

Nati Shamia Opher, In Public, 27.11.98 - 25.12.98  
Exhibition site: <http://www.hagar-gallery.com/nati0.html>

**Nati Shamia Opher.** In Public  
Text by Tal Ben Zvi

Nati Shamia Opher formulates options for physical experiencing. A simulation of proceeding in actual/virtual/fictional space that enables the body to carry the memory of its existence. An existence that preserves/documents/remembers the footsteps, presence and proceeding of the body in space.

This move is part of an examination carried out by the artist in recent years, in private and public spaces, an examination of the extent of the relation between the body and an object in a given space, with objects functioning as an essence that indicates and realizes the body and its possible actions.

In a space that does not inscribe activities or preserves footsteps, a space that erases every remainder of movement and every mark of its existence. In a clean, empty space, ready for endless absorption and emptying of the presence of the concrete body, it creates a disturbance. A series of objects representing options for documenting, remembering and realization.

It accumulates objects in the field, an accumulation of signs, those marking territory and activity. Signs in various states of aggregation that accumulate to an accumulation with volume and meaning. A meaning constructed from the succession and increment to a pile of signs. Signs in public.

A succession of pairs of shoes against a wall, in a vertical line to an object – a table – sleep. The shoes are covered with lycra that looks like a tight skin. The shoes are preserved, fixed, unidentifiable and non-objectable. Besides each shoe there is an opening – a notch in the lycra that enables a hand to infiltrate it. Infiltrating, an entrance into an under-the-skin state. The preserved and fixed object enables activity, but a different activity: touching, feeling, sensing, without seeing, taking, objectifying it.

This is more a memory of shoes, a memory of the moment the foot was pulled out of the shoe. A memory of an order, of a situation that can be returned to. A marking of a territory in space, a marking of human presence with its variety of activities, copied into alternative movement situations: sleep, sitting around a table or walking barefoot.

Three pillows on the wall, and underneath them three computer simulations. Interior pillows, accessories that are pseudo-functional for postures of a sleeping body. pillows pushed on the body, forced on the body. Pillows indicating a negative space that is supposed to be closed. It is an experiment to clinically examine how the human body behave in a regimented space. The scale of the body is taken. A negative of the body's dimensions is formed. The touching points of the body with the object, with the bed, with the space, are indicated. It is an attempt to unite the body's positive and negative. To create a unity, a succession, a relation between the body and the bed, the body and the space, thus expanding the body's boundaries.

In the center of the room a central element, table-like: It is a reference to the elongated conference table placed in the opposite room-space reflected through the glass doors. The element is made of a construction wrapped in lycra and hung from the ceiling. To its length there are depressions, water bags in which wide-open books are floating. The book's parting reveals an image of a woman's hair parting in a state of sleep. The book's parting testifies to an order, a structural logic related to language, to the weight of the pages, to the knowledge acquired on a time axis of turning pages: begin reading, end reading. The hair parting changing from book to book testifies to a fragmentation of the sleeping time, to a change of

posture, non-productive, non-functional repetitive movement, a movement within a sub-conscious state in order to find equilibrium.

Fluid bags, preservation fluids, preserving an intimate, sexual moment of exposing the structure of the hair roots. The depression is formed by the weight of the water placing its mark on the lycra, like the mark of the head's posture on the pillow. A head floating in water, part living-body part dead-body. The boundary between sleep and death.

In the table-like object there is a suggestion of a sleeping tunnel, an intimate tunnel, a functional space, an invitation to sleep, a common collective convergence. The public sleep of an individual.

On the wall, under the three pillows, there are three computer simulations: a sleep laboratory, a suggestion of sleeping in public. A suggestion of sleeping vertically, ignoring the pull of gravity. Vertical sleeping tunnels, parallel to each other like sleeping compartments on a train or in outer space. Niches, burial caves, sleeping and dying space, a convergence inwards, to the center of the body, to the point of minimization and disappearance. Occupation with a minimal space surrounding the person, a space that enables protection and privacy. A minimal space indicated by friction points, transition points, a boundary that is diffusive – diffusing from the public to the private and vice versa. A sleep that is a cortex – a negative – a sub-space – an atmosphere.

A projection of the concrete body onto a theoretical resting place. An instinctive, automatic projection, created by the relation between the weariness of the concrete body and the indication of the empty space waiting to be filled, to hold something inside it. A simulation of sleep in an alienated, sterile, transient place, but at the same time a place that enables insulation and protection as a result of the elevation from the floor to a high place, and the lack of the invasive viewpoint into the territory of sleep. Cortex, wrapping, intimacy.

A state of indecision, inability, impossibility, of realizing the body that is active in space, turns into the starting point for a transition into another experience. A condition of self gathering and expanding the boundaries of the body by creating a double skin. The perception of the tunnel wrapping as an autonomic addition that enables a private space, an atmosphere, the forming of a public sub-space in which the body has a place to carry the memory of its existence.

**Nati Shamia Opher (1965)**

Israeli artist. Lives and works in Kibbutz Shiler.

1990 Studied at the Art Department, Bezalel Academy of Arts & Design, Jerusalem. 1993

Studied at the Department of Industrial Art, Bezalel Academy of Arts & Design, Jerusalem

**1998 "In Public", Heinrich Boll Foundation, Tel Aviv\***

1996 "Touching Within Public Spaces", Mishkenot Sha'ananim, Jerusalem\*

1994 "24 decibels Altogether", Bograshov 1 Gallery, Tel Aviv\*

1994 "Portfolio", Bograshov 2 Gallery, Tel Aviv

1991 Bograshov Gallery, Tel Aviv

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