

# T H I I R D

**Yishay Garbasz re-creates the route of her mother's footsteps during the Holocaust, based on her mother's typewritten life-story.**

Burdu'ja, Cristina. "Yishay Garbasz re=creates the route of her mother's footsteps during the Holocaust, based on her mother's typewritten life-story." *Thiiird Magazine*. June 18, 2017.

<http://thiiirdmagazine.co.uk/yishay-garbasz-interview-artist-uncovered/>

*Documented interview by Cristina Burdu'ja*

Yishay Garbasz (b. 1970) is a British-Israeli rooted artist, working and living in Berlin where she moved in 2005, 'when, as she describes it, there were no buildings like this, everything was dirty and everything was cheap and all the streets were full of dog-shit'. She lived so far in Taiwan, Thailand, Japan, Korea, Israel, America and England.

When finally 'In my Mother's Footsteps' was published (a project Garbasz worked on for nine years), it got nominated for the German Photobook Award. Sadly the project has never been shown in Germany. It has been shown in the Busan Biennale, in the Miami Art Fair, in Tokyo (few times), Seoul, Taiwan, Thailand, New York.

*'In my mother's footsteps' is not the story of my mother, it's the story of her daughter in her footsteps and it's a story about inheritance of post-traumatic memory, cause it's now my memory, my trauma and I have to take responsibility for it, says Yishay. Her mother died two weeks after seeing the book.'*



Cristina Burdu'ja

**Did you discover that this was harming you while you were working on the project or...**

Also before...I realized that everybody could remember their childhood and I just had swiss cheese around mine. That was when I realized that I have PTSD and that what's impetuous for the project is to see, to really see my mind. My mother had two role models growing up, abusers and abused. She chose abuser from two options she had available for her as a parent and that's how I grew up...and I can say that, but it took a long time to be able to say that and to understand that. We all deserve parents that love us, doesn't mean we get it. Doesn't mean we can't or shouldn't love them but it also doesn't mean that we shouldn't call out abuse when there is that.

**Do you refer to non-physical abuse?**

Yes, psychological abuse is much harder to discover because the abuser tries to shape the reality of the victim and it is really hard to hold on to what has happened.

**Especially when you're a child. So, did that help you remember?**

Yes, I was able to recover memories. When I came back from this journey, one of the gifts that I've got from it, was an increased capacity to love. It maybe sounds corny, but that's what happened. What was a smaller lake before, came back as a deep ocean. The inheritance of traumatic memory, because trauma is not actually inherited. Might be re-enacted but the memory is inherited because the patterns are repeated and you grow up with the patterns.

Footsteps 61



Footsteps 48

We have both selected the photographs from the book. Yishay asked me to pick the ones I like assuring me of great stories behind each one of them. You can imagine how tricky this was. I had a book of a life in my hands and a very intense being in front of me, snuggled under the blankets and noticing precisely my heartbeat. I always felt exposed with her, she gave me that space and from time to time would ask me 'Any other things you want me to ruin for you? I am really good at dark

morbid conversations. I'm awesome at that. You smile too much, I'll take care of that. ' followed by an explosively evil laughter. Beautiful!

Art gives you space to feel. Good art gives you space to feel, but it doesn't dictate what you feel. Good art changes with your mood, it has capacity for more than one thing, but it doesn't make you feel anything. The only way that art kind of tries to make you feel something specific is by showing you the mind of the artist and how inadequate they feel to themselves.

*'In my Mother's Footsteps'*

*[1st Photo (cover photo of the book)]*

*So this is Footsteps 48. This is actually three stories underground. This was in Christianstadt, largest munition manufacturing site of the 3rd reich. It's like 2,5 – 3 hours from Berlin. It's in Poland. You can't really tell that this is so deep. This is summer, I'm shivering cause this is so down it's actually cold, I'm wearing a jacket and shivering. This is an one hour exposure. I couldn't tell the colours because it was so dark and I didn't want to walk in because then you could see my footprints in the picture, so...I kind of...had a sense this is the right picture and I took it. You can see the things that are coming from the ceiling, that's because it is war concrete, it had a special added chemical to harden it against bombing. And with the time the water started to take from that chemical and make these little things.*

**I was wondering, cause it looks like a cave, stalactites.**

The stalactites are actually the chemical.



**Wow, it looks like sort of a chandelier, I felt the need to look closer as if 'what is that? What are these lights?**

After a while your eyes get used to the dark, you see this light kind of streaming and I was like: whoooooa, this looks so beautiful! (laughs) You kind of stand there in the dark, because you can't use any light, because that would ruin the picture and you just basically try to stand still not to disturb anything and you just wait (laughs). And it's very very scary (laughs) because it's dark and cold and has noises.

**Wow, sounds like a horror situation.**

It's a horrible camp, I mean they made bombs and they used slave labour to make the munitions and people died making them.

**Do you know what chemical was used?**

To make the concrete harder? No, I don't. But I know that it's referred to as 'war concrete' because of the added chemical.

**It looks cold, but this light makes it...it's a very contradictory feeling when I look at it. On one side you have all this concrete, all these pieces, like this gathering, you feel you're getting cold just by looking at it but then you look at this light...**

Pictures are magical. Just because they become so easy to do doesn't mean they are not magical. When you can take 10.000 pictures, it's one thing, but if you can only take one picture: what would you do for that one picture? Because you are there for that picture. It's not you're there anyway and take pictures, you're going to take a picture and you do whatever you have to to get that picture.

**It's quite interesting that you weren't seeing how it's going to happen but...**

No, but I felt it. I had a tiny flashlight and I didn't want to walk into it. So I just felt it. In the dark (laughing). In the cold dark.

**Sounds pleasurable.**



Footsteps 61

*[2nd photo (pre-last in the book)]*

*This is Footsteps 61. This is where my mother was taken after the allies rescued them from Bergen-Belsen. They transported them to the former SS quarters. My mother was hallucinating at the time, but she remembered one thing, tall windows. Talking with the historian of the camp we figured out that this is the only place that had tall windows that prisoners were taken to when they were just received from Bergen-Belsen. There were three locations, and this was the only one that had tall windows. After the war ended, this became the largest tank training ground in Western Europe and it's actually British soil so they have royal mail and everything.*

So this is where the German nurse cleaned my mother and kept repeating over and over 'We didn't know. You must believe us. We didn't know. I didn't know.' This is a really interesting point because this genocide is happening around you and you don't know. It is very relevant for us today, because there is horrible war in Syria, there is horrible war and famine all around the world and living here in Germany there's a lot of privileged people that have a comfortable life and really don't understand what's going on because of the limits of their comfort.

I mean, when you look at the political situation now in America, Donald Trump basically said things that are extreme, racist, misogynist, class...horrible in so many ways and you look at it and you have to compare it to Hitler. When Hitler was elected it was like 'oh, he would not do everything he says because ...you know...it's against the constitution, it's like too much' but no...he did that! I mean when somebody says 'I'm going to kill you' believe them, they are going to kill you. People don't just say it. Doesn't mean you should change your behaviour, but believe what people are telling you. And when Trump says he's gonna bomb the families of people he thinks are terrorists, I believe he will commit that war crime. When he's extreme vetting of Muslims and kicking out all the Muslims, I believe he's that racist. I believe he's that antisemitic. I believe he's that anti-black. I believe what he says. I think people should believe people when they say something. It saves time. And when people think that 'Oh my God, where did all of this, with Brexit also, where did this all come from?' It was always here. You were just too privileged to have to experience it. In my communities a daily war to survive is normal. Be thankful you are privileged and not had to experience that but it's there all the time.

**What is the language written here? (Showing to the right side of the photo)**

Arabic. This was used for briefing the British troops about to go to Iraq. This was during the invasion of Iraq, which still hasn't ended yet (laughs)...seriously, right? This was photographed in 2005 – 2006...ten years ago and we're still in that war. Ten years and we still haven't learned anything.



Ladder

*[3rd photo (ladder)]*

*That one is in Theresienstadt, the nazi show camp. The picture looks really clean, right? There's so much bird shit on the floor, but somehow the camera makes it all look clean.*

**So this is an attic, but it's quite like...what did you see here?**

It just worked. It is like it was correct. There is only one rule I know in photography, it has to work. This was really a very interesting time in this project because this was Passover and I was in the place where my family had their last Passover together as a family in this camp. So my mother, her sister and my grandparents.

**It's very interesting that you said it cause now I was thinking that the ladder is down, the distance is so small...it's like you see the access towards out, towards upstairs, to go to the roof, to go higher.**

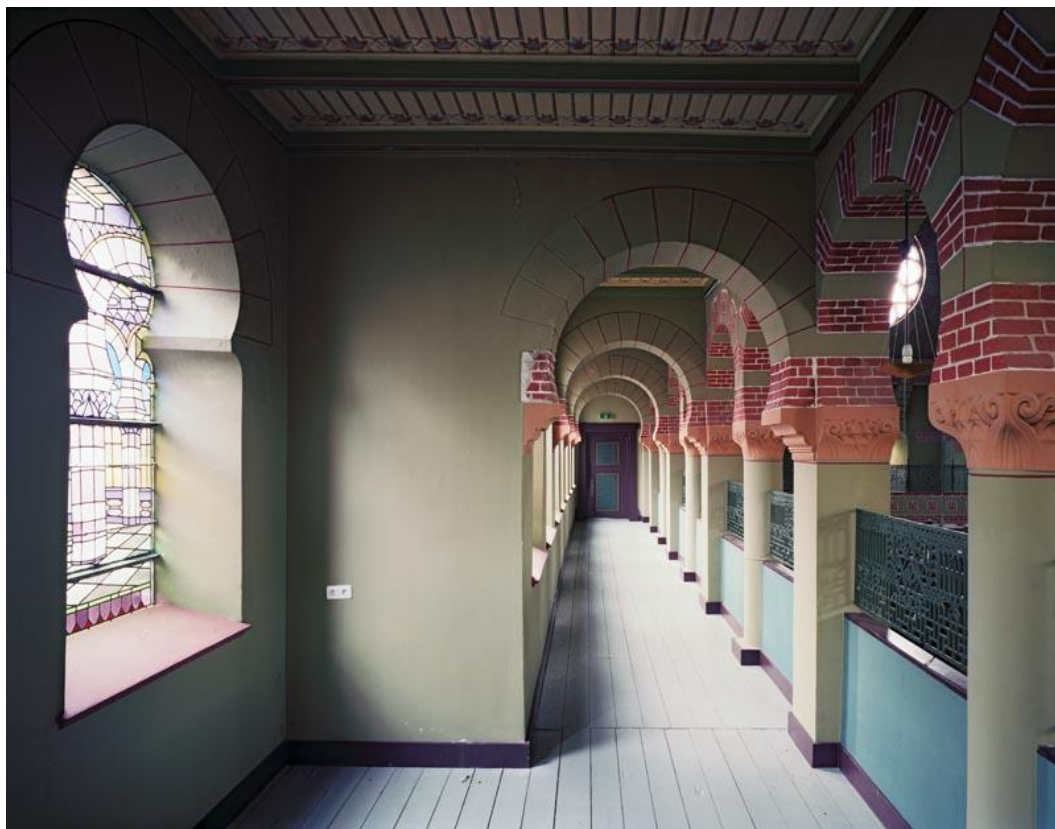
This was the last picture I took there, before I left. It was the end of the day. I was so tired, you know, I've worked the whole day. I was exhausted. Cause it's day after day and you're just sooo tired. And you're fighting your exhaustion and taking the picture because you've done it so many times over so many days, you're just struggling to keep going and all idea is that a good photograph is better, all of it is melted and you're pushing yourself to keep doing it and you're tired and that's a great interesting struggle.

**And then you get the feeling: ok, this was it.**

You're too tired. You don't get a...you just keep doing.

**Yeah, but there is a sense of completion.**

Yeah, that's months before the project ends you get a sense that you know how to start it, that's the sense of completion.



*[4th photo (synagogue)]*

*This is the women section in the synagogue. In orthodox Judaism the women are separated from the men and this is the women section in the synagogue. My mother and her two sisters are almost one percent of the survivors. There were over 120.000 Jews in Holland before the nazis, 5000 after. It's because of the great bureaucracy. Cause everything was written and registered, so when the Nazis came the Dutch turned over the archives and the Nazis could find all the Jews.*

**Fuck.**

Fuck.

**Why didn't they burn them down?**

There was one archive that was burned down in Amsterdam, but most weren't. Well...but this is a great question. This is a question to ask now in America. Cause if we look at America, you know...with immigrants, with trans people, from January it's going to be so much harder on everybody that's marginalized. Trump says he's gonna deport, he's gonna deport to the country of origin. So he's gonna be deporting people that have escaped...America should be looking at compensating the Native Americans for the largest genocide in history, right? But nobody talks about that. I'm thinking of what's gonna happen to refugees, 3000 refugees or fewer who made it, they gonna deport them to the country of origin which means that they're gonna be killed. It's morally repugnant. Trans people will not be able to change their passports or ID documents. I mean, they're in the most amount of risk because with the bathroom laws in America and repealing the LGBT protections that Trump promised, trans people are not going to be able to go to bathrooms. We're not joking about this. With the fines and the jail time, trans people are excluded from society. They're already not included that much but he's gonna kill them off. Muslims, I mean...they're gonna round up Muslims, that's what Trump says he's gonna do. I believe him.

### **The bad stuff at least...**

The stuff that's gonna inflame feelings expect him to deliver. He's gonna double-down on hatred and racism cause that's the easiest thing for him to do. Fixing economy and stuff, that's not gonna happen. Especially not with isolationism. But, the thing that he can double-down on is the hate. That's the easiest thing. We have example of how stuff works. You find your dissidents, you jail them and kill them. You find these others that are the cause of all your evil. That's what happened with Jews, they were the cause of all evil and all the hatred was towards them instead of working together in an un-glamorous way to make everybody's life better. You find the other that's the enemy and generate the hate towards them, while the rich are getting richer and the poor and getting poorer. Black communities are more and more precarious. There was a black American president and yet, black Americans are still killed outside the law by the police without repercussions. How does that work? Somebody should explain that to me.



None of Yishay's many holocaust-related works that received international exposure and acclaim were exhibited in Germany. She is a resident of this country for more than 8 years.

This is a subject of great frustration for me.

I am really thankful for the opportunity to interview this great woman. She is a true listener and a profound teacher of life. She laughed at me any chance she got:

You never get the answers you want. You want the easy way. I can show you but I can not tell you.

You can find more of Yishay's works here:

<http://www.yishay.com/>

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# T H I I R D

## On the Inheritance of Post-Traumatic Memory

Yishay Garbasz re-creates the route of her mother's footsteps during the Holocaust based on her mother's typewritten life-story

*Documented interview by Cristina Burdu'ja*

Burdu'ja, Cristina. "On the Inheritance of Post-Traumatic Memory." *Thiird Magazine*, March 2017.

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**Cristina Burdu'ja**

*When she died, I didn't feel certain loss, because I felt like stuff has been transmitted and she understood, at least that's my impression, that she understood why I did it and that things were safe with me and also that they were not harming me the way they harmed her anymore.*

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## **The Unsightly and the Unseen: Yishay Garbasz at Home at the Border**

By: Jeffrey Shandler

Photographer and installation artist Yishay Garbasz is drawn to borders—the lines between states, the frontiers of gender, and the limits of memory. She approaches borders sometimes to scrutinize them, other times to test them or to flout them, as revealed in *Severed Connections: Do what I say or they will kill you*, her most recent solo exhibition at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts in New York in 2015. To create the work on view in this installation, Garbasz, who lives in Berlin, traveled with her camera to the “demilitarized zone” (DMZ) that has divided the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (i.e., North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) since 1953, the “peace lines” that have partitioned parts of Belfast, Northern Ireland, into Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods starting in 1969, and the “separation fence” begun in 2002 by the State of Israel in order to constrain the movement of Palestinians living under occupation in the West Bank. Each border has its own geography and history, as well as a distinct physical form that restricts the contact between different populations. At the same time, there is a troubling similarity to these boundaries. Beyond the physical unsightliness with which they intrude upon rural or urban landscapes, there is the unseen political malice that these borders materialize between peoples who, separated in the name of peace or security, regard each other as dangerous enemies. In addition, these borders carry a greater symbolic weight, as reminders of other boundaries around the world, past and present, designed to keep peoples apart.

Shandler, Jeffery. “*The Unsightly and the Unseen: Yishay Garbasz at Home at the Border.*” Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences.

<http://irw.rutgers.edu/rejoinder-webjournal/borders-bodies-homes/289-the-unsightly-and-the-unseen-yishay-garbasz-at-home-at-the-border>



*Yishay Garbasz, Har Homa, Israel/Palestine, 2004.*

© Yishay Garbasz, courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Art and the artist.

Garbasz approached photographing these borders by transgressing them, both physically and aesthetically. To begin with, she ventured into places that people are supposed to avoid, so that she could photograph sites meant to be kept out of sight or, when that proves impossible, simply ignored. Moreover, her images can be surprisingly picturesque, given the subject at hand, with bright blue skies, verdant fields, and smiling faces. In some of these photographs, the border's disruption is self-evident, as loops of razor wire, chain-link fences, or concrete barriers slash across an otherwise pleasant vista. In other images, the border's presence is more discreet—a wooden wall at the far end of a street lined with tidy, modest houses in a Catholic neighborhood of Belfast; the broken “dragon’s teeth” of an underwater defense barrier jutting out of a placid sea off South Korea’s Baengnyeong Island, close to the country’s Northern Limit Line.





*Yishay Garbasz, Kirk Crescent, Protestant neighborhood, Belfast, 2014.*

© Yishay Garbasz, courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Art and the artist.

Central to the power of these images is what is *not* seen—an irony, perhaps, for photographs of these places. Even the more manifestly unsightly images displayed in *Severed Connections* are remote from brutal pictures of war or terrorism, including photojournalists' documentation of the conflicts that preceded the creation of these boundaries. But the uneasy aftermath of violence is precisely Garbasz's subject. She is not the only photographer to address it; others who have produced photo essays on these sites include Ed Kashi, on Northern Ireland (1991) and Josef Koudelka, on Israel/Palestine (2013). But Garbasz's images are distinguished by their uncanny beauty and their paradoxical focus on the border between the seen and the unseen. She has sought out ways to photograph precisely that which, in the wake of hostile attacks, is avoided, suppressed, blocked from view, or buried underground. What, we are left to wonder, lurks beyond those concrete barriers and wire fences that is so forbidding as to be off bounds? And what does it mean to live with such a boundary—to have it loom over one's home, as in Belfast, or to have one's mobility hampered by it on a daily basis, as is the case for Palestinians living in the West Bank, or to make one's livelihood at its perilous threshold, as South Koreans do, growing rice and harvesting oysters alongside the DMZ?



*Yishay Garbasz, Seagull migration across mine field near Sabajawi Rock, north shore of Baengnyeongdo, South Korea, 2014. © Yishay Garbasz, courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Art and the artist.*

Garbasz's approach to the photographs displayed in *Severed Connections* builds on her earlier work. The connection is most readily evident with her photographs of the Fukushima Nuclear Exclusion Zone, taken in 2013, which document sites rendered uninhabitable by the accident at the Japanese town's nuclear plant two years earlier. In these images a calm, orderly world—a tidy house, a lush golf course, a spotless hospital interior—is haunted by the unseen, both the absence of inhabitants and the implicit presence of an invisible contaminant.





*Yishay Garbasz, Fukushima Prefectural Ono Hospital in the Nuclear Exclusion Zone, 2014.*

© Yishay Garbasz, courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Art and the artist.

The photographs that Garbasz took in 1984 for *In My Mother's Footsteps* (Garbasz 2009), have a similar serenity and eerie elegance that diverge sharply from this project's subject: retracing the experiences of the artist's mother, a Holocaust survivor, from her childhood in Germany and the Netherlands during the 1930s through her wartime imprisonment in Westerbork, Terezín, Auschwitz, Christianstadt, and Bergen-Belsen.



*Yishay Garbasz, Christianstadt, 1984.*

© Yishay Garbasz, courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Art and the artist.

These images contrast a benign present with the unseen horrors of the past, the disparity conveyed by juxtaposing Garbasz's photographs with excerpts from her mother's memoir of the war years. The images shown in *Severed Connections* similarly evoke past violence, but they also raise the specter of an uncertain future: What would it take for these barriers to come down? And if that eventually does occur, what might happen then?

While her probing of political borders has taken Garbasz to places far from home, she has also tested other boundaries—the thresholds of memory and the perimeters of gender—at close range, on her own body. For her *Numbers Project*, an artwork initiated in 2011, Garbasz branded her forearm with the number that had been tattooed on her mother as a prisoner in Auschwitz. Instead of injecting a permanent dye into the skin, the artist uses heated wire “brands” in the shape of numbers and letters to burn them onto the surface of her arm. Even as this action brings the artist close to an embodiment of her mother's wartime experience, branding produces a different mark. Wishing not to appropriate her mother's prisoner number but to recontextualize it, Garbasz explains that she chose branding in order to produce an image that was visually distinct from a tattoo and thereby provide a different experience of receiving and wearing the number, until it disappeared. Unlike her mother's tattoo, the number inscribed on Garbasz's arm eventually healed and faded from sight, emblematic of the distinction between the artist's vicarious remembrance of her mother's experience and her mother's own memories. As Garbasz's brand disappears, the border between these two kinds of memory is exposed.



*Yishay Garbasz, Branding, 2011.*

© Yishay Garbasz, courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Art and the artist.

Garbasz offers an even more personal—and provocative—scrutiny of the borders of gender in *Becoming*. For this project, the artist photographed her naked body, standing before a white background in the same posture, every week for a two-year period in 2008–2010, during which she underwent hormone treatment and surgery as she transitioned from male to female. Flouting the discomfort that some observers might feel when confronting such a forthright exposure of gender transition, Garbasz has presented selections of these photographs in two decidedly ludic formats: a small flipbook (published in 2010) and a large-scale zoetrope (in an installation at the 2010 Busan Biennale in Korea).



*Yishay Garbasz, Becoming zoetrope, Busan, 2010.*

© Yishay Garbasz, courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Art and the artist.

Both presentations animate the still images in ways that evoke the process of transition; Garbasz's body appears in a constant state of change. With *Becoming*, the artist uses



photography toward an end that complements her other projects. Rather than asking viewers to consider what is not readily visible in the images, she uses explicit exposure to demystify gender transition and replaces anxieties about crossing the border between male and female with playfulness.



*Yishay Garbasz, Severed Connections installation, Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York, 2015*

© Yishay Garbasz, courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Art and the artist.

Visitors to the gallery warily skirted this imminent danger as they examined the large prints of Garbasz's photographs and listened to audio recordings of her accounts of visiting South Korea, Belfast, and Israel/Palestine, where she sometimes encountered her own brushes with danger at the border.

As *Severed Connections* prompts us to ponder what lies beyond the unsightly fences and walls that establish these borders, Garbasz compels us to contemplate a larger unseen: the hatred and fear, the danger, whether real or imagined, that we all live with, that has been pushed out of view, lurking somewhere behind a boundary. As the range of the artist's work further reveals, these borders not only cut across political and geographical landscapes; they also bisect the complexities of human sexuality and mark the limits of generations and their transmission of memory. How might humankind overcome these barriers and, moreover, the animosities and anxieties that they embody? That remains to be seen.

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# The Disfactor

Staff. *"Yishay Garbasz identity, agency, human rights and the construction of gender."* The Disfactor. March 18 2017.

<http://thedisfactor.blogspot.de/2017/03/yishay-garbasz-identity-agency-human.html>

Saturday, March 18, 2017

## Yishay Garbasz identity, agency, human rights, and the construction of gender



"Right or wrong -- you must step out of the way and allow the picture to enter the camera," a trans lesbian woman of British-Israeli descent; Garbasz is a Berlin-based visual artist born in the 1970's. Garbasz studied photography at Bard College in New York. [Garbasz's work](#) delves deeply into sociopolitical issues of: identity, agency, human rights, and the construction of gender. Her latest show a solo exhibition "Severed Connection: Do what I say or they will kill you" appeared at the Ronald Feldman Gallery where it ran from May 9 - June 13 in NYC, which chronicles three sites of hot conflict and resounding trauma produced by fear of the other.

In an interview with Tobaron Waxman on March 3, 2013 Yishay was quoted as saying "I'm an artist; not a trans-artist, or a Jewish artist, just an artist. A lot of people struggle with gender as something that shapes their lives. There's a lot more to life than gender. If not for the socially enforced constraints upon gender, we would have much richer lives as people. The full interview can be accessed at [Pretty Queer](#) . Tobaron's interview provides the reader with a perspective of both Yishay's educational background, life philosophy and various images and names of her numerous photo installations. What I surmise from Yishay's interview with Tobaron is that her main concern is not her identity as a transwoman, but as a woman. It is Yishay's aducity to experience her own human existence as a woman without her society's permission that brings her into conflict with society.

When individuals refuse to live within the legal constraints that society has laid out for them as individuals without breaking the law, they threaten society's belief that it naturally possesses power over them; thus, forcing society to recognize its inherent power over disparate individuals exist only because those individuals have given their society permission to possess power over them. Unfortunately, society is composed of aggregates of individuals that choose to deal with their own personal issues "whatever they may be" by projecting those issues on to others instead of working through them in a mature fashion.

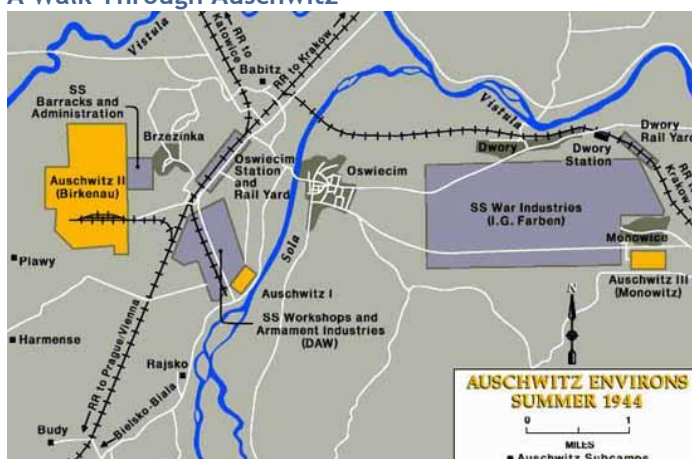


Jews in the Warsaw ghetto. (1941). (Photo courtesy of the USHMM)

An individual's inability to resolve their own issues may cause so much tension within them that they may need to project their issues onto others and deal with those others in ways that they refuse to deal with themselves in order to alleviate the tension that they've allowed to build up within them, or their inner tension may be increased by witnessing aspects of those issues they're unable to work through within others even if those others or the individuals themselves are unaware of it. This phenomenon is known as projective identification. Why is this an important phenomenon in explaining why Garbasz's existence as a transwoman is threatening to her society or responsible for her work. This phenomenon would come under internalized self-hatred or severe rejection of the self; the individual is unable to live with aspects of themselves that they believe, consciously or unconsciously, make them undesirable to others or decrease their chances for survival either as an individual or a group including powerlessness; a trait that is often associated with that which is considered "other" and prone to various forms of socially sanctioned retribution or scapegoating.

In two subsequent projects, Garbasz documented the path of her mother's path to a Nazi extermination camp, counting the number of steps and photographing her progress periodically, and branded her arm with her mother's prison camp identification number. These numbers constitute abstracted markers of real-world experiences that Garbasz translates back into materiality through her performances and documentary photographs. Yishay's work involving the intersection of: race, gender, sexuality and class could be viewed as her attempt to positively deal with the residue of inter-generational trauma present within her own family which would be considered [transgenerational PTSD](#).

### A Walk Through Auschwitz





According to non fiction writer and journalist Robin Rowland in his March 16, 2014 article "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and the children of veterans" it is possible that the psychological and emotional trauma experienced by Yishay's mother could have been transmitted to Yishay and other family members. It would be possible to view Yishay's work as self directed occupational therapy utilized to aid her in dealing with unintentional psychological and emotional wounding inflicted upon her by her mother who was born in Berlin. Yishay's mother escaped from the Nazis to Holland where she deported to Westerbork, then to Theresienstadt through [Auschwitz-Birkenau](#); after arriving in Christianstadt she marched to Bergen-Belsen, where she was liberated by British forces.

Despite Yishay's apperance as a white female, she is considered "other" due to her being a transwoman and a person of Jewish descent. However, what is important to note in her description of other is that her family history also posits her as being "other" due to her possession of an immediate family history that few of us would be able to relate too. Thus, Yishay's identity and family history demonstrates that "otherness" may be based on dissimilarities between people other then race/skin color or gender. Perhaps that is why her personal experience and family history as "other" makes her well suited to document issues of sociopolitical issues of: identity, agency, human rights, and the construction of gender.

According to [Wikipedia](#) Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights in Germany evolved significantly between 2000 and 2017. During the 1920s, Because LGBT people in Berlin were generally tolerated by society many bars and clubs pertaining to gay men were opened.[2] Sexual activity between men was made illegal under Paragraph 175 by the German Empire in 1871, Nazi Germany extended these laws during World War II, which resulted in the persecution and deaths of thousands of homosexual citizens. These extensions were repealed in 1950 and sexual activity between men was decriminalized in both East and West Germany in 1968 and 1969. The age of consent was equalized in unified Germany in 1994.

Registered partnerships which provide most of the same rights as opposite-sex married couples for same-sex couples have been legal in Germany since 2001,. Same-sex step adoption has also been legal since 2005 and was expanded in 2013 to allow someone in a same-sex relationship to adopt a child already adopted by their partner;[3] however, joint adoption has not yet been legislated.

Discrimination protections on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity vary across Germany, but discrimination in employment, and provision of goods and services is banned nationally. Transgenders have been allowed to change their legal gender since 1980. The law initially required them to undergo surgical alteration of their genitals in order to have key identity documents changed. This has been declared unconstitutional.[4] Germany is the first country in Europe to enact a law that allows German citizens to assign intersex infants as neither male or female on their birth certificate.[5]

Despite two of the three political parties in the German Government being socially conservative on the issues of LGBT rights, Germany has frequently been seen as one of the most gay friendly countries in the world.[6][7] Recent polls have indicated that a majority of Germans support same-sex marriage.[8][9] Another poll in 2013 indicated that 87% of Germans viewed that homosexuality should be accepted by society, which was the second highest in the world (only 39 countries were polled) following Spain (88%).[10] Berlin has been referred to by publications as one of the most gay friendly cities in the world.[11] The former mayor of Berlin, Klaus Wowereit, is one of the most famous openly gay men in Germany, next to the former mayor of Hamburg, Ole von Beust, the Secretary of State of Finances, Jens Spahn, the deceased former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Guido Westerwelle and comedian Hape Kerkeling.

# SHIFT

Coles, Alex Hiroki. "The long story of the contacts of "the other side."" *Shift*, February 26, 2016.

<http://www.shift.jp.org/en/archives/2016/02/yishay-garbasz-the-other-side.html>

## THE LONG STORY OF THE CONTACTS OF "THE OTHER SIDE"

HAPPENING 2016.2.26 Text: Alex Hiroki Coles

"The Long Story of the Contacts of 'the Other Side'" by a Berlin-based photographer born in Israel Yishay Garbasz focuses on suffering and trauma in areas of conflict. These were of photographs taken from three separate locations: the South/North Korea border, the West Bank and Northern Ireland. These were all areas that were divided through physical barriers due to high levels of conflict in the regions. This was displayed in the photographs which showed the walls and fences used to separate the regions.



Yishay Garbasz "Tunnel Road 2", 2004, c-print, Exhibition: The long story of the contacts of "the other side", Baexong Arts Kyoto

The photographs documents the other side of the barrier, looking across the border and documenting how the region has become divided through conflict. One of the photographs also showed the people

living near to the border of South Korea, documenting the life for these people, with many being elderly farmers, living in poverty and struggling to survive.



Yishay Garbasz "Huwara checkpoint", 2004, c-print, Exhibition: The long story of the contacts of "the other side", Baexong Arts Kyoto

As you go upstairs the exhibition continues with similar photographs in these areas. Most notably in the center of the room, where several large prints of the region in South Korea are taken from, with one focusing on the bomb shelter and the area directly next to the border to North Korea looking out to the sea.



Yishay Garbasz "Modin' Illit", 2004, c-print, Exhibition: The long story of the contacts of "the other side", Baexong Arts Kyoto

"In My Mother's Footsteps: Journey Through the Landscape of One survivor's Holocaust" was another series by Garbazz. This focused on a more personal level for the photographer, documenting her mother's experience and struggles as a Holocaust survivor. Although it was not part of this exhibition, the images were displayed in a book in the exhibition.



Yishay Garbasz "Seagull migration", 2014, single-channel video, Hani Beach (Baengnyeongdo),

Exhibition: The long story of the contacts of "the other side", Baexong Arts Kyoto

The photos in the exhibition has a deep and powerful meaning behind them, exploring the impact of conflict and the suffering and the trauma it causes to the people and landscape.

**The long story of the contacts of "the other side"**

Date: January 15th – February 28th, 2016

Opening hours: 12:00 – 19:00 (Closed on Tuesday – Thursday)

Workshop: February 27th, 14:00 – 16:00

Place: Baexong Arts Kyoto

Address: 27-3, Nakafudatsuji-cho, Higashikujo, Minami-ku, Kyoto

Tel: +81(0)50 5857 8454

<http://baexong.net>

Text: Alex Hiroki Coles

*KYOTO*

# TEMPORALITY OF TRAUMAS: YISHAY GARBASZ'S TIME DRAG THROUGH IMAGES

Posted by m-est editor on March 22, 2016

**Göksu Kunak**

In the aftermath of disasters, time exists in several temporalities—as a decaying façade or as a piece of rusting steel. Not only buildings but also traumatized bodies experience the same thing by being transformed into ruins. After all, bodies, objects, and spaces all carry traumas, which resonate in muscles, cells, and DNAs, as well as in concrete, wood, abandoned houses, and schools.

Artist Yishay Garbasz has been coping with trauma and its effects in time as a result of personal discoveries. Yet no violence or sadness can be observed in the first encounter with the artist's work. The photographer's first book *Becoming* (2010) is a flipbook—exhibited as a life-size zoetrope—, documenting her own transformation throughout 28 weeks when she underwent sex change. In a conversation with Sunaura Taylor, Judith Butler mentions a young man who was killed because of his distinct swish: hips moving side to side. [1] The subject generated by power has to perform in a certain way; a basic act such as walking may create danger for the heteronormative society. In *Becoming*, Garbasz stands passively—however, the transformation of a body raises the problematic of classification of sexes. This passive body raises the question: what does a body aim to say? [2] As Butler points out in the same conversation: "If one doesn't have recognition for one's gender presentation or one's gender identification, then there's a certain kind of suffering." As a resistance to normalization, inevitably, Garbasz alludes to various types of traumas generated in the process of subjectification of power.

When I met Garbasz the first time, she was working on her upcoming photo book *Ritual and Reality*. I was asked to record her words and transcribe them. Garbasz is dyslexic and she learned how to write at a later age, in college. That might be one of the reasons why the artist decided to use photography instead of words and create books with images. For the second book, Garbasz approached another traumatic experience: her own family history to discover missing links of her past, as she knew nothing about her grandparents—she had been rarely exposed to their past or identity. Garbasz's father, in his deathbed, asked his wife Salla to write about her life story. The narrative in the memoir delineates Salla's childhood in Germany and the Netherlands during the 1930s and her subsequent imprisonment in Westerbork, Terezin, Auschwitz, Christianstadt, and Bergen-Belsen, which



encouraged Garbasz, along with a large format camera, to go embark on a journey. As a sort of therapy to overcome the inherited trauma, Garbasz visited the places Salla mentions in her memoir and looked for energies and traces of her mother. Only two weeks before Salla's death in Israel, the artist published her book *In My Mother's Footsteps* (2009).



Yishay Garbasz, *In My Mother's Footsteps*, 2009. Courtesy of the artist and the Ronald Feldman Fine Art, NY.

Turning the pages of Garbasz's book, I observe an uncanny silence in the images. I read the excerpts of Salla's memoir accompanying the images and ponder on what is not apparent in the text and the images: What kind of violence had happened? The road Salla walked during the death march, captured in the photo *Marinebad 2005*, is now part of a calm and sleek, white European city. Abandoned places, such as the underground concentration camp in the photo *Christianstadt 2005*, are reminiscent of dystopic sci-fi movies, particularly the zone in Tarkovsky's *Stalker*, where the characters of the film travel to the savage places by following a belief to find the place that will fulfill the innermost desires.

Contemplating on pain and traumas, I recall Georges Bataille's meditation technique by looking at a photograph of a Chinese torture scene: "I didn't choose God as an object of my



meditations, but, humanly, a young Chinese. . . shown in photos as covered with blood while the executioner tortures him. I was connected to this unhappy being in ties of horror and friendship.” [3] In the terrifying images, bodies are hung alive and the limbs are cut in a ceremony. Here, the violence is crystal clear, unlike in Garbasz’s images. Bataille believes that an image of pain has the capacity to communicate with a certain past and connect with the victim. In the encounter with an image, we have the tendency to drag that moment into our now—that is how we find meaning. At odds with such an approach, by looking at the image for a long duration, Bataille meditates to feel the moment of what we call a violent act. In a similar fashion, Garbasz looks for traces of Salla’s past, whether on Linienstrasse of Berlin—her birthplace in 1929—or in a random garden where the ashes of the artist’s grandparents remain scattered, which becomes a tool for her to embrace her own fears. Reminiscent of Bataille’s meditation, Garbasz’s journey allows her to overcome such fears and connect to her mother’s victimization and sadness. The artist channels a time: “My mother had lost parts of her soul in those places and I needed to return to each one to collect them.” [4] This is how her journey turns into a long duration performance where she documents places by following the order of Salla’s memoir and rewrites a story through images, years after its existence. By choosing to take a bulky camera, the artist “forces herself to slow down.” [5] The journey is not only about going back to a certain place and documenting, moreover to experience every step with a certain awareness. The photos depicting dusty rooftops or remains of a barrack intervene and excavate a past that is about to disappear throughout the years.



Yishay Garbasz, Abandoned home and car, Kumagawa, Okuma-machi, Futaba, Fukushima Nuclear Exclusion Zone (Ritual and Reality series), 2014. Courtesy of the artist and the Ronald Feldman Fine Art, NY.

Garbasz's upcoming book, *Ritual and Reality*, depicts the life in Japan after the Fukushima disaster. In her studio, the photographs she took in Japan were hung all over the place—images of damaged houses, industrial areas, a golf driving range, a hospital, and a pile of objects in an empty field. Similar to *In My Mother's Footsteps*, there is no one around in these images and the narration resembles a memoir. In a disturbingly white hospital waiting room, white blankets are scattered around, hospital beds are aligned, and some medical materials in boxes are placed in an order—probably the expiration date is already over. An eerie feeling lingers in the air. A car is parked near a cute blue house. And nature takes over: There are wild plants in a small garden or bushes in a golf area, instead of perfectly cut grasses.

### Storytelling and Portraying Ruins

Is it possible to portray disasters and their aftermaths through photography without exploiting the condition of survivors or serving neoliberal markets? In *Making sense of disaster: the cultural studies of disaster*, researchers Peer Illner and Isak Winkel Holm

analyze how disasters change the social from the perspective of cultural studies. The writers point out the tendency “to view of the aesthetics of a disaster as a kind of ‘anaesthesia’, a harmful way of being unaware of the social production of disaster.” [6] Illner and Holm emphasize what they name as “emergency regime” and governance around the social production of disasters. Writing novels, composing music or making movies also have the potential to create a common sensibility and “determine what we see and how we act in a world ravaged by disaster at an ever-increasing rate.”



Yishay Garbasz, Fire drill ritual, Tokyo International Forum, Tokyo (Ritual and Reality series), 2014. Courtesy of the artist and the Ronald Feldman Fine Art, NY.

At first glance, Garbasz’s imagery calls to mind the idea of ruin porn. [7] The fact that the images don’t show any people around arouses a similar feeling of visiting an urban decay. Examples of ruin porn or ruins photography beautify contemporary archeological sites: untamed and savage buildings commemorate a certain story and generate excitement. Therefore, post-apocalyptic imagination that is fantasied in ruin porn has the potential to transform itself into tourism or a boom in the market of national flags as in the cases of Chernobyl and 9/11—the neoliberal tendency of turning any kind of material, even traumas, into a market value. How artists and writers inscribe ruins and traumas may lead to an



upper class market's aesthetics or, on the contrary, provide a core for healing. In that manner, where does Yishay Garbasz's series *Ritual and Reality* stand?

Fukushima has been a well-known name since 2011. It immediately recalls the largest nuclear disaster since the Chernobyl disaster of 1986. Despite the numbers that the authorities provide in regard to the level of radioactivity and health problems in the region, Garbasz's observations introduce us to the aftermath of a disaster in everyday lives that is being kept as secret by the authorities. In *Ritual and Reality*, each image has a caption that gives information about the place through Garbasz's observations, which is reminiscent of *In My Mother's Footsteps*. These lines are crucial to perceive her images. Even their titles are explanatory of situations that are taken place in the region. In her studio, following the same order with the book, the photographer recalls her journey along with a Geiger counter and a hazmat suit to wander around the streets of Takaku, Oto, Ishinomaki, Tokio various prefectures around... She photographed the reactor and learned more about how TEPCO and the authorities disregard the dangers of radioactivity and the unbearable life of evacuees and factory workers.



Yishay Garbasz, Greenhouse for ornamental growing, Rte 256, Harada, Okuma-machi, Futaba, Fukushima Nuclear Exclusion Zone (*Ritual and Reality* series), 2014. Courtesy of the artist and the Ronald Feldman Fine Art, NY.

Photographs from kasetsus—the Japanese word for temporary dorm-like accommodations—for evacuees of Fukushima illustrate the loneliness and emptiness of souls after a man-made disaster. In the photo *No. 2 Takaku Kasetsu (temporary evacuee dorm) in Chuodai, Iwaki City, Iwaki* (2013), few pots with colorful flowers alongside the gray blocks of containers installed repetitively remind the urge of beautification, our rituals to turn a space into a personal place. Survivors want to take their lives back into their hands, despite big Geiger counters on the streets—as in the photo *Permanent radiation counter at Kumamachi elementary school, Okuma Kumagawa, Okuma-machi, Furaba, Fukushima Nuclear Exclusion Zone* (2013). Luckily, not long ago, some could return to their hometowns with memories of the loss. The damages of flood that took away their loved ones are still discerned on buildings and powerful enough to prompt personal (her/his)stories. Wallpapers are torn, exterior and interior wall materials are torn apart or bent and roof structures are corroded—as in the image *2 Chome-9-11 Chūō Ishinomaki-shi, Miyagi-ken*. In another photo, we see a pile of some material and big brown bags reminiscent of a military zone. The title is: *Storage of nuclear contaminated materials, Route 6, Fukushima (former Exclusion Zone opened in April 2013)* (2013). Stories are crucial to truly interpret the photographer's intention in the images. Just by looking at them, we might not be capable of telling what they are. However, once one pays close attention to the title, say, the story behind, Garbasz's images are altered.

On the one hand, demolished hospitals exist as memorials, where people still work in radioactive areas. On the other hand, in another photo of Garbasz from Tokyo, a few kilometers away, there is a Prada store with the best air-conditioning system: chic, glittering, all in extremes. Life continues in another town, where workers are in hazmat suits. Garbasz mentions the hours she spent there, while taking photos with such an outfit. It was hard to drink water or pee—basic acts of a functioning body. In one photo, we see Nuclear Café, where water is no more boiled for tea. In another, there is a sign: “Bright future with nuclear energy” (*Futaba, Fukushima Nuclear Exclusion Zone*, 2013). A longing for better future, the thirst of speed, and energy of capitalism keep ignoring the danger and eliminate the existence of survivors. Their bodies have no representation and significance anymore, unless they're workers of energy.





Yishay Garbasz, *In My Mother's Footsteps*, 2009. Courtesy of the artist and the Ronald Feldman Fine Art, NY.

Considering the trauma as an organic entity, more than just aestheticizing a ruin, the artist's dawdling journey depicts a post-trauma—reminiscent of the photos of Salla's past. As mentioned before, Garbasz's images might not tell much to the audience without a narrative and one might interpret this as a weakness. However, instead of words, Garbasz uses photography as a medium of storytelling. Reminiscent of a stone in an archeological site or, say, a concrete building in an abandoned city, traumas are decaying bodies that have the capacity to metamorphose according to the needs of the day. The memory of traumas puts one in a dilapidated condition; its existence depends on yours. Part of the body resonates a past—undergoes the traumatic experience repetitively, whereas the other part continues to experience a now. Yet, recalling requiems of various cultures, story telling could function as a remedy. Similarly, whether personal like *In My Mother's Footsteps* or collective as in *Ritual and Reality*, Garbasz urges to create books and writes short stories of/with images, while traumas keep residing in bodies like a parasite.

#### Endnotes:

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### ***Edited by Özge Ersoy***

*Göksu Kunak is a writer based in Berlin. They received a BA degree in Interior Architecture and Environmental Design from Bilkent University. Before Berlin, they worked as a Research and Teaching Assistant in the Department of Art History at Hacettepe University where they has their MA as well. Besides working as an editorial correspondent for Ibraaz and in the editorial team of quarterly interview magazine mono.kultur, Göksu has been contributing to several magazines and blogs such as frieze d/e, Ibraaz, Paper Journal, Freunde von Freunden, Berlin Art Link, sleek, e-skop, crap=good, Istanbul'74. Between 2012-2014, they has worked as a writer and project developer as a part of Apartment Project Berlin. They will start their PhD soon on queer chronopolitics in relation to performance art and contemporary dance. Göksu's short stories and poems can be read at the literary blog [leopardskinandlimes](#) and [goksukunak.tumblr.com](#).*

*Yishay Garbasz finds significance in numbers, often using them to frame aspects of her personal history, memory, and imagination. Garbasz, who also is transgender, previously explored issues of identity during her sexual reassignment surgery, documenting her body in the process. "I'm a very tactile and kinesthetic thinker, this is how I enter things, I enter the world through a very personal space, through my heart." She is the author of *Becoming: A Gender Flipbook* and *In My Mother's Footsteps*, in which she documented the path of her mother's path to a Nazi extermination camp, counting the number of steps and photographing her progress periodically, and branded her arm with her mother's prison camp identification number. These numbers constitute abstracted markers of real-world experiences that Garbasz translates back into materiality through her performances and documentary photographs.*





Staff. "【The long story of the contacts of "the other side"】at ベクソン・アーツ・京都." *Kansai Art Beat*, February 17, 2016.  
<https://www.facebook.com/KansaiArtBeat/posts/566949580126096>

2/17/2016

【The long story of the contacts of "the other side"】at ベクソン・アーツ・京都

心地よく光が差し込む築78年の和風建築にイシャイ・ガルバシュ氏の「壁」をテーマにした、ひととき美しいその写真群は飾られていました。

青空の下、生い繁るみずみずしい緑、草刈りの休憩をしながらカメラに向かって微笑む住人達、ポップな鶴のオブジェが置かれた記念撮影用の場所...

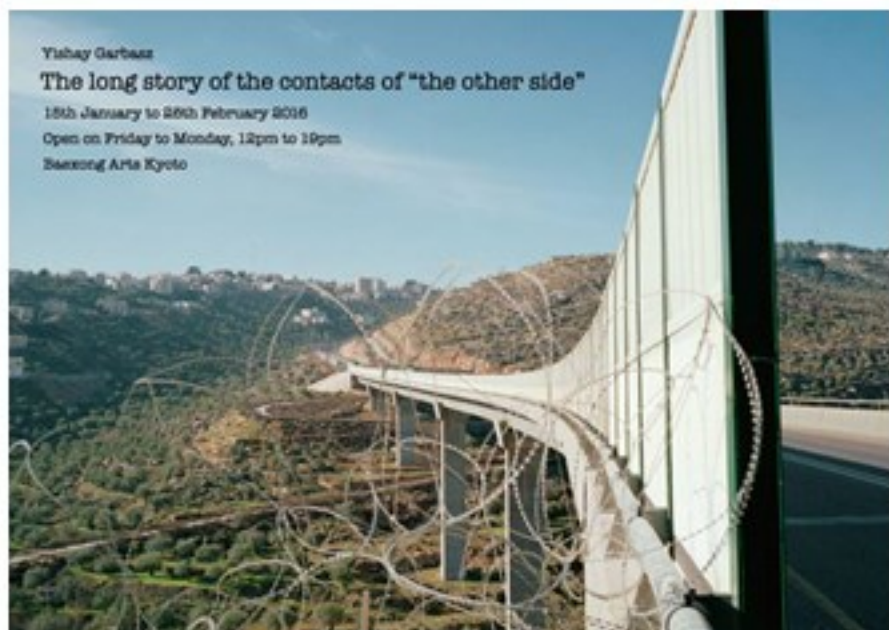
一見するとあたかも平和な日常が写しだされた錯覚に陥りますが、そこは「ベルリンの壁」や「韓国の38度線の壁」「北アイルランドのピースウォール」「パレスチナウォール」など、まさに別の二つの世界に遮断された緊迫する場所。

皮肉にも、そのビジュアルの美しさとは裏腹に、はかり知れない哀しみや切ない距離感が同居します。

そして何よりも、イシャイ氏ご本人の言葉や表情から、前向きに突き進む彼女の強い覚悟と深い優しさのようなものを感じることができ、個人的にとっても感慨深い時間となりました。

2/27の14:00～は、アーティストとキュレーターによるワークショップが開催されます。希少な機会となりますのでぜひ足を運ばれてみては。

[展覧会詳細]→<http://baexong.net/2016-yisha/>



Hugill, Alison. "BODY // Trauma and Identity: An Interview with Yishay Garbasz." Berlin Art Link, April 19 2016.  
<http://www.berlinartlink.com/2016/04/19/body-trauma-and-identity-an-interview-with-yishay-garbasz/>

## BODY // Trauma and Identity: An Interview with Yishay Garbasz

Interview by Alison Hugill in Berlin // Tuesday, Apr. 19, 2016

**Yishay Garbasz** is a Berlin-based artist and photographer whose diverse body of work displays a fortuitous congruity. Often, her subject matter is trauma and its intergenerational inheritance, through which bodily and embodied sites of conflict and memory loom large. In the case of her 2010 tour-de-force, 'Becoming', which chronicled changes in her body over the course of her gender affirmation surgery, she created a human-scale zoetrope to exhibit the work. When we spoke over tea in her Mitte apartment, Garbasz's fierce intersectional feminist standpoint and concern for the plight of trans women worldwide came through as crucial to her art practice, as well.



Yishay Garbasz, *Becoming*, 2010, Installation of becoming at the Busan biennale // Copyright Yishay Garbasz, Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Art New York.

**Alison Hugill: Let's talk about your 2010 piece 'Becoming'.**

**Yishay Garbasz:** The piece looks at the viewers' reactions in a way. In the beginning most people look at the genitals—yes, no—but then they continue to look. The most interesting part about the piece is the hair. There are two versions of the work: the zoetrope, which when it was installed was the second biggest in the world, and the flip-book version. Even in the flip-book, the hair is really what interests people. The genitals occupy so little of the body in terms of percentage, and the legs and arms don't change. I'm the same person that I always was. To put it more clearly: I'm the same woman I always was. I wanted to bring that to light because the before-after trope is boring and clichéd, contrary to what hundreds of CIS photographers would have you believe. I wanted to create something more real, and not about before and after.

**AH: Is there a difficulty in being both the photographer and the subject matter of the work?**

**YG:** The practice is very different. This was a very regimented project: I had to do it every weekend, except for about a month when I was too depressed to do it. Every weekend I would take a picture. When I was feeling very cheerful about it, then sometimes twice a week. It's not about going outside and doing stuff like my usual work, it's about returning time and time again and watching the drama your mind creates with this repetitive task. That's what was really interesting for me as an artist.

**AH: The repetition comes across for the viewer as well, in the way that you have chosen to present the work.**

**YG:** Firstly, I am very neutral in my body: I am not trying to make myself less pretty or more pretty. I'm very matter-of-fact about it. The second thing was the size of the zoetrope. I was very particular about the size because of the context of Victorian pornography. I didn't want to make it too small because that changes the power dynamic. So I had to make it large. I wanted the power relationship with the viewer to be correct. When you have a 1-metre high image size, and the zoetrope is made of half a ton of steel, a quarter of which travels at 11km per hour (12 frames per second), it creates a correct power relationship. The viewer doesn't have to stay but if they do there is a very interesting relationship going on between the object and the viewer. It's viewable from any direction. There's something about the massiveness and the movement. I didn't want to make a projection because it's very unreal.

The easiest way would have been to inkjet on the plexi but I actually used photographic reproduction. We used 24 pieces of scotch tape because the engineer researched and found it had the right heat-resistance. We also had to consult with a couple physicists. The steel team was five ship builders. It was a very big project, not a trivial undertaking.

**AH: Is there something in the cyclical nature of the zoetrope that changes the power dynamic as well?**

**YG:** The circle has four frames of grey to show that it's not cyclical. It's just my body. It's all about the change and the not-change, in the same stroke. But again, the hair was the main focus. Having people be more than the sum of their genitals, I think, is a big win.

**AH:** That brings us to another work of yours, 'Eat Me Damien.' In that case you bring the genitals to the fore, but as a point of critique.

**YG:** Mostly it's not about gender. It's about the jerky male art thing, which infuriates me. After my surgery I kept the genitals, I knew I'd do something with them. There were several options: a door-knocker for a female divorce lawyer ('Yes I am that good') [laughs] and also floating them like basketballs.

'Eat Me Damien' won because the title became the favourite one. I think the critique is obvious: there is this predatory, business-oriented, professional artist syndrome.

**AH:** So how is it not related to gender? You also see women artists in this role?

**YG:** It's like Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire: Fred is the famous one but Ginger had to do everything he did but backwards and in heels. This is how it feels. As a woman artist, I have only 10% chance to be in an exhibition here in Berlin. As a woman with an experience of trans I have 0% chance. Even when there's a trans show there are no trans women, or maybe a single token trans woman. When the **Historisches Museum** did their thing they didn't have a single trans woman: they had images of trans women. The **Schwules Museum** right now has a show *about* trans women but I don't have a chance to exhibit. The closest you can see my work to Berlin, where I've been living for 8 years, is New York or Korea. Closest I've talked about gender is the **Tate Modern**.



Yishay Garbasz

Eat Me Damien, 2010, Installation view

Have We Met Before? 2012 // Photo by Varvara Mikushkina

Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York

**AH: In that kind of climate in Berlin, what keeps you going?**

**YG:** I'm really stupid and stubborn. I live here in Mitte, my mother grew up on Linienstrasse two streets away. I'm stubborn. There is something for me here.

**AH: You exhibited 'Eat Me Damien' at the Seven Miami fair and in New York in the group show *Have We Met Before?*.**

**YG:** Yes, the show in New York was of old generation and younger generation artists dealing with the body. I was in an exhibition with **Hannah Wilke**. I met her husband who took the last photos of her sitting. There was **Andy Warhol, Man Ray, Chris Burden...**

In Miami, I showed four different pieces because it was very important for us to have context. 'Eat Me Damien' is a very strong piece, so it is important for people to have context. Some people will just fixate on the testicles and not take the next step.

**AH: Is providing that context more work for you, beyond the role of the artist and entering the realm of educator?**



**YG:** It's not my job to educate. My job is—when I do a solo exhibition as an artist—to show the viewer how to look at my work and how to move in my space. That's my responsibility as an artist. I need to know who my audience is: I do height distribution, I do age and size, because sometimes it's very critical. I will figure out the average height of the viewer in whatever country I am in, for the viewers that I will get.

If the location is young and trendy I have to look at the attention span. If it's shorter I have to see how I can play with that. That's my responsibility as a artist. But to explain gender: fuck that!

At the fair in Miami, lots of people came just to see 'Eat Me Damien'. My gallerist **Ron Feldman** wanted to get it in the show in New York to look at it in generational context as well. We had **Lynda Benglis** with her incredible Art Forum double-headed penis. There was an incredible amount of art to give the right context. 'Eat Me Damien', 'The Number Project', and 'Becoming' were all together in this show.

**AH:** You seem to have an overarching theme that emerges in your work.

**YG:** Mostly, I deal with trauma. People think that their voice as an artist is somewhere far away, over some obstacle: for me it is right where you stand. What you're facing right now, is your voice. The obstacles are where your voice is. I don't think about the trajectory of my work it just happens that way. In retrospect it looks thought-out but it's not. I'm clear enough in my mind and my heart that these things are just there.



Yishay Garbasz, The Number Project, 2011, Video Still // Copyright Yishay Garbasz, Courtesy of Ron Feldman Fine Arts, New York



Yishay Garbasz, The Number Project, Close Up Day 9 // Copyright Yishay Garbasz, Courtesy of Ron Feldman Fine Arts, New York

**AH:** In ‘The Number Project’ you literally inscribed your mother’s trauma onto your body, her number from Auschwitz.

**YG:** The reason I carried it was because she had it removed. She had a scar from plastic surgery when they removed it. She couldn’t talk about it and part of my work, dealing with my own trauma, was being able to talk about it and create conversations. I didn’t want to take away from the image of the Auschwitz tattoo like some other artists. I don’t want to recontextualize it, it’s a bad thing to do. I wanted the number but I didn’t want the tattoo.

After lots of research I learned about a branding technique. You can see the blow torch right here. The hardship wasn’t the pain so much as the psychological inhibition of doing it to myself. For the first month I had a hard time even looking at it. In the second month it became a comfort, because I could feel it. It’s almost all gone now but it will never be gone.

Originally, I wanted to take three pages from the Auschwitz death book and brand each number on different people, so the people who died are carried today so we can reconnect. Many of my German friends wanted to do it. But the act of branding is so intimate and so vulnerable that I couldn’t do it to somebody I wasn’t close to. One close friend was branded with my grandmother’s number, though.



**AH: What projects are you working on now?**

**YG:** I just finished an anti-racism project in Japan. I was working with my friend **Yumi Song** and we were talking about how, during the Second World War, everybody knew that the Koreans poisoned the water in Japan. And still now everybody knows that the Koreans caused 3/11 – the tsunami in Fukushima. Hold on: we all know that the Jews are the ones who poisoned the well, we are the ones who drink the blood of babies. Our project became trying to create stereotypes or projections. So we went around and poisoned a lot of stuff using chilli peppers. We made videos and still which will be shown at the beginning of next month in Kyotographie Plus.

Most of what I do as an artist is write grants. I'm also working on two books: one about the trauma from Fukushima and one, through a Japanese publisher, about the show 'Do What I Say or They Will Kill You'. This one looks at Israel/Palestine, North and South Korea, and Catholic and Protestant in Belfast. I look at these types of fences as a psychological aspect. Every side that has built them has not won: why are they still being built? Belfast is so interesting: most of the "peace lines" were created after the Peace Agreement. Why would they do that? Same with Israel/Palestine. This is where it helps to be queer: it's about othering. The less contact you have, the easier it is to make the other a monster.



Yishay Garbasz, Bikini, Khao Sok, Day 22, 2011 // Copyright Yishay Garbasz, Courtesy of Ron Feldman Fine Arts, New York

Finally, I have to say something about trans murders. This has been a very nice interview but I need to kick someone's ass. The next project I'm working on has to do with violence, both individual and institutional. Part of the project is about the murder and violence against trans women. In America

right now there are several laws enacted that target trans people but particularly trans women. The number of death threats are increasing. The life expectancy of a trans woman of colour in America is 35. In Brazil, it's 30.

This is where intersectionality comes in: feminism is not just about one thing. We have the 'white feminist' thing which excludes all women who are marginalized, of colour, with disabilities, with a history of trans, sex workers. All that is excluded: we focus on one issue, but that's how we become separated. This is a big problem I see, not encompassing all issues together. Trans women—because trans men, especially in the art world, are more well-represented—are a big part of that. There's a lot of work by CIS artists, photographing trans people, but if I do it I don't get the funding. The subject has already been covered. A lot of curators and institutions are lazy. They are interested in showing what they feel comfortable with.

**AH: So the solution is a total structural overhaul?**

**YG:** It's a personal overhaul, being able to step out of your comfort zone. But it's also an institutional critique: give me a sledgehammer!

#### **Artist Info**

More info about Yishay Garbasz's work: [\*\*www.yishay.com\*\*](http://www.yishay.com)

#### **Writer Info**

Alison Hugill has a Master's in Art Theory from Goldsmiths College, University of London (2011). Her research focuses on marxist-feminist politics and aesthetic theories of community, communication and communism. Alison is an editor, writer and curator based in Berlin. [www.alisonhugill.com](http://www.alisonhugill.com)

# イシャイ・ガルバシュ、ユミソン「Throw the poison in the well」

2016年 06月 15日 号

twitter でつぶやく

会期: 2016/04/30～2016/05/08

Baexong Arts Kyoto[京都府]

Baexong Arts Kyotoを運営するアーティスト、ユミソンと、イスラエル出身でベルリン在住の写真家、イシャイ・ガルバシュの二人展。出身地も年齢も異なる二人だが、「親世代がジェノサイドの生き残りである」という共通の出自を持つ。負の記憶の継承と共有の(不)可能性、親子関係がはらむ心理的葛藤、個人の生と民族の歴史の交差について言及するそれぞれの過去作に加え、2ヶ月の滞在制作において共同制作された新作《Throw the poison in the well》が発表された。

イシャイ・ガルバシュの《The Number Project》は、ナチス政権下でユダヤ人強制収容所に収容された母親が、腕に入れ墨で刻印された囚人番号を、自身の腕に焼きこいで刻印して、痛みとともに継承するというもの。数字とアルファベットが刻まれた金属片をガスバーナーであぶり、顔をしかめながら自身の腕に焼き付けていく記録映像と、生々しい傷痕が癒えていく様子を毎日1枚ずつ、101日間にわたって撮影した写真が展示されている。「A2867」といういびつな数字が、赤く血でにじみ、かさぶたになり、はがれ、ゆっくりと薄れて読めなくなっていく過程が、ドキュメントとして示される。母親の身体に刻印された番号を、痛みとともに「私」の身体に受け入れ、「私のこの身体」に起きた出来事として反復・引き受けようとする。それは、民族の受難の物語への回収を拒み、「母と私」という極私的な関係性に留まりながら身体的に継承しようとする身振りである。それはまた、個人を匿名性へと暴力的に押しやった番号が、個人の生の証として取り戻されるという逆説を帯びてもある。しかしその番号が薄れていく様子は、時とともに傷が癒えていく過程であるとともに、迫害の歴史が忘却されていくプロセスの可視化をも思わせる。ガルバシュの鮮烈な作品は、傷口を押し開きながら縫合するような両義性をはらんでいる。

また、ユミソンの《It Can't Happen Here.》は、1948年の済州島四・三事件(韓国軍などによる島民虐殺事件)の生き残りである父親が語った記憶と、自身が罵声を浴びせられたヘイトスピーチの体験、父親との葛藤などを、父親の視点から仮構的に綴り直したテキストである。ただし、固有名や具体的な日付と場所を剥ぎ取られて抽象化されることで、話者の「I」は、不特定多数の他者を受け入れる場所となり、記憶と現在時の思索が行き来するなかに、体験の過酷さは詩的なモノローグとして語られる。

一方、ガルバシュとユミソンの共同制作《Throw the poison in the well》は、ともにジェノサイドの生き残りを親に持ち、民族の被傷性にどう向き合うかをそれぞれの視点で考える二人が、「井戸に毒を流す」行為を京都市内の市街地や河川で擬似的に再現するパフォーマンスの記録である。タイトルが示唆するのは、1923年の関東大震災の際、「朝鮮人が井戸に毒を流している」などのデマによって引き起こされた朝鮮人虐殺事件だ。だがこのパフォーマンスで二人は、社会的に排除され憎しみの対象となる「魔女狩り」の「魔女」役を押し付けられたことを糾弾するのではなく、むしろその役割を引き受けてフィクションとして演じてみせることで、「被害者の歴史」を訴えるという政治的正しさに陥ることを回避し、シンプルな行為がもたらす想像の回路を開いていた。

静かな住宅街で、個人宅の軒下に置かれた防火用のバケツに、二人がそっと入れるのは、小さな唐辛子である。その鮮烈で美しい赤。その行為は、むしろそっと贈り物を置いていくような、慎ましやかな贈与のようにも見える。一方、京都市内を流れる鴨川に「唐辛子を流す」行為は、河川敷という空間の公共性や開放感とあいまって、穢れや厄を依代(よりしろ)である人形に託して海や川に流す祭礼行事を想起させた。それは人を殺す「毒」ではなく、社会の底に澱のように溜まった「毒」を、身代わりとして流し、浄化しようとしているようにも見えるのだ。異質な他者への憎しみや排除が社会的不安や混乱の中で暴走し、肥大化した妄想が集団的につくりあげた「架空のテロ」の恐怖。その模倣行為が、憎しみの浄化行為として希望に満ちたものに変わる瞬間を、アートに成しえることとして差し出していた。

Staff. “イシャイ・ガルバシュ、ユミソン「Throw the poison in the well」.” Artscape, June 15, 2016.  
[http://artscape.jp/report/review/10123870\\_1735.html](http://artscape.jp/report/review/10123870_1735.html)



左: Yishay Garbasz & Yumi Song《make the poison 9771》



右: Yishay Garbasz《The Number Project》

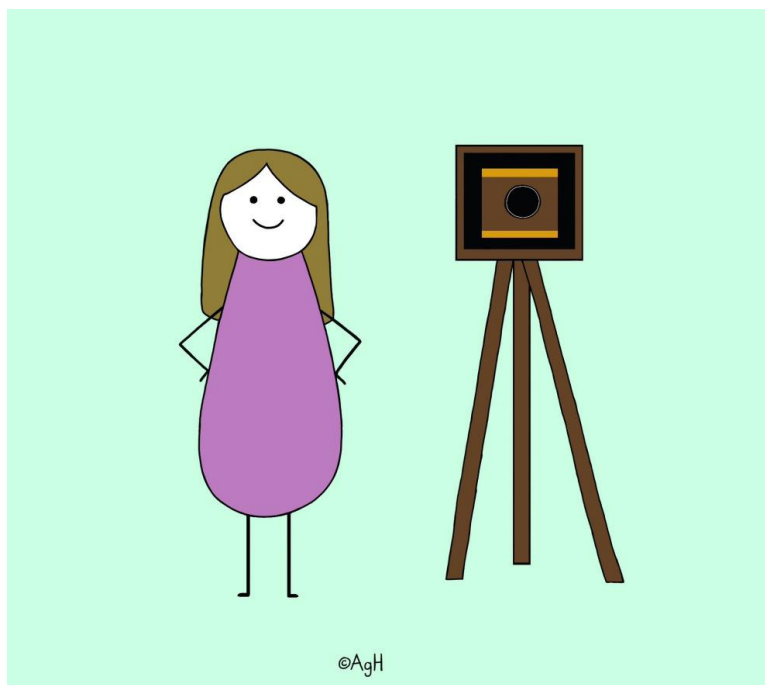
2016/05/06(金)(高嶋慈)

# The Art of Trauma

May 19, 2016  
By avidog

Let's talk transgender turkey for a minute. Transgender women are women. If you disagree and/or your feminism doesn't include them, you kind of suck. That said...

"Jewish gay transgender woman artist" is not a phrase you hear much, or at all, in the art world. But, lucky for us, there is an awesome woman named Yishay Garbasz making art and busting through cis-hetero-patriarchal walls. Now that I've rolled out a long string of labels, I'd like to roll them back. Garbasz said in an interview in 2013, "I'm an artist. I'm not a trans-artist, I'm not a Jewish artist, just an artist. And I think that's important; a lot of people struggle with gender as something that shapes their life... There's a lot more to life than that. Society constrains a lot of people into very specific things, and if there wasn't a social ostracism they would have much bigger lives." And she's right. So, let's just talk about a bitchin' contemporary artist and her work.



Yishay Garbasz was born in 1970 in Israel; her parents were survivors of World War II and the Holocaust. She studied photography at Bard College in the early 2000s, though she also does installation art and performance pieces. She won the Thomas J. Watson Fellowship in 2004. In 2008, Garbasz moved to Berlin and has been based there ever since. She won Berlin Woman Filmmaker of the Year in 2010. Garbasz is interested in trauma. The memories of trauma, the sites of trauma, the passing along of trauma from person to person and place to person, the post-trauma experience. Her work also addresses identity and her life as a woman.

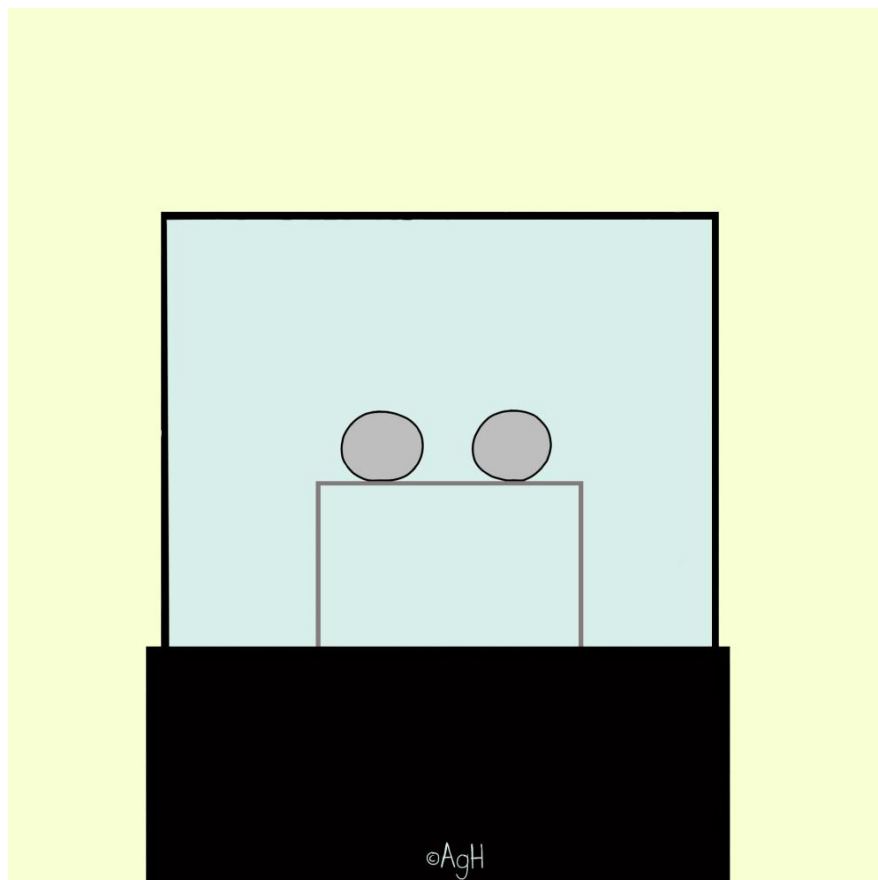
One of her earlier undertakings was begun in 2004 (ending in 2009) and involved Garbasz retracing her mother's steps through the Holocaust and photographing it. She went everywhere her mother was from 1942 through 1945: the Jewish ghetto her mother lived in as a girl, the concentrations camps, along the route of the death march her mother was forced to go on. All while lugging a large-format single-negative camera on a tripod. When speaking of "In My Mother's Footsteps," Garbasz said "my mother lost parts of her soul in those places and I had to go back and collect them." Garbasz also did a piece that centered on her branding her mother's concentration camp number into her arm and photographed it as the wound healed.





Documenting sites of trauma continued in her next project in which she traveled a variety of places including the DMZ between North and South Korea, the barriers running between Israel and Palestine, and the Peace Lines in Northern Ireland. She also traveled to and photographed Fukushima, Japan post-nuclear disaster. I think we can agree that if you want a guide for a sweet trauma-based vacation, Garbasz is your girl.

In 2008, Garbasz began “Becoming.” She documented her transition through the gender-affirmation process by taking a nude picture of herself every week. The 28 pictures were then made into a life-size zoetrope and a flip book. After transitioning, Garbasz took her old testicles and exhibited them in a tank of formaldehyde. The piece was titled, “Eat Me Damien.” Indeed. You can take your stupid preserved shark, Damien Hirst, and suck it.



Yishay Garbasz continues to travel and take photographs and exhibit around the world. If you get the chance to see her work, jump on that shit.



Yamamoto, Nine. “We have to think intersectionally” – Yishay Garbasz on the politics of allyship and solidarity.” *Verso*. October 30, 2015.  
<http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2309-we-have-to-think-intersectionally-yishay-garbasz-on-the-politics-of-allyship-and-solidarity>

## "We have to think intersectionally" —Yishay Garbasz on the politics of allyship and solidarity

By Nine Yamamoto Yishay Garbasz / 30 October 2015

***"For people who also are trans, it is our basic humanity that is challenged. Anger is the only sane response." Nine Yamamoto-Masson interviews Yishay Garbasz about the politics of allyship, solidarity, cultural memory, institutionalised oppression, visibility and survival.***

Yishay Garbasz is an artist and author whose main artistic interest is the inheritance of post-traumatic memories. British-Israeli and based in Berlin, she works across multiple media: "I'll learn whatever I need to in order to get the job done," she says. "Mostly I use photography; I was trained as a photographer and as a dancer, but I also use video, installations, kinetic sculpture, light installations, performance. This is something incredible that my teachers taught me: if I can see it in my mind, and I have enough experience and confidence, I can make it in the real world."

Garbasz was in conversation with Juliet Jacques at the *Representing Trans: Acts of Self-definition* event at the Tate Modern to launch Jacques's *Trans: A Memoir*. Both trans women, they discussed the importance of resisting sensationalist representations of transgender people, and how their artwork and writing addresses the question of representing trans lives *as lives*. They left a deep impression on many of the attendees, echoing in fragments on social media. One fragment in particular, from Garbasz, seemed to hit a nerve: "There are no allies, only actions. There is no magical status – only a readiness for action".



- *Eat me Damien*, Yishay Garbasz, 2010: *Sculptures, Formaldehyde protected testicles removed during surgery, Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York. "This has nothing to do with gender," she said at the Tate Modern.*

While some agreed, others seemed frustrated about Garbasz' stance that actions alone make you an ally, not the self-designation as such. Vexed allies, let us call them, speak of ally-shaming, ungratefulness, being divisive, and argue that the self-designation as ally itself should be recognised and celebrated. This kind of response, which may be termed 'ally fragility', is a common defence mechanism in the politics of solidarity. If intersectional politics is an attempt to recognise our own personal location in networks and layers of privilege, it often seems as if ally fragility is the evasion of this responsibility, to recognise that personal accumulations of privilege complicate relations of solidarity and allyship.

In light of so many intersecting complex identities, individual stories and corresponding oppressions; in light of a struggle that we have recognised as a common one, what is it that we mean when we say "solidarity", when we call ourselves "allies"? If we know that language can be both violent and emancipatory, when does intention transform into material reality, when do words translate into action – what is the *matter* of saying that these lives matter? What does solidarity mean, what does it mean to be or call oneself an ally; how is solidarity enacted, manifested and nourished?

I met Garbasz in her Berlin studio to talk about her work and how it relates to her intersectional identities. We exchanged notes and thoughts about allyship, solidarity, friendship, visibility, resistance against institutionalised oppression, and survival. The first time I met her, not so much by chance, was at the Wikipedia Art & Feminism Edit-A-Thon she co-organised in Berlin, a collaborative work session on International Women's day. Aiming to improve the dismal coverage of women on the men-dominated online encyclopedia, participants brought a few articles related to women's work in art and activism that they wanted to create or expand on the website. We had both brought names of women artists and activists who are key figures in the solidarity struggle calling for justice for the former so-called "comfort women" (women and girls from the former Japanese colonies forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese military during the Second World War), a topic central to my artistic, academic and activist work. In this way, our first meeting was not just a simple coincidence: rather, it was a serendipitous manifestation of our similar approaches to our entanglements, roles and responsibilities within transnational, transgenerational solidarity work and multiform resistance against intersecting oppressions, including, but not limited to, patriarchal and racist systems of discrimination.

From there we developed an ongoing dialogue about everyday resistance, a dialogue that, for me as a cisgendered university-educated woman, is also a practice of active listening: to her critique of tokenism, how to work together towards a more emancipatory visibility and empowered voice for people who are transgender, particularly trans women.



- Portrait of Yishay Garbasz working in the Fukushima nuclear exclusion zone for her show *Ritual and Reality*, Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York, 2014. By Toshifumi Taniuchi.

**Yishay:** For a few years now I've continually asked curators I meet if they know of any trans women in a museum or a major collection. Mostly they answer that they don't—but they *do* “know this amazingly sensitive cis person who did this amazingly sensitive project about Trans women”. Very often funding for projects *about* trans women will go to a cis persons making work about trans people! Or, on occasion, to a transmasculine person. But not to trans women making work about trans women. It's not like there are no trans women artists—but we are erased.

In Berlin, 90% of museum shows are by men; only 10% by women, most of whom are white and middle-class. And if there is *any* trans and queer presence, it'll usually be transmasculine, while transfeminine is completely erased. Trans women are erased. We have been completely erased from the Berlin art scene in three years. In 2012, there was a major trans exhibition at the Schwules Museum that only had cis women and trans men artists, and only one token trans woman artist. Now, three years later, there is another major exhibition of queer artists in Berlin, without a single trans woman artist. Curators and the keepers of history in Germany and Europe will refer to the catalogue of this exhibition as a reference work for queer sexualities in art—and in that



reference work, no trans women artists will be present. People are afraid to point out this erasure of trans women, because then they're accused of undermine 'the cause', of being divisive in a supposedly bigger, more important struggle.

**Nine:** So the erasure itself is being erased...

**Yishay:** It keeps happening: it's not a coincidence. It's like exhibitions that have no people of colour. It says something about how these curators view the world. Being an intersectional, living, breathing human being, the more intersectionalities you have, the further away you are from the centre: the chances of you being seen are exponentially less.

You're invisible: your responses or actions are not seen, your words are not heard, your visual art is not seen, your body is delegitimised, your thoughts are delegitimised, it's not even counted, it's automatically rejected. Then, *one* out of the whole range of marginalised people is selected, as a token.

And if you're vaguely heard from, in your tokenised form, it will be via somebody closer to the centre who appropriates you in order to get their own message across. It's not the cis middle-class white person who should speak for everyone. Get somebody from the margins to speak, bring somebody who's lived their life, not just studied it abstractly in some introductory 101 class. We have to start centring the most intersectional voices.

Given how exclusionary institutions are, I make books as a way to bypass them and subvert collective memories by putting these books in libraries. I learnt to read at the age of 25 due to dyslexia, and that's also why I'm so happy to have books. The American radical librarians from the 1970s subverted libraries by buying certain books. They looked so innocent and harmless, but they were not – they are role models.

**Nine:** You were saying that it was a surreal experience speaking with Juliet Jacques at the Tate Modern, one of the most renowned art institutions worldwide, in an area where twenty years before you used to be homeless. Class privilege is seldom acknowledged or addressed in the British and Western art institutions, because of their domination by the middle-upper class.

**Yishay:** Institutional exclusion is not just due to class inequality—it's always an intersection of many things. If we try to separate one thing from another, we're eliding

everything else. It's class, yes, but it's also race, it's also cis-status, it's also gender. All of these things are always together, always compounded.

**Nine:** Do we need institutions? How do we deal with this dependence on institutions, recognising their power, while knowing how far from perfect they are, that they are not welcoming to many people? In her book *Plantation Memories*, Grada Kilomba writes: The concepts of knowledge, scholarship and science are intrinsically linked with power and racial authority. What is knowledge? What knowledge is acknowledged as such? And what knowledge is not? What knowledge has been made part of academic agendas? And what knowledge has not? Whose knowledge is this? Who is acknowledged to have the knowledge? And who is not? Who can teach knowledge? And who cannot? Who inhabits academia? And who remains outside at the margins? And finally, who can speak? [...] These questions are important to be asked, because academia is not a neutral space. [...] Within these rooms we were made the objects, but we have rarely been the subjects. In this sense, the academia is neither a neutral space nor simply a space of knowledge and wisdom, of science and scholarship, but also a space of violence. [...] our voices [...] have been systematically disqualified from being valid knowledge.

**Yishay:** The institutions are the guardians of our collective memories: they write history and that's why history looks like this: white, heteronormative and male-centered. Is it really true, that this is our history? I don't think so. I think the truth lies in who curated it.

**Nine:** An artwork, a piece of fiction, a poem, a novel, a song, a blog can be vessels of resistance against (and disruption of) monolithic, one-sided tellings of history, and contribute to disrupting and diversifying the narrative of Empire. But cultural institutions are structurally, by essence, selective and exclusionary.

Many people closer to the centre will be unaware of the margins or even deny that there is a disparity and inequality in access to the centre. Those of us who have privilege of some sort must also acknowledge that there might be things that we're not aware of that we might be missing, that there are unknown unknowns.

**Yishay:** That's why there is no such thing as an absolute, eternal "state" of being an ally – there are only actions *in allegiance*. Everything else is magical thinking. In the absence of actions in allegiance, there are no allies. There are no allies: there is only action. We have to train ourselves for constant action. I don't care what people's intentions are – I care about what they're actually done.



- *Sunset over Northern Limit Line, Dragon's Teeth, Baengnyeongdo, 2013, Severed Connections: Do what I say or they will kill you, a body of work based zones of conflict including the Koreas and West Bank.*

**Nine:** Yes; it shouldn't be a magical label you give yourself that then absolves you from acting and lets you remain passive but profiting from the cultural capital it gives you. When “ally visibility” trumps the visibility of those who are marginalised... It shouldn't be that the main currency circulated within an economy of cultural capital is the ally-label, publicised as absolution or fix for privilege-guilt, if it's without the readiness to make space for the less privileged. Solidarity is not to expect to be educated for free; it's also a practice of reading and listening, and a readiness to also work—do homework, inform yourself.

**Yishay:** I disagree: people can be illiterate and uneducated and still perform amazing actions in solidarity and support. I think it's important to look at the actions, not just the thinking and the words – because the same person can do incredible and terrible acts at the same time.

**Nine:** It's particularly hurtful if self-proclaimed allies remain passive and fail to call out or call in those who say or do bigoted things, but instead publicise their allyship and often speaking for and over the people they claim to be allies to. Being humble is an important part of being a supporter who *acts in solidarity*; knowing when to keep quiet, to listen, to take a step back. The thing with allies is that sometimes even *one* ally, friend, or supporter actively being there and intervening in a situation of oppression can make a huge difference.

**Yishay:** This is what I mean: if they don't come through, if they don't act, they're not allies. The only time I'm an ally is when I'm actually taking action. When that action stops, that's it. It's done. I don't care about people's intentions, because that's magical thinking, and it's not enough. I prefer the word "solidarity" over "ally", because it always implies action – standing in solidarity, doing things in solidarity. All of us need to start learning to act, not just "like" things on Facebook. We need to always question ourselves about our actions, not only our intentions. What have we done, how are we using our minds, how are we using our bodies. We have to think intersectionally. It's not simple black and white, it's a lot more complex.

I want to see a man give up space if there is none for women. I want to see a cis person give up space for trans people. I want to see a trans man give up space for trans women. I want to see a white person give up space for people of colour. And more, and more, and more. Liberation for all of us, not some of us.

**Nine:** These multiple degrees of erasure, and reclaiming or fighting for more visibility is a complex issue. While on the one hand there's the need to be visible and heard, on the other hand, hypervisibility or tokenisation is also very problematic. Hypervisibility can expose people to danger and hate, and being referred to as a "trans artist" and not just an "artist" can be pigeonholing or patronising.

**Yishay:** Hypervisibility is also a way of silencing, as is raising one token and simultaneously silencing the other experiences. This is important to me: I don't say "I'm a trans woman", I say "I'm a woman with a history of trans", or "a woman who happens also to be trans". There are many reasons for that that I learnt from the Civil Rights movement in the US, because language matters. The reason you say "woman of colour" is because the woman is first, "colour" is one of the flavours of the person. So celebrate the personhood.

For people who also are trans, it is our basic humanity that is challenged. Second wave feminists deliberately misgender and exclude trans women based on genitals, while still maintaining that for women "biology is not destiny"—with the exception of trans women. In regards to intersectional identities: if you're of colour and also have trans experience, you're pretty much dead.

**Nine:** And when then your anger and hurt are pathologised on top of it, it's basically people telling you "go kill yourself". There are no neutral discourses. "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor," said Desmond Tutu.

'Objectivity' is a myth created by people at the top of the pyramid to justify and maintain their position, while silencing and discrediting the discourse of others by saying, "you're being irrational", as if they were the arbitrators of rationality.

"My anger and your attendant fears are spotlights that can be used for growth in the same way I have used learning to express anger for my growth," Audre Lorde writes in *The Uses of Anger*. "Women of Color in America have grown up within a symphony of anger at being silenced at being unchosen, at knowing that when we survive, it is in spite of a world that takes for granted our lack of humanness, and which hates our very existence outside of its service. And I say *symphony* rather than *cacophony* because we have had to learn to orchestrate those furies so that they do not tear us apart."

**Yishay:** Anger is the only sane response to this. Just for us to have survived to this day—that's a huge accomplishment. Trans women of colour have an average life expectancy of 35. To be honest I never expected to reach even 30. So every day we're alive – that's a big deal; that's a big accomplishment.

**Yishay Garbasz** finds significance in numbers, often using them to frame aspects of her personal history, memory, and imagination. Garbasz, who also is transgender, previously explored issues of identity during her sexual reassignment surgery, documenting her body in the process. "I'm a very tactile and kinesthetic thinker, this is how I enter things, I enter the world through a very personal space, through my heart." She is the author of *Becoming: A Gender Flipbook* and *In My Mother's Footsteps*, in which she documented the path of her mother's path to a Nazi extermination camp, counting the number of steps and photographing her progress periodically, and branded



her arm with her mother's prison camp identification number. These numbers constitute abstracted markers of real-world experiences that Garbasz translates back into materiality through her performances and documentary photographs.

**Nine Eglantine Yamamoto-Masson** is an artist, curator and PhD candidate at ASCA (Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis). In academic research and artistic practice, her work examines historical memory, ideology, resistance and counter-narratives at the site of their encounter with socially engaged art as a critical forum.



*Split (Taipei)*, Nine Yamamoto-Masson, 2014 (film still)

More in [#Interviews](#) [#Feminism](#) [#trans](#)



Staff. "Representing Trans: Acts of Self-definition." *Tate*. October 20, 2015. <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/talks-and-lectures/representing-trans-acts-self-definition>

# Representing Trans: Acts of Self-definition

Tate Modern, Starr Auditorium

Tuesday 20 October 2015, 18.30 – 20.00



Image credit: Joanna Walsh



Yishay Garbasz *Becoming* 2010

Photographs, steel, makrolon, motor, light, wood, foil, cloth. 300cm width (Zoetrope)

Courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Art New York

I believe that there are as many gender identities as there are people; all unique, all constantly being explored in conscious and unconscious ways  
*Juliet Jacques*

In July 2012, Juliet Jacques underwent sex reassignment surgery—a process she chronicled in a *Guardian* column.

Out of this experience came her Manifesto for Confessional Journalism:  
Never humiliate or sensationalise yourself or others known to you, and do not write anything unkind about your own body, although you may test its limits: think of confessional journalism, and everything else in your life, as a form of performance art.  
*Juliet Jacques*

Interweaving the personal with the political, Juliet Jacques explores, in conversation with artist Yishay

Garbasz, debates that comprise trans politics and the cruxes of writing, art and identity. The event is chaired by Paul Clinton.

This event coincides with the launch of Juliet Jacques' *Trans: A Memoir* published by Verso this autumn. The discussion is followed by an opportunity to purchase the book and have it signed by the author in the Starr Foyer from 20.00–20.30.

## Biographies

### Paul Clinton

Clinton is a writer and is the assistant editor of *frieze* and *Frieze Masters* magazines. He has taught on art and queer theory at Goldsmiths College and the University of Manchester. In 2013 he edited a special issue of the philosophy and critical theory journal *parallax* on stupidity, and in 2014 the South London Gallery staged a daylong event around his research on this subject. In the same year he organised the conference *Shimmering World*, which featured presentations by artists Ed Atkins, David Panos and Hannah Sawtell. His catalogue essays include on the work of artists Bonnie Camplin, Sidsel Meineche Hansen and Jacopo Miliani, amongst others. Previous speaking engagements have taken place at the ICA, Whitstable Biennale, Whitechapel Gallery and Frieze Art Fairs, amongst other venues. He was also a founding member of the band No Bra, co-writing several songs on the album *Dance and Walk*, and with Patrick Wolf he formed the band Maison Crimenaux. He is currently working on an exhibition, also on stupidity, co-curated with Anna Gritz, and due to open in October at Focal Point Gallery.

### Juliet Jacques

Juliet Jacques is a freelance author, best known for writing *A Transgender Journey* for the *Guardian*—which was long listed for the Orwell Prize in 2011. She was included in the *Independent's* Pink Lists for 2012, 2013 and 2014, and is a regular blogger for the *New Statesman*. She has also written for *Granta*, the *London Review of Books*, *Time Out*, the *New Humanist*, *The New Inquiry*, *Filmwaves*, *3am* and many other publications and websites. She lives in London.

## Yishay Garbasz

Yishay Garbasz is a Berlin-based British-Israeli artist, graduate of photography BA from Bard College in New York 2004. Her 2005 Watson Fellowship resulted in the first book project, *In My Mother's Footsteps* (Hatje Cantz, 2009), nominated for the German photo book prize award. Garbasz's second project starkly documents her body a year before and after gender affirmation surgery shown in the flipbook *Becoming* (MBP, 2010) and installed in the second largest *Zoetrope* in the world (Busan Biennale 2010, Korea). Currently, she explores globally the impact of trauma on communities, including *Ritual and Reality*, which documents the Fukushima nuclear exclusion zone, with fall-out reaching Tokyo (forthcoming 2016, Sieveking Verlag). Garbasz has exhibited widely in galleries, museums, around the world. Garbasz's work has also been featured in Artforum, the New York Times, and she was recently listed by the Huffington Post as one of Ten Transgender Artists Who Are Changing the Landscape of Contemporary Art.

*In partnership with Verso and Frieze*





Figure 4. Yishay Garbasz, video still from *Futaba, Fukushima Nuclear Exclusion Zone*, 2013.

East Japan Earthquake"; the *Roppongi Crossing* exhibition at the Mori Art Museum, the triennial survey of the most recent developments in contemporary Japanese art, presented work that "reflects the social awareness that has been heightened since the Great East Japan Earthquake" that year as well. Artists as diverse as Takashi Murakami, who created paintings of the five hundred Buddhist *rakan* deities as "a prayer"; Takahiro Kondō, who sculpted a series of haunting ceramic portraits layered with metallic mist; and Kazuhiko Hachiya, the media artist who organized a group with scientists named Geiger Counter Meeting, have responded to the disasters. Nonetheless, photography has been the medium that has allowed artists to convey their reactions most directly.<sup>8</sup>

Since March 11, 2011, disasters both natural and man-made have continued to happen around the world. The great fear of many who experienced the Great East Japan Earthquake and its aftermath is that these catastrophes will fade from memory. In Tōhoku the endless mounds of twisted metal have been cleared away, and most of the landmarks of destruction made famous by news coverage have been dismantled. Yet recovery from the tsunami is far from complete, and the ongoing nuclear cleanup in Fukushima continues to affect not only personal lives but political developments. The photographs presented here ensure that what happened on that day will not be forgotten, while the power of their imagery invites us to contemplate, question, and yes, find profound beauty.

Anne Nishimura Morse

William and Helen Pounds Senior Curator of Japanese Art

Anne E. Havinga

Estrellita and Yousuf Karsh Senior Curator of Photographs

- 1 David Lochbaum, Edwin Lyman, Susan Q. Stranahan, and the Union of Concerned Scientists, *Fukushima: The Story of a Nuclear Disaster* (New York and London: The New Press, 2014), 12.
- 2 See Takanobu Tanaka, "NHK's Disaster Coverage and Public Value from Below: Analyzing the TV Coverage of the Great East Japan Disaster," *Kelso Communication Review*, no. 35 (2013), 95–99.
- 3 See [www.311photoproject.org](http://www.311photoproject.org).
- 4 Yasusuke Ōta has published two photobooks, entitled *Nokosarete dobutsutachi* (The Animals That Have Been Left Behind) and *Mochitsuzukeru dobutsutachi* (The Animals That Continue to Wait; both, Tokyo: Asuka shinsha, 2012).
- 5 Yasushi Handa, *Mighty Silence: Images of Destruction, The Great 2011 Earthquake and Tsunami of East Japan and Fukushima* (Milan: Skira, 2012), 19.
- 6 Lieko Shiga, "The Spiral Shore," unpublished manuscript.
- 7 Charlotte Cotton, *The Photograph as Contemporary Art*, 2nd ed. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 167.
- 8 The sculptor and painter Leiko Ikemura makes this point in "What Moves Us and What Can We Move? Fukushima and the Consequences," in *Ethics in Aesthetics?*, ed. Annett Zinsmeister (Berlin: Jovis, 2012), 179.



# Walking Into Conflict: Trans Woman and Visual Artist Yishay Garbasz on Chronicling Trauma

**Eliza Steinbock** Posted: 05/01/2015 1:42 pm EDT

"My job is not to document a story, or see right or wrong -- you must step out of the way and allow the picture to enter the camera," explains British-Israeli and Berlin-based artist, Yishay Garbasz. Her latest show is the solo exhibition "Severed Connection: Do what I say or they will kill you" at the [Ronald Feldman Gallery](#) running from May 9 - June 13 in NYC, which chronicles three sites of hot conflict and resounding trauma produced by fear of the other.

## Shooting Conflict Zones

Garbasz spent the last 10 years traveling and photographing the DMZ as well as on the South Korean island Baengnyeongdo bordering North Korea, the entire length of the barrier from both sides in Israel and the occupied territories of Palestine, Fukushima, Japan and lastly the Peace Lines of Northern Ireland and other local spots like the "Murder Triangle." The images were created using a cumbersome large-format camera that must be hoisted onto a tripod before backloading a single negative. Amazingly, Garbasz dragged this kit along with her through check-points, minefields and radioactive wastelands to prevent herself from cheating and taking more images than necessary. Besides the expense, the bulky camera's extensive set-up forces her to soak up the landscapes, wait patiently for the shot and resolve with her entire sensorium where the image lies; all this before assembling her gear for the shot. Only then will she step to the side and press once.

## Capturing Trauma

The affective intensity of working at the scene of trauma is central to Garbasz' practice. "Be afraid," she tells me, then methodically "let the fear wash over you and the camera and hope that it stays, let it churn and be with it." Her bearing witness and being open to ordinary people caught up in conflict is important because it allows her to be a witness "in a way that others were not there for me." This project follows on from her acclaimed book *In My Mother's Footsteps* (2009) that chronicles her movement as a young girl between Jewish Gettos, concentration camps and on a death march that her mother took through Germany from 1942-45. The desire to stand in the footsteps of others is powerful, and perilous. In the exhibition, blue footsteps, like those guiding tourists in South Korea to the 'correct' spot to take a picture, draw us into Garbasz' perspective nestled amongst blood splattered buildings, bombs and radioactive waste. The resulting images are equally soaked in desperate color, evocative and haunting; they shatter our sense of life and death as separate worlds.

## De-Humanization and Crowd Control

Growing up in Israel, the daughter of survivors and even as an officer in the Israeli army has its indelible impact, not least the sensitivity to how a people and individual persons can become simply enemy targets. Garbasz' new work-in-development will focus on how soldiers and police officers eliminate the hesitation to kill another human through target practice. The show "Severed Connection" already consists of a body of work that is trying to pause this dehumanizing drilling practice by slowing us down to really look at how

fear of the other is produced. By focusing on militarized spaces that use a 'single dimension line of defense' (wall, barrier, limit line) the artist critiques the demarcation of Us and Them. In terms of military tactics, Garbasz says these types of defense between neighboring states are historically weak and unsustainable because there is not enough distance to maintain a single line. Nevertheless, they are powerful spaces for maintaining control over your own people because of the constant tension and flare-ups that reinforce the fear of the (enemy) other. Thus, her images of, for example, tranquil scenes of rice fields that end at landmine fields remind us these are no ordinary landscapes but places that radiate fear in the social, national and global imaginary.

### **A Jewish Woman of Trans Experience**

Though being a trans lesbian does not define these works, Garbasz has also chronicled her physical transition in *Becoming* (2010) a flipbook and a life-size scale model of a zoetrope with 28 images of her nude body taken over 28 weeks. Her own experiences of being ordinary, poor and, nevertheless, made into an image of the enemy other grants her "a trans sensitivity to being" for people who endure conflict and the micro and macro forms of trauma. Becoming a visually marked woman, congruent to her self-identity, also granted her a form of femme invisibility that allowed her access to wander past borders, and into restricted areas. For example, she made friends with laboring women on the island who took her through a field of landmines to where they harvest the best seaweed -- Garbasz following precisely in their footsteps. Or in Fukushima, she could have been arrested for a possible breach of security for filming the accident site, but she apologized profusely in Japanese in a 'girly' way. Being invisible to power, and perceived as incompetent sometimes helps. Being femme, which she loves, also enables her simply to do her job: to get up, go out and see. Being poor and without a car meant too that she would simply walk with her rolling suitcase carrying the hefty camera, to most eyes a non-threatening pedestrian, a nobody.

These works on display demonstrate that Yishay Garbasz has a commitment to look anew at others and their trauma. Each time she risks this relationship, from scratch, to fall in love with the thing that she most fears. There is no calculating your own risk in becoming fully open and exposed to the work. Simply go, step in and follow her footsteps. And watch out for the razor wire.

Yishay Garbasz is represented by the Ronald Feldman Gallery.

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts 31 Mercer St New York [www.feldmangallery.com](http://www.feldmangallery.com)

Website: <http://www.yishay.com/>

Eliza Steinbock (Assistant Professor, Department of Film & Literary Studies, Leiden University Center for the Arts in Society) writes on contemporary philosophies of the body, visual culture and transfeminist issues. Recent publications include essays in the *Journal of Homosexuality*, *Photography and Culture* and *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*. For more information, please see [www.elizasteinbock.com](http://www.elizasteinbock.com).



# Berlin reads, in Café Owl in West Park

8. 09. 2015

As part of the [International Literature Festival Berlin](#) several readings take place on Wednesday, 9 9

15 16 clock in the café Owl Berlin:

- Sandra Ehlermann, Daniel Popat and Chun Mei TanWas: Sandra Ehlermann reads from "In My Mother's Footsteps" by Yishay Garbasz (in German and English).
- Daniel Popat reads an Afghan fairy tales (in German).
- Chun Mei Tan reads from "lost in transit" of Ruth Klüger (in German).

The readings are part of the reading performance "Berlin reads" the situation of refugees and asylum seekers at the opening of the 15th International Literature Festival Berlin September 9th, 2015, from 6 to 17.30 clock. *"What words and images, the fate of the refugees and asylum seekers can still insistent be presented in the light?"* is on the [website of the literary festivals](#) in demand.

This entry was posted on 09. 8. 2015 and is stored in the category [Potsdamer Güterbahnhof - Westpark](#). You can follow the discussion by Please subscribe this [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a](#) response, or [trackback](#) put on your part.

## ART&FEMINISM // 5 Berlin Artists Who Happen to Be Feminists

*Article by Alison Hugill in Berlin; Friday, Jun. 05, 2015*



*Hannah Black "We don't go to work & we don't use the word love"; courtesy of the artist*

For the month of **June**, Berlin Art Link is launching a series of feature articles, interviews, and studio visits on the theme of **Art & Feminism**. To kick off the series we offer this list, which begins as a dialogue with **Elvia Wilk**'s recent article '**5 Berlin Artists Who Happen to Be Women**' in *Sleek* magazine.

In her salient look at some of Berlin's most interesting contemporary artists, she observed that many women artists are forced to contextualize their work in relation to their gender: a qualification that is rarely asked of men, who are professionals primarily and then also "happen to be men". While, certainly, not all women practicing art identify with feminism or explore gender politics in their work, we take a look at some of those women-identifying artists, working in Berlin, whose work takes on a political dimension as well.

Feminism is an undoubtedly complex term, and is not easily amenable to one political stance. To claim that these artists "happen to be feminists" does not necessarily imply that their works always cover explicitly feminist themes, or that there is any one kind of feminism that they as a group embody. The approach is rather to showcase several artists who engage politically with the unequal status of women in all fields. From a recent exhibition exploring the socio-cultural dimensions of menstruation, curated by **Kandis Williams**, to the importance of 'intersectional feminism' as it relates to histories of the oppressed in **Yishay Garbasz**'s art practice, we present brief profiles of 5 artists in Berlin *who happen to be feminists*. Stay tuned this month for upcoming interviews with **Monira Al Qadiri**, **Fannie Sosa**, **Maja Cule**, and **Sol Calero**.

## HANNE LIPPARD

**Hanne Lippard**'s primary performance medium is her voice. As a trained graphic designer, she began to visualise pure text in her work, in terms of what she calls "word decoration or rearrangement." Her live readings are captivating, revealing a command of language both poetic and witty. In one of her earlier pieces, *Beige*, she reflects on the statistically most ubiquitous colour in the world. Her voice mirrors the monotony of the colour as she explores the signification and symbolization of beige in relation to its most usual wearer: the typically bourgeois middle-aged, Starbucks-drinking, professional woman. She reflects on the "becoming beige" of mainstream femininity, as a troubling rite-of-passage into adulthood and the corporatization of the self. "Beige is dull. Average. Beige is not yes or no, but maybe. Perhaps."

*Hanne Lippard – "Beige" (2010); Courtesy of the artist*

### FATALE

Up and coming	Damsel in Distress	Up and coming	Woman of the World
Up and coming	Femme and Fatale	Up and coming	Woman of the Underworld
Up and coming	Devil in Disguise	Up and coming	Woman in her Underwear
Up and coming	Devil wears Prada	Up and coming	Miss U S of A
Up and coming	Girl from Ipanema	Up and coming	Miss Abusive Husband
Up and coming	Horny Woman from Russia	Up and coming	Miss Hit & Run
Up and coming	Lady is a Tramp	Up and coming	Missiles R Fun
Up and coming	Buffy the Vampire Slayer	Up and coming	Cool Girls with Guns
Up and coming	Scarlett O'Hara	Up and coming	Good Girls gone Wrong
Up and coming	Missing White Woman	Up and coming	Big Tits & Ass
Up and coming	Skin & Bones	Up and coming	MILF I'd like to tilt
Up and coming	J-Lo & Behold	Up and coming	Must
Up and coming	Jenny from the block		Go
Up and coming	Mother of the year		Down

*Hanne*

*Lippard – "Fatale" ; Courtesy of the artist*

Lippard's other texts, having a pleasingly onomatopoeic quality, muse similarly on the making of female identity as a social product. Her poem *Fatale* reads like a list of probable pop-up ads, combining a host of popular descriptions of women in the media in a characteristic build-up, the impact of which is a titillating laugh at the absurdity of these portrayals. In addition to her written work, she is a regular contributor to [Girls Like Us](#), a magazine focussing on feminist arts and writing, and fronts a band called **Luci Lippard** together with **Lucinda Dayhew**, which debuted at **Girls Like Us Summer Salon** last July.

## KANDIS WILLIAMS

**Kandis Williams** recently curated an exhibition about menstruation called *Stains in the Cowshed*. The very visceral display was inspired by an Instagram scandal, wherein poet **Rupi Kaur** posted a series of photos of herself in period-



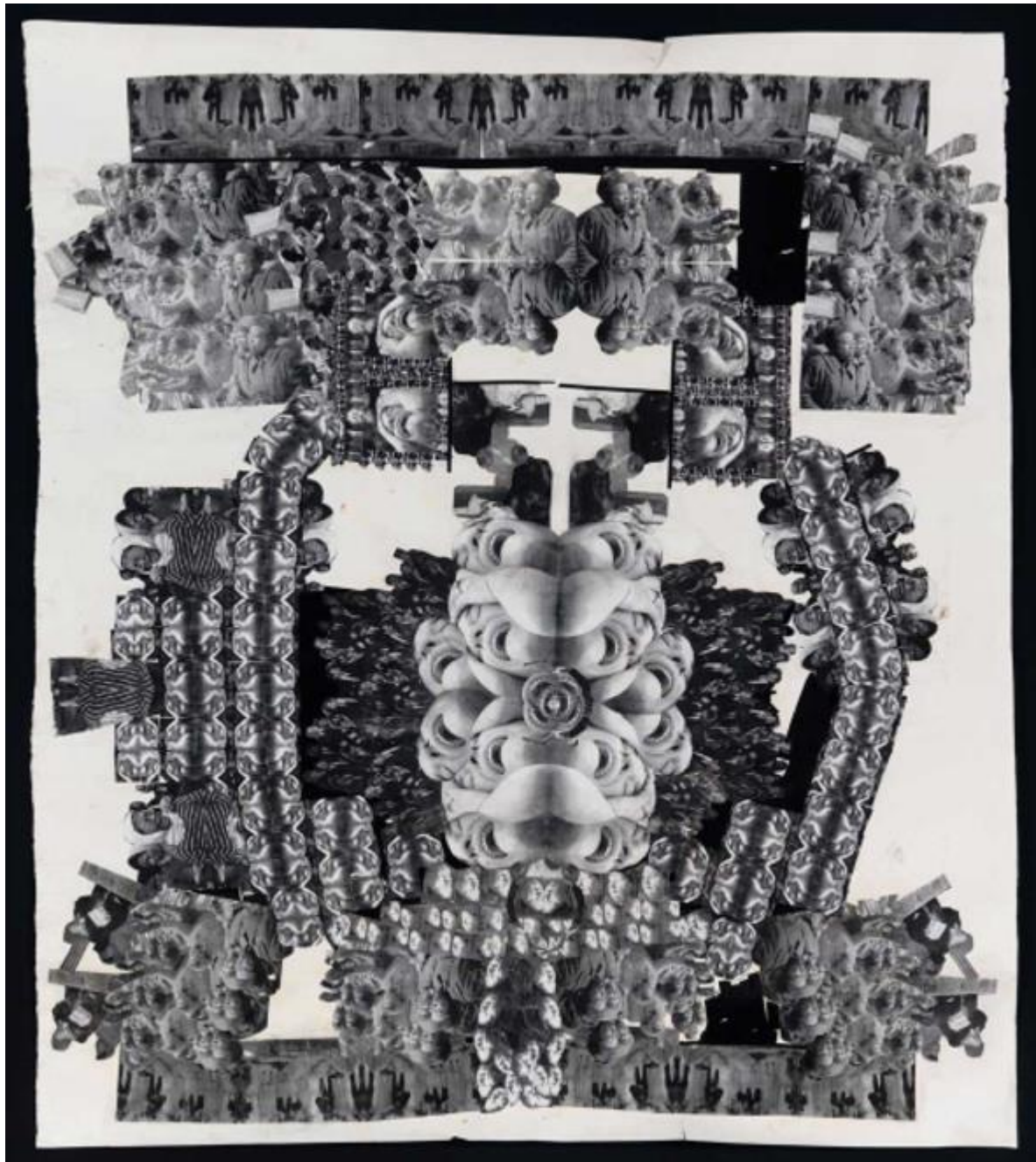
stained clothing. The photos were removed as ‘inappropriate’ and a discussion about the shame and fear surrounding menstruation ensued. The exhibition curated by Williams displayed a complex look at the rituals, taboos, and alternatives surrounding periods, through a selection of fascinating audio-visual pieces and workshops.



*Kandis Williams Installation of Aline Calvalcanti's 'Sectarian State' at Neu West Berlin; Photo by Jason Harrell*

In her own art practice, Williams produces large-scale black and white collages that “track a deeply personal on-going exploration of racial-nationalism, authority, eroticism, magic and violence.” These rich works on paper are repetitive and geometrically complex, and Williams builds almost architectural scenes out of found images. The collages feature references to African-American cultural heritage, as she engages in a critical way with the anthropological study of black identity. Her emphasis on the physical body is a powerful and recurring theme in her work, whether in textile, photography, drawing, or collage.





Kandis Williams – “Grief” (2008), collage on paper, 62 in x 35 in.; Courtesy of the artist

### YISHAY GARBASZ

British-Israeli artist **Yishay Garbasz** deals with trauma as it appears in various heated conflict zones worldwide. Her ongoing exhibition *Severed Connection: Do what I say or they will kill you* at **Ronald Feldman Gallery** in New York, presents photographs and installations reflecting on her travels in Korea, the West Bank, and Belfast in particular. The fence, the wall, and the coiled razor wire are powerful motifs in this exhibition, as she looks at the way governments create cultures of fear to sever connections between people.



Yishay

*Garbasz – Severed Connections (2015) Installation view at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York; Photo: Casey Dorobek, Courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York*

Though being a trans lesbian does not define the works in her current exhibition, Garbasz has also chronicled her physical transition in *Becoming* (2010), a flipbook featuring 28 images of her nude body taken over 28 weeks, displayed in the second largest zoetrope in the world. Garbasz's emphasizes the complicated relationship she has had with certain feminisms – specifically those with transphobic tendencies – and instead makes clear that her feminist perspective is decidedly intersectional: the struggle that her work embodies goes beyond the one-sided concern with women's rights towards a more holistic understanding of feminism as it intersects with issues of race, sexual orientation, class, and ability.

## HANNAH BLACK

**Hannah Black** is a writer and an artist, whose work focusses on philosophical approaches to marxist anti-capitalism and feminism. Her writing for the *New Inquiry* has gained a cult following, as her command of language both literary and theoretical is a rare pleasure to read.



*Hannah Black, portrait; Courtesy of the artist*

Black's visual works are often buttressed with text, her most lauded medium. Her fluidity between media makes her oeuvre all-encompassing, with themes of class, race, and sexuality intersecting throughout. In one video work, 'My Bodies', she presents a hilarious mash up of pop songs and corporate culture, as stuffy white men appear against the audio backdrop of R&B songs with the lyric 'my body.' Through this piece, she looks at the body as a "vector of domination" and questions the ways in which certain bodies – particularly those of white heterosexual males – have come to be privileged over others.

*Hannah Black – "My Bodies"; Courtesy of the artist*

## HITO STEYERL

Established and prolific artist and filmmaker **Hito Steyerl** has been teaching at the UdK for many years, and her research interests cover cultural globalisation, feminism, migration and racism. Alongside her video work 'In Free Fall' (2015), at a group exhibition on Accelerationism at **Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler** in 2013, Steyerl left a small yet powerful intervention in the description of her piece: "The author wishes to personally insult anyone attracted by accelerationism by calling it a bout of dead white Ferrari envy, dripping from head to toe with stale testosterone." This kind of biting and astute commentary is typical of Steyerl's work, as she's become famous for theoretical and critical narration of her at the same time aesthetically brilliant films.





Hito

*Steyerl – “Factory Of The Sun” (2015), film still; copyright of the artist*

Steyerl is currently part of the German Pavilion at the **Venice Biennale**, where her film ‘The Factory of the Sun’ has gained considerable critical acclaim. The film is a collage of the digital information age presented with dry wit, as she pastes together everything from mock commercials to Deutsche Bank drones, using motion capture technologies to mediate the interaction between the human body and the virtual.

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***Alison Hugill** has a Master’s in Art Theory from Goldsmiths College, University of London (2011). Her research focuses on marxist-feminist politics and aesthetic theories of community, communication and communism. Alison is an editor, writer and curator based in Berlin. [www.alisonhugill.com](http://www.alisonhugill.com)*

# Yishay Garbasz: 'Ritual and Reality'

MARCH 6, 2014



Video image of a roadblock near the Fukushima nuclear plant in Japan, in Yishay Garbasz's show at Ronald Feldman.  
Credit: Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York

## Art in Review

By KEN JOHNSON

*Ronald Feldman Fine Arts  
31 Mercer Street  
SoHo  
Through March 22*

It was almost three years ago, on March 11, 2011, that a tsunami hit the nuclear power plant in Fukushima, Japan, causing the world's worst nuclear accident since the Chernobyl disaster of 1986. Afterward, about 80,000 people living closest to the plant were evacuated, leaving a toxic no man's land. This is the subject of [Yishay Garbasz's videos and photographs](#), which she made during a three-week tour of the so-called "[exclusion zone](#)" in 2013.

Ms. Garbasz's five eerily matter-of-fact videos depict intersections in abandoned towns and a country road with the power plant visible in the distance. Each is a single nine-to-12-minute take. Only blinking overhead traffic lights, the swaying of windblown shrubbery and an occasional passing truck tell you that these are actually moving images. The incessant beeping you hear is the sound of Ms. Garbasz's personal Geiger counter registering ambient radiation.

The large color photographs in a separate gallery resemble images you can see online by lots of other photographers who were drawn to the exclusion zone. They document temporary housing for evacuees, stacks of radioactive dirt in plastic bags, a ruined greenhouse and other signs of life interrupted.

Because Ms. Garbasz's works are so understated, the enormity of what they represent may be lost on casual viewers. It's essential that you use the gallery-provided headphones and audio guide, in which you hear the artist describing her experience as well as the broader ongoing story of the disaster's [aftermath](#). Her engaging, meditative voice sounds a lot like [Werner Herzog's](#), and what she says is profoundly sobering.

A version of this review appears in print on March 7, 2014, on page C30 of the New York edition with the headline: Yishay Garbasz: 'Ritual and Reality'.

# 10 Transgender Artists Who Are Changing The Landscape Of Contemporary Art

by Priscilla Frank

03/26/2014

Working in an array of artistic media including photography, video, sculpture, classical music and the spoken word, transgender artists are sharing their stories and experiences, their trauma and hope, their pasts and futures -- on their own terms. Whether defining themselves as transgender, gender variant, transfeminine or gender failure, the following artists challenge our current understandings of identity while paving the way for a more aware and accepting future.

With skill, bravery, humor and passion, the following artists interpret transgender life in radically different ways, revealing the infinitely multifaceted reality of the trans experience. The following artistic forces have contributed immensely to the growing transgender presence in the art world and thus in the greater cultural consciousness. Behold, 10 trans artists who are radically changing the landscape of contemporary art.

## 1. Tona Brown





Brown is a mezzo soprano vocalist and violinist based in Baltimore, Maryland. Brown began playing the violin at the age of 10 years old and was partaking in competitions at 14. Brown, who referred to herself as an "androgynous" child, channels masculine and feminine qualities in her voice to give it its unique character. As Baltimore Vocal Arts Foundation founder Robyn Stevens said, "It's very powerful, with the cartilage and larynx of a man, but with a feminine quality. The timbre is unique."

Brown became the first transgender to perform for a living president when she sang the National Anthem to Barack Obama and is currently working to secure a \$3,500 deposit to become the first trans woman to sing at Carnegie Hall during LGBT Pride Month. "I would want nothing more than to sing and or play on the greatest stages and concert halls around the world," she told The Huffington Post.

## 2. Heather Cassils



Heather Cassils, 'Becoming an Image' Performance Still No. 1, Edgy Women Festival, Montreal 2013  
(artworks © Heather Cassils; photographs by the artist and Alejandro Santiago)

While some view transgender identity as crossing from one gender to another, Cassils breaks down binaries to create a vision of continuous -- and sometimes slippery -- becoming. "I use my physical body as sculptural mass to rupture societal norms," Cassils stated to HuffPost. "Drawing on conceptualism, feminism, body art, gay male aesthetics, and Hollywood cinema, I forge a series of powerfully trained bodies for different performative and formal purposes. It is with sweat, blood and sinew that I construct a visual critique and discourse around physical and gender ideologies and histories." In the work above Cassils attacked a 2,000-pound clay block with kicks and blows in complete darkness, the happening occasionally illuminated by a photographer's flash. The piece, dubbed "Becoming an Image," grapples with issues of evidence, documentation and memory.

### 3. Yishay Garbasz



Golf driving range, Mukaihata, Okuma-machi, Futaba, Fukushima Nuclear Exclusion Zone, 2014

Garbasz's work simultaneously explores her mother's experiences as a Jewish Holocaust survivor and the artist's own personal journey with gender identity. Much of Garbasz's work revolves around the pain of trauma and the beauty that comes with reconciliation, such as her work in the Fukushima Nuclear Exclusion Zone. "My journey through the physical and spiritual reality of Fukushima is part of a life-long quest to explore and document spaces that were affected by trauma," she explained. "My explorations focus on places that are mostly forgotten and traumas whose physical signs have been erased or are invisible. These places are in fact home to a new reality. It is at this intersection where my work takes place."

### 4. Cooper Lee Bombardier



Bombardier is a visual artist, writer, illustrator and performer, whose past jobs include construction worker, cook, carpenter, union stagehand, welder, shop steward, dishwasher, truck driver and

housepainter. "As a writer and an artist I am interested in exploring hinterlands and uncovering subjugated knowledges," Bombardier said. "My creative work is concerned with themes of gender, masculinity and manhood; survival, resiliency, and healing; juxtapositions of culture and identity; and the physical experience and positioning of the queer body in the world; labor and how what we do for money shapes who we are. My work is about journeys: on the road, in community; of body and heart; and the never-ending search to know oneself."

## 5. Amos Mac



Mac is a Brooklyn-based artist who captures striking and playful images of gender non-conforming people, capturing their entire beings rather than solely their gender identities. "Inspired by teen magazines, vintage 'Physique Pictorials' and celebrity fan circulations, I construct artful representations of trans and gender non-conforming people," he wrote to HuffPost. "Often colorful and exuberant, humor and camp (stock queer motifs) permeate my work. Rather than examining transgender bodies or documenting 'transition,' I'm concerned with manifesting the bold wholeness of my subjects."

## 6. Rae Spoon



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=1P7T93rrU7I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=1P7T93rrU7I)



Spoon is a musician and author whose sound fluctuates from acoustic country folk to electric indie pop. Growing up in an evangelical Christian home in conservative Alberta, Spoon began making music as a means of escape. According to Spoon's website, "'My Prairie Home,' Rae Spoon's latest album, explores the meaning of home when it is no longer a place one can return to." With lyrics including "Lesbian, gay, bisexual/ Transgender and transsexual/ It's better to ask if you don't know/ A message from the Queer Trans Prairie Tourism Co," the songs address LGBT issues with humor and hope. Spoon teamed up with director Chelsea McMullan to create the documentary-musical "My Prairie Home," which debuted at Sundance. "Whatever I am trying to communicate with my work," Spoon explained, "I want my audience to sense that I am thinking about them and how they experience my music and writing."

## **7. & 8. Zackary Drucker and Rhys Ernst**



Drucker and Ernst are two transgender artists who have documented their romantic relationship and gender transitions through a stunning photo series entitled "Relationship." The works, which are currently on view at the Whitney Biennial, interlace banal moments of coupledness with shots that reveal more intimate details of gender transition, privileging neither. "This series of photographs represented a return to photography for both of us, and is simultaneously an extension of our narrative film-making practices," Drucker wrote to HuffPost. "It is the real-life film of our 'romance collaboration.' Our bodies are a microcosm of the greater external world-transitions or shifts that we, as humanity, are looking at in 2014. As our earth transitions from abundance into depletion and the decay of our environment. As we move from institutionalized patriarchy to gender equality, and from heterosexist social structures to a more polymorphous spectrum of sexuality." On being an artist, Ernst added, "I'm happiest creating things -- using my intuition and creativity and I think it's because I come from a family of artists and thinkers. I couldn't image it being any other way."

## 8. Ivan Coyote



Photo credit Adam P.W. Smith

Coyote started off singing in a lesbian folk band before realizing she preferred the banter between songs to the actual singing. She now combines music, storytelling, performance poetry and monologue in a singular practice. In her words: "I've never really been much into labels. I am interested in telling stories from the little niche that I have carved out for myself outside of the established gender binary, in the 'not really' space between male and female. I am writing myself down so I can find myself later." She's currently working with Rae Spoon on a multi-media performance and accompanying book called "Gender Failure." Check out her beautiful and hilarious "To all of the kick ass, beautiful fierce femmes out there" on Youtube.

## 9. Wu Tsang



<http://vimeo.com/38857998>

Tsang, who identifies as "transfeminine and transguy," is a Chinese-Swedish-American video artist whose work combines activism, community organizing and the art of the party. At 25 years old Tsang opened up a weekly club night at the LA immigrant gay bar Silver Platter, which he called "Wildness." Tsang documented the mixing of communities as artists and punks mingled with the Latino drag community, questioning the meaning of a "safe space."

A film based on the experiment, also called "Wildness," was praised at Sundance and the 2012 Whitney Biennial. "In my art and as a person, I just tend to be OK with contradiction," Tsang told The L.A. Times.



# Yishay Garbasz

ritual and reality . 2014

Staff. "Yishay Garbasz: Ritual and Reality." *Afasia*. March 14, 2014.  
<http://afasiaarg.blogspot.com/2014/03/yishay-garbasz.html>



fukushima prefectural ono hospital in the nuclear exclusion zone, 2014

ronald feldman fine arts

In *Ritual and Reality*, we join Garbasz on her journey through Japan's Fukushima Prefecture, where on March 11, 2011, the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant was hit by a tsunami triggered by the Tohoku earthquake. The resulting catastrophic failure has become the largest nuclear incident since the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. Garbasz's investigation into Fukushima continues her life-long quest to explore and document spaces that have gone through a serious trauma.

Over the course of three weeks, donning protective gear and a Geiger counter, Garbasz travelled the Fukushima Prefecture, predominantly on foot, photographing the abandoned towns that have been taken back by nature because humans have rendered them uninhabitable.

ronald feldman fine arts



abandoned home and car, kumagawa, okuma-machi, futaba, fukushima nuclear exclusion zone, 2014



golf driving range, mukaihata, okuma-machi, futaba, fukushima nuclear exclusion zone, 2014





overgrown garden and greenhouse, tepco single worker accommodation in the background, ono, fukushima nuclear exclusion zone, 2014



storage of nuclear contaminated materials, rte 6, fukushima (former exclusion zone opened in april 2013), 2014

## Interview with Yishay Garbasz

By Tobaron Waxman on March 3, 2013

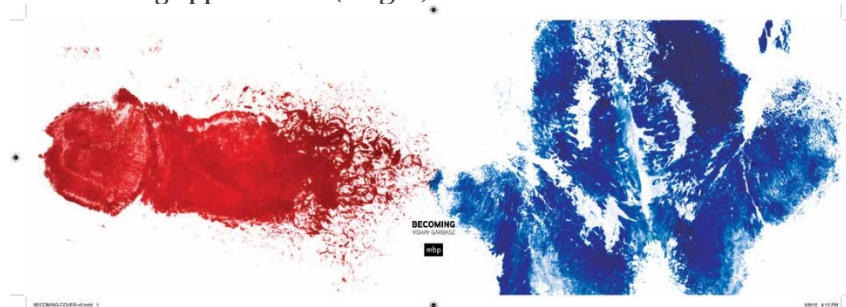
Waxman, Tobaron. "Interview with Yishay Garbasz." *Pretty Queer*. March 3, 2013.  
<http://www.prettyqueer.com/2013/03/03/interview-with-yishay-garbasz/#more-4631>

*Yishay Garbasz was born in 1970 and studied photography at Bard College in New York. She is a Berlin-based British-Israeli artist whose work delves deeply into social and political issues of identity, agency, human rights, and the construction of gender. She has exhibited widely in solo shows in galleries, museums, and photography festivals around the world. "Becoming", a project in which Yisha photographed herself as a standing nude, every week, over the entire course of her SRS, was installed as a zoetrope with 28 images in the 2010 Busan Biennale in Korea. "Becoming" is also available as a flipbook. Garbasz's "In My Mother's Footsteps" (Hatje Cantz, 2009), a riveting contemporary journey through her mother's survival of the Holocaust, was nominated for the German photo book prize and exhibited at Wako Works of Art, Ronald Feldman Fine Art, Norderlicht fotofestival, Chiang Mai Museum of Art, and Tokyo Wonder Site. <http://www.yishay.com>*

YISHAY: I've never given an interview specifically like this. I refused to do it in the past because I am not a trans woman. Another reason that I am weary of this kind of language is something learned from the disability movement experience with language: the usage of "disabled person" versus "person with a disability", where a disability is only a single attribute of the person rather than a qualifier for personhood. "Trans woman" makes the 'trans' the bigger aspect and 'woman' the smaller aspect. I can only speak about my current understanding of myself. I don't philosophise about gender because this is not my strength, my strength is making work, part of which is understanding myself better.

*Yishay Garbasz is the 2013 Hadassah-Brandeis Institute Artist-in-Residence. For the month of April 2013, Yisha will be visiting New York, Boston and surrounding areas to meet and photograph Jewish women of trans experience. Her month-long residency at the Women's Studies Research Center will culminate in a multimedia exhibition of photographs, video and text generated during the residency. Through interviews and portraits, Garbasz will celebrate a segment of the Jewish population that has been little discussed until recently, showing her subjects with their loved ones and families, at their jobs, or in their homes. The exhibition will immediately follow and be on view for a minimum of six weeks at the Kniznick Gallery at the Women's Studies Research Center (WSRC) at Brandeis University. If you would like to be part of this project, please contact "Ms. Yishay Garbasz" <[hbiproject@yishay.com](mailto:hbiproject@yishay.com)>.*

YISHAY: I learned to write at age 25 at Landmark College in the U.S. It's a tiny tiny college. They pretty much did the impossible thing and taught me how to write. I still have horrible struggles with writing, but stuff actually does come out, however painfully and slowly. Which is why it's totally awesome and cool and still blows my mind the fact that I have two books published. Isn't that crazy? ...I struggle for words. That's why I'm a visual artist. That's before anyone told me that being a visual artist is all about writing applications. *(laughs)*



Becoming (book cover image) (Mark Batty pub., 2010) Book cover image composed of two Gyotaku prints in water soluble oils (a traditional style of Japanese rubbing, the contemporary version in which a fisherman makes an imprint of the fish he has caught in order to show its size



**TOBARON:** At your recent opening at Ron Feldman Gallery NYC, I remarked that with both “*Becoming*” (2008-2010), your zoetrope series of selfportraits before and after gender clarification surgery and “*Eat Me, Damien*” (2010), by displaying your formaldehyde protected testicles in the gallery, you have done something that many transpeople might have imagined allegorically, or even joked about – but you’ve actualized the punchline and enacted it.

YISHAY: The “*Eat Me Damien*” piece is really about addressing Damien Hirst and his contemporaries that do this kind of conceptual art, more of an aggressive business model to art making.

What I’m suggesting is that I can use the same conceptual framework, but make a personal artwork and at the same time laugh at them, or point a sarcastic eye at them or whatever. Mostly, it’s a social critique. The piece looks at predatory art practices, predatory commercial practices. There’s a lot of this type of conceptual art making, and this piece is intended, designed and inspired to make you think about that.

**TOBARON:** Yep! I’ve been calling them your ‘kreplach’.



Formaldehyde protected testicles removed during surgery approximately 2 x 1 x 1 inches each (image courtesy of Ronald Feldman fine art)

YISHAY: (*Laughs*) Humour and sarcasm are very lovely tools to use for this end.

I display it in a gallery and museums, so my assumption is a certain level of familiarity with fine art practices. It’s a reference to Damien Hirst’s shark piece, but also a reference to Duchamps as well: readymades. In the beginning I thought of a lot of things to *do with* the testicles, and slowly I started letting go of the idea of doing anything and realized they are already ‘done’ by themselves. They are complete and lacking nothing by themselves. The political aspect of them became more and more apparent, that made it correct.

**TOBARON:** So, have you had any feedback from Damien Hirst ?

YISHAY: Well, no I haven’t brought it to his attention, I was too busy.

**TOBARON:** Right. (*laughs*)

**TOBARON:** Your practice has always been one of immediate physical engagement with time, relationships and context, and you have documented your body and catalogued your physical shifts in a variety of very technically exacting ways. Whether its schlepping that heavy camera to trace a path, and documenting events on that path, or displaying your own body parts, or affecting your own body parts for a gallery setting, this is all very different from having a studio of hired fabricators who make Damien Hirst’s dots or whatever.





Becoming (2008-2010). 5.33 meter Digital C-print. Monthly photograph of 10 pictures before surgery and 10 pictures after. (installation photograph from  
Seven - Miami Art Fair, courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Art)

YISHAY: I'm a very tactile and kinesthetic thinker, this is how I enter things, I enter the world thru a very personal space, thru my heart.

YISHAY: I was born a woman. That's how I was born. If you want to be religious about it, that's how god made me.... I mean, I was born a woman, it's not a big deal. I'm going to die a woman. Now I'm a woman, you know, its not that there aren't many many many amazing other ways to identify, there are and I admire all of them, this is just how *I* am. On a personal note, I actually avoid doing this kind of interview, but I realized it's important.

**TOBARON: Yeah!**

linden1212

YISHAY: I'm an artist. I'm not a trans-artist, I'm not a Jewish artist, just an artist. And I think that's important, a lot of people struggle with gender as something that shapes their life. And that, I think that a lot of the social construct. There's a lot more to life than that. Society constrains a lot of people into very specific things, and if there wasn't a social ostracism they would have much bigger lives. And I think that's part of what this interview is about.



Four Generations/ Wu Family (2007). C-print, 38.3x48.8cm



Four Generations/ Chen Family (2007). C-print, 38.3x48.8cm

**TOBARON:** I've been thinking critically about kinship. Kinship can mean family, kinship can mean some kind of similarities that you have with others.

For “*In My Mothers Footsteps*”, you traced the path your mother took from fleeing Nazis in Germany to the death march itself and even into the gas chambers, carrying a heavy, large format camera. Then in your “*Four Generations*” project you took portraits of intergenerational households. For “*The Numbers Project*” (2011) you are again bearing some of the weight of your mother, so to speak, using branding irons to burn her prison camp tattoo number into your own arm. In your statement about *Footsteps*, you wrote “My mother lost parts of her soul in those places and I had to go back to collect them... As I am a photographer, the camera was going to be my tool to help me see.” I'm wondering about your relationship to notions of family. You mentioned overcoming your dyslexia and learning to write as an adult, within the context of talking about transforming relationships. I was moved to ask you about the process of your own personal changes in embodiment while thinking about Queer women who have complicated relationships to the mother.



Footsteps (24) from *In My Mother's Footsteps* (2004-2009). C-print and text 32 7/8 x 50 3/4 inches

**YISHAY:** My experience has changed, when I did ‘*In My Mothers Footsteps*’ that was a solitary project. I sometimes would go days and weeks without speaking and as a person just immersed in my practice of walking, and seeing, and seeing what is there and seeing myself. That was 7 years of that kind of practice. And when I went to Taiwan it was on one hand wanting to see what it looks like to have grandparents, because my grandparents were murdered in the Holocaust. On the

other hand it became also a transformative learning experience because in Asia community is thought of differently. You, in your religious training would know *chevruta*. I found that in rural, *rural*/Taiwan. I experienced that to an amazing degree, that changed me. In small villages, mostly with aboriginal people mostly Hakka 客家. That's when you are part of the community: basically you go to eat when everybody's hungry. Not when you're hungry, but when everybody's hungry. When I went to photograph the houses, sometimes there would be up to 9 people going with me, to create community around me. Because how else would I be able to be, without a community? And I've learned a lot from that. I'm still learning from that. It's being taken care of in a very nurturing and fundamental way, not that there were no problems with that, there are, but it was so different from my experience beforehand.

One of the things that happened, from *Footsteps*, was that it increased my capacity to love.

I came into the project with a lot of anger and hurt. And it looked at the inheritance of post traumatic memories. By facing that, by chance, it also increased my ability to love.



Footsteps (34) from *In My Mother's Footsteps* (2004-2009). C-print and text 32 7/8 x 50 3/4 inches



Footsteps (62) from *In My Mother's Footsteps* (2004-2009). C-print and text 32 7/8 x 50 3/4 inches





Footsteps (48) from In My Mother's Footsteps (2004-2009). C-print and text 32 7/8 x 50 3/4 inches



Footsteps (33) from In My Mother's Footsteps, (2004-2009). C-print and text 32 7/8 x 50 3/4 inches



Footsteps (40) from In My Mother's Footsteps (2004-2009). C-print and text 32 7/8 x 50 3/4 inches

Weird things happen when you begin a project. You have your idea of what the project is, then you have to let go of that and surrender to the project and let the project take you where it wants to take you. It took me on many wild turns. And the project with the 4 generations in the same house, again, and it happened in a very different place. When it got to the number project, that project directly deals with love, and its really weird because you see a branding iron, and branding – what does that have to do with love? I'm not smart enough to answer that, I just know my feelings, and that's what happened.

In the *Numbers* project I branded my mother's Auschwitz number on my arm. It was the first time I had ever done body modification. I have my ears pierced but no tattoos and no other interesting piercings. For the first month of wearing it it was really hard for me. Not even wearing it, having it was really hard for me and I had a lot of trouble adjusting to it. The second month I would keep touching it for reassurance and connection, . I learned how to do the branding from one of my partners, my beloved. I kept finding excuses it should be next week and not this week, until my partner said hey, why aren't you doing the project? And I released that I was really scared.

This is part of what is has to do with love.

Also, it has to do with my other partner, I branded her with the number of my grandmother. And this is not a small thing it was quite a bit of discussion before hand. But that process all the barriers between us vanished. And I'm not saying this lightly, it really changed everything between us. (*long pause*) Even thinking about it is emotional.



Close Up, Day 9. (2011) From The Number Project. Digital C-print, 26 5/8 x 40 inches

It's a huge act of love, on both sides.

It's not a tattoo, but it is permanent in its own way.

**TOBARON: To whom do you need it to be visible?**

YISHAY: To myself. I would like it to be stronger. I'm worried that it wont be permanent. I really like that it's permanent. When I do it, means that I have taken this person into my life, in a permanent way. I want to address the number, and I want to address the issue of memory, and the issue of dehumanization.

I don't want to appropriate the Auschwitz number tattoo. We all have a visual memory of Auschwitz tattoos. The number that is blue on skin. I don't want to take away from it, if I used any ink, it would interfere with that memory. I'm very



specific with my artistic intent. I want to look at the number. I want to make sure that the person who was dehumanized with this specific number is remembered. I took my mothers number, because she died, but her number is part of my life, I will carry it for ever, that is not dead. It did not dehumanize her, it caused post traumatic memory, but I'm changing it, I'm owning it. It is my number now, nobody else's. It is my number.



Six Used Brands from The Number Project (2011). Wire and metal brands sculpted by the artist, 6 inches each



The Number Project (2011) Installation documentation. Brands, video, run time 4 minutes. (installation view courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Art)

It's less to do with carrying the number as it has to do with changing it. This number was used as a tool to dehumanize her and I'm changing it into a tool of making me more human, making her more human and the memory more human.

I'm being active, I'm not being passive. Do you understand the strength that is required to be able to do this to yourself. And its not done once, its done letter by letter. So there's a lot of opportunities to regret, and to stop. You see the red hot, and you have a second and half to put it on your body. The hardest part is not the pain but seeing this read hot thing and your mind saying NO. This is an act of asserting ownership and will.

*This interview is an excerpt from Tobaron Waxman's forthcoming book, "Trans women Artists: interviews with artists on the MTF spectrum" with forward by Susan Stryker (forthcoming 2014).*

## COMING SOON

### COMING HOME: Portraits of Jewish Women by Yishay Garbasz

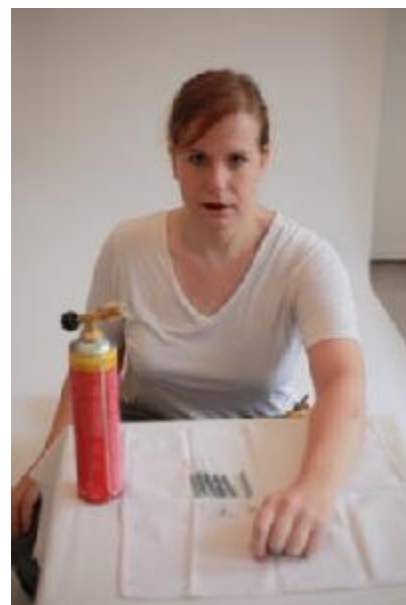
**April 30 - June 14, 2013**

Berlin-based, Israeli artist Yishay Garbasz has been selected as the fifth annual Hadassah-Brandeis Institute Artist-in-Residence. Her month-long residency at the Women's Studies Research Center will culminate in a multimedia exhibition of photographs, video and text celebrating Jewish women who identify as transgender. Through interviews and portraits, Garbasz will give voice to a segment of the Jewish population that has been little discussed, showing her subjects with their loved ones and families, at their jobs, or in their homes. The artist says that "by showing that these individuals are part of relationships that are familiar to us, it is the first step toward [creating] a larger, more diverse Jewish community."

While her Brandeis installation will explore the intersection between Jewishness and gender, it will also tackle larger issues of identity, agency, and human rights, topics that have recurred in Garbasz's work for several years. In her project "My Mother's Footsteps," she traced her mother's path from her birthplace in Berlin to Holland to Westerbork and eventually to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, where she was liberated by British forces. Her photographs and accompanying text have been exhibited internationally and are now available in a book by the same name (Hatje Cantz, 2009). In "Becoming," which has been exhibited and also published as a flip book, Garbasz courageously documents her own transformation from male to female, photographing her body every week to chronicle its gradual transformation.



Yishay Garbasz was born in Israel and studied photography in New York at Bard College. She has exhibited internationally, including at the 2010 Busan Biennale in Korea, as well as in Tokyo, Berlin, Bangkok, New York, and Taiwan. Her book "In My Mother's Footsteps" was nominated for the German Photo Book Prize in 2009.



*The 2013 HBI Artist-in-Residence Program is made possible thanks to the generous support of Arnie and Walter Winshall.*

### Related Events

#### Opening Reception

**Tuesday, April 30 from 5-7:30 p.m.**

Artist's remarks around 6 p.m.

#### Artist's Slide Talk: Yishay Garbasz

**Tuesday, April 16 at 2:30 p.m. (Please note time correction)**

Garbasz works on multimedia art works exploring trauma, identity, memory and gender. Her work has been exhibited all over the world, including at the 2010 Busan Biennale in South Korea. Garbasz's slide talk will highlight recent projects and examine the role of the artist in social change.

#### Trauma and Ritual: A Workshop

**Thursday, April 25 from 3-5 p.m.**

HBI Artist-in-Residence Yishay Garbasz will facilitate a participatory workshop on trauma and the rituals we create in our daily lives and our art practices to explore and move through trauma. The session will incorporate breathing and meditation, observation, drawing, journaling, and discussion, and is designed for anyone interested in exploring this subject matter with an open mind. No artistic experience is required. **The program is free, but please RSVP by April 19 6pm at [mlheur@brandeis.edu](mailto:mlheur@brandeis.edu).**

## On the role of the artist in promoting social change

Garbasz explores trauma, identity, memory and gender as HBI artist-in-residence



Yishay Garbasz

By Michele L'Heureux

April 15, 2013

Berlin-based Israeli artist Yishay Garbasz has been selected as the fifth annual **Hadassah-Brandeis Institute** artist-in-residence.

Garbasz' multimedia art works explore trauma, identity, memory and gender. Her work has been exhibited all over the world, including at the 2010 **Busan Biennale** in South Korea.

The first of her public programs at Brandeis will be a slide talk about her recent projects and, more broadly, the role of the artist in promoting social change. The talk will be at 12:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 16, at the **Women's Studies Research Center**.

As a major focus of the residency, Garbasz is creating an installation entitled "Coming Home: Portraits of Jewish Women" that will celebrate Jewish women who identify as transgender. This exhibition will be in the research center's Kniznick Gallery from May 1 through June 14.

Through interviews and portraits, Garbasz aims to give voice to a segment of the Jewish population that has been little discussed until recently, showing her subjects with their loved ones and families, at their jobs, or in their homes. The artist says that "by showing that these individuals are part of relationships that are familiar to us, it is the first step toward [creating] a larger, more diverse Jewish community."

While her Brandeis installation will explore the intersection between Jewishness and gender, it will also tackle larger issues of identity, agency and human rights, topics that have recurred in Garbasz's work for several years.

In her project "My Mother's Footsteps," she traced her mother's path from her birthplace in Berlin to Holland to Westerbork and eventually to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, from which her mother was liberated by British forces.

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「1928年、私はドイツのベルリンで生まれた」  
写真集『母の足跡』は、サラのこの言葉から始まる。  
娘のイシャイは、この事実を18歳になるまで知らなかった

## Picture Power

**ホ**ロコースト（ユダヤ人大虐殺）を記録する——写真家のイシャイ・ガルのイシャイ・ガルの生存者でトラウマを背負う母サラを十分に理解できず愛せずいた。だが父の遺言でサラが95年に記したホロコーストの体験記を読み決意する。「トラウマの連鎖を私で止める。別の形に変換して、もう誰にも受け継がせない」

04年、イシャイは母の戦時中の足跡をたどる旅に出た。ドイツのベルリンから、オランダ、ポーランド、チェコ、そしてまたドイツへ……。丸1年かけて5つの収容所や死の行進の現場などを訪れ、「母が置き去りにしてきた魂の断片を拾い集める」ようにカメラに収めた。その写真一枚一枚にサラの回想録の抜粋を添えて完成させたのが、写真集『母の足跡』だ。イシャイは言う。母の記憶を追体験するうち、「母に対する怒りは、愛に変換されていった」。

出版前の手製の写真集を受け取ったサラは、何か言いたげだが言葉が見つからない様子だった。その2週間後、サラは他界した。わずかな時間ではあったが『母の足跡』を1冊ずつめくるたび、サラもまた娘の足跡を追体験し、多くを理解したに違いない。

N

アウシュビッツ・ビルケナウのナチスドイツ強制収容所(ポーランド)に着いたとき、サラは15歳だった。当時をこう回想している。「『逃げ、逃げ、出る、出る』という叫び声が聞こえた。押し合いながら、悲痛も聞いた。私たちは2列に並ばされ、男性は女性から離された」

In My Mother's Footsteps

# ホロコーストを生きた母の足跡

PHOTOGRAPHS BY YISHAY GARBASZ







死の行進を経てサラがたどり着いた  
ドイツのベルゲン・ベルゼン。  
ここにあった収容所で、衰弱し切ったサラは  
イギリス軍によって解放された。  
撮影当時も、イラク出兵前の英軍が講堂を使用していた

戦後、サラは2人の姉と共にイスラエルに移住。  
同じくホロコーストを生き延びた  
ポーランド人のジャックと結婚し、  
息子2人と娘1人(イシャイ)を儲けた。  
収容所生活で片時も離れることのなかった  
姉ミンナとサラの自宅は、わずか10分の距離だった

**撮影:イシャイ・ガルバシュ**  
イスラエル生まれ。本作では、大型カメラを使用することにより、撮影に時間をかけ、過去の出来事と、じっくりと向き合った。納得がいくまで何度も現地に足を運んだ。ベルリン在住



死の行進でサラが歩いたチェコのマリエンバートにある通り。  
数多くの町や村の大通りを歩いたが、  
「どの町でも、私たちに目を留めたり、助けたり食べ物を与えようとする人は  
いなかった。何千もの人々が私たちを見たのだけれど」



グロース・ローゼン強制収容所の付属収容所、クリスチャンスタード。  
45平方キロの敷地に11の収容施設があり、  
ナチスドイツ最大の地下兵器製造所だったといわれる。  
現在、一部がポーランド軍のキャンプとして使用されている



爆弾などの兵器を製造していたとされるクリスチャンスタード。  
「収容されていた女性の多くが急に体調を崩していった。周囲の工場で使われているさまざまな化学薬品のせいだった」。  
サラも体調を崩していたが、女性警備兵の計らいで診察を受け、一時休ませてもらったこともあるという





Staff. "Best Basel Headline Grab – 2012." *Miami New Times*, June 2012. <http://www.miaminewtimes.com/bestof/2012/award/best-basel-headline-grab-3315540/>

## **Best Basel Headline Grab - 2012**

### **Yishay Garbasz**

From a drug-filled coffin at a satellite fair to a naked artist lying in the mud with a pair of hogs in a local gallery window, the tenth-anniversary edition of Art Basel featured plenty of weird art to compete with the high-priced masterpieces at the Miami Beach Convention Center. But if there was one artist this past December whose opus raised the bar on headline grabbing, it was Yishay Garbasz's cringe-inducing installation at the Seven Art Fair. The Israeli-born, Berlin-based artist typically explores issues of gender in her work. At Seven, the Bard College-educated photographer presented an arresting suite of self-portraits snapped over the course of a year documenting her gradual transformation through surgery and hormone treatment from man into woman. The powerful pictures, exploring a typically taboo subject, were visceral and compelling in their honesty. But what left tongues wagging was the artist's display of her post-op testicles floating in a jar.

## Seven Art Fair to Return to Art Basel Miami Beach

Rozalia Jovanovic



Seven is returning to Miami. (Photo courtesy Seven)

"Seven in Wynwood is definitely on the map," said Magda Sawon of Postmasters Gallery to *Gallerist*, confirming that the mini art fair involving just seven galleries is indeed happening this year during Art Basel Miami Beach.

The usual suspects will be in tow, namely Postmasters Gallery, Pierogi Gallery, Hales Gallery, Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, BravinLee Programs, P.P.O.W. and Winkleman Gallery, returning to Miami for the third iteration of the fair, which, with its do-it-yourself vibe, is a mellow and manageable counterpoint to the Art Basel circus—just in size, that is. We expect the art will turn some heads, as it did last year with such works as *Eat Me, Damien* (2010), British-Israeli artist Yishay Garbasz's contribution, a \$1.2 million jar of preserved testicles.

While Seven will retain its pop-up feel, the galleries are still in negotiations for a site, which will be in a "big building" located in the Wynwood neighborhood of Miami. And to sweeten the deal for fair-goers, Seven organizers are also considering inviting some special, non-gallery, guests for the fair. Pray tell!



Yishay Garbasz

WAKO WORKS OF ART

Piramide Bldg 3F, 6-6-9 Roppongi, Minato-ku, 26481;  
April 11–May 16



Yishay Garbasz, *Many Women in the Camp Started Suffering from Seizures*, 2003–2004, color photograph, 19 x 24". From the series "In My Mother's Footsteps," 2003–2004.

Some in Japan, on learning of photographer Yishay Garbasz's Tokyo exhibition, with its images of Nazi death camps, wondered whether her work would only recapitulate the many series already documenting the Holocaust. But the combination of Garbasz's photos and her mother's narrative is a very different story: "In My Mother's Footsteps" quietly reveals Garbasz's search for her identity as a child of Holocaust survivors.

Garbasz's mother, Salla, who never spoke of her Holocaust experiences during the artist's youth, much later gave her child a ten-thousand-word account of her experiences. Garbasz was ultimately motivated to retrace her mother's footsteps through the five concentration camps Salla survived. With a large-format view camera, 150 pounds of equipment, and narrative in hand, Garbasz set out on a yearlong journey, from 2004 to 2005, to photograph all the sites and their environs. Her mother passed away in 2006, about two weeks after Garbasz gave her a handmade book of the work. Garbasz has said the process liberated her from the debilitating post-traumatic stress she inherited from her family and enabled her to finally identify with her mother.

Poignant and beautifully photographed, Garbasz's images are paradoxically incongruous and comforting—rail lines that carried Salla to Auschwitz, hidden in a weed-covered backyard; a road she walked during the infamous Bergen-Belsen death march, bordered by an opulent gold-painted hotel; an attic room she shared with her grief-stricken family, now decorated with green dots. In Salla's narrative, the lack of emotion speaks volumes about her broken soul. Garbasz has transformed her broken inheritance into a joy for life, with a collaboration that speaks the unspeakable.

## Die Kulturzeit-Tipps in Kürze

### Die Sendung vom 12.10.2006

#### Absolute Wilson



Der Dokumentarfilm "Absolute Wilson" ist Künstlerporträt und Hommage zugleich. I Mittelpunkt steht der visionäre Regisseur und Produzent Robert Wilson, der seit 40 Jahren die internationale Theater- und Opernszene prägt. Mit Produktionen wie

"Einstein On The Beach" von 1976 wurde der Workaholic Wilson zum Theaterguru. "Absolute Wilson" von Katharina Otto-Bernstein ist ab dem 12. Oktober 2006 in den deutschen Kinos zu sehen, ab Dezember in der Schwei

#### Film

"Absolute Wilson"  
USA/Deutschland 2006  
Regie: Katharina Otto-Bernstein  
Kinostart D: 12.10.2006  
Kinostart CH: 14.12.2006

#### The Fence



Berlin Mitte hat jetzt einen Ort für politisch Fotografie: Die "Cicero-Galerie", geschäft vom gleichnamigen Polit-Magazin, wurde am 11. Oktober von Kulturstatsminister Bernd Neumann eröffnet. Thema der Eröffnungsausstellung ist die israelische

Absperrung der Palästinensergebiete: Die Bilder der Reihe "The Fence" wurden von dem britisch-israelischen Fotografen Yishay Garbasz fotografiert. Bereits 2004 hatte er begonnen, die Sperranlage aufzunehmen und als Israeli mit britischem Pass gelang es ihm, die Absperrung von beiden Seiten zu dokumentieren. Die "Cicero-Galerie" ist ab dem 12. Oktober 2006 geöffnet.

#### Ausstellung

"The Fence"  
Cicero Galerie, Berlin  
bis 15.01.2007

#### Effi Briest



Theodor Fontanes Roman "Effi Briest" wird in Wien als Bühnenversion gezeigt. Sand Schüddekopf hat die Geschichte einer Effi im Burgtheater als kleines und beachtlich Kammerspiel mit zwei überzeugenden Schauspielern in Szene gesetzt. Die

nächste Vorstellung findet im Wiener Burgtheater am 19. Oktober 2006 statt.

#### Theater

"Effi Briest"  
Burgtheater, Wien  
19.10., 03., 04., 29., 30.11.2006