

Boaz Aharonovitch

Dark Matter, four parts, pigment print on Plexiglas, 2011

Born in Tel Aviv, 1970; based in Tel Aviv

Boaz Aharonovitch studied photography at the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem. He has received various scholarships and prizes in connection with his work, which is represented in numerous public and private collections.

Aharonovitch's art is not photography in the conventional sense, but an extremely rigorous distillation and combination of thousands of photographic images addressing a single subject, many of them not taken by him. The four-part *Dark Matter*, for example, combines a large number of photographs of supernovae that the artist amassed during many hours of research. The resulting cosmic panorama brings together phenomena that in fact took place light years apart, but the image appears to be a hyper-realistic view of an actual cosmic event.

The fascination of Aharonovitch's work lies in this tension between real events documented in single images and the fiction embodied in combinations of many such images. His photographs give the impression of being the ultimate representations of a particular subject: there would seem to be nothing to add and nothing to remove. The artist extends the boundaries of the photographic medium, not by transcending the level and range of human perception, but by disclosing images of the unimaginable. After all, events in the cosmos are generally hidden to the eye and it can therefore be no accident that outer space features in the creation myths of many religions as the metaphysical source of all phenomena.

kvo

Ilit Azoulay

Telegram 24, inkjet print, 2010

Born in Jaffa, Tel Aviv, 1972; based in Tel Aviv

Israeli photographer Ilit Azoulay studied at the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem and in Tel Aviv. Her approach to photography as an artistic medium links documentary with conceptual aspects. She might best be described as a pictorial archaeologist who assembles images from pre-existing visual material and objects.

The photograph *Telegram 24*, from the series *Messengers*, shows a number of everyday things that once surrounded members of Tel Aviv's founding generation in their homes. Arranged as on a pin-board, they combine to form a large mural that, the viewer senses, will divulge narratives concerning the former occupants if it is 'read' like a book. The objects include a length of twisted wire, nails, needles, washers, scraps of paper, bits of plastic and pieces of paper bearing numbers – items that, removed from their original functional context, feature as almost surreally impersonal remnants of a life once lived in a particular place.

The montage process lies at the root of all the artist's photographic projects and series. In 2014 this 'archaeologist of cities', as K. Reich has called her, was invited to Berlin on a scholarship. She travelled throughout Germany to amass images, not objects, in the streets and squares of cities rich in tradition. She then assembled these details of architecture, sculpture, urban ensembles and everyday life to form large montages. The surprising and sometimes grotesque-looking panoramas that resulted show Germany and its treasures in a new light and rarely conform to received opinion about the famous places in which the images originated.

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Hila Ben Ari

Untitled (from the series *8 Exhalations*), etching, 2011

Born the Ein Harod kibbutz, 1972; based in Tel Aviv

Hila Ben Ari, who studied art and comparative linguistics in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, is one of a number of young Israeli artists who address personal and political issues relating to the human body. She uses a variety of media to develop her themes in complex two- and three-dimensional works, which include videos, paintings, prints and, most recently, a piece for the theatre. Ben Ari's work features in solo and group exhibitions around the world and figures in both public and private collections.

The four prints acquired by the German Bundestag come from the series *8 Exhalations* and show one or more women performing gymnastic exercises. Their surroundings are not clearly defined, but some large frames and other three-dimensional elements suggest an imaginary space rather than an actual one. Some of the women's heads and faces are covered with splodges of ink, suggesting that the artist's concern is not with personal beauty and recognisability, but with how the female body asserts itself in space. Ben Ari, who grew up in a kibbutz, has described her work as an act of self-liberation from rules and codes of conduct established on a communal, rather than individual basis. Her art thus involves a critical investigation of moral standards and social expectations in terms of the individual.

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Sigalit Landau

Bridge Map 2 and 3, monoprint photo etchings, 2014

Born in Jerusalem, 1969; based in Tel Aviv

Sigalit Landau is one of Israel's best-known contemporary artists. She represented her country at the 54th Venice Biennale and has been awarded numerous prizes and scholarships.

The two prints from the series *Bridge Map* reflect the artist's view of herself. She has said that she sees herself as a 'builder of bridges' engaged in a search for 'new and vital materials' with which to connect 'the past with the future, the West with the East, the private with the collective, the everyday with the arcane and the random with traditional narratives and myths'. At home in a very wide range of artistic genres, she aims to find visual metaphors of human, cultural and political conflict in her native country and elsewhere. For a number of years she has used salt from the Dead Sea in her installations and sculptures. The physical properties and symbolically charged origins of this natural material make it suitable for every conceivable form of artistic expression.

The Salt Route Bridge, a project on the scale of the Land Art of Christo, James Turrell and Anish Kapoor, is the logical consequence of Landau's artistic practice. For several years she has been working on this real bridge, made of salt, which is to span the Dead Sea and link Israel with Jordan. The series *Bridge Map* is a step on the road to achieving this goal. A sequence of colours and motifs, all taking their cue from works celebrated as icons of contemporary Israeli art, is inscribed like a bead necklace on maps of the Dead Sea. A short text relates Landau's artistic dream to her childhood in Jerusalem.

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Orit Hofshi

Resilience, two parts, woodcut, 2012

Born in the Matzuva kibbutz, 1959; based in Herzliya

Orit Hofshi studied at the universities of Leeds, Pennsylvania and Haifa before specialising in woodcut, the oldest print medium. Her large-format prints, which have earned her such prestigious awards as an art residency in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and a grant from the William J. Cooper Foundation in the USA, occupy a unique place in the contemporary art world.

The German Bundestag has acquired two works by Hofshi, the single print *Glimpse* and the two-part *Resilience*. Both are typical of her approach: they feature neo-Romantic landscapes that can be read as allegories of humanity's place in the world but, unlike her nineteenth-century models, Hofshi represents natural forces as destructive, uncontrollable and threatening. In *Resilience* she combines the natural motifs with a concrete historical allusion: the left-hand half of the image incorporates a visual quotation from an old photograph showing the synagogue in her parents' birthplace in what is now the Czech Republic. All members of the congregation, including Hofshi's grandparents, fell victim to the Nazis.

Resilience is one of this artist's most compelling works. Although its biographical background is not immediately apparent to the viewer, the image exudes an unsettling aura that seems to hint at terrible events not depicted. By letting the grain of the woodblocks show through, Hofshi transposes the motif onto the level of an uncertain and disturbing memory that forms part of our present identity.

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Micha Ullman

Reading in the Sand (nos. 593, 587, 573), sand on paper, 2006

Born in Tel Aviv, 1939; based in Ramat Hasharon

Micha Ullman ranks with Dani Karavan and Moshe Gershuni as one of the great names in the first generation of artists born in Israel. After studying in Jerusalem and London, he taught in Düsseldorf and Haifa before being appointed Professor of Sculpture at the State Academy of Fine Art in Stuttgart. Ullman has been a member of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin since 1997. He has created numerous works for public sites. In Berlin alone these have included the sculpture *Nobody* (now opposite the city's Jewish Museum), the memorial to the burning of books in Bebelplatz during the Third Reich, the staircase installation *Seven Steps* in the Matthäikirche at the Kulturforum and, most recently, the monument to Moses Mendelssohn in the square in front of the Rotes Rathaus, Berlin's town hall near Alexanderplatz.

Ullman's memorials are conceived as spaces for the memory to inhabit rather than as illustrations or documentations of the events concerned. He accomplishes this by means of abbreviated, cipher-like forms that can spark a process of recognition and assimilation in any viewer who enters into a dialogue with them. The aura of intense stillness that surrounds his works is among his most remarkable achievements.

The Art Collection of the German Bundestag has acquired three works on paper by Ullman. Produced in connection with his memorial to the book-burning in Bebelplatz, they feature rigorously abstract shapes that are vaguely reminiscent of books. The artist titled these works *Reading in the Sand*, an allusion to the fact that in them he used sand (from the Negev desert) rather than paint.

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