Sites of Unlearning

Encountering Perforated Ground

Thesis Report and USB of Video Works
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Slade School of Fine Art
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Declaration

I, Dana Ariel, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.
Abstract

This research project addresses the struggle to encounter and see others, and otherness, beyond preconceptions. Through my art practice I experiment with methods that aim to implicate the viewer in acts of ‘unlearning.’ These acts intend to provoke the desire to see beyond what has been seen and known before. I experiment with the printing processes of photographs and hybrid printmaking techniques, video, abstract concepts of drawing lines and text works in order to highlight the ambiguity in language and to create sites for ‘unlearning.’

My methodology developed from the German verb ‘verlernen,’ that translates to unlearning or forgetting in English. This verb contains within its meaning an action that is both passive and active. In my practice, it also emphasises the desire for a process that must be constantly at work. Experimenting with methods of erasure, I search landscape and language for moments of misidentification and misreading that offer generative ways to challenge the single reading of images and words.

Through encountering sites in the UK, Germany, Israel and Palestine, as well as the material sites of making, I explore cultural and political narratives and my own biography. The encounters with these sites complicate the different rights and limitations applied to citizens, immigrants and refugees, and question what methods of identification are at play and whether they manifest themselves in the landscape. These encounters confront me with the ambiguity of the law and my national identity when meeting military forces and people who inhabit the landscape, as they both engage in acts of surveillance. These boundaries between different civil and national identities blur further through the collapse of dichotomies such as hospitality and hostility, poetics and violence and access and restrictions. The artworks I create allow for pauses or gaps that aim to challenge these positions and dichotomies.

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(Figure 1.3) Dana Ariel, *from Mount X*, gelatin silver print, 2015
Introduction
Einleitung, Einführung
مقدمة
הקדמה
My title *Sites of Unlearning: Encountering Perforated Ground* emerged in stages and through a repeated return to my practice of making. My research project is led by practice: I repeatedly return to the places I photograph – I will be referring to these places as the *visited sites* – and the making process in order to rethink ways of seeing beyond what has been seen. I see the interruptions or distortions of the making process, such as the mistakes, scratches, stains appearing on paper and the over exposure of the negatives, as resembling the misidentification, misreading or mistranslation that occur at the sites I visit. These interruptions become integral to my research, as moments of rupture or conflict, that force the renegotiation of what can be seen, known and spoken.

My text aims to not only voice this practice, but more importantly to embody the proposed methods and methodology. As a starting point, I address the question of what is the role of writing in my practice and what do I wish this text to create? My approach to writing is anchored in the urge to make the written text become the practice. I began thinking of what a practice of *siting language* might be, and how the work with images and the printing process could reflect and inform the reading or misreading of words.

This text visits the English, German, Hebrew and Arabic languages. These languages are encountered in direct relation to the sites I visit, in Israel, Palestine, Germany, and the UK, and are rethought through wordplay, poetic propositions, exploration of the split roots of words, misunderstanding and misreading. The treatment of words in my project emerged from my work with images. To speak of my images in words required working with language as I would with images – through visiting languages as I visit sites and treating the writing process as a form of making.

A practice of *siting language* should begin by asking where and how can we begin? A questioning of language and common language. The table of contents above already begins this process of tampering with the possibility of beginning to speak, read, or write in a single language. In a changeable order, each title begins with the language that first instigated the process of translation. This decision emerged from the sites I visit and is determined by which language most clearly represents the conflict – or conflicted narratives – offered by the sites.

My table of contents is perforated. It presents gaps within a construct of parts and titles. It could only be read in full by those who are familiar with all four languages; and even if such a reader is found, the selection itself is not straightforward. It is made in the form of a poetic leaning or preference towards one translation or another. This choice reminds us that there is an author, who navigates the variations of possible readings. For others, this might render the
text unreadable. However, these gaps are poignant to this research. Words, if unreadable, remain pictorial variations on white paper. Perhaps they could be read out loud, without their meaning being fully understood, purely by the familiarity with some alphabetic forms. In this instance, there will be an untranslatable or even ungraspable vocal gap. In any case, the gap, even when occupied by an unreadable sign, is important. It holds a place on the page, and is present despite, and through, its unreadability.

The order of things – where one begins – is significant too. The order of translation, from Hebrew to English, or from English to Arabic, will take us on different paths, and possibly result in different meanings. It is therefore the process itself that I will be focusing on in my project, without aiming to reach an end meaning, result or product. The process of translating from one language to another could unfold endlessly. Translation aims to be a method of expanding meaning, poetically and metaphorically; it intends to be a method of rethinking the breath of words and meanings uttered out loud or silently in conversations or silent contemplations. My use of translation stretches the meaning of words to their breaking point, where ‘the meaning’ might fall-apart or collapse on itself, yet remains present. I will begin with the following example: addressing the urge behind this research project as offered by the following translations:

Urgency
דחיפות
دراج

urge, compulsion, impulse, desire
ملحة

pressing, compelling
Dringlichkeit
drängen
ungenedulig schieben und drücken
or impatiently push and press
In the pages that follow, words and images are driven by compulsion. Urge, impulse and desire are urgently and equally gathered to the task of writing; the task of making with words and images pushing and pressing against each other to leave an imprint. The play with translation paves the way through the urgency for this project, the desire for another form of speaking and seeing, the impulse to make and to encounter, and finally, to consider what is impatiently pushing and pressing in the photographic trace and the printing process.

My research project is written in different voices. There are many layers operating in the works I create, and the works I exhibit to the viewer are those which travel through these layers most fluidly. In order to echo this in my writing I use different forms of creative critical writing. These different forms might be analogous to the choice of medium for a work of visual art, like the caption of a photograph indicating a gelatin silver print, or a photo etching print. The genre shifts frequently from one encounter to the next, and include:

Descriptive texts – these are observations from the visited sites, accounts of encounters with the people who inhabit or visit the sites, or detailed descriptions of the printing process.

Biographical and autobiographical texts – the sites I visit directly or indirectly confront me with my own biography. Being present on site always demands the return to identity, national identity in particular, which affects matters of access and restrictions to sites. The sites in Israel, Palestine, Germany and the UK were chosen because of their entangled histories. This entanglement also forms my own national identity – as I will address in more details in part two of this text – and plays a key role in the motivation and political urgency for revisiting these sites. The biographical voice is embedded and is inseparable from this research project; it contributes to the development of my methods and methodology and greatly influences the way I see the landscape, and the potential encounters that seeing might invite or provoke.

Poetic texts – I use a poetic and ambiguous language as a method to challenge the single reading of both images and words. Most importantly, it is used throughout this text and my works, as a way of beginning to speak through the difficulties of dialogue – with the use of imagination. The poetic texts aim to generate fluidity between the encountered political complexities and violence, the printing processes and the materiality of the photographic image. They aim at finding an imaginative way to rethink the political boundaries of dialogue: of what cannot be spoken and who has the right to speak.
I take inspiration from Irit Rogoff’s words ‘that the project of theory has moved on from being a mode of analysis by which you understand what lies behind and beneath the working of knowing and representing. Instead “theory” can become the space for making, or re-making of culture, of envisaging further possibilities rather than explicating existing circumstances.’ In another of her texts, entitled What is a theorist?, originally published in German as What is an artist?, Rogoff writes that ‘a theorist is one who has been undone by theory.’

The narrative of theoretical unraveling, of being undone, is a journey of phases in which the thought we are immersed in is invalidated. Those moments of silent epiphany in which we have realised that things might not necessarily be so, that there might be a whole other way to think them, moments in which the paradigms we inhabit cease to be self-legitimating and in a flash are revealed to be nothing more than what they are: paradigms.

For Rogoff, criticality is entangled with risk: it is a cultural recognition of what is being risked or what is at risk. Criticality, for her, is the task of undoing by recognising the boundaries and limitations of one’s own thought. She seeks to think of the work of art as something that creates and that has effect on its surrounding environment – for Rogoff the work of art is ‘an actual cultural making, not an analysis, of a condition I perceived of theoretically.’

I draw inspiration from Rogoff’s text in regards to the following two key aspects: the first is the question of theory in my practice and writing, and the second is concerned with where is the work and when is the work at work? I draw here from Rogoff’s conception of a ‘shift to a performative phase of cultural work in which meaning takes place [...] through forms of enactments.’

I will begin with the latter – the work. I will not dive into the analysis of what the work of art is, but rather offer a few more words on my use of the word: where I see the work, and when the work is at work. The Hebrew word ḥażakah or ḥבורה might be attributed to the work of art. The first translates as creation – a creative work constructed of the verb to create that also means urge or drive – and the second means work or labour. Arabic, too, emphasises labour – عمل نمي.

3 Rogoff, 98.
4 Rogoff, 104.
5 Rogoff,106.
The works I make point at the labour required in seeing and unseeing and knowing and unknowing. This also includes speaking and listening. The works I discuss through the various encounters are unfixed. Some of these encounters result in series of images and prints, video works or text works, while others remain dormant, for the time being, in the narrative or description of a site, a process, or an encounter with a viewer. These are potential works, already situated in relation to other works I make. In this text and my project, the work is enacted in language and translation, through the different sites I visit and the sites of exhibition. The work is in a constant state of becoming, re-enacting and responding to new encounters.

In my research, theory is inseparable from my thinking and making process. Various fields of research such as trauma theory, identity politics, political theory, creative critical writing, literature and art critique, form part of the landscape of this research project. I am particularly interested in theoretical and philosophical works that emerge from the encounters with the sites I visit. An example of this could be seen in my engagement with Jacques Derrida’s work of deconstruction and in particular his critique of Kant and the notion of cosmopolitan right for hospitality that he deconstructs by highlighting the hostility that the word hospitality harbors. Hospitality and hostility return time and again in relation to the sites I visit and in relation to the encounters with visitors at the exhibition sites. Another significant text that I revisit repeatedly throughout this research is the lecture series by Roland Barthes on The Neutral, where he skillfully and playfully explores ways to challenge the paradigms offered by selected terms he refers to as ‘figures’.

In Ariella Azoulay’s work and writings I find meeting points with my approach to photography and the contamination of the Hebrew language. Azoulay offers an intriguing critique on Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territories and the photographic medium itself. She argues that the act of viewing photographs can renew a critical discussion and awaken what has been buried and concealed in photographs taken at sites of conflict, or by the means of their making. Her work and writing significantly influences my approach to photography. Azoulay writes that ‘the event of photography is subject to a unique form of temporality - it is made up of an infinite series of encounters. The event of photography has two different modalities of eventness - the first occurs in relation to the camera or in relation to its hypothetical presence while the second occurs in relation to the photograph or in relation to the latter’s hypothetical existence.’6 Azoulay argues that the use of photographs is not primarily a search for truth, but is rather ‘a struggle over the mode of being with

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others’ – it is the opportunity to open up a place for others to participate in the search for truth.\textsuperscript{7} I am interested in her proposition to view photography as a form of an open encounter, one that calls the viewer to practice what she terms as ‘civil imagination’ – the reconstruction of the event of photography and the relations between the photographed event, its participants, the mediation of a camera, the sovereignty of the state and the photographer’s gaze.\textsuperscript{8} Azoulay highlights that the conversation on photography must also address the reading and seeing of photographs through what is not represented in the photographs but is part of this act of reconstruction.\textsuperscript{9}

In order to voice the transitions between what constitutes the event of photography and situate it within my own practice I will be using the following variations of the term \textit{site}:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Siting language} – is the turn from practice to language. It aims to use the same methods used in my works to unpick, deconstruct and tamper with words. \textit{Siting Language} is the term I use out of the necessity to lay the (perforated) ground for a conversation; to identify the gaps and holes made by untranslatable words, misunderstandings and poetic connotations different languages can offer.

\item \textit{The visited sites} – refer to the history of the sites and their conflicted geopolitical narratives, the performative act of photography and the criticality of visiting derived from the Hebrew words \textit{buscar} and \textit{ביקום} that I will address in more details in the first part.

\item \textit{The sites of making} – these are predominantly the darkroom and print room, but could also extend to other places of making. With this term I \textit{site} the making process, paying attention to the importance of the making process as a thinking process and as a potential \textit{unlearning} of the visited sites.

\item \textit{The sites of exhibition} – where the work is encountered by viewers. At this site of encounter my attention turns to bringing the different sites together and making the various layers of the work visible.
\end{itemize}

The movement between these different sites remains fluid. The works I will be introducing in this text stretch and transform through repeated visits, and are molded by the various encounters with viewers, places, theory and processes from the sites of making.

\textsuperscript{7} Azoulay, 224.
\textsuperscript{8} Azoulay, 219.
\textsuperscript{9} Azoulay, 232, 234.
In the first part, *Siting Language: Practicing Unlearning in Words and Images* I unpick the title of my research; analysing the multiple layers each individual word in my title suggests. In this way, I am laying the ground of this research project by revisiting in words and their extended political and poetic contexts, the same methods I apply in my making process.

In the second part, *Methods of Unlearning*, I present my search for generative methods of unlearning. Through my own encounters I seek to politically and poetically analyse my own national identity, which is often demanded in the sites I visit. I explore the *photographic trace* and its relation to actions of blurring borders and boundaries. Finally, I encounter misidentification in the landscape and explore the generative potential it may offer. These methods aim to challenge preconceived ideas and are developed from the repeated encounters with the sites, with their political entanglements, the presence of the military, acts of violence; as well as the need to see time and time again.

In the third part, *Encounters with the Visited Sites and the Sites of Making* I address the works made during this research project. The titles refer to images, series of prints, video works, text works, sound pieces and even potential works – encounters with sites that cannot be photographed, or are considered as work in progress, and works to be revisited or reconsidered in relation to other works.

These parts will be followed by reflections from my solo exhibition at the Brighton Photo Fringe Festival in 2016 entitled *Encountering Perforated Ground* and the exhibition entitled *From Sites of Unlearning* exhibited at the Slade School of Fine Art in 2017.

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This text outlines the desire for the written encounters presented here to appear side by side. Much like the installation of works in a space that invite the viewer to encounter them in different orders and durations, and allow the observing gaze to hover freely and repeatedly between works and possibly newly formed relations. The desire here is one of *unthreading* – a slow process of undoing the entanglement of meanings of words and images – that begins with the possibilities of reading and misreading the written encounters to follow.

Towards the task of *unthreading*:

My text asks to be imagined as the forked paths and detours offered by languages and sites alike. One might imagine a map sketching this research through the act of redrawing circles. An analogy might be an apparatus
that can draw a perfect circle time and again, in an endless movement of a needle or a pencil: I could wait for the paper to become exhausted or worn-out. This would provide the necessary outcome in the form of a hole caused by a repeated (violent) action of drawing, but would falsely promise a conclusion in the form of rupture, which might lead, mistakenly, to a sense of relief, a solution, an answer, or even worse, an outcome.

In another analogy for this text, the circle is drawn by hand, passively retracing the shadow-line of a circle over and over again, actively re-marking a circle that only follows the guideline made by the previous marks of retracing. In this way, the circle is never a perfect circle, it is guided by the shaky hand, the force and attention invested in the movement, the weight of the pencil, the uneven surface and possibly even the resistance of the fibres of the paper.

In the final analogy for this text and my research, the gesture of drawing turns to an action of piercing, like sewing through layers. The hand holding the needle pierces through each layer at a time in a repetitive movement, slowly fastening them together. With each complete gesture of piercing, the bond between the layers becomes stronger, tighter. The resulting seam perforates the edges of the layers, whilst trying to keep them held together. To return to the written text, it might be that we end up with a book, which brings us all the way back to the beginning, the site of the inherent conflict, the inability to escape the predetermined linearity that is the domain of the author. But, for the sake of this analogy and the need for progress to be made, I would like to focus on the possibility of threading and unthreading, the act of perforating and the act of holding together.

What is threading and unthreading in language? My project proposal began with misspelling the word sightseeing. Even when writing this word just now, I had to return to the dictionary to double-check my spelling, remembering there was a mistake, but not recalling which was the correct one. I try to remember the spelling by means of negation, that it is not seeing site as I understand it, and that it is the sights, which the dictionary tells me is ‘the faculty or power of seeing,’ ‘the act or fact of seeing,’ or what ‘can be seen’ that one desires to see.10 The double use of seeing in sightseeing causes me to consider what governs seeing, what could be seen or what one actually seeks to see when visiting sites.

Sightseeing points at the crisis of seeing I will be addressing in my research. What lies in the desire to see sights? I would like to imagine it as the desire to see again, perhaps implying a revisit to a site, or simply to see with one's own eyes.

But there is also a disturbing translation hiding beneath these words, which I think prevents me from remembering the correct spelling, and that is in the notion of seeing the sight through what has already been framed as the sight of the site. In other words, it is what has already been framed by those governing the site: the nature reserve, the owner of the land, those guiding the way through the landscape, or even the visitors themselves, who search the site for the best views they have seen in prior images online. In practice and on the ground I refer here to the placement of a viewpoint, that spot that often gives the visitors the best view, an overview of the site and probably some historical information on a need-to-know basis, as if framed in a postcard. Even in the desert for example, rocks will be marked with different painted stripes of colour to mark the path, even when the valley only flows in one direction and there are no split roads to choose from. The road is already mapped for various reasons of safety or simply for reasons of convenience, promising the most scenic route. To lose one’s path is not an easy task, neither is the decision to go off track. Both might offer a process of unlearning.

It is not my intention here to protest against actions of preserving and mapping nature. Rather, I want to focus on the generative ways of seeing and encountering offered by the misspelling or misreading of words. Every time I write the word ‘sight,’ I return to this conversation in my mind, not to find a resolution other than by correctly spelling the word, but rather to rethink or reconsider what I wish to see and whether I can see beyond these wishes. This place, that I have just marked out in words, is where my research project begins.
- PART ONE -

SITING LANGUAGE : PRACTICING UNLEARNING IN WORDS AND IMAGES
verlernen
unlearning
שכחה
نسي
(Figure 2.1) Dana Ariel, from De-listed, gelatin silver prints, 50x50cm, 2012
The word ‘introduction’ – in the Hebrew version of הַקִּדְמוּת – suggests a beginning that has already begun. The root קדמָה situates us on the brink of ‘what predates’ and of the ‘movement forward.’ In order to communicate my research methods, and how the German verb verlernen became the centre of my research project, I would like to recall the project that predated this research, a project which is not at all an ancient history as the Hebrew word might suggest. It returns to my early interest in the process offered by the verb verlernen, and portrays how this developed into a methodology of making.

I first encountered the verb verlernen when learning the German language. In its literal sense it proposed many peculiar, surprising and poetic notions. I began thinking of verlernen when working on the project Delisted in 2011-12, just after I had arrived in London. Throughout its making process, the project was entitled verlernen, and only much later changed to Delisted. In this work I followed a list of architectural elements in London that had been delisted – renounced of their significant status – over the last 10 years. I received the list upon request from English Heritage, the charity that manages the National Heritage Collection. From the list I devised paths that took me from one location to the next, each time marking certain areas in the city. At the time, I was not familiar with London and its urban architecture. The delisted map was my first introduction and insight to the streets and buildings of the city where I now live.

The list contained addresses of the architectural elements that had been taken off the lists of the English Heritage. In other words, a list of what has now been historically and culturally discarded and erased. This also entails the shifting of property from the public to the private domain, allowing people to renovate or alter the fabric of the building once it is no longer of recognised cultural value. I was fascinated by this shift. First, I was curious to find out what English Heritage deemed culturally significant and what is celebrated as worthy of an English Heritage rank? Who makes that decision and how? It was also a way for me to become familiar with a new place and culture. Second, I was interested in the possibility of erasure or regret. What would it mean for a culture to change its mind in regards to what is significant? That a culture could change its mind in this way seemed to me only natural as the city and country undergoes political and social changes. I was delighted to discover that records of the delisting process were still preserved and remained traceable, despite, as I was informed, the fact that many documents have been lost due to changes in the archiving system. In relation to verlernen, I thought it was poetic for this list to exist as a record of the erasure process; an act of leaving a trace, a commemoration of the fading away of significant architecture, amongst what is still to be protected and considered significant.
The photographs of the delisted series depict my search for the erased architecture. Sometimes, the list of addresses offered a short description of the delisted element, for example: a post stand, a water fountain, or a fish and chip shop with hand drawn tiles. In most cases there was only an address. This was a ghost hunt, searching for what is in the process of being erased or is no longer there. I was expecting to find construction sites, empty lots, or other disappointing notifications that might deem my search a total failure. There was not much to go on, but I found an excitement in roaming the streets of London with my camera chasing architectural ghosts.

The search became my work. I had two boxes, one for the delistings I found, or believed I found, and another, with all the images I collected during the search. I was not interested in evidences, nor do I believe the photographs and my testimony would provide such proof. It became clear that I was more interested in the second box, the one that marked my expectations and disappointments of the search. In a critique of the work during my graduate studies, a fellow student commented that the work seemed to present a foreign gaze that carried some sense of humour. I couldn’t refute the suggestion of my foreign gaze as I was undeniably a foreigner, and was pleased that humour was communicated through what I thought was a bleak and ironic, yet serious search.

Many of the strategies formed in this project have been carried into my current research. I changed the name from Verlernen to Delisted because I wanted the title to point to the process of erasure that I was searching for. Additionally, I realised verlernen was more of a thinking methodology that resonated in other projects as well and it became apparent that it was a broader subject I needed to address.

Introducing my work with the Delisted project shows how verlernen began to perform as a methodology in my practice. Searching for traces that mark a process of erasure in the urban landscape is now further explored in the sites I visit. The expectations, anticipations and disappointments of the search led me to consider the role these preconceptions play in what is seen. Through my practice I began searching for ways and methods of challenging the preconceptions that inform seeing the landscape as well as other people.

The following is a return to the definition of verlernen, where the dictionary becomes a site in which methods, similar to those in my search in landscape with a camera, are applied to language and translation. It is the way my practice reflects back into language. This poetic experiment is an example of the task of sitting language.
from *verlernen* to *verlieren*:
metaphorically drawing a path through words and meanings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>German</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>verlernen</td>
<td>forget, unlearn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verlesen</td>
<td>read out, misread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verletzbar</td>
<td>be easily hurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verletzen (verwunden)</td>
<td>hurt, injure, wound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verletzung</td>
<td>injury, violation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verletzlich</td>
<td>vulnerable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verleugnen</td>
<td>deny, disown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>go against or betray one’s principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verleumden</td>
<td>slander, calumniate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>make false and defamatory statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verlieben, sich</td>
<td>fall in love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verlieren</td>
<td>lose, subside, disappear, lose one’s way, be lost in thoughts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A further translation of *verlernen* unfolds to the following propositions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>نسي</td>
<td>forget, unlearn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>تناسي نسي</td>
<td>forget, unlearn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vergessen, übersehen</td>
<td>not noticing, getting tired of seeing something, looking over something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ohne Absicht nicht sehen, nicht beachten</td>
<td>not noticing, getting tired of seeing something, looking over something</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Arabic translation into German suggests that ‘verlernen’ is also the possibility of seeing without noticing. The German verb ‘übersehen’ - over-seeing or seeing over, in its literal translation, acknowledges the blind spots of seeing, or the paradox of the inability to see while observing.

From verlernen to verlieren is a play with words – an experiment with language – using the dictionary as a site. My finger follows the words from verlernen to verlieren by means of verlesen: to read out loud or to misread. All the words between verlernen to verlieren, appear in one way or another in my works, or in my making and thinking process.

As a method, it is an invitation to consider or totally reject these new meanings and situated relations between words. What does it offer to consider falling in love just before verlieren: just before loss, losing one’s way, or disappearing? It resonates with the Greek mythology of Orpheus and Eurydice, where Orpheus travels to the underworld to bring his beloved Eurydice back from the dead, but fails to keep his promise on the threshold, and as he turns to look at her she disappears forever. Eurydice’s disappearance that occurs at the turn of the gaze is told as an act of love. Would the metaphor stretch as far as suggesting that falling in love is to see? What is the fall in falling in love? Is it to see what is in the process of disappearing, where the fall is seeing the possible fading of the lover’s image?

In Roland Barthes text A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments the conversation about amorous discourse is concerned with language. Through different fragments of the silent and internal speech of the lover to his object, Barthes offers ‘outbursts of language’: ‘I am engulfed, I succumb [...]’ Barthes opens the book with this fragment. On the desire to be engulfed, Barthes refers to his readings of Goethe’s novel The Sorrows of Young Werther and writes ‘this is how it happens sometimes, misery or joy engulfs me, without any particular tumult ensuing: nor any pathos: I am dissolved, not dismembered; I fall, I flow, I melt.’ The desire to be engulfed or succumbed is generated by the absence of the other, who is no longer. Haunted by the image of the other, the lover is ‘nowhere gathered together; opposite, neither you nor me, nor death, nor anything else to talk to.’ After reading Barthes text, the fall of falling in love seems to hover between language and image. The fall into the lover’s image, is the desire to be engulfed in the risk of succumbing to the possibility of its fading away – sich verlieren – lose oneself in images and words.

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2 Barthes, 10.
3 Barthes, 11.
A few notes about the possibility of verlieren:

Another motivation for this suggested wordplay is rooted in the opening lines of the short text entitled Tiergarten by Walter Benjamin:

_Not to find one’s way around a city does not mean much. But to lose one’s way in a city as one loses one’s way in a forest, requires some schooling. Street names must speak to the urban wanderer like the snapping of dry twigs, and little streets in the heart of the city must reflect the times of day, for him, as clearly as a mountain valley._

These words reverberate deeply in my thoughts. ‘To lose one’s way,’ as found in one definition of verlieren appears as a struggle and an open invitation for what I propose as a process of unlearning. A desire to be lost in landscape and words reflects many of my visits to sites and methods of making. But at the heart of this desire is Benjamin’s use of the word schooling - ‘Schulung’ in German – an active notion of learning, which I find to be better described in the word unlearning that harbors the process of actively, and through repeated practice, undoing what has been learned.

However, what unlearning lacks in this instance is the reference to the institution - the school [die Schule], that governs learning, that prescribes the taught curriculum and that exercises the regimes power over knowledge by forming and dictating the collective narrative.

From losing oneself in landscape to losing oneself in words: to lose one’s way is also the desire to encounter something new, something other; something that is unfamiliar. When I, as an Israeli citizen, travel to the West Bank I am hoping to encounter another narrative to the one I have absorbed through my Israeli education and exposure to the media. The visits are my desire for another narrative that could challenge the understanding of the complexity of the political landscape. The erasure of one narrative never results in total annihilation of the other, traces will always remain or reappear.

_To lose one’s way may seem impossible. With every turn, the land is already marked, signposted or monitored. Visible and invisible surveillance operates at all times. The wish to be lost requires serious effort. My project aims to experiment with such methods by paying attention to the efforts needed for the task of being lost in words, sites and sights._

5 In Hebrew the German word Schulung is translated to אימון – training or practice.
Unlearning laughter is a proposition offered by the German dictionary. It is given as an ironic example to an act that cannot be forgotten or unlearned. It aims to provide context for the understanding of the word *verlernen*. This enigmatic request, to unlearn laughter, offers the opportunity to think of unlearning beyond the literal and daily use of the word. After all, we constantly engage in a process of unlearning; whenever new knowledge is acquired, when reading, working, communicating with others, etc. Unlearning laughter proposes an interesting impossibility of unlearning, a moment of rupture; unlearning that is instinctive, bodily, intellectual and emotional, that can also offer a form of resistance.

I began with the search for the German word verlernen. Das Lachen verlernen, in English, unlearning laughter, or in some cases, *Sie hat das Lachen verlernt*, which in English means - she unlearned laughter, which appeared repeatedly as a means to define and interpret the word verlernen. This puzzling encounter with language set me searching and researching laughter’s relation to unlearning, and the anonymous, absent *sie* [she].

My early search landed on a book by Marie Luise Knott, entitled *Unlearning with Hannah Arendt*. In her book Knott explores laughter, translation, forgiveness, and dramatisation in the writings of Arendt. *Laughter: the sudden turn of the mind* is the first chapter in her book, which opens with ‘Because of her laughter, Hannah Arendt was subject to fierce attacks from all over the world and virtual “excommunication” from the Jewish people after publication of her report on the Eichmann trial in 1963.’ My next step was consequently, to read Arendt’s report from the Eichmann trials in Jerusalem, which for me, is in itself a process of unlearning or an undoing of a certain history as taught to me by the State of Israel. I began noting any passages that might suggest laughter, bearing in mind, that this odd and unexpected detour began with a definition found in the dictionary.

Between Arendt’s report and Knott’s text on Arendt, laughter represents a response beyond irony; a powerful judgment, critique, rage and even disbelief. Arendt’s laughter bursts out at the words of Eichmann’s statements during his trial in Jerusalem and previous interviews, not because they are not spoken seriously, but rather because that seriousness

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becomes ridiculously violent. Knott writes:

[…] It is unimaginable that someone like Eichmann could say in his own defense, “Where would we end up if everyone would have his own thoughts?” Something in the act of thinking blocks our access to this kind of seriousness. Laughter, on the other hand, makes it possible for our intellect to regain access to seriousness from another dimension.⁸

This detour into laughter could lead to an entirely different direction of research, one I believe is worth exploring. However, I will attempt to return now to the task at hand, and ask what, if anything, could be drawn from this detour into laughter, concerning unlearning. The following extract from Arendt’s report provides me with a return to language.

The German text of the taped police examination, conducted from May 29, 1960, to January 17, 1961, each page corrected and approved by Eichmann, constitutes a veritable gold mine for a psychologist – provided he is wise enough to understand that the horrible can be not only ludicrous but outright funny. Some of the comedy cannot be conveyed in English, because it lies in Eichmann’s heroic fight with the German language, which invariably defeats him […] “Officiallese [Amtssprache - official language] is my only language” [apologises Eichmann]. […] Whether writing his memoirs in Argentina or in Jerusalem, whether speaking to the police examiner or to the court, what he said was always the same, expressed in the same words. The longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to think, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else. No communication was possible with him, not because he lied but because he was surrounded by the most reliable of all safeguards against the words and the presence of others, and hence against reality as such.⁹

What I find most alarming here, in this extract, is the possibility to be safeguarded in language: to speak as a law obeying citizen of a good society. These are recurring statements uttered by Eichmann during his trial. Ludicrousness and laughter seem to be the only possible reactions in the face of this.

⁸ Knott, Unlearning with Hannah Arendt, 15. Knott notes that the quote is from Willem Sassen’s interview with Eichmann in Argentina as quoted in the docudrama Eichmanns Ende. In another translation the statement is ‘Where would we have been if everyone had thought things out in those days.’ From “Eichmann Tells His Own Damning Story,” Life Magazine 49, No. 22, November 28 (1960), 21. https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=0U0EEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA20&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false. (Accessed 10 November 2017).
I return to my own playful, yet serious, use of language. The method of stretching language close to its breaking point – translating across languages – aims to make visible other forgotten or unnoticed meanings. I search for ways to safeguard myself from being safeguarded in language. It is a resistance against allowing fixed images and words to become the sole governing agents in the shaping of reality – of unseeing the other. This cannot be a destination at which one simply arrives, but rather it is a practice that must be always at work: always casting doubt, stretching and unpacking words and images, never allowing them to be at rest. Laughter, therefore, is invaluable.
Site
Standort, Stellung, Kampfplatz
موقع، مكان
 места
In order to speak my practice and the different sites that operate in the event of photography, I propose the following terms: sitting language – which I have discussed in the previous sections, the visited sites, the sites of making, and the exhibition sites.

The Visited Sites

My visits to sites with a camera are led by the urge to see the political borders that limit my movement and sight. The desire to explore these territorial margins is a political act, one which aims to experience and see these borders beyond their physical presence. The notion of visiting the border is, in essence, metaphorical, since one can never reach the actual borderline as it will already be fenced off, other than at designated crossings. Although real, it can also be an imaginary space, where one’s imagination fills in the gaps of what cannot be immediately seen. The sites I visit are those that present and embody layers of invisible boundaries; that are intrinsically affected by the political landscape and are the manifestation of the contradictions and complexities that operate in cultural and political conflicts. Borders, territorial edges and political margins are spaces where these boundaries can be made visible. There, I encounter extraordinary things; where violence dominates the landscape and complex power relations are constructed between occupier and occupied, visitors and inhabitants, soldiers and civilians.

The visited sites, in my research project, encompass all that surrounds the sites. Metaphorically speaking, my visits to sites aim to outline the stain of the site. I use the term stain differently in this text. Later, it will appear in the work Holes, as the stain that emerges on the print in the darkroom. Here, the ‘stain’ refers to the way the site, and the visit to the site, exceeds the boundaries of the geographical space by affecting and informing all that is encountered before and after; a form of contamination that can be experienced belatedly and through multiple returns to the site. The sites of unlearning I create with my works are informed by the experiences and encounters generated by being, seeing and knowing the sites: this includes the historical and political complexities, the performative act of photography, the desire to put my identity into practice when challenging the accessibility to sites of conflict, and the encounters provoked by my presence. These ideas are performed in the event of photography and will be discussed through the different encounters to follow.

Through the proposition of the visited sites I emphasise the search itself; what I encounter before, alongside and after the visit to the site become integral parts of the work and include the expectations, confrontations and disappointments of
my search. For example, in the work *Crash Site* (2014), where I searched for a buried plane that crashed on the moors near Manchester in 1942, a series of photo etchings and photographs depict the traces of my search, the historical knowledge, the myth of the plane, the desire to find it and the surprising sight of the landscape. In another project, the Palestinian village of Fasa’il and the Jewish settlement of Peza’el, bearing the same name in Arabic and Hebrew, were the destination of my search. The two places are not directly represented in the work, but rather bind the project together. Not documenting the village and settlement is an ethical and political decision, emerging from the acknowledgment that I cannot evade the power relations that my national identity and presence there with a camera will provoke.

In my practice the act of *visiting* becomes the work, it constructs the site. The specific location I travel to often does not appear in the photographs I take. The historical and political narrative of the site informs my search and contaminates my encounters and impressions. The visit is an attempt to resist the preconceptions and prejudices (prejudgments) that inevitably inform my visits. Visiting the sites is a form of critique, not only of the sites and their complexity, but of seeing and knowing, and how these faculties are informed by prior knowledge. The visits to sites aim to bring these notions of *prior* knowing and seeing into conflict.

*(The Blind Gap)*

On my experience of photographing:

I photograph with a medium format Hasselblad camera, with a normal 80mm lens held tightly at waist level. To photograph I bow my head down to look at the landscape in front of me, lifting the mirror in the camera, a white blurred blind eye swallows the viewfinder, and then it is time to look back up towards landscape. This blind gap is the moment I attempt to re-experience in print. Stretching the moment of recording to witness the drawing of an image. The photographic act reveals both my physical position in landscape, literally, how close or far I stand in front of the subject as well as my standpoint.

Between the *visited sites* and the *sites of making* I identify a mechanical gap that is critical for the understanding of photography and the printing process. This is the moment when light enters the camera obscura to draw an image. It is the moment when the mirror inside the camera is released to cut the photographer’s view; a rupture of the direct gaze of the photographer observing who or what is being photographed. The blind gap that occurs in the camera is a moment without witnesses that cannot be directly experienced.
I draw on trauma theory to discuss the blind gap as rupture, a moment, like trauma, that cannot be experienced first hand, and the printing process, as the attempt to repeatedly return to the site of trauma. Cathy Caruth’s introduction to the book Trauma: Explorations in Memory also allows me to think of the photographer as one who does not fully experience the event. I turn to her work to draw lines between photography and the traumatic event that will hopefully shed some light on the extended role of the blind gap. ‘The trauma is a repeated suffering of the event,’ writes Caruth, ‘but it is also continual leaving of its site.’ The traumatic event creates a temporal rupture in order to carry one beyond its premise. In another essay in the same book, Dori Laub reflects on the process and struggle of witnessing through interviews he conducted with Holocaust survivors and his own testimonies, which attest to a certain distortion that occurs in the witness’ perception of the event – the longer the story remains untold.

[...] It was not only the reality of the situation and the lack of responsiveness of bystanders or the world that accounts for the fact that history was taking place with no witness: it was also the very circumstances of ‘being inside the event’ that made unthinkable the very notion that a witness could exist, that is, someone who could step outside of the coercively totalitarian and dehumanizing frame of reference in which the event was taking place, and provide an independent frame of reference through which the event could be observed.

It is because of this inability to witness the full extent of the event that Laub argues for the importance of bearing witness, not only for witnesses to experience the telling of their own story by giving testimony, but also emphasising the importance of witnessing the process of witnessing itself – belatedly. I would like to concentrate on the belated experience of the traumatic event that forces the repeated return to its site by returning to the work of Caruth, who in another book entitled Unclaimed Experience: trauma, narrative and history explores trauma through an analysis of history, literature, poetry and cinema. Caruth writes that ‘the historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all.’ The German verb for forgetting is vergessen, which in its English translation means leaving behind, leaving the event in

10 Cathy Caruth ed., Trauma and Experience: Introduction to Trauma: Exploration in Memory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 10.
12 Laub, 66.
13 Laub, 68-70.
14 Cathy Caruth, Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 17.
the past. The ‘continual leaving’ of the site of trauma proposed by Caruth, which she later explores through literature and cinema, paradoxically happens through a continual return to the site, or even more so, to sight. Through this lens, I would like to draw a subtle distinction between the two English translations to the German verb verlernen – unlearning and forgetting. By giving attention to the active notion offered by the German verb verlernen, I would like to propose that a repeated return to the site is a way to unlearn rather than to forget the site. Unlearning here, would be to sever the ties of the eventness of trauma, or in the context of my research, of conflict; to experience and see the event through its various layers, visible or not, and their continual affect. Photography plays a vital role in the return to the photographed event, it mediates and enables the return to its site as well as pointing at the generated gaps of this mediation through the blind gap.

The Sites of Making

My sites of making are the darkroom and the print room. They are the return to the moment of the blind gap and the closest opportunity to experience and intervene in the lost moment of its event. The return here is not a romantic or nostalgic gesture, nor is it the wish to repair or regain something that has been lost. I see the return as an inherited gesture of seeing that is constructed from more than one experience and from more than a single view.

This is the site for an intimate exploration and experimentation of seeing as matter. The darkroom and print room allow me to revisit the sites through the materiality of photography and the printing process. Though the sites of making are informed by the traces of the visited sites, there is a significant moment of rupture – an element of surprise that emerges from the making process and offers another possibility, narrative, or a proposition for a new reading of the site.

The darkroom and print room invite different considerations. While the darkroom most clearly echoes the mechanical process occurring in the camera and allows to metaphorically intervene with its method of representation, the print room, is a place that allows for a different transformation to take place; it is where I consider hybrid printing processes and what each process can offer that is different to the print made in the darkroom. Working between these two sites of making generates valuable dialogue for my research project. With each work and printing technique, I renegotiate the differences emerging from the printing processes; what they might offer to the viewer, and how they might communicate and shape the reading of the visited sites.
The Exhibition Sites

The exhibition site brings together the visited site and the making site for the viewer. It is a place for staging an encounter; a place for observation and conversation. It is a site for another form of making through dialogue, a place to see how the work is read and seen by others. The exhibition sites bring into consideration the perception of the viewer, as well as cultural differences and translations in the naming of works and the inclusion of texts. As I am aware of the political and cultural conflicts that arise from the sites I visit, I ask to what extent should such considerations be accommodated in the exhibition? I am also, repeatedly confronted with how, or whether, to address my national identity. Moments of misunderstandings or misidentification encountered at the visited sites are explored as generative methods, which could lead to a certain valuable misreading of the work at the exhibition site. This misreading highlights a conflict in and of seeing; it is a reading that could activate and provoke the process of unlearning. In instigating this conflict or misreading at the site of exhibition, I am also experimenting with methods that will question and challenge the risks and limitations of using poetics and ambiguity in images and language.

In my works I seek not to speak for the image, but rather to speak with the image. This shift in prepositions remain a constant conflict in my practice as I negotiate ways to make visible the many layers that inform the making of the work; from the biographical, historical, political and poetic explorations of the sites, and which, if any, of these layers will be directly included in the exhibition space or communicated to viewers. When planning an exhibition of my works, I explore ways to make visible these textualities. Mostly, this involves experimenting with installations that include the use of text works in space, such as the use of video projections, sound pieces, leaflets, etched texts on copper and the presence of titles. These textual explorations are aimed at making the writing become a practice, or the text to perform as images do in my work.

My aim in the exhibition sites is to exhibit the various sites together, often using different media, in order for the works to be read alongside each other. This allows the images to contaminate and interfere with the construction of a single narrative, and highlights my desire for some loss or erasure of the visited site, allowing other ways of seeing to emerge. The site of exhibition wishes to offer a site for an encounter. The work aspires to develop a conversation. The encounters that happen at the site of exhibition or following the exhibitions become an integral part of my making process and could even provoke the revisit of a work or a return to its site.
encounter
begegnen
נתקל, פגש באקראי
صادف, פגש
The photograph is the locus of appearance where an encounter between people is registered that is neither closed nor completely defined at the time that the photograph is captured.\textsuperscript{15}

The Hebrew word נתקל means to stumble upon something or someone. The same root תנקל (takal) also constructs the word חלון (takala) - a fault or a problem. There is a problem in identifying the boundaries of the encounter itself, when it begins and when exactly, if at all, it ends. פגעניaval breathing (the other translation I have given to encounter in Hebrew, means to meet someone or something by chance, unintentionally or by the way, and if read out of context, it would mean to meet or encounter an incident or an occurrence; to encounter something that happened without prior planning; to be surprised, or to encounter something unexpected.

When considering these propositions offered by the word encounter, it is clear that the first gesture of the encounter at a particular time and place is governed by all that proceeds it, such as a shared understanding, prior knowledge, recognition, fear or prejudice. Even before the encounter has taken place, thoughts and emotions have already taken affect. Is the first gesture one of hospitality or hostility? This will be addressed in more details later in my work.

Having discussed – and complicated – what leads to the encounter, I now discuss the encounter’s horizon, or what and who follows the encounter: when does the encounter end, and how or whether that can even be determined? Each encounter effects the next, and is informed by all the predated encounters or their residue. When I first came across a place I call Hollow Mountain in the Jordan Valley, I neither knew the name of the place nor where exactly I was. When I returned home, I revisited the site remotely, via Google Maps and Google Earth in order to identify the exact location. My identification was faulty, perhaps because I was overtaken by the excitement of encountering the names of the Palestinian village of Fasa‘il and the illegal Jewish settlement of Peza‘el, that, by bearing the same name, embody the conflict so clearly. I was utterly convinced that I had identified the right place, discovering only on my next visit how wrong I actually was. This (mis)identification fell on fertile ground, resonating so strongly with the encounters I experienced on the mountain – one with an IDF officer and another with a young man from the Palestinian village – that I didn’t even bother to go into great effort to dispel it. In my work I returned to the initial encounter through the false identification. The work, which resulted from the need to correct this mistake and the inability to unsee all that had led me there, was led by a trail of misidentification.

\textsuperscript{15} Azoulay, Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography, 54.
And now, having explored the blurred borders of encounters, the before and after, I return to the gap created between - the encounter itself and what governs its site. For this I will return to the Hebrew notion of encounter הָעֹלָה - by encountering a problem. The problem I encounter in the encounter is concerned with photography and is outlined in the power relations that the encounters make visible. This is the ongoing struggle I have with photography, photographing, and being photographed, and which I experiment with through the very same medium.

‘To photograph is to perpetrate,’ said sociologist Florence Weber at the book launch event celebrating her collaborative work with photographer Jean-Robert Dantou entitled The Walls Don’t Speak.¹⁶ This collaborative work aims to offer an alternative approach, or at least confront its inherent ethical impossibility, by asking whether those who are diagnosed as psychiatric patients can be photographed, or whether what we categorise as the ‘insane’ in humans can be captured in images. The first series of photographs depict objects that belong to the patients, which Dantou refers to as ‘marker objects’ – these are, he writes, ‘objects of friction that grate and speak of tipping points, of realisation and decisions to be made.’¹⁷ The texts that accompany the images tell of the photographer’s encounter with the objects themselves or their owners and creators. The second series of photographs evolved out of a workshop held in the hospital where patients and their carers were photographed in similar conditions, as they wished to be portrayed. For this series, Dantou asked...

the professional team participating in the work to remove any clothes and jewelry that marked their social condition. In an interview with Dantou, Weber comments that this act presented a reversal of roles; to begin their treatment, doctors will remove the patients’ social attributes in order to reduce them to bodies.\textsuperscript{18} The last section of the book is a photo essay portraying the Bellevue Hospital. In order to create this project many ethical issues had to be negotiated, which included seeking permissions to photograph and issuing forms for those who were not in full legal control over their consent. The project began on the premises of these challenging aspects that in photographic terms address the right of a person to control the making and distribution of their own image.

Before I address photography as perpetration, I would like to mention another collaborative work, this time between two photographers, Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanaring, from 2003, entitled \textit{Ghetto}. The project presents portraits from twelve different \textit{modern ghettos}, such as a psychiatric hospital in Cuba, a refugee camp in Tanzania, and a prison in South Africa to name a few examples. The work I find that most directly addresses the statement above is encountered right in the beginning, on the cover image of the published book \textit{Ghetto}, with the portrait of a man turning his back to the camera and viewer, holding the extended release cable.\textsuperscript{19} The image only just reveals the fist pressing the release cable to take a photograph. This becomes more evident in another image, where the person photographed confronts the camera while raising their hand triumphantly to photograph.

\textsuperscript{18} See Dantou and Weber, 146-147.
The release cable is of great significance and only appears in this site which, the caption informs us, is from a psychiatric hospital in Cuba. The cable represents a gesture towards addressing the problem at hand, namely the sovereign gaze of the photographer and the act of perpetration, which I will address in more details shortly. Far from offering a solution, it redirects me to the event of photography. It makes clear that the sovereignty is not in the act of photographing itself; but lies in the following factors: who governs and instigates the image, the positioning of the camera, the framing and above all, its dissemination? It also begs the question of access: who can gain access to these secure facilities? How much of their artistic freedom will they be forced to sacrifice in return and under what conditions? Who is free to walk away after the image has been taken?

With these questions in mind, I return to my silent laughter when hearing Weber’s opening statement ‘to photograph is to perpetrate.’ This statement frames Dantou and Weber’s entire project under the premise of questioning the seemingly impossible task of fully relinquishing the sovereignty of the photographic gaze. In the book Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography, Ariella Azoulay argues that sovereignty can be challenged by the medium of photography and its mediation:

The pencil of nature [“the camera” – referring to the words of Henry Fox Talbot] could be seen as an inscribing machine that transforms the encounter that comes into being around it, through it and by means of its mediation, into a special form of encounter between participants where none of them possesses a sovereign status. In this encounter, in a structured fashion and despite the threat of disruption, the pencil of nature, for the most part, produces a visual protocol immune to the complete domination of any one of the participants in the encounter and to their possible claim for sovereignty.20

My visits to sites experiment with these possibilities of the medium. Although I agree with Azoulay that the event of photography, and the participation of its citizens – to use Azoulay’s terminology – challenges any claims for sovereignty, the question of perpetration keeps arising in my practice.21 When photographing and exhibiting my works, I cannot escape my sovereign gaze and authorial voice. They are carried through the visited sites, the sites of making, and the exhibition sites. The sites of making demonstrate the sovereignty of the maker most vividly when the revisiting of the work occurs through the sole experience of the artist. It is only later, and through the material transformation of the

20 Azoulay, Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography, 17.
21 Azoulay, 70.
printing process, that the work is offered to the viewer. Photography, nonetheless, offers a form of resistance through the relationship to the photographed event, one which is re-enacted during the printing process in the darkroom. Ariella Azoulay offers another avenue in support of this:


A photograph is never the testimony of the photographer alone, and the event of photography, unlike the photographed event, continues to exist despite all other considerations [...] The event of photography is never over. It can only be suspended, caught in the anticipation of the next encounter that will allow for its actualization: an encounter that might allow a certain spectator to remark on the excess or lack inscribed in the photograph so as to re-articulate every detail including those that some believe to be fixed in place by the glossy emulsion of the photograph.\textsuperscript{22}

Azoulay gives many examples of Israeli photographers who photograph in the occupied territories, such as Micha Kirshner and Miki Kratsman. Though her arguments are most easily elucidated through portraiture, I find it more interesting to examine her ideas in the context of the exhibition she curated entitled \textit{Horizontal Photography}, presenting works by Aim Deüelle Lüs.\textsuperscript{23} In the exhibition, Lüs, an Israeli artist and theorist, presented a range of cameras, built in the shape of different objects that he has constructed since 1970. His cameras and prints aim to challenge the conditions of seeing the photographed event. By constructing his own cameras he disrupts the traditional, single-entry point, pin-hole structure. The cameras he builds take different shapes inspired by his immediate surroundings and vary from highly crafted objects to ones that seems to be made from unstable materials such as cardboard or leftover boxes. Amongst the objects were a football, a pita [bread] camera, and a beer barrel. It does not seem that anything in particular guides the selection of objects other than their ability to challenge the preliminary construction of the camera obscura. He experiments with the placement of the negative and the number and position of the pin holes. The negative is often exposed from the back and front, or when placed in a horizontal position, hence the name of the exhibition. The cameras were installed in the museum in front of the images they created, with a caption of the places that had been photographed, barely recognisable in the images.

\textsuperscript{22} Azoulay, 25.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Aim Deüelle Lüs}: \textit{Horizontal Photography}, curated by Ariella Azoulay, MoBY: Museums of Bat Yam, Israel, 17 September 2014- 18 January 2015.
At the entrance to the exhibition is a wall presenting his different cameras, leading to a round room where a camera is placed at the centre. Lüski designed this central camera, consisting of eight chambers, to replicate the architectural structure of the museum. Prior to the exhibition he used it to produce 32 images of the museum’s building. The light-sensitive paper is placed, not only vertically and parallel to the pinhole (as in conventional cameras), but also at the sides of the camera obscura and at the top and bottom, causing the light to flood the light-sensitive surface. In this way, Lüski reminds the viewer that the distortion is not just out there, referring emphatically to the political borderlines he photographs, but can also be seen right here. The ability to see, or the refusal not to see, can start from where we stand right now by considering what governs and distorts seeing itself. Lüski views the photograph as an event of rupture, a crisis of seeing. He argues for the relinquishing of his photographic sovereignty by means of transferring it to the agency of the cameras he builds. Tampering with the way images are recorded is the closest means of diminishing the photographer’s sovereignty, albeit that a trace always remains: in the creation of the camera and in the later selection and re-framing of the work at the exhibition site when it is encountered by the viewer.

Photography reminds me that, in any encounter, we are not equal. The power relations may not always present themselves immediately, but they will always be operating in the background, determining the event and drawing its boundaries. My encounters unfold through identifying these power relations and trying to resist them by some form of gestures and words that might level the ground. A methodology of unlearning returns to this moment of the encounter.

(Figure 2.7) Aim Deüelle Lüski: Horizontal Photography, curated by Ariella Azoulay, MoBY Museum of Bat Yam, 2014. Photograph by Gal Deren. (Figure 2.8) Aim Deüelle Lüski, Museum of Bat-Yam, The Surroundings, 360 degrees, MoBY camera, 24-7, 2014

[Images removed for copyright reasons]
perforate
derchlöchern
Horar
خرق، نقب
History is perforated. By its nature, it is filled with holes. History as taught to me as a child growing up in Jerusalem, tells the story of the Jewish people. We began with the story of Ezra and Nehemiah, the book in the bible, which is considered to be an historical account of the return to Zion after the Babylonians exiled the Jewish people from what is now called Israel. Everything that followed portrayed the Jewish struggle to return to Zion - Israel. My history lessons ended shortly after the early wars of Israel for independence. I do not recall any mentioning of the word occupation, which doesn’t necessarily mean it wasn’t mentioned, but rather attests to my inability to hear it and grasp its full meanings and implications. This paragraph aims to give an example of the historical perforation that contributes to the need for unlearning. My visits to sites are not intended to fill these historical gaps, but to make them visible through further acts of perforation.

Perforation appears in the landscape. One only needs to glance at the various maps of the state of Israel – after the Oslo II Accord in 1995 – that include the West Bank to see the depiction of territorial gaps. A closer look at the West Bank reveals the use of three colours that depict zones A, B and C. The colours mark the often invisible borders of occupation (or degree of occupation) within the Palestinian territories and shows the Israeli military presence and control over this land.24 To say that these borders are invisible is politically problematic. These political lines are invisible without prior knowledge or until military forces are encountered and access is denied. Area A is inaccessible to Israeli citizens, but I could potentially enter by exercising my German citizenship. Area C is easily accessible by Israeli citizens as it is under full Israeli control and this is where the illegal Jewish settlements are. Access to area B is harder to determine.

The map begins to make visible the perforation and territorial isolation that overshadows that land. My visits to the Jordan Valley are motivated by the need to see the blurring of these borders and the conflict. I want to see what the invisible borders look like, how far I can travel, and what, or up to where, the limits of my citizenships (Israeli-German) could be stretched. This is a matter of putting my identity into practice. During my visits I am invariably approached by the military to investigate my presence. What follows is either a friendly warning saying ‘be careful, there are Palestinians here,’ which only leaves me full of rage, or they will deny me access, not by force (or at least I haven’t yet stretched the limits as far as that) but through standing their ground when it comes to military training zones that are inaccessible to

24 Area A contains most of the Palestinian cities and population and is mainly under the control of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Area B contains rural areas where Israel holds the security control, while the PA holds the control over civil matters. Area C, which covers the majority of the West Bank is almost entirely under Israeli control in all security and civil matters, including land allocation. See “Planning Policy in the West Bank,” B’TSELEM, http://www.btselem.org/area_c/what_is_area_c. Accessed 28 November 2017.
civilians. My Hebrew often gains me easy access to the area, and hence I am reminded of the part that I play in this conflict. My visits are also the urgent need to resist this very position to which I am historically and politically bound through my national identity.

Perforation in language: I trace this back to the reading of Ariella Azoulay’s essay *Mother’s Tongue, Father’s Tongue: Following the Death of the Mother and the Death of the Father*. In this text Azoulay gives a very personal account of her parents’ identity, and therefore her own identity. Azoulay’s confronting of her own familial legacy parallels my own experience. Her political awakening at the age of twelve echoes my own in regards to the political events that took place when I was at that age and how they forced me to inquire of my parents about national identity. The name Azoulay already gives away the Mizrahi heritage she inherited from her father. In this text, Azoulay recalls her mother’s efforts to distance herself from the legacy of her own East European heritage by declaring herself to be a *sabra* of three generations. Another division appears in the distancing acts of her father from his Algerian heritage, who identifies himself as French by inventive storytelling.

I was strongly affected by this text, and in some cases I even felt as if it told my story in words that were not my own. However, it also caused me a great sense of discomfort. I trace this feeling to the rage towards the mother. Perhaps because this feeling reverberates more loudly with my own accusations towards my mother, for denying me the German language, which was also the access to her culture, and mine.

Azoulay’s first use of the word *perforated* appears in the text when she describes her sister showing her a booklet of a political party called SHELI, a left-wing party formed before 1977. The booklet depicts the image of the sabra on its cover. Azoulay writes that ‘the image of the perforated, punctured prickly pear fading into the green background was so much more fragile than the prickly pear whose image was reinforced by my mother’s words every time she proudly declared: “I am a sabra, a third-generation native.” [...] This booklet was where I first came upon the word “occupation.” It hit me with great force.’ The image and the word *sabra* led to the encounter with the concealed violent reality of contemporary life in Israel. Many other words participate in this and are recklessly uttered by many Israelis, with little thought given to what history and crimes they conceal. I cannot remember when I first came across the word

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25 *Sabra* is the Hebrew word for prickly pear, which symbolises Jews who are native to the land of Israel.
occupation, but I am convinced it was very late and I only began making active steps towards seeing and speaking of this shortly before leaving the country at the age of 26.

‘My father’s tongue was punctured... My mother tongue is contaminated. Hebrew is contaminated [...] Yet I loved the language, I loved the mother.’

Azoulay’s critique of her parents’ tongues is a critique of a perforated language, one that partakes in the act of concealment and denial. Hebrew easily lends itself to this process of contamination. The language, structurally, already harbours different meanings and interpretations. Hebrew is constructed of roots and verbs, consisting of three letters that split to construct various words. These words can often seem to be unrelated or even contradictory. In many cases, to the enjoyment of linguists, debates and controversies arise as to the relations between these different words stemming from the same root.

A photographer whose practice evolved around the relation between the roots of language and images, and by whom I had the pleasure of being taught by during my Undergraduate Studies in Jerusalem, is Yossi Breger. I return to view Breger’s photographic work through the prism of the split meanings the Hebrew language offers and which, he explored through photography. In his work Breger always returned to the importance of the 50mm lens, which is a normal lens for 35mm cameras. This was to emphasise that, in order to frame the image, he had to physically move towards or away from the object he wanted to portray in search of a photographic standpoint. Thus the image reflected both his position in the world and his position in relation to the object. He always said that observing is a serious matter and this echoes, I believe, in his use of words.

Azoulay, 115-116.
Breger’s photography constructs a language, his images aimed to act as words, and when he used words they operated as images. In his last exhibition at Dvir Gallery in Tel Aviv, he exhibited a selection of words from the Guide for the perplexed written by Moses Maimonides. In this book, Maimonides presents a selection of words that represent the image or concept of god: an image he attempts to deconstruct through the different meanings and interpretations each word offers. In his exhibition entitled Guide for the Perplexed, Homonyms, Breger presented images of words, שורשים, meaning roots in Hebrew. In his selection of words were: צלם, which could be read as photographer (tzalam), or tzelem, which means image or figure, or being in ones image. In another example the word נגע means touched and forms the basis of the word ‘to be contaminated.’ Viewing Breger’s last exhibition invites a return to his photographic images, in the form of another reading of the image through words or vice versa.

(Figure 2.9) Yossi Breger, Word #1, archival inkjet print, edition of 3+1 AP, 52x52x2cm, 2016.

(Figure 2.10) Yossi Breger, Word #18b, archival inkjet print, edition of 3+1 AP, 52x52x2cm, 2016.

29 In Genesis god creates Adam in his image - in Hebrew - יברא אלהים את adam בצלם. Heb. Genesis. 1:27
Breger installs his images in a form of poetic syntax, as seen in the exhibition *Time is Not Money*. He searches for images that could become the roots of what they depict, such as *the door of doors*, and situate them together in order to compose a visual sentence. Similar to Hebrew words laid next to each other to generate different meanings, his images, too, could be read both individually and within a sentence, as well as in relation to the images that surround them. The images of prior works depict images from his various travels. Chosen carefully, they do not pretend to provide the viewer with any information about the visited place, but rather speak in poetical depth of the observing gaze. The images aim to become *roots of seeing*.

The verb to perforate, in the literal sense, means to make holes. The German verb durchlöchern also means to undermine, completely render or weaken a system, or make a rule meaningless. In the pictorial sense, it points to the gaps in historical narratives and political identities that, though they are violently visible in Israel and Palestine, are also to be found everywhere. I give special attention to the perforation I find in words and images, and which I paradoxically attempt to turn into a generative method that repeats the act of perforating – an act that challenges the single reading of images and words.
The ground, in this research, refers to the land and the political ground; the language and the ground of a conversation; and the image and the surface of the print. I treat the phrase *common ground* with utmost suspicion. When in use, it needs to be resisted, examined and deconstructed, while at the same time, it is greatly desired.

The ground, as Grund or אָרְץ in German and Hebrew, expands far beyond the ground we understand to be what lies beneath our feet, be it the floor or the soil. I chose to translate this word with a slight bending of meaning, moving away from the soil, the land, or the earth in the Arabic word زُمْرَة, and more towards the foundation, the surface, and base for something that remains open and is easily attached to other words and meanings, such as in the case of the German language. Some examples can be seen in Grundgesetz, the basic law of German citizens, or Grundbegriff, which means fundamental or basic concept. Another meaning appears in the Hebrew word בסיס, which like German means base or foundation, and is often spoken as a short version for a ‘military base,’ a motif appearing frequently in my works.

In *Encountering Perforated Ground* resides a passive and active proposition. It implies seeing and becoming familiar with the perforated ground, and it also, through the methodology of unlearning, demands the action of perforating. This presents a paradox where, in order to see or encounter the perforation, one needs to actively engage in the same act, to become complicit. The desire to perforate the ground means simultaneously to perforate the geopolitical landscape, the language, and the image. This forms the basis of my working methodology, and which I will elaborate on further by first starting with the photographic image.

My use of photography, and in particular the negative and print, stems from the need to think, metaphorically, of the materiality of seeing. The printing process offers me the possibility of touching this materiality with my hands; literally when working in the darkroom or print room, and poetically, by asking what it might be to see too much? Or what might be the edges and limitations of seeing? The negative becomes a site of excavation. I often over expose my negatives out of the desire to expose the negative to more of the site. This action turns the printing process to an act of excavation – to see what remains. The darkroom is the place for such activity where the printing process becomes a way to insert my hands into the fabric of the site, as Walter Benjamin’s analogy between the painter and the cameraman suggests:

> The surgeon represents the polar opposite of the magician. The magician heals a sick person by the laying on of hands; the surgeon cuts into the patient’s body. The magician maintains the natural distance between the patient and himself; though he reduces it very slightly by the laying of hands, he greatly increases it by
virtue of his authority. The surgeon does exactly the reverse; he greatly diminishes the distance between himself and the patient by penetrating into the patient’s body, and increases it but little by the caution with which his hand moves among the organs [...] the surgeon at the decisive moment abstains from facing the patient man to man; rather, it is through the operation that he penetrates into him. Magician and surgeon compare to painter and cameraman. The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web.\footnote{Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1992), 226-227.}

The analogue printing process in the darkroom varies significantly between colour and black and white. It is with the black and white process that Benjamin’s analogy resonates most strongly. With colour printing, the experience is of peeling back the layers of colour until one reaches a balanced ground, where the image and its colours seem most clear. With the black and white process, using the same yellow and magenta filters that adjust the contrast, one can seemingly alter the feel of depth within the two dimensional surface of the print.

My works in the sites of making, the darkroom and print room, draw on Benjamin’s analogy and cultivate a way of touching the fabric of the visited sites. The hand touching the surface of the ground of both image and site is a way to revisit the sites through the printing process, and it is also a way to rethink the sites through what emerges from the different printing processes, such as in the case of the order of printing in colour photo etching, attempting erasure, and other incidents or mistakes such as the appearance of chemical stains and accidental scratches on the print.

In regards to the landscape, treating the photographic image as an excavation site, relates in many ways to the work of the The Forensic Agency. Under the name Forensic Architecture, it was first established at Goldsmiths University in 2011, offering a forensic practice from architects, artists, filmmakers and theorists rather than qualified scientists. Forensic Architecture animates images of sites to bear witness and tell a public truth by applying forensic tools to photographic images.

There are many meeting points between my research and Forensic Architecture in regards to the locations I visit, the political commitment, and even by some of the working methods. The work of Forensic Architecture aims to reverse the use to which modern forensics are put in order to legally enforce current regimes to reckon with their actions.
My research, much smaller in scale, attends to the margins of sites of conflict, their gaps and borders. The difference between my works and the ones of Forensic Architecture is described most clearly in the words of Eyal Weizmann that outline a gap in their work: ‘Forensics can however never really overcome the complexities of the subject, the ambiguity of language, and the frailty of witness memory.’ My research is located precisely in these grey zones that are often slippery and hard to capture in images and words. I therefore concentrate on the margins; the edges of territorial lands, as well as the edges of the print and what is visible on paper. Ambiguous words serve me in my experimentation with acts of blurring that appear in the spoken language as a mean of concealing state violence, and the blurring of distinctions between such acts in the name of order and security.

The works I create do not intend to reveal some truth about the site, nor to make it publicly recognised. I am using the sites I visit as vessels, testing grounds, or sites for experimentations with ways of seeing and knowing. In this way, and through photography, I focus on methods that return the attention to the making of sites.

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(Figure 2.12) Dana Ariel, Ze'elim, c-print, 61x61cm, 2014
- PART TWO -

METHODS OF UNLEARNING
This part addresses the search for different methods of unlearning and negotiates the possibility for such methods. The Hebrew word מַשְׁבֵּר might shed some light on what these methods seek to create or instigate. Unlike the English translation of crisis that originates from the Greek word *krisis* and *krinein* – to separate, decide, judge – the Hebrew word means a situation where the stability of a system is shaken or undermined, quite often in a surprising manner. In the Hebrew manner, it also means a turning point. The verb also means to shatter or smash to little bits, while as a noun it translates as a fracture, break, or fragment. In English, I would rather use the word conflict, or the action of bringing into conflict rather than the word crisis. When I use the word conflict it also harbours the Hebrew word crisis מַשְׁבֵּר.

My exhaustive translations might be exhausting to a reader or a viewer, but there is great significance in unpacking the nuances of meaning. Not all layers need be fully discussed; some may seem self evident, but how am I to tell without making assumptions about the reader of this text? It therefore brings me to the point this part seeks to emphasise: the need for a moment of conflict, the necessity for a visible fracture. Moments of misunderstanding, mistranslation, misidentification, and misreading offer a confrontation with the visibility of conflict. These moments turn in my research project into generative methods that carry the potential for a process of unlearning.

I begin with my own national identity that I have gradually began using as a method of unlearning. It emerged from the struggle of speaking without giving away – or being asked to give away – my national identity. My work is often read through the lens of my presumed national identity. I have experimented repeatedly – in my presentations and artist talks – with the complexity presented by my national identity. Whether first announcing my national identity or by intentionally neglecting it entirely in order for the work to speak for itself, the conversations would always circle back to this topic. Neither option was satisfactory, and both risked overshadowing the work itself. Despite these many experimentations of revealing and concealing my identity, I often wait to see in what way it will arise – resulting to a tactic of suspension.

I encounter the need to deconstruct my national identity repeatedly outside and within my artistic practice. A first encounter with people will always undergo, to various degrees, a process of undoing preconceived identifications. In the case of Israel and Palestine, a fair amount of unlearning is required. In fact, it is rarely the case that a conversation goes beyond that very process of undoing or unlearning – a conversation suspended in an endless act of erasure.
At the age of 16, every Israeli must be issued an ID card which they must then always carry with them.

Upon applying for one, I was asked to answer a few questions regarding my identity and religion. In Israel, written under the nationality category is a person’s religion when Jewish, followed by the nationality or religion of the mother. When that can’t be determined, a replacement will be given. I was randomly given the following sign (---)

The new and invented form was created out of familiar characters, to define what is undefined by law. The gap represented by this form of identity reveals a disagreement regarding the fundamental definition of Jewish identity and, hence, Israeli national identity. It presents a paradox: it defines by testifying for what it cannot define. As a non-Jewish-Israeli-German-of-Kurdish-decent my identity already attests to a conflict in the telling of an historical narrative. My identity confronts a heritage of dual positions such as perpetrator-victim, Ashkenazi-Mizrahi and citizen-immigrant that still operate and divide Israeli society today. My identity should be read as being both none and all of these components bound together by hyphens. In its complete form, this identity aims to generate a process of undoing that refuses a fixed identity or a single reading of its past. This is how it developed into a method rather than representing an identity by which I identify myself. In fact, it is through negation that I address and unpack my identity. In this way, it provokes me to think of ways to begin to articulate or represent similar gaps in my practice, by means of negation or erasure.

My first act was to decipher this ambiguous sign that is my national identity through various lenses – textually, politically, symbolically, poetically and visually. The role of punctuation marks in a text is varied. It gives rhythm and navigates the fluidity and connectivity of words. Punctuation marks emphasise, separate, cut through the text, while also joining together. They can be abrupt, commanding and soothingly pleasant. Theodor Adorno writes on punctuation marks that ‘[...] through their logical-semantic autonomy punctuation marks, which articulate language and thereby bring writing closer to the voice, have become separate from both voice and writing, and they come into conflict with their own mimetic nature.’ Adorno’s text opens with assimilating the punctuation marks to pictorial symbols that instruct and command like traffic signals. For him, punctuation marks are the closest element in language to resemble music. Most importantly, it is through punctuation marks that he claims, one can identify the intentions of the author: whether they violently ignore their guiding rules, or cleverly and sensitively allow them to operate in the background of the text.²

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2 Adorno, 304.
My identity is a gap, unspoken, invisible and voiceless, and yet it is a complete sign with a beginning and end - held by the crescent of the brackets; a perfect broken sign. Like the punctuation marks that construct my national identity sign, it punctures the very form of identity within Israeli society. Its creation was a significant moment in my understanding of my own identity and the political and historical circumstances that formed it. It is an imprint of a political moment or constellation of events. It signified a crisis, a rupture in my relation to community, nation state and civil duty. It forced me to renegotiate my position.

My given sign, read through the prism of Adorno’s text, brings me closer to the voice, by means of punctuation marks, and yet further away from language, as it cannot be spoken. It situates me between images and words. It is a silent voice, not quite representing or belonging to any particular group or community, other than by means of negation. As such, it also allows me to choose which part to disclose first; a method of manipulation on my part that might grant me access to the different sites I visit. However, it also remains invisible amongst others who might quickly presume I am Jewish Israeli. Under the presumption of a shared ‘we,’ I am often exposed to the undercurrent streams of divisive language. For example, comments on the violence of the sound of the German language or the inability to escape the historical shadow of Nazi Germany, and more recently in Israel, statements such as *its us or them*, inciting fear and separation. This confronts me with an ethical problem: on the one hand, I have the strong urge to confront these statements and blow my cover; and on the other hand, which is often my chosen position, I simply observe and listen to the subtle nuances of violence in the use of language when in the comfort of ‘we.’

This historical and political context requires further elaboration. Israeli national identity is defined in reference to the Jewish religion, yet the law of nationality fails to define who is considered Jewish. That definition is borrowed from the law of return, allowing every Jew in the world the opportunity to ‘return’ to Israel and receive permanent citizenship.\(^3\) The law of return, first formulated in 1950, neglected to include a definition of who would be considered Jewish and left it to be decided by the judicial system. It was only in 1970 that the law was amended, stating that a Jew is a person whose mother is Jewish and does not belong to any other religion. An additional section was added the same year to allow children and grandchildren of Jews (without gender restrictions) to receive permanent citizenship under the ‘law of return.’

People who immigrated to Israel under the law of return and who have proven they are Jewish through their paternal side would not be considered Jewish according to the Rabbinate, and their national identity would be disputed because of the absence of an Israeli national identity. The main dispute over national identity is in regards to the process of conversion to Judaism and under whose authority this process falls. The court of justice ruled in 2002 that people who have undergone a non-orthodox conversion process should be registered as Jews. In objection to this decision, the inner minister office decided in 2003 to erase the national identity from identity cards altogether – an act that buried rather than resolved the matter. As it could not be erased entirely it was merely replaced with a symbol of eight unified stars, no longer distinguishing between Jews and non-Jews, while still refusing to use Israeli (rather than Jewish) under that category. In 2011 the national identity category was re-instated, thus disregarding the court order from 2002.

Professor Uzi Ornan, from the association ‘Ani Israeli’ (I am Israeli), has been appealing to the State of Israel (together with 37 additional supporters) since 2003, demanding to have the national identity in his ID card changed from Jewish to Israeli. The court rejected the last appeal in this case in 2014, declaring that this sensitive matter has serious implications for the State’s identity and therefore should not be decided or judged by the court of justice. This statement, by suspending any judgment at all, contributed to, and legally enforced Israeli national identity to remain a silent gap.

The repeated gesture of gradually constructing and deconstructing the national identity is deeply entangled in historical-political-national relations and is further explored by Dan Bar-On’s writing on the disintegration of a monolithic identity in Israeli society. In his book The Others Within Us: Constructing Jewish-Israeli Identity, Bar-On approaches Israeli identity as dynamic, constructed of various ‘others.’ Through interviews he conducted with families across three generations, he traces the events and traumatic experiences of the Holocaust, shell shock (or rather the denial of it), and the first Intifada as the cause for the disintegration of a solid and monolithic Jewish-Israeli identity. In another book by Dan Bar-On, Legacies of Silence: Encounters with Children of the Third Reich, he includes his own voice as a writer and interviewer, revealing the difficulty of approaching his research from an objective point of view. Bar-On often breaks the rhythm of writing by entering his own personal difficulty in encountering the children of perpetrators. I refer to Bar-On’s writing because his research contributes to the intersection of a personal-political method of investigation, one which

4 Ani Israeli was founded as a voluntary association aimed at constituting an Israeli national identity in Israel (rather than Jewish) and act towards its public and legal recognition.
5 The phrase monolithic ‘is a geological expression describing one piece of stone made of a single material’ and is used by Dan Bar-On to describe the political and social shifts in Jewish-Israeli identity. See Dan Bar-On, The others Within Us: Constructing Jewish-Israeli Identity, trans. Noel Canin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1.
cannot avoid addressing the position of the author in the process.

Finally, I would like to return to poetic readings and literature.

_It was done in this way: gangs of some twenty workers were formed who had to accomplish a length, say, of five hundred yards of wall, while a similar gang built another stretch of the same length to meet the first. But after the junction had been made the construction of the wall was not carried on from the point, let us say, where this thousands yards ended; instead the two groups of workers were transferred to begin building again in quite different neighbourhoods. Naturally in this way many great gaps were left, which were only filled in gradually and bit by bit, some, indeed, not till after the official announcement that the wall was finished. In fact it is said that there are gaps, which have never been filled in at all […]_⁶

I was inspired by Kafka’s description of the building of _The Great Wall of China_, which in my imagination appears in sections and through a long period of time as an horizon line made up of many hyphens. The wall is a border that failed the purpose for which it was erected. The metaphor of Kafka’s fractured border that failed to protect from an invisible enemy informs many of my works and political views on the theme of borders.

(open bracket hyphen hyphen hyphen close bracket)

To read this sign out loud by means of _verlesen_, I can’t help but laugh, in an Arendtian manner. Most of all, my sign of national identity is a bureaucratic _glitch_, provided by a clerk who simply didn’t know what to name this form of identity, or what rules to follow. In the absence of guidelines, and the obscurity of the law, creativity invented a perfect form. Reading this sign poetically and playfully should not detract from how seriously this sign has imprinted itself on my life, choices and world views. It is through the poetic reading that I begin to think of it as a generative method: as the voicing of something that has been buried or deemed insignificant, yet time and again appears as a crucial fracture in Israeli society.

_(hyphens held by the crescent of the brackets)_

_ hyphenating_

Misidentification
(Figure 3.1) Dana Ariel, 'חלול', photo etching, plate size 15x15cm, paper size 30x30cm, 2013
Misidentification in my research pertains to both identity and place. As I drive from Jerusalem towards the Dead Sea on my way to the West Bank, the car’s navigation system alerts me not to use it. It is quite an odd thing to encounter a machine that admits to its shortcomings and inaccuracy. Nonetheless, this is a political matter, attesting to the instability of borders and access to the area. I translate here a version of the alert as it appeared on my screen on the morning of one of my visits to the West Bank:

Drive Safely.
To prevent entering dangerous areas in יש״ע, we advise you to refrain from using the navigation system at your disposal in יש״ע areas. You are advised to ensure that the roads listed in your destination calculation settings do not include the following options “Judea and Samaria,” “Permit Required” and “Special Road”...
In any case, this navigation programme should not be used whilst driving, and should not rely merely on the information provided here, but rather, use it for guidance only, in addition to traffic regulations, road signs, the state of the road and its condition in reality, and common sense.

With this message in mind, I think of what a special road, and common sense might be? I assume the intention was for restricted roads and the latter meant common sense for an Israeli Hebrew reader? Or at least one who spent his life in the Israeli education system? This most likely could not be answered in simple terms, but the fractures begin to show in the common sense of we all know what this means, or dangerous phrases such as no need to state the obvious.

Special Road is an interesting choice of words. It attests here to roads that are inaccessible to civilians, or worse, some civilians over others. Therefore, under the word special we actually can begin to see the regime’s concealment of state violence. I choose to look at the term metaphorically as I search for signs of erasure, and signs of blurred borders - special signs that could pierce through this silent layer of violence seen in the landscape.

My photographic interest in the Jordan Valley, the West Bank, began in 2013 with the visit to what I call in my work the Hollow Mountain. The encounters on this mountain made it clear to me that I was trapped between gazes, that my presence in the landscape will always be watched, and that, in this way, I am always performing to an invisible audience.

יש״ע is the Hebrew initials for the area of Judea, Samria, and Gaza.
Hollow Mountain, הר חלול, has not yet developed into a work. However, it exists as a narrative, perhaps awaiting to be written as a text work. It informs my thinking process with the proposition of a hollow gaze. I first visited this place in April 2013, climbing the mountain by foot in search for a viewpoint. The mountain revealed itself as punctured from all sides. Observation posts, tunnels, and remnants of military presence littered the place. It looked abandoned, ruins of past wars. The direction of the tunnels indicated the direction of the surveying and watchful gaze. They pointed at the border with Jordan. Shortly after my arrival, a military vehicle appeared and an IDF officer stepped out to observe the Palestinian village beneath the mountain. The remnants of the observation posts and the binoculars of the officer pointed in opposite directions. He was looking inwards, towards the West Bank. I was standing there too with my camera and tripod, observing him observing the landscape. He wasn’t bothered by my presence, and like the clocking of an observer’s assignment he remained there briefly and then drove off. In the background were sounds of barking dogs, drawing closer and closer until a young man appeared escorted by two eager dogs. I paused and waited, concerned by what might follow. I smiled as he approached despite the fear that overwhelmed me. We didn’t have a shared language, but it was clear what needed to be done. I waved and smiled and he did the same. He came closer, and I offered him my camera so he could view the landscape through the viewfinder. The camera stood in for my words. More than words, it offered to show how I saw what he was observing from a distance. I attempted to break apart the different directions of the gaze; to open up the space, to make it hollow again, in order to be able to see through the observation post, the different power relations and the camera itself. He escorted me down to my car, out of hospitality, I believe.

I returned from this visit with images of the observation post and the military vehicle approaching and departing the scene. However, that is not yet the work I named Hollow Mountain. Currently a single print was made into a photo etching and with it my fascination with the etching process emerged. It depicts a line on a rock, as if cutting through it. I wanted to emphasise the gap, the hollow ground I saw opening beneath my feet when standing on the mountain and observing the many different historical and contemporary observation posts. Pointing at different destinations, they bear witness to Israel’s various wars with its neighbours and to the inversion of the gaze inwards, a conflict within, or perhaps, Israel’s war with itself, if the metaphor can stretch thus far.

The photo etching process reduced the photographic details of the image and transformed the photographic grain into tiny holes, slits or punctures on the surface of the copper plate. What was a line in the photograph was now a cut,
metaphorically cutting open the ground, the image and the gaze.

A map of the region, of י"ע, is not a map I have clearly visible in my mind’s eye due to its many blind spots, unmarked roads and restricted areas. While searching for a title for the print, my eyes landed on the double naming of the village of Fasa’il and the settlement of Peza’el. I assumed this is where I was standing. This mistake in identification was revealed and corrected. But the interest in the double names that I was so eager to believe was the right location remained and led me to include this as a site in this project. The misidentification that occurred here led to the making of many works from the various visits to Fasa’il and Peza’el. It confronted me with unpleasant acknowledgments of my position as an Israeli citizen visiting this territory and the encounters my presence provokes. I was made aware of how closely I am monitored from the opposite sides of the conflict. Most importantly, I began experimenting with the idea of the hollow gaze, and what it might be. It seems to resonate with previous ideas of the blind gap and strongly echoes the use of a camera. Furthermore, it touches on the intersection of the observing gazes. The experiments with the hollow gaze have not yet reached a conclusion, yet emerged from these encounters mentioned here.
ביקרות
visit
ביקרות
critique
besuchen, suchen
search
(Figure 3.2) Dana Ariel, *Zeichen*, gelatin silver print, 2017
My visits to sites could be viewed as movements between two translations: one is the German verb ‘besuchen’ – that harbors the verb ‘suchen,’ that means to search, and in the Hebrew word ביקרו, part of ביקור, which means critique. The visit is both the search for, and the critique of sites and their making. In this way, my visits to sites extend to the entire experience of the search; affected by memories from previous visits, concerns, fears, anticipation and growing expectations. Before, alongside and after become significant parts of the new sites’ narratives.

The visit that resides within critique was pointed out to me by my philosophy teacher, Raphael Zagury-Orly, when I first invited him for a studio visit. I understood his words in the context of the studio visit, to mean that the critique begins by being in the presence of the work, much like I see the visiting of sites. It is a desire to see and listen. To offer critique on someone’s work is a delicate matter that first requires being present, absorbing and observing. If the visit fails to incorporate this, it risks speaking from pre-informed critique or pre-determined discourse.

Pausing on this invitation to critique, I would like to address the studio visit through the power relation of the invitation itself – through the host and the guest, and hospitality and hostility. In the essay Hostipitality, which I will be referring to extensively throughout my works and encounters, Derrida begins by quoting Kant to discuss the aspect of conditional and unconditional hospitality. The allgemeine Hospitalität (universal hospitality) described by Kant is a matter of deciding by an international treaty the conditions of cosmopolitan right: the right of anyone to be greeted with hospitality, and not be treated with hostility, when on foreign land. Derrida adds that he insists on using the German word Hospitalität to emphasise the Latin origin that, he says, ‘[…] allows itself to be parasitised by its opposite, “hostility,” the undesirable guest [hôte] which it harbors as the self-contradiction in its own body.’

Through the text, which transcribes a seminar, Derrida pauses by saying ‘we do not [yet] know what hospitality is;’ as if arrested in the task of rereading, or on this threshold of the ‘not yet.’ Every time Derrida returns to read Kant, another aspect of hospitality and hostility unfolds. He points to Kant’s use of the word ‘Wirtbarkeit’ – in German ‘Wirt’ means owner, patron, the owner of the house and the one who can therefore offer hospitality, says Derrida. The first question outlining the power relation is therefore, the one who can offer hospitality. This will mark out the owner and guest in the gesture of hospitality.

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10 Derrida, 10.
For Derrida, the origin is already contaminated with its opposition, trapped within the same term. What leaps out are the limitations set by the host. When accepting the invitation, the guest must say yes to the law of the house set by the host. In his dwelling on the threshold of hospitality, Derrida points out the potential for a reversal of roles: the possibility of the guest taking the host as his hostage. Hospitality emphasises and establishes the power structure of the visit. Other than by means of a hostile takeover, the act of hospitality is an act of enforcing the rules of the house – predicated on saying ‘yes’ to its power structure. He writes:

_It does not seem to me that I am able to open up or offer hospitality, however generous, even in order to be generous, without reaffirming: this is mine, I am at home, you are welcome in my home, without any implication of “make yourself at home” but on condition that you observe the rules of hospitality by respecting the being-at-home of my home, the being-itself of what I am._

How to think of the studio visit in light of this reading? I cannot easily attribute the same power relation to the artist and the critic or curator who functions here as the guest. Alternatively, this could extend to the exhibition site in the form of the artist and visitor, or the work and the viewer. For Derrida, it is not to say that there can be no hospitality, but rather that it is this impossibility – for hospitality to get rid of hostility – that must be overcome. I led a seminar entitled _Methods of Unlearning_ with undergraduate students at the Slade, following the reading of this text by Derrida, to rethink the studio visit in terms of hospitality. Interesting questions were raised, such as who can voice critique? What is the role of critique for a work in progress? Is the artist the one to offer hospitality in this instance and is there such a thing as critical hostility? Who dictates the rules of the house?

These question touch on the difficulties of writing critically on one’s own practice, and finding creative ways to do so without flattening or detracting from the work. Jane Rendell offers interesting insights into this issue – ‘asking what is possible for a critic to say about an artist, a work, the site of a work and the critic herself and for the writing to still “count” as criticism.’ Rendell argues that the writing of the critic is the remaking of the artwork in the critic’s own terms and is therefore a creative process, a mode of communication. This discussion reverberates through my text and my search for a writing mode that can communicate my practice and its methodology of making in words.

11 Derrida, 14.
13 Rendell, 7-8.
أثر
trace
שריד, עקבתה, טביעת רגל, רשם, סימן
Spur
tracing
durchpausen, zeichnen, folgen, finden, erkennen
(Figure 3.3) Dana Ariel, *Placed Object*, photo etching print, plate size 30x30, paper size 50x50cm, 2014
In a conversation on photography Derrida returns to Pliny the Elder’s account on the origin of image making. In this story, Dibutade’s gesture of tracing the shadow image of her lover before his departure is inherently linked to a sense of loss, absence and the desire to grasp at something or someone who is already and unavoidably in the process of slipping away.

*When Dibutade follows a line, she is active; she has an instrument, a technique, but her human activity consists in passively taking as a model a line that is already there. And therefore at the point, at the sharp point or the pointed tip of the pencil, or at the extremity of the metal or wooden point, activity is modelled on a given… When Dibutade traces, she begins to retrace. And the remarking of the retracing is at once active and passive. Activity and passivity touch together or are articulated along a differential border. This is the very movement of the trace: a movement that is a priori photographic.*

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

(Figure 3.4) Joseph-Benoit Suvée, *The Invention of the Art of Drawing* (detail), oil on canvas, (1743-1807). Groeninge museum, Bruges, Belgium. © Lukas - Art in Flanders VZW. Bridgeman Education.

When Dibutade traces the image of her lover on the border between light and shadow, she is passively drawing what is there, in the presence of her lover. She is also actively creating a representation of his image, arresting his outlines in a still image or drawing. In her passivity she bears witness to his presence and imminent departure, and through her activity she participates in the act of making, by means of retracing. Derrida positions the photographic trace as one which is trapped between passivity and activity.

The act of retracing, which I exercise through the revisits to sites, aims to reflect back at the medium of photography and its gestures. What I retrace in my works is not the sites themselves; rather, it is *through* their conflicted narratives that I seek to retrace photographic gestures. My aim is to bounce from the political to the poetic, from passivity to activity, from the photographic image to the landscape, to consider what new perspectives these transformations and movements could offer.

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The word أثر in Arabic reveals an entanglement of terms. Translated into Hebrew and English, the word harbours the following: trace, sign, impression, shred, shadow, artistic or literary work, influence, signature and site. What arises from many of these options is the index – the relationship to another place, moment or event that is pulled to the surface by the photographic image. My interest lies in the capacity of the photographic image to press at this urgent matter, of bringing, and collapsing together, different referents, sites and gestures. My work experiments with the ties of this indexical relationship to place, knowledge and expectation, and how these can be shared with viewers.
(Figure 3.5) Dana Ariel, ‘I must have a way of leaving at a moment’s notice…’ in response to Kafka, photo etching, 40x40cm, 2017

(Figure 3.6) Dana Ariel, ‘I try to guard myself in various ways against this danger…’ in response to Kafka, gelatin silver print, 40x40cm, 2017
- PART THREE -

ENCOUNTERS AT THE VISITED SITES AND THE SITES OF MAKING
The following encounters present my revisits to the different sites and experimentations with the making process. This part takes the shape of a photo essay, in which I unpack the many layers that make the work. These texts will not necessarily appear beside the work in an exhibition space, but they will inform its construction. Like a syntax formed by selected works, the following encounters intend to draw out the possibilities of bringing together the different sites and methods.

The titles given to each encounter indicate a title of a work, a series of prints, a text work, or an encounter that has the potential to become work in the future. The following works are not listed in chronological order. I begin with selected works from the exhibition *Broken Ground*, and later arrange the encounters geographically. Through the course of the research, I repeatedly returned to visit sites in different locations, the ongoing work on one site influenced impressions and perceptions informing other sites, despite their geographical distance. Alongside these influences is the process of printing that was developed in relationship to particular sites and provided new approaches for experimentation on both my return to the sites with a camera and further developments of new printing techniques. The sites and their making influenced each other.
Broken Ground

أرض مكسورة

Gebrochener Boden

קרקע שבורה
*Broken Ground* was a solo exhibition of my works, exhibited at neo:gallery22, Bolton UK, between 6 November 2014 and 4 January 2015. The exhibition was a culmination of a three-month residency at neo:studios. It was accompanied by a catalogue of the works and a text by Dr Eleanor Morgan entitled *Inviting the site to speak*. With the full support of artists at neo, I had complete freedom in the curatorial decisions for the exhibition and events. Morgan writes on the exhibition:

> The works in *Broken Ground* are comprised of different distances - different ways of observing and seeing a site [...] The series of images work together to form their own narrative, in which each element of the site is viewed from a different angle [...] each repeated form like a word in a sentence that we can gradually recognise and begin to look for, like anchoring points in a shifting story.¹

The exhibition brings together different works in photography, print, video and text. Included in the exhibition are: a crash site, a quarry, a lookout post, a flock of birds crossing a border, urban edge-lands and a *non-site* in the form of prints of a stain from the print room.² The motivation behind the selection and installation of the works was to create a fluid movement between the various sites. The walk around the gallery aimed to create a circular path where series of prints from each site were encountered in fragments, and for the viewing experience to be constructed slowly and through repeated encounters with the different sites. I discuss here selected works that contribute to the methods used in my research project.

**Rummu**

I visited Rummu in summer 2013 and printed during 2014, shortly after I had written my research proposal. Despite the fact that this site resides outside of my selected locations, I discuss it here for the many connections it offers in the development of my working methods. The printing method developed for this work forms the link between the site and the possibility of revisiting the site through the printing process in the darkroom, as well as the experimentations with the tracing of colour that appears in many of my printmaking works.

¹ Eleanor Morgan, “Inviting the site to speak,” in *Dana Ariel: Broken Ground*, exhibition catalogue, (Neo, 2014), 3.
² *Dana Ariel: Broken Ground*, 26-27. The prints titled *Stained*, Decalcomania (ink transfer) on paper, 70x100cm, 2013, were made from an accidental blob of ink that was pressed against the plate.
(Figure 4.1) Dana Ariel, from Rummu, c-print, 58x58cm, 2014
Rummu is the site of an abundant Soviet prison in Estonia. The prisoners of Rummu were forced to work in the quarry outside the prison walls, beside a lake that reached the prison's walls. It is unclear if an accident occurred or if it was a deliberate action that led to the flooding of parts of the prison and quarry. The lake that now covers part of the wall, building and heavy vehicles, is a major attraction for young Estonians who can cross the lake on the flooded wall as if they were walking on water. Divers come day and night to explore the underwater prison, while visitors jump off the building into the lake. The black and white photographs were taken whilst standing on the ruins and overlooking the remains of the prison under water.

I revisited Rummu upon my return to London through the analogue printing process, attempting to recreate, or recall, the colours of the lake. Using the black and white negatives, I chose to print with colour sensitive paper. In this way, the colour is generated by the filters on the enlarger and the reception of the paper. Colour from the site, which has been erased by choosing to use black and white negative, is now remembered, or rather, invented through the printing process. The process began by balancing the yellow and magenta filters in the enlarger and printing various test strips to determine the ground zero of colour, or in other words, create a neutral print which would look as if the image was printed on black and white paper. Once it seemed that the colours had canceled each other out, my palette of colours was set. I then could begin inserting colour back into the print by slowly adjusting the magenta and yellow filters. When the colours finally resembled the memory I had, I exposed the edges of the print to the full strength of the enlarger's bulb that without filters imitates daylight. The action of exposing the photographic paper to daylight, appears in a red colour that very quickly burns the paper (the over exposure of emulsion), which appear as black devoid of any details. I stopped just before the image disappeared into black. The encounter of the remembered colours of the lake and the natural burning colour of the paper, returned the print, at the collision point between the two colours, to black and white.

3 Dark room enlargers use the three subtractive colour filters - cyan, magenta and yellow (unlike the additive colours used in monitors - Red, Green, Blue). In practice, it is recommended to use only the magenta and yellow filters, and use the cyan only if absolutely necessary. When printing in black and white, the same two filters are used. Raising the magenta filter determines the contrast, while raising the yellow determines the greyness of the print.

4 This palette is unique to this print and will change once using different paper, enlarger or chemicals.
(Figure 4.2) Dana Ariel, from *Crash Site*, c-print, 61x61cm, 2014
(Figure 4.3) Dana Ariel, from Crash Site, gelatin silver print, 61x61cm, 2014
(Figure 4.4) Dana Ariel, *Crash Site no. 1, no. 2, no. 3*, photo etching prints, plate size 20x20cm, paper size 40x40cm, 2014
Crash Site

Crash site, is a series of c-prints, gelatin silver prints and photo-etchings, which emerged from the search for the burial site of a plane. During the Second World War an American bomber that intended to land in Devon, had to divert its route due to heavy fog. The plane was forced to make its way north until the weather cleared for landing. However, it ran out of fuel not far from Manchester which made the crew abandon the plane and leave it to crash on the moors.

I came across this information when I was an artist in residence at neo studios in Bolton. Julie Levy, a member of the directorial board of neo, who was familiar with my work, thought I would be intrigued. She introduced me to an officer of the fire brigade who gave me more details about the operation that took place on the moors – just a few months before my arrival in May 2014. He said that the remnants were found by a passerby who identified live ammunition on site. Due to the rough conditions on the moors, and with no good roads for access of vehicles, the fire brigade decided it was not worth salvaging the plane and buried the remains immediately after the safe destruction of the live ammunition.

The story holds no dramatic details; there was no loss of human lives, only an unaccounted for plane that was not unusual during the war. In many ways, this was a non-story, a forgotten event in the form of an unmarked site, buried underground. This non-site immediately caught my attention and I decided to visit the site with my camera. I was accompanied by Jason Simpson, an artist and creative director at neo. I received a few maps of the area and some friendly warnings emphasising the bad condition of the roads. The plane, I was told, should be found on an area marked as Broken Ground. My search, just a few months after the discovery and burial of the remains, was motivated by the remote hope of finding the unmarked crash site.

We traveled to the nearby town and walked from the station, climbing through streets that shortly turned into paths leading to the moors. Just when we thought we had left the little town another set of houses appeared and we spotted a man leaving his house for a morning run. We took the opportunity to ask for directions. We told him what we were after and his surprised response was that he thought the story was a myth, stating that he had lived in the area for 60 years. He pointed to the moors and advised us to take the left turn towards the reservoir. The reservoir was easy to find, and from there the rest of the path was overtaken by vegetation that led us to climb the slippery hillside rather than retrace our steps, ignoring all previous lines made by walkers. It proved to be a good short-cut. After the climb we were finally on Broken Ground.
Crash site no. 1, 2, 3 are my first encounters with possible signs of the crash site. Scouting the broken ground yielded each mark significant in my search. The experience of the search itself merged the prior knowledge of the plane and the sight of the landscape. The prints made from the search represent the wish to superimpose the landscape onto the knowledge of what happened and what is buried underneath.

The landscape was breathtaking, stunning and frightening. The ground, soft and black, was collapsing with every step I took. I photographed in black and white to highlight the patches of black soil marked by a thin layer of white powder, in the midst of the vivid green and magenta vegetation that overtook the area. To avoid going back through the slippery slopes of our journey, we took the path leading to the quarry. It was only then that we stumbled upon the remains of the plane, just a few tiny bits that must have been missed by the fire brigade, or perhaps intentionally left there to mark the ground.

8 fold

The following text piece was first written in 2012, edited in 2014 and etched on copper and exhibited in Broken Ground.

8 fold is a job for two. It is an act of discipline and order. To begin each needs to hold the short side edges of the blanket. Make sure the blanket can’t slip through your fingers. Shake it as hard as you can to remove unwanted particles. It will take a few seconds until you find the rhythm together. Allow yourself a few moments to enjoy the simple moment of harmony as the blanket creates waves that flow through your bodies. Now concentrate. Fold the blanket in half, so that your own hands are now touching. Turn the blanket upside down. The edges should fall freely as you hold it from the round fold in the middle. Use one hand to bring one loose edge to the middle. Repeat the action on the other edge. Catch the loose rounded loops and stretch them. Now fold the blanket again in half so the edges of the blanket are inside the protected fold. Make sure there aren’t any wrinkles. Look at your partner, wait for a silent sign. Try to imagine the blanket is divided into quarters and fold it towards the centre. The edges should face each other, almost touching. Then fold for the last time. All edges should be tucked inside. Looking at the short sides you will see only rounded layers, 4 on one side and 8 on the other. Place the blanket neatly, the 8 fold facing out. The blanket is now folded.
The 8 fold unfolds with a quote by Walter Benjamin writings on Kafka’s work:

> The word “unfolding” has a double meaning. A bud unfolds into a blossom, but the boat which one teaches children to make by folding paper unfolds into a flat sheet of paper. This second kind of “unfolding” is really appropriate to the parable; it is the reader’s pleasure to smooth it out so that he has the meaning on the palm of his hand. Kafka’s parables, however, unfold in the first sense, the way a bud turns into a blossom. That is why their effect resembles poetry.\(^5\)

The two mentions to the act of folding, the first written by myself and the second written by Walter Benjamin addressed to Kafka, passively and actively unfold in writing and make writing unfold. What I find most compelling about Kafka’s writing is described so poetically here in Benjamin’s words. The parables, even when located at a specific site, have the ability to travel in the readers’ mind and reverberate at a contemporary moment. The parables, far from being empty, open-up space to allow for other events to echo in them. They become vessels, for the unfolding process to be carried out by the reader, making the reading itself an experience of unfolding that invites a repeated return to the text. Yve Lomax writes that ‘any serious act of unfolding requires enfolding.’\(^6\) The enfolding that surrounds and envelops in an embracing gesture is how I perceive the parables to operate. These stories unfold with the tale and have the capacity to enfold into them other similar narratives, or at least make suggestion as to their potential reading.

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Flock is a video work projected on a loop. It is a black and white video depicting in a still shot a flock of birds moving in a circular movement away from the camera.

I chased a passing flock of birds making their way from south to north. I reached the most northern city in Israel, in front of me was the border, lurking behind the trees. This was the clearest spot from which to film. Time seemed to slowdown as the birds circled their way north, perhaps they were already beyond my political reach. Their white feathered wings flickering in the sun made them momentarily disappear. I stood there observing how they appear and disappear in black and white, moving in circles that take them over the border, a movement I could not take myself.

Flock, was exhibited again at Against Delivery, a two-day event at the Slade Research Centre (SRC) in November 2015. Landscape Encounters and Transformations: sensing site and sight was a session that I led in collaboration with fellow PhD students. We began the session at the Blackboard Cafe, a place we designed for participants to be able to rest and sketch on the blackboard walls. There were approximately 60 participants, staff and students from the European Artistic Research Network and the London Arts and Humanities Partnership. I presented the session as a circular walk and pointed at the drawn floor plan of the Research Centre, our current landscape, on the black wall. Once my introduction was finished, silence took over until it was broken by one of the artists reaching out to grab a rope tied to a chalk rock. He dragged the rock across the floor to the next space, dropping the rope on the floor. Another artist came forward and unfolded a book of drawings beside the rock. With her gesture, a drawn landscape of a mountain unfolded. Then another artist approached and dragged the rock to the next artwork.

It did not happen instantly, but very shortly after the unfolding of the book, people began walking in a flock formation. The chatter that followed the first movement of people quickly faded into a concentrated viewing, as if suddenly and silently it became evident that we were part of an ongoing performance.
The different works presented by the artists at the Research Centre were brought together through the theme of landscape and in relation to sites that were out of sight. Collaboratively we decided to collapse the site of that moment at the Research Centre together with the different sites of our independent research. The block of chalk being dragged across the floor marked the line of a path we took through the space. It invited people to follow and indicated that *this* is now a work of art.

My video was screened in the last space and when it was my turn to carry the rock to the next stop I dragged it all the way to the fire exit door, then I picked up the rock and went down the spiral staircase. At the bottom of the staircase I passed-on the rock to another artist who walked us by dragging the rock on the asphalt. At that point, the line was most distinct, marking the path for those behind who had lost sight of the artist dragging the rock. The line led us in a circular path back to the entrance of the Slade Research Centre. Once we were out in day-light the magical hold broke and people began to speak to each other again as they followed the marked line on the pavement.

Ascending the stairs whilst dragging the rock caused it to shatter. Piece by piece fell off – some pieces were then picked up and carried by the participants that followed. We made our way up to the 5th floor for a group discussion that concluded the circular walk.

It was after this event that I changed the name of the video work to *Flock*. 
Left to right: (Figure 4.5, 4.6) Documentation of *Landscape Encounters and Transformations: sensing site and sight*, Against Delivery, UCL. Photographs by Nir Segal. (Figure 4.7) Dana Ariel, Flock, still image from video, duration: 6min, 2014.
 дорר מפוצלת
Split Road
تقسيم الطريق
Geteilter Weg
(Figure 4.8) Dana Ariel, *Split Road*, Lambda c-print, 300x100cm, 2016
Split Road is a panoramic view of the Judean Desert in Israel, photographed in March 2015. Unlike my other works, which I printed myself, this work was printed digitally by another printer. Printing in the darkroom, the site of making, plays a big role in my practice, not only as a way to revisit the photographed site through the printing process, but also as a valuable thinking process. In the case of Split Road, this process had to be communicated to another person.

Split Road was printed digitally on a Lambda processing machine. In this process a digital file is exposed through a laser beam on traditional colour photographic paper. The image, originally shot on a panoramic medium format camera, was scanned and processed by Metro Imaging who sponsored my solo exhibition at Pheonix Brighton as part of the Photo Fringe Festival in October 2016.

The digital file scanned from negative offers many more possibilities in intervening with the image. The colours translated into figures between 0 and 255 register the information in pixels. Photoshop opens up countless ways to alter the image, dodge and burn, mask and overlay, etc. The digital process far exceeds what can be done in the darkroom, which is more significantly subjected to the physical limits of the human body and the photographic material. Sean Mulcahy, the photographic print manager at Metro Imaging, who worked with me on the print, made the initial colour corrections, following my instructions to do only the necessary minimum. That meant, erasing the traces of the scan and the transformation into a digital file. We met a week later to view the first test strip. It was far from what I imagined. The colours felt dead. Without a clear white, grey or black point of reference in the image that the desert did not offer, it was hard to establish the correct colours. In the analogue colour process it is an action resembling the pealing off of layers of colour, testing and comparing, until all colours look as clear as possible. It is the search for a balanced moment in the print when the filters are not clouding the image. This is of course a matter of perception and often to create a certain feel to the print it can be printed colder or warmer by adjusting the filters.

Sean made the colour corrections according to the test prints I showed him and what he thought was right, drawing from his own experience. How could I describe the colour of the desert sky? The return to the site through the printing process is not a desire to create an authentic representation of the site at that particular moment, despite photography’s flirtation with this idea. To describe the desert sky is more of a metaphor to point at the significance of experience, perception and the making process itself in the manipulation of the print and its representation.
I return to my conversation with Sean and my attempts to describe my experience of encountering this place. I told him of my repeated visits to the area; where it is located and how the desert unfolded in front of my eyes when I descended the road from Jerusalem towards the Dead Sea. Driving into the desert along a curved road led me to the scratched hilltops I have been frequently visiting, and the military base on an unmarked path. The area surrounding the military base is an active fire zone, as I have been told by the military patrols. The desert never looked so green, I told Sean. The hills were painted with purple and green flowering vegetation – not the colours immediately associated with the desert. Sean listened patiently to my story and said repeatedly that he wasn’t there. I must have flooded him with too much information, but the resulting print contained a trace of our conversation where words were translated into colours, contrast and saturation.

The questions which arises from this experience is not found in positioning analogue against digital or vice versa, for me that is an irrelevant issue. My focus is based on the site of making – the experience of printing – and what might arise from this method of revisiting. In the darkroom, the encounter with the materials, the process, the negative and the unexpected or surprising depictions offered by the print itself become integral to this form of revisiting I refer to in this text. Drawing from these experiences which very often shape my final works, I ask what can be learned from the image taken and the site it is taken from, if all possibilities are digitally available? My concern lies in these endless possibilities, and whether the digital process then is more reliant on the preconceived notions of how the image should look. These questions, concerned with ways of seeing, emerge from the printing process when decisions must be made to determine the final print. This is not to say that unexpected sights are unachievable in the digital medium, as glitches and malfunctions occur constantly. How likely are we to keep these mistakes, is one point, but, more importantly does the practice of smoothing out these encountered inaccuracies result in a potential flattening of the image and the site?

Many of my works address the limits of seeing through the materiality of the negative. Political and territorial edges are echoed in the limitations of the negative and what can be seen when stretching its capacity. The encounters with surprising elements in the darkroom, and stretching the ability of the negative to record and reveal information, are methods to introduce something other and unexpected, that could challenge and divert us from seeing strictly through what has been seen before. The question between analogue and digital, is not a question of what can be achieved through the process – a question of quality – but rather a question of where and how am I to encounter the unexpected sight?
Holes
בורות, חורים
نقوب
Löcher
(Figure 4.9) Dana Ariel, *Holes*, gelatin silver print, 61x61cm, 2014
The site was found on the road leading from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, where the landscape gradually becomes bare and turns into desert. I climbed the nearest mount to search for a better position and took 11 shots of the holes, each from a slightly different angle. The small change in viewpoint depicted in the negatives, traced my search for a position. The two holes caught my attention immediately because of their resemblance to mass graves when seen from a distance. Even though I swiftly expelled this thought from my mind, something of the initial fear remains in the final print.

I aim for the print to become a ground for conflicting representations. Through the interplay of existing emotions and experiences, the print aims to arrest the gaze: to pause at any sight of conflict and question what is seen and what is known. My work aims to pursue this moment of misidentification, or momentary doubt without the offering of an immediate resolution. When exhibiting my works the order in which the images are encountered performs the potential weaving together of these interpretations: what appears first or last may determine the reading of the work or at least inform the connotations provoked by the ambiguity of the presented work. The question of how much to reveal and how to make this information available to a viewer at the exhibition site is an ongoing concern in my practice.

In a conversation with the Bedouins living in the area where I took the photographic series *Holes*, I was told that the holes had been dug for capturing the floodwaters that run from the mountains down to the lowest point, the Dead Sea, and that they had failed due to their location. Back in London I printed proof prints of the negatives from my visit. In one of the prints, taken at a particular angle, a stain appeared around the holes. At first I thought it must have been a mistake, a chemical intervention in the darkroom during printing or when developing the film. This was quickly dispersed as the stain only appeared in *that* print and seemed to accurately testify in support of the Bedouins’ narrative of the presence of water. The prints in my works, however, do not attempt to testify to a single narrative, but rather highlight the entangled possible readings of the print by retaining both a trace of the site and its history as told by witnesses and the false assumptions it invites that are the domain of political interpretation and misconceptions.

On a visit to the site a year later I saw that the holes had been marked by stones, for safety reasons, I presume. It was only on my last visit in December 2016 that I saw the holes had been covered completely without a trace. I wondered what implications this had on my work, now that the holes exist only in the print. I am unsure if the new images, the one with rocks marking the holes and the image of the holes covered up, will ever become part of the work in the future. In the meantime they rest in my archive, awaiting future encounters.
The stain in Didi-Hubermann’s text *The Index of the absent wound (monograph on a stain)* appears in the unexpected face, the figure of Christ that appeared to Secondo Pia in Turin and emerged not out of the shroud but rather out of its printed image in the darkroom. Didi-Hubermann writes, ‘almost nothing was visible, that is to say: already something other than nothing was visible in that almost. One actually saw, then, something else, simply in the looking forward to it or the desiring of it.’

The printed image allows us to encounter the desired sight that appears, despite its wishful anticipation, as surprising and arresting. For Secondo Pia the effaced figure appeared out of a strong desire to see the image of Jesus Christ, while it was thought to be impossible. I cannot attest to a similar deep desire to confirm the holes were used for water storage, though, I definitely hoped it was not a large burial site. That would have confirmed my worst fears. The stain appearing around the holes was unexpected because it couldn’t be experienced at the site by the naked eye and only became visible through the mediation of an apparatus.

In order to see, not to see what has already been seen and is already familiar, but to see as encountering something else – allowing that thing to leave an imprint – depends on its unexpectedness: a belated experience that is offered through the printing process. The notion of ‘looking forward’ as Didi-Hubermann writes, resonates with the moments of observation at the visited sites when waiting to take a photograph. For instance, waiting for a cloud to pass over the holes, which I suspect was what allowed the stain to register on the negative, or waiting in the darkroom, staring at the developing process of the print, both hold something of this desire to see, which becomes part of the artwork.

The stain’s relation to photography appears in many artists’ works, who photograph in sites of conflict and their aftermath, in the form of a cultural stain. This stain is attributed to violent events that resist being forgotten or buried by the regimes responsible. Many of the projects led by Forensic Architecture, address this very issue. The image that emerges in the darkroom slowly like a stain from within the emulsion of the photographic paper, is a manifestation of the search for

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traces of violence in the landscape, or what Ariella Azoulay terms ‘regime-made disaster:’ a ‘disaster,’ she argues, that is ‘generated and orchestrated by a political system in which one part of the population is mobilized to see the disaster of the other part as a non-disaster.’

The movement of the stain appears visually and politically in the photographic work made by Fazal Sheikh in collaboration with Forensic Architecture. The Erasure Trilogy by Fazal Sheikh contains the following projects: Memory Trace, Desert Bloom and Independence/Nakba. In the group exhibition This Place, at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art (2015), Sheikh presented a grid of forty-eight aerial photographs from the series Desert Bloom of the Negev desert in Israel. In the images are marks of erasure caused by the forced displacement of Bedouins, militarisation, mining and industrialisation, Jewish settlements and the attempts to convert desert lands to forests. The exhibition is supported by a brochure, which maps the photographed area and provides each image with a detailed caption, identifying and accounting for the historical markers on the ground.

(Figure 4.11) Fazal Sheikh, Latitude: 31º 0’ 60” N / Longitude: 34º 43’ 4” E, October 9, 2011. Abu Asa Family homestead in the vicinity of the recognised Bedouin town of Bir Haddaj, of the Azazme tribe. The dark circular stains in the centre of the image indicate the former presence of sire, livestock pens for camels, goats, and sheep. Staining is created by the bodily fluids of the herds that were kept there. Each year, the pens are shifted and the former space disinfected by fire. The stains remain on the ground for several years, the gradient of their saturation indicating how many rainy seasons have washed them away. Such traces help gauge the minimum duration of their presence in years.

October 9, 2011. Abu Asa Family homestead in the vicinity of the recognised Bedouin town of Bir Haddaj, of the Azazme tribe. The dark circular stains in the centre of the image indicate the former presence of sire, livestock pens for camels, goats, and sheep. Staining is created by the bodily fluids of the herds that were kept there. Each year, the pens are shifted and the former space disinfected by fire. The stains remain on the ground for several years, the gradient of their saturation indicating how many rainy seasons have washed them away. Such traces help gauge the minimum duration of their presence in years.

8 Azoulay, Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography, 244.
Stains become testimonies for a past presence of Bedouins and their repeated return to this land. Even though I give a very direct example of staining in Fazal Sheikh’s work, it appears both through his use of photography and the political concept of the project. The first staining appears in the prints and the second appears in the name of the series.\textsuperscript{10} The desert, like a pencil drawing, is highly susceptible to such movements and easily preserves and records them on the ground. Fazal Sheikh’s work represents a double mark, a double gesture of staining in the fabric of his work.

The returning stain in Fazal Sheikh’s work is clearly aimed to dispute the Zionist narrative that the land was empty and to tamper with the misconception that the desert is deserted. The forty-eight images mark the year of the grounding of the Israeli state, following the Independence War, as referred to by Israelis. The same year, and the same event, that for Palestinians marks the Nakba - the catastrophe in Arabic – and the displacement of Palestinians from the land by the state of Israel.

I never regard the desert as empty. The stain in my works aims to act differently to Sheikh’s work; it is not arguing for any particular truth but rather, asks us to re-examine what is seen in the landscape through the print and the image formed in one’s mind’s eye. In other words, I seek to bring these different images – the printed, the depicted and the imagined – into conflict. Additionally, I use the term stain in conjunction with the term site, to refer to the site’s shadow self and aftermath. What is left behind as a trace appears like a stain, making itself visible on the ground. My works aim to enable the viewer to hover over this ground: a ground which is simultaneously the surface of the print and the political site it constructs.

\textsuperscript{10} Israel’s first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, renowned statement ‘to make the desert bloom’ meant to re-settle the Negev desert, implying it was uninhabited despite the presence of Bedouins and other minority groups.
(Figure 4.12) Dana Ariel, Holes, gelatin silver print, 2015, 2016
Peza’el and Fasa’il
(Figure 4.13) Dana Ariel, *Peza’el*, c-print, 40x40cm, 2015
In the Arab village of Fasa'il and the Jewish settlement of Peza'el the doubling begins in the spoken and written name. Road signs in Israel are written in Hebrew, Arabic and English. In Arabic Fasa'il and Peza'el are identical, while English offers various options. The written word kept changing in my text, until deciding to return to the road sign version Peza'el. In speaking the English word as if it was German, and translating it back into Hebrew, Peza'el would be pronounced as Pe(t)za'el. In Hebrew, peza means wound, and el means god.
At the heart of my research project is the return to the Palestinian village of Fasa’il and the illegal Jewish settlement of Peza’el on perforated land, the West Bank, in the Jordan Valley. Language here already participates in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, by naming one a village and the other a settlement מושב or יישוב, which could be read in Hebrew as something being restored or returned to its rightful place.

Fasa’il and Peza’el confront me with the political reality in Israel, the complexity of the conflict, the fight over narrative, the blurring of borders and boundaries, the violence it entails and the crisis of seeing it incites. This site, of the village and settlement, is a place I return to frequently, and many of my works are created through these visits. The village and settlement themselves do not appear in my photographs, and, through their visual absence, the inability to photograph is emphasised – the result of an ethical and political standpoint I take in relation to the conflict and the medium of photography. I do not seek to document the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, nor does my work and research provide a full account of the historical and political context of the sites I visit. The passive-active role I play in this conflict is felt most strongly when I stand there; observing the vivid green vegetation that surrounds the newly built basketball court inside the fence of the illegal Jewish settlement and in stark contrast, seeing the bare stricken football field of the Palestinian village in which the goal post is marked by the use of two rocks.

My ethical dilemma begins with the issue of gaining access, which already reveals my identity. Being Israeli and a native Hebrew speaker allows me easy access to the Jewish settlement (which is surrounded by a “protective fence” as the Hebrew translation implies), while being of German nationality, theoretically, allows me to access the Palestinian village in spite of the red sign at the entrance forbidding Israelis from entering. Besides the legality of the matter, there is also an ethical one that is fundamental to photography and the sovereign gaze, which cannot escape the existing power relations. My dilemma lies in how I will be identified by the residents of Fasa’il and the provocation it might create when entering the Palestinian village as an Israeli. Considering I might not have the opportunity to explain the layers that construct my national identity, the identification will happen beyond my control – my looks, my presence with an analogue or digital camera, my accent and my name will all proceed me and my intentions.

When standing in front of Fasa’il the following questions arise and prevent me from entering. What would it mean for me to photograph Fasa’il to the people of Fasa’il? Can it be anything more than simply restating my ability to move freely in this land, where Palestinians do not share the same right? What will I be pointing at in this photographic act that
cannot be found already, if one desires to see? Standing there, thinking and analysing the difficulties of the sovereign gaze imposed by my national identity and my camera, causes me to observe the conflict elsewhere, in language and the surrounding landscape. Here, attention can be directed towards the difficulties of seeing and the poetic notions of ‘seeing-double’ echoed in the name Fasa’il and Peza’el and the dualities highlighted in my prints.
(Figure 4.14) Trees (West), c-print, 61x61cm, 2015

(Figure 4.15) Trees (East), c-print, 61x61cm, 2015
(Figure 4.16) *Trees (South)*, c-print, 61x61cm, 2017

(Figure 4.17) *Trees (North)*, c-print, 61x61cm, 2017
לחתות את הגבול עם רימון

to cross the border with a pomegranate
to cross the border with a grenade

to split the border with a grenade
to divide the border over a pomegranate
to halve the border with a grenade

to split a pomegranate on the border
to divide a grenade for the border
to cross the border for a pomegranate
(Figure 4.18) Dana Ariel, *Rimonim*, c-print, 61x61cm, 2015
Pomegranates
Granatäpfel
The following text was recorded as a sound piece and exhibited in the Slade Degree Show in June 2017.

Two pomegranates were offered to me on one of my visits to the village of Fasa’il and the settlement of Peza’el in the Jordan Valley. It was a token of hospitality when I feared to encounter hostility. The desire to take the precious gift back to London with me led to the writing of this text.

In the summer of 2015, August to be precise, I visited the Jordan Valley once more. It was 44 degrees that day. A cool down, the radio forecast declared. The week before registered a new record as it measured 51 degrees in my chosen site. Though one does not wish to yield to weather conditions, it has definitely restricted my visit to very short outings in the vicinity of my car. Midday presented acute danger. My negatives didn’t react well to these conditions either. In fact, black and white negatives shot that day revealed ghostly marks and stains, I suspected the heat might have played a role in this.

North of Peza’el, on route 90 heading north, we turned right at the sight of two trees. A palm tree and a cypress tree in a cultivated field situated on the border with Jordan. We stopped to photograph. I took a single shot of the trees as they stood there side by side. Galit was interested in the two trees for another reason and from another angle, at which they are concealing one another. This, I thought, resonated with her stubborn desire to photograph in Jordan: to see and photograph from Jordan looking towards Israel. She desired a reversal of the gaze, I thought, as I observed her observing the trees as she took her time to position the camera in the right place.

A blue car spotted us and was now driving towards us. I was afraid. Galit was out in the field and I felt helpless, not knowing how this encounter would unfold. My presence in this field presented a double intrusion. First, I could see that this belonged to someone, and even though my intentions were not harmful I nonetheless questioned my right to stand there. Secondly, the ethical and political reality that shadows all my visits to the West Bank and is also the motivation for my visits, was now dominating this encounter. I feared being identified as hostile, I feared being identified as Israeli, in the occupied territories of the Jordan Valley, and I feared for being a woman.

All of these thoughts above could, to some degree, be diffused or deferred through reason. Nonetheless, in the fraction of the moment leading to that first encounter, these thoughts, grounded or not, were violently present.
In an attempt to release myself from them I decided to surrender any gestures that might seem hostile. I smiled and waited. It all proved to be incredibly silly and irrelevant as the man approached with a smile of greeting, no signs of suspicion as to my presence here. There was only hospitality. We spoke in Hebrew and he never asked for my name, only where I was from. Jerusalem, I said. I regret never asking for his. He told me of the fruits he was growing in his field, and that the field belonged to his father and his father’s father before that. After a while he left, and I remained there, sweating from the heat and my shame at fearing everything I tried so hard to resist, still waiting for Galit.

Moments later he returned with palms full of dates and two pomegranates.

Back in Jerusalem, on the afternoon before my return flight to London, I decided to take the two pomegranates with me. They had become a precious souvenir and I couldn’t leave them behind. Fearing they might be confiscated at the airport I decided to photograph them in my parents’ garden. I photographed in black and white because I was interested in the scarred surface, the marks and scratches. I placed them on an improvised set, covering my parents’ garden table with a white sheet of paper which, when lifted against the sun, provided a beautiful back light for the pomegranates. I took a few shots, each time rotating the pomegranates to reveal different marks. By the end of the film I paid more attention to the slightly faded colours of their skin, and to how different they were from one another. The colours, I thought, seemed to reveal their exposure to light, and differentiate between fresh marks and older scratches that had healed already. I decided to take a few photographs with colour negative as well, trying to retrace the previous positions and rotations.

I left for the airport with the two pomegranates and this sentence in Hebrew in my mind. When asked by the security officers at the airport if I had received any gifts I will have to say yes. When asked who gave them to me I will have to say that I don’t know the name of the person. Then, I will probably be asked where I got them from, and I will have to say, from the West Bank. I was crossing the border with a pomegranate, but in Hebrew, רימון means a pomegranate and a grenade, and the verb לחצות means to cross, to split, to divide, or to halve.
(Figure 4.19) Galit Aloni, *Tree Blocking Tree* עץ חוסם עץ, c-print, 2015

(Figure 4.20) Dana Ariel, *A Cypress and A Palm Tree*, c-print, 2015
Verbotene Stadt
Forbidden City
مدينة محرمة
עיר אסורה
(Figure 4.21) Dana Ariel, *from the Forbidden City*, silver gelatin print, 50x50cm, 2017
An account of my visit to the forbidden city in July 2016 is described in the following text and impressions.

Ruins of Soviet buildings and ghost stories about Hitler’s underground city haunt me as I drive in circles in search for the Forbidden City. Signs for the Forbidden City were pointing in all directions. Suddenly a sign informs me of daily tours to the Soviet ruins, followed by the sudden presence of people. The city is being repopulated, section by section. The buildings, previously designated for Soviet officers, are now converted to accommodate the new families. Each urban section is separated by vast areas of birch trees, which have come to represent for me the uprooting of older forests as a result of militarisation or the aftermath of war. The birch trees at the side of the road were hung with signs alerting about the presence of minefields, urging people not to leave the main roads.

Driving in what felt like a vicious maze of Forbidden City signs, led me to encounter a sight of familiar temporary housing solutions that I recognised from the many images that had been flooding the media that summer. At the entrance I encountered the following sign in German, English, Arabic and Russian:

On September 5th 1914 a special order was issued to set up a war prisoners camp intended primarily for Muslim prisoners: Tatars, Moroccans, Turkmen, Sudanese, Indians, and the indigenous peoples of Australia from France, Belgium, Russia, England, Scotland. The prisoners were granted the privilege of free religious practice of Islam, which was implemented starting May 1915 and took place in the wooden Mosque newly erected for the purpose on July 13th 1915. In the beginning of the 1930-ies the construction was pulled down because of the precarious condition of the building. Neither the Muslim Community of Berlin, nor starting 1924, the Society for Islamic Religious Representation were able [to] preserve the Mosque by that time.

When I stood in front of this sign I wondered who the visitors to this place were? Left from the sign was a fence surrounding a former Soviet building in good condition, unlike the ruins to the right, and the empty area ahead. Driving a bit further down the road alerted a guard who observed us from within the fenced area. Not far down the road were blue structures, containers that were placed there recently, and seemed to remain untouched. Inside these containers I could see tables and chairs, clearly indicating these were classrooms. The guard greeted us with suspicion, but once convinced we were not journalists he generously offered information, which was given solely on the condition of refraining from taking any photographs. He confirmed that this was the first arrival camp for refugees and I immediately
took the opportunity to inquire about the classrooms. He said that he was not sure what will happen with them, they
could just as easily be gone the following week. During the uncomfortable conversation he emphasised the good
condition of these facilities, ‘they are living like in paradise here,’ he kept repeating.

There is much to say of hospitality in the case of housing refugees on the grounds of the erased mosque, and the
compounds of former prisoners of war, and for that reason I would like to return to the text mentioned before by
Jacques Derrida, entitled Hostipitality. Derrida’s argument that hospitality is already harbored by its opposite – hostility
– reverberates through this encounter. When Derrida writes that ‘we do not know [yet] what hospitality is’ he does not
mean that there can be no hospitality, but rather that it is [the not yet] ‘what must be overcome.’ Derrida touches on
an interesting reversal that is relevant to the encounter at the Forbidden City. He suggests the invitation of a guest for
dinner. Once she or he rings the bell and is invited into the house, an acceptance of the house rule has taken place. But
the reversal occurs if the guest decides to overstay her or his welcome. In this way, the host is taken hostage by the guest
who refuses to leave, or read the gestures indicating the dinner has come to an end.

Back to the classrooms: the reason I pause on this encounter is that I find the gesture of hosting refugees on the grounds
of a former prisoner of war camp to be ill considered. It is relevant here as a site I consider as embodying another
aspect I attribute to unlearning. Notions of unlearning first appear in the sign at the entrance informing visitors of a
process of erasure, the destruction of the mosque and the act of remembering the erasure. Another notion of unlearning
then operates in relation to the historical and contemporary parallels – the repeated gesture that is echoed through the
closing remarks of Derrida’s text:

[...] We would need to attempt a difficult distinction – subtle but necessary – between the other and the
stranger; and we would need to venture into what is both the implication and the consequence of this
double bind, this impossibility as condition of possibility, namely, the troubling analogy in their common
origin between hostis as host and hostis as enemy, between hospitality and hostility.

Detached from the previous purpose of this site, hosting refugees there might not be so problematic, or perhaps the
problems would not be so visible. I am interested in the notion of reversal that Derrida’s text suggests – the host being taken

12 Derrida, 15.
hostage. This is not to say that if the refugees will be allowed to learn the language they could take the host hostage, but rather, it could allow for them to, potentially, become hosts themselves – not a reversal of the power relations but rather a more equal distribution of power. The empty classrooms, therefore, represent the arresting moment of the need for this subtle distinction, to determine whether these refugees would be greeted with unconditional hospitality and be allowed to learn the language that will gain them access to the country and its culture, or be sent away – a form of diffused and invisible hostility. There is much sadness in hearing the guard’s words that this is ‘paradise,’ violently concealing the hostility in the gesture of conditional hospitality. In exchange for this experience I refrained from photographing, what remains are: my accounts and thoughts on the distinctions between citizens and refugees, the role of language in this, and an image of a birch wood I took upon departure.
(Figure 4.22) Dana Ariel, *Hainich Forest*, colour photo etching, plate size 20x20cm, paper size 50x70cm, 2014-2018
I first came across Hainich Forest in 2007. The sudden desert looking patch of land caught my attention as it so distinctly stood out from the surrounding German landscape. However, it was only in 2011 that I first visited the site with a camera. The images I took then followed the tank paths that were left as a remnant of the site's history. The square format was used to capture the tank path in a consistent manner: situating the horizon line in the centre of the image. Those images rested in my archive since, and it was only when I began this research project that I finally returned to Hainich.

My revisits to Hainich Forest were made in different seasons. It occurred to me when visiting the exhibition *David Hockney: A Bigger Picture* at the Royal Academy in 2012 that this action of observing a site change through time, carries with it a sense of mourning. Hockney's painted landscapes depicted a specific road that the caption indicated came out of the many journeys he took to visit his dying mother. The change of seasons in the paintings were haunted by a feeling of the mourning process; mourning the loss of another, but also the loss of the road taken and the return to *this* landscape. My revisits to Hainich and the colour photo etching technique embody something of this sense of loss.

The work *Hainich Forest* is not biographical, however, it is informed by the following notions:

I first came across the site when driving with my grandfather to see the newly built wooden path, which is raised to the height of the tree-tops of Hainich forest. My grandfather, a non-Jewish German who served in the Wehrmacht during the Second World War, spoke only German. A language I didn't speak at the time, other than odd words. Our relationship was formed through the inability to speak, firstly by the absence of a common language and secondly, as a result of the unspeakable past. Photography, both the camera itself and the presence of images, was a way to bridge these gaps. I remember a few occasions, in which he attempted to tell me, in words I could not understand, of his military service during the war. I could pick up the locations he mentioned, where he must have served. He had something to do with communication, his mimed gestures suggested, and much later I learned he was also a driver of some unnamed officers. The lack of information made room for the worst speculations, no matter how far removed they were from the truth. This void, or gap in knowledge, became filled with other people's stories, such as the testimonies of Nazi perpetrators and mostly Holocaust survivors I encountered through my Israeli education. In this way, a few personal narratives, that were not my own, but rather belonged to the collective memory, became part of my personal biographical narrative by filling in the void that was there.

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I loved my grandfather despite the absence of a common language. In response to my unspoken questions, my grandmother always rushed to the chest of drawers to find the same official certificate, a piece of paper that my grandfather received at the end of the war officially certifying he had not committed any war crimes. When my grandfather asked me to go with him to visit the concentration camp Buchenwald, I refused to go. I couldn’t go there at the time. In light of my refusal he suggested we should visit Hainich Forest. It was much later that I realised that in the absence of language, or his inability to tell me his story, he offered to show me something in the form of a visit to a site; another site, from which he could perhaps begin to tell me his story.

My visits to Hainich forest carry with them layers of what a visit to sites might entail. I doubt this personal narrative will ever explicitly appear in the site of exhibition, although it might be visited in conversation. Like other biographical information, it is not intended to be an index from which to decipher the work. It is however, intended to articulate the notions of visiting, and with it, begin to perforate the concealed layers of seeing and knowing. The biographical information aims to contextualise, not the work itself, but rather the thinking and making process.

This absence in the narrative, the many gaps in knowing what happened, also encouraged my pursuit for relevant theory that might offer some insights into the absent accounts. I ventured into other fields of knowledge such as trauma theory, history, philosophy, psychoanalysis and literature in search of something that could voice this void in my biographical narrative. In the absence of common language and the tendency of my witnesses to forget, I turned to theoretical investigations and literary representations.

The former Wehrmacht (German military) base was built on the grounds of Hainich, one of Europe’s largest forests. To accommodate the militaristic needs, the area was flattened, destroying the forest to make space for training. After the Second World War, the Red Army took over the base for its strategic advantage, located right at the border between West and East Germany. In 1997 it was declared as a nature reserve. The preservation of the site has taken an almost passive approach, slowly clearing the tank paths, but mostly just waiting for nature to return. Due to the heavy militaristic presence the area was not subjected to the extensive forestation that took place in central Europe, ironically, making the returned nature the closest thing to a ‘natural forest’ in the region.

My visits to Hainich Forest developed into different works in print, photography and video, the central work being an ongoing series of colour photo etchings. This etching process introduced a way to think of colour through the element
of the trace. In this process a copper plate is coated with light sensitive emulsion. The plate is then exposed to a photographic image, developed and etched in acid. The acid bites into the plate in the areas that have been washed off in the developing process. The bitten areas hold the ink, while the surface of the copper is wiped to remove all additional residue of ink. Once inserted into the press, the paper is pressed against the plate, which stains the paper with the ink that was held in the bitten area. In the colour photo etching process the same technique is used, only the image is etched four times in cyan, magenta, yellow and black. Each plate contains a thin layer of the image, and the print is constructed by over layering them in the printing process. Every step or change such as the order of plates, the opacity of the ink, removing too much or too little ink, show on the final print, dramatically altering its colours. During the printing process I found it intriguing that while the printed plate laid ink on the paper it also took some of it back. This subtle notion of adding and deducting or covering and unveiling the layers of colours reflected my thoughts on the historical layers of the site itself.

_Hainich Forest (erased)_

When working on the project Hainich forest, I made a mistake when applying the photo emulsion on the copper plates. The mistake ruined eight copper plates. In the attempt to salvage the plates, James Keith, the print technician, suggested I should sand the plate down. We considered different sand papers and tested other ideas drawn from the different processes that surrounded us in the print room, such as the process used to smooth the lithographic stone.

The Book, _Hainich Forest (erased)_ began with an accidental scratch of the copper plate. Consisting of seventeen prints, the book records the slow erasure process of a photo etched plate. The plate was originally etched for a very short time, resulting in a shallow etch into the copper. For the manual erasure process, I used a lithography stone and carborundum, otherwise used for gently smoothing the lithography stone in various stages. The first touch of the stone on the copper surface of the plate made a significant impression as scratches began covering the image. I stopped and printed. Throughout the process I kept the manual labour of erasure, attempting to be as consistent as possible in my movements. In the process I repeatedly inked up the plate, wiped the ink off, and printed onto paper. Maintaining a consistent process of inking and wiping was necessary to discover what traces actually remained on the plate, and differentiate between marks created from the erasure process and my own movements.
When I reached the blackest print – the stage where the surface of the copper was rough enough to hold the most ink – I began polishing the plate in order to restore it to its original smooth condition. By keeping to the same consistent process of manual labour, the plate began fading back to white. White here means less black ink remaining after wiping the plate, until the only thing left is the white paper and the impression made by the plate. During the erasure process I was amazed to see traces of the image, especially of the tank path, reappearing, as if emerging from underneath the roughened surface.

Unlike other projects, this printing process emphasised the sense of loss, of verlieren most vividly. Each print became unique and held the evidence of a specific temporal condition of the plate. The print seemed to, metaphorically, lose its indexical relation to the site and the plate. Although the loss of the indexical relation is impossible, my experiment was toying with this desire for ruination.

_Hainich Forest (excavated), 12min video, 2016_

My last visit to Hainich forest was around new year’s eve between 2015 and 2016. Alerts of imminent snow forecast expedited my arrival plans to the site. Renting a car and staying approximately thirty minutes’ drive from the site, allowed me to become an artist in residence at Hainich. Over the duration of four days I spent the day walking the paths drawn by past military forces, and those made by the new visitors. In the 12min video I uncover the tank path after it has been covered by snow. Armed with a snow-shovel I attend to the task of unveiling.

(Figure 4.23) Dana Ariel, _Hainich Forest (excavated)_ , stills from video, duration: 12min, 2016
(Figure 4.24) Dana Ariel, *Hainich Forest (erased)*, photo etching book, 40x30cm, 2016
(Figure 4.25) Hainich Forest (erased), documentation of photo etching book, 2016
sketch, drawing
Zeichnung
scratch
(Figure 4.26) Dana Ariel, נמש, gelatin silver print, 61x61cm, 2015
(Figure 4.27) Dana Ariel, שלטונות, gelatin silver print, 61x61cm, 2015-2017
(Figure 4.28) Dana Ariel, שרטוט, gelatin silver print, 61x61cm, 2015-2017
שביל טשטוש
blurring a border begins with first light
each soldier is assigned a section of the border
this is a protective measure
the soldier’s duty is to know the border
to become familiar with its site and sight
to recognise and identify the land, the path, the rocks, the holes, the stains and scratches
to see it change through seasons of the year, from morning to dusk
to see the border fade in and out
to stand there at noon and be blinded by the sun reflecting from the bright dusty ground
to know the border and become the border
(Figure 4.29) Dana Ariel, *blurring a border begins with first light*, laser engraved wood print in CMYK
plate size 53x53cm, paper size 61x90cm, 2015
(Figure 4.30) Dana Ariel, *blurring a border begins with first light*, laser engraved wood print in CMYK plate size 53x53cm, paper size 61x90cm, 2015
(Figure 4.31) Dana Ariel, *from Mount X*, c-print, 2017
(Figure 4.32) Dana Ariel, *from Mount X*, documentation of laser engraved wood panels, 2015
(Figure 4.33) Dana Ariel, *from Mount X*, documentation of laser engraved wood prints in CMYK, plate size 40x115, paper size, 2015
Mount X is the name I gave to the project on a site in Israel that had failed to be settled throughout history. Works made in response to this site include hybrid and photographic prints. At this site I found remnants of a מעברה – a transition camp that was a temporary solution for Jewish immigrants from Arab countries who came to Israel in the 50s – prior to an interview with my paternal grandfather regarding his name-change and illegal immigration from Kurdistan (north Iraq) to Mandate Palestine.  

I would like to unpack the layers encountered at that site through the hybrid printing process I developed. The laser engraved wood-prints, printed in variations of CMYK – a similar technique used for the work שביל טשטוש – was developed from various processes; I began with a black and white analogue photograph, digitally scanned, converted in Photoshop to CMYK channels, laser engraved on wood panels inspired by screen-printing technique, and finally hand printed with a wooden spoon. The process aims to exhaust the image by stretching it through the different printing methods. Each print is made of the four panels layered on a single sheet of paper, causing the image to appear in a changing monochromatic tone. The colours change with each print as the ink builds up on the wooden panels. I was consistent in printing the black panel at the end, but altered the printing order of the cyan, magenta and yellow that came before. Theoretically, it should have remained monochromatic, but in practice, the printing order of panels and the process itself drastically changed each print. The colour emerged through the failures of the process, where the lines fail to overlay, the ink weakens, and the human hand leaves its mark.

In Mount X, the X stands for the intersection of the roads, of the site and the name, of the image and the word. The letter X could also indicate an intersection, a gesture of erasure, the unknown or absent figure, or even a marker of a desired destination. X also resembles the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet - א.

On December 2014, I visited my grandparents with the intention of hearing them retell me the story of how they made their way from Kurdistan to Israel and why they changed our family name.

I drove with my father to visit my paternal grandparents, who live in the north of Israel. On our way we passed by their village, a deliberate and mutual decision to stall our visit. My father pointed at a hill in front of us, a nostalgic move on his behalf, and said that he and his friends called it Mount of love. I chose not to ask further,

14 The Hebrew word מעברה indicates that the camp is a temporary solution intended for the integration of the newly arrived immigrants, unlike in the case of the term ‘refugee camp’ that doesn’t guaranty the integration of its inhabitants.
and he continued with a brief history of the place – the hill was called after some king… I lost him when I noticed that the mount was covered with platforms made of concrete. While reflecting on the narratives told to me by my father, I walked towards the concrete platforms and noticed that each had a single lower concrete step placed in the centre, an indication of what might have been the entrance to a temporary structure such as a tent or a shed that once occupied the platform. I began speculating what this might have been and was astonished to discover that my father didn’t know either. He, who grew up in the nearby settlement, who gave it a name, and who knows the country and its tales by heart didn’t know that these were the remains of a מעברה.

Later, my grandfather proudly tells the story of his Aliyah – a Hebrew word that means ascent, rise, and the ‘return’ of the Jews to Israel – how he made his way as an illegal immigrant [said with a smile] from Kurdistan, through Syria, and why he changed his name much later because he had a double in the village who kept receiving his pay cheques each month. The name change, he still claims, was to prevent confusion of identities. My repeated question as to why he did not choose a Kurdish name was conveniently ignored.

At Mount X I encountered a sign placed by the nature reserve indicating the brief history of the place, which included the Templers, who attempted to settle on this hill. The sign said that the Templers arrived in 1867 and remained there for a brief time. In my previous work entitled Waldheim, Morgentau, Wilhelma, Warburg (2009) I visited the settlements of the Templers that today still bear two names, one in Hebrew and the other in German. Waldheim, also called in Hebrew אלוני אבא, is in fact very close to Mount X, which might suggest that these are the same settlers who left the place I call Mount X. The series of photographs I made then searched for visible notions of this doubling of the name in the architecture and vegetation. The marks captured in my images are intended to point at the aesthetic appropriation made by the new Jewish settlers, and to observe and re-examine the heritage carried in the name.

Reflecting on the stories I heard that day and exploring the history of the site, I sketched a few notes on the action of name changing. People, who came to Israel like my grandparents, received their family names upon registering in Israel from a random official asking questions about their origin. In Azoulay’s text Mother Tongue, Father Tongue: Following the Death of the Mother and the Death of the Father, she tells how her father, who arrived in Israel from Algeria through France, when faced with similar officials upon arrival used the moment of bureaucratic chaos to invent his

15 The Templers were German Christians who arrived to Palestine in the late 19th and early 20th century.
own identity.\textsuperscript{16} According to my grandfather’s testimony, names were given to immigrants from Kurdistan according to the stories they brought with them, nicknames, or after the place they came from. Here, name and site merge. For my grandfather, who still claims in front of strangers that he was born in Israel, in the hope of being considered a native ‘sabra,’ changing a name is inherently an act of blurring, a wish to forget the past and place of origin by inventing or bending the details. In the many times I heard him tell the story, the details are always slightly misregistered: arriving on a donkey sometimes changed into a brand new cab, the tent that became my grandparents’ first home in Israel, or Palestine, is sometimes a shed, and dates have little importance, which is why I am still unclear as to when exactly my grandparents settled or how old they were.

Two significant notes were made during my visit. The first was drawn from the inability of my father to see and recognise the remains of the מעברה – in this way broken narratives, made-up tales, and shame, that empahsises the attempt to distance oneself from an ‘Arab’ identity, manifest in blindness and erasure. The second observation came much later, when sharing this story with people close to me in Israel, which revealed similar narratives and actions resulting in name-changes by Jews who immigrated from Arab countries to Israel. In such cases, the act of changing one’s name in Israel is called לעברת, to make the name, and therefore the identity, Hebrew.

To change one’s name is the rejection or abandonment of a given gift, the inherited past that is given with the name. ‘To inherit’ writes Jacques Derrida ‘means both to give the name and to receive it. [Naming] risks to bind, to enslave or to engage the other, to link the called, to call him/her to respond even before any decision or any deliberation, even before any freedom. An assigned passion, a prescribed alliance as much as a promise.’\textsuperscript{17} In the context of my attempts to unlearn misconceptions, the name plays a vital role. As Derrida suggests something is already being called for through the act of naming, a ‘prescribed alliance’ is then formed between the one who gives and the one who receives the name. The name already demands a response, an engagement with the past, even if that will be one of forgetting or denying. The name is what binds the one who gives and the one who receives and changing one’s name is an attempt to break away from this bond or alter its power of association.

With these thoughts in mind, I return to the landscape and my works with the aim of identifying or capturing the marks made by the desire to be emancipated from one’s name or identity while requesting to assume another. These marks

\textsuperscript{16} Azoulay, “Mother Tongue, Father Tongue: Following the Death of the Mother and the Death of the Father,” 111-112.

\textsuperscript{17} Jacques Derrida, \textit{On The Name}, ed. Thomas Dutoit, trans. David Wood et al. (California: Stanford University, 1995), 82.
and actions are relevant to the process of unlearning, which is inherently concerned with how the past is seen, how it contaminates what is seen in the present, and how it informs future desires to see. The visit to *Mount X* is bound up in my intentions to find out about my Kurdish heritage; a heritage that struggles with its identity both within my family and outside of it, in Israeli society. Feelings of cultural shame that result in the erasure of a certain legacy, and the need *not to see* these ties and the act of invention itself – of a new identity – manifest in both the Hebrew language and the landscape.

While my grandfather tells me the story of his illegal immigration to Israel, I come across a photograph in the family album, which is actually a plastic bag filled with random colour and black and white photographs, that seems to reflect a lack of interest in re-arranging these memories into a carefully selected and constructed narrative. I pull out a photograph of my grandfather sitting at a table with four other men, one of them has a patch awkwardly stuck on the photograph itself, concealing his face and upper body – his identity manually erased from memory. I scanned the photograph, so I would not be tempted to remove the patch, as I was not interested in the person’s identity, but rather in the act of erasure itself.

My investigations towards understanding my identity or uncovering it, yield many undocumented stories and awkward attempts to forget. These stories do not directly appear in my works. They do however influence and motivate my making process, my choice of site and naming, my treatment of the photographic trace and the chosen printing processes.
Shades of Neutrality
(Figure 4.35) Dana Ariel, *Shades of Neutrality*, aquatint etching print in cyan, magenta, yellow, plate size 60x60cm, paper size 70x100cm, 2017
The use of aquatint in an intaglio printmaking technique is intended to create a fine tonal effect. In the process, powdered particles are sprayed evenly across the plate and function as an acid-resist. Once the plate is inserted into the acid-bath the acid bites into the copper around the sprayed particles. The longer the plate remains in the acid, the deeper the bites are, which can then hold ink in the printing process. This appears in the print as a fine grain.

*Shades of Neutrality* is a unique edition of three aquatint prints, each printed in the same three colours - cyan, magenta, yellow. The 60cm square copper plate was first polished to remove all scratches and marks and then degreased to remove any residue of oil or finger prints. Once erased of all pre-existing marks, visible or hidden, I sprayed a thin layer of aquatint across the surface. Previous tests showed that 8 seconds was the minimum time needed for the acid to take effect and sufficiently bite into the copper. Due to the size of the plate, the split second of pulling it from the acid tray and washing it allowed streams of liquid to faintly etch longer into the copper. These marks later appeared in the test print, leading me to polish the plate further in the attempt to even the surface, while refraining from erasing the faint marks made by the aquatint altogether.

I began printing with cyan ink. Like before, when etching the aquatint to the point of the least possible trace, I wanted the ink to follow a similar method, marking the edge of what is printable. To do so, I used an extender to soften the ink. This is a form of neutral paste that extends or stretches the ink, reducing the pigment without reducing the quantity of ink needed to cover the entire copper plate. Like Roland Barthes disappointment caused by the greyness of the promised neutral colour, which instigated his seminar on *The Neutral*, the extender, to my disillusionment, changed the ink beyond the promise of extension, neutralising it, toning it down, making it cloudier, almost dirty looking – a contaminated ink.18

I nonetheless inked up the plate, and began wiping with the use of a scrim, a thin piece of coarse fabric, one that has been used before and was therefore softer and already coloured with cyan ink from my previous prints. I tried to be consistent, wiping in circular movements across the plate, repeating my action time and again, until an even layer remained. This was hard to determine. The aquatint only left the faintest of marks. While wiping I could barely see if anything was still held on the plate, or whether I had wiped it all already. The print, to my surprise, revealed that plenty of ink was left; it revealed where I lingered for too long when wiping; it revealed the streams of acid flowing on the plate and the attempts to polish it back; it revealed the uneven pressure of the press and the prior marks left on the blanket that

protects the paper when printing. In the very little that was printed, every mark was visible, every gesture exposed: every mechanical, chemical or manual mark left its signature on the print. It seemed as if the print room itself was imprinted.

I wished to experiment with the idea of printing nothing at all. I needed to imagine the residue of an image, and whether it could be created with no direct photographic referent, emerging from the site of making, with no trace of any visited site. Printing very little proved to be very difficult. The less there is, the more visible the process becomes, emphasising every mark and every mistake. In this very quiet print that depicts no image at all, the process becomes noticeably loud.

I left the paper in the press and cleaned the plate, inked it up with magenta and repeated my action. The same again with yellow. Then I paused. The print was grey, colourfully grey. All three colours were printed and the paper was still in the press for registration purposes. I needed to decide whether to print the black and complete the CMYK sequence that makes the traditional printed colour image. This pause is significant because it forced me to rethink the conceptual framework of the work. After long contemplations and conversations, I decided to leave out the black, creating neutral grey from colour. The print reflects the process, the order in which the colours were printed, the residue of ink and the light in which it is viewed.

*Shades of Neutrality* continues my work on colour as a trace, and the tracing of the making process through colour, as previously seen in the photo etching works of *Hainich Forest* and the laser engraving works in CMYK. Traces of the erasure process recorded in the book *Hainich Forest (erased)* have also influenced the making of this work and the treatment of the plate. Another strand of thought operates in the making of *Shades of Neutrality*, and which I trace to the encounter with a visitor to my exhibition *Encountering Perforated Ground* who accused me of taking a neutral position in my works, an a-political standpoint. This encounter led me to read Roland Barthes work on *The Neutral*.

‘My definition of the Neutral remains structural,’ writes Barthes, ‘By which I mean that, for me, the Neutral doesn’t refer to “impressions” of grayness, of “neutrality,” of indifference. The Neutral - my Neutral - can refer to intense, strong, unprecedented states. “To outplay the paradigm” is an ardent, burning activity.’\(^{19}\) The neutral, writes Barthes always risks being accused of indifference – not being seduced or seductive.\(^{20}\) The *desire for the neutral*, in the work of Roland Barthes, is a passionate and intense activity that ‘outplays’ the paradigms – disturbs the system to make this

\(^{19}\) Barthes, 7. The editors of *The Neutral*, Thomas Clerc and Eric Marty, note that the word ‘outplay’ was previously translated by Richard Howard from the French word déjouer, other translations were to ‘baffle’ and ‘outwit.’ Barthes, 213.

\(^{20}\) Barthes, 69-70.
desire visible. Thoughts on the neutral have always accompanied my works in some way, dragging with it an inevitable critique, or even accusation of occupying a neutral position.

What I try to articulate by means of ambiguity, methods of erasure and poetic gestures is a serious matter. The use of laughter, or even a smile, should not be taken as dismissing or denying of the severity of the topic that aims to push through the unspeakable, the dichotomies of perpetrator-victim, or occupied-occupier. This cannot be escaped. I cannot overcome being the occupier when visiting the occupied territories of the West Bank. I cannot undo my foreignness when speaking or exhibiting my works. While ambiguity or poetic language might be read as fleeing from conflict or not taking a stance, my work aims to overturn these conceptions. This criticism, embedded in the difficulties of escaping seeing and speaking through national identity, has always accompanied and motivated my careful use of words, the use of poetics when speaking of violence, and broadly speaking, informs my entire artistic practice.

The desire for the Neutral continually stages a paradox: as an object, the Neutral means suspension of violence; as a desire, it means violence. Throughout the length of the course [on The Neutral], it will be necessary to understand that there is a violence of the Neutral but that this violence is inexpressible; that there is a passion of the Neutral but that this passion is not that of a will-to-possess [...].

The violence of the neutral, drawn from the encounter with the exhibition viewer and Barthes writing, is trapped between violence and desire. There is a desire for the neutral position that is able to travel freely between two conflicting sides, and there is violence in that same act of not taking a position – there is violence in being indifferent. There is also a risk of acting violently when treading this ground in search for contaminated words and images and activating them in the exhibition site. Shades of Neutrality aims to point at the subtlety and effort involved in the making of neutral grey, or printing very little, and at the effort and labour needed to blur preconceived meaning.

21 Barthes, 13.
A Few Notes on Crossing a Minefield
A Few Notes on Crossing a Minefield

In a field, one might find mines against humans, not intending to kill but rather to injure, and mines against vessels that seek the destruction of moving targets. A simple, some might say primitive, method of crossing a minefield would be to use a metal rod with a handle. The person wishing to cross must tread carefully, feeling the ground by poking it with the rod. In such a case, the sound of clanging metal would undoubtedly indicate imminent danger. Another more advanced and efficient method would be to plough the field with an armoured vessel. This would efficiently remove any trace of hostile objects, but would permanently alter the features of the land. In this case, precise guidance notes must be issued to prevent any future confusion for those who wish to return. Please note that a detour may prove valuable in certain cases, but should only be considered after all other possibilities have been thoroughly exhausted.

(Figure 4.36) Dana Ariel, *A Few Notes on Crossing a Minefield*, etched copper plate and birch plywood, plate size 20x20cm, 2017
Fauld Crater
(Figure 4.37) Dana Ariel, *Fauld Crater*, gelatin silver prints and walnut wood, 61x26x7cm, 2017
(Figure 4.38) Dana Ariel, *Fauld Crater*, gelatin silver prints, 2018
At the entrance to the site, under the headline *Danger Unexploded Bombs* a sign reads:

This land is private property belonging to the Ministry of Defense. The land contains unexploded bombs and in the event of an explosion, injury or death could be caused to persons on the land. In the interests of safety therefore, members of the public are warned not to enter the land in any circumstances.

On another sign, the visitor to *Fauld* encounters the following information:

The Fauld Explosion. At just after 1100 hours on the 27th November 1944 the largest explosion caused by conventional weapons in both the world wars took place at this spot when some 3,500 tons of high explosives accidentally blew up. A crater some 300 feet deep and approximately a quarter of a mile in diameter was blown into the North Staffordshire countryside. A total of seventy people lost their lives, with eighteen bodies never being recovered. The 21 MU RAF Fauld disaster is commemorated by this memorial which was dedicated on the 25th November 1990, some 46 years after the event. The stone, which is of fine granite, was a gift, organised by the Commandante of the Italian Air Force ...

My visits to Fauld began with the desire to see the crater. Walking around the fenced circular path, I searched for a better viewpoint, a way in, all the while asking myself why is this site relevant. Could I identify a process of unlearning here, and how could I work photographically, when it wasn’t possible to access the site itself? I barely took any photographs on my first visit. I revisited Fauld again, one year later, in the summer of 2016, this time, climbing the fence to photograph the crater. I tried to capture the panoramic view of the crater with single square images, first in colour because I wanted the colour of the different trees, then in black and white in the hope it would capture the depth and sense of the descent.

My work with the panoramic view has in mind the works of two photographers. The first is the work of Josef Koudelka entitled *Wall* (2008-2012) and the second is the work of Roi Kuper entitled *Gaza Dream* (2014). In the first, Koudelka uses a panoramic camera to depict the Israeli-built Wall that separates Israel and Palestine. The wall, as it is referred to by the international community is also spoken of as the *separation fence* or the *protective fence* by Israelis who support its construction. Josef Koudelka was invited to participate in a project entitled *This Place*, instigated by photographer Frederic Brenner in 2009. Upon arrival in Israel, Koudelka was assigned an assistant named Gilad Baram. During the trips to sections of the Wall in Israel and Palestine, Baram began documenting Koudelka’s movements and observations...
of the landscape. In the film Koudelka: Shooting Holy Land, directed by Baram, the still long shots of the wall are interrupted by the movement of the photographer, Koudelka, searching for a position from which to shoot. The two works, the photographic body of works by Koudelka, and the film made by Baram of Koudelka’s work, shows not only the recording of the borderline, but also the negotiation of the photographic work with the political and ethical concerns that being in the landscape and gaining access demands.

On 28 February 2017, the film was first screened at the ICA in London where both Baram and Koudelka responded to questions from the audience. What was intriguing in this discussion was that Koudelka addressed the reasons for finally agreeing to participate in the project. He said that he had repeatedly refused Brenner’s invitation on the basis of wanting to have artistic freedom in shaping his own perspective on the land and consequently the conflict. This concern was shared by many of the other photographers, who demanded more transparency regarding the funding of the project. Though Koudelka said ‘no’ to Brenner’s proposal, he nonetheless decided to fund his own visits to Israel and Palestine. It was after a few visits that he finally said ‘yes,’ formally, to taking part in the project. He said that what made him change his mind was that throughout his work and life in Czechoslovakia, he was always aware of the presence of a wall – the Iron Curtain. However, despite his best efforts, he could never get close enough to see it, or know what being there, on the separation line would look like in images. The motivation therefore to photograph the wall separating
Israel and Palestine was deeply linked to another wall, in another place and time. This repetition, assimilation, or even appropriation is significant, and though it may not be necessarily ascribed directly to Koudelka's project, it is very much relevant to the exploration of these border lines and their afterlife in my research project.

In my past work *Border* from 2011, I photographed the border stones marking East and West Germany. The stones, mark a path through the forest where the border once stood. It is aligned with a former border between Hessen and Thüringen and even re-uses the same type of stones, only with engraved DDR letters. When I exhibited this work in Tel-Aviv in 2012, I wondered whether it could be seen beyond the connotation that the depiction of the German forest by an Israeli photographer provokes; that of reference to the Holocaust. My work then was conceived of through the lens of my experience growing up in Jerusalem, a city surrounded by a separation wall, and a country where the drawing of lines is still a serious and urgent conflict. Walking the borderline of the past East-West Germany today, is a way to point at recurring acts of division and bring attention to the work needed to deviate from these marked lines. My work did not communicate this at the time, but it has ever since been my intention to bring these repetitions and over-layered notions or metaphors to the site of exhibition.

The second panoramic work mentioned above is *Gaza Dream* by Roi Kuper. The panoramic view of Gaza is constructed by a number of square format images. In this work that began in 2014, before the Gaza war in the summer of 2014, Kuper intended to photograph the Gaza strip from north, south, east and west. To photograph from the sea - west of Gaza - was prohibited by the military. Kuper's project was resumed after the war, where he returned to the location he photographed before. The fields separating him and Gaza were later ingrained in the Israeli consciousness, as the places where many of the battles took place, in tunnels underground. Noam Gal, the curator of the exhibition in the Israel...
Museum wrote that ‘[...] the distance from Gaza that Kuper wishes to indicate with his photographs is a function of restrictions set by the State, but it also results from Israeli society’s blurred or skewed vision, which amounts to an almost unconscious blindness toward the place.’

Kuper, who has a long standing fascination with the book *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino, depicts Gaza as if it was one of Calvino’s imaginary cities, shimmering in the horizon of the colourful square images. This imaginary city, can only be seen by those who really seek to see it. *Seeing Gaza* is a metaphor, not only for seeing the conflict – Gaza in ruins – but mostly to see the conflict in its far reaching implications on the landscape, the culture, the language and even the faculty of seeing itself. Gaza, as seen by most people only through aerial photographs or images of the bombed houses is rarely seen through the lens of someone heading towards the city on foot, or observing from the nearby fields, says Kuper in a conversation with Gal.

What is photographed in Kuper’s panoramas is concerned with distance; the distance he himself, as an Israeli, is able or allowed to take - and how close he can get to see Gaza, both physically and conceptually.

I return to *Fauld Crater* and the question of *why this site?* The historical account of the explosion is interesting, yet it is something about the site now that I am attracted to, which lies in the inaccessibility. The crater becomes a secret garden where trees are growing anew on the ground of a past disaster. The fence and the warning signs preserve the secrecy of these trees, the hole in the ground and what might lie underneath. The explosion blew up the mine from within, raising tons of soil up in the air and flooded the area, which led to the many casualties. The fence was erected much later, in 1990 together with the decision to remember and commemorate, that I find interesting. In a conversation with people working in the still active section of the mine, I learned that it was accessed in the past mainly by teenagers, who were trying to find the entrance to the ammunition storage. Walking into the crater was not prohibited until the commemoration that brought with it the attention signs and fence. In this way, it resembles the inaccessible minefields encountered in Israel.

The thoughts on the unknown registration of minefields or the unexploded ammunition at Fauld, which deemed the area inaccessible due to the lack of resources to safely attend to its clearance, resonate with the making of many of my works. For example, in the works *A Few Notes on Crossing a Minefield* and *Visit to the Forbidden City* where my interest lay in Birch trees that mark the possible presence of mines.

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23 *Roi Kuper: Gaza Dream.*
I wonder how many years will need to pass until people have forgotten what happened, the signs have eroded, and the memorial stones have been covered by moss? How long will it take to forget that the fence was placed in the name of security? The work on Fauld consists of photographs taken in black and white and colour portraying the panoramic view of the crater in small square sections. The first image appears twice, placed again as the last image in its inverted form. This repetition seals the panoramic view with a manipulation of sight, echoing the inversion that occurs in the camera, which is then corrected in the printing process - from negative to positive. It also performs as two brackets ( ) holding the images of the crater and the crater itself together.

Another work from the Fauld crater was exhibited in the Degree Show at the Slade School of Fine Art in June 2017. This work consisted of three gelatin silver prints inserted into pre-cut slits in a 61x7x7cm piece of dark walnut wood. The lines or slits in the wood followed the curving lines of the photographic paper when it dried, making each line unique to the print that it held. The rock depicted in the photographs was found in an empty field just outside the fenced area of the crater. I photographed it three times because I wanted to capture the vegetation that was growing around it, which seemed to be cutting through the rock. I imagined that the rock had landed there as a result of the explosion, as if dropping into the lake, creating ripples that had become fossilised in the surrounding ground.

Another element leading to this work occurred when mapping my research on the studio walls of Slade Research Centre, Woburn Square, in March 2017. With the aim of writing about my practice, I arranged all the images I had taken from the different sites, over the duration of my research, in the form of a non-linear time-line. I wanted to draw lines between the different sites and to rethink the connections and repetitions emerging from working simultaneously with different techniques and on different sites. The act of mapping allowed me to observe my use of colour through the different printing techniques, abstract actions of drawing lines, and my fascination with trees that mark the landscape and its erasure.

Observing my images, I realised that my search for sites was in fact a search for gaps. I was looking for sites that represented the gap between what is seen and what is known or desired to be seen. Though I didn’t write, as intended, my reflections and observations of the act of mapping allowed me to return to the practice of writing through the practice of making. In addition, in order to construct the panorama of Fauld Crater and include it in the map, I cut-out all the squares from my contact sheet. This left the three rocks – a single rock photographed three time – in one strip,
one above the other, surprisingly appearing like my imagined narrative of the rock dropping into the lake.

My work is informed by *The Green Line*, a work by Francis Alÿs from 2004 that re-enacts the drawing of lines in landscape. In 1995 Alÿs performed a walk through the city of São Paulo with a leaking can of blue paint. That same walk was than performed in Jerusalem with a can of green paint. In this literal act Alÿs is re-drawing the green line that is at the heart of the Israeli Palestinian conflict.

The green line is the cease fire border between Israel and the Arab Legion from 1948. Francis Alÿs quotes the following information at the beginning of the video documenting his performance from Meron Benvenisti’s book *City of Stone: The Hidden History of Jerusalem:*

*The Lines were sketched on a Mandatory 1:20,000 scale map. Moshe Dayan [commander of the Israeli forces in Jerusalem] drew the Israeli front line with a green grease pencil, while Abdullah al-Tal [representative of the Arab Legion] marked his front line with a red one. The grease pencils made lines three to four millimeters wide. Sketched on a map whose scale was 1:20,000, such lines in reality represented strips of land sixty to eighty meters in width. Who owned the “width of the line?.”*  

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At the opening of the video documenting his performance, Alýs writes ‘sometimes doing something poetic can become political and sometimes doing something political can become poetic.’ To re-enact the performative walk in Jerusalem, Alýs invited writers, theorists, journalists and even parliament members to respond to his work. The different voices are heard as a voice-over in the video. In Eyal Weizman’s response a critical voice is heard, emphasising the problematics of Alýs’s actions of simplifying an overly complex issue. He points out that Alýs’s gesture of walking might be accepting the violent reality it presents, such as in the case of Alýs’s starting point that Weizmann says, marked the first moment of annexation that did not follow the urban borders of the city nor the natural borders in historical terms. Further more, he points out that the harsh reality of drawing the initial border disregarded the existing conditions and was made under a colonial agenda, whereas Alýs made his walk following paths available to him.

After listing the problems that arise in this performed poetic gesture, it’s implications on the ground and the political reality, Weizman begins, in an interesting shift of tone, to address the rupture that occurs in the act of drawing this line by walking. He points out the moments where the paint suddenly thins down, how it splashes when it hits solid ground, or when it breaks abruptly by the swing of the hand whilst walking. In the critique of Eyal Weizman I find important notions of how the work travels between the political and the poetic gesture. In this space between the work – the walk of Alýs and the critique of Weizman – lies the work that needs to be done, to travel through the different political and physical acts of drawing, into the imaginary and conceptual notions of drawing, and from there to rethink the political. Most importantly, it is this movement that must be put into practice.

The drawing of lines appear repeatedly in my works, in the passivity and activity of the act of tracing that Derrida attributes to the photographic gesture, the lines made by walking, and the actions of blurring lines and borders. The action of following the line in the work *Fauld Crater* is made to acknowledge and make visible the printing process. The signature of the site of making becomes as important to the work as the narrative of the site itself.

27 Francis Alýs, “Eyal Weizman.”
- EPILOGUE -

Sites of Exhibition
(Figure 5.1) Dana Ariel, *Encountering Perforated Ground*, installation view, BPF, Phoenix Brighton, 2016
(Figure 5.2) Dana Ariel, *Encountering Perforated Ground*, installation view, BPF, Phoenix Brighton, 2016
(Figure 5.3) Dana Ariel, *Encountering Perforated Ground*, installation view, BPF, Phoenix Brighton, 2016
(Figure 5.4) Dana Ariel, *Encountering Perforated Ground*, installation view, BPF, Phoenix Brighton, 2016
(Figure 5.5) Dana Ariel, *Encountering Perforated Ground*, installation view, BPF, Phoenix Brighton, 2016
(Figure 5.6) Dana Ariel, *From Sites of Unlearning*, exhibition installation view, Slade School of Fine Art, 2017
(Figure 5.7) Dana Ariel, *From Sites of Unlearning*, exhibition installation view, Slade School of Fine Art, 2017
(Figure 5.8) Dana Ariel, *From Sites of Unlearning*, exhibition installation view, Slade School of Fine Art, 2017
(Figure 5.9) Dana Ariel, *From Sites of Unlearning*, exhibition installation view, Slade School of Fine Art, 2017
Epilogue
Nachwort, Abschluss
edge
סוף דבר, אחרית דבר
אברם, חלופה
At the outset of this research project I aimed to create sites of unlearning through methods of making and unmaking. The sites of exhibition are where I share the methods used to create the works and observe how the work is encountered: it is where the various layers, gathered at the many sites of making, unfold and where the reading and misreading of the work is performed. I frame the following reflections between two exhibitions: the first, is my solo exhibition at the Brighton Photo Fringe in 2016 entitled \textit{Encountering Perforated Ground}, and the second, exhibited in the Slade Degree Show amongst the MA and MFA graduates in 2017, entitled \textit{From Sites of Unlearning}. In Brighton, I chose to focus on sites from Israel and Palestine out of the need to confront my position in relation to the conflict, and moreover, in order to divert the focus from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to a conflict of seeing. Some works appear in both exhibitions, placed beside other works, in order to change the underlying syntax of the installation, and offer other possible readings or connotations.

With the support of the Brighton Photo Fringe Festival team I was given the freedom over curatorial decisions, which allowed me the opportunity to experiment with the ideas and methods I presented. I focused on finding creative ways to bridge the gaps in how I speak of the work and how it is presented to viewers. In the exhibition, unveiling the hidden textualities of the work was explored through the use of text. These text works were intended to function as images.

The first text element appeared on the floor plan that was available for visitors. Alongside the list of titles was a text about the wordplay of the two names Fasa’il and Peza’el in Arabic and Hebrew, and how they could be read through German and English.\footnote{See page 111.} The second approach to the inclusion of text appeared in the form of a video text. This text was projected on the wall beside the photographs. Each sentence appeared separately, momentarily filling the space as a hovering title. The text works included were: \textit{לחצות את הגבול עם רימון}, \textit{שביל טשטוש} and the wordplay with the Hebrew word desert: \textit{מדבר מדבר}. By repeating the word desert in Hebrew different meanings are voiced, such as \textit{desert speaks}, or \textit{speak the desert}. This play with words stretched the meaning and connotations through translation and the cultural references and associations they provoked. The multiple readings offered by the split roots of Hebrew verbs ask to consider the multiple readings offered by what is seen in the images – a form of presenting \textit{split roots of seeing}.
During the *In conversation* that took place at the gallery on Sunday October 2nd between Sarah Pickering and myself, a visitor expressed her concerns regarding the images in the exhibition. She introduced herself not by name, but rather through her familiarity with *this* landscape. She expressed her concerns in regards to my use of language, in particular to the blurring of borders. My response to her concerns began with my position when visiting the village and settlement. I described the experience of being there with a camera, observing the visible violence of occupation through colours, the architecture and the green vegetation or lack of it in the desert landscape. In my response I aimed to re-lay the ground for dialogue that overcomes the barriers set by a single reading of national identity.

The urgency in modes of speaking I identified in this encounter brought me back to the early reasons that led me to think of methods of *verlernen*. This motivation emerged out of the inability to speak about the conflict without falling into the prescribed dichotomies, which are often overtaken by strong emotions that limit the possibilities for a dialogue beyond the barricaded political positions. This struggle to speak in face of acts of silencing emerging from these emotions is already rooted in the Hebrew word for violence, איב החדש, which means silence, mute, being unable to speak. *Verlernen*, as a methodology aims to pierce through these layers of silencing; to tear down the singularity of identity and narrative and to blur and erase the fixed misconceptions of what is seen and known. The potential for a political encounter that I wish the site of exhibition to become, relies on the process of unlearning which comes about through the unfolding of the many layers that construct each work.

What to make of this encounter? In the gap between the exhibition in Brighton and the Degree Show at the Slade I revisited some of my works. My strategy for the degree show exhibition was to bring the different sites together, which I thought would shift the focus from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to address the conflict of seeing and allow more space to observe the mechanisms that inform this conflict. Alongside the preparation for the exhibition was the development in my writing process, and the opportunity to unpack the various layers, regardless of whether they would be shared with the viewer. In some instances, such as in the work *לחצות את הגבול עם רימון* a new work emerged through the practice of writing. The text detailing my visit and photographic process was recorded into a sound piece that was exhibited alongside the translated poem and image of the two pomegranates.

In another work entitled *A Few Notes on Crossing A Minefield* I drew from multiple references that emerged in my writing; those being the notions of perforation discussed earlier in the text, where I began unpacking the notions of
perforation in the landscape and language. These minefields, that in Israel and Germany are often seen in areas that have not yet been cleared of live mines, reverberate through the difficulties of entering into dialogue with others who do not share the same ideas, or for whom the simple act of speaking altogether carries serious cultural, political and emotional implications. Another new piece that I made for this exhibition is related to the accounts of the visit to the Forbidden City in Germany. The single image, that I titled after this visit, was not taken on site. The hollow piece of Birch tree represents for me the past site afflicted by war; its fast and uncontrolled growth allowed it to spread in areas that had been previously bombed or used for military training where older trees once stood. The hand holding the birch piece also represents the inability to photograph, or the promise not to photograph in exchange for information about the refugee camp I encountered there. This promise resonates with the event of photography that Azoulay reminds us, also occurs in the absence of a camera or a photograph.

In the various conversations I had in the exhibition space in front of the works, the sites and the encounters were used as a form of language – pulling elements, gestures and thoughts from my visits and the printing process into the conversation – sites and images became tools for dialogue.

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Nachwort – after-words or awaiting what follows. Days after de-installing my works from the exhibition at the Slade in June 2017, I received an email from the artist Sadegh Aleahmad, whom I had never met before, and whose words affected me greatly. His kind words offered observations from his experience when visiting the exhibition, and particularly in response to my work Rimonim. He introduced himself and his practice and research, and asked if I would be interested in a future collaboration. It rarely happens that an unknown viewer makes such a gesture and effort to offer their experience and impressions. It is a wonderful way to experience the work at work, to see and receive a response to what is offered at the exhibition site. In contrast to the previous encounter with a viewer at my exhibition Encountering Perforated Ground, Sadegh’s reading was different; it confirmed that the work could speak through the various layers and complexities, subtle as they may be.

What was so interesting to me was the narrative of the audio piece... And how it constantly changed my perception and expectation of the ‘moral of the story’ as it unfolded through its duration... But there is something very intangible about Rimonim itself that I cannot put my fingers on... There is a certain delicacy
Sadegh’s reading hovered above and below the visible surface of the image and the ground, where the work bounces from the personal to the political sphere. In his performances, Sadegh aims to challenge the binaries of gender by conflicting femininity and masculinity. With the use of a video camera and live streaming, he attempts to split the gaze of the viewer and challenge the existing power relation between the artist-performer and viewer. When performing he is often blindfolded, in the attempt to challenge his authorial sovereignty when encountering the viewer. We both agreed that the desire to surrender or negotiate these sovereign powers are equally a motivation and a necessity in each of our practices.

We circled back and forth over the topic of our identities, and mostly, how we are constantly being identified: forced by a viewer to return to the site of national identity. Sadegh performs in front of a viewer, yet sabotages his own ability to see, while offering the viewer the opportunity to observe both the performance and the camera view that presents an internal gaze. In this act, he attempts to metaphorically turn his skin inside out. In Sadegh’s work, his own body becomes the site of conflict. For me, the visited sites are already conflicted and I draw on that in order to speak of a conflict of seeing that a process of unlearning could unpack.

Reaching the edge – occupying that edge. The edge is the meeting points between dualities and dichotomies, or the place where two territories meet and overlap: an example for this could be seen in the case of “no man’s land” between borders. It is in this gap between dichotomies, between conflicted terms or ideas, that I wish to situate my images in order to begin the task of unlearning. I see the sites I visit as performing something of this edgeness; they are sites on territorial edges, at the edge of a conflict, at the brink of disappearing from the collective memory – or the surface of the printed paper – held by a thread. I use these sites as tools to speak of something else, not of the sites themselves, but rather the ways of seeing they invite.

خاتمة in Arabic translates to Nachwort – afterwards in English – or Ausgang, exit – endpoint or boundary in English. The play with words and translation intends to offer different readings for both words and images. As a method this invites a reading from both the right and the left as if switching from Hebrew to English in mid sentence, as if all layers of the print and its meanings can be readily visible.

2 Sadegh Aleahmad, e-mail message to author, July 14, 2017.
(Figure 5.10) Dana Ariel, *from Mount X*, c-print, 2015
Bibliography


——. “Mother Tongue, Father Tongue: Following the Death of the Mother and the Death of the Father.”


Link no longer available.


