

**PUBLIC**<sup>42</sup>  
ART | CULTURE | IDEAS

# Traces

EDITED BY  
Mario Di Paolantonio and Chloë Brushwood Rose

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Canada

Individual 1 year \$20.00, 2 years \$35.00

Institutional 1 year \$50.00, 2 years \$100.00

+ 5% GST

US & International

Individual 1 year US\$20.00, 2 years US\$35.00

Institutional 1 year US\$50.00, 2 years US\$100.00

#### BACK ISSUES

\$15.00 (plus 5% GST)

For a complete list of titles available, visit  
[www.publicjournal.ca](http://www.publicjournal.ca)

Please enclose cheque or money orders to:

Public Access  
303 Goldfarb Centre for Fine Arts  
York University  
4700 Keele Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
Canada M3J 1P3

[public@yorku.ca](mailto:public@yorku.ca)  
[www.publicjournal.ca](http://www.publicjournal.ca)

Public Access is a registered Canadian charity.

Printed in Canada  
Public 42 ISSN 0845-4450  
© 2010 Public Access

Copyright is shared equally between the authors and the publishers. Contents may not be reprinted without permission.

Public is distributed by Magazines Canada, and by Ubiquity in the US.

#### PRIVACY POLICY

Public occasionally exchanges mailing lists with arts and literary organizations in order to reach new subscribers. If you would prefer not to receive such mailings, please contact us.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Magazine Fund toward our editorial and production costs.

#### EDITORS FOR PUBLIC 42

Mario Di Paolantonio, Chloë Brushwood Rose

#### EDITORIAL BOARD

Dan Adler, Ken Allan, Chloë Brushwood Rose,  
Christine Davis, Jim Drobnick, Caitlin Fisher,  
Monika Kin Gagnon, Saara Liinamaa, Susan Lord,  
Scott Lyall, Janine Marchessault, Dorit Naaman,  
Deborah Root

#### ADVISORY BOARD

Ron Burnett, Sean Cubitt, John Greyson,  
Janet Jones, Michelle Kasprzak, Gary Kibbins,  
Philip Monk, Walid Ra'ad, Johanne Sloan,  
Ho Tam, Dot Tuer, Allen Weiss

#### MANAGING EDITOR

Aleksandra Kaminska

#### REVIEWS EDITORS

Dan Adler, Jim Drobnick

#### COPY EDITOR

Eva Nesselroth-Woyzbun

#### DESIGN

Claire Christie

#### PRINTING

Hignell Book Printing Ltd., Winnipeg



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts  
du Canada



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

Canada

# Contents

<i>Mario Di Paolantonio and Chloë Brushwood Rose</i> <b>Introduction</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Graciela Sacco</i> <b>M2:T4</b>	<b>16</b>
<i>Vikki Bell</i> <b>On Shoes and Shadows: Political Ethics in the Art of Graciela Sacco</b>	<b>22</b>
<i>Francesc Torres</i> <b>Dark is the room where we sleep</b>	<b>26</b>
<i>Anita Glesta</i> <b>Gernika / Guernica: Desde El Cielo Hasta El Fondo / Hell Castings from Heaven</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Excerpt from the Spanish <i>Law of Historical Memory</i></b>	<b>38</b>
<i>Avelino Sala</i> <b>Derocar</b>	<b>40</b>
<i>Scott Waters</i> <b>The Hero Book</b>	<b>42</b>
<i>Sara Matthews</i> <b>Tracing the Human: Memory and the Visual Frame in <i>The Hero Book</i></b>	<b>47</b>
<i>Elke Grenzer</i> <b>Material Losses</b>	<b>57</b>
<i>Renay Egami</i> <b>Picnic</b>	<b>67</b>
<i>Blake Fitzpatrick and Vid Ingelevics</i> <b>Freedom Rocks</b>	<b>72</b>
<i>David M.C. Miller</i> <b>The Museum</b>	<b>73</b>

- 82 *Kenneth R. Allan*  
**Grounds of Forgetting and Intermediaries for Memory:  
Some Photographs by David M.C. Miller**
- 93 *elin o'Hara slavick*  
**Memorials in the After Aftermath: Hiroshima and France**
- 101 *Amber Dean*  
**Can Names Implicate Us? The memorial-art of  
Rebecca Belmore and Janis Cole**
- 113 *Angela Failler with artwork by Eisha Marjara*  
**Remember Me Nought: The 1985 Air India Bombings and  
Cultural *Nachträglichkeit***
- 125 *Elle Flanders and Tamira Sawatzky*  
**What Isn't There**
- 132 *Roger I. Simon*  
**Artwork, Aesthetics and Public Memorialization**

## COLUMN

- 136 *Ian Balfour*  
**Quaking**

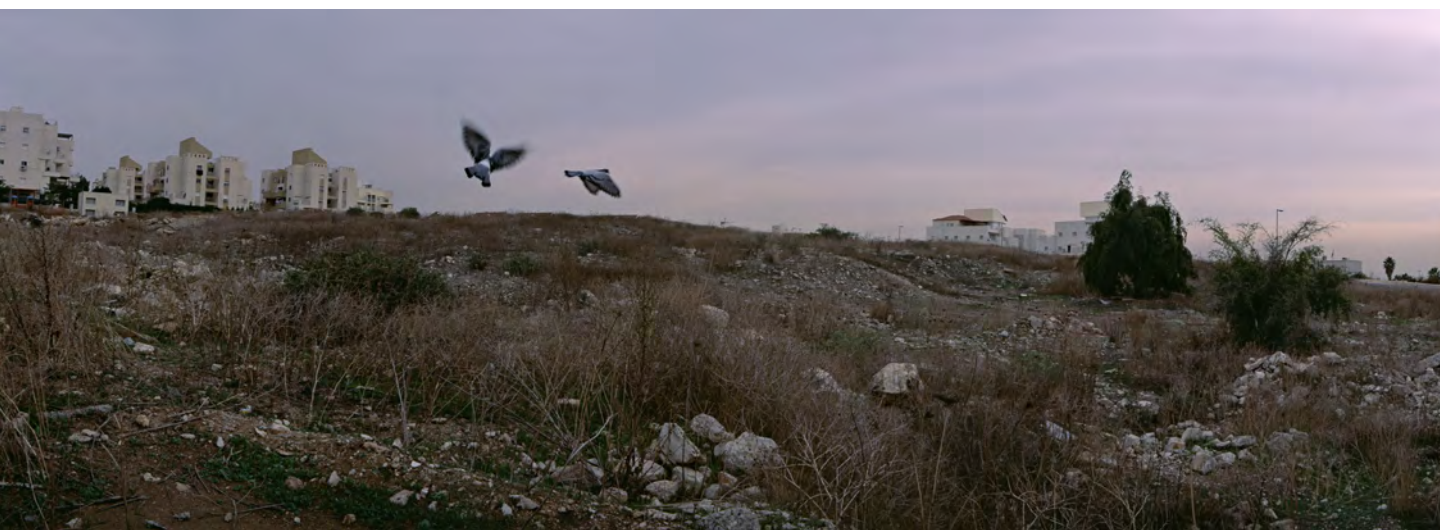
## REVIEWS

- 138 *Warren Crichtlow*
- 144 *Jenny Florence*
- 146 *Charlene Lau*
- 147 *Spy Denommé-Welch*
- 150 **Contributor Bios**

# What Isn't There

*by Elle Flanders*

*with artwork by Elle Flanders and Tamara Sawatzky*









*In another's country that is also your own, your person divides, and in following the forked path you encounter yourself in a double movement... once as stranger, and then as friend.*

—Homi Bhabha<sup>1</sup>

### Linear Perspective

I can't remember if the first time I encountered a Palestinian village I thought it was Roman, Byzantine, Crusader, or Mamaluk. These were the historical categories to which all ruins belonged in Israel. I was twelve and diligent about history, and I must have questioned the teacher. I don't remember the answer, but I can say with assurance it was not "Palestinian" or even "Arab." Much like American or Canadian accounts of "first settlements," Israeli history has a tendency to gloss over at best, or completely ignore, the indigenous populations that lived in the land prior to modern Jewish settlement. Visit the few Palestinian villages that are marked by the Israel tourist authority (the ones with "ancient ruins" such as Majdal Yabba, for instance) and the "history" provided will repeat the same periods above ending with Ottoman rule and the British Mandate period. And then, there it is, the luminous 1948, the establishment of the State of Israel—no Palestine, no Nakba (the "catastrophe" as it is referred to by Palestinians), just Israel. The time arrow on the signpost produces the narrative, perhaps even the mantra, of historical memory as it pierces linearly through the centuries leaving the detours for those of us on a more complex operation.

Recently at a lecture on architecture and memory, I referred to Israel as the "land of constructed memory" when I questioned the speaker. My comment was met with the defensive response: "Why is it we point a finger elsewhere when we think of constructed memory and enforced forgetting? Why don't we look in our own backyard?" Why indeed, I answered, very much in agreement—I have always been fascinated by our collective lack of voice when it comes to "land issues" as white artists in Canada. But Israel *is* my backyard. It was the place my parents took us, telling us that it held our promise and our future. My brother's poster from the Israel Museum read: *Our Future is where Our Past Is*, displaying a blue liquid in a science beaker lodged inside an ancient vessel. This was my Israel, land of promise—until I went to university and the first Intifada occurred.

Almost twenty years ago I started my mission—a search for my divided half. I retraced my childhood steps laden with similar accoutrements: A water bottle, a compass and a topographical map, this time of my own making. The map combined old Palestinian land maps with current Israeli road maps. My task: to trace every village Israel erased from cultural memory and my history books. Today, a Google Earth project on the villages has replaced my haphazard







nature-walks that resulted in “perhaps” a trace, a village, an educated guess based on the examination of flora and fauna, to a more exacting science: the villages have been mapped and exist virtually now. The project provides me with the latitude and longitude positioning of each village although they still remain as elusive as in my first attempts. While sites like Google Earth allow us to think we are careening around the world and everything is now at our fingertips, I can assure you that places that no longer exist remain virtual—ethereal—and the practice of tracing does not always loan itself to satellite mapping. It is the ghostly refraction of place that first made its appearance with the discovery of photography and hence it is through photography once again that I locate the trace of that which isn’t there.

### **The Latent Image: Landscape as Memory**

*What Isn’t There* investigates landscape and its relationship to shifting political geographies. An ongoing media installation combining photography, live music, film/video and projection, it traces the political landscapes that remain at the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by “documenting”



the present absence of 400+ Palestinian villages that ceased to exist with the establishment of the State of Israel. *What Isn't There* looks at the Occupation and the loss of home caused by mass migration and forced exile through the prisms of war and architecture and the ongoing destruction of memory. *What Isn't There* looks at the role that the destruction of architecture plays in an “enforced forgetting” and produces an interpretive response of the landscape that exists in its place.

The content, the “absent-presence” of the more than 400 Palestinian villages that were destroyed with the 1948 establishment of the State of Israel, evolved from a dichotomy implicit in my own background: I grew up in this landscape and saw one thing, but later I learned of a completely different “reading” of the land. This led me to question the interplay of exile and internal exile as they relate to psychic states imposed on landscape, and how this can be recapitulated through contemporary landscape photography. It also begs the question of the relationship between aesthetics and politics—how can beauty and trauma co-exist? *What Isn't There* involves “documenting” villages that no longer exist, ordering the sites along a strategic artistic scheme and assigning certain media strategies to each grouped location (i.e., photography, video, sound installation, etc). Through an aesthetic mapping of the sites via these varying strategies, I am creating a new “map” indicating the trace rather than the index, bestowing memory and significance to these presently quotidian and rewritten locations. Like Richter's *Atlas*,<sup>2</sup> the work began as a haphazard “collection” designating place and expanding in the process to a larger work categorized and ordered around an internal logic with an encyclopedic aspect integral to its historical subject matter.

The obsessive nature of “mapping” is therefore inherent to strategies within my practice. In the mid 1990s my work engaged questions of nation, home and identity from within a conceptual photographic framework that began to re-question landscape's role as political art. With a shift to questions of identity through the body a few years later, I argued that through a deconstruction of the photograph (via early digital manipulation), the abject could only be represented through its absence. My larger inquiry revealed itself to concern the complexity of representing “the other,” leading directly to the problematic of the lack of the visible and questions of nation. I maintain that it is through the trace that we gain access to the presence of the other, linking these critical practices to my current inquiry into the rethinking of contemporary landscape photography as it relates to memory, history, and nation. But having bumped-up against that which could not be represented, I had to find a new form of address in order to lay bare these villages that no longer existed.

In traditional landscape painting the Sublime became a common trope by which to represent that which lay beyond human understanding, in Kant's estimation, the border where reason finds its limits. Postmodernity, however, in tarrying with the power of technology and the military industrial complex, ascribed a negative connotation to the Sublime, assigning it to complete alterity and that which is unrepresentable.<sup>3</sup> When approaching landscape in contemporary photography, we indeed face the double bind of having to contend with the Sublime through (romantic) conceptions of nature's awesomeness, technology's imposition on, and destruction of nature, and, of course, representation as spectacle. Facing the void of both place and the potential of the unrepresentable in my work, which wrestles with that which lies beyond rational cognition and an unattainable unity, a “recuperative Sublime,” as described by Kirk Pillow in his book *Sublime Understanding*,<sup>4</sup> could induce a positive, and hence perhaps even pleasurable, sense when trying to decode political landscapes. This allows for a proximity and even an engagement with the spectator, rather than the alienation thus far provided by a postmodern Sublime and conceptual practices.

Contemporary landscape photography has taken as its main subject human intervention in landscape and the resulting massive changes in our environment. Yet as wars shift territorial homelands and landscapes change dramatically at the hands of environmental impact, a return to landscape

photography in the digital era poses new and difficult questions and interpretations to our topography. Contemporary landscape photographers such as Isabelle Hayeur, Edward Burtynsky and Hiromi Tsuchida also look to absence in landscape, often employing before-and-after images to comprehend the present. But in the age of hyper-spectacle, there remains a question as to whether to be seduced or repelled by disaster in order to understand its impact. While their work invokes a suggestion that the spectators are complicit in the destruction, I pose the question differently: In the wake of disaster, can we interpret landscape as both a site of struggle and as the Sublime, therefore invoking a recuperative and restorative element? Can we summon this “recuperative” Sublime to release ourselves from the quagmire/paralysis of disaster/spectacle?

Rather than perpetuating the well-worn tropes of “landscape as document” or the reinterpretation of history through the photographic evocation of singular referents, *What Isn't There* looks to contemporary landscape photography in order to suggest the complex history of place. The images draw upon the tradition of classical landscape photography, yet simultaneously challenge the notion of the photograph/document as a static representation. The work is a social response to the forced removal of Palestinian villages, offering an architecture of absence. The works appropriate the principle of the Sublime, the images attempt to symbolize their ambivalent relationship to the norms of aesthetic representation and the didacticism of so-called “political art.” War and terror are now cultural norms, and landscape photography faces (still and again) a crisis of representation. By confronting the historicity of both landscape and its representation, *What Isn't There* works to recuperate faith in landscape generally and to raise the question of moral imperative—specifically, “What happened?” or “What happened here?”—sits antagonistically alongside nature.

### Afterimage

*What Isn't There* is an attempt to reassign meaning through form to contested territory that remains hidden from most people's view. The areas in which I am working are seen differently by different populations. For the most part, the Palestinian population is no longer able to access these locations, or to commemorate or to impose their memory on these landscapes—they exist only in their imagination, stagnant images from long ago. The Israeli population, in contrast, has almost no idea what came before the current landscape and walk “through” these landscapes as if the remnants that are evident are simply and at best without meaning, or, at worst, completely irrelevant. For a country imbued with artifact as evidence, it is fascinating to witness the “memory gap” that occurs in these places.

While formally the work is reminiscent of classical landscape photography, by asserting the human history that belongs to these landscapes, the photographs bring human brutality into tension with the notion of the Sublime by presenting images that are pleasurable, perhaps even desirable, but that remind us of our simultaneous inhumanity. In reasserting the Sublime on a formal level, I put it into question in a contemporary context a recuperating Kantian approach of “Sublime reflection” allowing an *interpretive response* to the “other” that has eluded us thus far.

As an artist I continue to search for new forms with which to express developing ideas and images. With the use of new light technologies, projections and music-performance, these landscapes work towards creating a new form in landscape photography that brings a complex history into play in a way which renders the viewer capable of receiving its message. In the age of hyper-spectacle where we are no longer repelled or seduced by images of disaster and destruction, and wherein images no longer hold anything as true, perhaps via the tracing of elusive histories, in this case through the invocation of pastoral landscapes, we can provide a point of reentry.

Walter Benjamin posited the future of photography by suggesting that the photographer's task was to reveal guilt and point out the guilty in his (sic) pictures. “Won't inscription become the most

important part of the photograph?” he asked. Photography, he wrote, “made it possible for the first time to preserve permanent and unmistakable traces of a human being. The detective story came into being when this most decisive of all conquests of a person’s incognito had been accomplished.”<sup>5</sup> Just as Benjamin found “unmistakable traces” of humanity in photography, *What Isn’t There* reproduces his “detection” to recreate traces of humanity in obliterated history. The work locates itself by beginning in this place of inscription, and elucidating the crimes that occurred with the establishment of the State of Israel. Rather than ending in this place, however, *What Isn’t There* takes landscape photography to the next level, a place of the recuperative and a reconnection to land that allows for an alternate history to exist.

## NOTES

1 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), xxv.

2 Gerhard Richter’s *Atlas* is a comprehensive collection of photographs, newspaper clippings, and sketches that serve as the source material for his work. The collection, which is now reprinted in book-form, can be seen as a categorizing of images that cuts between documentary and historical painting.

3 Kirk Pillow, *Sublime Understanding: Aesthetic Reflection in Kant and Hegel*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 5.

4 Ibid.

5 Walter Benjamin, “Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire,” *Selected Writings, Volume 4*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2003), 27.



#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Canada

Individual 1 year \$20.00, 2 years \$35.00

Institutional 1 year \$50.00, 2 years \$100.00

+ 5% GST

US & International

Individual 1 year US\$20.00, 2 years US\$35.00

Institutional 1 year US\$50.00, 2 years US\$100.00

#### BACK ISSUES

\$15.00 (plus 5% GST)

For a complete list of titles available, visit  
[www.publicjournal.ca](http://www.publicjournal.ca)

Please enclose cheque or money orders to:

Public Access  
303 Goldfarb Centre for Fine Arts  
York University  
4700 Keele Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
Canada M3J 1P3

[public@yorku.ca](mailto:public@yorku.ca)  
[www.publicjournal.ca](http://www.publicjournal.ca)

Public Access is a registered Canadian charity.

Printed in Canada  
Public 42 ISSN 0845-4450  
© 2010 Public Access

Copyright is shared equally between the authors and the publishers. Contents may not be reprinted without permission.

Public is distributed by Magazines Canada, and by Ubiquity in the US.

#### PRIVACY POLICY

Public occasionally exchanges mailing lists with arts and literary organizations in order to reach new subscribers. If you would prefer not to receive such mailings, please contact us.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Magazine Fund toward our editorial and production costs.

#### EDITORS FOR PUBLIC 42

Mario Di Paolantonio, Chloë Brushwood Rose

#### EDITORIAL BOARD

Dan Adler, Ken Allan, Chloë Brushwood Rose,  
Christine Davis, Jim Drobnick, Caitlin Fisher,  
Monika Kin Gagnon, Saara Liinamaa, Susan Lord,  
Scott Lyall, Janine Marchessault, Dorit Naaman,  
Deborah Root

#### ADVISORY BOARD

Ron Burnett, Sean Cubitt, John Greyson,  
Janet Jones, Michelle Kasprzak, Gary Kibbins,  
Philip Monk, Walid Ra'ad, Johanne Sloan,  
Ho Tam, Dot Tuer, Allen Weiss

#### MANAGING EDITOR

Aleksandra Kaminska

#### REVIEWS EDITORS

Dan Adler, Jim Drobnick

#### COPY EDITOR

Eva Nesselroth-Woyzbun

#### DESIGN

Claire Christie

#### PRINTING

Hignell Book Printing Ltd., Winnipeg



Canada Council  
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts  
du Canada



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL  
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

Canada