of mud, a golem, and wrote a sacred word on its forehead – "Truth"[8] – that gave it life. With its frightening size and enormous strength, the golem was to defend and safeguard the Jews. But the golem was not rational, not controllable. It was a danger in itself. So the rabbi removed a single letter from the word on its forehead, which then read "Death[9]," and the life went out of the giant, leaving only mud (Le Guin).

In another text of hers, Being Taken for Granite, "mud" symbolizes vulnerability, the raw[10] material, and the remains. It can be molded and destroyed, only to be continuously cyclically created. For this reason, I find mortality and fragility qualities present in my works.

Le Guin contrasts it to a stone as a strict, non-changing object, like the fixed ripple I mentioned:

> Mud lies around being wet and heavy, and oozy and generative. Mud is underfoot. People make footprints in mud. As Mud I accept weight. I try to be supportive, I like to be obliging. Those who take me for granite say this is not so but they haven't been looking where they put their

8 Emet אמת

9 Met מת

10 The name comes from the word raw=Golmi in Hebrew

feet. That's why the house is all dirty and tracked up.
Granite does not accept footprints. It refuses them (Le Guin, The Wave in the Mind: Talks and Essays on the Writer, the Reader, and the Imagination 8-9).
gave it life. With its frightening size and enormous strength, the golem was to defend and safeguard the Jews. But the golem was not rational, not controllable. It was a danger in itself. So the rabbi removed a single letter from the word on its forehead, which then read “Death[9]," and the life went out of the giant, leaving only mud (Le Guin).

As an artist working in an international environment, I often encounter the friction of mud, conflicts, and disagreements. When I try to distance myself from such conflicts, I feel defensive and as if I am not fully embracing the reality of the situation. Accepting ambiguity brings its own set of issues, such as Jean Luc Nancy's claim.

Perhaps everything happens between loss and appropriation: neither one nor the other, nor one and the other, nor one in the other, but much more strangely than that, much more simply (Nancy 13).

He suggests another approach to the simplicity of everyday life, which enables a movement between everything and nothing. The mud, left on one, can be a mixture of dirt and blood, land and body, material and human, communal and individual, and hold all the meanings, associations, narratives, and questions of loss and appropriation. As Margus Vihalem said about Jacques Rancière's ideas:

aesthetics is not a discipline but a mode of articulation of the sensible, including senses, thinking, feeling, and acting (Vihalem 6).

Rancière, by Vihalem, argues that art is not a set of procedures (Foucault 17) like disciplines and governments but a fundamental experience of being together (Vihalem 8) and how the distribution of the sensible, or what is perceivable and meaningful in society, affects our understanding of aesthetics and politics together. When we think of water bodies like seas and oceans, we can imagine them endless, moving all over the world, free. Nevertheless, they also have borders guarded by destroyers, bombed from across the transparent fence. What kind of ripple would a rocket hitting the water make? Vihalem claims that the

essence of art itself is different because it does not wish to maintain discipline:

What makes literature (and indeed art in general) progressive or future-oriented is the way it introduces heteronomy and challenges our perception of the community (Vihalem 3).

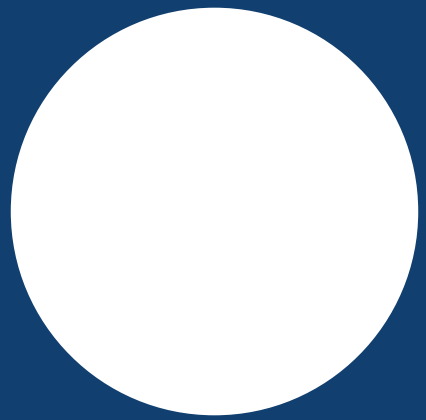
A key concept he introduces is the aesthesis, which is the everyday aesthetics, connecting art to sensorial and emotional without mediation (Mandoki 31-35). By emphasizing the idea of the "distribution of the sensible" in his writings, he discusses how society organizes and perceives what is visible and audible by political agendas. Rancière proposes a democratic conception of aesthetics where everyone has the capacity for aesthetic judgment through everyday aesthetics. This approach recognizes and values the diverse ways people interact with and appreciate art in their daily lives, promoting a more egalitarian view of aesthetic experiences. The understanding that art is constantly subjected to the viewer's thinking and feeling is a participatory space where the audience influences the artwork's meaning. In other words, he rejects the attempt to manipulate the viewer through art, arguing that such an effort would be similar to a political party imposing its criteria on a specific crowd (Rancière 29-30). In my opinion, this is the cause of the shattering of a community.

"With" is the sharing of time-space; it is the at the-same-time-in-the-same-place as itself, in itself, shattered (Nancy 35).

Jean Luc Nancy said that by putting the thought that we are all in mud, like the one created from a temporary shared sink, standing in a forest without sewage connection, where all the everyday activities are done such as hand washing, hair washing, teeth brushing, and

dishwashing, we are always affected by another's remains and dirt.

In conclusion, Rancière's ideas challenge the traditional understanding of art and aesthetics and suggest that the artist is not the only authority on an artwork's meaning. Through his democratic conception of aesthetics, Rancière encourages recognizing and appreciating the diverse ways people interact with and appreciate art in their daily lives, promoting an equal view of aesthetic experiences. It can be understood that exclusion is caused when an artist does not wish to share a space but to present a granite-fixed discipline because mud cannot shatter.



CHAPTER THE MIDDLE

To further explore the relationship between art and the viewer, I would like to refer to Tamar Getter, an artist who delves into the themes of heroism and constructed narratives by observing the similarities between national and artistic disciplines. Her works deal with the perspective of the eye's determination of one section or focused space juxtaposed with an ideology that is also there as a vision to be fulfilled, within reach.

Her painting Tel-Hai Yard with a Sleeping Guard (Version I) from 1978 depicts the outline of a head and the Tel-Hai Yard, a significant historical site in the north of Israel. It is drawn with green blackboard paint and chalk on plastic. Tel-Hai site was the location of a battle in 1920, where a settlement was built on land purchased from the Ottomans to become a farm. An attack on the location resulted in a battle that caused casualties on both sides. Afterwards, it was abandoned and set on fire.

In the drawing above the structure is another drawing of a tilted singular head, reminding statues of mythological warriors such as Alexander the Great, expressing a dynamic movement (Kiilerich 90). The lines crossing from the yard's gate to the figure's face resemble the perspective preparation sketches and connect the geometrical square architecture to the round slanted face, the erected space, and the limp body. It does not seem as if they are both in the same space because the head is the same size as the structure and is not trying to imitate life but to confront the interaction between them. Still, everything is centered.

Although the structure is somewhat familiar to a specific group educated on the heroic story, the man's head can be anyone's, detached from it. The two of them, the yard and the figure's head, are depicted temporarily, much like the medium of the painting itself. The choice of materials also challenges traditional educational tools, like those used in schools. In Getter's works, the ideological landscape combines the ugly sides of architecture, body parts, and singular beings wandering through the paintings. It is a mixture of

life and death where everything can be easily erased. In her artist book, she reflected on the gaze as an artist's tool:

> The De-historicization of the relationship between painting-viewer was built on such manipulation. The perspective painting was presented as a valid document of perception of what the eye sees. The same manipulative transparency works in a sentence like: "We have no other country" or "Women are hysterical." Manipulation of this kind blocks access to any sort of real depth. Instead, it functions like a mere backdrop or a curtain. As methods of representation, both perspective and ideology keep and rely on the purity of their geometry. What must be concealed is that they are methods. Otherwise, they lose their authority. (Getter 14)

The perspective defines what is there, and there is where I used to be. How can we get access to real depth if we are not there?

Specifically, I am curious about how disengaging body parts or bodies from each other affects a community's perception.

How does a tilted head, hanging from the body, look next to others? Not only does a dynamic dance or a game represent an ideal sense of togetherness but also the state of relaxation, sitting, or "just being with each other." A static body can symbolize a mandatory group arrangement like effortlessly gripping tightly. For instance, when setting up a group photo, there are essential things to consider. First, you need to count how many

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Fig. 6.
Tamar Getter
Tel-Hai Yard with a sleeping Guard (Version 1)
1978

people are in the group. Next, think about how they should stand or sit next to each other. Who should be in the middle or at the front? Should everyone face the same way, or can they be more relaxed with their poses? What do they do with their hands? Should there be gaps between them, and how big should they be? The one missing from the photo, challenging the community when you are not together, would be indiscipline.

Inspired by Getter's approach, the reality or minimized biased perspective portrayed by propaganda tools leads me to consider the placing of each detail of my work subjected to my experience. A circle on the ground is a memory of a dirty sinkhole, a circle on the wall is an eye, and a circle of hands is like the movement of clapping. I look for scales that create multiple quiet gestures. The figures in my work now see what I did not see before, staring with an empty gaze before becoming an abstract shadow. I think of what holds them. I worry that they will fall; can they hold each other? I try to draw a circle where I can find shelter, leaving access to the figures based on the memories of souls. A space between the hands of approval, in a movement, and a community that chooses it too. I draw again and again until a conversation opens. Here I stay. Would you join me in my shelter?

I do have to warn you: in my house, someone might still burst open and burn everything, including us.
Do you believe me?
Do you want to save yourself?
I do, too.

When the walls turn black and our bodies as well, would you still remember what it was like before? The fire would dry up the mud, revealing the bones, and any hope would melt. The skeleton, just like the wood beams or plastic leg chairs, is the foundation of a leaning body, and the surface it relies on has its layers exposed. As I see my end from your eyes, I draw our staring looks and tense bodies waiting to be lifted.

According to Rancière, the works of Simantov, Kentridge, and Getter are all two-dimensional expressions of criticism towards a particular discipline. This could be the painting medium itself, the representation of a space, or a historical injustice. What these artworks have in common are abstract figures in a conceptual space that represent the stories of real people as the core of an idea. In addition, they all share a monochromatic color palette and a centered composition. These figures serve as a compilation of knowledge or feelings, the in-between space that allows for communicating a subjective thought or experience. By using these figures, the artists can explore the intersection between the real and the imaginary relationships of groups and individuals in them. Another question that comes up is when a person is erased and when memorized, which can also be asked about an artist.
In the play The Dybbuk, at the end, Leah indirectly acknowledges the presence of Khonen, her deceased lover, by using plural pronouns. She expresses sympathy towards him and, like him, asks her community to show kindness to those outside their circle, even if they are considered evil spirits.

LEAH (Very self-confident.): …The spirits that surround us aren't evil.
These are the people who died before their time.
And now their souls watch everything we do and listen now to everything we say...
(Neugroschel and Ansky 25)

When a viewer enters the space of my artwork, will they possess my work with their ideology? Will they trust me enough so it will enter their spirit?

The sky color is navy blue, like the workers' blue-collar uniforms. A small stone structure is divided into three spaces, surrounded by sand and trees, less than three kilometers from a fence that defines its nature. This is a space where navy blue became the color of socialistic ideals, kids became a group, groups became a community, and communities became a village.

One Shabbat, I was in the Kibbutz- this is also the name of a painting by Yohanan Simon from 1947, raising the dispute in a collective lifestyle, showing the conflict between art discipline and the socialistic one. The description of the work:

Idyllic Kibbutz's life was part of the romanticized founding ethos of Israel. The kibbutznikim were the elite, working the land. The Sabbath, portrayed in this painting in the Tel Aviv Museum of Art by Yohanan Simon (1905-1976), was the only day off when parents could see and play with their children, who lived in children's homes. Simon's figures are monumental, with minor facial detail, befitting a collective philosophy that downplays individuality. Simon, who later left the kibbutz, was criticized for showing workers relaxing instead of working in the fields" (CIE).

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Fig. 8.
Yohanan Simon
Shabbat in the Kibbutz
1947

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Fig. 9.
Nitzan Sitruk
White House
Gallery in
Nir-Oz, 2021

Simon faced criticism in the past for being a cause of conflict rather than contributing to the glorification of ideology. However, he was acknowledged for fostering a sense of community over time. The images of members who were previously undisciplined and favored rest over work were later recognized for contributing to a peaceful and harmonious environment. In Jean Luc Nancy's book, The Inoperative Community, he posits that a community is not solely about task-sharing but also entails a profound, organic connection to its essence (Nancy 35).

So, actually, I was there for three Shabbats to exhibit in a gallery made in the conflicted navy-blue skies and brown desert ground horizon. In the gallery, in a structure that is also a monument for the ongoing war, the nearby communities gather to confront it, or sometimes not to, for a short while.

On another Shabbat, Haim Perry[11], the curator of the gallery, was kidnapped, and as I write, he is still captured. The gallery, run by him with the help of his community, stands empty. This is Nir-Oz and Nirim, socialistic dreams who made villages, communities, families, friends, and artists. Not far from there, Beeri Gallery[12] was burnt to the ground with a painting exhibition in it. The list of artists who were hurt in the massacre of October is, for me, sad and scary because we are connected. I have written their names and stories and then felt it is like when reading names in a memorial ceremony, the tone is cold, and the information does not reflect enough of what they did or do and hopefully will do in the future. To not let them be subsumed into a collective identity as a plain particle and to emphasize their rich, unique singularity, I decided not to do it that way.

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Fig. 10.
personal archive
Trust game
2007

11 (Williamson)

12 (Riba)

Making or talking about art refers to the poet Lea Goldberg, who wrote a poem questioning art in times of struggle:

To the exam question “For what purpose
are lyric poems written in our era?”

And what would we do with the horses in the twentieth century?
And with the does?
And with the large stones in the Jerusalem hills?
(Goldberg 125)

Goldberg's poem asks if lyric poems can always be a part of the world, and if so, what is their worth and that of any objects and beings. It suggests that our sensory encounters are not always a call to action, but they possess the ability to communicate through their essence. This approach can be a way to deal with the trauma of a community that now sees each other from the ground.

What is a community defined by exclusion and collapsing? The charcoal dust of different bodies. Smudges and erases that expose the mistake or the glory of reducing. The carrying of the ghost of another is hard to escape from, and it is always surrounding threatening to pull you out of the circle or collapse it entirely. However, this could also be the window to a less imminent approach, where the idea of a community exists beyond its borders. Nancy writes about the "truth of death," which suggests that communities are formed not just by what is present but also by what is absent. Nancy warns against overemphasizing the present and the pursuit of imminence, which can lead to a destructive cycle that ultimately destroys the community that seeks it. He also discusses joint suicide or death among lovers as a symbol of immanence. He highlights the delicate balance between the principles of immanence, impassioned love, and communal thought. He suggests that an overemphasis on one can lead to the destruction of the other, ultimately leading to the collapse of the community and a reciprocal embrace of death (Nancy 12-17). From that, it can be understood that we cannot protect our loved ones or to love those we protect if we are based on absolute destruction.

Another example is a series of oil paintings from 2016 called Cypresses Grove by Ziva Jelin, which depicts

vivid red cypress trees. The cypress tree, a symbol of death in some cultures, is commonly planted around cemeteries. However, it is also a Mediterranean tree associated with longevity and strength. Jelin works from her childhood memories in the Kibbutz, marking the upright trees as a collective symbol. The red and black leaking of the landscape tells a story of loss and growth, of warning and war. "Red Color" is also the word announced when rockets are shot in her area, but she also describes it as a deep emotion and as holding the meaning of belonging. In October, bullets penetrated her painting, leaving holes and becoming a testimony to the immanent of the "truth of death" and the clashes between disciplines.

In conclusion, the life around the art ripple became the indiscipline. Ideas that accompanied my artistic practice faced unfamiliar turbulences. I try to move from the confines of the circle to the mud and find the gaps, to be flexible and find where I belong and how I can express myself in the gaps between the structures and disciplines.

Fig. 10.
Ziva Jelin
Cypress Grove
2016

To clear a sink clog, remove dirt for water to flow freely.

Mud absorbs interferences.

An example of accepting an interference is from a speech by the curator Hila Cohen-Shniderman, who extends this by acknowledging the transformative potential of trauma:

A question of place is, first and foremost, a question of presence. The where indicates the manner. Where are we? Together.
…Trauma collapses the layers one into the other, and therefore, along with the pain it causes, it is also an opening for a meeting. Just like that, things that were until now our border suddenly move. A border is always the only thing we point to as our own threshold
(הפצע הסורי-אפריקאי" כהן-שניידרמן)[13].

[13] This is a generateThis is a generated translation of a quote from an article that's written in Hebrew ("הפצע הסורי-אפריקאי"; Google Translate trans.; כהן-שניידרמן)

Again, this would be the becoming of the left-outs as a community. However, those looking from above and failing to reach a hand, not having to deal with the suffering, can take roles of power. One of them would be to examine the behavior they see just as the Pastor, by Foucault's description, that is, one who is in charge of judging morality (Foucault 132).

In that context, Foucault argues that conscience can also be a tool for governing, a manipulation. To explain it, he examines Christianity not merely as a religious doctrine but as a significant force that has influenced the development of societal structures and power dynamics. He delves into how Christian practices, particularly within the confessional and pastoral contexts, have shaped and regulated moral conduct within Western societies. He illustrates the pastor as a symbol of authority and moral guidance. The Christian emphasis on confession as a means of exposing one's sins to an authority figure, such as the pastor or priest, becomes a focal point in Foucault's examination. He portrays confession as a mechanism through which individuals subject themselves to a form of power, revealing their innermost thoughts and actions to an external authority. In Foucault's analysis, the pastor embodies a form of power that extends beyond the confines of the religious domain. Instead, this authority figure represents a mode

of governance and influence that shapes society's moral and ethical fabric. Like a shepherd guiding a flock, the pastor is responsible for the individual's moral conduct. He says there is always a mechanism, and even if we think we are acting from a pure moral compass, we are constantly subjected to another, which is inherent. This means that one who aspires to be a good person would have to find their system of values and more to be recognized by those (Foucault 256-259). This idea is also related to the concept of policing which is that the Police therefore is in actual fact the art of the state's splendor as visible order and manifest force (Foucault 409). It shows how modern governments control their populations not only by using obvious means of force but also through more subtle methods that affect various aspects of people's lives:

So with police, there is a circle that starts from the state as a power of rational and calculated intervention on individuals and comes back to the state as a growing set of forces, or forces to be developed, passing through the life of individuals, which will now be precious to the state simply as life (Foucault 421).

That notion holds the meaning that standards are a product of being together, and this is exploited to gain control over a society. Therefore, the urge to be judged for your character may be such that it creates moral conflicts based on interests.

I ask if you identify with what you see as Good, does that make you good? Or have you identified as good? Or just Great.

Someone recently told me he "always stands with the oppressed." That notion echoes Foucault's observation. It is a saying, not so different from others I have heard lately, managed to reduce theories, geo-political history, complex situations, and a variety of feelings and cultures to a slogan that, above all, talks about him, not the oppressed. This topic was also discussed in a podcast called Unapologetic-The Third Narrative, where the hosts asked:

Does our conflict feed your savior complex? (Ibrahim and Amira)

The question is a reaction to what they see as one-sided expressions toward a conflict that does not

see the layers and complexity of a situation involving people's lives. They insist on nuances and the possibility of not choosing sides and, in my opinion, offering real depth (Getter 14).

Furthermore, Foucault challenges traditional acts of resistance to a discipline that often seems like an alternative but is actually the exact mechanism.

That being the case, it cannot fail to function to a certain extent as a counter-society, another society, even if, in fact, it only reproduces the society that exists, and consequently it appears and functions internally as a sort of different pastorate, a different governmentality with its chiefs, its rules, and its principles of obedience, and to that extent it possesses, as you know, a considerable capacity both to appear as a different society, a different form of conduct, and to channel revolts of conduct, take them over and control them (Foucault 256).

By that, the appearance of a discipline or a group had a significant role. So, to rebel is to show that you are a Rebel, to write, to post on social media, to wear this or that flag (and probably post that too), as long as it is clear. The most straightforward way of resistance, challenged by Foucault, is what goes against what is considered the oppressor, like the classic "Fuck the system" saying or the quote from the Communist Internationale anthem: We shall the raze the old world to the ground. So good is connected to rage, the will of destruction, to pull the chairs out violently and walk away.

I claim that being subjected to power is also present in making art, especially in the current social media era, which is based on visual experience based on commercial algorithms and political propaganda. Vihalem also supports this view:

New medias, in particular, impact the partition of time and space by shaping and reshaping our perceptions, sensations and affects. As we tend to spend more time and energy in the virtual time-space of the internet and social media, we might be said to witness a radical change of what we understand as the being-in-common (Vihalem 6).

Returning to Foucault and ways of expressing opinions or resistance in media controlled by financial and political regimes, I agree with his question:

Are we not merely dealing with the same phenomena in reverse, from the negative or reactive side? (Foucault 259)

Rancière also discusses the police as an order of bodies that allocate tasks and defines what is visible and sayable and the polarization that can emerge from it:

> The police is thus first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task; it is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise (Rancière 29).

To challenge this, an example of a work dealing with resistance is Katarina Zdjelar's video installation Not a Pillar, not a Pile from 2018 is inspired by Dore Hoyer, all women's dance studios founded in 1945, and the works of the artist Käthe Kollwitz, who died in the same year. The dancers in the video are seen in fragments interacting with cohesion, gestures of heads leaning on hands, hands holding each other or barely touching, pairs of hands or more, pulling and letting go, but never a whole body, blocking the possibility of separating an organ to a person. The work description says: In the resulting film installation, one body encounters another as a site of resistance and possibility, pointing to the fragile agency of collective action in the present (GalleriesNow). The group she assembled moved together within their cultural differences, their hands exposing the frictions and ambiguity of human encounters. I return to the examples of the game and the dance in paintings to explore what a tense body is, perhaps an upright one, a part of a structure, compared to the relaxed one, perhaps the joyful or the weak.

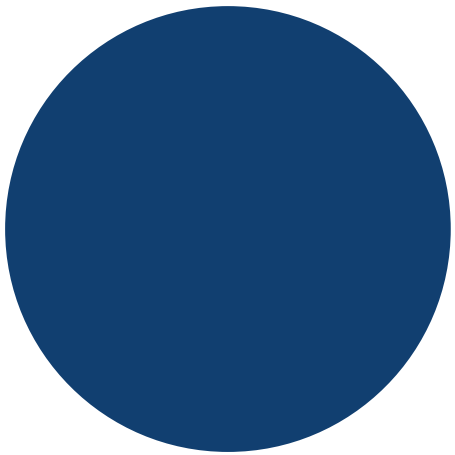
So when does resistance become a discipline, and when does it end lyric poems?

In conclusion, I ask how a community can avoid the hole in the middle, the clog made by the firm leftovers that stop us from floating, the grime that sticks to the side of the sink or others, preventing us from being washed thoroughly, and to navigate the delicate balance between order and disruption.

I argue that unclarity allows for more open, non-violent interactions. By being open to and embracing uncertainty, we can welcome diverse perspectives and allow for contradictory ideas to coexist, not

feed decision-makers' hunger for war but instead be inclusive mud. This is the only way I can believe in making art, and this is what I wish- to look directly at reality while turning aside or just staring.

Finally, the bodies making noise in an orderly way is like a crowd clapping, mass approval of the messages or the speakers, and symbolizing the end of an event. This synchronized clapping forms a tangible structure, like a fence enclosing and connecting individuals. However, with this collective unison, I ask, what is the sound of a solitary clap, a clap of a singular person, or in an isolated space?

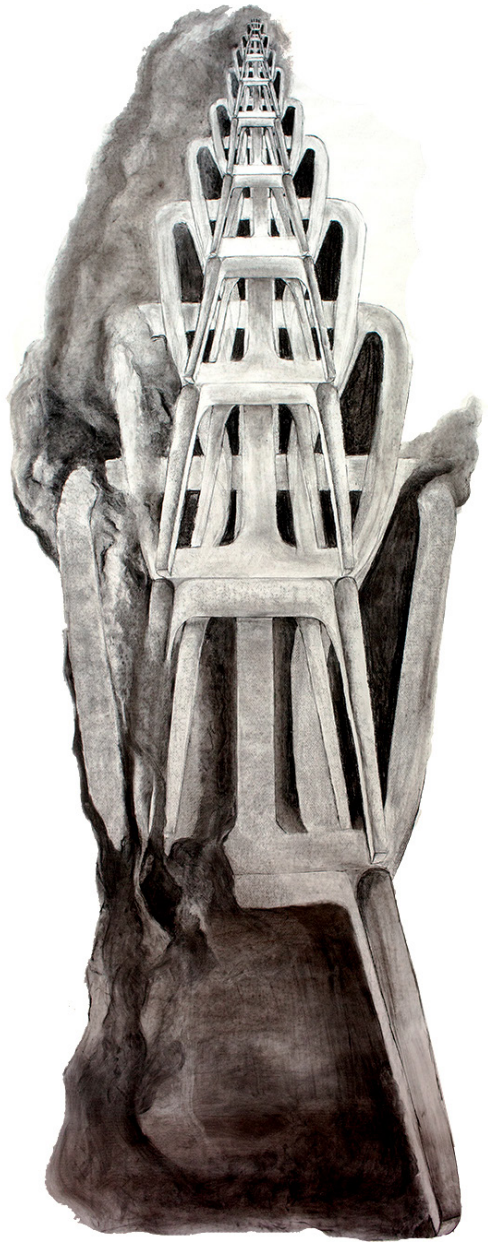


Ladies and gentlemen,
We are towards the end. Please bear with
(Speaker feedback)
me for a few more minutes.
Once again, we are gathered here to commemorate those who were and are. In a spirit of unity, hope, or nothing at all, I sincerely thank each of you for being part of this gathering.
I want to take a moment to thank the speakers and artists who honored us with their presence.

Thank you all for joining.
. . . . . .
I kindly ask you to put your chair in the designated pile before you leave the arena.

Please rise to the singing of your anthem.

Tam HaTekes.



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Dybbuk		דיבוק
Devek	Glue	דבק
Shir Hashirim	Song of Songs	שיר השירים
Despondent	Leah	לאה
Khonen	Merciful	חנ(ו)ן
Kibbutz	Gathering	קיבוץ
Ikar	Peasant	איכר
Emet	Truth	אמת
Met	Dead	מת
Golem		גולם
Golmi	Raw	גולמי
Shabbat/Sabbath	Saturday	שבת
Tam HaTekes	The ceremony is over	תם הטקס

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