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Guava: A conceptual platform for art-actions

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Guava

A conceptual platform for art-actions

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Introduction

Demonstrating the *Guava Platform: Follow the scented walking road*

A process in an ongoing re-search

“To demonstrate” is to give a practical exhibition and explanation of how something is performed, and also to take part in a public political march or gathering that expresses views on a certain issue or stands in opposition.¹ I have been taking part in demonstrations, in the second sense of the word, since I was a teenager. When I arrived as a child in Israel in the mid-1980s, the area was already involved in one of the longest ongoing violent conflicts of the time in the area east of the Mediterranean. My thirty years of living in Israel included four major military operations, three intifadas, two wars, and an ongoing daily occupation of millions of people, in all of which thousands of Palestinians and hundreds of Israelis were killed. For me demonstrating was a way to react and to express my resistance to the socio-political surrounding of which I am a part and to convey my insistence for change.

I still find myself on the streets demonstrating from time to time, but as the years went by I decided to stand less in front of tanks, and instead to find alternative ways to incorporate resistance within my daily routine as an artist. I wanted to look for ways to react to the increasing racism, violence, injustice and fear that exist in the area where I live. My quest joined ongoing² matters and concerns of the possible connections and affects between society, politics, art and artists, and the society these are part of. There is an inherent conflict, curator and writer Will Bradley claims, “...between the construction and maintenance of the sphere of art by the dominant social and economic forces, and artists’ pursuit of the possibility of social change.”³ Motivated by the aim to become part of this search, I began to look for possible courses of *art-actions* – a term I constructed

¹ Based on the Oxford Learners English dictionary. (2020). Retrieved: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>.

² The relation between society, politics and art can be found already in Plato’s writings. In this website/thesis some of Plato’s standpoints on these relations are discussed in the chapter: **Feeding/Eating the Other**. Since, artists attempted to refer and reflect upon these relations, but only from the middle of the 20th century the art field has coined terms that relate to socio-political—engaged art practices. These, more recent reflections are discussed thoroughly in the chapter: **Behind Sham**.

³ Bradley, Will. 2007. 23.

that replaces the prefix 're' in 'reaction' with the word 'art,' and thereby suggests that an art practice can be a reaction to the socio-political surrounding.⁴ The *Guava Platform*, which is at the centre of this PhD thesis, was initiated in 2014 as a conceptual framework of these art-actions and research. My aim to search for possible courses of art-actions on the *Guava Platform* therefore also becomes part of my quest to continue to live here, in this conflicted landscape as an artist.

The activeness of the art-actions are regarded on the *Guava Platform* as verbs and not nouns: actions that someone takes, does, puts into effect. The characters, tactics and qualities of these art-actions are what is inquired by means of the platform through the practice and in the various ways each chapter of the dissertation suggests.

The thesis/website assembles a series of three short films, an online radio station, two performances, a geotagging website, a scent collection, eatable fermented food items and four chapters, all of which are part of the platform. The leading questions of the thesis are: Can time-based art-actions in a conflicted landscape induce and take part in an embodiment of constructive political imagination? If both physical and conceptual 'movement' are the impetus of these actions, could these actions adjust the socio-political impasse of the landscape, and if so, how? And how might they contribute to a socio-political discussion of the landscape I live in?

This text characterizes the thesis's conceptual framework, the particular elements it assembles and the interrelations between them. It is both an essential part of the thesis body, and a *paratext*. *Paratext* is a borrowed concept from the field of literary studies, where it is used to indicate surrounding materials of a text as offered by the authors of the text, editors and publishers. It is basically everything (annotations, comments, publishing data) except the body of the text itself, everything that is beside the body of the work. Here this concept is borrowed to establish this text as one that wishes to weave a thread between the chapters and art-actions of the *Guava* PhD thesis and expand on concepts and modes of expression used throughout the writing. Literary theorist Gerard Genette describes the term *paratext* as an "'undefined zone' between the inside and the outside"

⁴ This term is further elaborated upon on in this text of the dissertation.

of a text.⁵ Genette's zone puts the paratext as part of the text itself and at the same time as part of the discourse around it. Likewise, I place this text in an *undefined zone* where it holds multiple roles that have traditionally been separated. It is an entrance and exit route to the thesis/website, as well as a cornerstone for the visitor to the website to come back to throughout reading, watching and listening to *Guava*. It simultaneously performs acts of interpretation and specification of the various elements that conduct the thesis, and also presents the dynamic interactions between them. This text includes an elaboration on the central concepts used in the thesis, referring to the discursive fields these concepts address or are inspired by. It also gives justification to the particular shape of the thesis as a non-linear website, and brings forward the research methodologies, and the means of the particular demonstration of this thesis/website. Finally, it will address the platforms' main questions by unfolding how the art-actions add to the current socio-political discussion of the conflicted landscape.

⁵ Genette, Gerard. 1997. 2.

Living in a conflicted landscape filled with racism, violence, injustice, anger and fear is terribly unsettling. It is especially concerning when the conflict emerges as part of a nation that claims and fights to be in charge of the surroundings I live in. For me, as an artist, this disturbance increases because of two contradicting notions I find in practicing art: art feels powerless against the suffering and pain, or it feels absurd and even offensive to spend time with while people are dying on your behalf; at the same time art is the most playful and flexible field I know to explore my concerns with the people and landscape around me, allowing the clearest or most precise recording of these concerns to appear. The conceptual framework of the *Guava Platform* aims to unfold the tension of this contradiction in an ongoing process. It does not try to solve or find solutions for the continuing harming frictions occurring in this landscape.

The *Guava Platform* therefore is a conceptual framework for conducting this search through art practice and writing. In other words this research and thesis are part of the platform, meaning the platform was not initiated to be part of this thesis. The research is conducted through my art practices and my writings and it is demonstrated on this thesis/website. In it, the practice and the writings are equally part of the platform. The platform therefore is a scheme, a plain on which all the elements participate. One is invited to look into a single particle on the platform, but in order to grasp the whole of it, visitors to the website need to explore the connections and interrelations between the different elements. The form of research suggested on the platform is one of a re-search: an attempt to search again and again for artistic opportunities of political embodiment, aiming to re-feel and re-think the conflicted landscape I live in. The prefix **re** implies something that one does once more, anew, with frequent or intensive force.⁶ The *Guava Platform* re-search does not attempt to resolve the ongoing conflict to which it re-acts; instead the prefix stands for a pursuit, a constant search of alternative ways to act here as an artist. It is a continuing inquiry that acts through the specific relations between the different searches, each time further enriching the process and creating something anew.

The writings and art-actions on the platform are part of the same process of re-search in this thesis/website. Each of the art-actions re-searches different structures of time-based-

⁶ Based on the Oxford Learners English dictionary. (2020). Retrieved: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>.

art forms and studies the artistic and socio-political possibilities of it, the making process and realization of the actions. All of the four **chapters** in the thesis/website are correlated to one of the art-actions on the platform in content and form. Every chapter explores a different art-action and brings together the context, motivations and structure the action proposes, and the theoretical concepts and ideas that took part in manifesting it. Each of the chapters are written in a different writing format that has developed in correlation with the structure and tactics of the art-action and the content they address. An example of this is the correlation between the film **A Day Becomes** and the chapter **Back to present**. The film is structured from more than twenty recordings of the same few minutes of dawn that are edited together into one abundant moment. In the layout of the chapter, the filmmaking text is set in the centre of the page, while the contextual and reflectional parts of the text lay around it, as though they push themselves in and spread over the layout of the page. In this case the chapter and the film correlate in their structure, both are arranged and constructed as layers of different conversations that take place in the same place and time.

Both the theory and artistic developments of each art-action work together to identify which components of the conflicted landscape it can address and how. They interact in what philosophers Brian Massumi and Erin Manning call a mutual process, where both academic research and artistic creation are “...experimental, emergent effects of an ongoing process.”⁷ Both, they claim, intersect in technique, which is an engagement with modalities of expression. Technique is a process that “reinvents itself in the evolution of a practice”.⁸ This thesis/website offers a technique of re-search, a continuing inquiry that converges both theoretical ideas and time-based-art-actions.

The conceptual terms that are revisited in the thesis/website all took part in the thinking processes that formed the art-actions. The theoretical concepts are central components of how each of the actions approaches and configures its challenges. These concepts refer to varied fields of my interest that demonstrate and configure how I experience the conflicted landscape around me, how I understand my way of living on it, and how I react

⁷ Manning, Erin. and Massumi, Brian. 2014. 89.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

as an artist to these challenges. Accordingly, to approach questions of first-hand experience and understanding of the landscape around me, I refer to the field of philosophy and especially to phenomenology. To address the conflicted landscape, I turn to political theory and cultural history, and to connect to former artists and understandings within the field of art, I look into socio-politically engaged art theory. These transdisciplinary theoretical thoughts and terms are discussed throughout the thesis/website and act as anchors of the tactical scheme of each art-action, in order to refine how the action operates as a reaction to the conflicted landscape.

A single form of action did not feel like enough resistance when considering the amount of violence, racism and fear. Therefore, as the re-search went on and developed, there was a constant need to continue the search and open more tactics of action. Each component of the platform is another endeavor from a different level or through another approach. However, on the platform, the elements also unfold through their connections, oppositions and interactions. The ongoing re-search of the platform acts similar to the circularity of interpretation, what is known as a Hermeneutical Circle. Since the 19th century, the circle has been a recurring topic of investigation and understanding in the field of hermeneutics.⁹ The circular movement in hermeneutics signifies a process of interpretation that moves between smaller and larger units of meaning that contribute to the understanding of a certain thing. It points out that the whole is understood in reference to the individual elements, and vice versa: the individual elements can only be understood in reference to the whole. The interpretation of the individual components is constantly influenced by a rotation between larger and smaller units.

A demonstration of this can be found in the sense of scent that spreads around the platform. The guava fruit scent triggers a memory for one of the main characters of the first film of the series called **Guava**.¹⁰ In this film, a Palestinian and a Jew who were driven out of Jaffa-Tel-Aviv. As they walk from what used to be their home towards Beirut, they discuss love, memory, trust and forgetfulness. They try to determine whether it would be better for them to continue their journey carrying their memories along with them, or not:

⁹ This has been a main topic to philosophers Hans Georg Gadamer, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Martin Heidegger and many others.

¹⁰ Guava, short film, 12 min. (2014).

he remembers the place and what happened, and believes their journey would benefit from forgetting; whereas she has forgotten it all, but believes the only way to go on is to remember. The character's argument in the film resolves because of the power of scent to arouse memory. The scent of a guava reminds her of their first encounter: when they understood that they had to flee from their home. Memories of scent are also part of the conversations around the platform's **scent collection**, which in itself is nothing but smells, extracted and waiting to be sniffed.¹¹ The chapter written around the scent collection discusses how scent, a formless entity, can be exhibited. The chapter also explores traditionally negative perspectives in Western philosophy on the sense of smell, and how these perspectives actually contribute to the discussion around locality and land ownership in the area east of the Mediterranean – a topic that the scent collection approaches through smelling. An understanding of the use of scent on the platform can be gained through each one of the elements above: the film, the collection or the text around the collection. However, the understanding will broaden when considering the relation between all the elements that address to scent and smelling, or when understanding interaction of odors on the platform as a whole.

The technique of re-search practiced on the platform is demonstrated also in the thesis/website through its layout as a layered flat-form.¹² Placing all the art-actions and writings on one website enables an exploration that potentially could convey numerous opportunities of movement between the assembled elements of the platform. Presented on a website, the conceptual platform acts as a flat-form where all elements are not the same, but on the same level of appearance. The website is a flat form that combines them and enables all the parts to become players on the same surface. Philosopher Alva Noë suggests to “Think of art and philosophy as long conversations in which participants come and go, some joining in at the end, others at the beginning, others coming late but insisting on learning what was said earlier, while others intervene without a good sense of what is going on.”¹³ Noë suggests philosophy and art are practices of shared traditions

¹¹ עטר א A Guava Scent Collection, Installation and Performance, 2017-ongoing.

¹² Flat form is the original French meaning of the word *plateforme*.

¹³ Noë, Alva. 2015. 232.

and concerns, and states that art is a philosophical practice and philosophy an aesthetic practice. In the re-search forms of this thesis/website, I do not agree that these different practices are interchangeable (art as philosophy and philosophy as art), as Noë proposes. However, the website enables these different practices (art-actions and explorations of philosophical concepts and ideas) to be experienced by the viewer together in the same space. This potentially suggests that aesthetic practices and theoretical, philosophical explorations can be in conversation with each other: they are both working to explore and develop tactics of the platform's art-actions. Instead of separating the thesis into printed written texts and exhibited art-works, here on the website both can *live* together and have the possibility to interact in multiple ways. The platform as a flat-form stretches the elements' ability to interact with each other. Thus, the components are not to be bound to a hierarchical relationship between theory and practice that might have restricted their forms of inter-action.

The website enables one to navigate between the elements in a nonlinear way, opening innumerable opportunities of directions to go through. If each element conducting the platform is another search, then every possible path creates a different course of the re-search, where other interactions and interrelations between the elements can occur. As such the thesis/website is also a recording of all the possible routs of inquiry, a *place* where all the different possible interpretations and understandings from these inquiries are collected together. By not providing the visitors of this thesis/website a certain starting point (which leads to the next step and so on), *Guava* emphasizes the investigative and conversational notions on the platform as a process. Instead visitors are invited to navigate through the website as they feel and think. From this text one can pursue any of the suggested links that include eight art-actions and four chapters.

Guava Platform art-actions interact and intervene with the actual socio-political surrounding of my life and with the people who are living here. However, the conceptual platform of *Guava* is exhibited and performed mainly in the artistic contexts of galleries and museums, and in academic contexts, such as conferences, lectures and workshops. Therefore, the platform distinguishes itself from the surface: It acts within the surroundings it takes part in it, but also disconnects itself from them in order to reflect, re-

think and re-feel the conditions of living here. Dealing with my socio-political surroundings on the platform is an ongoing process. I am not aiming to find results or solutions to the severe emergencies around me, but instead allowing myself, participants and viewers¹⁴ an opportunity to re-articulate, in thought and body our state of living here.

¹⁴ There are different ways to interact on the platform. As participants, people are invited to take part in the various actions, always as themselves: like the performers in the films or in the conversations on the radio. Another way to engage on the platform is as viewers of the films or performances or listeners to the radio station. In addition, some of the art-actions encourage people who begin as viewers to become participants as in the case of the conversations around the scent collection or at the end of the performance Entrails, where people ate the performers' leftovers.



Video Still from the film *Sham (There)*, 2016

Behind Sham¹⁵

The following chapter is written in the format of a stream of consciousness, following part of my thoughts, fears, and experiences in the context of making the film **Sham**¹⁶ and the events related to it. The chapter is composed of five different ‘voices’ that relate to:

1. Excerpts from the film script.¹⁷
2. Personal remarks.
3. Behind the scenes of the film making and the *Guava* platform, of which the film is a part.
4. Theoretical discussions concerning the relationship of socio-politically-engaged art with its sociopolitical surroundings.
5. Violent events regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that occurred before, during and after the film making.

Acting as a politically-engaged artist during an ongoing violent conflict, in a place which is becoming more and more extreme in its ‘rightwing’ policies, makes me constantly question and weigh every decision I take in the process of practicing art. Being constantly confronted with severe violence and expressions of racism raises doubts about and urges re-estimations of the affect and the purpose of creating socio-politically engaged art. The multi-voiced text follows the making of a new film, the artistic context it was made in, and the political environment around its making, in an attempt to give the reader a sense of how this way of practicing art feels. Through the filmmaking, I question the place art and artists have in society in general and especially in violently conflicted areas. The chapter begins with discussing art practice as representing feelings and thoughts through Walter Benjamin's description of the ‘Angel of History’. It continues into a discussion of more

¹⁵ The word *Sham* means ‘there’ in Hebrew. In Arabic it refers to Sham, Greater Syria, which included Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria of today.

¹⁶ Sham, short film, 22 min. (2016).

¹⁷ The film is the outcome of a live performative action, the script has been written after the film was edited.

recent art practices that prefer to literally intervene in their surroundings rather than to represent an image of it. The chapter then, discusses the argument in the art world regarding these two approaches and ends by rethinking the filmmaking and the qualities and characteristics of my own present and future art practices.

1. Pre-Production

EXT. Judeaea Plains – DAY

At an intersection of footpaths in the Judeaea Hills, an open-back truck is at a standstill in the road. It is almost empty. One person sits in the back watching people as they decide which road to take.

This is a perfect location to film the truck. Just standing here and looking around, I feel the four thousand years that people have occupied this land.¹⁸ I can almost smell the blood repeatedly shed here. I just hope it won't rain.

The film will be the second in a series created as part of the *Guava Platform* for art-actions that advocate for free movement and the removal of borders east to the Mediterranean. With residents of the area, it practices constructive political imagination in this place through film, video, performance and participatory art.

EXT. Judeaea Hills DAY

Samira (Arabic): What are you looking for?

Goni (Hebrew): Signal, I'm looking for a cellular signal.

Samira smiles, and gestures with her hands that there isn't one.

A pile. A huge pile of things and people on the side of a road. This is the first image I have when I think about the film. After a few moments, I notice that something is moving inside this pile, which looked dead at first. It has life within it, moving slowly, finding its way around the pile. As usual, I tell Yuval about the idea. Almost every time I have an idea, I talk to Yuval first. At least, as long as he was living here. It could seem like technology dismisses distance, but there is a quality of dialogue and friendship that is possible only when you're on a shared piece of land. Not surprisingly Yuval brings up Benjamin in our discussion.

This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet...

¹⁸ References to cities built in the area are found in the so-called execration texts (ancient Egyptian hieratic texts, listing enemies of the Pharaoh, most often enemies of the Egyptian State or troublesome foreign neighbors). For a detailed research on archaeological findings in the area see: Dagan, Yehuda. 2004.

This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.¹⁹

Benjamin's angel of history is caught between hope and catastrophe, between future and past, his body and gestures turn towards the future but his face looks to the past. There, he sees a constant growing pile, growing tremendously up to the sky. His gaze into the past sees a growing pile, not a chain of events, as we might think of the past, but more and more wreckage and ruins growing into an endless pile.

July 2014. 3 teenage Jews kill and burn a sixteen-year-old Palestinian in Jerusalem. A month earlier 3 teenage settler Jews are kidnapped and killed in the occupied West Bank.

I lose hope. There is so much violence and fear around me. I grew up in the ongoing cycle of clashes, which had been going on for years before I was born. But I was never afraid before or uncomfortable to speak against the notion of war. After twenty years of being an activist the loss of hope feels like someone has pulled the carpet from beneath my feet. One must to have a certain amount of optimism to continue a struggle.

July 2014. Israel launches Military Operation²⁰ 'Tzuk Eitan' (Strong Cliff) in the Gaza Strip.

Benjamin's angel of history is blown irresistibly by the wind of the storm. It is left impotent, without the power to assist or be with the actual ruins of the past, stuck with the gaze of the pile. 'He would like to stay, resurrect the dead, heal, redeem, but he cannot. The storm of paradise is pushing him in the opposite direction, back into the future.'²¹ Progress, Benjamin writes, is the storm that drives the angel away from the pile of catastrophe and into the future of hope, watching it growing endlessly.

¹⁹ Benjamin, Walter. 1968. 257-258.

²⁰ I use the term military operation and not war because of the asymmetric nature of the violent conflict between the state of Israeli, and the ruling party of the Gaza strip, Hamas.

²¹ Handelman, Susan A. 1991, 346.

November 2014. The Israeli police arrest an artist for corrupting the Israeli flag, during one of her performances.²²

Benjamin's description of the angel of history is inspired by the watercolor mono-print *Angelus Novus* by Paul Klee.²³ Over the years it has become a left-wing icon, symbolizing the options of an alternative historical idea. "As an icon of the left, Angelus Novus has seemed to hold out an elusive formula for making sense of the senseless, for reversing the irreversible, while being subject to a kind of political brooding all the more protracted the less promising the prospects for political practice appear to be."²⁴ Benjamin himself owned the mono-print since 1921 and has mentioned it in three other texts.

The image of a truck standing still, stuck, with only the constant expectation to move, to go somewhere, keeps coming up in my thoughts. Over and over again I imagine a pile of people and cargo 'growing' on the open-back truck and they, like the truck, will sit there, stuck and almost still.

In Benjamin's thesis, the angel of history is a detailed description of the angel in the artwork, combined with a description of an imaginary reality Benjamin 'sees' in it. In Klee's mono-print there is no catastrophe, piling wreckage upon wreckage as described by Benjamin, no claws and wings sharp as knives. In *Agesilaus Santander*,²⁵ an earlier text, the angel's movement is described quite differently. In the Angel of History, the angel wishes to stay but is forced to move on; in *Agesilaus Santander*, he is expected to move forward but resists movement. The changing image that Benjamin 'sees' in the *Angelus Novus* print reveals two qualities of the image: to represent thoughts and feelings; and its openness by which it allows one to 'see' opposite things in a single image. The former reveals the option of representing within an image and the latter insists that representation is not finite, but flowing and open to change.

²² At the time of writing this chapter, Natali Cohen Vaxberg has been questioned by the police 5 times and is waiting for her trial. <https://fundrazr.com/campaigns/d1585d/ab/45N5U2>. Retrieved September 2016.

²³ Paul Klee (1879-1940), *Angelus Novus* (New Angel) dated 1920, mono-print, Oil transfer and watercolor on paper, 31.8 x 24.2 cm, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

²⁴ Werckmeister, Otto. K. 1996. 242.

²⁵ Benjamin, Walter. 2005. 712-716.

August 2014. The ‘Tzuk Eitan’ war²⁶ ends. 2203 Palestinians and 72 Israelis were killed. 2457 Israelis and over 11000 Palestinians were injured.

The war ended, and quickly life goes back to what is considered ‘normal’ around here. The more one faces the image of death, the faster one learns to put it aside – that is among the only possible ways to continue living here in the present. But each time it is put aside, something changes, without noticing, sight becomes more narrow, as the images of death pile up in the margins of the field of vision.

EXT. Judea Plains – Afternoon

Waseem (Arabic) off screen: I know you from somewhere.

Amitay (Hebrew): I don’t speak Arabic

The sound of another man’s footsteps as he enters the truck. The sun is setting.

I usually think of Guava as an unbalanced mixture of past and future, and as such I imagine the truck waiting between the past that made people set out on the refugee roads and the unknown future that exists at the end of these roads. But Lin emphasized the Guava actions not as something that moves in time, but parallel to the present.

The political imagination of the *Guava Platform* practices the dismissal of borders east of the Mediterranean and evokes the idea of residents inhabiting this land without national borders. In the film *Sham* this practice is performed in an open-back truck, which, during the film, loads up more and more people and cargo. The image of the pile of people and stuff on the truck refers to an image not just of the past and future, but of the present as well. At present times, the image is associated with the current movement of refugees, especially between the Middle East and Europe from the war in Syria. Yet, it is part of the history of both sides of this local conflict as well. A truck filled with people and cargo implies the destruction of hundreds of villages and thousands of lives of Palestinian refugees in the Nakba (1948 war), and the Jewish history of the Holocaust. Finally, as

²⁶ I use the term war because of the amount of killed and injured people, as well as the damage that occurred, and as an opposition to the state of Israel which continued to refer to it as an operation because of the International and economic implications Israel will have to face with a declaration of war.

the film creates in-itself a micro-cosmos of a living place, it points out courses of actions of how this way of living might be possible in the future.

In the past two decades, an increasing number of artists have turned away from creating artworks that represent a variety of thoughts and feelings, in opposition to what the ‘Angelus Novus’ represents in Benjamin’s writings. Instead, these artists are motivated to make artworks that will ‘do’ something in the world – that will take part in finding a solution to world crises. Over the past years, this notion of art has been referred to in many different ways: participatory art, dialogical art, new genre art, relational art, all of which try to express its motivation, process and outcome. In one of the first works of research done in this field, art theorist Suzanne Lacy suggests “the underlying aversion to art that claims to ‘do’ something, that does not subordinate function to craft, presents a resonant dilemma for new genre public artist.”²⁷ Lacy claims that the ‘new genre art’ practice is built on the concept of audience, relationship, communication and political intention, and not upon materials or spaces. She also claims that artists are looking for ways to raise awareness of the social political surroundings they are working in. In her research, Lacy reconstructs a history of the art field based on these concepts, rather than from the more common perspective of materials, spaces and artistic media.

The art world, Lacy claims, has been ambivalent towards the new notion of practicing art. Detractors in the art world referred to the new notion as not being art, and questioned artists’ motivation to transform and affect their surroundings. The gap between different approaches leads to an ongoing search to capture the relationship between the ethical motivation of the artist and the aesthetic value that the artwork incorporates. Lacy suggests that the ‘new genre art’ practice is not only about the subject matter or the site of the art, but: “...about the aesthetic expression of activated value systems.”²⁸

May 2015. Miri Regev (the new minister of culture in Israel) tries to demand Norman Issa, a Palestinian actor (and citizen of Israel) to perform in the settlements although he refuses to do

²⁷ Lacy, Suzanne. 1994. 20-21.

²⁸ Ibid., 30.

so. She threatens to detract an upcoming budget for his children theatre, and at the same time cuts the budget of Al Midan theatre in Haifa.²⁹

Almost a year has passed since the last war, and still I'm not calm, outside me everyone and everything becomes more and more right-winged, and inside me the image of the truck slowly filling up with more and more people and cargo. I decide to send out an open call and invite whoever wants to join in 'the political imagination act' on an empty refugee truck during 24 hours.

‘This is an open call for people to take part in a performance for a short film whether you have performative experience or not...’

2. Production

Sham is part of a film series that addresses and presents an imagined borderless area east to the Mediterranean, and the situations in life that residents of this place might face.³⁰ The films present a fictive dismissal of borders that stands in opposition to the concrete walls dictated by national and political authorities and the restriction of movement they dictate. In the first two films of the series, residents begin to find their way towards places they were not able to reach before. These films are set in a place without official national status and an absence of nationality, and this setting allows stories of loss to be told, alongside tales of new opportunities and questions about a future for the this area. In other words, the series is a poetic lamentation on the great Zionist dream in the Middle East, while simultaneously evoking a life for residents in a land without national borders.

The motivation to have an impact and to blur ‘life’ and ‘art’ has grown in artists alongside social movements. These artists have pushed towards taking responsibility over continuing social and political crises around the world since the 1990s. They were responding to global and local events such as the fall of communism, AIDS, global warming and globalization. The field of art was shaken by socially-engaged art that sought to impact the world, as curator Nato Thompson claims:

²⁹ Stern, Itay, Skop, Yarden, Ashkenazi, Yair. "Israeli Arab Theaters Under Fire for Terrorism Play, Refusing to Perform in West Bank Settlements". Haaretz Online. Retrieved Septemeber 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.660463>.

³⁰ Resident represents the people living in the area on a long-term basis, both Israelis and Palestinians.

“these cultural practices indicate a new social order – ways of life that emphasize participation, challenge power and span disciplines.”³¹ To explain how this engaged notion of art is part of art history and not mere activism, Thompson looks to the desire of artists to blur life and art as growing from a combination of the various avant-garde movements in the twentieth century, like Fluxus or Antonin Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty. It is an anti-representational desire, originating in the alienating effects of spectacle, according to Thompson. Socially-engaged artists have found out that “the arts have become an instructive space to gain valuable sets of skills in the techniques of performativity, representation, aesthetics, and the creation of an affect.”³² Thompson describes the realm of the political as perhaps the most appropriate place for the arts, as one that is necessary for its manifestation.

I met responders to the open call for *Sham* individually. Through dialogue we decided together what they would bring to the truck – a gesture, an object, or a state of mind – that would direct their time there. They also received information on the meeting point and time. There were no rehearsals, and they did not meet each other before the filming of the performance/film.

June 2015. Minister of Culture Miri Regev decides to withdraw the financing of choreographer Arkadi Zaides’ latest artwork³³ because he works with video footage of the Betsalem³⁴ archive. This is one of Regev’s first acts to demonstrate her intention to apply a new set of rules for artists and artworks: “One shall not: Deny the existence of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state; Incite racism, violence and terror; Support terror against Israel; Note the Israel Independence Day as a day of mourning; Corrupt the Israeli symbols; Call to boycott Israel.”³⁵

³¹ Thompson, Nato. 2012. 22.

³² *Ibid.*, 21.

³³ Naveh, Gil. "Culture Ministry Removes Sponsorship of Dance Show Over Video Clips From B'Tselem". Haaretz Online. Retrieved September 2016. <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.659484>.

³⁴ The Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories was established in February 1989 by a group of prominent academics, attorneys, journalists, and Knesset members.

³⁵ Based on the bill Miri Regev promoted in the Israeli Knesset. Translated by Thalia Hoffman. Retrieved April 2020. <https://main.knesset.gov.il/News/PressReleases/pages/press05.11.18bv.aspx>.

EXT. Judea Plains – Early Evening

Towards sunset a large group of people join the truck, and everyone needs to move around to find a place for themselves and their things. Ayelet continues to separate pomegranate seeds into a large tray. The sun is setting.

Hadil (Hebrew): How much did she give you?

I'm confused and afraid as the production of the film moves on. Confused about how to act as an artist while the political surrounding turns so severe and afraid to make mistakes that won't allow me to continue working here.

The dichotomy between the detractors and supporters of socio-political-engaged art has deepened since the 1990s. Art critics, artists and scholars have found different ways to describe the flaws of the practice, and to suggest alternative theories of judgement and interpretation. British artist and scholar Alana Jelinek claims that politics and activism are not to be mixed with art. In her recent research, she claims that non-art such as activism and other fields the art practices have collaborated with are merely a consequence of neoliberal pressures in economy and politics, alongside the internalization of neoliberal values by the art world. Neoliberal values, such as success rates and measurements of success, are a result of the confusion between art practice and non-art sociopolitical practice, Jelinek claims. The values of politics have become more important than the values of art. In order to counter this development, artists should reclaim their responsibility for art, and not rely upon the meaning of non-art actions: “The art world has lost a way of articulating the value of what we do and art is now understood directly in market terms, or indirectly in other neoliberal terms, as a measurable instrument for the amelioration of social ills as defined or at least sanctioned by government.”³⁶ To succeed in articulating the value of art, art should be understood as a knowledge forming discipline, Jelinek suggests, and as that it should reflect on the discipline of the art practices, and not other fields. Understanding art in that sense will define what art is, and what it is not.

³⁶ Jelenik, Alana. 2013. 119.

EXT. Judea Plains – Night

Yoram walks around the truck, examines it, and notices someone sitting on the higher bars of it.

Yoram (Arabic): Be careful sitting so high up, the road is dangerous.

He continues walking around the truck, catches a leg of a woman sitting upon it, and moves on.

Samira is covering a kid who is lying down outside the truck with a blanket.

Yoram (Hebrew) Off Screen: So much trash people take with them.

September 2015. The 3rd Intifada³⁷ erupts. Palestinians are killed during demonstrations and Jews are being stabbed in the streets. Palestinians use anything they can find to hurt (kitchen knives, scissors, etc.) and Israelis (citizens and military) shoot to kill whoever seems alarming.³⁸

Each time this happens it feels worse – fear and violence pick up their volume dominating the streets, again. The possibility of changing the direction of this circulation becomes even more out of reach. Discouragement shuffles all my cards of ideas, thoughts and feelings, and I’m clueless which ‘hand’ will be a good player for this game. I don’t understand why I should continue to make this film.

Art historian Claire Bishop argues that relational art practices prefer collaborative activity over aesthetics. She established a critical reading of this practice and the necessity of a connection between art and politics or between aesthetics and ethics. Bishop claims that one of the biggest problems about the ‘Social Turn’ in art since the 1990s is the “disavowed relationship to the aesthetic”³⁹ it created. Relational practices, she says, attempt to merge ‘real life’ and art, equality and quality, participation and spectatorship. They do so by focusing on the process and not the object, by preferring collective or co-authoring art practices that are judged by humanist values, and by turning spectators into participators. But, models of democracy in society do not have an

³⁷ A protracted grassroots campaign of protest and sometimes violent resistance against perceived oppression or military occupation, especially either of two uprisings among Palestinian Arabs in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, the first beginning in 1987 and the second in 2000, in protest against Israeli occupation of these territories.

³⁸ This is still ongoing as the chapter is written.

³⁹ Bishop, Claire. 2012. 26.

inherent relationship to models of democracy in art, Bishop argues. The equation between the two is misleading and “does not recognize art’s ability to generate other, more paradoxical criteria.”⁴⁰ The ongoing attempt of artists to combine their work with the socio-political sphere surrounding them, although motivated by an urgent call from their experience, fails to address both ethical issues and aesthetic criteria. Instead of merging ethics and aesthetics, art should underline the necessity to sustain a tension between them. They should be thought of simultaneously and not as one, sustaining a continuing tension.

Two weeks after the Palestinian uprising in East Jerusalem began, the group of people that joined the *Guava* action participated in a twenty-four-hour performance. The entire film crew, performers and staff volunteered to take part in the art-action, and were responsible for activating and operating the camp. During the first hour, people were introduced to their collaborators and the landscape. After this, the crew, performers and staff gathered for an opening talk. As a general rule, people were asked to act as themselves, and not play a role or a certain character. In addition they were asked to not act or represent during the performance anything that would illustrate the situation. Finally as was agreed between us before hand, they were asked to *use* the one behavior or gesture that we discussed individually as a last resort.

I can't sleep. This is the only time we have to rest for a couple of hours during the filming, and I walk around the landscape between the people. It is dark, so I can't see much, but I hear the openness and emptiness of the scenery and some whispering in Arabic and Hebrew. I decide to lie down next to the truck, as if something would happen, I would be able to protect it.

The twenty-four hours were divided into six separate performance sessions (day-afternoon-evening-night-morning-day). For each performance session, numerous participants joined the truck either alone or in small groups with her/his/their pile of things – a bag, some cloth, sometimes water. One after the other, females and males of different ages left the refugee roads they were walking on and piled upon the truck. Between each session more and more stuff – jerrycans, bundles of cloth, suitcases and boxes piled up in the truck. With each new person arriving, former ‘residents’ had to find their way to deal and contain the ‘newcomers’. The camera shot each session from another

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 279.

angle of the truck, keeping the truck in front-centre of the camera. The movement of the camera was planned in such a way that the final scene would be shot from the same angle as the first.

EXT. Judea Plains – Midday

The truck is full of people. More than fifty are squeezed next to each other. The camera returns to its first position parallel to the truck. Multiple conversations are held between the people on the truck, from time to time one can hear parts of them. Another woman finds a place to sit on the truck and opens a red umbrella to make some shade. Nazir is teaching Shir Arabic.

Shir (Arabic): El shams btitlaa' min el shark o btenzel fi el gharb⁴¹

Art returns to the social throughout history, Bishop claims, whenever there is a collapse in collective thinking in society, political upheaval and movements for social change: “a utopian rethinking of art’s relationship to the social and of its political potential – manifested in a reconsideration of the ways in which art is produced, consumed and debated.”⁴² The current return of art to the social, which began in the 1990s, is “focusing on the ‘project’ as a privileged vehicle of utopian experimentation at a time when a leftist project seemed to have vanished from the political imaginary.”⁴³ Relational art practices stand without relation to an existing political project, and usually work independently and move from project to project. This is a result of these art projects not having any institution to continue their activist art. This should not be addressed by collapsing art and ethics together, Bishop suggests, but rather “the task today is to produce a viable international alignment of leftist political movements and a reassertion of art’s inventive forms of negation as valuable in their own right.”⁴⁴ Art should be recognized as an experimental activity, one that overlaps the world and might lend support to existing political institutions by exchanging ideas.

‘24 hours of utopia’, one of the participants says to me at the end of the filming. ‘A utopian dystopia’ I answer – but was it?

⁴¹ English translation: The sun rises in the East and sets in the West.

⁴² Bishop, Claire. 2012. 7.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 284.

3. Post-Production

October 2015. Dareen Tatour, a Palestinian poet living in Israel next to Nazareth, is arrested for inciting violence and supporting a terrorist organization, as expressed in one of her poems. She is kept in custody for over seven months and her trial begins in May 2016.

The failure of socially-engaged art, Bishop claims, is “an ethical reasoning that fails to accommodate the aesthetic or to understand it as an autonomous realm of experience.”⁴⁵ Following philosopher Jacques Rancière and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, she argues that to hold the tension between ethics and aesthetics, art must leave space for perversity, paradox and negation. Her answer to this failure is that socially-engaged art should create a space that occupies a territory between mere life and mere art – a space that will multiply the ways to be present in participatory art and diversify its negotiation of the social.

The film shoot ended and the film went into its next stage of editing and sound. *Sham* was edited into a twenty-minute film that ties together the twenty-four-hour performance. The editing connected the six separate sessions into one scenario during which the truck begins almost empty and ends with a long scene in which all fifty people who took part in the performance fill the frame on the truck. Today the film stands alone as a video work, but at the same time it is part of a film series, that was created as part of the *Guava Platform*. The film demonstrates the layered form of action within art that is part of the larger quest of the platform: how art can act in both the aesthetic regime and the politic regime?

I keep thinking about the shooting as I edit the film. The twenty-four hours there were the only moments in which I felt the non-symmetric shared fate of both the Palestinians and Jews who are living here in this blood-soaked land.

The owner of an art collection offered to purchase the film and I decided to collectively ask the participants, crew and staff how to make use of it. I wrote an e-mail to them all asking what they prefer to do with the money:

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

1. Donate it to an NGO working in the area
2. Have a party
3. Create a new art-action on the *Guava Platform*



Photo from Performance, Entrails, 2016

Feeding/Eating the Other

A journey through Entrails

The following chapter is written around ***Entrails***, a performance first held in December 2016 in Tel Aviv as part of a performance series.⁴⁶ *Entrails* is composed of a repeating biographic monologue, and while this monologue is performed, the speaker is fed lamb internal organs. The speaker, Morad Hassan, repeats his text seven times in spiral form – each time his description becomes shorter. The second performer, myself, cooks the lamb organs on stage and feeds Morad. The first spiral turn of Morad's text begins with a detailed description of his biography: where and when he was born, his occupation, his family and friends, etc. The final turn of the spiraling text reduces the details of his life into that of an anonymous citizen of no specific time or place, someone who is simply satisfied with food and beer, and does not do much thinking. This final script is in fact a quote from the short story "Basta!"⁴⁷ by Robert Walser.⁴⁸ At the end of the performance, after Morad's seven turns of his decreasing biography, not only are his identity details gone, but also there are no more entrails to cook.

The short story by Robert Walser was chosen because of its literary preciseness in its use of words, but looking into Walser's biography might perhaps trace why Morad and I found the story relevant for us. Walser was born in Biel/Bienne on the border between German and French speaking Switzerland and spoke both languages. Growing up in that area might have given him the experience of living in a land that, historically more than one nation was claiming and learned to exist as a bilingual area. In addition, his mother died when he was only 16, although not in the context of war, but he carries with him an experience of unexpected loss, something that is widely known here, east of the Mediterranean. Eventually, after years of being hospitalized in a mental care institute, Walser stopped writing, but until then, he saw himself experiencing with literature, looking for new ways to use words and literature. In this performance, Morad and I are

⁴⁶ A-Genre series, Tmuna Theatre, Jaffa - Tel Aviv, Israel, December 2016.

⁴⁷ Walser, Robert. 1996. 71.

⁴⁸ Robert Walser (15 April 1878 – 25 December 1956) was a German-speaking Swiss writer.

experiencing with the format as well, attempting to explore how food, feeding and eating can take part in our socio-political relationship.

Morad speaks the text of the performance, while I feed him silently. However, during rehearsals I experimented with talking alongside the action or in dialogue with him. I tried out speaking and clarifying the connections, distinctions, contradictions, and similarities between our biographies. But spelling these out felt unsuitable, as if it was disturbing what the performance undertakes. At one point, Morad said: “You just need to shut up and feed me... whatever you think of saying,” he continued, “is already embedded in the action of the performance”. We agreed.

The following chapter is built around the seven spiraling turns of Morad’s text, and tells the story of what was left out, what was kept silent, and what emerged as a result of the performance. The seven sections of the chapter point to the decision-making process underlying various elements of the performance, and the sections are interlaced with layered sets of questions and potential interpretations that emerge from the relations between Morad and myself.

The act of cooking, feeding and eating on stage communicated different aspects of Morad’s and my encounter. Many of these are reflective of the signifiers that are attached to who we are: Man and Woman, Muslim and Jew, and Citizen and Resident. Each section in the following chapter theorizes a different aspect of food and the activities of eating and cooking, in relation to Morad’s version of the spiraling text, to the performance’s ingredients, to what was seen and what was kept hidden.

The first section of the chapter describes what the audience saw, heard, smelled and was offered to eat and drink. The second section is the performance as it would have read if my verbal parts were included. The third section considers three of the main components in the performance: Food, Feeder, Eater. Using these components, this section establishes the importance of food as one of the most basic conditions for physical life, and discusses what food symbolizes and communicates. The fourth section focuses on the dualistic effect that Morad and I bring to the performance, and offers a philosophical approach as to how food and feeding might overcome the dichotomies of dualism. The

fifth section looks at eating and feeding as a performative action. The sixth examines the connection between food and art, and reflects upon the meaning of food, feeding and eating as part of performance art. The seventh, at the centre of the spiraling chapter and performance, remains, as in the performance, the quoted opening of the short story 'Basta!'

The performance is part of the *Guava Platform*, which seeks to inquire how the region east to the Mediterranean, where I live, can be experienced as open for actual and conceptual movement. This chapter explores the possibilities of movement through ways of cooking, feeding and eating in performance. It is a study of Morad's and my relationship and interaction through food. As we put our guts on the table (he with his life story and me with the lamb entrails I cook for him), we are nourished by an interaction that undermines the main language used in the performance – Hebrew. Hebrew is the dominant (and official) language in the state of Israel. By using this language, Morad's identity is diminished, and at the end of the performance he describes himself anonymously, a good citizen that the state wishes he should be – one that enjoys his food and beer, and doesn't think much. But perhaps through feeding and eating, new possibilities emerge.

The chapter is meant to be read as a spiraling stream of consciousness; with each section of the spiral in the chapter, a different recipe with different ingredients is prepared and consumed. The different 'dishes' as well as the motion through the spiral text suggest another layer of understanding of the possibilities stacked in our interaction and relationship. It is meant, like the performance, to entice the audience to symbolically consume aspects of the relations between Jews and Palestinians that are difficult to swallow in reality.

Turn one:

The audience enters a dimly lit theatre, and is directed to sit on the stage, where small bar tables are set with bottles of *Goldstar*⁴⁹ beer and glasses. Everyone is invited to drink. An oblong metal table with a griddle upon it takes up centre stage. Morad sits at the head of the table with a wooden eating plate before him. I stand across from him at the other end of the table, facing a cutting board, a sharp knife and a towel. Above me a set of fresh lamb entrails, still dripping with blood, is hanging on a big metal hook: lungs, kidneys, liver, heart and spleen.⁵⁰

The exposed lamb organs on stage confront us and the audience is face to face with the business of eating an animal. No one is permitted to hide behind meat camouflaged into more 'digestible' products such as ground meat, sausages or even steaks, all of which no longer look like body parts. This is what often keeps people from cooking/eating entrails, since they are physically 'too close' to the original, living body. At the same time, the internal organs are connected to our most intimate feelings and thoughts. In both Hebrew and Arabic (as in many other languages), these organs often serve as metaphors for human motivations and desires, for the centre of life.⁵¹ In Hebrew, the expression 'Kidney shame' for example, stands for a feeling of remorse, guilt and regret. 'He who investigates heart and kidney' is an expression referring to God, and also to people who can see into others, read others' thoughts and feelings. In Arabic, the liver stands for the centre of the body and is a metaphor for strong feelings and affection.⁵² 'My liver' is many times used to refer to one's kid or lover, and 'I feel a burning in my liver' or 'my liver bleeds over losing you' means that someone is depressed or afraid of losing someone dear. The entrails offer the most intimate and direct symbols of a person's experiences and feelings.

⁴⁹ Goldstar is the most common and cheap Israeli beer.

⁵⁰ Using the animal's less popular parts is a more respectful choice once it is killed to be consumed, as it allows minimal waste. This approach is known in the gastronomic world as "Nose to Tail," a 21st century philosophy of eating and cooking that involves using every possible part of the animal and thus minimizing waste.

⁵¹ Maio, Giovanni. 1999. 101-106.

⁵² Menacere, Mohammed. 1992. 567-572.

While the audience find their places, standing around us on the stage and pouring themselves beer, I begin to cut up one of the hanging entrails, slice it into edible pieces and fry it on the griddle. A small microphone is attached to the back of my hand, so every cut and each sizzle is heard clearly through the speakers surrounding the stage. The smoke of burning meat travels up into the stage lighting, turning into a cloud above us. I pour Morad a glass of beer and he begins to talk. As the performance goes on more and more entrails are sliced, fried and served to Morad at an accelerating pace, so that by the end all the cuts he has not yet consumed are either on the griddle or on his plate. Morad eats, talks and drinks without stopping, trying to finish as much as he can from the plate and to get as much of it as he possibly can, not in an exaggerated way, but with enjoyment.

Morad Hassan: *I came into the world on May 24th 1983, at the English Hospital in Nazareth on a Thursday at 6:05 in the morning. My Zodiac sign is Gemini and my Ascendant is Gemini as well. I was brought up in the village of Mash'had, a small village of 7000 people, all Muslim, situated between Kufur Kana and Nazareth in the lower Galilee. I went to the best of school in the area, the Sisters of Saint Joseph School in Nazareth. This is a private Christian school. Usually only Christian kids are accepted, but I had very high grades, so they let me in. I am an actor, I studied acting at Haifa University, and I am also a bartender to supplement my income. In the past I worked with my brothers at the family pastry factory and shop, and I also worked with my father in construction. As for that, I have a tractor and a truck license. My name is Morad. My full name is Morad H'ir Din, Musbach abd al-Hilm, Ahmed, Hassan. Six Generations⁵³. As to gender, I am a man. Straight. My ex once wanted us to try new things but I didn't like it. I was never called in by the police for an investigation. Was never caught throwing a stone or lighting up tires, even the Nakba⁵⁴ memorial⁵⁵ I initiated in the village was approved by the police. This is*

⁵³ The Arab name system is different than the name-surname system known in the West. Though varying in places and tradition, Arab names are usually built from five categories including family connections, religious practices and titles of profession.

⁵⁴ The 1948 Palestinian exodus, also known as the Nakba (Arabic: النكبة, "al-Nakbah", literally "disaster", "catastrophe", or "cataclysm"), occurred when more than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs fled or were expelled from their homes, during the 1948 war.

⁵⁵ The Nakba memorial is not an official memorial-day in Israel, and its commemoration is generally considered seen as a protest against the Israeli State.

why from the state's point of view, I am a good citizen. Actually, I committed one traffic violation in 2001; I didn't have a 'New Driver' sign on my friend's, Rinat, car which I drove in Tiberias. I paid a 150 NIS fine. Concerning my station in life, I belong to the upper class; I come from a good family. We are the biggest family in the village. My father is a bus driver and the owner of two pastry shops, and my mom works at home. I have two brothers and one sister. Amir and Musbach run the family pastry business. My sister Rashaa is married and has three girls – Roze, Julie and Sophia – and owns a beauty salon in the village. I have three childhood friends. Wissam who is married to Nijat; he is a lawyer and she is a social worker and they have two kids, Firas (who is named after Wissam's brother who was killed in a car accident) and little Muhammad. Halil and Hadil who met during their studies, they are both social workers, and they have two kids: Yousuf, named after Halil's father, and little Rim. Ali, my third friend, just got married and came back from his honeymoon in Thailand. Among my friends, I am the only single one who is not in a relationship. They love me because I am a neat, nice and quiet friend. When we meet, we like to drink whiskey, single malt, McClellan 18 years old, oak, not cherry. But when I am alone, I like to drink a glass of beer, like a sensible person, I like Goldstar, Goldstar Unfiltered. It goes without saying that I am fond of eating well. I like good food. My favorite dish is grape leaves with rice and veal meat, cooked in chicken stock, the way my mom makes it. If you ask me, I have lots of ideas. Like, I think there should be one state here. One state with no borders and free movement for everyone. What one may call post-national. I think one should not vote. I do not believe in a change from inside. During the last election, I didn't even vote for the Joint List⁵⁶, my mom didn't like that. And I also think that we need to cancel the tax on fuel and cars. And there should be free public transportation and the profession of a real estate broker should be cancelled, and that's that, so Basta!

⁵⁶ The Joint List was formed shortly before the 2015 elections, combining candidates from three Arab parties as well as from Hadash.

Turn Two:

MH⁵⁷: I came into the world on May 24th 1983, at the English Hospital in Nazareth on a Thursday at 6:05 in the morning.

TH⁵⁸: I came into the world on June 3rd 1979, at 2:05 in the morning in a Christian Hospital in Düsseldorf.

MH: I was brought up in the village of Mash'had, a small village of 7000 people, all Muslim, situated between Kufur Kana and Nazareth in the lower Galilee.

TH: I was brought up in Düsseldorf, a town in what was then West Germany, and moved to Jerusalem in the summer of 1986. In Germany, we were part of the Jewish community, but even though my family moved to Israel following my Zionist father, we hardly practiced any Jewish traditions once we arrived in Israel. Jerusalem is statistically a multi-cultural and mixed religious city of mostly Jews, Christians and Muslims, especially since Israel's occupation of East-Jerusalem in 1967. But we moved to Jerusalem during the first Intifada.⁵⁹ The Intifada drew a clear but invisible, line between the East and West parts of the City. As for that, I grew up in a very Jewish environment and met Muslim and Christian Arabs only when I began working in restaurants as a teenage waitress and bartender. The Arabs I met there were cooks and dish washers, always in the back of the restaurant and hardly ever in communication with the customers.

MH: I went to the best of school in the area, the Sisters of Saint Joseph School in Nazareth. This is a private Christian school. Usually only Christian kids are accepted, but I had very high grades, so they let me in.

TH: I went to a semi-private school. It was known as a very bad school in Jerusalem since most of its students were drop-outs from the "normal" school system. Although I didn't dance, act or play music, I really liked film and they decided to accept me.

⁵⁷ Morad Hassan.

⁵⁸ Thalia Hoffman.

⁵⁹ The first Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The uprising lasted from December 1987 until the Madrid Conference in 1991, though some date its conclusion to 1993, with the signing of the Oslo Accords.

MH: I am an actor, I studied acting at Haifa University, and I am also a bartender to supplement my income.

TH: I am an artist, I teach art at Haifa University; my practice includes various media, from video art and performance to public interventions. I am a PhD candidate at the *PhDArts* program in Leiden and work as a video editor and cook for supplementary income.

MH: My name is Morad. My full name is Morad H'ir Din Hassan.

TH: My name is Thalia. My full name is Thalia Katrin Hoffman, after my grandmother from my father's side.

MH: As to gender I am a man. Straight. My ex once wanted us to try new things but I didn't like it.

TH: As to gender I am a woman. Bi-sexual. My partner and I decided on an open relationship, but we don't really see other people.

MH: I was never called in by the police for an investigation. Was never caught throwing a stone or lighting up tires. This is why from the state's point of view, I am a good citizen. Actually, I committed one traffic violation in 2001; I didn't have a 'New Driver' sign on my friend, Rinat's, car which I drove in Tiberias.

TH: I was investigated twice by the police, once for keeping Hashish in high school and once for hanging an 'offensive' flag from my roof top on Israeli Independence Day. I was blamed for the corruption of national symbols, but after three hours of investigation I convinced them that the flag was a work of art and that I was willing to take it off the roof top, but that the police should hand back the art work.

MH: Concerning my station in life, I belong to the upper class; I come from a good family. We are the biggest family in the village. I have two brothers and one sister. Amir and Musbach run the family pastry business. My sister Rasha'a owns a beauty salon in the village.

TH: Concerning my station in life we are a good family. My father was a dentist and my mother was a journalist. I have two brothers, Guy is a professor at Cornell University

researching the relationship between robots and humans, and Dani is an accountant with Israel's Ministry of the Environment.

MH: I have three childhood friends. Wissam who is married to Nijat, they have two kids, Firas and little Muhammad. Halil and Hadil they have two kids: Yousuf, little Rim. Ali, my third friend, just got married. Among my friends, I am the only single one who is not in a relationship. They love me because I am a neat, nice and quiet friend. When we meet, we like to drink whiskey, single malt.

TH: I have three high school friends but most of my friends entered my life later on; most of them are artists, educators or academics. Almost all of them have steady relationships and kids. When we meet we like to drink Arak⁶⁰, the local cheap brand made in Israel.

MH: But when I am alone, I like to drink a glass of beer, like a sensible person, I like Goldstar.

TH: But on a hot summer day, I like to drink a glass of beer, I like Goldstar.

MH: It goes without saying that I am fond of eating well. I like good food. My favorite dish is grape leaves with rice and veal meat, cooked in chicken stock, the way my mom makes it.

TH: It goes without saying that I am fond of good eating. I like good food and I love cooking, mostly I cook a combination of my desires and what's in the fridge.

MH: If you ask me, I have lots of ideas. Like, I think there should be one state here. One state with no borders and free movement for everyone.

TH: If you ask me, I have lots of ideas. Like, I think there needs to be one state here. One state with no borders and free movement for everyone. What one may call post-national.

MH: I think one should not vote.

TH: I can't vote because I don't have Israeli citizenship. If I could, I would vote for the Joint List. My mom wouldn't like that.

⁶⁰ Arak is a Levantine distilled spirit in the anise drink family, made originally from grapes.

MH: And I also think that we need to cancel the tax on fuel and cars. And there needs to be free public transportation, and that's that, so Basta!

Turn Three:

MH: *I came into the world on May 24th 1983, at the English Hospital in Nazareth. I was brought up in the village Mash'had, a small Muslim village in the Galilee. I went properly to school, the Sisters of Saint Joseph School in Nazareth. I am an actor, I studied acting at Haifa University, and I am a bartender as well. My name is Morad Hassan. As to gender I am a man. Straight. Concerning the state, I am a good citizen. I only have one traffic violation from 2001, when I didn't have a 'New Driver' sign on my friend Rinat's car which I drove in Tiberias. Concerning station, I belong to the upper class, we are considered a good family, the biggest family in the village. I have two brothers and one sister. They all have jobs and are settled. I have three childhood friends. Wissam, Halil and Ali. They love me because I am a neat, nice and quiet friend. When we meet we like to drink Whiskey, single malt. But when I am alone, I like to drink my glass of beer, like a sensible person, I like Goldstar. It goes without saying that I am fond of eating well. I like good food. My favorite dish is grape leaves with rice and veal meat. If you ask me, I think there needs to be one state here. It seems like a good idea not to vote. And I also think that we need to cancel the tax on fuel, and that's that, so Basta!*

Food is considered one of the three basic needs of humans alongside clothing and shelter⁶¹, needs without which humans cannot survive.⁶² In the world that we create on stage, I am the supplier of Morad's nutritional needs. I bring my own food and my own cooking devices, and he eats what I serve him. The act of feeding Morad with entrails during the performance symbolically addresses the basic physical human need of survival.⁶³

Even though the term 'basic needs' was officially introduced and put into use only in the late 1970s⁶⁴, twenty-six centuries ago, Plato already mentioned precisely these exact elements in the *Republic*, and named food the first among them: "Surely our first and

⁶¹ Denton, John A. 1990. 17.

⁶² Measurements of minimum basic needs are used to calculate poverty in developing countries, though the strategies and amounts vary from places to place and changed during history.

⁶³ Inner animal parts are known as well for their high nutrition value such as B vitamins, iron, phosphorus, copper and magnesium, and are rich with the most important fat-soluble vitamins, A, D, E and K.

⁶⁴ Jolly, Richard. 1976. 31-44.

greatest need is to provide food to sustain life. Certainly. Our second is for shelter, and our third for clothes and such."⁶⁵ In the *Republic*, Plato first suggests the idea of a basic city, a place where only the essential needs of humans are answered. He claims that in this sort of place not much food is required, that people would survive on grains alone. But Glaucon, his interlocutor in this dialogue, objects and claims that a proper city cannot be founded on a diet of grains and nuts alone. "Then how should I feed these people, Glaucon? I asked. In the conventional way. If they aren't to suffer hardship, they should recline on proper couches, dine at a table, and have the delicacies and desserts that people have nowadays."⁶⁶ A proper meal is integral to creating proper living surroundings. The city described in the *Republic* is a place where food is not considered merely as nutrition.

In the spirit of Glaucon, I will suggest that while food is something one consumes to keep one's body going, eating has rarely been treated as a mere necessity in any culture. According to philosopher George Herbert Mead,

The behaviour of all living organisms has a basically social aspect: the fundamental biological or physiological impulses and needs which lie at the basis of all such behaviour — especially those of hunger and sex, those connected with nutrition and reproduction — are impulses and needs which, in the broadest sense, are social in character or have social implications, since they involve or require social situations or relations for their satisfaction by any given individual organism; and they thus constitute the foundation of all types or forms of social behaviour.⁶⁷

Though eating and intercourse are basic physiological needs, as Mead claims, their consumption entails social interaction. As a result, these become no longer merely physical, but always involve symbolic connections to how one places himself in any given society.

Feeding and eating play important roles, both physical and symbolic, in religious rituals and sacrifices, such as the communion bread in Catholicism, or periods of fasting in

⁶⁵ Plato. 1997. 369d, 1008.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 372 d-e, 1011.

⁶⁷ Mead George Herbert. 1934. 227–228.

various religions. Furthermore, people recognize themselves as part of a community through their eating habits and restrictions across many circumstances. These include Jews and Muslims who don't eat pork, or certain Hindu sects which forbid eating meat. This is true not only when it comes to formal communities such as those based on religion, but also when one identifies oneself as vegan, paleo, or as practicing any other food restriction or approach.

This section suggests that the cooking-feeding-eating interaction between Morad and myself in the performance played a symbolic role in our identities and our relationship. I decide how to fulfill Morad's need for food. He eats the food I have selected, according to the order I choose, flavored as I have chosen to flavor it, and received via my physical gestures in the act of feeding. My identity is manifested through the customs and manner of my cooking.

Philosopher Roland Barthes found in food and eating habits, that there is a wordless language, through which preferences, references and cultural identities could be defined. According to Barthes, food is a "...system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations and behavior."⁶⁸ A food item, he claims, does not relate simply to the motivations surrounding the situation of serving or purchasing it, but is also a functional unit within a system of communication. The functional units of communication, such as taste, flavor and smell construct a system that reflects, according to Barthes, the 'spirit' of food: "This 'spirit' brings together different units (such as flavor and substance), forming a composite unit with a single signification."⁶⁹ The unit, he claims, is analogous to the units of tune and rhythm of speech in language. One applies the food units of communication to reconstruct systems of empirical use such as menus and diets. These are syntaxes and styles not merely in an empirical sense way but also in a semantic sense, allowing others and oneself to compare them. As Barthes claims, "One could say that an entire 'world' (social environment) is present in and signified by food."⁷⁰ Eating habits act as a signifier because they are a behavior that

⁶⁸ Barthes, Roland. 1997. 29.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

develops beyond its direct functions of feeding of the body. According to Barthes each functional unit communicates socio-economic identity, national identity, economic state, gender, physical condition, or to sum up, replaces and signals behaviors other than eating in and of itself.

In the food-cooking-eating interaction Morad and I present on stage, we communicate that which is kept silent over the performance. Morad eats the 'me' that is embodied by the food he swallows. This incorporation might be experienced as personal when considering our dual relationship on stage, but at the same time he eats my whole 'world' as Barthes would phrase it — the world I come from and communicate through the food I cook. I, a Jewish woman, while not a citizen, still represent the Jewish majority in Israeli society that we both live in. When I feed Morad, he is indoctrinated with what I offer through the food, and the 'world' I represent is incorporated in him. Through the incorporation of my so-called superiority, via the food, Morad is encouraged or tempted to abandon details of his biography, specific to his Muslim and Palestinian identity.

Turn 4:

MH: *I came to the world in May 1983. I grew up in the village Mash'had, in the Northern part of Israel. I went properly to school in Nazareth. I am an actor, I have studied acting at the Haifa University. My name is Morad Hassan. As to gender I am a man. As to state, I am a good citizen. I only have one traffic violation from 2001. Concerning station, I belong to the upper class; we are a good family. I have two brothers and one sister. They all have jobs and are settled. I have three childhood friends: Wissam, Halil and Ali. They love me because I'm a neat, nice, quiet friend. I like to drink my glass of Goldstar beer, like a sensible person. It goes without saying that I am fond of good eating, especially filled wine leaves. If you ask me ideas... I think one should not vote, but opinions are far away from me. Because I am a good citizen, and that's that, so Basta!*

The setting of the performance implies a dualistic approach: Man-Woman, Muslim-Jewish, Citizen-Resident, Eater-Cook. In many ways, Morad's monologue implies another dichotomy, indicating there is a preference for bodily pleasures over the generation of ideas and thoughts. By gradually minimizing what biographical information he shares, Morad finally reaches the conclusion that a good citizen need not think much, a good citizen eats the food he enjoys and drinks the beer he likes, and that's it. Morad's words might then be understood as referring to someone who is satisfied with bodily pleasures and gives up his mental abilities. This section suggests that by the end of the performance Morad's monologue establishes yet another dichotomy between mind and body. But at the same time, the interaction between Morad and myself offers a way to dismiss it through food.

The dualistic approach that separates mind and body, physical needs like eating and mental needs like thinking, can be found in Plato's work as well. He suggests that for philosophers or 'Truth' seekers, the body is an obstacle on the way to enlightenment and knowledge.

And indeed the soul reasons best when none of these senses troubles it, neither hearing nor sight, nor pain nor pleasure, but when it is most by itself, taking leave of the body and as far as possible having no contact or association with it in its

search for reality.... because the body confuses the soul and does not allow it to acquire truth and wisdom whenever it is associated with it.⁷¹

Taking food seriously, Plato claims, is attempting to disrupt the transcendent patterns of philosophical thinking. He recognizes human beings as inherently relational, temporal and valuing the everyday and the ordinary.

Contrary to Plato's search of truth, Morad at the end of the performance offers to become a good citizen by dismissing the needs of the mind in favor of the pleasures of eating and drinking. This suggests that a good citizen is one who is not searching for the truth, but leaves thinking and decision-making to others or to the rules of the state.⁷² I would like to suggest in this section that by accepting my food and swallowing it, Morad might actually be presenting another way of using his body to reflect his thoughts, ideas and feelings.

American Philosopher Deane W. Curtin suggests that the separation between mind and body, and the preference of one over the other for the purpose of gaining knowledge, expresses Plato's determination to represent the world in exclusive dualisms, "...dualisms that answer to the dominant metaphor of the pristine brightness of the Platonic heaven versus the dim, dusty cave: mind/body, self/other, culture/nature, good/evil, reason/emotion."⁷³ Using the metaphor of Plato's cave, Curtin explains that *ordinary* life in the cave receives its definition only by the opposition of the *extraordinary* life outside the cave.

These dualisms, Curtin claims, refer to an ontological and a value distinction: ontological, in that the two elements of the dualistic pair are forever separate and cannot interact, meaning for example that what is good can't be evil or what is self cannot be other; a value distinction because one is claimed to be autonomous, knowable and fully real, while the other is dependent, not fully real and therefore unknowable. In Western philosophy, he continues, searches are usually for autonomous substance and knowledge, something that can remain unchanged through time, or like the 'soul'. These searches stand in

⁷¹ Plato. 1997. 65a+66c, 57.

⁷² This can clearly be seen at the continuation of the story, "...I'm delighted to leave all straining of wits and racking of brains to the leading and legislated minds who feel responsible" (72).

⁷³ Curtin, Deane W. 1992. 5.

contrast to inquiries of things as the 'body' which is constantly changing and eventually dies. Substances like food, which are relational, independent and not autonomous, were as a result excluded from philosophical research during most of the Western philosophical history. Furthermore, Curtin claims that the outcome of these dualistic distinctions turned what was knowable to humans against what was unknowable, for example mind against body, reason against emotion or desires, and theory against practice.

Curtin offers the relation to food and to eating as a way to go beyond the reductions of dualistic distinctions. He suggests that when one is about to eat something one parameter of concern is that this food item will become part of oneself: "The classification of something as food means it is understood as something made to become part of who we are."⁷⁴ Humans have a prior understanding that anything they eat will become part of their bodily self, and as such, according to Curtin, food holds a special relation to the Self. Since food items enter the body and become part of it physically, eating, he claims, threatens a sense of self as absolutely autonomous. What one agrees to consume becomes part of one's own body — which means that food that has been consumed is in a different position to oneself than what is merely edible. Edibility is not the only condition one considers when eating; choosing to eat something raises the question 'am I willing to make this food item part of me?' Considering food as such "...leads to a suspicion that the absolute border between self and other which seems so obvious in the Western tradition is nothing more than an arbitrary philosophical construction."⁷⁵ This is so because food items, which are not part of one's Self and as such are Other, become part of the Self when eaten, and in this way overcome the dualistic dichotomy of self/other.

In the performance, Morad is not forced to eat what I feed him, but decides to enjoy my food. He keeps on eating throughout the performance though I am in so many ways the 'Other' to him: a woman, a Jew, a resident, a feeder. Nevertheless I, through the food I cook and offer him, am accepted in his mouth and digestive system, becoming part of who he is. Through the action of eating, Morad willingly accepts into himself whatever the food contains and signifies. By eating the Other that is incorporated in the food I serve

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

him, he symbolically agrees to make me part of his body and a part of himself. Thus, he agrees to blur the distinction between us and agrees to dismiss the dualistic distinctions that make us Self and Other. If so, then by excepting my food, Morad not only gives up his soul for the sake of his body (preferring food over thinking), but he also suggests overcoming the divisions of our identity that were initially staged. The feeding-eating relationship developed between us during the performance allows this physical interaction between us to evolve alongside his biographic monologue.

Turn 5:

MH: *I came into the world in 1983. I was brought up in a village in the North. I went properly to school. I am an actor. My name is Morad. As to gender I am a man. As to government, I am a good citizen. Concerning station, I belong to the upper class, I come from a good family. They all have jobs. I have three childhood friends: Wissam, Halil and Ali. They love me because I'm a neat, nice, quiet friend. I like to drink my glass of Goldstar beer, like a sensible person. It goes without saying that I am fond of good eating. And if you ask me, ideas aren't for me. Opinions are unquestionably not for me. After all, I am a good citizen, and that's that, so Basta!*

In the ongoing act of feeding and eating during the performance, Morad and I create a combined unit of interaction on stage. The functional relationship of feeding and eating implies a merged existence that can easily be resisted by each of us – I could stop feeding and Morad could stop eating. Neither of us chooses to do so during the performance, so instead, we continue to dive deeper into the cooking-feeding-eating interaction: while Morad continues to part from more and more biographical details and lose the specificity of his identity, I feed him more and more entrails. This section suggests that within the image and process we act out on stage we are interdependent: neither of us can exist without the other, and since the feeding-eating loop is continuous, there is no certainty regarding who holds power over whom.

Cooking and eating are part of everyday life, claim the 20th-century French philosophers Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard. According to them, cooking and eating are everyday life practices that can serve as a way to resist ruling systems. According to de Certeau, each individual action creates a microphysics of power that becomes a cultural apparatus. This might allow for individuals to find ways of operating in counterpoint to the ruling mechanism and “constitute the innumerable practices by means of which users re-appropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production.”⁷⁶ De Certeau claims that everyday life practices might be used by individuals as opportunities to resist ruling orders or to “...fool this order, and make it the field of their art.”⁷⁷ These

⁷⁶ De Certeau, Michael and Giard, Luce, Mayol, Pierre. 1998. xiv.

⁷⁷ De Certeau, Michael, Jameson, Frederic and Lovitt, Carl. 1980. 4.

opportunities, claims de Certeau take place within the territory of and under the rules imposed by the ruling system. Individuals can manipulate the various possibilities offered by every moment, and use them as “tricks of the *weak* within the order established by the *strong*, an art of scoring within the realm of the other...”⁷⁸ De Certeau refers to these manipulations as tactical in character: a tactic “...insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance.”⁷⁹ Tactics are time-based opportunities that one can seize over the mechanism of which one is a part. As such, tactics do not overturn the ruling system, but use opportunities to strike at specific junctures.

In the second volume of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, an entire section is devoted to what de Certeau and Luce Giard call ‘Doing Cooking’ a nourishing knowledge, a combination of tastes and gestures which are “...a way of being-in-the world and making it one’s home.”⁸⁰ ‘Doing cooking’ is an everyday life practice that is rooted in one’s relationship with others and oneself. Like any other animal, Giard claims, humans eat to nourish themselves qua organism, but they also distinguish themselves from other animals by practicing avoiding food for specific periods and by choosing specific things to eat of all that is edible. “Even raw or picked from a tree, fruit is already a cultured foodstuff, prior to any preparation and by the simple fact that it is regarded as being edible.”⁸¹

In the everyday life practice of doing cooking, tactics are constantly invented and ways of operating are individualized. Cooking is a continuous combination of activated traditions such as cooking techniques and recipes, and personal inputs that take place at specific junctures. A good example of individualization is the bodily movement one might employ while cooking. Bodily techniques activate both tradition and innovation, through the practical intelligence of the one who cooks. Each gesture has a unique function but it also consists of errors and prejudgments the particular cook brings into the practice of

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, xix.

⁸⁰ De Certeau, Michael, Giard, Luce and Mayol, Pierre.1998. 154.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 167-8.

cooking. According to de Certeau and Luce Giard, food, cooking and eating have two contrasting attributes at one and the same time: they are both unifying and individualizing. Cooking and eating unify relational groups by communicating identity elements through traditions. At the same time, they amplify individualization when cooking and eating practices are particularized.

The cooking-feeding-eating interaction Morad and I create on stage is not merely a reflection, communication or result of the indoctrination of the 'worlds' we represent, but also an expression of our individualizing tactics. Each of my physical gestures, the order of serving, the different parts used, and manner in which every bite is sliced and served up, become particular and distinct. Morad uses similar tactics while eating: he sets the pace of swallowing as well as the order and amount, just as it is his choice which parts and details to discard in each section of his monologue. Throughout our specific and personalized cooking and eating tactics during the performance, we do not only serve the systems, communities or societies we represent, but we also become the initiators of a particular relationship performed on the stage.

The everyday practice of cooking and eating allows Morad and me to use the occasion of the interaction to find ways to rebel against the ruling systems of which we are part. Thus, even though Morad loses details of his identity over the course of the performance, we gain a personal and individualized way to communicate. This opportunity operates as a counterpart to the surface representation: the performance allows us to construct individualized tactics of being, or in de Certeau's words a "practical science of the singular."⁸² The feeding-eating relationship between Morad and me is personal; it is distinct from all what each of us might stand for, like our religion, gender or nationality. By choosing to continue to cook-feed-eat in the merged interaction of the performance, we manipulate what seems to be a reflection of systems, communities or societies. Instead of distancing ourselves from each other and withhold from interacting— as ruling systems that signify our differences promote— we insist in the performance to interact in a particular and individual dialogue that has the ability strike back at those systems.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 256.

Turn 6:

MH: *I came into the world in one of the days in the 80's. I was brought up in a certain village in the North. I went to school as expected. I am an actor. I am called Morad. As to gender I am a Man. As to government I am a good citizen. Concerning station, I belong to the upper class. I have three friends from childhood, they love me because I'm a neat, nice, quiet friend, and I don't think much. I like to drink my glass of beer like a sensible person. It goes without saying that I am fond of good eating. And if you ask me, then, I am a good citizen, and that's that, so Basta!*

Entrails is an art-action where the audience is invited to step onto the stage with us and take part in our performance. This section will look into the food-feeding-eating interaction as a performative art practice. It will ask what the connection between art and the food proposition might be when the two operate together, and how these juxtapositions may affect the audience watching our cooking-feeding-eating performance.

Plato's *Republic*, offers a surprising connection between art and food. In the dialogue, after Glaucon opposes the idea of a minimalist city where only the basic needs of men are addressed, Plato yields and begins to speak of the luxurious state. The luxurious city appears in the text at the very moment art and food are linked: "We must increase it in size and fill it with a multitude of things that go beyond what is necessary for a city—hunters, for example, and artists or imitators, many of whom work with shapes and colors, many with music."⁸³ In the *Republic*, hunters and imitators, artists and feeders are correlated when the city is transformed from one wherein food is a mere necessity to a city where food is connected to pleasure.

The proximity of food and art in the imagined life of the citizens in the *Republic* is also manifest in the resemblance governing how both are to be utilized and restricted. Art does not promote the city's educational values and therefore should be censored. Only mediocre art that will not challenge civil values should be promoted. "Whenever anyone

⁸³ Plato. 1997. 373b, 1012.

says such things about a god, we'll be angry with him, refuse him a chorus⁸⁴, and not allow his poetry to be used in the education of the young, so that our guardians will be as god-fearing and godlike as human beings can be.”⁸⁵ Plato decides to censor the good artist and opts for mediocre ones, who can be controlled. The only art allowed in the *Republic* is art which serve the ruler's values and promotes them: “But, for our own good, we ourselves should employ a more austere and less pleasure-giving poet and storyteller, one who would imitate the speech of a decent person and who would tell his stories in accordance with the patterns we laid down when we first undertook the education of our soldiers.”⁸⁶

Like art, food in the *Republic* should be controlled. The city should feed its guardians only that which will keep their body fit, rather than food consumed for enjoyment. Sweets, cakes or delicious meals are not recommended for the city's guards. Plato believes that enjoyment, whether of food or art, is not healthy for one's body and mind:

I believe that we'd be right to compare this diet and this entire life-style to the kinds of lyric odes and songs that are composed in all sorts of modes and rhythms. Certainly. Just as embellishment in the one gives rise to licentiousness, doesn't it give rise to illness in the other? But simplicity in music and poetry makes for moderation in the soul, and in physical training it makes for bodily health⁸⁷

In the *Republic*, body and mind are controlled through food and art. However, if one can control society via those elements, food and art can also be manipulated into resisting the very same systems. In contrast to Plato's restrictions on food and art, *Entrails* brings the connection between them to the fore, so as to raise ideas and feelings that can undermine the ruling system. In this section I will argue that this undermining is made possible by considering food-feeding-eating as performative acts.

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu claims that performance is an inherent part of food making and eating, and constitutes central elements in the identity of the feeder and eater. Food

⁸⁴ I.e., deny him the funding necessary to produce his play. (Editor's Note).

⁸⁵ Plato. 1997. 383a, 1022.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 398b, 1022.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 404d-e, 1041.

consumption and taste are commitments to stylization, which “tends to shift the emphasis from substance and function to form and manner”⁸⁸ and deny the material reality of the act of eating. Alongside the nourishment of eating and drinking, Bourdieu claims the performance and gestures that are part of cooking, feeding and eating represent and constitute who one is. It is not the food itself but the performance and gestures that surround it that come to portray the one who eats or cooks.

During the performance, I hold a chef’s knife to slice the inner organs, while Morad eats with his hands. The knife in my hands grants me the option to hurt or control Morad. All he has are his bare hands and control over his own body. My focus and gestures during the performance are aimed at making him the tastiest entrails and as many of them as possible: I am engaged with tempting him, wanting to give him parts of myself. Morad is eating, drinking and telling me his story, again and again, while enjoying each bite: he wants to continue to eat, and he is not being forced to eat, or obliged to let my food into him. On the one hand, we play at representing Israeli society as it is, where the Jews have the option to hurt and control Muslim citizens (like Morad) who only have their body with which to resist. But, through the specific cooking-feeding-eating interaction we create on stage, we are both entering an agreement of trust and cooperation that underlies the words of his monologue. The performance is based on a willingness to eat/feed what we are and so willingly create a significant interaction between us.

Working with food in an art performance brings out new questions that challenge the dichotomy between art and life. It aspires to encounter the audience/viewer using additional senses, and it also attempts to penetrate the audience's body as well as their mind. By inviting the audience to join us on stage, we make them a part of our cooking-feeding-eating interaction; they drink the same beer Morad drinks, and smell the same frying entrails.

Art historian Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett claims food performances offer a unique position: “It is a particular kind of attention that cooks the raw, making it both edible as

⁸⁸ Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. 190.

food and recognizable as art, without ceasing to be life."⁸⁹ She adds that food and performance intersect conceptually at three junctures:

1. To perform is to do: "...to execute, to carry out to completion, to discharge a duty - In other words, all that governs the production, presentation and disposal of food."⁹⁰
2. To perform is to behave: "to behave appropriately in relation to food at any point in its production, consumption, or disposal, each of which may be subject to precise protocols or taboos."⁹¹
3. To perform is to show: "As a sensory experience, taste operates in multiple modalities - Not only by way of the mouth and nose, but also the eye, ear and skin."⁹²

When it comes to food, one's pleasure and survival is dependent on sensory cues. Smell, sight, touch and even sound are all at work before one decides to put something in one's mouth and taste it.

When food is used in performance all senses are put to work, taste and smell are no less important than sight and sound. Whereas with most art works, the viewer remains separate from the art object, in food-related art "the distinction between object to be viewed and viewer does not apply."⁹³ Smell and taste operate inside the body.

The audience of *Entrails* is part of the cooking-feeding-eating interaction Morad and I create in the performance. During the performance, we don't serve the audience food: instead our feeding-eating relationship is manifested to the audience through cooking – the sound, sight and smell of food production. These elements, which enter the audience's bodies act as temptations, entice them to take part in our inner exchange and to ponder the possibilities our interaction brings with it.

When taste and smell enter the artwork, boundaries are crossed and the distance between the work and viewer is narrowed down. Taste and smell enter the body of the

⁸⁹ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 1999, 26.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 10.

viewer directly with a strong, visceral connection to their innermost feelings and memories. Roland Barthes described food and eating as provoking internal sensations: "...inside the body, enclosed in it, not just beneath the skin, but in that deep, central zone, all the more primordial because it is soft, tangled, permeable, and called, in a very general sense, the intestines."⁹⁴ *Entrails* seeks to affect the audience/viewer of the performance from the inside, to evoke and work with the audience's viscera.

Even though the food in the performance was not cooked for the audience, after almost every performance, a majority of them rushed to the remains of the entrails. The audience were acting as though they are trying to get a bite of what we left behind. By eating our leftovers, they digest and incorporate all that we have performed. If control can be gained via food and art as Plato believed, then the other way around may be possible as well. The leftovers and the responses they evoke become part of the performance, the audience's part. By tempting the audience to eat our food, their body is now penetrated with our layered interaction. When the audience chooses to eat the leftovers and physically incorporate the remains of our performance, they become the main characters: they agree to accept the terms of citizenship that Morad describes in his text and they agree to become like the citizen who enjoys good food and doesn't think much. But at the same moment, they affirm the tactics of the rebellion we suggest through our interaction and submit their body (and mind) to the possibility of performing resistance to our ruling systems.

⁹⁴ Barthes, Roland. 1985. 63.

Turn 7

MH: *I came into the world on this or that day. Was brought up in this or that place. Went properly to school. I am something or other. I am called so and so. And don't think much. As to gender, I'm a man. As to government, I'm a good citizen. And concerning station, I belong to the upper class. I'm a neat, nice, quiet member of the society of man. A so called good citizen. Like to drink my glass of beer like a sensible person. And don't think much. It goes without saying that I am fond of good eating. Just as it goes without saying that ideas aren't for me. Clever thinking is clearly not for me. Ideas are unquestionably not for me. That's why I am a good citizen. For a good citizen doesn't think much. A good citizen eats his food and that's that, so Basta!*⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Walser, Robert, 1996. 71.



Photo of a scent extraction, 2017

Enriching flaws of Scent

עטר עטרה A Guava Scent Collection

Introduction

This chapter is written around the *Guava Platform's* scent collection. It connects the decision-making process, the motivations and manifestations of the scent collection to dominant convictions in Western philosophy. According to these convictions, the sense of smell and scent have no relevance to rational thinking and/or scientific knowledge, for three reasons: scent is volatile, the sense of smell is non-verbal, and the sense of smell is too subjective to rely on. By contrast, I argue that these supposed 'flaws' of scent and the sense of smell, might, in fact, contribute in a constructive and productive way to a socio-political debate, as will be demonstrated by the art installation of the *Guava scent collection*. The volatile, non-verbal and subjective nature of scent and the sense of smell inspired the realization of the exhibition of the *Guava scent collection*. Through this exhibition, I found new ways of entering the conversation around locality and inhabiting land that the *Guava Platform* promotes. The *Guava scent collection* therefore adds the sense of smell to the exploration of embodying politically constructive imagination, which is the main goal of the art-actions that are gathered on the platform. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how the bodily sensations that are induced by scent contribute to the awareness and re-positioning of oneself in the complexity of the territorial conflict east of the Mediterranean.

One of the main issues of conflict the state of Israel is involved in is the right to reside in or inhabit land in the region. One major example of the common line of thinking is the Jewish settlers' ongoing movement into the West Bank. Political scientist Oded Haklai states: "Settler projects in contested territories are often accompanied by national homeland claims that can have far-reaching implications for the trajectory of the territorial conflict".⁹⁶ There are several competing considerations for the constitution and localization of the borders of the Jewish homeland, and these issues can often be

⁹⁶ Haklai, Oded. 2015. 20.

recognized in the arguments around the settlers' actions in Palestinian territories. The settlers movement envisions the state of Israel in the borders of *The Greater Israel*, that includes the Palestinian Territories of today.⁹⁷ The settlers' belief of how to gain ownership over this territory prevents any possibility of establishing a Palestinian State in the area. Furthermore, their belief excludes any other way of inhabiting land, and as a result includes only people of Jewish origin.

As a response to this territorial conflict, the *Guava Platform* art-actions provoke the idea of movement through the region east of the Mediterranean by imagining the elimination of national borders. The platform practices embodiment of constructive political imagination with the participation of inhabitants of the area, by means of film, video, performance and participatory art. The scent collection art-action suggests to set aside national collectivism and aspires to create new connections between people and the land they inhabit. These connections go beyond the current national boundaries in the region and are the outcome of its inhabitants' diversity. This chapter aims to show how the particular characteristics of the sense of smell and scent as mentioned earlier, that affected the extraction process and installation of the collection, enable the possibility of new associations and correspondences with this conflicted land.

Traditionally, scent was closely identified with the body and with the animal nature of humans. Therefore scent was not considered as a sense that can be associated with rational thinking, and/or scientific discoveries, and it has not been considered worthy of any philosophical discussion.⁹⁸ From ancient Greek philosophy until recently, scent and the sense of smell were mentioned merely by their faults and flaws, and as a result dismissed and neglected. According to art historian Adam Jasper and designer Nadia Wagner, smell in philosophical history is "deeply connected with the unconscious, divorced from representation, and consequently in some respects more primal than the other senses. It indicates our animal and emotional being, offering a way of thinking, or at least of drawing conclusions, that is not conceptual but intuitive."⁹⁹ Sigmund Freud for

⁹⁷ Historically this term had different interpretations of the territory it covered, but in all of its' versions the territory is larger than the state of Israel today.

⁹⁸ Korsmeyer, Carolyn. 1999. 11.

⁹⁹ Jasper Adam & Wagner Nadia. 2008-2009. Retrieved October 2019.

example relates the decline of the sense of smell to man's decision to adopt an upright manner of walking.¹⁰⁰ Since then, he argues, sexual stimuli were no longer dominated by the olfactory system, but rather dominated by sight. This change, Freud claims, was the entrance of humans into civilization.¹⁰¹ The issues around the sense of smell and scent that were raised historically in Western philosophy add up into three main points that this chapter addresses. Firstly, scent is volatile and non-persistent, and as a result, difficult to categorize. Secondly, there is no descriptive vocabulary of the sense of smell; therefore it is challenging to communicate about the sense of smell and scent, and consider them as part of discussions from which knowledge emerges. Thirdly, the physical challenge of recognizing scents¹⁰² alongside the lack of a shared vocabulary made the sense of smell to be regarded as subjective and therefore untrustworthy in philosophical arguments. This chapter reflects on these three supposed shortcomings. It explores how each of them contributed to the manifestation of the *Guava scent collection*. Together they reveal how the sense of smell might take part in embodying a socio-politically constructive imagination regarding the territorial conflicts in the area east of the Mediterranean. Even more, it will argue that the so-called flaws are the positive characteristics that make this contribution possible.

As said, the supposed flaws of the sense of smell dominated discussions about scent and the sense of smell in Western culture. Because of this prejudice, olfactory artworks are very rare in the history of art and the sense of smell has not been a common object of study in the field of aesthetics. However, in recent decades, this had changed. Efforts are being made in the philosophical and aesthetic fields to attend to scent and its contribution to knowledge. These efforts try to redefine knowledge in such a way that it will include, and not dismiss, the sense of smell. For example, philosopher Frank Sibley examines if and how smell can be an object of aesthetic interest, value and appreciation,

¹⁰⁰ Freud, Sigmund. 2004. 134.

¹⁰¹ I will come back to Freud's claim about smell and civilization in the third sub-chapter of this chapter.

¹⁰² There are physically tens of thousands of odor receptors in our body and each scent is sensed as a combination of a few of them. As for that there is a constant chance of error in identifying the smelled scent, therefore many times it feels as though one is guessing the what is smell. For further reading: For further reading: Jennifer C. Brookes, 2010, 3491-3502.

by comparing it to the other, more dominant senses in the field.¹⁰³ He claims that the so-called flawed sense is not different in character than the much appreciated senses of sight and sound. Theatre director and researcher Erin B. Mee suggests a sustainable aesthetic theory that refers to the Sanskrit term and theory of Rasa. In Sanskrit Drama, Rasa is translated into the flavor and essence that are experienced during a performance. Rasa, Mee claims, is a way to consider the senses of taste, scent and touch not just as part of the aesthetic realm, but as a way to engage and connect through them: “The central metaphor of catharsis (sight) distances us from the world around us; that of rasa (taste) connects us to it”.¹⁰⁴

However, the focus of this chapter is not the incorporation of scent and the sense of smell into philosophical or aesthetic fields. Rather, I argue that the very flaws and shortcomings that have been attributed to the sense of smell and scent may in fact contribute to manifesting an art installation that enriches a socio-political debate about a conflicted land. By relating the shortcomings to the metaphorical and symbolic aspects of the scent collection exhibition, and by shifting the focus of the socio-political conversations from matters of national identity to personal perspectives and observations, the scent collection and its installation serve as a case study to explain and support this argument.

In the three subchapters below I will explore how each one of these traditionally unfavorable aspects of scent and the sense of smell – that is its volatility, its non-linguistic character and its subjectivity - affected and inspired the scent collection installation and shifted the conflicted conversation the exhibition promoted from the everyday, common local debate. The first subchapter, *I wanted it all to disappear*, unfolds the non-persistent character of scent. It proposes to discuss the feeling of locality without connecting it directly to the materiality of soil and land. It suggests to metaphorically focus on what remains from this materiality in scent, and in the process of smelling in order to find new ways to relate to a piece of land. The second subchapter, *To represent what is not there*, correlates the non-descriptive vocabulary of scent to the endeavors of realizing the scent collection installation. As a result of the challenging relation between words and scent, it

¹⁰³ Sibley, Frank. 2006. 207-255.

¹⁰⁴ Mee, Erin. 2019. Retrieved October 2019.

presents how the shortage of language regarding the sense of smell is actually an opportunity to find new words and ways of conversing about inhabiting this conflicted landscape. Finally, the subchapter *Talking through scents* emphasizes how the subjectivity that is associated with the sense of smell in fact adds to the discussion about the right to reside on this conflicted land. A subjective conversation situates the people who are living on the land, their thoughts and desires, in the centre of a socio-political discussion, rather than communal ideologies, like nationality, that usually dominate the conversations about the territorial conflict.

The three subchapters are not meant to be read in a certain order, they drift next to each other as though spreading around like scent, and are not set in a chronological order. Each one of them proposes a different exploration, both metaphorical and material, to the manifestation of the scent collection installation and exhibition. Together they show how the bodily sensation of scent contributes to a broadening of the socio-political conversation about locality and the right to inhabit this conflicted land, through an art installation. The reader is welcome to follow her/his nose and choose in which order to read them.

I wanted it all to disappear

Scent is one of the most difficult sensual experience to trace. Many times, one of the first questions visitors to the *Guava scent collection* exhibitions asked me was “How long does the scent last in these bottles?” The answer is that this is impossible to estimate. The connection of scent to dissolution is what drew me to experiment with scent in the first place; I felt that the territorial dispute about the land east of the Mediterranean endlessly repeated itself: both nations claim their right to reside on it for over a century, and I was exhausted hearing the same discussions over and over again. I wanted it all to disappear.

The local territorial dispute is chiefly based on questions of peoples’ origin and nationality, through which the current right to inhabit the land is attained. Since these two categories have led to an unsettled conflict, I was wondering whether different types of considerations might be part of the discussions about who should live on this land and how. The art-action of collecting scents offers to metaphorically evaporate materials that signify this territorial dispute and consequently establish a new relation to the conflict that is not exclusively based on nationality and origin.

Currently the collection contains two categories of scent: one, a category of scents that are extracted from land taken from places in the centre of the territorial conflict of the area; and two, a category of scents that are extracted from local crops that indicate the connection of inhabitants to the land they live on. Soil and locality are both main issues in this conflict that evolves around the right to reside on and inhabit it.

The *Guava scent collection* was first initiated as part of the platform in an exhibition¹⁰⁵ at Beit Hagefen Gallery¹⁰⁶ in the city of Haifa at the end of 2017. The first collection of scents for the exhibition was made from produce collected at the market in the gallery’s

¹⁰⁵ Self Collecting, Group exhibition, Beit Hagefen Gallery, Curator: Yael Messer, 2017.

¹⁰⁶ Beit Hagefen is an established and well-known Municipality institution for over five decades that promotes the joint company in Haifa in particular, and Israel in general. Over the years, Beit Hagefen has worked in a variety of fields and creatively to bring together the various religions, cultures and nationalities living in Israel.

neighborhood, Wadi Nisnas, known for its *Baladi*¹⁰⁷, local products. Wadi Nisnas is a Palestinian village-like neighborhood in the city of Haifa, and in its centre lies the only Arab market in town. The neighborhood is known to have poor housing conditions and is overcrowded, due to the low income of its residents and the ongoing neglect of the municipality, which is preserving it as an oriental slum.¹⁰⁸ During the season of early winter, greens such as za'atar and sage can be found in the market next to oranges and lemons, and next to them, the season's last batch of local guavas.

The guava fruit originates from Central America. Since 1526, it has been spread by man, birds and other animals to South America and the West Indies. It was adopted as a crop in Asia and in warm regions of Africa soon after it arrived. Egyptians have been growing guavas for a long time and from Egypt, the fruit traveled to Palestine.¹⁰⁹ The weather in the area suited the trees and it quickly became a *local* crop.¹¹⁰ This makes the guava fruit an interesting case study of locality. The guava fruit was collected alongside other local crops of the season from the market. This collection of local produce concentrated on questions of locality: When and how does something or someone become local? What sort of intersections are generated between locality and rights over a piece of land?

The second scent collection was extracted during an exhibition of the *Guava Platform* in The Mamuta Art Centre in Jerusalem.¹¹¹ It was completed by collecting soil samples from all the locations where the platform's art-actions took place. These included the locations of the three films in the series, the vicinity of the online radio station used for the ***Guava Platform broadcast***, and from the surroundings of the complex where the **performances** were presented. In all of these locations, there has been a long, ongoing conflict of the land. An example is Quneitra, where the film ***A day becomes*** takes place. The town of Quneitra was a crucial conflict point between Israel and Syria in the 1967 war. During the

¹⁰⁷ Baladi in Arabic means literary 'of town' or local and it is used to describe crops as well as music in the area east of the Mediterranean and Egypt.

¹⁰⁸ For further reading about the area and city refer to: Faier, Elizabeth. 2004, 119.

¹⁰⁹ Morton, Julia. F. 1987. 356-363.

¹¹⁰ According to the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in 2014 there were 1350000 square meters of crops in Israel alone.

¹¹¹ Guava, Solo exhibition, Mamuta Art Centre, Curators: Sala-Manca, 2018.

ongoing Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights, Quneitra's control moved back and forth between Israel and Syria, and today the town itself is in Syrian authority, but large parts of the region are under the Israeli rule.

The elusive character of scent affected the realization of the scent collection in two ways. Firstly, it influenced the process of extracting the scents from the substance. Secondly, it was part in the decision to invite visitors of the exhibitions to smell the extracted scents. As explained above, in Western thinking the volatile quality of scent was treated as a flaw. Philosopher G.W.F Hegel claims that by seeing and listening, what one hears and sees is left untouched, but by tasting and smelling one dissolves what is sensed: "We can smell only what is in the process of fading away".¹¹² After experiencing a certain scent, there is no possibility of re-capturing it and reflecting upon it. Because of its material volatility, smell, Hegel claims "...cannot have to do with artistic objects, which are meant to maintain themselves in their real independence and allow of no *purely*¹¹³ sensuous relationship".¹¹⁴ Hegel follows the convention that scents, because of their elusive character, are purely physical and therefore preclude the critical distance needed for his conception of art. Beauty in art, he claims, expresses a higher truth that is of both physical and conceptual nature. As the experience of a certain smell is maintained merely in the body, one therefore cannot reflect upon scent after it has disappeared, and consequently it cannot be considered as an art object. I want to show how scents' material tendency to disappear is actually crucial for the metaphorical aspect of the scent extraction and collection; and how the maintenance of scent in the body in fact contributes to the participants responsibility in taking part and positioning themselves in the local conflict.

The scents are extracted through a process of vaporization and condensation of water and oils. This type of process was chosen as it is one of the earliest and most elementary ways to collect scents using merely the basic elements of water and heat.¹¹⁵ This

¹¹² Hegel, Georg. W. F. 1975.138.

¹¹³ Italics in marked in the original text.

¹¹⁴ Hegel. 1975. 39.

¹¹⁵ In addition, the simplicity of the extraction process will potentially allow for others to take part in collecting the scent and enlarge the collection in future developments.

extracting method requires time. It is a long procedure that takes about two hours for each batch of material to be extracted, whether soil or local crops. The materials distillate throughout this long process by drawing out the scent together with all the water within the extracted materials. As a result the extracted container of what used to be the material is drained and the substance is left to decline. For me, the extractor, it feels as though this process wrenches the liveliness out of the materials, taking the essentials out of the local crops or the soil leaving their materiality drawn-out, empty.

Since the extraction and collection process needs to be controlled carefully, I patiently watch the materials slowly pass away. More importantly, metaphorically this process of collecting scents takes away the material ground of the local territorial conflict. In order to collect scent, the art-action metaphorically diminishes the land that inhabitants are fighting over, and the plants that symbolize the connection of the people living on it. By distilling local plants and soil only the scent of what they used to be is left. The course of action from material to scent dismisses the substance; it takes the land that people here are fighting over and the objects that symbolize locality and vaporizes them into scent. Metaphorically, the decline of the matters that are crucial in the local territorial conflict, proposes to search for new ways for one to position themselves in the debate. It allows one to shift their standpoint about how to live on this land. It also invites, maybe, to include more perspectives than the importance of land and locality, other parameters that might be able to enrich the current debate and through them find ways to broaden the now stuck discussion. For me, this was a way to signify my despair about the ongoing territorial conflict. It was a way to metaphorically make the core material of the conflict disappear and ask whether a piece of land or the quarrel over who is “more” local are really as important to die or kill for?

The distilled and captured scents are put in small bottles marked with the name of the extracted material and its extraction date. The extracted material, what is left after extracting, declines. But this is only one aspect of how scents’ tendency to disappear was considered in the exhibition of the scent collection. The volatility of scents is a matter of time, and it is also related to the amount of times people open the bottles and smell its content. When people repeatedly sniff a specific bottle, or the longer a bottle stays open,

a lesser amount of scent molecules will last in it, and the intensity of smell in this bottle will reduce. The action of inhaling a scent from the bottles caused the one who smelled to take part and encourage the volatility of the collected scent. Visitors of the exhibition thus urge the collected scents to further evaporate the substance of soils and local plants. If the distilling process takes away the material of the extracted substance, than the act of sniffing the collected scents, encourages the scent itself to disappear. If I, the extractor, metaphorically made what lies in the centre of the local conflict to diminish, now visitors might be seen as participants in this art-action by taking part in making what is left of these materials to vanish. Whoever participated in smelling the collection's scent during its exhibitions became symbolically responsible for carrying the vanishing leftovers of a certain material with them. In this art-action, the bodily experience that is stored in the smeller's body becomes a way to metaphorically join my resistance to fight over a piece of land. The scent remains a bodily experience as Hegel claims, but in regard to him, I assert that even if this is the case, it can still be considered as part of an art-action. As a result of smelling, the smeller symbolically participates in dissolving the land, and consequently, may find new ways to reposition her/himself within the local territorial conflict.

Accordingly, my answer to the repeated question of how long the smell will last in the bottles would be: "It will last as long as the people who smelled it live to tell about their experience". The *Guava scent collection* insists on materially and metaphorically containing this elusive character by extracting and collecting scents, and encouraging people to smell them during exhibitions of its installation. The collection works with the characteristic feature of scent to disappear in such a way that their disappearance becomes a vital part of the art-action itself, the volatility of scent becomes a dominant part of the art-action. This is why I propose the *Guava scent collection* as a metaphor for the dismissal of matters that are at the core of the conflict in this area: soil and local crops; connection to land and the right to inhabit it. Opposed to the claims against scents' volatility, in this art-action volatility is a productive and beneficial (both physically and conceptually) aspect. Within the art-action of the collection I assemble the materials that signify the parameters of the conflict in a process that metaphorically dismisses them into scent, an ever-changing volatile substance, and then I ask people to inhale and

further dissolve it. These scents will now survive only within the visitors of the exhibition who smelled, who now metaphorically carry the remains of what is so forcefully fought upon here.

To represent what is not there

"I don't recognize the smell of the land of Bir al Maksur¹¹⁶ at all, I tried all the bottles of scent from this soil, and I did not perceive anything" Rahma told me when visiting the *Guava* exhibition¹¹⁷ in Jerusalem. "Do you think it is because I was born there and still live in the same village?" she asked and looked at me, as though I might have an explanation for her. Was the scent so familiar to her that she couldn't sense it? Or did she not have any words to describe or recognize the scent of the area that she had lived in all of her life? Our conversation continued and opened questions of familiarity with the land. We discussed how people become accustomed to their place of birth and to where they live. We thought about places that are so well known to us that they become part of our body. Then we thought whether a land can be as well known to someone as their own body? Can it be like not having words to recognize and signify your own smell?

Plato described scents as impossible to classify: "The only classification we can make is that scents which disturb the substance of the nostrils are unpleasant, while those which restore the natural state are pleasant".¹¹⁸ The lack of descriptive words or the gap between language and scents implies that it is very difficult for us to reduce and classify scent in specific terms. The American psychologist Trygg Engen claims that the association between smell and its terminology is weak, unsymmetrical and easily influenced by the verbal factor: "Odor perception is not organized lexically by nouns but around the similarity of objects causing odors and especially the contexts in which odors usually occur".¹¹⁹ It is as though scent refuses to be incarnated into words and wants to remain a physical sensation, without form and structure.

The struggle to find words to describe what one smells affected the scent collection exhibition in two ways. Initially, prior to the first exhibition of the scents¹²⁰ my deliberation

¹¹⁶ Bir al-Maksur is a small Bedouin village in the lower Galilee. The Israeli Antiques Authority recently found evidence of humans living in the area of the village as early as the late Roman period. For further reading: Abu Zedan, Fadi and Mitler, Itamar, 2014.

¹¹⁷ Guava, Solo exhibition, Mamuta Art Centre, Curators: Sala-Manca, 2018.

¹¹⁸ Plato. 1997. 67a, 1268.

¹¹⁹ Engen, Trygg. 1987. 502.

¹²⁰ Self Collecting, Group exhibition, Beit Hagefen Gallery, Curator: Yael Messer, 2017.

was how to exhibit them as part of an art installation. The main struggle was to determine whether the scents should be spread in the room or should be contained inside other objects. How many items should be part of the installation alongside the scents? In both cases, exhibiting and finding descriptive words for scents, there is the question of how to *represent* scent. Following the initial installation, I noticed that the scents stimulate conversations. I was keen to continue the talks and curious to find out what kind of socio-political discussions about the local territorial conflict that scents could promote, if ostensibly there are no descriptive words to do so? In the following I will explain how these two impacts contributed to the installation and exhibition of the *Guava scent collection*.

The scent extraction produces a colorless, transparent liquid infused with the odor of the material from which it was extracted. It is a beautiful liquid at the edge of nothingness: clear water that reveals whether it contains something, only when it is actively sniffed. The elusive character of the extracted material urged me to merely spread the collected scents in it and to keep the exhibition room on the verge of emptiness. This sort of installation might emphasize the elusive character of scents. But, since I wanted the scents to be recognized and to signify the absence of a particular material they were extracted from, another urgent issue presented itself: the need to represent the scents in additional objects and items, such as bottles with the extracted perfumed liquid or papers that are soaked with the scents. In this way, the installation would enable the presented scents to be recognized with texts on the bottles or paper, and would allow the addition of items and objects that are part of the extraction process to the room.

My endeavor was to set up an installation that is suitable for a physical experience of scents. But it was also to allow the sense of smell to induce and take part in rethinking the extracted materials and how to position oneself to what these materials might signify. Should other sensations like sight, sound, touch be employed to bring forward these intentions, and if so, how? Or should there be nothing in the room but scent? Are the collected scents entrusted to speak for themselves? Or should additional objects support and articulate the presented odors? I found myself struggling to find the precise way to represent the scents in the installation. The questions that troubled me corresponded with

the struggle to find terms and words to clarify and categorize the sense of smell and scents.

Scholar and poet Diane Ackerman describes smell as the *mute* sense, the sense that has no words: “Lacking a vocabulary, we are left tongue-tied, groping for words in a sea of inarticulate pleasure and exaltation”.¹²¹ The words one uses to talk about scents, she claims, are terms for other things: floral, fruity, sweet, etc. One is only able to describe how a scent feels: pleasurable, sickening and so on. The gap Ackerman notices between the lack of words and a concrete sensation, is for her what gives smell a magical distance, a power without names that holds a secrecy within. In the visual arts, the presented objects usually represent themselves—they *are* what is exhibited—but when considering the installation of the scent collection this did not satisfy me. It felt as though in the exhibition the scents must to be translated into additional objects. The clear scented water needs to be collected into vessels with names of the materials and extraction date written on them. In order for those to be sniffed by visitors’ the vessels should be placed on shelves or in a cabinet. In addition, if a visitor in the gallery is asked to stay in the room and inhale the scents long enough to reflect upon them, a bench or some other piece of furniture should be present. As a result, the room would become crowded with many additional materials and objects: vessels, shelves or a cabinet and sitting benches. All of these objects might be visually tempting, but would produce sensations that distract from the sense of smell. These objects then would stimulate additional senses and eventually take away the mere interaction with the scent that initially I wanted to exhibit. The transformation of scent into descriptive words that relate to other things, like Ackerman suggests, is similar to the attempt to transform scents into other objects by exhibiting them. In both cases odor derives support from and relies on other elements to represent itself.

Eventually I decided to get rid of as many objects as I could. The room was kept almost empty: shelves were built on the walls, painted in the same color, and small bottles were placed on the shelves. But after installing the scents in the room, I was again, not satisfied. Because of the strain between words and scents and as a result of the difficulty

¹²¹ Ackerman, Diane. 1990. 6.

to represent the scents as themselves, I decided to not just exhibit the scents in the bottles. The difficulty to represent scents in the exhibition resulted in changing the character of the exhibition. It would no longer be an exhibition of the scent collection, but a live installation. An installation in which scents would be extracted and visitors would be invited to discussions that were induced by the smelled odors. The art-action of the scent collection changed its character as a result of the co-relation with the non-descriptive aspect of scent. It turned into a performative action of distilling and holding conversations, alongside an installation of the remains: bottles to be sniffed and an extraction table with the objects needed for the process.

Whenever I arrived in the exhibitions, I found that bottles had been moved between shelves, indicating the comfort and ease visitors were experiencing in the room while smelling the scents— possibly walking from place to place with the bottles. Making the exhibition hall functional gave visitors the opportunity to focus on the scents and, hopefully, to allow the experience of all the feelings and thoughts that the scents induced. The scent extraction performance routinely took place in both of the exhibitions of the scent collection. My presence and the scents in the room (and around the whole building) attracted visitors to the table and generated immediate conversations regarding the scents that spread around us. In the exhibitions of the scent collection, the performative extracting and distillation became part of the art-action alongside the conversations that were held. The conversations were both triggered by the sense of smell and were about the smelled scents. They evoked memories in visitors that questioned locality, regional living conditions and feelings of residentship.

The conversations that were triggered by the scents dealt mainly with feelings of locality, memories of childhood and the sensation of belonging to a place. The conversations with me or whoever else was in the room were sometimes spontaneous responses to the smells. At other times, I intentionally led these conversations and invited groups or specific people to discuss these issues while extracting the scents. The lack of words— or the gap between the existing words and scent— provoked the visitors (mostly inhabitants of the area) to think and try to use a new language for a known discussion.

Most of the discussions about the territorial conflicted land east of the Mediterranean are conducted in an established language. Each inhabitant already has a certain line of reasoning at her disposal that will include words that are over-used and imbued with meaning. An example of this is the different names with which people indicate the area of the Palestinian Territories: people who are part of the settlers movement will call it Judea and Samaria, as it was called in the Bible during the kingdom of Israel; others, who believe this land belongs to Palestinians refer to the same area as the Israeli-occupied West Bank. These names immediately activate the conflict. Yet by engaging in the conversation on scent, visitors were challenged to find new words to enter, to take part in this old conflict and to redefine their positions. The activation of the installation therefore turned the lack of descriptive words, or the gap between language and scent, into a beneficial characteristic for exhibiting the *Guava scent collection* and the socio-political conversation it promotes. In order to engage in a conversation through scent, there is a necessity to find unknown words or a new language, and this might allow for new understandings of and connections with the conflicted issues discussed around the scent collection.

Talking through scents

“I hate the scent extracted from the land of Haifa” a visitor told me in the exhibition in Jerusalem¹²², where scents from the lands were collected. “Doesn’t everyone?” she asked and was disappointed when I told her she was the first to share this sensation with me. Her physical reaction to the scent was so strong that she could hardly accept that it was only her particular experience of the scent. We began a conversation about memories of the places we lived in, just to find out she grew up in Haifa, miserably, waiting for the moment she could leave the city forever. Now, forty years after she left, she still does not think about moving back. Maybe this is why the scent disturb her so deeply? Did the scent evoke her personal most intimate memories of Haifa?

Philosopher Walter Benjamin signifies that remembering through smell generates an experience of infinity. Experiencing an event is something finite, he claims, something that comes to an end, but remembering “...is only a key to everything that happened before it and after it”.¹²³ Remembering is not merely an assembly of perception, of what was experienced, but it is also the action of the weaving of one’s memory.¹²⁴ This weaving is a personal activity that recalls all that was not forgotten and succeeds in placing theses in a certain order. The weaving of memory tells us more than the experienced perception of occurrences, Benjamin says, because it reveals the way these experiences are recollected, the connections that are made between them, and how they remain with the one who remembers. But the sense of smell, Benjamin claims, brings to the surface another way to remember, it is an invitation to the ‘sea of lost time’.¹²⁵ A smell opens up a whole, indefinite and formless surrender into one’s personal memory. The visitor from Haifa was one of many visitors who have submitted themselves to the ‘sea of memories’ that were induced by the scents of the exhibited collection and engaged in personal and intimate conversation with me.

¹²² Guava, Solo exhibition, Mamuta Art Centre, Curators: Sala-Manca, 2018.

¹²³ Benjamin, Walter. 1968. 202.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹²⁵ A term borrowed from the name of Marcel Proust’s book: *In Search of Lost Time* (1913-1927).

Philosopher John Dewey states that empirical sensuous experience of the world, smelling for example, is usually considered as subjective and therefore irrelevant to the development of knowledge: “Prestige goes to those who use their minds without participation of the body”.¹²⁶ Dewey is pointing out that all of the senses, and the body in general, stood in the way of ideas and the process of the intellect.¹²⁷ But smell, taste and touch in particular were at odds with intellect and knowledge in the history of Western thought. Philosopher Immanuel Kant, for example, refers to the sense of smell as being subjective. Because the idea observed from scent is “more a representation of enjoyment than of cognition of the external object”¹²⁸ different people might be differently affected by a given scent, and often cannot come to an agreement about it. Kant found that there are no common agreed upon concepts that one could use to communicate the sense of smell. In other words, odors, he claims, tend to be described through personal references rather than a general terminology. The subjectiveness of the sense of smell is what made this sense untrustworthy in philosophical or intellectual arguments. The sensuous experiences that were induced by scents in the exhibitions, invited visitors’ subjectiveness to become part of the conversations. Most of the discussions led immediately to a personal memory connected to the smelled material. As a result we held intimate subjective discussions that responded to the scents and were aroused by them in each visitor.

In both of the exhibitions the socio-political conversations that the scents induced indeed were subjective and intimate. Visitors immediately expressed to which land they feel connected and to which they did not. Many times these feelings developed into conversations about locality and the right to inhabit this land from their personal-physical, interior standpoint. The scents of local produce turned into a unique and personal conversation about the visitors’ thoughts and feelings, which then initiated a conversation that included their childhood memories, cooking preferences and intimate connections to the plants and crops that grow around them. Recent science-related research found a

¹²⁶ Dewey, John. 1934. 21.

¹²⁷ For further discussion of the senses and their connection to knowledge within this website/thesis: **Feeding/Eating the Other.**

¹²⁸ Kant, Immanuel. 2006. 46.

strong connection between the sense of smell and memory, as described in the famous Proustian memory effect, which regards scents as particularly powerful in triggering autobiographical memory cues.¹²⁹ Studies show that odor-cued autobiographical memories are qualitatively richer and reliably superior in the amount of detail yielded. These results strongly support the proposal that scent is especially effective in provoking past experience. Scholar and poet Diane Ackerman equally claims that smell can take a person directly into the centre of a memory: scents open “a route that carries us nimbly across time and distance”.¹³⁰ I argue that the subjective socio-political conversations opened up the normally narrowly enclosed discussion of such conflicted questions in this area I live in. The subjective sensations of the visitors stood in opposition to the more objective terms that are commonly used in socio-political discussions. The conversation through the scents disconnected their feelings and thoughts from the general discourse and changed into a distinctive and intimate one.

Locality and inhabiting land is usually discussed through general terms and concepts. These sort of discussions rely on the communal identities, like historical and religious kinship based on nationality, as being part of a certain nation. They promote identifying only with people who are in their own group of identification, and exclude people who are not. Freud claims that civilization imposes on society cultural ideals, general concepts that demand to ignore subjective variations: “The first consequence of civilization was that even fairly large numbers of people could now stay together in a community”.¹³¹ In civilizations, he claims, developments of society could progress smoothly and people had better control of the world around them. Since the sense of smell is a reminder of a time before culture took over and before man gathered in communities, it was devaluated. The suppression of the sense of smell signifies, according to Freud, the repression of subjective desires. Smelling is a reminder of when man was uncivilized and not organized in communities that might protect common needs. Following Freud’s argument, the subjective qualities of the conversation held in the exhibition pay attention to the visitors

¹²⁹ Chu, Simon and Downes, John J., 2000. 111–116.

¹³⁰ Ackerman, Diane. 1990. 84.

¹³¹ Freud, Sigmund. 2004, 60.

distinctive and personal desires. They place a plurality of identities at the center of discussion, challenging the supposedly homogeneous perceptions of the area's inhabitants.

The conversations in the exhibitions took into consideration the people who live on this land. This suggestion is in correlation to Philosopher's Hannah Arendt definition of plurality: "the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world".¹³² Arendt states that plurality is a central condition for human action. The fact that all people belong to the same species, but yet each one of them is a different individual, is what sets the ground for human action.¹³³ Accordingly when basing the conversation on nationality, one enters a discussion with the set of values and preferences that promote the political interests of the state. But when one joins the conversation from a subjective point of view the discussion can open into new directions. Their personal experiences are a source of additional connections to the land they live on, that are not merely based on nationality or other general concept. Participants voiced their needs and desires of living here, and as a result they acquired a more influential role as themselves, more than is usually asked of them in collective political interest. They were invited to take an active part in independently thinking about how to live on this land.

The subjective conversations that were part of the scent collection exhibition invoked this plurality in order to bring in new ideas and find new paths to entangle the long and ongoing territorial conflict. This might encourage people to take responsibility for their actions and beliefs, even after the smell dissolves. Responsible for carrying the memory on, a memory from local plants and a conflicted land, that, as time goes by, will not be as it is remembered now.

¹³² Arendt, Hannah.1958. 7.

¹³³ For further discussion of Arendt's political philosophy within this website/thesis: **Back to Present** and **Insist to Resist**



Video Still from the film *A Day Becomes*, 2018

Back to Present

Back to Present is a discussion of the motives, filming structure, and editing process of a short film named **A Day Becomes** (2018). The film is part of *Guava*, a platform for art-actions that provokes the idea of free movement and the removal of borders east to the Mediterranean. In this chapter and throughout the making of the film, I explore the possibilities of regional movement across political borders in relation to the phenomenon of Time. The chapter addresses the dynamics of movement in time and asks how a present moment can be performed in time-based art, so that it offers a phenomenological embodied experience of time.

The following chapter addresses the making of the film in regard to the concepts of duration and temporality as investigated by philosophers Edmund Husserl, Henri Bergson and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as well as the related film theory of Gilles Deleuze. The film begins at the break of dawn, in a building located near what currently is the Israeli border with Syria, and end when the sun rises. The main and only character in the film, Yousef Sweid, walks through the building while holding several conversations with people from his past, debating their relationships at the verge of the moment before he crosses a border that hasn't been crossed before. The chapter correlates between Yousef's time experience of this moment in the film to the phenomenological connection between time and space. It suggests Yousef's embodied exploration of this particular landscape in relation to his experience of time. Finally the chapter uncovers how through this certain flow of time experience he contains his past, suspends determination and enables what will become of the landscape he is walking on to be open ended.

The structure of the chapter is inspired by the form of a Talmudic page (Gemara), where the main text of ancient law is set in the middle of the page, and surrounded by interpretations, elucidations and mutually responsive commentaries printed all around it. The unique layout of the dense page, with almost no margins, originated in the sixteenth century, designed by a Catholic printer in Venice. The layout probably resulted from technical necessities, but also reflected to the long-established structure of conversational learning and studying in the

Jewish tradition. Since then, this layout has been used across nations and cultures as the main format of Talmudic study in yeshivas, universities and schools.

The chapter is divided into two sections: the first, titled Here, unfolds around the discussion about the landscape; the second, named Now, suggests the ways that time is experienced can become a factor in how one experiences their surroundings. The form of the texts is correlated to the content, form and making of the film. The filmmaking text is set in the centre of the chapter, while the other discussions push themselves in, and spread over the layout of the page. Like the text, the film's continuous timeline is dense and loaded with plural repetitions and conversations. The interlaced reflections and commentaries that characterize the text echo Yousef's layered performance of time in the film.

With its layout and content, the chapter explores the film's structure and embodied experience of the landscape through time— an added dimension to the investigation of physical and conceptual movement undertaken by the Guava Platform. In other words, it is a way to rethink and re-feel the Here of this region through the lingering Now of the film.

Here

In the place where I live, it is very common to hit a wall, literally to reach a point where one is not allowed to continue. From every possible spot in the state of Israel, it is very likely that a twenty minute drive in a certain direction will lead to a barrier. Following a fence to its length, you might find a checkpoint where an Israeli soldier will restrict your entrance or demand a special certificate for passage. Alternatively in areas near the Gaza strip or approaching the northern border with Lebanon and Syria, you receive notice about your restriction to move several kilometers before reaching an actual border: at this distance, you will be ordered by a sign or an official not to continue.

As much as this lack of free movement is limiting to citizens and residents of the state of Israel, for Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories restrictions are beyond endurance and have a daily effect

Since 1967, when Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza strip, Palestinians' movement is controlled by a system of rules and sanctions. The restrictions include limitations on entering private agricultural lands for harvesting, obtaining work permits, visiting relatives in Israel, partaking in family reunions and accessing education.

and walls.¹ *The Guava Platform*, initiated a few years ago as a framework for my practice, is a platform for various *art-actions*. All of these actions—films, performance, participatory works, and research—challenge conventions

regarding physical and conceptual movement in the area I live in, east of the Mediterranean. The art-actions also examine the possibility of imagining the region open for movement.

on their routine
and possibilities
in their life.
Residents of the
Palestinian
Occupied
Territories have
been constantly,
for over fifty
years, restricted
by checkpoints,
closures, sieges

The freedom to move is the core of the political concept of Freedom. Philosopher Hannah Arendt claims that freedom in its original sense “meant nothing more than being able to go where one pleased...”*. Besides the freedom to move physically, Arendt claims that in the political sphere, moving also means free speech and the freedom to begin something new. This freedom of movement, she argues, is the substance and meaning of all political things, and not the end purpose of politics, meaning only where free movement is available a political space may occur.

* Arendt, Hannah. 2007. 121.

¹ For further enquiry of free-movement restrictions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories please visit “Gisha” - <https://gisha.org/>.

The *Guava* platform short film series is set close to the moment when the borders dissolved and people interact on walking roads, now open for them to reach places they could not go before. The people in the film series are placed in a time of change, a time when everything they knew up to now is bound to alter. The situations performed in the films look into these moments and linger on them to reveal and experience as many options as possible— to leave them open for change, before they will be determined.

This chapter suggests a way to re-think and re-feel the restricted place I'm living in through time-based art, as practiced in *art-actions* of the *Guava* platform. I refer to the *art-actions* in the platform as time-based-art because they are time-led and consider the passage of time as an essential element. The films in the platform are time-based

because of several additional reasons: they have a beginning and an end, and are not moving images arranged in an endless loop; they are directed as performative actions in the film, meaning they are filmed as live actions occurring in a certain time-frame and place; the films in the platform shoot a live-performance, rarely disturbed by the making of the film (for example, scenes are not divided into different shots, and the same shot is not filmed multiple times in order to achieve the best possible take). As such all of the films in the platform appear in the present or come-to-be in the present time they happen. The proposition in this chapter follows the making and context of the film *A day becomes*, the third film in the platform's short film series.

The name *A day Becomes* is borrowed from a Jewish Piyyut (the Hebrew term for a liturgical poem) by Yannai* from the sixth century. The opening words of the poem in Hebrew are *Karev Yom*, which can be translated into different meanings in English. The official English translation of this first line is: "Bring near the day that is neither day nor night". This translation relies on the understanding of the Hebrew words *Karev Yom* as a prayer to God, asking him to bring near the day of Messianic redemption. But the Hebrew words might be also translated not as a request to God, but as a continual present: there is a day that is constantly becoming, not progressing nor regressing but continues to be on the verge of becoming. The last translation leaves aside the notion of God as a force that can control time and bring a day nearer, and keeps the name of the film in its present temporality of the becoming of a day.

* The first payyēṭan to employ rhyme and introduce his name in acrostics; flourished, probably in Palestine, in the first half of the seventh century.

Since its establishment, the state of Israel battles for its right to claim the land it occupies. One of the ways to gain its acknowledgement is through connecting pieces of land to pieces of Jewish and biblical

An example of the connection between the land east of the Mediterranean to its biblical history can be found in Ir-David. In the middle of the Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan in East-Jerusalem, the state of Israel is promoting a Jewish settlement and archeological site under the name Ir-David, demanding Jewish rights on the land today because of its historical attachment. Ir David is claiming to have an archeological connection to the biblical city of David which was assumably built three thousand years ago. On the base of this connection, the archeological site and Jewish settlement have taken control over Palestinian houses and lands.*

* For further information about Ir David organization see <http://www.cityofdavid.org.il/en>.

randomly divided the land east of the Mediterranean into two: the northern area including contemporary Lebanon and Syria to the French mandate and the southern area of Israel today to the British. Today's West Bank and East Jerusalem belonged to Jordan. Since 1948, when Israel was established and the mandates left the land, more than fifty battles between Israel and its neighboring countries took place and resulted in thousands of dead bodies. As a resident of the state of Israel for over thirty years I keep questioning the loop of ownership and justification of this land that is continually leading to more wars—especially since I am part of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestinians, and contributing to it by simply living here. As such the art-actions of the *Guava*

history. The land upon which Israel is established is one of the earliest known places of human life, where communities have built their homes continually for over thousands of years. Because of this, it has had an abundance of occupiers and endless wars and power encounters. Between the 13th and 20th centuries, the area was quite stable under the Ottoman Empire. But at the beginning of the 20th Century the area was occupied by the British and French mandate, taking territory from the Ottomans.

T h e y

Ir Davis is located in the middle of the Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan next to the old city of Jerusalem in the East side of the city. Since the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Jerusalem in 1967 Jewish settlers have tried to reestablish their ownership of the occupied land in the neighborhood of Silwan, first succeeding in 1987. Since many sections of the neighborhood were taken by force from Palestinians and public areas have been “privatized” into Jewish handle. These Jewish demands and occupation of land in the neighborhood are responsible of the violence and tensions between Jews and Palestinians in Silwan* and act as a case study of Israelis policy to gain control of the lands around the old city on Jerusalem.

*For further information about Silwan: <http://www.ir-amim.org.il/sites/default/files/Silwanreporteng.pdf>.

Platform are looking to re-think and re-feel the conditions and possibilities of inhabiting this piece of land and inquiring what else, if anything, can be a way to live here.

The Golan Heights was occupied by the Israeli State in 1967 during the Six Days War, and annexed successfully in 1981 following the [Golan Heights Law](#).

A day becomes is set in The Golan Heights during the few minutes of dawn. The character in the film, Yousef Sweid, walks from

night into dawn through a four storey building with multiply corridors and rooms.

The building is a ruin of what used to be the headquarters of Qunaytirah's governor, and it views the ruins of the town of Qunaytirah.

Qunaytirah was the largest town in the Syrian Golan Heights, and because of its strategic location, it became a crucial conflict point between Israel and Syria. The town was destroyed and its ruins remain today. These town ruins became, for Syrians, a symbolic view of the war with Israel and the refugees of this area. For a poetic inquiry of the loss of the city refer to Omar Amiralay's short film [A Plate of Sardines](#). His film, as well as ***A Day Becomes***, addresses this area through the personal narrative of the

characters in it, and reveals the layers of the landscape through its film-making.

"...Here is no more (and no less) than our encounter, and what is made of it"* geographer Doreen Massey suggests. Places are entangled events of configurations, and conjunctures that have their own temporalities. Places are unique, she claims, because they constantly negotiate multiple here and nows of both humans and non humans that together make a place. A place, as Massey suggests, has a necessity of invention: it is always a challenge to respond to a temporary meeting with a place. She suggests to encounter with a place through its temporality, to make it a meeting point for place and time. The thrown-togetherness, as she calls it, of a place makes it a sphere of relations that is in a constant demand of negotiation. This challenge of place acknowledges an openness of the future, a space that is always being made.

*Massey, Doreen. 2015. 139.

Throughout Yousef's walk in the building he faces physical and vocal interactions with people and moments from his life. The film shows only Yousef's side of these interactions. Although his words clearly interact with others, all that is seen and heard in the film are his movement and voice. He holds the conversation not in flashbacks, but as though they were there with him, in the building. The building is located

near to where the border with Syria is set today. Yousef grew up and lived in Israel, and as result he has

never been in Syria. For Yousef, the ongoing moment in the film are his last minutes on the landscape as he has known it. He is on the verge of leaving the land he is familiar with into an undisclosed place.

Both of the former films in the platform series, *Guava* (2014) and *Sham* (2016), began with a thought about the place they were filmed in. These preceding thoughts of each film considered their location, the landscape and layers of histories that took place upon them. ***A Day Becomes*** began with a thought about time. A thought about the few minutes of dawn, when there is already some light but the sun rays do not yet hit the landscape. A time when sight begins to show one around but the details are still not clear. During those elusive moments of the first light, the film explores the landscape it is set on. It seeks to recognize the landscape as a sphere of possibilities, to put aside the determinative restrictions that were put on the land before and let it appear in its openness, to what is about to arrive. To explore this suggestion, the film was built and thought about through time and its dynamics within the specific minutes of daybreak in which the film is set.

A film conceived through thought about place considers the location of shooting and ways of presenting the landscape via the filming and sound. It as well reflects on the history of the place: events and people who lived upon it. When a film is thought through time, although time

The short story by Jorge Luis Borges “Funes the memorious” explores Funes’s life experience as someone who remembers it all. His memory is so good that he is not able to generalize, but instead remembers every instance in time and each object in the certain place he experienced it. In the very short film *A Day in April* (2009) I wanted the structure of the film to relate to the unique characteristic of Funes’s time experience. Each single frame in the film was represented by an image I shot throughout a day. During that day I took more than 1500 pictures that were edited, twenty-five frames each second together to follow that day in April.

and place are intertwined, it is contemplated differently than thought that is led by space. The first concern is the way the time of the film relates to the time in the ‘world’: how do the

twenty-five frames per second of film contain or present a second of time as the clock counts it? If *A Day Becomes* would be in ‘real’ time then every second of the film would be a second of a clock, and the duration of events in the film

Director Andrei Tarkovsky claims the invention of cinema gave birth to a new aesthetic principle. For the first time in art history, man found a direct way to capture time: printing it on celluloid film. Tarkovsky believed this allowed viewers to perceive life through the movement of time, meaning that film exists in time, but time as well, comes to life inside it: “The image becomes authentically cinematic when (amongst other things) not only does it live within time, but time also lives within it, even within each separate frame.”

*Tarkovsky, Andrey. 1986. 68.

would have been a couple of minutes long. But the film does not advance in the pace of the clock time. The duration of a second in clock-time varies in the film between a split-second and a long minute. Even though time in the film follows how night evolves into day, it merely captures how the look of the landscape changes during the first light of dawn. This means that even though the amount of light upon the landscape increases during the film— it changes from night into daylight— it does not follow the duration and pace of the time in the ‘world’. Instead, the film seeks to pursue the duration of Yousef's experience of time. During these minutes the film unfolds the conversations and encounters Yousef has with his friends, lovers and family.

Now

The film captures how the night strives to approach the day through Yousef's experience of being in this

time. It follows and lingers with Yousef during a moment of change he is experimenting in the film: a change in time and a change in the landscape. The timescale of the film attempts to reflect Yousef's experience of time and not the time that chronologically passes during dawn. It seeks to follow this moment through

Philosopher Edmund Husserl described phenomenology of time as 'a lived experience'. He separated time from its spatial appearance, a sun-clock for example, to one's inner experience. Husserl's assumption was that time as it appears in space (meaning an objective time outside of people experimenting it) is a timeless time, a time that occurs only in a now, a time that has no flow of duration. Time as assumed by experience is not an objective 'real' time of the world but "an immanent time of the flow of consciousness". Husserl claims that the time one presumes in the flow of time-consciousness is an actual present of representative phantasy in which one represents a past or future as present. This means that it is an experience of time that does not advance chronologically, but a present in which both a future and a past are literally re-presented. In the flow of time-conscious, the present contains an image of the past that was before and the potential of what is about to come.

* Husserl, Edmund. 1973. 23.

Yousef in order to explore the possibilities of the landscape through his time experience. What are the socio-political possibilities of understanding a place, when addressed via a personal time experiences upon it? How does the conflicted landscape Yousef has been living upon all his life change, when seen and heard throughout the last moments he spends on the land as he knew it before, a place that is now (in the film) about to change?

The time of transition in which the film occurs is a transition between night and day, but also a transition between the place as Yousef knew and the unknown that he is about to enter. As a result it confronts him with all that he knew before and all that he is expecting to come. The film is based on the performer's life experience, as Yousef's encounters in the film are related to his biography. Yousef is a Christian Palestinian born in Haifa in 1976. He was educated in a Jewish school in his home town and later studied theatre at the Tel Aviv University. He is a local and international actor who divides his life between Israel and Germany, where his Jewish son and ex-wife live. Together, Yousef and I, chose people and interactions from his life that he wanted to confront during this walk through the building. At first, we thought who would be the people most important for him to converse with during this time of

“Time is someone”.* Philosopher Merleau-Ponty asserts this statement about the intimate relationship between one’s subjectivity and time. The experience of time presupposes someone experiencing time, meaning that time is a result of one’s relationship to things and not a flow that occurs around one who records it. To be conscious, he claims, is the action of temporality; it is the flux of time as a process that flows through one during the process of living. Time has meaning to one because one ‘is’ time: “It is through time that being is conceived, because it is through the relations of time-subject and time-object that we are able to understand those obtaining between subject and world.”**

*Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1962. 422.

** *Ibid.*, 430-431.

performed experiences in the present of the film. In other words, all of the conversations, physical and vocal, are held in present tense and performed as though the person he is confronting is in the room with him. The time that is structured in the film traces Yousef’s time-consciousness of the moment performed in the film, and aims to rebuild his subjective experience of time during the minutes of dawn.

The film’s duration is constructed according to Yousef’s intense expanse of the flowing present of dawn. It is built by returning to the moment captured in the film again and again. This moment was built in image as well as in sound, and was collected (filmed and recorded) in separate days at the same location during the time of dawn. We returned several times to the same place of shooting in the building on the border of Qunaytirah. We recorded and filmed during dawn to collect numerous materials that would be edited into the time flow of his experience in one single becoming of a day. The collection of materials was divided into four main categories:

1. Visual performative encounters, each meeting was filmed in a separate room of the building.
2. Recordings and vocal interactions of Yousef with the people he addressed in the building. Every recording was made in a separate room.

change? When decided, I asked Yousef to write about an encounter or interaction he had with these people that is characteristic to their relationship. Through his writings, we decided on specific interactions to reference in the conversations held in the film.

In the film the main and only character, Yousef, is seen and heard, while he physically and vocally performs encounters with the people we chose, as though they were there with him. His conversations with them are not memories of the past or imagined future meetings, but rather real time

3. Collection of sound recordings of all 'live' things in the building and in the area around it, including the wind that runs through the leaves and all the animals we could find.
4. Visual records of Yousef moving in the corridors of the building in different times during dawn.

The film was shot during four separate filming days. Each day Yousef was filmed during the minutes of dawn, in a different scene in one of the rooms in the building. Each scene was built, based on one of the following encounters: with his father, his sister, his Jewish best friend from high school, his Jewish wife and with the first Palestinian/Arab woman he had sex with. In our rehearsals every planned encounter was translated into a physical performative gesture that was developed from a specific memory he had with each person. For example his relationship with his sister reminded him of a wedding they had been to together during which she constantly hung on his arm. His complex reaction to her hanging on his arm reflected, on the one hand his urge to hold and protect her, and on the other hand his strive to get rid of her for his sake, but also for her own freedom. This moment in

Philosopher Henri Bergson continued Husserl's research in the experience of time, but claimed more distinctively its disconnection from space. Connecting time with space, he claims, is taking away its flow, or in his words, the duration of time. Duration is a heterogeneous succession of our consciousness without distinction, not a homogenous spatial time, but "an interconnection and organization of elements, each one of which represents a whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought".* Duration is not a succession of present moments that stand in an order of Past-Present-Future, but a flow in which chronology collapses. Qualitative changes melt into each other without any affiliation, and as such, they collect into a continuous multiplicity that cannot be measured. In a durational flow there are, he claims, reciprocal relations: the past is part of the present which becomes the future. In duration, past-present and future are connected and related through a flow of time. In his research, Bergson made an effort to articulate a philosophy that thinks through time. One cannot grasp the unceasing flux of reality with a static readymade concept. Geographer Doreen Massey compared her suggestion of a temporality of place to Bergson's proposition of duration. In her book *For Space*, she claims that if Bergson describes Duration as throwing oneself into the past, than her suggestion of thrown-togetherness is like throwing oneself into the spatial.

*Bergson, Henri. 1913. 101.

the past points out, for Yousef, the essence of his relationship with his sister. The physicality of her hanging on his arm, and the entanglement of his reaction to her, was the performative action Yousef used and handled during this specific scene. These gestures in each of the scenes embodied Yousef's memories from significant moments in the past into performative present actions. Physically interpreting these past moments as performative actions became part of his present throughout the filming. Alongside Yousef's present-tense conversations with the characters in the scenes, his performance physically brings his past to take part in the present of the film.

Every day of shooting was dedicated to a different scene. Each of the physical confrontations, one for each scene, was filmed as an ongoing, non interrupted, live performance during the few minutes in which night turned into day. The sound related to each scene was recorded after the time of shooting, in the same place in the building on the same day the scene that was shot. Yousef talked to each person he encountered as though s/he were there with him; he was not remembering what happened, but bringing the moment of encounter into the present. The conversations were not scripted nor rehearsed before the filming. The structure of the conversations was spontaneous, but Yousef was asked to approach each spoken encounter with all the emotions and thoughts he has towards them. Every take of the recorded conversations with one of the people from his life he encounter in the film was led by another thought or emotion. For example if the encounter with his father evolved regret, anger and compassion, than we were to record three different conversation. Each of the recordings were influenced and motivated by another mental and emotional base. This led him to speak fluently and intuitively in the recordings, confronting the conversation each time from another starting point connected to it. This allowed the recordings to document all the possible layers of engagement Yousef felt and thought about the encounter in each of the scenes. Eventually we recorded three to five conversations related to each of the filmed scenes. In addition to the conversations, we intensively recorded the sounds of the building's landscape and the animals in its surroundings during all of the shooting days. Throughout the filming and recordings of the film, the few minutes of dawn were returned to over twenty times, both in sound and in image. The repetitions of the dawn collected through the film materials added to over twenty hours. The next step was to understand how these parallel time flows could be edited into a single duration of Yousef's time-experience of the dawn in the film.

In his book *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, philosopher Gilles Deleuze, claims an image of 'Bergson's thinking through time' can be found in film images. Taking Tarkovsky's intuition about time in film further, Deleuze finds a way to represent through film the way Bergson thought through time. The reciprocal relations between Past-Present-Future, Deleuze claims, occur in film in what he refers to as two different kind of chronosigns. Deleuze defines a chronosign as marking the presentation of the direct time-image, "an image where time ceases to be subordinate and appears for itself"*, meaning for its own duration. Chronosigns are the different ways time appears or is structured in a film. Chronosigns create the relation of the film's time to the time in the 'world'. They either differ themselves from the ways time proceeds or is structures in chronological 'reality' outside the film or mimic how time passes outside it. The first concern of chronosigns, Deleuze claims, is the order of time, the internal relations of time between past-present-future. Here he finds two sorts of correlations 'Sheets of the past' and 'Peaks of present'. Both occur in an actual present, but time appears in them in different ways. These are two ways to reconstruct the appearance of time in film.

*Deleuze, Gilles, 1989. 335.

In the edited film, the time explored flows through Yousef, and it is difficult to determine whether he is in control of the encounters or whether the encounters are handling him. The film is loaded with Yousef's many confrontations of the same moment both in sound and in image. At times, he listens and takes part in the conversations; some times he ignores and screams; and in other occasions, he is silenced by the encounters or due to the sounds of the landscape around him. As a result there is an uncertainty created from the unclear orientation: what leads to the next step? In which direction is Yousef going? His time experience isn't led by the chronology of the passing events, as all the recorded scenes occur simultaneously throughout the film. Eventually, it is difficult to assert when his performance handles his

Peaks of present, Deleuze argues, are chronosigns of simultaneous accents: "a present of past, a present of present and a present of future" within a film.* In these scenes, time is never a succession of passing presents, and as for that it is unable to be explained or accounted for. Instead, time as it appears in *peaks of present* is a system of relativity, claims Deleuze "a plurality of worlds, constituting the universe"**. In this time structure one and the same event is played out in different worlds. These are not points of view of the same world, he suggests, but different worlds implicated in one event. *Peaks of present* are moments in films of a perpetual present cut off from its temporality. These are structures of time in film, that are disconnected from the chronology of time, and instead contain mutual worlds that are in relation within a certain event.

*Deleuze, Gilles, 1989, 101.

** *Ibid.*, 102.

memories or deals with his desires towards the future. The physical and vocal confrontations of the film occur in various time regions: past and future collapse into his present experience of time, while Yousef

walks from darkness to light. Daylight keeps advancing constantly in the film, slowly and quickly, but in a slower pace than in the time flow outside of his experience. Time in the film is edited and constructed in relation to Yousef's reactions in his performance. The pace of time, its appearance and its structure, changes throughout the film relatively to how Yousef experiences and handles his encounters and his movement towards the unknown landscape he is approaching.

Philosopher Gilles Deleuze claims that the chronosings of *sheets of past* contain temporality "in a form of coexisting large regions to be explored."* *Sheets of past* have a chronological course of the presents they refer to. These routes coexist in what Deleuze refers to as regions, best explained as parallel layers of time. All the layers of time, he claims, coexist in relation to the actual present in which they appear. The chronosign *sheets of past* subordinates movement to a lower rank than time. This is in regard to chronological-spatial time in which time is subsidiary to movement. In other words, the coexisting regions of past, the *sheets*, are the ones that enable movement between them. To allow movement all the *sheets of past* connect to a certain actual moment in the present. This moment is like the highest layer of a wave that holds together the rest of the wave, and empowers the movement once one enters it. "As soon as we reach the sheets of past it is as if we were carried away by the undulations of a great wave".** Deleuze claims that in these chronosigns, time gets out of joint and instead one enters temporality, which is for him, a permanent crisis. The transformation between the coexisting layers changes depending on which layer one currently experiences. As a result the present is no longer the centre of evocation, but instead movement is probabilistically carried between the sheets. This implies that chronosigns produce something new from the movement inherent in them "whether in the deciding between them, or at the edge of undecidability".***

*Deleuze, Gilles, 1989, 105.

** *Ibid.*, 112.

*** *Ibid.*, 118.

The same dawn Yousef is walking through in the film was captured in image and in sound over twenty times, returning again and again to the same moment where he leaves the place as he knew it and walks towards the place he is about to approach. The editing process compiled all of the returns into a single dawn, continuously drawing closer to daylight, but also loyally following Yousef's experience of

his flow of time. The edited flow was built in a dynamic pace, moving from dense experiences coming together to scattered instances of time.

First, every one of the visual scenes was edited separately and each vocal encounter was cut into one coherent conversation. Slowly, connections between the visual returns were made, taking into consideration the amount of light in the moment of the current scene, but more importantly connecting

Deleuze suggests that it is possible for a work of art to invent paradoxical, hypnotic and imaginary sheets whose property is at once in the present and always to come. The attempt in cinema to sketch a present prevents the past in it to be a mere recollection. Each one of the chronosigns calls up all the mental functions simultaneously and “What is loaded with all these functions, each time, is feeling”.* The chronosigns are layers of past experienced in the present of the film. These regions of past that appear in films promote feelings as a result of moving between them. The various relations between the sheets is in continual exchange, circulating from one sheet to another. Cinema is a place where direct confrontation of chronosigns, interrelations between past-present-future takes place independent of any fixed point in space.

* Deleuze, Gilles. 1989. 124.

body gestures, tensions and the pace of Yousef’s movement. Similarly the conversations were edited together addressing content, but more thoroughly his voice intonation, speed of speech and the energy coming out of his vocals. The final part of the editing process was connecting together the now single layers of the visual and sound. The connections within each of the edited layers, and also between them, were

seeking the inner relations between Yousef’s performances of the filmed and reordered scenes. The final editing process searched for links between the different actions that took place in each of the performances of every scene, as well as connections between the actions and the sound recording of his conversations. It strived to find resemblances and contrasts between the visual actions and sound recording that would reconstruct his embodied time experience. This structure incorporates various dynamics of time pace, and it also comprises relations and interactions between the recorded visuals and audial scenes. The structure of this edit correlates all the performative actions and the conversations as though they were occurring at the same flow of the moment. This film’s form suggests an impression of how Yousef experienced the moment of dawn as captured in the film. It unfolds all that Yousef has arrived with to this present flow, and wishes to reflect on his experience.

The intense return to the same present moment in image and sound of the film was edited into a continual dawn following Yousef's embodied experience of these few minutes. The physical and verbal encounters with moments and characters of his past changed throughout the film in their intensity and form. The film ceaselessly moves in structure between the changing occurrences in the film, at times led by the actions in the performances and at other time guided by the sound of his voice. Yousef's present encounters with people and moments from his past change from extremely *full* to very *narrow* incidents. When *full*, he is moving from sentence to sentence in sound and from one physical movement to another. Throughout the full incidents the flow of time, or a current present moment, stretches and expands over the chronological time that passes in the film. When *narrow*, the visual and sound empty themselves, and only one

image that is synched to one sound are shown and heard. During the *narrow* occurrences in the film, the time flow is consistent with the spatial time moving around Yousef, imitating chronological time as it is experienced outside the film. The film eventually moves between these extremes, never in a singular direction. This structure of film enables the past to burst into the present of the film as an unwanted visitor, and untangles its present as open and allowing the past to spread through it.

When recalling past events, Bergson claims, one shortens their duration and make them a "thing" in order to picture it to oneself. On the contrary, he argues, time and the duration of time needs to be lived, and not pictured; one needs to be in the flow of time, and not make events into something shorter and not part of a flow, something that can be put into a box and looked at. Shortening is not possible unless one attempts to determine what is about to come. "One is bound to live this duration whilst it is unfolding".* Bergson argues that living through the unfolding of time is duration. Duration dismisses the necessity of determination; it is to place oneself into the very moment of the act without "foreseeing the act before it is performed or reasoning about the possibility of the contrary action once the deed is done".** Bergson insists that time is fundamentally different from space and only thinking through pure Duration implies that the future is open.

* Bergson, Henri. 1913. 198.

* * *Ibid.*, 199.

Yousef's movement in the building throughout the film— the spatiality of the building and the landscape in which it is set— follows the way the movement unfolds from his experience of time. Until the end shot of the film (when the viewer sees the building from the outside), there is no opportunity to conclude

where he is in space, but only where he is in his particular time experience. But when the film ends and the sun rises, Yousef is no longer visible nor audible. Only the building is left and time returns to being represented merely by its spatial chronology, by the way the sun moves over the landscape. With this shot the film ends, without knowing how or if he left the building and how his journey continued. Only the landscape is there, intertwined with his experience.



Video Still from the film Guava, 2014

Conclusion

Demonstrating the *Guava Platform*: Insist to resist

Movement towards an embodiment of constructive political imagination

The notion of movement is explored throughout the thesis the *Guava Platform*, both physically and conceptually. In its physical meaning, the term circles around the effort of opening up the area in which I live, east of the Mediterranean, for movement. I aim to create concrete mobility in order for people living here to be able to interact with each other and explore the neighboring lands. Conceptually, *Guava* analyses movement as a form of resistance to the restricting and limiting borders of the region I live in. Most of the states around Israel are considered enemies and as a result there is almost no movement between Israel and the neighboring states. Furthermore, the Israeli State surrounds the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza strip, thereby controlling the movement of people within, and restricting movement into them. These restraints have been part of Israeli history since it came into being in 1948, and escalated as a result of every war, military operation and the ongoing occupation of people and land that Israel still practices. Political sociologist Adriana Kemp claims that since the establishment of the Israeli State, no government succeeded or conversely attempted: "...at bringing about a consensus over the desirable shape of the national 'geo-body', thus leaving the Israeli society in a 'no-border' situation."¹³⁴ As a result, inhabitants of the area have been living with multiple restrictions and no official state borders, and are suffering from the violent consequences of the control those restrictions impose on them. In this research project, when discussing the Israeli State and the conflicts with its neighboring countries, the legal national borders and Israel as a sovereign territory are some of the main issues questioned. The *Guava Platform* is concerned with the consequences of these barriers and the lack of movement the barriers impose on the landscape and the people living in the area.

Although this thesis does not discuss the authority and legality of Israeli State borders directly, I would like to point out the connection between the borders and the lack of

¹³⁴ Kemp, Adriana. 1999. 79.

possibilities of movement in the area. Since the establishment of Israel, the State randomly controls its inhabitants' movement. It considers borders as something changeable with the nation's needs: announcing territory to be a restricted army area, evacuating residents from their homeland, building settlements on private Palestinian lands, placing checkpoints, etc. As a result, fears emerge in people who are living here, the fear to cross a place one should not cross, whether this happens legally or to maintain their own safety. In ongoing discussions about Israeli territory, the main criticism actually regards the state's lack of solid and fixed national borders.¹³⁵ Nevertheless Israel continues to maintain its official 'borderless' position, and maintains restrictions of inhabitants' mobility according to the states needs. These unstable borders and fluidity of the Israeli territory add to the stagnation of people living here, who consequently shut themselves up in their familiar and *safe* surroundings. The *Guava Platform* is a reaction in form of multiple art-actions that insist to stimulate this impasse and find tactics of continuing to live here as an artist.

To react to these physical restrictions, the *Guava Platform* performs art-actions that induce and take part in embodying a political imagination of movement in the conflicted landscape. On the platform, imagination is acknowledged and rooted as a constructive tool. Imaginations "...are proper 'objects' of reflection through which we come to develop our powers of reason and increase our knowledge".¹³⁶ By considering imagination as constructive in *Guava's* artistic re-search, I ask to reclaim arts' ability to participate in its environment and become relevant in discussions that surround it. This standpoint suggests that imagination in art is not merely a fantasy representing something that is illusionary and unreal, but a constructive tool to connect one with their surroundings. This is similar to French Philosopher Paul Ricoeur's understanding of the imaginary. Ricoeur suggests that imagination involves an act of suspending the direct reference of thought to the objects of our ordinary discourse.¹³⁷ Similarly, the *Guava Platform* suggests suspending direct reference to the conflicted landscape and asks to experience it in alternative ways, through constructive imagination. The art-actions of the *Guava Platform*

¹³⁵ For further reading refer to: Kimmerling, Baruch and Weizman, Eyal, 2007.

¹³⁶ Gatens, Moira. and Lloyd, Genevieve. 1999. 4.

¹³⁷ Ricœur, Paul. 2003. 245-354, 261-270.

seek to postpone the common socio-political discussion of the local conflict, and constructively imagine movement in the area to re-think and re-feel oneself in the landscape.

The art-actions on the platform set this imaginative physical movement in motion by using conceptual movement as its dynamic force. The impetus of each action and within every one of them is therefore its conceptual movement: imagined movement triggers the action and maintains its existence; movement is the art-actions' incentive to perceive thoughts and feelings, and stimulates the ways one relates to a surrounding socio-political landscape. This sort of movement correlates to what philosopher Erin Manning conceptualizes as a movement that is an activator of minor gestures: "It moves the non-conscious toward the conscious, makes felt the unsayable in the said, brings into resonance field effects¹³⁸ otherwise backgrounded in experience."¹³⁹ Though it may pass almost unperceived, she claims that it is a force that challenges common sense and transforms the field of relations by offering unlimited experiential variations of alternative forms of being, knowing and doing. What a minor gesture might lead to, is, for Manning, always a political question as it invites new modes of living: "How this singular life-orientation carries existence, and where its minor gestures may lead, is always, for me, a political question."¹⁴⁰ Conceptually the art-actions on the platform aim to activate this sort of movement. The art-actions conduct their structure and practice accordingly, intending to activate this delicate but affective potency of movement.

One expression of this dynamic use of movement throughout the platform is how the Hebrew and the Arabic languages are applied. In all the elements of the platform that contain speech or conversation, Arabic and Hebrew are spoken. They transmit from one to another, as they are spoken inseparably, and not translated from one to the other. On the platform the users of the two languages are in need to unlearn the former knowledge of their main speech or mother tongue. The words in the actions on the platform are taken

¹³⁸ Field effects, according to philosophers Erin Manning and Brian Massumi, are relational fields of everything that takes place (moving or still) in a certain event. These fields are noticed, they claim, when one actively thinks **with** movement, when one bodily's action is thinking. For further reading on this concept: Manning, Erin and Massumi, Brian. 2014.

¹³⁹ Manning, Erin. 2016. 7.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

from Arabic and Hebrew, but to understand or speak what this combined language implies, one is required to redefine and experience how the words are used and what they mean. “I must learn how to speak Arabic” says the main character, Yousef, in Arabic at the end of the film ***A day becomes***¹⁴¹, after speaking this language alongside Hebrew for the whole of it. Yousef implies that even though he speaks both Hebrew and Arabic throughout the film, he is not familiar with his own speech. In order to learn the languages that might be spoken in the new, now borderless, landscape he is facing, he needs to forget Arabic and Hebrew as he formerly knew them.

In the past decades, the violent structures and unjust conditions in Israel changed the use of both the Hebrew and Arabic languages. Although Arabic is the mother tongue and main language of Palestinian citizens in Israel (who represent more than 20% of the society) and it is officially the second language of the state, Israeli Jews rarely speak it. Furthermore, because most of the daily routine is in Hebrew,¹⁴² Palestinian citizens of the Israeli State tend not to master their mother tongue, as they are expected to function in Hebrew. In almost every aspect of daily routine in Israel, Arabic is pushed aside: it is not heard on the streets, nor in the mass media or in any other public realm. As a result, Arabic has become the language of the ‘enemy’ and Hebrew the language of the ruler and ruling system. This insufficient and even harmful use of languages makes it nearly impossible to use their phrases in order to imagine a place that could be open for movement.

These divides between the two languages are the reason Yussef and also participants/viewers/listeners also of the other art-actions, are confronted with and challenged by the language as it is used on the platform. The fluency between the two languages in *Guava*’s art-actions encourages its participants to question the ways one uses their language and move from what was known before, towards a combination of the two that does not yet exist. Yussef’s comment, of his need to learn Arabic, implies that his knowledge of both the languages is no longer sufficient in the landscape he is walking towards. He will need

¹⁴¹ *A Day Becomes*, 19 min. (2018).

¹⁴² The local universities teach in Hebrew, and most of the work in all the fields requires knowledge in Hebrew.

to re-learn the languages to be able to speak in the new landscape that is open for movement.

Thoughts about the connections, relations and separations of the two languages are also the topic of the **radio conversation** with Middle East Studies language researcher Yoni Mendel. Mendel's research focuses on how the political conflict influenced the way Arabic is spoken in Israel. Our conversation was around how Arabic used to be the local language in Palestine before Israel was established. We discussed how it could have been the language that Jews and their neighbors would have had in common. But, sadly we concluded, that the absence of the use of Arabic has made people forget how close it is to Hebrew. Instead it is increasingly used by the Israeli general army forces, and military intelligence, and almost never in daily Jewish environments, except for some curses that every Israeli knows.

Throughout the platform's art-actions, the dynamic force of movement is a direct response to the physical limitations of the landscape: the dynamic force of movement alludes to dismissing the borders and allow movement in the area. One example of how the dynamic force of movement aims at the removal of borders in the *Guava's* art-actions is the geotagging **website**. This website invites people to notice and re-mark the road between Jaffa-Tel Aviv and Beirut. This road allowed inhabitants to move from one city to another before the establishment of Israel. The website invites people to download stencils, spray the stencil on the existing physical route and later upload a picture of the graffiti to the website. Another example is the *Guava's* short film series¹⁴³, which also invites its viewers to experience the landscape as physically open to movement. All these films are placed here, in the local landscape, but they occur in an imagined time, in the midsts of the moment when the borders are abolished. In all the films of the series, people are confronted with the sudden possibility of movement in the area, and are challenged to react to the possibilities it opens.

Other art-actions of the *Guava Platform* also enact the dynamic force through relationships between people. These actions focus on performing and as such, do not necessarily create new objects in the world: instead, there is appearing, discussing and

¹⁴³ *Guava*, 12 min. (2014); *Sham (there)*, 22 min. (2016); *A Day Becomes*, 19 min. (2018).

conversing. They consider the dynamic force in reference to how philosopher Hannah Arendt articulated it through the distinction between labor, work and action in relation to human politics. Action, she claims is the only activity that exists directly between people without the mediation of things or material. It means to “take an initiative”, and to “set something in motion”¹⁴⁴, through action people disclose who they are in the public realm. Action is what makes us human in a socio-political environment, according to Arendt. She claims action is what points towards and reflects peoples freedom and plurality. Freedom in the sense that all people are able to act, to make something new, and plurality because action is something done within the *world* besides others’ and in public. The *Guava Platform* art-actions are motivated and triggered on the base of these two means of action Arendt refers to, freedom and plurality, and seek how to activate them. One suggestion of doing this on the platform is to voice a point of view, to initiate a dynamic force between people and to engage in discussions. Here, the element of conversation becomes the main part of the performance. Several voices are put together to reveal their relations and interactions and to expose their multiplicity. By placing the interrelations between particular people in the centre of an art-action, the socio-political conflict shifts from the national sphere to a personal one. People – not nations – disclose their needs, desires and interest of living here. They confront their aspirations with this land separated from their nationality and converse their relations to it with other people who inhabit the land east of the Mediterranean.

One example of these conversations is the case of the **online radio broadcasts**. As social scientist Sherry Turkle claims, “Face-to-face conversation is the most human—and humanizing—thing we do. Fully present to one another, we learn to listen. It’s where we develop the capacity for empathy.”¹⁴⁵ On the radio, I organized more than twenty different broadcasts of conversations in Hebrew and in Arabic with artists, activists, academics and cultural entrepreneurs. They discussed independent map-making and urban planning, local activism and feminist theory, alternative historical readings and reconceptualization of being in refuge. In each of them there was a discussion about

¹⁴⁴ Hannah, Arendt. 1958. 177.

¹⁴⁵ Turkle, Sherry. 2015. 10.

current conceptions and actions people currently practice that might be relevant for the possibilities the *Guava Platform* suggests. In these conversations, memories, thoughts, feelings, and fictional accounts all contributed to imagining the landscape as open to movement.

At other times, the raised voices are part of gatherings and conversations that occur during the platform's performances, in which the viewers and visitors are invited to take part. One example is the ***Guava scent collection***. People are encouraged to share memories triggered by the scents presented in the installation, and engage in conversations on locality and inhabiting land in the area. In another ***performance***¹⁴⁶, Lebanese artist and activist Eliesh¹⁴⁷ and I met for the first time on the 'neutral' ground¹⁴⁸ of Leiden University, the Netherlands.¹⁴⁹ Our meeting opened a symposium we organized on the topic of art and artists in the light of national identities: how and in which circumstances do nationalities influence a work of art or the work of an artist? Eliesh and I had a chance to speak and work together online, but we had not been able to travel and meet each other in our respective countries. In Leiden the setting of the performance consisted of two chairs and a microphone. All we decided before was that we can ask each other anything, and the audience can interfere when they wish. Our personal and distinctive meeting in the performance revealed in the performance as a new and particular way to discuss artists' activity in the context of their nationality and feeling of belonging (or not) to a certain place.

The participatory artistic practice of conversations on the platform, alongside the conceptual artistic work did not feel adequate as a sole reaction to the ongoing violence in and over the landscape. The art practices described in this PhD project aim to demonstrate that the dynamic force of movement is activated through interactions between people and conversations. They also endeavor to challenge the common

¹⁴⁶ The performance that took place at the Leiden University in 2016 was never named.

¹⁴⁷ This single name without a last name is the only one I have learned to know him by.

¹⁴⁸ Lebanon and Israel consider themselves enemy countries, meaning its residents and citizens are not allowed to travel between the two nations.

¹⁴⁹ As part of the symposium *Arts in the Eyes of National Identities* that took place at the Leiden University, 23-24 of June 2016.

understandings of language and identity that people living here experience. But the *Guava Platform*'s re-search also seeks to activate this force in a physical form, to work with and inside one's body. Some of the *Guava* art-actions activate the participants and viewers physically within their body. If most of the art-actions activate sight and sound, these actions operate also with taste and smell. The art-actions address simultaneously all of the five senses and interior parts of the body, penetrating one's physical experience in an attempt to raise a political resistance movement from within. Philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty argues that "The perceiving subject is not this absolute thinker; rather, it functions according to a natal pact between our body and the world, between ourselves and our body".¹⁵⁰ The *Guava Platform* enters every gateway to embody the constructive political imagination of movement. These bodily actions penetrate all the entrances to one's body (eyes, ears, mouth, nose, skin) to broaden the research for additional tactics through feeling, tasting, smelling and the digestion system.

One demonstration of embodiment in the art-actions on the platform is in the film **Sham (There)**.¹⁵¹ In the film people were invited to join a twenty-four-hour performance in the Judea Hills. During these hours, people and cargo piled upon a refugee truck standing on a path in the landscape. Women and men of different ages, speaking Hebrew and Arabic, amass upon the open truck, one after the other. More and more people and cargo huddle together. The people who joined the performance did not necessarily know each other beforehand and their actions were not planned, leaving it open to their intuitive reactions to one another and the piling objects and stuff around them. Participants were experiencing, demonstrating and performing a bodily exploration of their interrelations while constantly in need of finding their place on the truck.

Another example is in the performance **Entrails**¹⁵², in it eating and feeding become the main dynamic activator of embodying political imagination. Morad¹⁵³ told me his life story repeatedly while I fed him lamb internal organs. The more I fed him, the less detailed his

¹⁵⁰ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1964, 5.

¹⁵¹ Sham (There), Short Film, 22 min. (2016).

¹⁵² Entrails, Performance, 20 minutes, 2016-ongoing.

¹⁵³ Morad Hassan is also one of the performers participating in the film Sham (There).

version of the story became. On the surface of our interaction lie our dualistic differences: Man-Woman, Muslim-Jewish, Citizen-Resident¹⁵⁴, Eater-Feeder, and the performance shows how feeding and eating underscore these dualities. Alongside these binaries, the performance explored what interrelations are possible between Morad and me through the food we share, and not just relying on the content of what he says to me in his monologue. In the chapter **Feeding/Eating the Other** the reader is taken on a journey mirroring the performance's structure, where various possible interactions are examined. The seven suggestions of possible relationships are unfolded in seven sub-chapters of the chapter, based on the seven repetitions of his monologue. In this chapter the accumulation of suggested interactions between us reveal the possibility of a layered relationship that appears when our shared Hebrew language is put aside and our connection is based on feeding and eating.

The explorations of the *Guava Platform* insist on full embodiment, engaging the five senses to re-think and re-feel the political imagination of this conflicted landscape. The platform re-searches both conceptual and poetical possibilities through the senses and through the whole body, including the inner bodily systems of digestion and olfactory capacities. None of these actions are sufficient on their own, separately, because *Guava* is in search for interrelations and re-actions that suggest possibilities of re-articulating what it means to live in this landscape. And for this, multiple and ongoing tactics of intervention are needed.

At the beginning of my PhD trajectory, we, as students, were requested to “demonstrate knowledge and understanding” as part of our aim in completing the thesis. Encountering the concept of ‘demonstration’ again— in such a different context and with completely different tools than the demonstration I recall from my political experience— made me draw a small sketch in my new PhD notebook. The sketch was of a female-like person

¹⁵⁴ I am a Jewish resident of the state of Israel, and not a citizen. My parents moved to Israel when I was a child, and decided to refuse the Israeli citizenship in order to keep our German citizenship. Since I have been an adult, I chose not to change this. Officially, because I'm Jewish, my residentship in Israel is very stable, and I have to fulfill all my duties (including army service). The only thing I cannot do is vote.

standing with her right hand held up and holding a sign saying: 'I know how to research'. While *she* continued standing in the middle of the page in the notebook, it took me a couple of more years to articulate why *she* was protesting and how *she* intended to do so.

At first I was motivated by the attempt to find ways to continue living, as an artist, in the violent and conflicted landscape of my home country. This incentive continued throughout my PhD project and is still stimulating my practice and my research today. On the thesis/website I looked for possible courses of art-actions as a response to the socio-political surroundings I am part of. I focused in particular on how the borders in the area restrict inhabitants' ability to physically move from place to place, and the constraints these borders dictate upon their political imagination. Eight of these art-actions (films, performances and radio conversations) and four chapters that are written around them are the components of this thesis/website. The chapters reflect and contextualize the research process and manifestation of each art-action in order to better understand and develop my response as an artist to this landscape. The thesis/website brings all the art-actions and texts together and organizes them in the same *space* for the first time. All of the actions and texts pursue the initial research questions: "Can time-based art-actions in a conflicted landscape induce and take part in an embodiment of constructive political imagination? If both physical and conceptual 'movement' are the impetus of these actions, could these actions adjust the socio-political impasse of the landscape, and if so, how? And how might they contribute to a socio-political discussion of the landscape I live in?" The research resulted in evolved and expanded methods of constructing and acting out these art-actions.

The tactics and techniques of the *Guava Platform's* art-actions that were articulated during the research process include four main understandings in regard to the questions raised. These four points together determine my positions in the field. They convey the ways I found to act in the field of socio-political-engaged art while living here, east of the Mediterranean.

One is the trans-medium approach of the art-actions, promoting the use of various time-based art forms on the platform, including films, performance, participatory art and public

interventions. The platform structure and thesis/website allow these various media to interact, relate and influence one another. Many times within the context of each individual art-action, different media cooperate. An example of this are the performative techniques that are employed and play a role in the structures of the films, or the conversations held as part of the scent collection exhibition. Since the various media on the platform relate and affect each other and as a result go beyond, across and through their original definitions, I refer to this understanding as a trans-medium approach.

Second is the understanding that the art-actions should operate in a large spectrum of participatory tactics. The platform's art-actions invite people to explore multiple ways of taking part. The participants always perform as themselves, not representing a larger group, and especially putting nationalities aside. In the art-actions participation ranges from promoting direct action to simply watching the films. In between, participants are called to take part in conversations, to speak on the radio, to listen to the radio, to perform in the films, to take part in conferences, to read the texts and listen to lectures, to smell or to eat.

Third is the understanding that the art-actions should activate an embodiment of socio-political constructive imagination, conceptually and physically and therefore operate the five human senses, the digestion and olfactory systems. The local socio-political conflicts of the area east to the Mediterranean, where I live, is vigorously interpreted both visually and vocally. Everyone puts effort into explaining the reasons and outcomes of this conflict, and therefore *everyone* has an opinion. Between the news, TV-shows, films, blogs and academic research in various fields—endless information has already been communicated, documented and recorded regarding the conflict in this area. As a result, on the platform I experiment with all the senses and inner parts to explore the possibilities of embodying a socio-political constructive imagination through them. These experiences are a result of both dissatisfaction with the efficacy of working only with sight and sound, and of my eagerness to subversively interact and affect participants on the platform.

Fourth is the understanding of activating conceptual movement within the art-actions in order to stimulate a political constructive imagination of physical movement in the area east of the Mediterranean. Because the art-actions generate metaphorical and symbolical

movement in time, memory, language, landscape and identity, they encourage and enrich the inhabitants' possibilities of a socio-political constructive imagination of physical movement in the area.

The thesis/website is the outcome of a demonstration that began with a female-like person sketched in my PhD notebook, offering a demonstration of the *Guava Platform* re-search. The tactics, terms and methods of this re-search demonstrate how *Guava*, as a whole and in each of its components, is engaged with the re-action of an artist in a conflicted landscape. This thesis/website may be the completion of the re-search project, but not the conclusion of the *Guava Platform*. At the moment I am in the process of developing a new film in the series named *Yatir*.¹⁵⁵ Yatir forest is the largest planted forest in Israel. It covers more than 40,000 square meters with about 4 million pine trees on the edge of the Negev desert in the south of Israel. The forest was planted at the beginning of the 1960s, but this particular area of land is already mentioned in the Old Testament and is thought to be inhabited by humans since then. The film will record the branching and ramifications of the trees in the forest. It will seem as though there is no way out of the forest, no direction to follow and no path to go by. The only trail the film will find is into the endless desert. In the film a tree will fall down, collapse. All of the participants in the film will appear in different scenes by the tree that is about to fall. In other words, the deeds of many people collapse into a singular action, the falling of the tree.

The *Guava Platform* will continue to follow the notion of reclaiming imagination through time-based art as a constructive tool. It will keep researching through art and writing how to respond and react in conflicted landscapes by embodying constructive political imagination. Through this embodiment, my research into the possibility of how to live in these places while resisting the increasing racism, violence, injustice and fear of my surroundings, is ongoing.

¹⁵⁵ Working title.

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The *Guava Platform*, which is at the centre of this PhD thesis, was initiated in 2014 as a conceptual framework of my art practice and research. The aim of the *Guava Platform* is to research and create possible techniques of *art-actions* that are part of my quest to continue to live in the conflicted landscape, east of the Mediterranean, as an artist.

This dissertation assembles the *Guava art-actions*: i.e. a series of three short films, an online radio station, two performances, a geotagging website, and a scent collection as well as the research into a combined space. Both the *art-actions* and the research convey the *Guava Platform*. The leading questions of the thesis are: Can time-based art-actions in a conflicted landscape induce and take part in an embodiment of constructive political imagination? If both physical and conceptual ‘movement’ are the impetus of these actions, could these actions adjust the socio-political impasse of the landscape, and if so, how? And how might they contribute to a socio-political discussion of the landscape I live in?

The outcome of this research is presented on a website. On this website, all the art-actions and texts are organized together in the same *space* for the first time. Here, the different components, the art-actions and texts, are not bound to a hierarchical relationship between theory and practice that might restrict their possibility to interact. Instead, the website enables the visitor to navigate between the different artistic and discursive elements in a nonlinear way, opening up innumerable opportunities of directions to go through and explore the research.

This dissertation is part of my ongoing process as an artist dealing with my socio-political surroundings. I suggest suspending direct reference to the conflicted landscape and instead experiencing it in alternative ways, through constructive imagination. Even though I do not aim at finding concrete solutions to the severe emergencies around me, I do allow myself, participants and visitors the opportunity to re-articulate, in thought and body, our state of living in this area.

Het *Guava Platform*, dat in deze dissertatie centraal staat, is in 2014 door mij opgezet als een conceptueel kader voor mijn kunstpraktijk en voor mijn onderzoek. Het doel van het *Guava Platform* is om mogelijke werkwijzen voor *art-actions* te onderzoeken en te creëren. De *art-actions* maken deel uit van mijn streven om als kunstenaar te blijven wonen in het conflictueuze landschap ten Oosten van de Middellandse Zee.

In deze dissertatie zijn de *Guava art-actions* bijeengebracht, te weten: een reeks van drie korte films, een online radiostation, twee performances, een *geotagging* website en een verzameling geuren, alsook het onderzoek, alles samen op één plek. De *art-actions* en het onderzoek vormen samen het *Guava Platform*.

De leidende vragen in het onderzoek zijn: Hoe kunnen *time-based art-actions* een belichaming van constructieve politieke verbeeldingskracht stimuleren en daar deel van uitmaken? Als zowel fysieke als conceptuele 'beweging' de drijfveer is van de *art-actions*, hoe kunnen deze acties dan mogelijkwijs bijdragen aan het menselijk bestaan in een conflictueus landschap? En hoe zouden deze acties kunnen bijdragen aan een socio-politieke discussie over dit landschap?

De uitkomsten van het onderzoek worden gepresenteerd op een website. Op deze website worden alle *art-actions* en teksten voor het eerst samengebracht op dezelfde plek. De verschillende componenten, acties en tekst, zijn niet gebonden aan een hiërarchische verhouding tussen theorie en praktijk. Een dergelijke hiërarchie zou de mogelijkheid tot uitwisseling tussen de componenten beperken. De website stelt de bezoeker in staat om op een nonlineaire manier te navigeren tussen de verschillende artistieke en discursieve elementen, hetgeen het mogelijk maakt om op ontelbare manieren door het onderzoek heen te gaan.

De dissertatie is onderdeel van het voortgaande proces om als kunstenaar om te gaan met de socio-politieke omgeving. Mijn voorstel is om directe verwijzingen naar het conflictueuze landschap op te schorten en in plaats daarvan het landschap op alternatieve manieren te ervaren, door middel van de constructieve verbeeldingskracht. Ik streef er niet naar om concrete oplossingen te vinden voor de urgente situatie om mij heen, maar in plaats daarvan bied ik mijzelf, participanten en bezoekers de mogelijkheid om ons bestaan in dit gebied te her-articulieren, zowel fysiek als in het denken.

Thalia Hoffman is a visual artist working in film, video, performance and public interventions. She was born on June 3rd, 1979 in Düsseldorf and moved with her family to Jerusalem in the summer of 1986. Since 2001 Hoffman lives and works in Jaffa-Tel Aviv.

She holds a BA in Humanities from the University of Bar-Ilan, and is an MFA graduate (with honors) in Fine Arts from the University of Haifa, where she is teaching since, in the BA and MFA programs of the School of Arts. In addition she is a graduate of the Musrara program of art and social change in Jerusalem. Since 2015 Thalia Hoffman is a PhD candidate at the PhDArts, the international doctorate program of Leiden University in close collaboration with the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague, The Netherlands.

Hoffman has directed a full length documentary, and several short experimental films and performances. In addition, she is working as an independent film editor and initiates socio-political change programs using the agent of film and art within different communities in her surroundings. All her work strives to be involved in its surroundings and engage people to look, listen and feel their socio-political landscape with attention. Hoffman's films, video works and performances have been shown in exhibitions and festivals in Israel and around the world. Among them the Tel Aviv Museum of art, The Haifa Museum of art, Mamuta art centre in Jerusalem, Beit HaGefen Gallery in Haifa, The Jerusalem film festival, Experiments in Cinema Festival in New Mexico, Aesthetica Film Festival in the UK, and The Video-Art festival in Cairo.

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Here live also the hundreds of people who participated and took part in the various art-actions of the *Guava Platform*. Unfortunately the limitations of this text do not allow me to name all of them, but I would like to mention a few who sculpted and carved significant

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