

The background of the cover features a large, light green triangle pointing downwards, which is centered on the title. Scattered across the entire white background are numerous small, solid-colored dots in various colors including red, yellow, black, blue, green, and grey. The title 'VISIONS OF PLACE' is written in a large, bold, blue, sans-serif font, with the words stacked vertically.

VISIONS OF PLACE

MARTIN ROSENBERG
Co-Curator

J. SUSAN ISAACS
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INTERVENTIONS: FROM DESTRUCTION TO HEALING

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The Modern era has brought remarkable achievements and progress on many fronts, but has also been shadowed by conflict, war, and violence. The state of Israel, in its brief history, echoes this dichotomy. As a nation, it has achieved a great deal, but has never been entirely free from the shadow of conflict, war, and violence. The first of the most well-known artistic responses to war and violence in the modern era is Pablo Picasso's 1937 iconic painting, *Guernica*, in reaction to the bombing of the Spanish Basque town by the Nazis. His reporting of the horrific scenes of violence through reduced and abstracted forms provides the first bookend to a set. The second archetypal monument in the set—now concentrating on healing—is Maya Lin's Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Wall, completed in 1983. Lin produced a simple, yet highly meaningful and symbolic design, which, through its quiet elegance, brings people of all political spectrums and religions together. Many artists around the world, including those in this section, follow in the footsteps of Picasso and Lin and also choose to respond to conflict, war, and violence in their creative practices.

Sigal Primor's video, entitled **48:67:82 [IMG. 54]**, refers to three wars that have involved Israel. The first number denotes Israel's War of Independence, also known as the First Arab-Israeli War, which took place when six Arab nations invaded the new State of Israel, just months after the United Nations voted on November 29, 1947, to divide Mandatory Palestine into two states: one for Palestinian Jews and one for Palestinian Arabs. The War of Independence began immediately following the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948.¹ The second date in the video's title is that of the Six Day War in which Israel faced Egypt, Syria, and Jordan from June 5-10, 1967.² Finally, 1982 is the year of the beginning of the First Lebanon War, known in Israel as *Operation Peace for Galilee*.³ It began on June 6, 1982, when the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) invaded southern Lebanon in order to root out the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which since 1970, had established a terrorist state-within-a-state in Lebanon's south.

For Israelis, the images on the video are recognizable military insignia from these wars.⁴ To others, the video appears as a series of minimalist abstract paintings moving across the screen. Primor is an artist who is interested in peace. She, like all mothers, worries about her children and empathizes with other mothers who also fear for their families.⁵ This work addresses the issue, not by taking sides, but simply by reaching out for a possible new world where bombs do not drop on children, and young people no longer need to serve in the military. She does this by removing the insignia from the real world of military uniforms and installing them in the neutral and pristine space of a video screen, where they become a series of reductive and brightly colored geometric fields of color reminiscent of minimalist paintings.

Tal Amitai-Lavi's, *Direct Hit / The House on Nahalal St. Haifa (1)* [IMG. 2] is based on a photo by Lenny Maschkowski from the Second Lebanon War of 2006.⁶ Amitai-Lavi appropriates images from the internet that deal with houses or remnants of houses that have survived natural disasters or war.⁷ She is particularly fascinated by domestic architectural structures, which she then translates into ethereal constructions, employing black sewing thread on clear Perspex. Amitai-Lavi works with unexpected materials using labor intensive methods of production. She is a process-oriented artist. The contrast between the delicacy of the materials and the content of the work results in a compelling image, at once beautiful and terrible. Life is perilous; consciousness and memory are elusive.⁸

Shelter [IMG. 37], the second work by Sigalit Landau in the exhibition, is a model for a larger sculptural installation that was produced for a 2013 exhibition entitled *Ici, Ailleurs (Here, There)*. Installed at the new contemporary art space, Panorama, in Friche la Belle de Mar, Marseille, France, the sculpture is based on an old bomb shelter slated for demolition, located on Livinsky Street in Tel Aviv.⁹ *Shelter* is a 1:1 scale copy of the original.¹⁰ Landau created rubber molds from the actual edifice so that she could make exact imprints of the textural surfaces and other details. The model here and the final full-scale work were then cast in bronze. Visually detached from its surroundings and removed from its context, *Shelter* requires supports. Landau transforms the original public architectural structure into a freestanding monumental sculpture. The elevated staircase now goes nowhere, and the structure protects no one.¹¹ Landau continues to explore, poetically and metaphorically, place, identity, and the future of the region—of Israel and its neighbors.¹² She finds there is no ultimate truth and admits to contradictions but seeks an ever elusive “normality.” For her, art is a language that can be used in this search.¹³

Similarly, Shai Kremer evocatively explores the remnants of military activity that mark the landscape in his photograph, *Former Ammunition Storage Area* [IMG. 36]. There are many deserted military camps throughout Israel.¹⁴ This particular photograph is part of Kremer's 2001-2006 *Infected Landscapes* series, which studies the social and environmental impact of the military on the land. The photographer comments: "My images mirror the psychological trauma and resulting ambivalence of living in a world of friction; they also warn against vestiges of war becoming a permanent fixture in people's lives."¹⁵ Like Amitai-Lavi, Kremer depends on a contrast between stunning aesthetics and disturbing subject matter to propel his content forward. *Former Ammunition Storage Area's* innocent appearance covers up the traumatic scars of military activity. For Kremer, this concealment parallels the suppression of the psychic wounds of the collective unconscious of a country constantly involved in conflict.¹⁶ Sylvia Wolf suggests that Kremer's photographs may be seen as a type of memorial, possibly to the dream of peace.¹⁷

Another artist who has utilized landscape to explore a history of conflict is David Adika. In his highly expressive photograph, *Untitled (Damaged Landscape B) Jerusalem* [IMG. 1], part of the series entitled *Equator*, he presents Jerusalem before the Security Fence was constructed.¹⁸ Over time the unprocessed film became damaged, a result that Adika pushed even more when he later imported the negative into the computer.¹⁹ He then manipulated it for dramatic effect and purposes of content. There is a sense of nostalgia conveyed through the atmospheric blue and purple colors, and the dramatic vantage point of the photographer who looks down upon the ancient city. The intertwined relationship between beauty and politics echoes throughout the history of Jerusalem, and Adika poetically captures it in this work. He is a Mizrahi Jew, which provides him with a different point of view, as he is at once outsider and insider—of the Middle East and yet not of the Western Ashkenazi heritage of those who first established modern Israel.²⁰ The image carries with it a rich but troubled narrative of Jerusalem as an ancient archeological dig, an important center for major religions, a city conquered and ruled by various empires, and a contemporary point of contention.

The final two artists in this section of the exhibition, Ariane Littman and Orit Raff, create documented performances where the final video is a work of art in and of itself. In *The Wounded Land Trilogy* [IMG. 39-41], Littman addresses "symbolic and Sisyphian acts of healing, visible and less visible wounds inscribed in the geography of the landscape and the body."²¹ A single video by Raff, *Sweating Sweet* [IMG. 55-57], also addresses a Sisyphian experience, the task of sweetening a salt sea. The two artists share a conceptual and absurdist response to the situation (*hamatzav* in Hebrew)—the daily conflicts between the various people of the region.

Littman transforms road maps, aerial maps, historical maps, and more contemporary “closure maps” into objects which also sometimes become the inspiration for performances and videos. In 2002, following the suicide bomb attack in the popular Jerusalem Café Moment of her brother-in-law, which killed 11 civilians and injured 54 people, she decided to document the growing numbers of fences and checkpoints around the city and took a position as a news photographer, which enabled her to cross borders more easily.²² Littman wanted to transcend what she viewed as the existential chaos prompted by almost daily terror attacks on Israeli civilians inside the city.²³ However, though her reporting, she also became aware of what she describes as “the resulting plight of the Palestinian,”²⁴

In 2004, she began to alter closure maps, which she incised, cut, and reshuffled, assembling them into new artworks where she controls the placement of borders; but in reality, borders can't change by cutting and reworking them in paper. At the same time, she began to create performance works around these issues, dressing ‘wounded’ maps of Jerusalem. Through her artwork, Littman attempts to gain some control over a paralyzing situation, but it is seemingly an impossible task.²⁵ In the installation, *Healing* [IMG. 42-45] at the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts, which includes the *Wounded Land* video trilogy, Littman adds a new map work, *Grafted Land*, which is based on a 2010 Palestinian Tourist map of the Holy Land showing Palestine and Israel. In this work, the artist excises the disputed areas of the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights and covers the four “wounded” entities in gauzes and plaster, suturing with green thread.²⁶

The first video of Littman's trilogy is *Sea of Death* [IMG. 39], in which she views the Holy Land as a sick patient suffering from a chronic disease.²⁷ The performance took place at sunset on the shores of the northern side of the Dead Sea, not far from Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. Littman describes the area as imposing, where life, death and healing exist together. Wrapped as a mummy and sent across the sea, as she floated, the artist meditated upon a series of oppositions: mothers and wars, pain and wounds, death and useless hopes. The second of the videos in the trilogy is *The Olive Tree* [IMG. 40]. In this performance she bandaged a dead olive tree at the Hizma checkpoint, located at the north-eastern entrance to Jerusalem.²⁸ The music in the video is sung by two women, one Israeli Jewish and one Palestinian. They weep for the dead and for the city of Jerusalem now surrounded by new walls.²⁹ The final work in the trilogy is *The Spring* [IMG. 41], which aesthetically documents a performance among the ruins of the Palestinian village of Lifta, located on the western outskirts of Jerusalem. Known in the Bible as Nephtoah, Lifta remains empty, deserted by its Arab villagers who fled in the wake of the Arab-Jewish hostilities of 1947-48 during the Siege of Jerusalem.³⁰ At full moon sitting by the spring, a performative healing acts takes place in a “wounded” landscape, where a woman sews a map of Jerusalem made of bandages and brings life to a mysterious mummy.

Orit Raff too feels the frustration of continued violence, commenting, "Living in such a conflicted place, makes you think about the narratives that are being told, [and] the narratives not being told."³¹ In this video, *Sweating Sweet* [IMG. 55-57], the artist walks along a body of water, putting her hand in and out of her dress/apron to pull out handfuls of a white powder, which she sprinkles into the water. It is a repetitive action for a task that is never completed, as she can't possibly throw enough sugar to sweeten the water.³² Raff is preoccupied in her works with dislocation, memory, transformation, repetition and self-assertion, which, she believes comes out in part from her identification with a young country of immigrants.³³ While there is often a political aspect to her work, according to the artist, she approaches the political metaphorically.³⁴ Artist Yair Barak writes of this work: "Raff's character is obsessed with shifting the rules in order to create a balanced reality in which there is less gap and contradiction. This is of course, the beginning of the end; the unavoidable recipe of failure."³⁵ Raff, through metaphor, addresses the complexity of Israel and the narratives of the land that are both told and untold. Like Ariane Littman, Orit Raff also attempts to gain some measure of control over living in a land of conflict, through the allegories provided in her art, but the hurdles they face seem unending.

1 The Arab-Israeli War of 1947-48 established an independent Jewish state, and it represented the attainment of the nationalist ambitions of modern political Zionism. For the Arab nations, the UN resolution dividing the former British Mandate of Palestine into an Arab state and a Jewish state (which also established Transjordan the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan) and the subsequent war became known as *al-naqba*, "the catastrophe." For more information see: Mark Tessler, "Routinization of the Conflict, 1948-67," in *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 2nd ed. Indiana University Press, 269-71 and Tessler, "The Palestinian Disaster and Basic Issues after 1948," in *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 273-335; Colin Shindler, *A History of Modern Israel*, Cambridge University Press, 2013, 64. "Milestones: 1945-1952: Creation of Israel, 1948" Office of the Historian, The State Department of the United States, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/creation-israel>; and "UN General Assembly Resolution 181," Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/un%20general%20assembly%20resolution%20181.aspx>.

2 Tensions in the region grew in the 1950s and 60s, ultimately leading to wars in 1956 and 1967. There were several catalyzing events in 1956 and 67, including President Nasser of Egypt closing the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping on the 23rd of May, 1967. King Hussein of Jordan joined in a mutual defense agreement with Egypt on May 30th. On June 5th, Israel preemptively attacked Egypt and Syria in a surprise operation. Also on June 5, Nasser persuaded Syria and Jordan to begin attacks on Israel. From June 5 to June 10, Israel defeated Egypt, Jordan, and Syria and captured the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. For more information see: Tessler, "Israel and the Arab States through June 1967," *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 336-97; Isabella Ginor, "The Cold War's Longest Cover-Up: How and Why the USSR Instigated the 1967 War," *Rubin Center for Research in International Affairs*, 7 (September 2003): n.p. <http://www.rubincenter.org/2003/09/ginor-2003-09-03/>

3 Due to Syria's installation of sophisticated SAM-6 missiles in the Beqaa Valley, Lebanon and PLO shelling of northern Israel, Israel amassed troops on its northern border, and on June 6, launched *Operation Peace for Galilee*. Israel was determined to remove the PLO from southern Lebanon. By June 8, the IDF had pushed the PLO beyond artillery range of northern Israel but had not destroyed or captured most of the PLO forces. Israel then engaged Syria and destroyed the SAM missiles and shot down Syrian jets. Israel moved into the southern and eastern suburbs of Beirut in order to eliminate the PLO as a threat and to remove the

Syrians from Lebanon. After a long siege, the PLO departed from Beirut with the last to go on September 1, 1982. Electricity (which had been cut off by the Israelis) was restored, and a Lebanese Maronite Christian leader was elected president. For more information see: Tessler, "Violent Confrontations in the Early 1980s," *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 535-99.

4 Most Israelis, men and women, serve in the IDF, so they are more familiar with military insignia than would be the average American.

5 Discussion with artist in her studio on June 25, 2013.

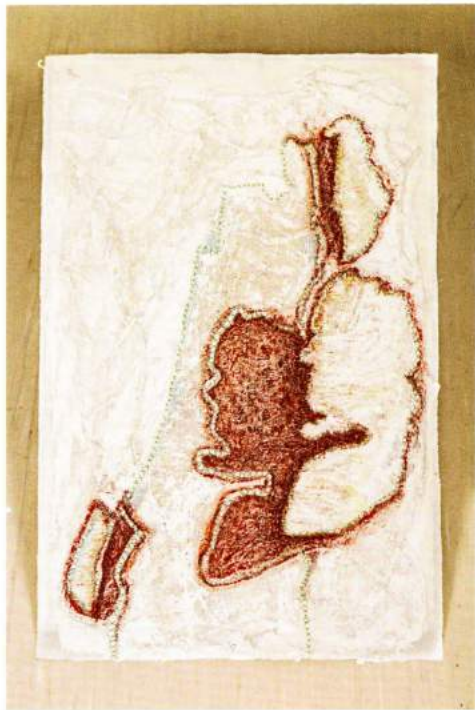
6 Film by and about Tal Amati-Lavi in connection with her 2014 exhibition at Chelouche Gallery in Tel Aviv. <http://www.headstart.co.il/project.aspx?id=7335&lan=en-US>

- 7 The Second Lebanon War was a month-long conflict between Israeli and Hezbollah forces in Lebanon during the summer of 2006. Hezbollah, an Islamist group, aided by funding from Iran, formed in 1982 after the first Lebanon War. Their view of Israel was uncompromising, believing Zionism the central enemy of Islamic civilization with the only solution the elimination of Israel. The precipitating event for the second war was the successful abduction in July of 2006 of two Israeli soldiers from the Israeli side of the border by Hezbollah. With Hezbollah refusing any dialog, Israel utilized airstrikes and shelling at targets in southern Lebanon. Hezbollah responded with short-range missiles and the threat of long-range missiles that could target major Israeli cities. Israel easily destroyed the long-range missiles, but during the summer of 2006, Hezbollah rained more than 4,000 short-range missiles into northern Israel. For more information see: Colin Shindler, "The Rise of Hezbollah," in *A History of Modern Israel*, 340–349.
- 8 Tal Amatai-Lavi comments in Hannah Stouffer, "Vibe Israel: Tal Amatai-Lavi, Chelouche Gallery," *Juxtapose* (December 22, 2013) <http://www.juxtapose.com/illustration/vibe-israel-tal-amatai-lavi-chelouche-gallery>
- 9 Online Interview with Sigalit Landau. <http://embassies.gov.il/marseille/Israel2013scenes/Pages/Sigalit-Landau.aspx>
- 10 Dalia Manor, "Shelter," in *Sigalit Landau: Caryatid*, (Be'er Sheva: The Negev Museum of Art, 2012), 241–243.
- 11 Manor, "Shelter," 241–243.
- 12 Online Interview with Sigalit Landau. <http://embassies.gov.il/marseille/Israel2013scenes/Pages/Sigalit-Landau.aspx>
- 13 Ibid., and Podcast Interview by SON|JA with Sigalit Landau. 21.55 minutes. Radio Web MACBA (Museum of Contemporary Art Barcelona) 2015 <http://rwm.macba.cat/en/sonia/sigalit-landau/capsula>
- 14 According to Amiram Oren, in an area of approximately 22,000 square km, the security establishment (mainly the IDF and government defense industries) owns about 40% of the territory. Amiram Oren, "The Scope of Security Area in the State of Israel," in Shai Kremer, *Fallen Empires* (Sante Fe: Radius Books, 2011), n.p. Amiram Oren is also the author of "Shadow Lands: The Use of Land Resources for Security Needs in Israel," *Israel Studies*, 12, (Spring 2007): 149–170. In 2001, Ariane Littman, another artist in the exhibition, created a series of works entitled *White Land* in response to her discovery that the forest her parents donated to Israel in 1967 in memory of her grandparents was turned into a secure military base to which access was closed. Ariane Littman, *Borderland—Alternative Ways of Mapping Jerusalem*, video 29:19 minutes, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMuJZWIXG4>
- 15 Shai Kremer, "Infected Landscape" <http://www.shaikremer.com/il.html>. See also: Shai Kremer, Moshe Zuckermann (Introduction), Sylvia Wolf (Introduction), *Infected Landscape: Israel: Broken Promised Land* (Stockport, England Dewi Lewis Publishing, 2008).
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Sylvia Wolf, "A Measure of Nature," in Shai Kremer, *Infected Landscape* (United Kingdom: Dewi Lewis Publishing, 2008), 11.
- 18 This structure is built along the 1949 Green Line. Depending upon which point of view is taken, it is variously entitled: The Separation Barrier, The Separation Wall, and The Separation Fence.
- 19 Discussion with the artist in his studio in March 2014.
- 20 There were approximately 870,000 Jews in Arab lands who had lived in the region since before the rise of Islam. Due to Arab nationalism and the establishment of Israel, Jews in the Arab world experienced poverty and disenfranchisement. Consequently, over 37% of Jews in Islamic countries immigrated to Israel between May 1948 and the beginning of 1952, which amounted to 56% of total immigration to Israel during this period. By 1988, the ancient Jewish peoples in Arab lands had virtually disappeared. See: Malka Hillel Shulewitz, *Forgotten Millions: The Modern Jewish Exodus from Arab Lands*, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000; and Shindler, *A History of Modern Israel*, 63–64.
- 21 Ariane Littman, Email correspondence with author. January 1, 2016.
- 22 Littman left the studio to become a freelance news photographer from 2003 to 2007 in order to be able to move across borders, which is very difficult for a civilian to do.
- 23 Unpublished artist statement by Ariane Littman.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Littman, Email correspondence, January 1, 2016.
- 27 Ariane Littman, "Sea of Death, 2010" <http://ariane-littman.com/2010/07/sea-of-death-2010/>
- 28 Littman sees this performance as part of a body of works in which she explores what she views as "the existential deadlock of the conflict through absurd and Sisyphean acts of 'healing'" <http://ariane-littman.com/2011/07/the-olive-tree/?setsldercat=border-land>
- 29 Ibid. Littman decided to make the video a tribute to mothers on both sides of the wall; Ruth Wieder Magan and Salam Abu Amneh sing Ladino and Hassidic songs and Palestinian traditional songs respectively.
- 30 Littman, "The Spring, 2013" <http://ariane-littman.com/2013/06/the-spring/>
- 31 Tom Teicholz, "Israeli Artists of the Imagination Ori Raff and Nir Evron" *Huffpost Arts and Culture*, October 1, 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tom-teicholz/israeli-artists-of-the-im_b_5643086.html
- 32 This is not the first time that Raff has used repetition as a Sisyphean task in a video. In *Palindrome*, 2001, she continuously rolls a mound of felt inside an igloo. Lauri Firstenberg, "Down to Earth: Ori Raff Speaks with Lauri Firstenberg," *ArtPapers* (May/June 2005): 28–33. The artist writes about this video on her website. <http://oriraff.com/video-projects/sweating-sweet/>
- 33 While Raff was born in Israel and lives and works there, she spent nearly 10 years in the US studying art. Her biography, which includes European grandparents who successfully assimilated, also influences her point of view where she negotiates between the global and the local. Ibid.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Yair Barak, "Abdominal Syndrome – Thoughts on Ori Raff's *Sweating Sweet*," Essay on Vimeo site for *Sweating Sweet*. <https://vimeo.com/5575189>

Healing

2015, Installation at the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts and Towson University.
Includes: *Wounded Land: A Trilogy*, video; *Grafted Land* (map), 2015, metal table, pan,
paper, gauze, wax, red pigments, plaster, thread, hemostats, and scissors,
map: 47¼ in x 31¼ in (120 cm x 80 cm)
table: 46 in x 96 in (116¼ cm x 243¼ cm)
Courtesy of the Artist

[42]



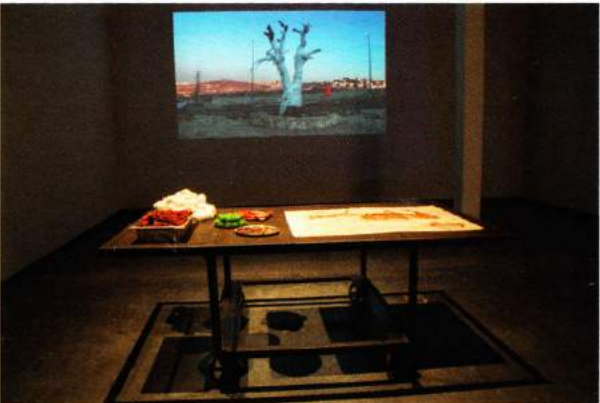
[43]



[44]



[45]



[39-41]
ARIANE LITTMAN
Wounded Land: A Trilogy

[39]
ARIANE LITTMAN

Sea of Death
 2010, video,
 9:20 minutes,
 Performed at the Dead Sea,
 Courtesy of the Artist



[40]
ARIANE LITTMAN

The Olive Tree
 2012, video,
 12:56 minutes,
 Performed at Hizma checkpoint, 2011,
 Courtesy of the Artist



[41]
ARIANE LITTMAN
The Spring
 2015, video,
 15:46 minutes,
 Performed at Lifta, 2013,
 Courtesy of the Artist

