

Images in the Air: Mom & Me, Me & Jona

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A woman sits on a beach with a baby in her lap. Dark glasses hide my mother's eyes. The baby's open eyes stare at the camera. I lie on a towel in her arms.

A woman sits on a beach with a baby in her lap. Dark glasses hide my eyes. The baby's eyes are closed. I hold my son in my arms.



Translucent fabric screens hang from the trees on King David Boulevard in Tel Aviv. Each screen consists of two black and white image panels stitched together. A mother and child pose. A second pair pose, the gestures imitated. The child in one image is the mother in the other. As the light and the wind shift, the translucent fabric allows for one mother and child pair to be visited by the image of the other. Buildings, cars, people, fragments of Tel Aviv past and present, are caught in the threads. Photographs of the installation trap layers of time: 35 years ago, 1 year ago, this moment.

The first child of American immigrants to Israel, I was born in Tel Aviv on June 11, 1962. Six months after my birth my parents sailed back to New York. Thirty four years later, I found myself living once again in that same neighborhood in Tel Aviv. This time I had a child, a son, who was by chance the same age as I was when we lived there. Fascinated by images of the life I do not remember, by the city and language that might have been mine, and by the condition of motherhood, I began a series of photographs in which I posed with my son and mimicked snapshots taken of my parents and my infant self. These images, are the basis of the installation, "Mom & Me, Me & Jonah".

The experience of place in the city is informed by the memory of national, civic, and individual events. Within the public arena, I have inserted a space of personal memory, a mental record of one family's associations with a particular place. This work is an attempt to build the space of personal relation and memory that I encounter when I walk on King David Boulevard—always aware that my parents and I once lived here, that the trees were planted around the time I was born, that the City Hall Plaza, my landmark at the end of their street, was once an orange grove, and that now and forever after, it is the place where Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated.

In my mind's eye, the city of Tel Aviv, the boulevard, and the apartment building where we lived, are filled both with "what ifs" and the presence of my family in 1962. Only for me, and perhaps my parents, does this street carry this particular significance. This work places mental images of myself, my son and my parents within the public realm so that they may be seen together by others and stimulate the consideration of the relation of memory and place. The work also places images of myself as mother and myself as child in proximity to one another

in such a way that the two intertwine and can provoke the consideration of the fixed and fluid dimensions of the mother/child relationship.

The challenge of accounting for perceptual reality, a reality which is constructed both from what we see and what we know—a combination of internal and external awareness—is elusive. The sense of past inhabitations and events, the idea or knowledge which renders the opaque transparent, the emotion which transforms a space into a particular place—invisible presences all—each alter our perception and experience of the physical environment. “Mom & Me, Me & Jonah”, is a work in which visible and invisible objects on a site are viewed *in relation to* one another. Through association and interpretation, these encounters between time and material, human roles and events challenge us to consider the powerful presence of memory in our experience of ourselves and our experience of place, revealing hidden dimensions of both human identity and physical sites. The installation aspires to make visible what we see, what we know, what we remember and what we forget.

