

PERFORMANCE

(read at symposium on performance, Bezalel, Tel Aviv. Hadas Ophrat's book launch, April 2012)

One day, years ago,
while preparing for an installation of gathered materials,
I lay down in a pile of earth on my studio roof;
Flapping my arms and legs,
I left an imprint of that action in the dirt - a 'winged angel',
Just like the angels we would make
Lying down in fields of virgin snow.
in Canada, in my childhood.

And I said "yes! this is something I will do."
And "this is a metaphor of what I will do"-
An act of abandon; to be in my body, in the material, in the world.
To make my small mark, and then to walk away.

Performance - not looking at, not drawing about, not musing on
But inhabiting. And in that moment –
fully at home in the world
No second-hand, handed down wisdom;
no abstract concepts, disconnected from my breathing, knowing self;
an integration of all modes of learning,
all personal and collective history, memory;
all mythic and symbolic meanings.

In the performing moment-
on a sticky summer evening on a rooftop in south Tel Aviv,
on the side of a river in a forest in Quebec,
or on the path of a village in the mountains of Portugal –
everything floods in, falls together.
Open, receptive, I become a conduit for knowing,
Abiding in the complexities of a place, a situation;
Without resistance or resolution.

Exhilaration: knowing and not knowing -
What I will find, what I will do, how it will unfold.
Total freedom.
I make the rules, and then, I break them.

Deep tourism, no hierarchies.

Arriving in an unfamiliar city, and finding myself
digging in the ground; or collecting pods in the local park becomes a sudden urgency.
Early in the morning, watching, with the bench-sleepers and dog walkers,
the quality of the sunlight angled on the grass or the wet pavement.

If art is a flirtation with surrender,

Then performance is a serious love affair with surrender.

(And yet still, the ubiquitous 'documentation' that differentiates it from pure being.

I set up my tripod, and only then do I drag a chain of cactuses through the streets;
only then do I go down on my hands and knees and nibble at the greens in my
garden, like a grazing cow...

And there, in the middle of that simple act, in the middle of my garden

Do I fall through the cracks, into another plane,

Even as the doorbell rings, the plumber coming to fix the pipes.

If performance did not exist,

so generously expanding herself to make room for me

Then I would have had to invent it

So I could drag cactuses through the streets,

incise into rocks,

cover myself with my dog's hairs,

stamp my forehead into a book,

lick the pages of a book...

Performance is work, and play,

love of the world

Unfathomable fun.