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## Against the Grain: Brushing History through Printmaking

The project *Under the Press of History* explores the manners in which the past destabilizes the present. It further examines art as a domain of deconstruction and ruin, and at the same time, as one of restoration, recovery and restructuring. In the framework of the project, Ilit Azoulay, Maya Zack, Merav Salomon, Gil Yefman, Moshe Roas and Ruth Schreiber were invited to the Jerusalem Print Workshop to create print works dealing with courses of history and memory processes.

Contrary to art's desire to be unique, to be recognized as an event encompassed by the aura of singularity and uniqueness, the printmaking medium was initially founded upon the reproduction and replication of images, representations and texts. Reproduction, today performed digitally, shatters art's value as a sole event and immortalizes the simulacrum – the unoriginal existence of a reproduction in the world of books, films, posters, products of consumption and more. However, an inseparable part of a work of art and of its power is the need to constantly be observed and studied. For the past thousands of years, art's presence has depended upon different means of reproduction, which have empowered it and helped it become an operating entity in the world.

As photography and later cinema were invented, printmaking, a medium that great masters of the past like Dürer, Rembrandt, Blake and Goya employed to create some of their most extraordinary and original works, was acquitted of its traditional role as the only means of reproducing copies. Modernism gave printmaking another chance to serve a double role as both a medium that produces singular, experimental and groundbreaking works and as a reproduction technique used to create works without an





original. In his renowned essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", Walter Benjamin pointed at this process, which has enabled printmaking to examine the "aura" concept – the religious or secular ritualist uniqueness and sacredness embedded in the work of art – in a dynamic critical-political manner, and to implement its conceptual relevancy as well as its ability to contain new ideas. Printmaking functioned as both a traditional and avant-garde medium with regard to the Second World War, and as a milestone in the Pop and conceptual art revolution of the 1960's and 1970's. Today, in the period after postmodernism, often described as the meta-modern era, printmaking is alive and kicking, fluctuating between modern strategies of experimentalism and a practicality that contains both nostalgia and irony, as can be seen in this project. In his essay "Theses on the Philosophy of History", Benjamin writes: "to articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was.'" Time and again, the historian must liberate tradition and appropriate memory in order to understand the present and face its dangers, for as Benjamin claims, "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another. A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain."<sup>1</sup> The tradition of advancement is based on continuity, the negation of the previous phase and the transmission of the singularity that projects from it, as Ariella Azoulay elaborates in her essay on Benjamin. According to Azoulay, the art history discipline constitutes a paradigmatic example of this claim, for it focuses

on a continuum of singular works that differ from all those that precede them. "Benjamin confronted this tradition, seeking a new tradition, where the transmitted would become a different kind of organizer, a 'reproducible' organizer that removes the transmitted from the continuum and reshapes it so that it appears as a fragment of the continuum."<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the reproducibility of printmaking does not necessarily void works of meaning, but rather enables artists to create a cutoff in the continuum and to consider the idea of repetition and reproduction as a formal basis and a conceptual means of examining history within the framework of the "now", and to better understand the role of the past in the present, as in the case before us.

A central part of the Workshop's activity is initiating projects, in which artists from various practices are invited to confront current affairs – ideological, materialistic, aesthetic or political – by means of the printmaking medium, and to examine the discipline itself, its boundaries, significations and current role in art. Intrinsic to the participating artists' work is facing private and collective histories, which come into being as illusions, phantoms, theatrical images or forms of undefined traumas. They thus compel the spectators to observe the underlying processes that structure their being and the society in which they live. In their work in general, these artists deal with reconstruction of personal or collective histories and present cultural and materialistic narratives. **Ilit Azoulay** reworks photographic materials, examining their ability to document and preserve memory by forming new hybrid and surreal environments. **Maya Zack** is a multidisciplinary artist who combines video, drawing and sculpturing to study the Jewish memory and its historical, social and cultural facets. **Gil Yefman** processes traumatic images from the Holocaust and restructures them in order to propose a new observation of the way the overflow of histories, our visual and iconic culture and the "documented material" it produces dull our threshold of sensitivity and humanism. **Merav Salomon** faces questions of fate, coincidence and

history from a feminine perspective, creating an archive of images and words alongside macabre allegories. **Moshe Roas**, originally a textile designer, studies the archeology and traces of matter by decomposing and reassembling it anew. This is performed in a continuous process of relentless movement between the two-dimensional and three-dimensional, between the figurative and the abstract, between the functional and the symbolic. **Ruth Schreiber** evokes texts and objects from a lost childhood in the shadow of the Second World War. She digs up her family history and finds tools, letters and images, which she takes apart and reassembles.

The project began in 2013, when the artists started working at the Workshop, and ended in the summer of 2016, before the opening of the exhibition. During this time, the artists produced different bodies of art, with the assistance of master printers from the various Workshop departments, the exhibition curator and the Workshop director. The exhibition spreads over the Workshop's two galleries and comprises spaces that constitute instillations, where each artist displays prints created at the Workshop, as well as additional works in other media. The spaces generate a dialogue between the different oeuvres. An unprecedented collaboration formulated during the project between the etching and screenprinting departments, in light of the involvement of the master printers – Ran Segal, Yoav Raban, Eitan Hurwitz and Wanja Schaub – in decisions regarding the exhibition content and in the spatial, detailed dialogue with the artists. The etching department's master printer, Ran Segal, stated: "Humans are dissatisfied with our world; they seek to create additional worlds. Over the past four years I have passed between different artists, between different worlds. The long timeframe enabled us to linger, a world... matter is accumulated, diminished, etched. A world ... a shadow gathers images. A world... a mother, a father, ashes are measured, a world... catastrophes colored in threes. As Albert Camus wrote, 'the world always ends up vanquishing history.' Without lingering, without the traces essential to the printmaking process, nothing new would be created, nothing real."<sup>3</sup>

## Ilit Azoulay

Ilit Azoulay uses a micro camera designed to capture an area of only one square centimeter to photograph places, objects, and fragments of objects that are usually overlooked, and sometimes even photos of images appearing in books or journals, in order to "revive" them, turning them into an event. By using this technique, Azoulay turns the photographic process into a photomontage composed of a systematic scanning of the fragments and angles of an object. The different components are then stitched together digitally to create a single whole image. In this long process, Azoulay seeks to negate the photographer's point of view, as well as the "Decisive Moment", a concept that emphasizes the importance of the conditions under which a photograph is taken: the specific composition and the captured moment in time. Azoulay proposes the contrary – an after-event or a pre-event. She views photography as a selection and accumulation of images not caught on camera, but instead deliberately brought to the photographic platform where they are rearranged. "Before she photographs the world, Ilit Azoulay arranges its leftover scrapes in straight lines," Sarit Shapira writes, "Screws, nails, springs, coils, spools of thread, fibers of all sorts, old pieces of rope, perforated tin plates, fragments of disintegrating, unstitched, damaged embroideries are all arranged over some kind of support [...]"<sup>4</sup> Shapira adds that Azoulay proposes "[...] the basic elements of any technology, perhaps of technology per se: representations of the technical impulse (techne) that underlies technology, which always conform to a basic grid pattern [...] the photographic paper itself – which is both the medium's support and the format in which the images are placed – seems to be the bearer of the technical field's elements; and since the items themselves are placed on a shelf, this becomes a simile of the photographic medium's format [...]"<sup>5</sup> At the Workshop, printmaking replaces the computer in editing and reconnecting the different elements of the work. The press and metal plate

immediately create a space for the objects and photographs extracted from the Workshop's history that Azoulay had collected as part of the project.

History in Azoulay's work is composed of a multitude of narratives that all unite in the action, the different objects and their layout in the artistic space, which she captures with her gaze and later with her camera. She eventually channels her gazes and photos through another filter: the screenprints, the metal etching plate and the press.

The capturing of the "techne" in her prints holds a special meaning at the Workshop, for Azoulay focuses on traditional printmaking as a technology frozen in time and requiring technical skills that involve specific materials, equipment and professional experience. Azoulay worked closely with Ran Segal, the master printer at the etching department, and with the master screenprinters Eitan Hurwitz and Yoav Raban, creating five prints – four small-scale ones, the size of half a sheet, and one bearing untraditional proportions – a long and narrow print.

*La Veritas*, the title of her print series, depicts the heart of the artistic creation, which searches for the "truth" or rather the falsehood behind the occurrence. During the two-year research she conducted at the Workshop, Azoulay followed closely the history of the building where it resides, from the time it was built by the Muslim Turjeman family in the middle of the 19th century, during the Ottoman Empire period, until today. She also studied the different tools, machines, old photographs and human voices that tell the building's story. Together, all these elements constitute a paradigm for the concept "techne", following Aristotelian thinking, which did not distinguish between art and craft in relation to the concept of "techne" but instead associated it with the word "poiesis", to make.

19th century Muslim architecture in Jerusalem and the history of the building and its interior play an important part in Azoulay's prints, enabling a new, different, alternative space to come into being in a complex and systematic fashion in every etching. Azoulay collects testimonies



concerning the lifestyle and everyday activity at the Workshop today: the different printmaking departments, the equipment and materials in each of them, the working artists and their encounters. By using various techniques like photographic emulsion and die-cutting, combining etching methods and screenprinting, and developing unique methods like using sugar-lift to create the "space walls" where the objects move around, Azoulay produced a print series that is in fact a collection of flashes, almost echoes, of the building and the traces of the objects it once contained and the people who used to live in it. The objects are not arranged in a specific order, but instead they flow up and down, to and fro: photographs of the Mugrabi Levi family that lived in the building during 1885–1910, a tin pigeon, who Arik, the Workshop founder, found on the roof when renovating the building in 1974, and a door knob that used to belong to an old house in Mea Shearim and somehow found its way to the Workshop entrance. "These remnants are easily recognizable as the left over components of some technology or the other, but it is hard to point out the particular use they had served or to date them,"<sup>6</sup> Shapira wrote, describing Azoulay's enchantment over an ambiguous technological display that sways from the ancient to the advanced. In her prints, the "techne" of the printmaking medium and of the building constitutes the manifestations and remnants of technological activity. They are pieces of the past and the present, situated in a kind of osmosis, floating one within the substance of the other, engaged in a back and forth motion in the small-scale prints, and an up and down movement embodying a slow fall of objects and memories in the long narrow print. Everyday objects, neither glamorous nor glorious, like an old fashioned electric kettle, a bundled up rope and a ruler, become singular mystical images. Pieces of old photos appear as sculptured objects. The history of the city and of the specific geographical location and the story of the Workshop and the art produced in it all turn into a cascade of ungraspable images.

Maya Zack

In his 1959 poem *The Straitening*, Paul Celan (a Jewish-German poet [1920–1970]) describes both the human inability to grasp loss and death through words, and the need to dwell on them and hang onto them nonetheless: "Do not read any more – look! / Do not look any more – go!" Celan invites the observer, the wanderer, himself and every one of the Holocaust survivors to try to extract traces from the absent, though is that even possible? He asks and cries at the same time. In her abundant collection of etchings, created at the Workshop using various techniques, Zack developed a circular, spatial array that unifies the act of observing, history's evasiveness, the camera's metaphorical action and the act of writing, which is actually an act of drawing, which is, in its turn, another kind of text. In an interview she gave to Nili Goren, Zack stated: "'The scene of the crime' – the place of the occurrence – is an important image for me. It embodies the tension between the site, reality, and the traces on the one hand, and the story hovering above them, which consists of information fragments, deductions, basic assumptions, and interpretations on the other. [...] My work refers to scraps of history from the first half of the twentieth century – based on testimonies, memoirs, documents, and old photographs – like an archeological mound whose strata include the event, on the one hand, and its historical record and documentation, as well as the reflection in it of my own artistic-historical research process, on the other."<sup>7</sup> Zack's large prints were created while she was working on her film *Counterlight* and her exhibition under the same title, recently displayed at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. In this current exhibition, the prints replace not only the drawings, texts and instillation, but also the cinematic set. Together they form a spatial movement that emerges from the written word, Celan's words in German, their translation to Hebrew, the calligraphic act of writing, which is a form of drawing, an instrument of drawing. The invisible movement continues to flow through the print, to the empty space of the pages or the

blank music sheet, to the folded, sculptured paper, imprinted on the metal plate of the press. From here, we dive into the blackness of the aquatint, into the letters and envelopes; memories and traces of memories. We dive into the dark room of the camera's bellows, into the obscurity of the collective history of Europe's Jews, and into Celan's personal family history, which tells the story of his mother and father who had been sent away to concentration camps in Transnistria, where they were later murdered. Celan's mother, Fritzi, embodies in Zack's work inspiration, home and childhood memories, traits that Hubert Damisch attributed to the figure of Virgin Mary in Piero della Francesca's *Madonna del Parto* or *Madonna della Misericordia*. In the *Thousandcrystal* she appears as a monumental icon, reaching beyond time and space, as a Madonna wearing an eternal architectonic dress whose pleats are bound together to form the pages of a book, but also the folds of the camera bellows. History begins with childhood memories, Freud claimed. The mother figure is the history, the written word, the story whose traces are lost; it is the foundation of the craft of art, it is the "istoria" that Alberti considered to be the "supreme goal of painting," according to Damisch in his interpretation of Freud.<sup>8</sup> Next to the mother figure, the gathering of the storyline and the capturing of the words become an almost physical reality on the relief prints and on the blackness of the paper. "Came, came. / Came a word, came, / came through the night, / wanted to shine, wanted to shine," Celan writes, his words showing, glowing, out of the endlessly deep, dark space of the aquatint. The viewer follows the movement; his head turns to follow the bright colors turning dark, the light turning black, and then to observe the virtual brightness of the act of writing on the lines aligned on the desk. The bleeding woman lies on the floor, etching herself time after time, without a beginning or an end. She lies before the mother's sacred monument, the salvation of words embodied in her character, words that are a chamber of darkness, of absence. The stage upon which she lies is perforated by the leg of a chair, which is perforated by the leg of a desk, upon which an etching of a hand is writing, engraving. The heroine does

not need a thing save the emptiness of the paper; this is where everything is created and consumed. This is Zack's "crime scene", the scene of the trauma, whose traces art tries to extract and substantialize in the present.

## Gil Yefman

Gil Yefman examines the boundaries of self-identity, the social definitions that structure us, the images that surround us and the ways we use them to produce pleasure and beauty, propaganda and memory. The deliberate exaggeration that is bound to cause shock and horror in his work is meant to warn the spectator against accepting images simply as they are, without questioning their origin. His works in all types of media, from printmaking to knitted sculptures, from animation to drawing, are distinguished by their hybridity, seeking to reframe conceptions of the body, history, privacy and the public space. They address repressed and silenced histories that the artist wishes to bring to the surface. Yefman: "The relationship between the Japanese, German, American and Israeli cultures in the context of the Second World War and onward, and the relationship between death and economy, life and manual labor, gender, sexuality and the human body – have been the core of my work in recent years. The appearance of the repressed and its repositioning inside the bedroom and guest room seem to create a renewed awareness, to mediate and soften the difficult experience, seeking to strive toward a solution".<sup>9</sup>

In his current project, Yefman employs the screenprinting medium to create piled-up layers of images and backgrounds, each layer carrying an unbearable burden of images – mass graves from the Second World War, corpses of murdered concentration camp prisoners and skeletons of tortured victims – positioned in an almost uncontainable contrast beside exposed women in provocative sexual positions. By using strong colors for the different layers and contrasting them sharply with photographic black-and-white images,

Yefman composes a pin-up calendar featuring real photos of female German guards at Nazi concentration and extermination camps, as well as the Third Reich's three first ladies: the mother – Klara Hitler, the mistress – Eva Braun and the ultimate model of motherhood, femininity, and feminism in Nazi Germany – Magda Goebbels. Each month in the calendar is named after one of the women who were born in that month, and is dedicated to her. Most of the portraits were extracted from British Army photos taken on the day Bergen-Belsen was liberated, shortly before the women were indicted. Yefman chose to attach their heads to the bodies of naked seductive women in order to create "a powerful dissonance generated by the women's newly granted possibility of looking straight at the spectator with cold, accusing eyes, while the former is caught in his raw voyeurism," as he describes it.<sup>10</sup> The project was the result of extensive research that consisted of an artist-in-residence program in Germany and visits to relevant archives and camps. In his research, Yefman brought together different sources and texts; he conducted an ongoing collaboration with the Remember the Women Institute and delved into the work of Rochelle Saidel and Sonja Hedgepeth, who, among other things, co-wrote the book *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women during the Holocaust*. As part of their research, the two writers bring to the front of the historical stage and to the public discourse different narratives of gender and the Holocaust. Yefman also read the book *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields*, which discusses Nazi female educators, secretaries, nurses, guards, etc. His research also deals with the "Lebensborn" project, a Nazi program to enhance the Aryan race; the conception of birth rate and motherhood in the Third Reich, according to the work of the German historian Robert Sommer; writings describing brothels in the Third Reich; the Bergen-Belsen trials, and exhibitions and archives. Yet another layer of his works consists of backgrounds extracted from different sources that describe the inconceivable reality of the brothels built by Hitler in the camps. There were roughly 10–12 brothels operating as a reward system for guards, S.S.

soldiers and excelling employees at industrial factories outside the camps. An additional layer features objects taken from the everyday world and from domestic life, opening up an unbridgeable gap between themselves and the other troubling spectacles.

Yefman: "Motivated by my autobiographic experience, as a transgender person, I identified with the need to examine and oppose the 'social fall between the cracks,' and to deal with means of the authentic expression and representation of different minorities. Today, Auschwitz's Block 24 serves as an archive and not as a memorial of the hundreds of women who suffered terrors and whose voices aren't heard. It was from that lack of social institutionalization that I drew the freedom and the imagination I needed to create the calendar, based on real-life figures and events but comprising layers and fragments, establishing a perverted and critical worldview. In his book *House of Dolls*, which had a profound influence on me during my adolescent years, Ka-Tsetnik tells the story of his sister, Daniella, who served as a sex slave at Block 24, which had been turned into a brothel in Auschwitz. Ka-Tsetnik, a Holocaust survivor, was accused of 'not sticking to the facts and reinventing the Holocaust reality' – due to public refusal to face and deal with certain narratives of history".<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the calendar, Yefman created a print portraying the home of the Majdanek concentration camp director as a magical castle that almost seems to be taken from a Walt Disney film. Another work by Yefman, *Decomposition*, created following a video piece under the same title, presents a kind of pop art kaleidoscope image. It is based on photographs of mass graves, which together form a marvelous wallpaper of shapes and colors, situated miles away from their source. Yefman depicts the violence that lies within the human experience and is engraved in the history of now and then, relying, among other things, on images of the skeletons dancing over the open grave in the Western art "La Danse Macabre" allegory, which reflects the fragility of human life and the certainty of death, in Tal Kobo's

words. "Yefman not only depicts the Holocaust as an act of man, but also depicts the memory of it as an act of man. He thus blurs the gap between the event and its representation and memorialization, and brings forth 'the eternal catastrophe' of the enlightened world," she concludes.<sup>12</sup> Yefman seeks to rewrite his own personal traumas as well as the collective ones, be it by printmaking or by means of his knitted sculptures. In the current exhibition, Yefman's space functions as a deceptive peeping room as well as a sacred catacomb, in the center of which lies a mattress upholstered in woven fabric, featuring images of mass Holocaust graves – a death bed, an open grave of history, around which we all gather, staring.

### Merav Salomon

Merav Salomon is an illustrator who deals with both the present way of living, as can be seen in her book *The Pool* (2013) and with the perception of the past, as it shows in *A Family Visit to Berlin* (2008). Bitter laughter constitutes an inseparable part of her work; her illustrations are theatrical and grotesque, symbolic and ironic. Working at the Jerusalem Print Workshop, she was drawn into a world of artists' books and works in series, which are intrinsic to the printmaking medium. Her artist's book and series of screenprints deal with establishing history in every passing moment and with the capacity to understand and contain it. *Pompeii* appears to be a book; it seems to have a narrative, but in fact it proposes a re-examination of the idea that defines a book as a space of physical occurrence, and of the traditional and contemporary role of illustration as a visual narrative accompanying a text. *Pompeii* comprises seven narrow vertical etchings, spreading out over seven scenes of a play, all featuring the same characters – a woman, a dog-wolf and the Angel of Death. Each scene is framed by a pulled-back stage curtain. The scenes' two-dimensionality is emphasized by a designed inscription that reads "Pompeii", extracted from

a series of black-and-white postcards that Salomon inherited from her grandmother, who had visited the site in the 1960's. The old postcards had been stitched together, and then laid out one by one or all at once as in a cinematic simulation, distinguished by their photographic yet illustrated design. Salomon's works sway from the two-dimensionality of the drawing, and all the more of the illustration, toward the three-dimensional scenery of the play. The works do not display a progress in narrative. The theatre-like display she created deals with a sense of an impending catastrophe, with anxiety, stress and her most personal fears, generated by thoughts of destiny, fortune and the human condition. Each scene holds the possibility of an end. The panoramic photos in each print conjure up natural and man-made disasters, embodied by the female character and her intimate relationship with danger, personalized by the dog-wolf and the Angel of Death. Before creating the final prints, Salomon transmitted her sketches onto soft wax using paper and pencil, and later translated them into colorful etchings. She used three colors for the printmaking process: yellow, blue and red, which also produce additional shades and colors. Thoughts about the way one's identity is formed out of fear and misfortune pervade the story of "Pompeii". The sharp contrasts between the presented horrors and the peaceful colors, between the funny and foolish and the sad and serious, between the circus and carnival and the sorrow and gloom prevail in this work. The pathos of the victim's consciousness counterbalances the laughter and the frivolous atmosphere. Above the medieval "Dance of Death" – the skeletons dancing over the open grave – hovers the atmosphere of violence and anarchy of the traditional puppet show *Punch and Judy*.

The series *The Archive of the Hand of Chance* comprises an archive of imagery, some of it clear and explicit and some intuitive and suggestive. The work is based upon the coincidental event that led Salomon's grandmother to discover what had happened to her mother in the Holocaust: "I have been hearing this story since I was a child, yet every time I was astonished to learn of



the fragility of the hand of chance, which played a central role in the discovering of this story," Salomon recounts.<sup>13</sup> Salomon's grandmother, Shoshana/Rogza Chaimovitch of the Koren family, arrived in Israel in 1935, and for many years could not discover what had happened to her mother and father during the war. In the 1950's, a young couple of Holocaust survivors immigrated to Israel and moved into Shoshana's building in Jerusalem. Salomon's grandmother and the new tenant started talking and the latter told her that during the war she met on the train heading from the Krakow Ghetto to Auschwitz a big older woman, who young orphan girls had been gathering around. The older woman, who took the young girls under her wing, hid lipstick inside her vagina, and before every selection conducted by the Nazis, she painted their cheeks so that they looked fresh and healthy. They were thus able to pass the selection in Auschwitz and were sent to labor camps instead of to the gas chambers. "She took care of us and we took care of her," the survivor recounted, "we called her Big Mother. Together we survived Auschwitz, the death marches and Bergen-Belsen until the camp was liberated by the British. Big Mother united us. Unfortunately she did not survive and passed away in a British hospital three weeks after the liberation."<sup>14</sup> When the artist's grandmother asked what the Big Mother's real name was, the answer was "Regina Koren" – Shoshana's mother, Salomon's great grandmother.

Salomon began inquiring into stories of "the hand of chance", stories of survival under incidental and nearly impossible circumstances in the Holocaust, and eventually, after several artistic attempts she decided to focus on the story of her own family, through which she observes the role of chance and fate in the structuring of narrative and identity. Wisława Szymborska wrote in her poem *Any Case*: "You survived because you were first. / You survived because you were last. / Because alone. Because the others. / Because on the left. Because on the right. / Because it was raining. Because it was sunny."

Salomon is concerned with the visual and linguistic craft of storytelling; she creates the infrastructure of the story as an archive of personal and

collective concepts linked to both her personal biography and to general human history, addressing them as cards that can be shuffled and rearranged to form different combinations, offering parallel versions of a visual and linguistic reading. She adds yet an additional level of reading, drawing the series of sketches upon paper she inherited from a painter she once knew, hereby digging into her own artistic memory. She translated this memory into prints, which were then carefully treated by the master printer Wanja Schaub, who saturated the print paper in organic solutions that produced different shades, inducing the impression of an archive. Layers of transparent lacquer and a mat color add a monochromatic black-and-whiteness to the prints, producing yet another shade of color on the paper. Consequently, the viewer senses an overflow of recurring images, texts and evasive textures that burst out of the reservoir of information, memories and imagination lacking order and form, violating any possibility of a single defined logic.

### Moshe Roas

Moshe Roas is an artist working as an archeologist of matter: he unfolds its strata and boundaries, examines the time and memory concealed within it and within the objects it produces, and the manner in which all these are revealed to us. While studying textile design at Shenkar College, Roas was already disassembling and dissolving weaves and carpets, until he was left with only their outlines. He then put them back together to produce a new object. In his eyes, a hole in the carpet constituted a channel through which one could grasp the carpet as a subjective entity inside the house and perceive concepts like childhood and identity. At the same time, by studying the internal structure of the luffa plant, Roas turned it into a drawing tool, disassembling and reassembling its torn parts with a heat press. He also created metal works, which he treated the same way as he would works of textile, challenging their solidity and the sharpness of their edges. Subsequently, the tension between

the desire to sense the materiality of the matter and the fear that the slightest touch would make it crumble and collapse is constantly present in his oeuvre.

Working at the Workshop, Roas continued to explore the relationship between image and matter, a relationship that materializes in the process of decomposing, dissolving and creating. The project originated with the action mechanism of a hundred year old piano Roas had found. He sought to understand the object, its history, the change its matter had undergone. He pondered upon the relationship between the instrument's mechanism, its pulse and the traces of the music it once produced. In attempting to immortalize the mechanism, he took it apart at first, principally the hammers pounding upon the strings, etching them directly. After several trials, he used a screen separation to transmit the images onto the metal plate, and then etched them. The printed result comprised abstract shapes that resemble organic landscapes – nature in the midst of becoming and decaying, mysterious organisms in a constant, accelerating motion forming an overwhelming spin.

Meanwhile, Roas also built a time machine in his studio, comprising clocks covered with different materials that affect the motion of their hands. With the help of a specialist, he created a mechanism that moves in circular motion, back and forth, producing minimal movement that hangs between life and death. He built a sculpture-machine based on drawings of the luffa plant, which he photo etched onto the metal plates and connected them to a 48-hour cycle mechanism.

Thinking about time and duration, the pulse and beat of the object, its resemblance to a living organism and the living pulses of all man-made objects took him back to nature; he observed a palm tree, whose exterior clearly shows its life cycle, its old branches telling the story of its long years. When creating his piano action mechanism and his palm tree works, Roas collaborated with the Workshop's engraving and screenprinting departments, exposing and erasing, printing and grinding, using techniques that nearly destroyed the image as well as the plate, and later re-exposing the image, which seems to have emerged from the very procedures. The layering involved in the medium

of engraving, which combines action, counter-action, traces of former actions and their re-establishment – embodies the processes of death and life in the matter and the image. Roas traveled to Ein Gedi to observe a palm tree plantation whose trees had died as a result of the area's sinkhole phenomenon. "I was astonished to see the plantation. The immediate metaphors that came into mind were that of the progress of a man's life and that of the walk toward death. There was a disturbing silence. Each tree was leaning in a different death-like position; it was humane and heartbreaking. At the time I was also interested in the Japanese Butoh dance theatre, and the plantation seemed like a scene from a dance," he recounts. "This spectacle generated my work of the leaning palm tree that reaches out and unites with the ground. The tree resembles a dying animal, with something still quivering inside it."<sup>15</sup> While working on the etchings, Roas also transmitted a photo of the luffa plant onto metal plates that he had cut out to look like shadows of palm trees and abstract shapes of a human body, using screenprinted photo-transfer. He saturated the plates in acid for weeks. Some crumbled and some remained whole, but extremely fragile. In the exhibition, they appear inside a display case as if they were archeological artifacts, mummies or bodies of culture.

Displayed in the exhibition, the piano hammer prints – entitled *Tectonic Plates* – turn into whirlwind walls, into a landscape that is also an encrypted text, a machine and an abstraction. The horizon of the room is a diptych conceived by the palm tree plantation, created by repeated grinding of a completely blackened metal plate. The remnants of nature and of the images conceive a dark scenery constituting the passage of time; a ruin bursting with life.

### Ruth Schreiber

Ruth Schreiber is the daughter of two Holocaust survivors; her father was rescued in the Kindertransport operation, and her mother was sent to France just as the war broke out; she crossed the English Channel to London by boat

a year later. Her parents, refugee children, withstood the war in a community of immigrants and refugees in London. Schreiber grew up without her grandparents, in the shadow of death and the memories of her parents, whose life had suddenly been interrupted and whose family was lost forever. The Holocaust project she created comprises works telling the story of her murdered family from the eyes of the children: those who were smuggled to England, those who escaped to Belgium, those who survived and those who perished. As a religious artist working with different media – sculpturing, video and drawing – Schreiber deals with the traces that childhood leaves behind and with the possibility of recapturing it. In her works, she constantly tries to retrieve childhood, to capture it, as it constantly escapes, evading the photographic remnants, obscured by the words in the letters.

The artist's book she created at the Workshop, *Letters from My Grandparents*, features eight screenprints that look like enlarged postcards wearing paper masks of death. The artist's book constitutes an important part of the quest she had embarked on to learn about her family history through the two hundred letters and postcards found at her aunt's home after she passed away in 2004. The letters, dating back to 1939, were written by Schreiber's paternal grandparents to their three older children, who had been sent away in the Kindertransport operation. Samuel Marel, the grandfather, wrote his last postcard in August 1942, on the day he was transported to Auschwitz. Her grandmother, Mina Marel, continued to write until her death in 1943. The works also include the story of their two younger girls, Sofi and Jenny, who remained with their parents in Germany and only later escaped to Belgium and then to France, to the Rivesaltes detention camp. After their mother died at the camp, the French resistance was able to save the girls by smuggling them to Switzerland.

Schreiber drew her lost family members and family events upon copies of her grandparents' letters, based on family portraits and photos documenting landmarks in the story. Consequently, Ruth's drawings and sculptures are

intermixed with her grandparents' handwriting, as the words themselves become drawings as well. This can be seen in her sculpture of the two girls, whose clothes are imprinted with letters, or in the work where fragments of children's clothing become pieces of porcelain; anthropological and archeological remnants.

Schreiber's artist's book is a journey between worlds. It unifies the lingual image of the letters and postcards, the visual photographic images and memory's physical quality, which appears as a paper mask, an inherent component of the prints. This is a work that refuses to remain in the two-dimensional realm, for when spread out, it becomes a three-dimensional, spatial piece. The eight prints tell the story of Schreiber's different attempts to reconstruct the events of the war, while the original letters are archived at the Yad Vashem Museum. However, they embody the lack of possibility to tell the story. They reach out only to touch an absence, especially considering their pop-like and childish appearance – the bright colors of the flowers spreading over the handwriting, the Auschwitz entrance gate, appearing as a black logo on a bright yellow background, the black-and-white photo of a detention camp, transfigured into a site of sheds residing on blue and yellow surfaces, lifeless, without any trace of history. The collage of works also combines amusing, playful elements, such as a London double-decker bus, a pair of children's shoes, a flying package, a mailman figure. The print featuring Auschwitz was created based on the letter that Schreiber's grandfather had sent on the day he was transported to the extermination camp, never to return. The black paths leading up to the famous Auschwitz gateway can be easily scraped off the paper; underneath them the paper's whiteness springs out, accompanied by the lack of possibility to truly understand history through art and the artificialness of memory. It expresses history as a blank, white sheet, but also as a product of the urge to tell it via the most personal texts and memories.

Across the prints, suspended in the air, the work *White Memories* features a 90 centimeter long ring, or rather a wreath made of fabric and papier

mâché, in which various objects like a mug, a plate, a baby shoe, a swing, a laced handkerchief and pages of a book are interwoven. The objects seem to spin in a circle as if blowing in the wind, ghosts inside the spaces of time.

- 1 Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, New York: Schocken Books, 1969, p. 256–257.
- 2 Ariella Azoulay, *Once Upon a Time: Photography Following Walter Benjamin*, Bar Ilan University Press, 2007, p. 85.
- 3 A conversation with the curator, summer 2016.
- 4 Sarit Shapira, "Houses of Junk and Specters: On Ilit Azoulay's Early Works", *Ilit Azoulay: Finally Without End*, edited by Orit Bulgaru, translated by Einat Adi & Talia Halkin, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014, p. 7.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Maya Zack in a conversation with Nili Goren, translated by Daria Kassovsky; Maya Zack, *Acting Memory*, Arles, France and Tel Aviv: Actes Sud and the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 2015, p. 39–40.
- 8 Hubert Damisch, *A Childhood Memory by Piero della Francesca*, translated by John Goodman, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007, p. 65.
- 9 From conversations with the artist and a text written by the artist to the curator, 2015–2016.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Tal Kobo, "The Banality of Memory", a ceremony held in honor of Gil Yefman's exhibition *Human Tapestry* at the Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art.
- 13 Merav Salomon, a conversation with the curator and a text she wrote to her, summer 2016.
- 14 A text written by Merav Salomon to the curator, summer 2016.
- 15 Moshe Roas in a conversation with the curator, summer 2016.



מימין: **היה, היה**, 2016, תצריב, 29.5x20.5

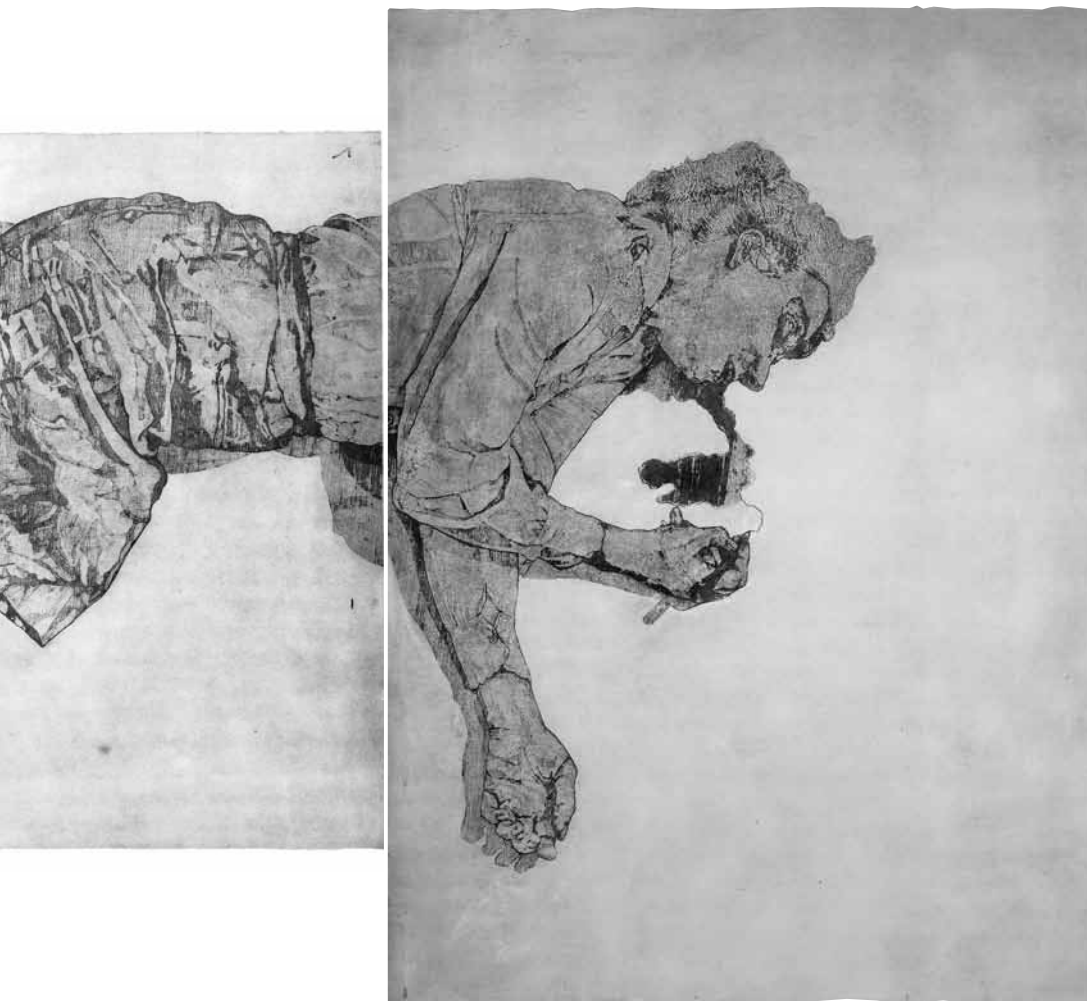
Right: **Was, Was**, 2016, etching, 29.5x20.5

משמאל: **דיבר, דיבר**, 2016, תצריב, שטוחה רכה ואקוויטינטה, 29.5x20.5

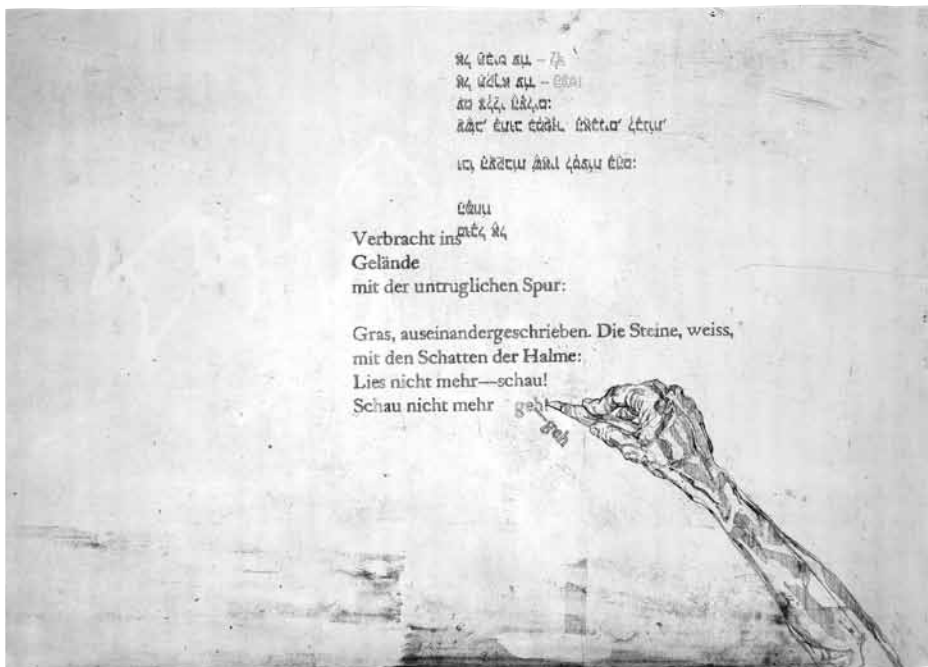
Left: **Spoke, Spoke**, 2016, etching, soft-ground, and aquatint, 29.5x20.5



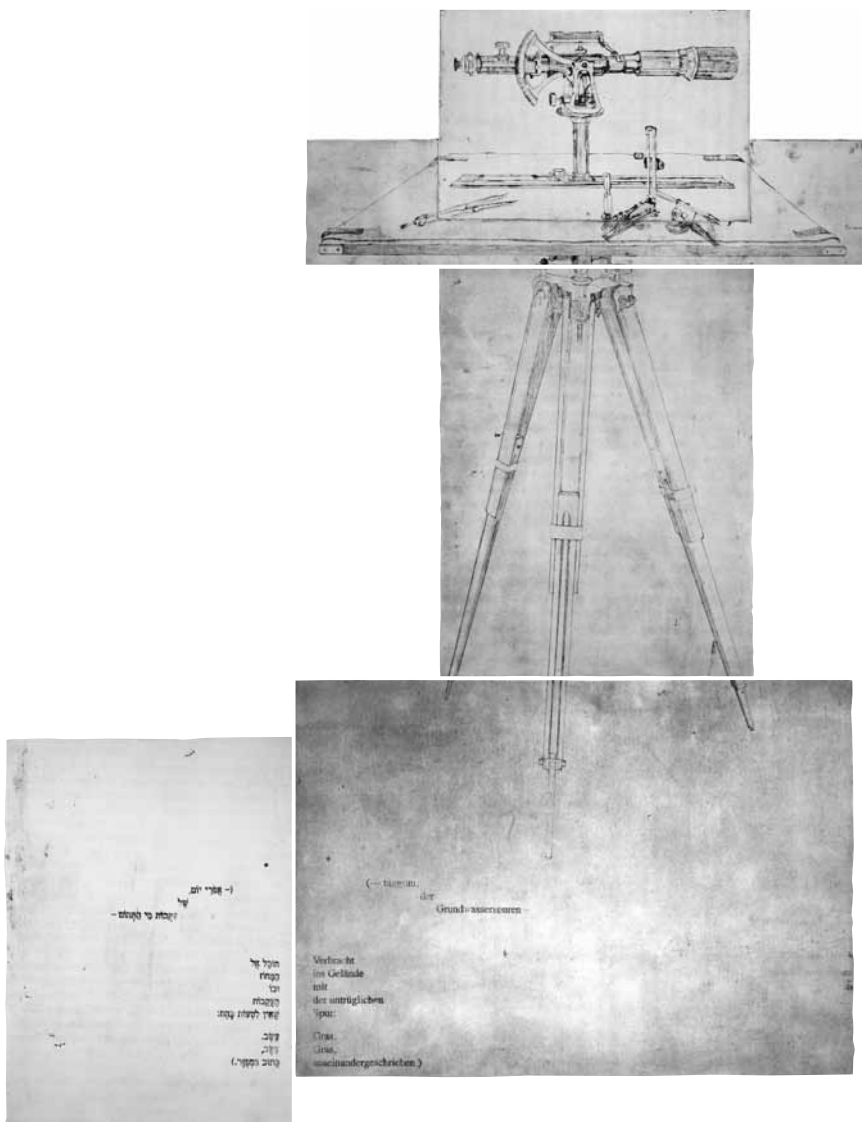




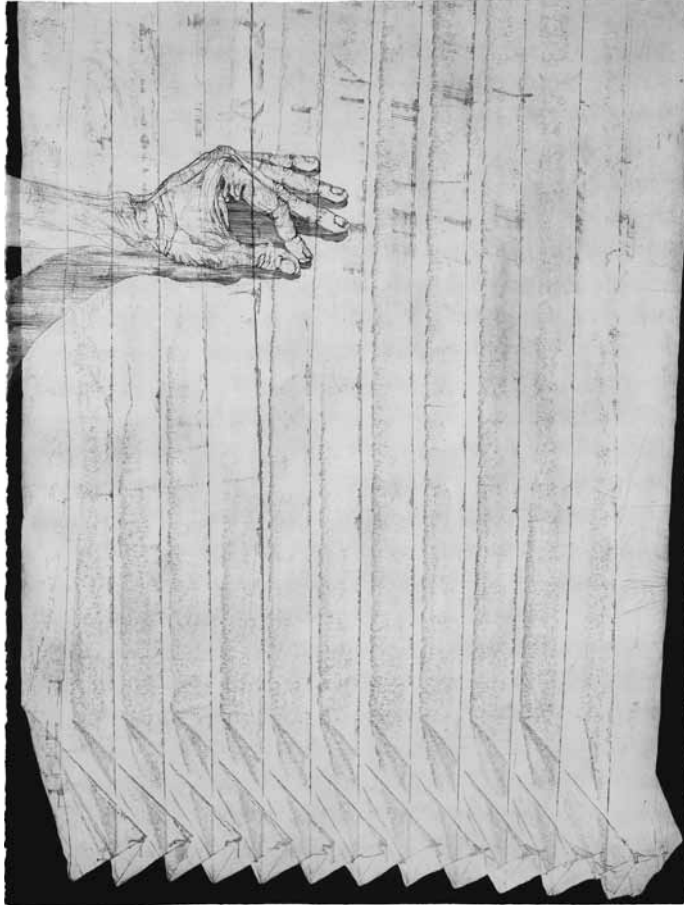
**עקבות מי תהום** (טריפטיכון), 2016, תצריב בהעברה צילומית בהדפסת סוכר ברשת, 106x228  
**Groundwater Traces** (triptych), 2016, etching with screenprinted sugar-lift photo-transfer, 106x228



**עשב כתוב במפוזר** (דיפטיכון), 2016  
תצריב בהעברה צילומית בהדפסת סוכר ברשת, 107x143  
**Grass, Written Asunder** (diptych), 2016  
etching with sugar-lift screenprinted photo-transfer, 107x143



**מובל אל המחוז** (קוואדריפטיכון), 2016  
 תצריב בהעברה צילומית בהדפסת סוכר ברשת, 227x163  
**Spent into the Ground** (quadrptych), 2016  
 etching with sugar-lift screenprinted photo-transfer, 227x163

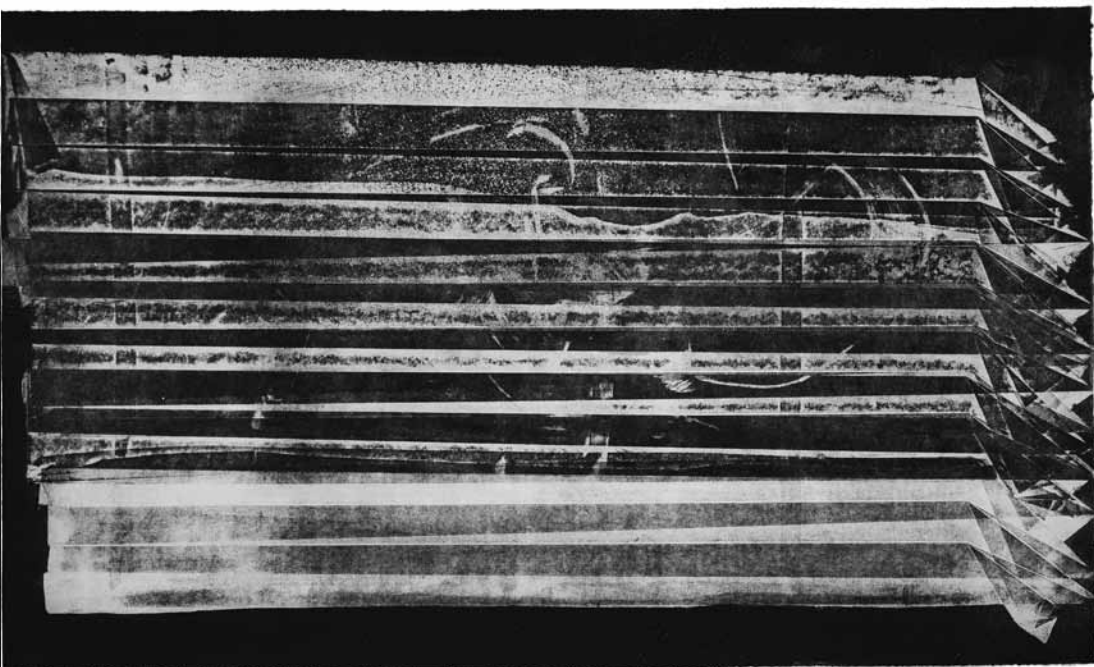


**עדיין אני הוא**, 2016, תצריב, שעווה רכה ואקוויטינטה, 76x57  
**I Am Still the One**, 2016, etching, soft-ground, and aquatint, 76x57

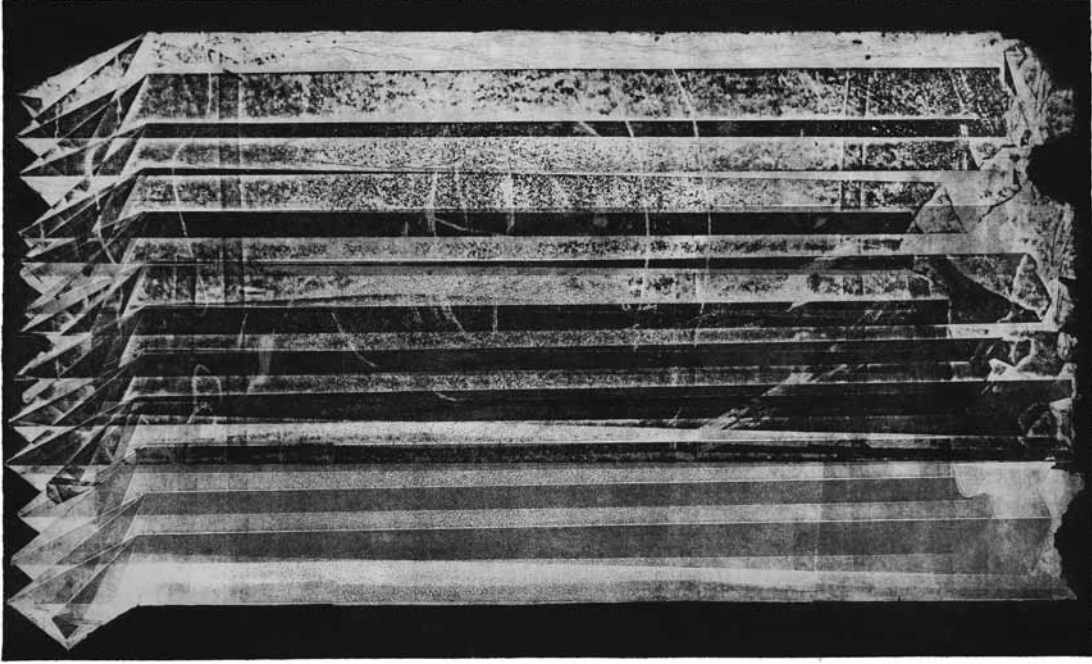
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**אלפגביש** (דיפטיכון), 2016, תצריב, שעווה רכה והדפסה בלבן על רקע שחור, 212x75  
**Thousand Crystal** (diptych), 2016, etching, soft-ground, and white print on black background, 212x75





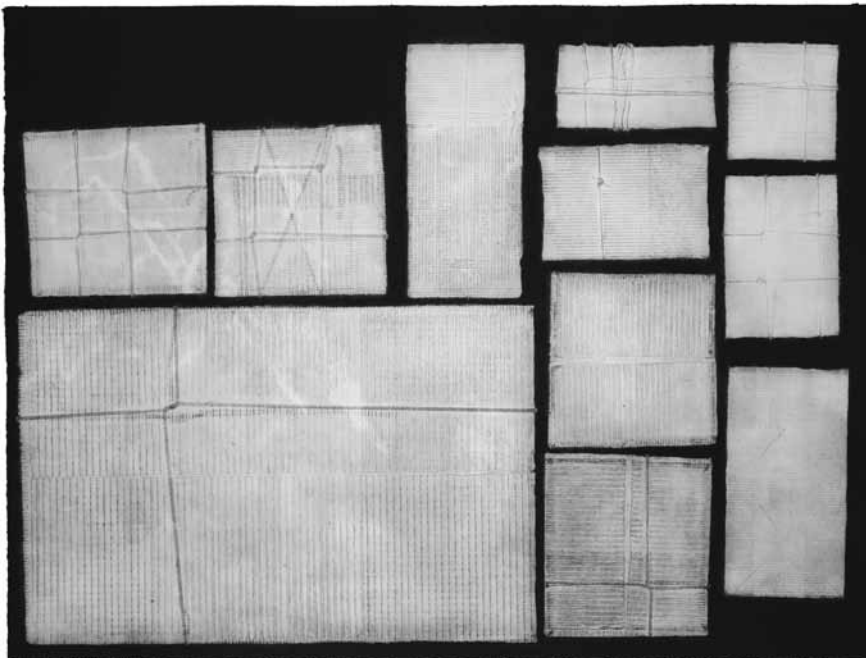
העקבות שאין לטעות בהן (דיפטיכון), 2016, שעווה רכה ואקוויטינטה, 62x206  
**Unmistakable Trace** (diptych), 2016, soft-ground and aquatint, 62x206



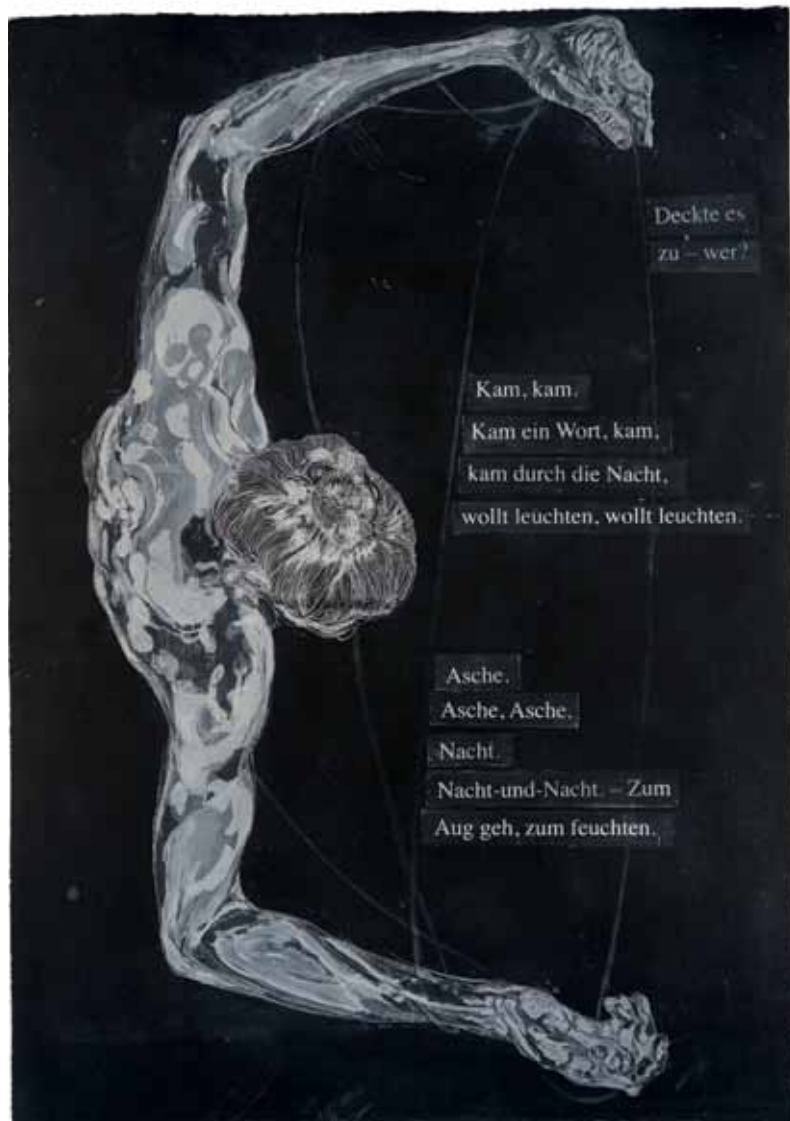




75x106, ששווה רכה ואקוויטינטה, 2016, **פה זה פעור לרוחב**,  
**Here It Ripped Wide Apart**, 2016, soft-ground and aquatint, 75x106



**שם שב והתאחה**, 2016, שעווה רכה ואקוויטנטנה, 75x99  
**Here It Grew Back Together**, 2016, soft-ground and aquatint, 75x99



Deckte es  
zu – wer?

Kam, kam,  
Kam ein Wort, kam,  
kam durch die Nacht,  
wollt leuchten, wollt leuchten.

Asche,  
Asche, Asche,  
Nacht,  
Nacht-und-Nacht. – Zum  
Aug geh, zum feuchten.



**באה מילה** (דיפטיכון), 2016, תצריב בהעברה צילומית בהדפסת סוכר ברשת, הדפסה בלבן על רקע שחור ותלחיץ, 106x150  
**Came a Word** (diptych), 2016, etching with sugar-lift screenprinted photo-transfer, white print on black background, and embossing, 106x150



בת מותך, 2016, תצריב בהעברה צילומית בהדפסת סוכר ברשת, הדפסה בלבן על נייר מודפס בשחור, מידות משתנות  
**Daughter of Your Deadness**, 2016, etching with sugar-lift screenprinted photo-trasfer, white print on black printed paper, dimensions vary

