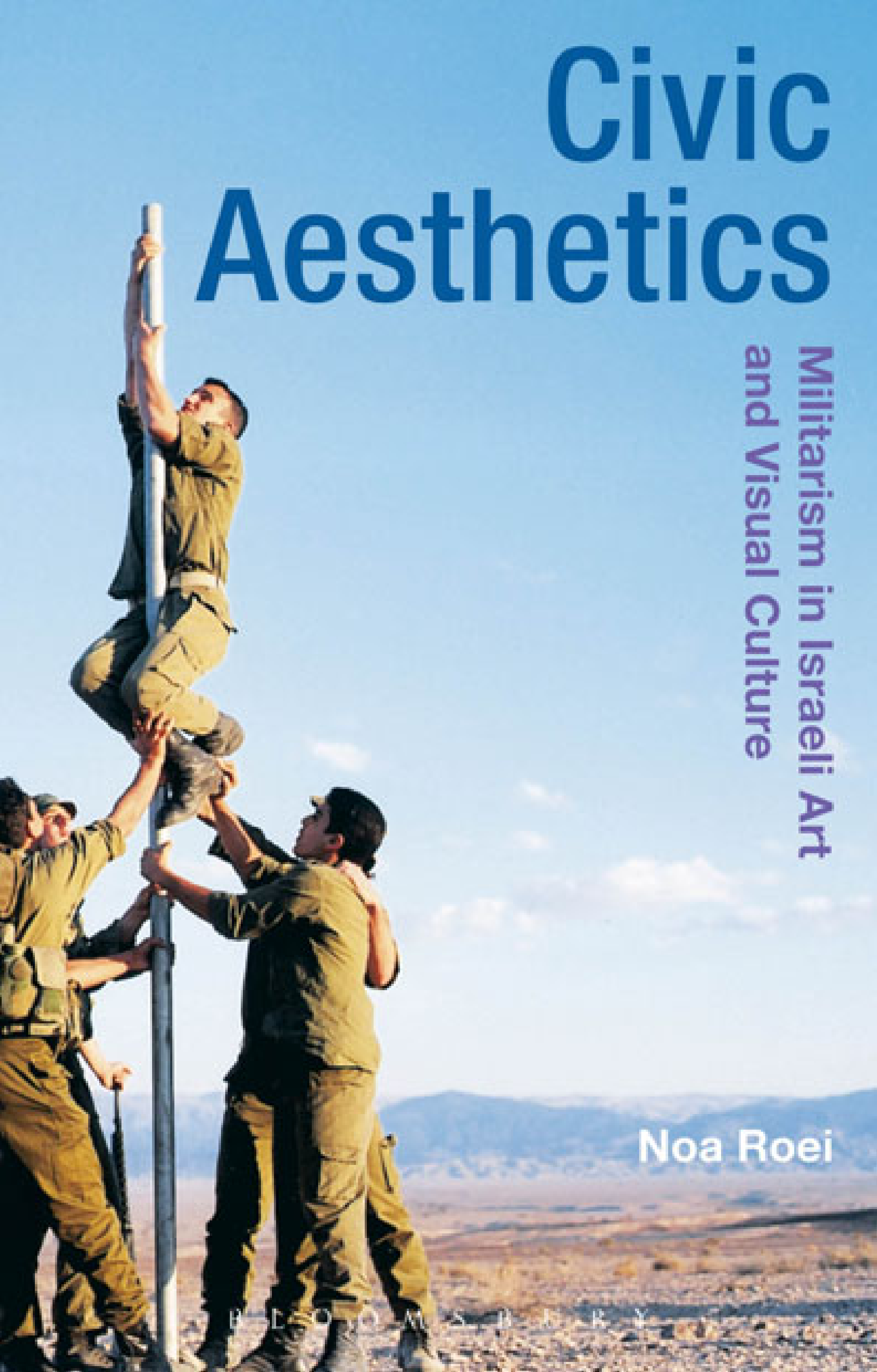

Civic Aesthetics

Militarism in Israeli Art and Visual Culture

Noa Roei

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RADICAL AESTHETICS – RADICAL ART

Civic Aesthetics

Militarism, Israeli Art and Visual Culture

NOA ROEI

Bloomsbury Academic
An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

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Bloomsbury Academic
An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

50 Bedford Square
London
WC1B 3DP
UK

1385 Broadway
New York
NY 10018
USA

www.bloomsbury.com

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First published 2017

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A shorter version of Chapter 1 appears in the edited volume *Inside Knowledge: (Un)doing Ways of Knowing in the Humanities* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009: 157–74), published with the permission of Cambridge Scholars Publishing; sections of Chapter 4 appeared in the online journal *Image and Narrative*, 18 in 2007; a concise version of Chapter 5 has appeared in the edited volume *Narratives of Dissent* (Wayne State University Press, 2012: 78–98) published with permission of Wayne State University Press; and an abridged version of Chapter 6 has appeared in Hebrew in the online magazine *Erev Rav* in 2009 and in English in the edited volume *Art and Visibility in Migratory Culture* (Rodopi, 2011: 239–56), published with permission of Brill.

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: HB: 9781474253161
PB: 9781474253154
ePDF: 9781474253178
ePub: 9781474253185

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

Series: Radical Aesthetics – Radical Art

Typeset by RefineCatch Limited, Bungay, Suffolk

To my parents, Rachel and Yochanan

To my partner, Timm

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PREFACE

The *RaRa* series explores what aesthetics might mean in the twenty-first century, by firmly embedding discussion of artworks in the social. Recent debates within contemporary art theory have introduced concerns about the intersection between the image and human rights, an issue that has been greatly amplified by social media. Discussions have emphasized the ethical implications of visual culture, articulated as a civic practice that extends beyond the object to include the responsibility of all those involved in image production. Roei's term 'militarism' similarly extends associations with armies and wars to deliberately encompass the many cultural implications beyond 'a naturalized (militaristic) visual field'. *Civic Aesthetics* significantly contributes to this debate, in assuming the premise that art and aesthetics are mediated by and respond to world situations and histories, and by providing a focused examination of the politics and power structures of visual representations embedded in the very specific context of Israeli identity, culture and society.

Civic Aesthetics contributes to the *RaRa* series aim of exploring a fresh approach to aesthetics in the twenty-first century, by considering the specific and localized implications of practice and its potential contribution, not only to critical discourse but also to the destabilization of the political status quo. The book provides a valuable addition to the more general literature on socio-political practices, by framing a range of contemporary artworks through the lens of 'civilian militarism'. *Civic Aesthetics* is ambitious in tackling the complexities of visuality, the visible and non-visible and, with conviction and commitment, takes an emphatic position on art's capacity to 'expose scopic regimes that construct their visibility'. As such, it makes a significant addition to the range of titles in the *RaRa* series that address some of the most pressing issues of our time.

RaRa series editors
Jane Tormey and Gillian Whiteley

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

While working on the dissertation that led to this book, I was lucky enough to be surrounded by friends, family, colleagues and a professional network that have made this journey possible. I would like to thank first and foremost Mieke Bal and Murat Aydemir who have supported and accompanied this project throughout its various stages. The Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis at the University of Amsterdam has been home for my research for more than a decade and provided a warm and inspiring atmosphere to work in. Earlier on, Gannit Ankori at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem introduced me to the world of contemporary Israeli art.

Various scholars have contributed to this book and provided important criticism at different stages, and I am grateful for their intellectual contribution and assistance. Larry Abramson, Ernst van Alphen, Yonatan Amir, Tali Artman, Naomi Aviv, Sigal Barkai, Carolyn Birdsall, Maria Boletsi, Sudeep Dasgupta, Diana Dolev, Bregje van Eekelen, Ronen Eidelman, Begüm O. Firat, Hanneke Grootenboer, Rachel Harris, Dalia Manor, Ranen Omer-Sherman, Amiram Oren, Esther Peeren, Mireille Rosello, Eliza Steinbock, Jules Sturm, Astrid Van Weyenberg and Merav Yerushalmy have all commented on versions of the chapters and helped me to sharpen my thinking and writing. Heartfelt thanks also to the artists whose works have inspired and challenged me to write this book, and to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments at the final stage of the project.

Outside the ivory tower, dear friends have contributed their time and grey cells for making sense of my thoughts all over Amsterdam, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. I want to thank especially Assaf Cohen, Maya Cohen-Mossek, Ronit Eden, Morly Frishman, Itamar Gilboa, Nicolien Kegels and Nat Muller for their reflections during our many conversations. Emi Sfard has been a great companion to exhibitions and our talks provided me with many insights. Osnat

Pinkas has offered vital support during many moments of crisis. In recent years my colleagues at the Literary Studies department at the University of Amsterdam have been a great source of inspiration and strength.

Finally, my heartfelt love and thanks go to my family. To my parents, Rachel and Yochanan, thank you for your unconditional support and for the high standards you set by your own goals and achievements. To my sister and brother, Roni and Yoav, for inspiring me by being the talented and amazing people that you are. To my children, Ben and Maya, for offering wonderful and much-needed respites from the world of research. Last but not least I would like to thank my partner Timm: thank you for your love, your calmness and clear head, for helping me to make sense of things and for making sure I do not disappear in the world of research. I am grateful for our partnership and for the person I've become in the years we spent together.

Four chapters are expanded versions of previously published material. I would like to thank their publishers for permission to reprint them here. A shorter version of Chapter 1 appears in the edited volume *Inside Knowledge: (Un)doing Ways of Knowing in the Humanities* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009: 157–74), published with the permission of Cambridge Scholars Publishing; sections of Chapter 4 appeared in the online journal *Image and Narrative*, 18 in 2007; a concise version of Chapter 5 has appeared in the edited volume *Narratives of Dissent* (Wayne State University Press, 2012: 78–98) published with permission of Wayne State University Press; and an abridged version of Chapter 6 has appeared in Hebrew in the online magazine *Erev Rav* in 2009 and in English in the edited volume *Art and Visibility in Migratory Culture* (Rodopi, 2011: 239–56), published with permission of Brill. All previously published materials have been developed further in terms of their depth and scope in the current manuscript. As a cohesive collection, they lead to a more complex overall argument regarding the politics of the image in contemporary culture as well as the specific role that civilian militarism plays within Israeli visual culture.

Introduction

Gunsight, also called Sight, any of numerous optical devices that aid in aiming a firearm.

ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA

In search of a civic aesthetics

A price list that is prominently displayed at the entrance hall of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, above the box office, may serve as a fitting entry point to this book. In descending order, it lists admission fees to the museum venues. Residents and students receive a mild reduction; children do not have to pay; seniors and enlisted soldiers pay half price; and soldiers in uniform may enter free of charge. The list presents a concise schematization of the social order of those invited to look at art, and in its denotation of the military uniform as a cultural commodity, it discloses a visual preference in addition to a social one. Come dressed in civilian clothes with your military identity card and you receive a reduction in price; come dressed in uniform, *looking like a soldier*, and you do not pay at all. The list thus rhetorically welcomes the display of military appearance within the museum grounds. In its prominent place at the entrance of an influential cultural institution, located across the street from the headquarters of the Israeli Defense Forces, it concisely presents the matter that is under scrutiny in this study: the ubiquitous and naturalized way in which militarism participates in the shaping of Israeli art and visual culture.[1]

Taking the price list plaque as the point of departure, this study attends to the relation between images and frames of vision in the contexts of militarized Israeli national identity and Israeli contemporary art. It addresses a variety of artworks (paintings, photographs, sculptures and installations) as well as art-related objects and events (catalogue texts, exhibitions, creative acts of resistance) that communicate visual and epistemological aspects of civilian militarism, using the tools of contemporary theory, critical sociology, art history and cultural analysis. I will attempt to answer two interrelated sets of questions: one set belongs to the politics of Israel's militarized visual culture, to the ways in which identities, memories, objects and spaces are imagined and represented in military terms. The other set belongs to the more general politics of aesthetics, and to art's intricate relationship with the world in which it is constructed and on which it comments. The analyses of the social, psychological and political effects of pervasive militariness within Israeli civilian life are left to other studies. Instead, my study

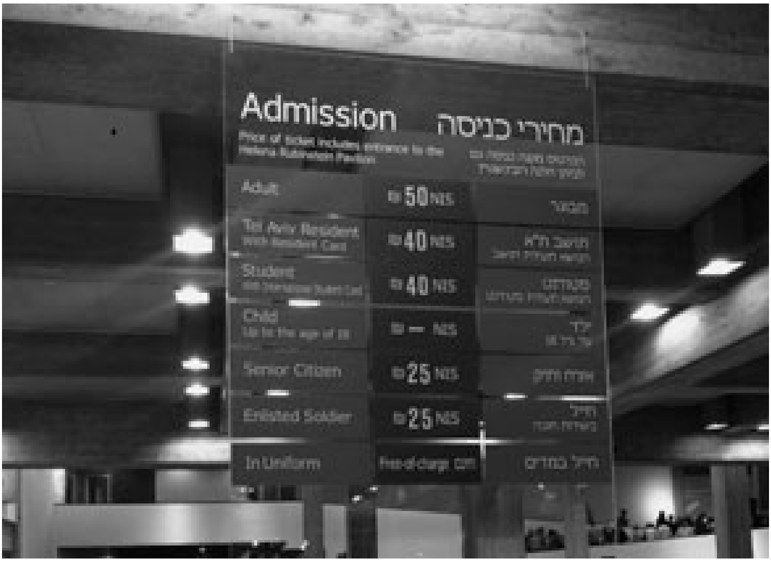

Admission
מחירי כניסה
Price of ticket includes entrance to the Helena Rubinstein Pavilion
Adult
50 NIS
מבוגר
Tel Aviv Resident
with Resident Card
40 NIS
Student
40 NIS
Child
Up to the age of 18
— NIS
ילד
Senior Citizen
25 NIS
Enlisted Soldier
25 NIS
חייל
In Uniform
Free-of-charge
חייל במדים

FIGURE i.1 Entrance hall, Tel Aviv Museum of Art (price list), 2016. Photographer: Emi Sfard. Courtesy of Emi Sfard.

concerns the ways visual art addresses the issue. The search for a civic aesthetics in this book is thus a search for an aesthetics that destabilizes a naturalized (militaristic) visual field and allows this field to present itself for investigation.

The employment of 'militarism' as a framework for the following analysis requires some clarification. Clearly, I am not referring here to militarism in the common, praetorian sense – the seizure of power by the army and its supporting elements.[2] Rather, the understanding of militarism that underlies this book stems from Alfred Vagts' classic study (1959), in which he distinguishes between 'militarism' and 'the military way'. The latter phrase has to do with the military proper: what it refers to is limited in scope, confined to the army's primary goal of winning specific power objectives with the utmost efficiency and via the application of violence. Militarism, in contrast,

> presents a vast array of customs, interests, prestige, actions, and thought associated with armies and wars and yet transcending true military purposes. . . . Its influence is unlimited in scope. It may permeate all society and become dominant over all industry and arts. Rejecting the scientific character of the military way, militarism displays the qualities of caste and cult, authority and belief.
>
> Vagts 1959: 13

Vagts' study forms the basis for many of the discussions that follow.[3] In accordance with his analysis, numerous studies address militarism in terms that are synonymous with excess, defining it as an 'expansion of the military beyond certain, usually not very well defined, bounds' (Skjelsbœk 1980: 81–3). Rather than a static phenomenon, militarism is understood to be a dynamic condition, characterized by the progressive expansion of the military sphere over the civilian (Klare 1980: 36). As Cynthia Enloe makes clear, militarism (in her terms, militarization) 'creeps into ordinary daily routines, threads its way amid memos, laundry, lovemaking, and the clinking of frosted beer glass' (2000: 3). In its everyday forms, militarism scarcely looks life-threatening, or worthy of attention (2000: 3).

The museum's price list described above is an instance of militarism inasmuch as its visual rhetoric welcomes the military appearance of/in civilian spaces. It symbolically strips the uniform of its militaristic qualities and frames the soldier as a civil figure, in terms both of having non-military interests and concerns and of being a civilized, cultured being. Significantly, and notwithstanding its prominent location, size and colour, the list remains somewhat transparent; it is located on the threshold between the non-representational space of the street and the representational space of the museum, and is meant to function as an information marker that does not lend itself to examination, interpretation or critique in the same way as those visual objects that are on display beyond it, in the museum itself. Furthermore, it is anything but dramatic or extraordinary: similar reductions in fees are presented at the entrance to many cultural and commercial institutions, and military denotations feature in countless books, songs, films, jokes, news items, commercials and artworks that do not necessarily focus on military-related themes.

This plethora of artworks and other visual signs does not, as a group, necessarily 'rank military institutions and ways above the ways of civilian life', nor does it always 'carry military mentality and modes of acting and decision into the civilian sphere' (Vagts 1959: 17). The works do not consistently propagate the notion that organized violence is the best solution for political problems, and are often not even based on a clear ideological agenda. Some of these references are critical towards military mentalities, and others are indifferent to the relation between the military and the civilian spheres. And yet, I argue, these are *all* instances of civilian militarism, as they participate in the expansion of the military over the civilian through the subtle blurring of the borders between the two realms.

In this book I focus on works of art and art-related objects that, while adding to the military excess within Israeli visual culture, give form to a civic aesthetics in the sense that they make that excess tangible, accessible for critical interpretation. Whether through references to previous known imagery, or through a careful manoeuvring of composition, the 'civic' here does not reside in what the images show, but in what they do, as they toy with common modes of seeing and interpretation and thus allow viewers to engage with civilian militarism as a *sight apparatus*. The sight apparatus is what one looks through in order to see, to capture, but it is so close to the eye, that it becomes transparent, its own actuality dissolving into vision. The attempt here is to engage directly with the 'sight' of civilian militarism – that diffuse, vague, expansive quality that blurs the borders between the civil and the military – as a site in itself, and, in this way, to create a space for intervention.

Approaching a variety of images from the vantage point of a specific way of seeing, rather than from a focus on their shared form or content, allows me to investigate a large array of visual objects as participants in, rather than commentaries on, contemporary culture. It also negates a separation between the aesthetics of the images and the politics that the images attend to, and treats both as inherently intertwined. Figuring out what these works have to say about civilian militarism is at the same time an exploration of what images in general can tell us about the world we live in and the way we approach it, and them.

Between critique and complicity

For Vagts, militarism and civilianism stand in opposition to each other. He coined the term 'civilian militarism' to describe a subcategory of militarism, in which civil servants without an explicit military background or affiliation pursue militaristic policies. Decades later, the Israeli sociologists Uri Ben-Eliezer and Baruch Kimmerling have each broadened the term to define a cultural phenomenon in which conflict and war are understood as self-evident parts of everyday life (Ben-Eliezer 1998: 7; Kimmerling 2005: 201). Their studies challenged the basic assumption of their predecessors, who asserted by and large that there was no militarism in Israel.[4]

In his seminal essay 'Militarism in Israeli Society' (1993a), published in English under the title 'Patterns of Militarism in Israel' (1993b), Kimmerling offers a consolidated presentation of 'the Israeli militarism thesis' (Peri 1996: 240). He argues that 'Israeli militarism tends to serve as one of the *central organizational principles* of the society' whose symptoms include institutional and cultural practices that are organized around the management of a protracted external conflict (Kimmerling 1993b: 199, emphasis in text). Kimmerling identifies three dimensions of militarism: the violent-force dimension, the cultural dimension and the cognitive dimension, which he also terms as civilian militarism, since

> its main bearers and implementers are the social centre, the civil government, civil elites and all or most of the members of the collectivity. With respect to this type of militarism, it is not necessary that the military, as an institutional structure, governs

> in the political sphere; nor is the army necessarily stationed at the centre of a statist cult. In contrast, the civilian militarism, or what might be called *the military mind*, is systematically internalized by most statesmen, politicians and the general public to be a self-evident reality whose imperatives transcend partisan party or social allegiances.
>
> 1993b: 207; emphasis added

Kimmerling's account centres on civilian militarism as being paradigmatic of the Israeli situation. Following the publication of 'Militarism in Israeli Society', a large number of studies have addressed the topic, and have attempted to enhance awareness of the issue by outlining and analysing various aspects of the collective's military mind. The expansive literature on the topic includes studies on militarism in Israeli politics (Ben-Eliezer 2001; Peri 2006), militarism in education and social media (Harel 2000; Gor 2005; Kuntsman and Stein 2015), the effects of militarism on the socialization of youth (Sasson-Levy and Rapoport 2003; Lieblich 1989), its economic aspects (Levy 1998, 2003), discursive aspects (Gavriely-Nuri 2013), gendered aspects (Klein 2002; Brownfield-Stein 2010; Sasson-Levy 2002), geographical aspects (Oren and Regev 2008), and more. Ariella Azoulay (2011) interprets the very declaration of the state of Israel as a victory of military logic over a civil one.[5]

The repercussions of the overall picture sketched out by these studies – where the distinction between the military and the civilian spheres is blurred at best and non-existing at worst – should not be underestimated. As Azoulay recently observed, the implementation of a continuous warlike reality in Israel locates war outside any constellation of political decision-making. It leads to a 'constitutive civil malfunction' where citizens are not able to intervene and demand the transformation of this continuous warlike reality, even as they participate in public debates about the moral and political aspects of war (Azoulay 2011: 168–9, 185).[6]

In what follows I too adhere to the definition of civilian militarism as a basic element of Israeli society and a prominent attribute of Israeli culture, a 'civil malfunction' which reiterates itself in numerous everyday cultural codes, attitudes, habits and customs. My interest lies in militarism as excess, and in its manifestations in the realm of the visual. More specifically, I wish to examine the ability of visual art to articulate this excess to its audience. My point of departure is the assumption that art is a valuable partner in the production of critical discourse.

A paradox arises here: how can the same art, which I have just declared to be participatory in the propagation of Israel's 'military mind', be part of the production of a critical discourse that attempts to undo, or at least unpack, its effects? This seemingly impossible entanglement of complicity and critique is constitutive of any object (and subject) that aims at deconstructing the cultural codes of its (her, my) society. As Theodor Adorno makes clear, culture and criticism are intertwined, for better or for worse. In his discussion of commitment in art, he points to the dangers of an autonomous work 'that wants nothing but to exist' as well as to that art which is reduced to propaganda by advocating a particular partisan position ([1962] 2003: 240, 242). Similarly, Adorno indicts the cultural critic who positions himself as being superior to the culture that he scrutinizes, but also warns against the dangers of losing oneself to flagellating self-reflection. These double binds, which reside both in art and in its critics, arise from a situation of inherent complicity, where criticism is 'imprisoned within the orbit of that against which it struggles' ([1951] 2003: 147). The vast majority of images discussed in this book fit this description perfectly as they remain both culturally and conceptually embedded within the orbit of civilian militarism. Whether they are critical of 'the military mind' or not, they remain imprisoned within its discourse, and in that sense support it, regardless of their specific message or critique.

The way for a civic aesthetics to emerge from this entanglement is paved out by the writing of Gayatri C. Spivak, specifically her *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, which repeatedly calls for a productive acknowledgement of complicity (1999: xii, 147, 244, 309). Following Spivak, a recent volume dedicated to the topic suggests that the recognition of the complicit mechanisms involved in practices of commitment may lead to a sense of responsibility, turning complicity into an enabling force (Firat, De Mul, and Van Wichelen 2009: 3, 9). In what follows, I wish to build on these insights and offer the suggestion that the civic aesthetics that the images in this book give form to is not cut off from a militaristic visual field, but works with and through it, mobilizing complicity as a tool for analysis. This dialogic move is particularly suitable for the visual field for, as W.J.T. Mitchell convincingly argues, the power of images lies in the way they awaken in us a desire to see exactly what they cannot show (1996: 78).

Similar arguments are offered by Judith Butler, who defines the critical image as that which should 'not only fail to capture its referent, but *show* this failing' (2004: 146; emphasis in text), and Jacques Rancière, who argues that critical art is capable of speaking, in part, on the basis of its illegibility (2009: 46).[7] Ernst van Alphen explains how artworks attract viewers through their ability to 'present that which withdraws from our cognitive power. . . . [Artworks] offer an articulation of issues we live by but that, precisely for that reason, we cannot know' (Alphen 2005: 9). This impenetrable, ungraspable essence of images in general, and of images of art in particular, fuels the desire to expose the scopic regimes that construct their visibility. That is why I turn to images in an attempt to perform what W.J.T. Mitchell eloquently describes as 'showing seeing', to consider the militarized frames that enable viewers to see or ignore meaning in the cultural, social and political cultures that they are part of (2002b: 178).[8]

More than two decades ago, Mitchell coined the phrase 'the pictorial turn' to indicate a shift in academic discourse in which visual objects were gradually gaining renewed centrality (1994: 12–13). Although that turn has since been problematized and complicated (above all by Mitchell himself), the notion that knowledge is envisioned in predominantly visual terms remains pertinent, as is the understanding that ways of seeing are historically determined and culturally mediated.[9] An important outcome of the pictorial turn is the awareness that 'we always see more or less than what is there and that, therefore, seeing is always affected by with ideals, values, presuppositions, fears and desires' (Bleeker 2008: 18). Vision, in other words, is entangled with *visuality*, the distinct historical manifestation of a visual experience (Bleeker 2008: 1). Visuality, as a frame of reference that directs vision, shares with civilian militarism qualities such as vagueness, obscurity and excess: what we see – and what we do not – is conditioned by what we know and by what we believe (Bleeker 2008: 2). In what follows I look at objects from the art world in search of a visual articulation of the militarized 'ideals, values, presuppositions, fears and desires' that affect and define the act of seeing in contemporary Israeli society.[10]

Any discussion of Israeli civilian militarism cannot be complete without attending to Israel's representational other – that is, Palestine. Indeed, while most chapters do not attend directly to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, that conflict serves, to some extent, as the unspoken context for this study as a whole.[11] Israel's permanent state of emergency and war with neighbouring countries has been brought up as explanation for the extensive role that the military plays in the Israeli ethos. Clearly, the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territory has a large role in defining Israeli modes of self-representation, both within and without. Yet in this study I adhere to Enloe's warning, and attend to militarization as a cultural, institutional, ideological, economical and, if I may add, aesthetical transformation, that is not always and already aligned with conflict and war (2000: 3). What this study wishes to foreground, taking visuality as its point of departure, is that the causal relation commonly sketched between a political reality and its comprehension is a dialogic one, so that the 'military mind' is not only an effect, but also a trigger for the ways in which Israel approaches cultural, social and political issues, including the way both Israelis and Palestinians are imagined, represented and ultimately treated within a militarized cultural sphere. From this perspective, destabilizing the military gaze is a necessary step in opening up new possibilities of identification and allegiances.

At the same time, it should be clear that this study does not understand art to be an unequivocal crusader in the struggle for demilitarization. In this, I follow Mitchell's call to 'scale down the rhetoric of the "power of images"'. Images, Mitchell tells us, though not powerless, are a lot weaker than we would like to think (1996: 74). I would add that images are also a lot less moral, or just, than we would like them to be. The artworks that I have chosen to examine work with and through a double weakness: their limited ability to affect discourse and their inherent complicity with that discourse. The problem, as Mitchell goes on to explain, is to refine and complicate our estimation of the power of images and of the way it works. I would like to follow his lead and suggest that the potential of visual art lies in its tendency to reflect its own premises and power, which then invites viewers to reappraise their perception of their sociocultural surroundings.

Showing seeing: the critical image

In the following analysis, I read artworks and exhibitions as potential moments of disruption in the naturalized assumptions of the Israeli psyche. My concern is with the way that the sight apparatus of civilian militarism – and the accompanying effacement of a military frame of mind – is both asserted and contested in Israeli visual culture. While my focus is clearly theoretical, it is deeply rooted within a specific sociocultural and political situation. Crucially, the works' meaning in the sense that I explore is limited neither to the art historical discourse nor to the sociopolitical sphere. On the contrary: the articulation of political concerns materializes here through an engagement with artistic traditions. The common distinction between aesthetics and politics is negated here, as well as the established cut between the work and the world, including its viewers and interpreters.

The focus is on how images work, rather than on what they show, following the methodology of cultural analysis as developed by Mieke Bal in the early 1990s. Cultural analysis stems from a semiotic reading of art and treats the objects that it analyses as signs that take part in the social production of meaning.[12] It does not set out to interpret artworks in the traditional sense, nor does it examine artworks from a purely sociological perspective. Rather, it traces the processes in which artworks become intelligible to those who view them (Bal and Bryson 1991: 184). As Saskia Lourens clearly explains,

> Cultural analysis takes off from the assumption that the cultural artefacts produced within a community reveal much about the ideologies upheld within that community. A critical reading of such artefacts therefore often provides clues with regard to the inconsistencies of presumptions made by these ideologies.
>
> 2009: 14

The critical reading that Lourens advocates necessitates a critical eye: the Tel Aviv museum admission fee list, for example, unfolds and communicates the story of civilian militarism only when triggered by the right set of questions. But in this study, I narrow my analysis to a number of artworks that, in different forms, *solicit* critical reflection on the cultural codes and ideologies that construct their visibility. In so doing, I explore the critical image as that which discloses the regime of visibility in which it is seen and comprehended.

Cultural analysis stands for an interdisciplinary, discursive and participatory research practice, in which objects are interpreted in relation to their situatedness in the present. The interdisciplinary character of cultural analysis takes shape in the 'recourse to various archives . . . forging new relationships between elements in them in the attempt to account for an object that, for the sake of analysis, is permitted not to belong' (Aydemir 2008: 39). It is discursive in the way it privileges intersubjectivity over objectivity in the interaction between object and analyst, and it is participatory in the sense that it emphasizes the 'active presence of the object in the same historical space as is inhabited by the subject', leading to an engaged dialogue that undermines the relation of authority and mastery between the analyst, the reader and the object under scrutiny (Bal 2002: 44, 1999a: 10–13).

Most importantly, cultural analysis follows Spivak's call for a productive acknowledgement of complicity insofar as it advocates self-reflexivity, based 'on a keen awareness of the critic's situatedness in the present, the social and cultural present from which we look, and look back, at the objects that are always already of the past, objects that we take to define our present culture' (Bal 1999a: 1). The cultural analyst is implicated within the culture that she wishes to examine. Her situatedness is actively acknowledged within the analysis, so that interpretation itself becomes part of the meaning it yields (Peeren 2007: 2). This awareness for embedded viewing or embedded interpretation is essential for my project, as is the realization that my analysis of the artworks is a result of the singular, sometimes even contingent, encounter between us.

This awareness, however, does not mean that what follows should be understood as an accumulated account of creative writing. Rather, I follow van Alphen's conception of artworks as theoretical objects that address transhistorical questions within the parameters of specific historical contexts (2005: 3). In my case, the transhistorical questions addressed by the artworks pertain to frames of vision (what do you know/what do you see) through familiar genres and themes such as landscapes, figural paintings and still lifes, while the specific historical context is that of civilian militarism in Israeli visual culture.

As a consequence of my methodological approach, this study will not offer its readers a historical overview of soldiers and military objects in Israeli works of art. It will not present a contemporary survey of the topic, nor will it focus on the works' circulation and reception. Instead, the objects selected are presented as theoretical objects that give form to a civic aesthetics through a critical engagement with the diffuse, vague and excessive character of civilian militarism.

Chapter 1, 'Can(n)ons of Israeli society', serves as a preamble to the chapters that follow. I conduct a close reading of an exhibition catalogue devoted to representations of soldiers in contemporary

Israeli art in order to touch upon the predicaments that arise when one approaches the topic. In this chapter I also offer a historical survey of the study of 'things military' in Israeli academia and develop the concept of civilian militarism as the framework for my analysis. Chapter 2, 'Bodies of the nation: eroticized soldiers', contends with the embodiment of militarism through Adi Nes' *Soldiers* series, which portrays the Israeli soldier as an erotic object of inquiry and critique. I read Nes' work against theories of sexuality, aesthetics and nationalism to enquire how its rendering of the body of the soldier destabilizes and/or reinforces hegemonic masculinity and citizenship in their Israeli militarized incarnation.

In Chapter 3, 'Looking through landscape', I turn to artworks by Larry Abramson, Meir Gal, Roi Kuper and Gilad Ophir that attempt to capture the apparatus of civilian militarism through the portrayal of landscape imagery. I analyse the way these works attempt to visualize the epistemological blind spot of civilian militarism, and examine to what extent they reflect (on) the way in which military landscapes engulf the viewer within their frame. Similar questions regarding the constructed essence of visual, spatial and political knowledge arise in Chapter 4, 'Kebab in theory: mapping vision', where I engage with the still-life genre and the mapping view through a close reading of a single artwork, *Lebanese Kebab* by David Goss. I focus on the challenges that the painting poses to interpretation as a way to clarify my understanding of the critical image.

Chapter 5, 'Greetings to the soldier-citizen: consuming nostalgia', moves from landscape and mapping to memory as it examines the relationship between militarism, visual culture and national memory in present-day Israel. I look at the exhibition *40 Years to Victory* by Honi Hame'agel and investigate the ways in which it challenges conventional narratives of the transformation of Israeli identity through the years. Finally, in Chapter 6, 'Fence art: re/framing politics', I investigate the performative aspect of the popular-resistance movement in the occupied Palestinian village of Bil'in, juxtaposed with an art exhibition based on the early stages of this movement that was displayed in an Israeli art gallery. Through comparing the two events I examine the politics and the aesthetics of art objects in relation to the context of their display. I conclude by considering the way in which the critical image was conceptualized in this study, in ways that can lead to insights beyond the specific sociopolitical concerns addressed in this book.

CHAPTER ONE

Can(n)ons of Israeli society

. . . perhaps our inability to see what we see is also of critical concern.

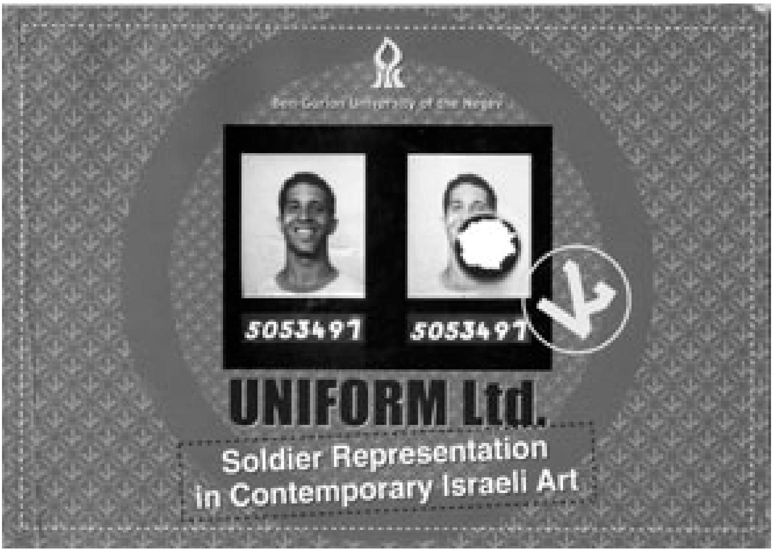
JUDITH BUTLER, 'PHOTOGRAPHY, WAR, OUTRAGE' (2005: 826)

Frames and set-ups

In this chapter I discuss the catalogue of a small exhibition from 2004 entitled *Uniform Ltd.: Soldier Representations in Contemporary Israeli Art*. The exhibition, an end-product of the yearly curatorship course at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Beer-Sheva, was on display at the Avraham Baron art gallery on the university campus. It consisted of artworks of various media, including oil painting, photography, installation and video by sixteen Israeli artists. The artworks varied widely in their aesthetics and focus, from Ronit Agassi's installation *Petals* (2002–3), which consisted of dried leaves pierced with the shapes of media images of soldiers, to Ofek Wertman's video animation *Game Not Over* (2003), based on a computer combat game. The catalogue of the exhibition, an A5-size booklet, includes three introductory texts, followed by short descriptions of the artists and colour reproductions of their works. The catalogue is bilingual, and its two languages – Hebrew and English – each open at one side of the booklet and meet at its centre.

The abundance of military themes in Israeli artworks and the apparent ease with which an exhibition on this topic fits into the national cultural arena are indicative of a larger cultural phenomenon in Israel. In this chapter I enquire into the soldier's prominent position in Israeli art, whether the figure is embraced or criticized. I do so through close reading, not so much of the artworks in this show but rather of the exhibition catalogue, to problematize the ways in which representations of soldiers in art are themselves represented: how they are framed, perceived and offered up to the audience. As a frame twice removed from the artworks themselves, the catalogue underscores the fact that our encounter with images is always already embedded in cultural, historical, theoretical or ideological contexts. It thus raises questions that precede criticism, questions related to framing and to perception, concisely articulated in the quotation from Judith Butler that serves as the epigraph of this chapter.

Butler poses her concern about the framing of sight in relation to the phenomenon of 'embedded reporting' in the second Iraq war,


Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
5053497
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UNIFORM Ltd.
Soldier Representation
in Contemporary Israeli Art

FIGURE 1.1 Catalogue cover, English front. *Uniform Ltd.: Soldier Representations in Contemporary Israeli Art*, 2004. Cover design by Sefi Sinay. Courtesy of Prof. Haim Maor, the Arts Department, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

when journalists and photographers agreed to report from within the perspective of military or governmental authorities, to secure access to the action (2005: 822). She concludes that every photograph (from that war specifically, but also more generally) is an interpretation insofar as it delimits what will fit within the frame of vision (2005: 823).[1] Butler's concern with embedded reporting and with the interpretative aspect of the frame in contemporary warfare can be generalized to other, more mundane instances in visual culture, where tacit agreements over the angle from which an image, an idea or a theme are portrayed and interpreted are constructed gradually and informally, maybe even unconsciously. In those cases, too, 'to learn to see the frame that blinds us to what we see is no easy matter' (2005: 826).

Preceding Butler's caution, while answering its concern, Mieke Bal foregrounds the act of framing as an indispensable complement to the analysis of images. For Bal, the emphasis lies in the dynamic nature of the frame: showing is a form of framing, which is, in turn, a form of performance (Bal 2002: 140, 173). The act of framing produces an event, and awareness of the frame as event calls for the accountability of its performing agents (Bal 2002: 135). Bal's formulation draws on Jacques Derrida's *The Truth In Painting* (1987), in which the picture frame is conceptualized as *parergon*, something situated neither inside nor outside the work, while nevertheless giving rise to the work and affecting its meaning: 'That which [the parergon] puts in place – the instances of the frame, the title, the signature, the legend, etc. – does not stop disturbing the *internal* order of discourse on painting, its works, its commerce, its evaluation, its surplus-values, its speculation, its law, and its hierarchies' (Derrida 1987: 9; emphasis in text).

As Robin Marriner makes clear, Derrida's analysis goes beyond the picture frame as such, and means to attend to the structure within which our thinking about objects takes place. The frame, as framework, implies that 'our vision of [the work's] "interiority", will be formed and informed by what we take and bring to it as "exterior"' (Marriner 2002: 352–4). In the same vein, Bal conceptualizes framing as the process within which (art) objects are set up by various *a priori* knowledge paradigms: art-historical, curatorial, contextual and so forth (Bal 2002: 141–5). The frame, here, is not necessarily a concrete, material structure, and subsists within the image (as in Butler's example of embedded reporting), around the image (as in Derrida's quotation above, through captions and titles), and within the mind of its beholders (as in Bal's account of the framing as event).

As *parergon*, the catalogue of *Uniform Ltd.* both emerges from the exhibition and affects its meaning. Some of its features expose its position as an agent of framing, and make explicit what the catalogue brings to bear on the theme of soldier representations, while others downplay it through the vocabulary of context to determine the meaning of the exhibit.[2] In what follows, I examine which frames of meaning are at work in the set-up of the exhibition, how they are camouflaged and what internal tensions within these frames reveal themselves through symptomatic signs and symbols. However, as an agent of framing, I too am held accountable for what I bring to bear on the object that I analyse (Bal 2002: 135–6). For my part, I employ the prism of 'civilian militarism' as the frame for my investigation, in this chapter as well as those that follow, as a means to understand how militaristic images, concepts and idioms are mobilized in Israeli society on levels that exceed the military proper, in ways that go mostly unquestioned and unproblematized. In the next section of this chapter, I discuss the catalogue texts within the frame of sociological studies of Israeli militarism. Then, I analyse the catalogue cover to see what aspects of civilian militarism it reveals. The final part of the chapter focuses on the considerable difference between the English title of the exhibition and its Hebrew counterpart, which translates roughly as 'you're a cannon!' in order to contrast two frames of reference with each other and, in so doing, to offer a methodology for teasing out and analysing built-in significations and constructed frames of vision.

The exhibition and its accompanying catalogue are less known than some of the works they include, and are more peripheral, even ephemeral, in comparison to other exhibitions that have dealt with the topic.[3] My interest in the *Uniform Ltd.* catalogue lies in its presentation of multiple, at times opposing, attitudes towards its subject matter – artistic representations of soldiers – as well as towards the relation between artworks and their framing agents, such as curators, critics or historians. This chapter, then, is about the juxtaposition of frames and frameworks: about weighing the hegemonic narrative of military themes in Israeli art against alternative readings; the call for objective, didactic presentations of artworks against the understanding of the art field as a stage on which a constant negotiation among various elements takes place; and the potential insights of visual critique against the ever-present limitation, of critical concern to this study, of our inability to see the frames that construct our vision.

Soldier figures, civilian militarism and Israeli art

The *Uniform Ltd.* exhibition catalogue includes three introductory texts. Generally speaking, the texts narrate a sudden shift in the attitude towards the soldier-figure in Israeli society, culture and the arts.[4] Until the early 1970s, the texts explain, the soldier-figure cohesively symbolized the Jewish hegemonic national collective, while at present this figure is much more fragmented. Contemporary artists follow society's critical turn in their deconstruction of the ideal image of the male soldier (Maor 2004: 109–10; Antebi and Dahari 2004: 97–9). Therefore, contemporary soldier representations attend to the soldier-figure not as an object of admiration but rather as that of desire, repulsion or care. They may be portrayed as heartless machines or as marionettes, as being in control or as being completely vulnerable (Maor 2004: 107–9; Antebi and Dahari 2004: 94–7). *Uniform Ltd.* attends to this multiplicity by presenting its variegated collection of images under four rubrics or sub-themes: 'Field Artist', 'Puppet Soldier', 'Mother's Voice', and 'The Sensitive Gender-less Soldier'.

The narrative frame presented in the catalogue texts, which highlight the waning status of the soldier-figure in Israeli society, is not uncommon and can be found in most existing literature on the topic. Haim Grossman, for example, has written extensively about images of soldier-heroes in popular culture, and notes their disappearance around the early 1970s.[5] Gideon Ofrat offers an art-historical overview to show that soldiers are nowadays portrayed in more individualistic ways than they had been in the past (2004a: 229, 233), and similar conclusions are reached by Elisheva Rosman-Stollman and Zipi Israeli with regards to representations of soldiers in mainstream newspapers (2015: 4–6, 13). In these as well as other texts, the shift is explained sociologically, and attributed to the aftermaths of two wars: the Six Day War of 1967, taken to be Israel's most successful war, and the Yom Kippur War of 1973, which is marked as a traumatic event in Israeli collective memory. The collapse of the belief in the Israeli army's invincibility on the one hand, and the occupational function that the army has fulfilled since the annexation of territory during the 1967 war on the other, unsettled the established consensus towards the army in general and the figure of the soldier in particular (Mishori 1991; Grossman 2003: 53; Ofrat 2004a: 230).[6] This more critical or, in the words of sociologist Yoram Peri, 'anti-militaristic' trend, has gradually moved from the fringe to the heart of the artistic institution, and is also to be found in contemporary literature, cinema and theatre (1996: 257).

A similar critical inclination is to be found within Israeli academia: a comprehensive survey from 2003 indicates that the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) has gradually opened up for public scrutiny as well as academic investigation (Rosenhek, Maman and Ben-Ari 2003: 477). Particularly in the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century, Israel has become a site of intense debates about many of the fundamental assumptions of the Jewish nation state, including the centrality of the military to definitions of Israeli-ness.[7] Specifically, the social sciences show significant growth in the number and scope of publications on the issue. Some of these studies are devoted to rewriting historical narratives of war (Segev 1998, 2007; Morris 2004). Others rethink the function of the military within society and its part in structuring and maintaining, for example, repressive gender relations (Sasson-Levy 2002, 2006) or class divisions (Levy 1998, 2003). There are also sociological studies that suggest that Israel has developed a specific kind of militarism, which continues to play a key role in its political, economic and social arenas. Prominent studies within this trend include the work of Shulamit Carmi, Henry Rosenfeld, Yagil Levy, Uri Ben-Eliezer and Baruch Kimmerling.[8] The latter focuses on the cultural aspect of militarism and his work on the elusive character of civilian militarism – which, at first glance, seems contradictory in light of the vast amount of critical research mentioned above – forms the base of my own argument.

Kimmerling investigates how a culture so deeply infiltrated with militarism can fail to see itself as such. According to his thesis, civilian militarism is hard to trace because it is not the formal, praetorian type of militarism, where the military forcibly takes over the ruling of the state, but is rather a grassroots cultural militarism, in which militaristic ways of thinking gradually penetrate the consciousness of the collective.[9] The strength of the armed forces originates in this case in a militarized society, which favours power-oriented solutions. The collective's nature is not perceived as militaristic, however, even though (or perhaps, precisely because) the military institution and the culture interwoven with it have a decisive role in the formation of what being Israeli is all about. He explains:

> [Civilian militarism] suffuses both the structural and cultural state of mind of the collectivity. This situation is liable to be reflected by full or partial institutional or cultural expressions; yet the main expression is a *latent state-of-mind*. . . . Preparation [for war] becomes part of the social routine; it is far from being an issue for public discussion, debates or political struggle.
>
> Kimmerling 1993b: 206, emphasis in text[10]

In other words, Kimmerling argues that Israeli militarism as a phenomenon in and of itself remains largely unrecognized both by scholars and by the general public – the attention given to military matters notwithstanding – because its principles *frame* the collective national consciousness and its norms of conduct. Key aspects of civilian militarism, such as the normalization of war, are 'civilianized' and dissociated from the military apparatus at the same time as the military is embedded in the nation's social framework through interactions with the education system, the juridical system and the entertainment business, which all play crucial roles in shaping Israel's militaristic metaculture (1993a: 135, 2005: 211–12). The sociopolitical boundaries of the collective are determined and maintained by participation in, or at least the support of, military service (1993a: 128, 2005: 215). Even peace movements are instrumental for the perpetuation of civilian militarism, as they often reiterate militaristic values through their actions and statements (1993b: 219).

Following studies as well as other non-academic social initiatives elaborate on the seemingly contradictory fact that, while the military institution today is scrutinized more than ever, it is still a most trusted establishment (Arian et al. 2010: 18–19, 88, 95). The 'explosion of cultural critiques, polemical essays, and more ordered academic treatises about the place of war and the military in Israel' (Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari 1991: 1) has not changed the fact that the military ethos today remains pervasive in the education system, in the socialization of youth, and in the construction of national and gender identities, as well as in economy and politics. In tandem, many cultural products are saturated with military imagery, and the combat soldier-figure remains for the Jewish-Israeli collective a symbol of ideal citizenship, an apolitical hero.[11]

While the growing awareness and ongoing specification of instances of civilian militarism since the 1990s have not had an effect on its pervasiveness, they have helped to outline the mechanisms with which military service is taken as a legitimate, normal and highly evaluated arena for matters that have nothing to do with the military proper. When we take civilian militarism to be the frame through which the discourse on all things military – critical or not – takes place, the seemingly critical stance of the art world to which the exhibition *Uniform Ltd.* points is put in a different perspective. Reading *Uniform Ltd.* through the prism of civilian militarism underscores the difficulty mentioned at the beginning of this chapter: the difficulty of reflecting critically on the social framework within which one is embedded. This difficulty is related to what Butler terms 'the paradox of subjectivation', in which the subject who resists the norm is also enabled and produced by it (1993: 15).[12] It is echoed in Kimmerling's view that many forms of discourse on the military, *even when they go against the grain*, ultimately fortify the position of the army as the organizing principle of social debate (Kimmerling 2005: 223–6).

The thesis that is reiterated in the exhibition catalogue texts suggests that the diverse approaches to the soldier-figure are part of a wave of critique of the mythical place that the army now no longer enjoys (Maor 2004: 100–10; Antebi and Dahari 1004: 97–9). Yet the abundance of military themes in artworks and exhibitions (as well as in film, theatre and other cultural productions) could just as well mirror the pre-eminent place that the army still holds within contemporary Israeli culture. The demystification of the soldier-figure and the military apparatus might be part of the demilitarization of Israeli society, but it might also result in their further corroboration as vital cultural emblems.

In a colloquium devoted to 'The Manly World View' in 1991, more than a decade prior to *Uniform Ltd.*, art critic Dalia Manor voiced this concern and questioned the customary interpretations of artistic soldier-representations as purely critical. Manor suggested that the change in the status of the soldier-figure from hero to anti-hero in the art world in fact helps to uphold the soldier's mythical status: precisely because contemporary Israeli society is more critical towards its army, the image of the soldier had to go through radical changes in order to maintain its position as marker of Israeli-ness. Manor concluded that the apparent breakdown of the figure runs counter to its avowed goal, and returns the soldier, now purged, to society's centre (in Mishori 1991). This wary approach remains a single minority voice in the historiography of Israeli art, and is not to be found in the texts of the *Uniform Ltd.* catalogue.

Taking sides: exhibitions as framing agents

The catalogue texts thus narrate the artistic fragmentation of the soldier-figure as a result of a process of social individualization that led to a break with the consensus over all things military. This interpretation is based on a specific understanding of the role of art in society as reflective, mirroring and commenting on social reality rather than actively participating in it. One example of such a view states: 'Art gives expression to the current reality, and when reality is multi-faceted and confusing, art too evades unequivocal stylistic definitions and is revealed in its diverse expression' (Antebi and Dahari 2004: 97). In this statement, even the formal qualities of artworks are subordinate to a social or political atmosphere. Art, here as well as in other instances in the catalogue, is framed as a secondary, limited agent in the social field, and curatorial knowledge is understood as distant and somewhat ineffective (e.g. Maor 2004: 108; Antebi and Dahari 2004: 94, 97).

However, at the same time, the texts maintain, 'art tries, with its limited power, to look out and mirror, perhaps even outline a path and point at another, possible alternative reality' (Maor 2004: 106). The artist's role is to observe reality, and art's social agency lies in a kind of domino effect, as it reveals those critical observations to its viewers (Antebi and Dahari 2004: 94; Maor 2004: 106). Dramatic in their claims for the artist's role, yet humble in their assessment of the social agency of art, the texts do not, cannot, address the challenge posed by the framework of civilian militarism, in which art participates actively, if inadvertently, in foregrounding the militaristic social values that it critiques, as its redistribution of the soldier-figure, however critical, ultimately reinforces a militaristic visual field.

I do not wholly disagree with the way in which art's agency is portrayed in the texts, but I wish to draw attention to the lack of reflection on art's potential *complicity* with power. One confessional fragment in the afterword to the third catalogue text forms a suggestive exception. It reads: 'The representation of soldiers in Israeli art is a sensitive theme replete with pitfalls. Awareness of this sensitivity has guided us throughout the preparation of the exhibition and catalogue, in an attempt to present the artists' work and the worldviews emerging from them professionally and accurately, and to give expression to the range of opinions and statements' (Antebi and Dahari 2004: 94).

The curators' avowed preference to remain objective and descriptive ('professional and accurate') and to steer clear of an exploration that goes beyond the intentions ('opinions and statements') of the artists corresponds to how they understand their own role, as outlined above; yet to my mind it clashes with the topic of the exhibition. If the theme of soldier representations is indeed 'replete with pitfalls' I would argue that it requires a thorough examination of the trouble that it stirs up, rather than a tiptoed evasion. This enigmatic indication of pitfalls, when left underdeveloped, turns into a sort of pitfall in itself, a pink elephant that undermines the texts' stated intention, and suggests a possible different path of interpretation.

Yet, things do not end here. While the catalogue *texts* frame *Uniform Ltd.* as an objective overview of a current tendency in the art world, the relations between colours, shapes and words on the catalogue *cover* bring up a more subjective set of questions with regards to the relation between artworks, exhibitions and social matters. The cover lays bare additional (and more dialogical) layers of meaning that precede and structure the exhibition's approach to the military aspects of Israeli culture. As a sort of fourth introductory text, a visual essay, the catalogue cover rises up to the challenge, as it frames the exhibition in a more intricate relation with the artworks that it hosts as well as with the catalogue's readers and exhibition visitors.

The catalogue of *Uniform Ltd.* is bilingual, written in Hebrew and English. Since both sides of the catalogue are front covers, leading to either the Hebrew or the English sections, they look identical except for their language fonts.[13] At the centre of each side are two duplicates of a numbered black-and-white photograph, featuring the bust of young man who smiles broadly (Figure 1.1). The duplicate on the right, however, is damaged, and a circular perforation in the shape of a cigarette burn wipes out most of the photographed lower face and neck. The photos are displayed on top of an ornamented olive-green background, which is composed of small, tightly packed repetitions of the Israeli army seal. They are surrounded by many more logos and signs: the logo and name of Ben-Gurion University is displayed in bright yellow above the photos; a bigger version of the army seal, also in bright yellow, is stamped on the lower corner of one of the passport photos, echoing the yellow borders of the burnt perforation; and the title of the exhibition appears under the photos in black and white.

The photographs are quotations from the participatory installation *Self Portrait in the IDF Induction Centre* by Dudu Bareket, composed of a self-made slide projector, slides and explanatory text.[14] In the installation, on display at *Uniform Ltd.*, the audience was invited to insert slides of Bareket's soldier identification photo into a projector, which burns through them by overexposure while projecting them on the wall. Each burnt slide falls on the floor onto a pile of previously destroyed portraits of the smiling youth (Figure 1.2). Clearly, on the catalogue cover the slide reproductions are part of an entirely different composition. They look like two recurrent images of passport photographs, one whole and the other burnt. Through the appropriation of an existing image from an artwork, and through its positioning in the midst of various other signs of social sanctions and authorities, the catalogue cover offers an alternative thesis on the way social and artistic norms are configured in and around *Uniform Ltd.*

The citing of Bareket's installation on the cover assumes a participatory, interpretative role for the exhibition: it creates a new image that does not exist independently, and so is not a reproduction, but becomes a representation of Bareket's installation and of the exhibition as a whole. Since many of the works exhibited are either photographs or paintings, the choice to produce a new image for the cover indicates the exhibition's agency. It presents the relation

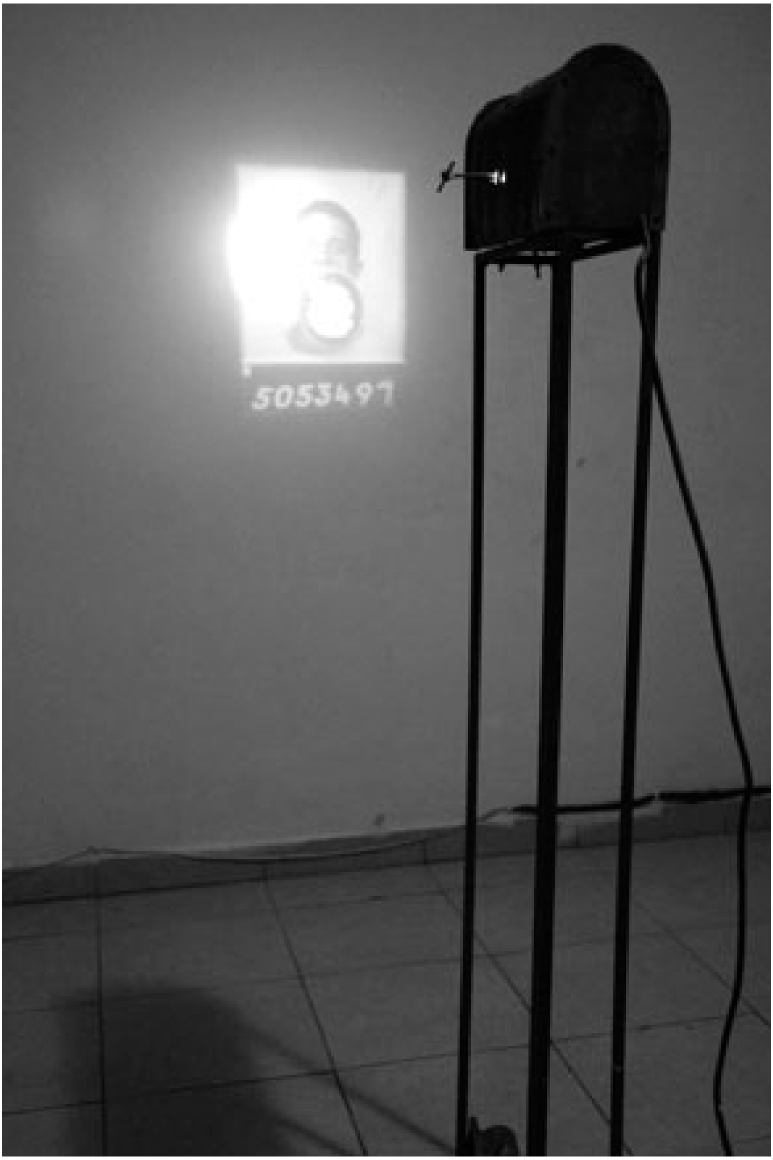

FIGURE 1.2 Dudu Bareket, *Self Portrait at the IDF Induction Centre*. Self-made slide projector and slides, 2002. Gallery view. Courtesy of the artist.

between the exhibition and the artworks as dialogic instead of descriptive, objective or subservient. This aspect is enhanced by the fact that signs that belong to 'art' and to 'society' respectively are intermingled on the cover, rather than categorically separated, and that the soldier-figure is addressed by both at once. Stamps of the army, the state and the academy are placed on top of, but also within and behind, Bareket's double portrait. The latter, in turn, indexes both the 'real' soldier that was photographed at the induction centre and the 'represented' soldier that is found on the slides that are part of the art installation.

Thus, unlike the descriptive approach of the catalogue texts and their attempt to stay 'outside' the work or offer contextual background and overview, the cover design draws attention precisely to its own status as parergon and to the active participation of an exhibition (catalogue) in the way artworks are framed and perceived. If, as I have argued above, an awareness of the act of framing calls for the accountability of its performing agents (Bal 2002: 135), then the catalogue cover design invites its viewers to reflect on the determining aspects, or prefigurative frames, within which the soldier-figure is represented in this exhibition in particular and in Israeli art and culture more generally. In order to do that, in what follows I propose to read the catalogue cover as a visual variant of Judith Butler's theory of performative reiterations.

Visual performatives

In her book *Bodies That Matter* (1993), Butler conceptualizes performativity as the power of discourse to produce effects through reiteration (1993: 20). The term was first coined by the philosopher of language J.L. Austin to designate an utterance that 'does' what it 'says'. Austin assigns the successful execution of the performative utterance to the social circumstances in which it is uttered and to the authority of its speaker, but Butler follows Derrida when she underscores the importance of repetition (or, in Derrida's terms, *iterability*) for the production of performative effects (1993: 12–16).[15] She describes a cyclic process of socialization: one becomes a subject through repeated acts that depend on social conventions, and by way of repeating these acts, one fortifies their status as authoritative social conventions. The performative is thus never an empowered singular act, and its ability to 'do' what it 'says', to have a determining effect on its surrounding, is based on prior instances (1993: 15).

Butler does not attend often to the visual in her writing, and the bulk of her work on the performative regards the bodily, temporal reiterations of societal norms. Yet, Butler offers her work up for appropriation when she writes that 'the unanticipated reappropriations of a given work in areas for which it was never consciously intended are some of the most useful' (1993: 19). The translation, or better yet, reiteration of her thought into the visual domain of the exhibition catalogue is thus not uncalled for.[16] In this case, the plural and repeated visual signs of state authority do not leave space to consider the subject portrayed in the photographs as independent from these enclosing frames, and the serial number that accompanies the image reaffirms the institutionalized position of the captured face. The body that emerges, that smiling torso of a young recruit, is formed by and framed within authorization codes, and receives legibility through various institutional signs. This portrait is embedded in a system of authoritative meaning production, and its subject seems quite happy to be there, smiling broadly to the camera.

The interaction between the different signs on the cover is also noteworthy. The bigger yellow army stamp derives its authority – its visual potency – from its many citations in the background. Its visual similarity to the yellow university logo suggests that supposedly independent state institutions may work in similar ways in constructing the subject. Thus, the subject on the catalogue cover, a representative of other representations of soldiers, emerges from both militarized and non-militarized institutional domains, which together relay countless reverberations of the military's authoritative approval.

The subject of *Uniform Ltd.*, then, is moulded into vision by the multiple repetitions of institutional signs. However, his visibility comes at a price. The dialogue between the larger version of the army stamp and the yellow edges of the perforation in the damaged photograph suggests that the army *burns* the subject whom it approves and defines. The burn, caused by overexposure of the slide photograph to light, is thus analogous to the overdetermination of the subject by the army stamps. It exposes the detrimental aspect of the process, a point pushed further by the thick black frame that surrounds the portraits, which cites the format of an obituary notice.[17] The eager smile of the subject does not waver and is still visible under the burnt perforation, reiterating a gesture of satisfaction and pride. The pain connoted by the burn seems to stem, then, not from the subject himself (who remains the same, smiling), but from the repetition of displaying the image, from the overexposure of the image not only to light but also to the eyes of the viewer; indeed, from the strain of maintaining that smile again and again. The dual reproductions of the photograph, one whole and the other burnt, focus the viewer's attention on the void between the one repetition and the other, and expose the mechanism (and the price) of reiteration that is at the base of performative identity.[18]

In addition, and perhaps more importantly, the background of the cover intimates that viewers are already embedded within a militarized visual field when they enter the realm of artistic representations of soldiers. The declared critical approach of the art world is based here on army stamps, which together produce the very ground for the visibility of the image, even as they simultaneously disturb it by overexposure. And yet, while the army seals effectively cover and envelop the entire field of vision, while they direct our vision, they become almost invisible as they amalgamate into a smooth colour. It is all too easy to overlook the military pattern on the catalogue cover, and that is precisely the point.

Cultural theorist Ruti Kantor suggests that 'our exposure to visual militaristic messages is acute and intensive, even when it is incidental or unintentional' (2005: 44–5). My reading of the catalogue cover suggests that the militaristic message is intensive *especially* when it is incidental: the effect of the army stamps in/as the background of the catalogue cover is all the more potent because of its subtlety. Here, again, Butler's theory proves most useful. For Butler, repetition is a method of disguise. Every performative act conceals the conventions of which it is a repetition, and naturalizes, in retrospect, all the previous ones. In extreme cases, 'certain reiterative chains of discursive production are barely legible as reiterations, for the effects they have materialized are those without which no bearing in discourse can be taken. *The power of discourse to materialize its effects is thus consonant with the power of discourse to circumscribe the domain of intelligibility*' (Butler 1993: 188; emphasis added).

This view of the power of concealed conventions resonates with Kimmerling's account of how civilian militarism functions within Israeli society. He argues that civilian militarism is hard to perceive because it is an all-encompassing social frame on which Israeli collective consciousness is based (1993a: 128, 1993b: 206). Butler explains how the combination of imperceptibility and influence comes about: through constant repetitions that simultaneously naturalize past events and pass as unquestioned norms in the present. The divergent militaristic discursive and visual acts that are everywhere to be found in Israeli civil society and culture do not merely cite the norm of civilian militarism, but are in themselves the tools for its maintenance, as well as for its disguise.

The stamps' repetition is a method of disguise, and if the power of discourse to materialize its effects corresponds to the power of discourse to circumscribe intelligibility (Butler 1993: 188), this disguise is itself the means to paint the domain of visibility in khaki colours. The catalogue cover thus operates as a visual metaphor for Kimmerling's theory, in which the signs of civilian militarism fade away and become the naturalized background of social life. While officially introducing 'representations of soldiers', the catalogue cover in fact allows for the concept of civilian militarism to gain momentary legibility over the military subjects that are its manifestation. By underscoring the frameworks that construe *Uniform Ltd.,* the cover reiterates a social performative in a way that allows it to be exposed momentarily, offering room for doubt at the threshold to a space of critical representations.

Critical frictions

Kimmerling's thesis paints a pessimistic picture with regards to the possibility of the demilitarization of Israeli society. His account of civilian militarism suggests that practically every form of discourse on the military, however critical, fortifies the position of the army. The military engulfs everything: left- and right-wing arguments, pro- and anti-war actions, critical and non-critical studies of the military, critical and non-critical images of soldiers. Kimmerling offers the example of the organization Peace Now: he shows how it flaunted the military rank and expertise of its members in order to gain social legitimacy for its demand, unpopular at the time, to retreat from Lebanese territory in the 1980s (2005: 224–5). For instance, during the movement's nascence in 1978, only men who served in combatant roles were invited to sign public petitions, and for many years after, the movement's rhetoric was often formulated in militaristic terms, even when calling for the end of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Feige 1998: 94; Kimmerling 2005: 224). When militaristic attitudes form the ground on which debates occur in the first place – forming, in Butler's terms, a *constitutive constraint* on the subject – they can hardly be challenged in and of themselves.

A way out of this deadlock was offered by sociologist Michael Feige, who suggests that civilian militarism contains an inherent self-destructive quality, which may lead to its eventual demise. Feige returns to Kimmerling's analysis of Peace Now and argues that, while civilian militarism was indeed omnipresent in the group's initial activities, it was minimized in time through a process that Feige sees as inevitable. The process that Feige outlines, of gradual and minor transformations which eventually lead to policy change, resonates with Butler's view on the agency that resides in performative reiterations. That agency is limited in the sense that it does not reside in a voluntary subject, but is there nevertheless in the form of a 'rearticulatory practice, immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power' (Butler 1993: 15).

Repetitions, Butler argues, are not only the mechanisms of authoritative subjectivation. They also hold a political promise, as they constitute the occasion for a critical reworking of norms. The process of reiteration is indispensable for the maintenance of the regulatory law, and consequently, the law remains to some extent dependent on its reiterations and is always susceptible to rearticulations. This susceptibility, then, is a constitutive weakness of the performative, not an incidental misfortune (1993: 21–2, 122). Butler (1993: 2) explains:

> That this reiteration is necessary is a sign that materialization is never quite complete, that bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled. Indeed, it is the instabilities, the possibilities for rematerialization, opened up by this process that mark one domain in which the force of the regulatory law can be turned against itself to spawn rearticulations that call into question the hegemonic force of that very regulatory law.

But how does this relate to *Uniform Ltd.* in general, and to the catalogue cover in particular? In the previous section, I argued that the cover could be interpreted as a visual metaphor for civilian militarism in its presentation of a variety of visual repetitions, which reiterate Butler's understanding of performativity. Now, I focus on the titles of the exhibition as another, more manifest non-identical repetition that allows further contemplation on the perception of soldier representations in Israeli art. Both titles occupy a supposedly singular position, that of the main title of the exhibition, and they echo each other in their location and design on the two sides of the catalogue cover, which are otherwise practically identical. Yet *Ata Totach!*, the Hebrew title, literally translates as 'You're a cannon!' and frames the exhibition in a very different manner than the English *Uniform Ltd*. This friction allows me to further theorize issues of visual performativity and of subjective critique.

The English version refers to the world of commerce. The abbreviation 'Ltd' is applied to capitalist companies, and so the title *Uniform Ltd.* alludes to the army as a profitable business. The critique implicated in the English title is elaborated (in Hebrew and English) in the first introductory text, in which curator Haim Maor narrates a transformation in the IDF's position from 'a people's army' into a workplace that segregates different social groups. Maor explains: 'In recent years one feels that different hues (political, sectorial, professional, image-related) have tinted the khaki colours that characterized the army in its nascence. These shades have transformed the uniform's uniform colours into variegated camouflage colours that conceal more than they reveal. The uniform has transformed from national to commercial, to Uniform Ltd.' (Maor 2004: 110).

In other words, the military uniform that used to symbolize transparency and equality has changed in function, and now hides social inequality behind a standardized khaki outfit.[19] The army seals that form the background of the catalogue cover can be interpreted accordingly as an attempt to cover up the demise in the status of the Israeli army or as the manufacturing of military symbols on an assembly line. In both cases, the title *Uniform Ltd.* is directed at the metastructure of the Israeli army, and at its relationship with civilian capitalist society.

The Hebrew title, in contrast, approaches the topic from the perspective of the subject and comments on the relation between gender and the military. To fully understand its various connotations, some background involving Israeli popular culture is called for. The idiom 'you're a cannon' is the Hebrew equivalent of the English 'you're a stud', referring to an attractive and successful man. Significantly, the Hebrew version employs the military image of the cannon for its macho figure, rather than the animalistic image of the stallion. Maor touches upon this issue and describes military service as a 'unique Israeli rite of passage', linked with youthful eroticism and the formation of a sexual identity.[20] When masculinity is measured through one's military identity, as it often is in Israel, it is not surprising that the image of manhood is militarized, and that idioms such as 'you're a cannon!' conceive of the phallus as a weapon.[21]

'You're a cannon' was also the name of another art exhibition, presented in 1997, and fully titled *You're a Cannon: Icons of Masculinity* (curators: The Limbus Group, Limbus Gallery, Ramat-Hasharon). This exhibition attempted to 'observe the changes and the undermining of collective, stereotypical and characteristic images of Israeli masculinity, which shape the identity of the "Israeli man"' (Sasson-Levy 2006: 192, my translation). Some artworks were exhibited in both *Cannon* exhibitions, and it is telling that the same title and some of the same artworks were used to reflect upon Israeli masculinity on one occasion and upon the image of the Israeli soldier in another.

Finally, 'You're a cannon' is the title of a hit song by the Israeli pop star Sarit Hadad in 2002. The lyrics of the refrain translate as follows: 'You are a cannon/there is no one like you/I will die for you/you are the greatest'. The words pronounce utter admiration for the macho man, and reiterate the canonical perception of cannons as signs for triumphant masculinity. In fact, Hadad's catchy song has little to do with military heroism as such. Dedicated to her manager, it tells the story of her discovery: how he found her, promised her a dream and made that dream happen. As in other aspects of civilian militarism, this *militarized* version of ideal masculinity – a knight in shining armour – passes unnoticed and functions here without much awareness.

In its citation of a colloquial expression, a hit song and a previous art exhibition, the Hebrew title *You're a Cannon!* locates its referent deep within the Israeli culture, street language and art scene. It intimates that the artworks included in the exhibition comment on a military ideal from an engaged position, from the centre of the culture. In contrast, the English *Uniform Ltd.* zooms out and turns critical focus towards the historical change in the army's position, from an ideal figure of national consensus to a fragmented industrial apparatus. The English framing is sophisticated and somewhat detached, promising an overview of the changes in the social value of soldier imagery. The Hebrew framing is popular and engaged, stemming from the folksy centre. The tension between the two is enhanced through their syntax. *Uniform Ltd.* follows the viewers' gaze inward, into the booklet's content, without including their subjectivity in the matrix of militarized culture. *You're a Cannon!*, however, directly addresses the viewers. It makes them a part of the picture, so to speak, and effectively masculinizes them, given that the word 'you' is spelled in its masculine form.

The frictions between the titles cancel out the possibility of a comprehensive analysis, as each title frames the exhibition differently. Take, for example, the four sub-themes of the exhibition: 'Field Artist', 'Puppet Soldier', 'Mother's Voice' and 'The Sensitive Gender-less Soldier'. When examined through the prism of the English heading, these headings emphasize the fragmentation of the uniform into disparate elements and voices. When examined through the prism of the Hebrew heading, their gendered and cultural aspects come to the fore.[22] The subtitles frame the cover image in different ways: the Hebrew title associates the burnt perforation in Bareket's portrait with a cannon ball, and the statement 'you're a cannon!' seems then to collide with the subject's face. In the English title, the perforation is more readily connected with a cigarette burn, and the association is that of a bureaucratic office where objects get accidentally damaged.

Because the same image is associated with each version of the title separately, on opposing sides of the cover, the friction I have traced becomes apparent only when the viewer flips the booklet around. The double heading mirrors its dissimilarity in the process, and subsequently emphasizes the *multiple framing possibilities* for a single image or theme. It is not simply the case that one title is located inside the militarized point of view and the other resides outside of this frame. As demonstrated on the catalogue cover, both statements, 'You're a Cannon!' and 'Uniform Ltd.' are equally set against a militarized background. However, they contend differently with their position, and thus allow viewers to flip between perspectives and consider the variability of visual, textual and social representations.

The multiple tensions delineated in this chapter – between the catalogue texts and its cover, the signs and stamps on the cover, and the incongruities of its disparate titles – negate a unified account of the exhibition that a catalogue is meant to introduce. They reveal, through symptomatic signs and symbols, the predicaments inherent to embedded critique, and point to the difficulty of critically reflecting on the social framework to which one belongs. At the same time, they introduce a tentative solution to this constitutive constraint, and suggest that *dwelling* on incongruities and frictions is a way to broaden one's perspective, acknowledge one's complicity and allow for hesitation, multiplicity, doubt and reflexivity to infect and inflect one's vision.

If our inability to see what we see is indeed of critical concern (Butler 2005: 826), then it does not suffice to make something visible or comprehensible through representation. Rather, we must turn our focus towards the frame, the parergon that forms and informs our vision on visual, conceptual and ideological levels. In following chapters I search for those incongruities that turn the military-related content of artworks inside out and that, in their disruption of cohesive compositions, clear-cut definitions or consistent histories, allow me to foreground the frames that construct their meaning within Israel's contemporary culture of civilian militarism.

CHAPTER TWO

Bodies of the nation

Eroticized soldiers

The body, indeed, is where it all begins: as soon as one wonders what, where, or who one is, one looks to the body for the answer.

ERNST VAN ALPHEN, 'BODYSCAPES' (1992A: 114)

A number of relatively recent Israeli exhibitions testify to a growing interest in reassessing the notion of masculinity in Israel. The exhibition *You're a Cannon: Icons of Masculinity* of 1997 announced this phenomenon, which remained relevant ten years later for exhibitions such as *Gvarim* ('Men') and *Gever Gever* ('Macho Man'), both from 2006.[1] The earlier exhibition, curated by the Limbus group, took as its point of departure the inherently militarized definition of Israeli gendered identities. It presented, in place of a curator's text, an artwork: a mural constructed from unstitched portrait tapestries of past and present Chiefs of Staff. The military phenomenon was also underscored in *Gvarim*, one of the later exhibitions, as a central aspect of Israeli masculinity that artists contend with.[2] Sagi Refael, the exhibition's curator, noted that the artists who examine Israeli masculinity through the soldier-figure are by and large openly gay, and related this fact to their outsider position in Israeli society (Refael 2006: 8).

The correlation of gender, nation and the military, to which both *Icons of Masculinity* and *Men* allude, is indeed a central aspect of mainstream Israeli identity, and a recurring theme in contemporary Israeli art.[3] In this chapter, I delve into the topic with the help of Adi Nes' *Soldiers* series, which portrays the Israeli soldier as an erotic object of enquiry as well as critique. The series is well known and its works feature in numerous exhibitions that deal with Israeli identity, Israeli art or Israeli gender (including the above-mentioned *Icons of Masculinity*, *Gvarim* and *Uniform Ltd.*) as well as being part of the permanent collection of the Israel Museum's Israeli art holdings. The series includes dozens of beautifully staged and digitally manipulated photographs that condense gender, nation and art through the militarized and eroticized male figure. However, while the series deploys soldier-figures to explore Israeli masculinity and national identity, it does not necessarily problematize the militarized aspect of this masculinity, nor does it seem to critique the military as a frame for national identity. It thus brings up questions that are relevant to the emerging genre as a whole, as it allows me to enquire whether the eroticization of the figure of the soldier is critical and, if so, in what way and to what extent.

In the first part of this chapter, I look at how some works within Nes' *Soldiers* series merge the canons of art history with Israeli national narratives by inserting the figure of the soldier into adaptations of famous artworks and photographs. I analyse the traffic of meaning within the series' narratives according to Bal's understanding of 'preposterous history', first introduced in her book *Quoting Caravaggio* (1999b). The term designates the mechanism in which an artwork is reinterpreted in later works that reference it, and contends with the ways in which quotations affect the comprehensibility of both the newer and the older images. In the sections that follow, I detail the possibilities and effects of the visual strategy of preposterous quoting, and focus on the way Nes' quotations rethink national stereotypes and gender norms through the exposure of desire that resides in the long-lasting connections among gender divisions, aesthetic sensibilities and national identities.

Next, I conduct a comparative analysis between Nes' photographs and the work of other Israeli artists who deal with similar issues. The comparisons are meant to tease out aspects that remain untreated in Nes' *Soldiers*, such as the place of women soldiers within the Israeli national ideal, as well as the place of those identities whose definition negates a depiction in military uniform. Here, I wish to focus on the military uniform as frame and to enquire to what extent Nes' *Soldiers* – as a marker for a wider emerging socio-visual field – destabilizes hegemonic masculinity in its specifically Israeli, *militarized* incarnation. A renewed reflection on the political significance of Nes' erotic military bodies will bring this chapter to a close.

Serial quotations

Adi Nes' *Untitled* (Figure 2.1, henceforth, 'The Last Supper') is a tableau-vivant photographic adaptation of Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. It is perhaps the most celebrated image from his *Soldiers* series, having received international acclaim and appearing in numerous group and solo exhibitions in Israel and abroad.[4] The work depicts a group of soldiers seated around an improvised dinner table, echoing the poses of the figures in Da Vinci's composition as well as its geometrical arrangement of the architecture. The food and plastic cutlery spread on the table, however, together with the deserted background, the figures' contemporary look and posture, their fatigue dress and the building that hosts them, all bring to mind a present-day military base. One additional figure marks the

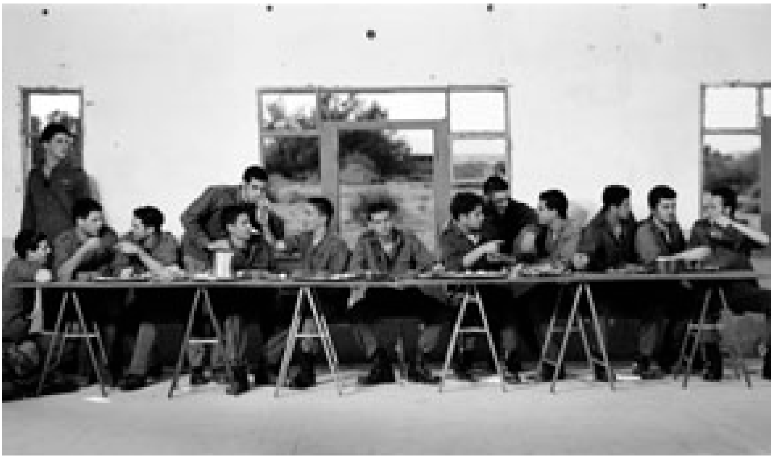

FIGURE 2.1 Adi Nes, untitled ('The Last Supper'). Colour photograph, 1999. Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

main compositional deviation from the original: a fourteenth man stands at the left end of the image, looking back at something that catches his attention beyond the commotion around the table, beyond the space of the photograph. His uniform is the only one on which the letters ZHL, the abbreviation for 'Israeli Defense Forces' ('Ztva Hagana Le-Israel'), are noticeable.

Da Vinci's *The Last Supper* has been the topic of innumerable interpretations in the twentieth century, to such an extent that its auratic status as a visual icon surpasses the actual wall painting in Milan.[5] Nes thus joins a long list of interpreters when he reworks the famous image of Jesus and the twelve disciples as Israeli soldiers. His adaptation displaces the Last Supper tale to a secular, contemporary time and place to tease out connotations such as brotherhood, loyalty, heroism and certain death. Nes also brings the disciples back home, to the land of Israel, and plays with the fact that they too were once Jewish soldiers of sorts. His contemporary Israeli soldier is endowed with the doomed as well as redeeming faith of Jesus at the same time that Christian canonical history is understood anew in relation to national and military alliances. According to Bal's understanding of the work of quoting, this type of two-way influence is crucial for a work of art that acts as a cultural intervention (1999b: 20).[6]

In *Quoting Caravaggio*, Bal describes four operations of visual quotations (1999b: 10–15). First, quotations in the literal sense endorse the iconographical precedent with authority: the quotation attests to the original's importance, its being worthy of being quoted. The work of Nes, among the many other adaptations of the Milanese fresco, authenticates the legend of Leonardo and affirms the genius of his work. Second, and simultaneously, quotations allow the newer works to appropriate the aura of the Old Master (which they themselves help to maintain) and so to position themselves within the canon (Bal 1999b: 10). Thus, this first pair of operations reinforces both the authority of the earlier composition and the contemporary's place in the pantheon of Western art. In other words, a work's strength and its status as art are based on the relation it stages with its predecessor, a relation that takes centre stage in Nes' 'Last Supper'. Here, the additional fourteenth soldier creates an unambiguous compositional distinction between the contemporary work and its founding image, an exception to the otherwise attentive restaging of the original's visual formation.

Many other works in the series – and in Nes' oeuvre as a whole – support an understanding of his methodology as a conscious and critical dialogue with the past. For example, another photograph from Nes' *Soldiers* series stages a Renaissance Pietà, in which Mary is replaced by a male soldier who attends to the wounds of another with brush and colours (Figure 2.2). The gesture evokes the hand of doubting Thomas, but the brush marks the dying Jesus/soldier as his mother/comrade's own creation. Instead of a proof of truth, the touching of the wound becomes the creation of fantasy. Such compositional changes turn out to be the work's main aspect, framing it as a theoretical contemplation on both the Pietà narrative and the ethos of heroic death.

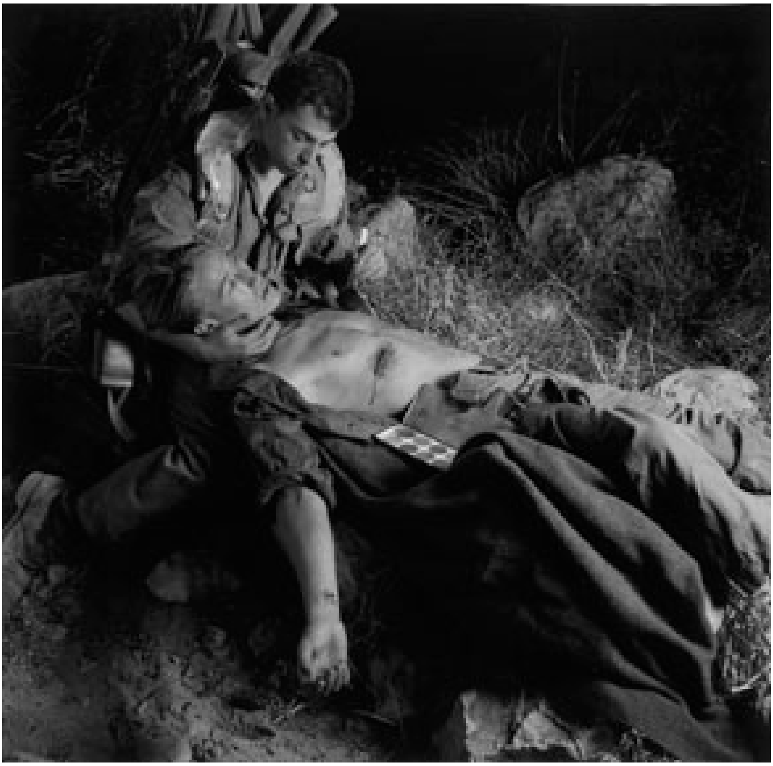

FIGURE 2.2 Adi Nes, untitled ('Pietà'). Colour photograph, 1995. Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

The effects of such quoting-with-a-difference assert the mythical position of the earlier compositions, while at the same time they reinforce the contemporary work's place in the pantheon of Western art. Furthermore, following Bal's logic, the quotes validate the (canonical selection of the) discipline of art history itself.[7] Yet such adaptations also bring up associations that exceed a direct comparison between two images, and contain the seed for the deconstruction of visual icons. Indeed, a third operation of visual quotations, according to Bal, points to ambiguities that exceed the artist's intentions, as it 'demonstrate[s] the difference between the illusion of wholeness and mastery pertaining to the artist of art history and the somewhat messy, yet much richer, visual culture of live images' (Bal 1999b: 15). The fourth and final operation of visual quotation pertains to the logic of deconstruction, as it insists on the impossibility of reaching an authentic origin (1999b: 11). Thus this second pair of operations points to the vulnerability of quoting in the sense that the same quotations that endow works with an art-historical authority also open them up for unexpected associative links. The moment of interpretation moves into the void between the quoted and the quotation.

The abundant layers of quotations in Nes' *Soldiers* series, which relate to Christianity, Judaism, early photography, Renaissance aesthetics and Israeli-ness at one and the same time, can be understood as an acknowledgement of that void. The photographs offer their viewers many narratives to follow. This multiplicity may lead to a sense of satisfaction with one's ability to read visual cues, but also to a flabbergasted realization of the impossibility of grounding the image in a single interpretation. The quotations take over the image and become the central characters of the visual play, while the actual images to which they belong (both 'original' and 'adaptation') move to the background. Thus, according to art critic Doreet LeVitte Harten, Nes' *Soldiers* series 'may be seen as a plateau on which effigies and symbols, icons and paradigms are projected, an encyclopedic repository of images – but fluctuating ones, which cannot be trusted' (2007: 146). Following LeVitte Harten, Nes' works deconstruct visual icons in their critique of reality as a codified system of signifiers. They make strange those images that are already 'etched on our visual cortex' (2007: 141, 143).[8]

LeVitte Harten's article is a comprehensive study of the visual cues of Nes' *Soldiers* series and their effects. However, because

LeVitte Harten understands the series as a repository of images, she does not examine the interactions that occur among Nes' visual quotations. When read as serial images, alternately, the internal structure of each work connects with that of others. Attending to the serial aesthetic of Nes' oeuvre exceeds LeVitte Harten's analysis inasmuch as it exposes relations of power within the series' encyclopaedic fluctuation of signs, and narrows down the scope of indoctrinated knowledge that *Soldiers* appraises. This focus allows for a comparison that pinpoints *desire* as the series' main target of critique.

In her study of seriality in modern art, Jennifer Dyer argues that attention to the serial structure of artworks transforms the way they are interpreted (2003: 10). Seriality, as an integral semantic element of a work, presents itself not necessarily in terms of the image's *content*, but within its *structure* which, in turn, defines its subject matter (2003: 19, 232). Dyer bases her analysis on John Coplans' definition of seriality as a 'particular inter-relationship, rigorously consistent, of structure and syntax . . . that links the internal structure of a work to that of other works (Coplans 1968: 11).[9] Following Dyer and Coplans, I would argue that the seriality of Nes' *Soldiers* resides more in its structure of quoting than its subject matter.

Two particular artworks help to clarify how visual quotations operate within Nes' serial aesthetics. Both remain untitled and present adaptations of photographs that have become iconic representations of the emerging Jewish state (Presner 2007: xv, xvii). The first (Figure 2.3, henceforth 'Um Rashrash') depicts a soldier struggling to climb a pole in the middle of the desert, assisted by five comrades. This work echoes Micha Peri's photograph *Raising the Ink Flag in Um Rashrash* from 1949, which itself refers to Joe Rosenthal's famous staged photograph depicting the raising of the American flag at Iwo Jima.[10] Peri's image is an iconic image of national victory in Israeli historiography, representing the 'invasion' of present-day Eilat during the Israeli War of Independence.[11] It displays in black and white a group of armed men that help a comrade to climb a pole. But in Peri's image the pole is not bare: it supports the Israeli flag under dramatically stormy skies. In Nes' version all pathos is gone. Here the sky is bright and blue, the flag is missing and the gesture is all that is left.

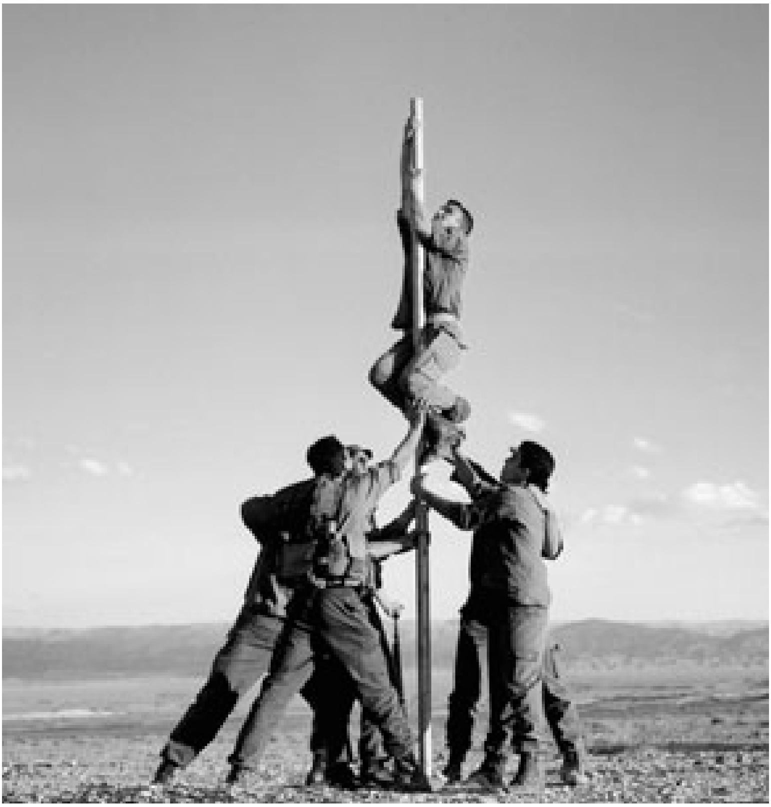

FIGURE 2.3 Adi Nes, untitled ('Um Rashrash'). Colour photograph, 1998. Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Another untitled work from the series (Figure 2.4, henceforth 'Suez Canal') depicts a soldier emerging from a pool of turbulent dark water, smiling as he triumphantly brandishes a rifle in his left hand. The soldier seems ignorant of the commotion around him, made up of four bare-chested men who are pulling on him and on each other. The composition, with the exception of its muscular water-nymphs, is an adaptation of a photograph by Denis Cameron, published on the cover of *Life* magazine in June 1967. The cover depicts an Israeli soldier waving his rifle in victory while being half-submerged in water. The captions on the cover read 'Wrap up of the astounding war' and 'Israeli soldier cools off in the Suez

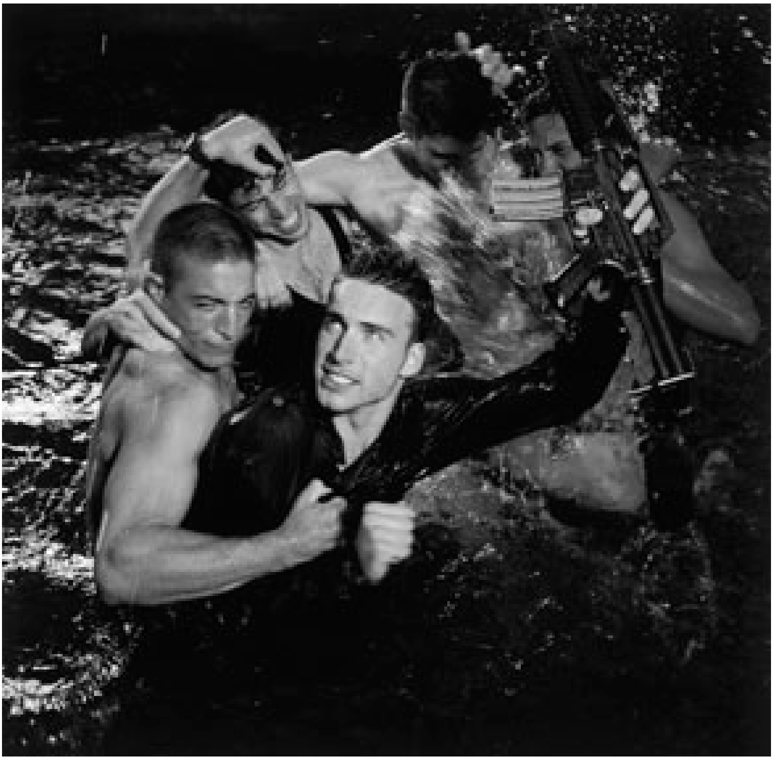

FIGURE 2.4 Adi Nes, untitled ('Suez Canal'). Colour photograph, 1999. Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Canal'. The reference to the *Life* magazine image might escape notice but it is repeatedly mentioned (and often reproduced) in relation to Nes' version in exhibition catalogues and captions.

Both works are clearly critical of the military ethos and its macho ideal. Their aesthetics is not melancholic or nostalgic, as are Nes' *Last Supper* or *Pietà* adaptations; yet the visual logic that structures all four is similar. Background and composition are duplicated from a well-known source, but men wearing modern-day Israeli uniforms replace all figures, and particular details of the source image are either taken out or replaced, or it is added to. The overt reference to available images calls for a comparative analysis, for an interpretation that is situated between the quoted and the quotation, and sets all four of Bal's operations in motion, albeit on different scales. What is crucial for our case is that *this single strategy is used to deal with distinct bodies of knowledge*: art history and early photography, Christianity and the Israeli national ethos. Consequently, the relation between what seems at first to be an arbitrary collection of indoctrinating images becomes more coherent and clear.

As much as Nes' 'Last Supper' and 'Pietà' allow for preposterous interpretations of the past, they clearly demarcate what is past (Italian masterpieces, Christian tales) and what is present (secular photography, present-day soldiers). The two temporalities are combined in a way that nonetheless keeps their particulars apart: art history is positioned as the background, both in a compositional and a theoretical sense, to the Israeli nation, marked by its quintessential soldier-figure. The older works' involvement with heroism, redemption and beauty is negotiated through this present-day context. In the 'Um Rashrash' and 'Suez Canal' adaptations, alternatively, both past and present belong to the Israeli ethos and to the medium of photography. Yet here too what is past and what is present is made clear: the propagandistic images of the early days of the state of Israel are handled as background to be revised and critically reinterpreted, similarly to the narratives of Western art. Such a focus of the quotations' structure allows me to read between pairs of images: it underscores the analogous method of quoting which endows two otherwise unrelated revised narratives with equal valence.

Such serially oriented reading frames the juxtaposition of the Israeli ethos with Western aesthetics not as the series' critical focus (as one could assume standing before Nes' 'Last Supper' alone) – but as its point of departure. A 'preposterous history' cannot subsist without framing the past as a foundational past, which is then preposterously reworked: the fact that compositions from early Israeli photography and from Renaissance and baroque art are dealt with on equal grounds, that is, as a background to be revised and revisited, points to the way in which *Soldiers* foregrounds Western ideals and aesthetics as an inherent part of Israeli historiography. As I will argue in the following section, such grounding is then mobilized to challenge historical and aesthetical definitions of ideal masculinity, citizenship and desire, as they reflect on the underlying, disavowed erotic aspects of both classical art history and Israeli national imagery alike.

National bodies

George L. Mosse's pioneering research on the construction of masculinity in early modern times delineates the interconnection between aesthetics, nationalism, race and sexuality. In *Nationalism and Sexuality* (1985) and in *The Image of Man* (1996), Mosse traces the roots of 'respectability', defined as the manners, morals and sexual attitudes that are today taken for granted as normative, back to the dawn of European nationalism. Then, the newly formed respectability advocated that if one could not suppress his sexuality, one would put society, family and state at risk (Mosse 1985: 9–11). From the prohibition of masturbation to the illegality of homosexual acts, restrictions were put in place with the expectation that the civilized human would control his passions and use his body in a socially productive way. Manliness meant freedom from sexual passion and the sublimation of sensuality into leadership (1985: 13). Mosse and others have shown that masculinity was reframed and restructured as the (asexual) founding force for nation and society: fraternity marked the soldier, reason marked the civilian, and desire was absent in both.[12]

The negation of individual sexuality thus characterized early modern life; it was also mostly homosocial, constructed of social bonds between persons of the same sex. Homosocial relations between men, specifically, allowed modern patriarchy to emerge and thrive. According to Eve Kokofsky Sedgwick's influential thesis in *Between Men* (1985), homosocial relations were heavily dependent on the repudiation of erotic bonds among men, and so the latter were defined anew in non-sexual terms, their erotic aspects disciplined, transferred and sublimated. Women operated as conduits between the trajectories of male desire to ensure the heterosexual character of the suppressed erotic traffic between men (Sedgwick 1985: 20–7).[13] Sedgwick further argues that the projection of suppressed erotic bonds onto the marginal figure of the homosexual was crucial to the creation of modern homosociality, and that homophobia is therefore a *necessary* consequence of patriarchal institutions in its disruption of the continuum between homosociality and homosexuality (1985: 3).

The neoclassical model of the male body provided the visual paradigm for hegemonic masculinity at the rise of modern political culture (Mosse 1985: 13–14, 1996: 109). It portrayed masculine bodies with an unnatural clarity and emphasized a hyperconscious muscular tension (Potts 1990: 2; Crow 1994: 152). Jacques Louis David's celebrated painting *The Oath of the Horatii* is a paradigmatic example of the way in which the neoclassical style served the emerging ideology of hegemonic masculinity. In this painting, as in most of David's oeuvre, the distinction between the sexes is clearly marked: women are possessed by emotions, mainly grief, while men are portrayed with detached postures, representing a virile sovereignty (Dudink 2001: 156).[14] Sexuality and desire are withdrawn from all figures in favour of national ideals. The men are brought together by virtue of their swords, as they look up and aim at the ideals of the revolution.

Men's bodies became visually omnipresent in paintings and sculpture around this time, representing civic, moral and ethical ideals. However, while the Greek model was steadily gaining a crucial place in national self-representation, its erotic undercurrents remained disturbing for the new bourgeois respectability. The emerging discipline of art history came to the rescue in the attempt to purge the stereotype of masculinity from its homoerotic undercurrents; the writings of Johann Joachim Winckelmann were particularly useful in stripping Greek and neoclassical sculpture of passion and sexuality, and presenting them instead as representations of symbolic beauty (Mosse 1996: 13–17).[15] In Winckelmann's analysis of ancient Greek art, exemplified by his rhapsodic descriptions of the Laocoön and the Apollo Belvedere, supreme beauty belonged to the male figure, while sensuous beauty, deemed secondary, was confined to the female nude. This sublime male beauty, a model for 'stoic' modern masculinity, combined a vigorous, sensuous body with a reserved soul (Crow 1994: 158).

Regardless of the attempts to subdue the erotic aspects of the male body, or maybe precisely because of these attempts, Mosse concludes that homoeroticism had been a part of modern nationalism from its nascence (1985: 176). Sedgwick, too, gives homosexuality credit for its part in constructing modern society, arguing that 'our society could not cease to be homophobic and have its economic and political structures remain unchanged' (1985: 4). For Sedgwick, the disavowed erotic aspect of male-to-male relationships is the affective glue that shapes homosocial relations on the basis of fear and desire. Although many factors have changed with regards to gender inequality and citizenship since the early days of modernity, the fraternal social contract still thrives in social clubs and associations, and finds explicit expression in military institutions and on the battlefield (Pateman 2002: 129). Homophobia and the repudiation of femininity, too, remain central organizing principles for a contemporary Western cultural definition of manhood (Kimmel 2004: 188).

Nes' *Soldiers* series makes use of various methods to tease out the desire that is always already present within and between male bodies. In some works, such as 'Last Supper', the emphasis lies on the affective relationship between the protagonists; in others, such as the 'Pietà' or the works that portray sleeping soldiers, emphasis is given to the subtle erotic depiction of the androgynous male body. The sleeping soldiers' compositions are the ones that are most sexually suggestive, especially when they focus on the soldiers' exposed necks, or when they hint at masturbation.[16] If, following Norman Bryson's ironic paraphrase, the history of art is 'a record of the creation of aesthetic masterpieces, which constitute the canon of artistic excellence in the West' (Bryson, Holly and Moxey 1994: xvi), Nes' photographs preposterously reveal the (homo)sexual undercurrents that have always informed it, echoing the conclusion of recent studies in art historiography, which show Winckelmann's description of male beauty to be more sexually charged than was understood in his era.[17]

Other photographs from the *Soldiers* series deconstruct features of hegemonic masculinity by exaggeration, inviting ridicule.[18] One of the better known photographs from the series (Figure 2.5, henceforth 'The Body Builder') depicts a bare-chested, muscular man in fatigue trousers and military shoes, posing and flaunting his muscles against a deserted dune just outside a military tent, on which the Israeli army seal is displayed upside down. The image condenses various stereotypes, and the figure's exaggerated muscle tone, knitted skullcap and silver dog-tag all turn him into the emblem of the 'muscular Jew', a term coined by Max Nordau around the birth of Zionism to forge a contrast to the European stereotype of diasporic, effeminate Jewry.[19] Yet this soldier's blatant display of masculinity is fractured by his somewhat unsteady pose, and by his long and bent shadow on the tent. The soldier's solitude further underscores the futility of his shaky display: his exaggerated virility is undermined by its having little other purpose than to be displayed in the enchanted, deserted landscape that surrounds him.

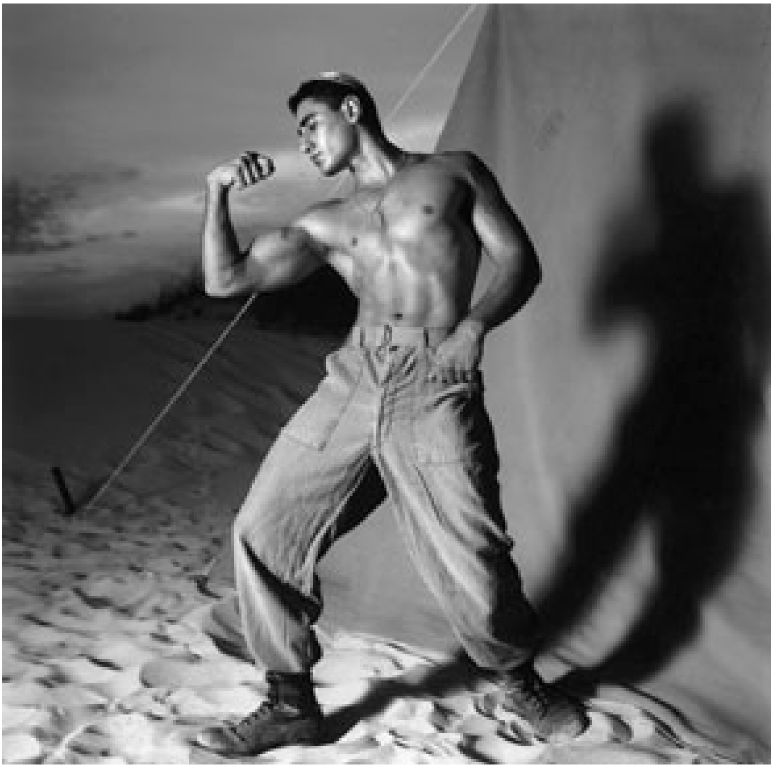

FIGURE 2.5 Adi Nes, untitled ('The Body Builder'). Colour photograph, 1996. Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Similar gestures are found in the 'Um Rashrash' and 'Suez Canal' adaptations (Figures 2.3 and 2.4), both of which turn the fraternal social contract on its head. The bare sky and the missing flag in 'Um Rashrash' critique the constructed pathos of national memories, and the naked pole is almost too obvious in its reference to the homosocial desire that fuels the striving towards national goals. The flag, in its conspicuous absence, is exposed as an excuse for the celebration of zealous masculinity. The *gesture* of conquest, rather than conquest itself, takes centre stage, and the desire for triumph is stripped of its sublimation. In the 'Suez Canal' adaptation, the message is spelled out even more clearly, as the masculine body turns into the target of a contest among a group of men. Here, too, Nes' preposterous quotations do not grant the erotic excess a way out of the image, and present us with the visual continuum of homosociality and homosexuality in the context of the fraternal social contract.

Rewriting the Jewish body, again

For Norman Bryson, 'to be a subject constructed as a male involves a necessary masquerade, the masquerade of the masculine' (1994b: 231). Nes' photographs succinctly portray 'the effort, the sweat, of producing the masculine masquerade' even as it comes undone by their overt eroticism (1994b: 233, 235). But they do more than that. Although only a few works within the *Soldiers* series make overt references to Israeli mythology, the investigation of hegemonic masculinity takes place in the entire series with respect to the ever-present Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) uniform, situating the more universal concern within a specifically Israeli context. Thus, at the same time as the portrayed bodies designate the effort of sustaining the masculine masquerade as such, they also point to the effort of producing a particularly Zionist national imagery.

In his study of European masculinity, Mosse goes on to discuss the ways in which non-hegemonic identities, including those of criminals, the insane and, more importantly for our case, homosexuals and Jews, were stereotyped in opposition to the neoclassical hero (1985: 30). Against the harmony, proportion and transcendent beauty of the Greek ideal stood the image of the distorted, nervous, unstable homosexual or Jew, representing a threat to the nation and to respectability. Among other outsider groups, homosexuals and Jews were especially endowed with excessive sexuality and feminine sensuousness, and were thought to engage in secret conspiracies (1984: 25, 31–6).[20]

In his book *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (1997), Daniel Boyarin argues that the Zionist movement unwittingly adopted the European masculine ideal – *including* its negative stance towards the stereotypical Jewish body (1997: 271–7). Rejecting the premodern gender norms of Talmudic Judaism, where masculinity was constructed via attributes of wisdom and gentleness, the fathers of Zionism, Theodor Herzl and Max Nordau, called for the 'sexual normalization' of Jewish masculinity (1997: 143–4). They argued for the need to reinvent the Jewish body in Israel as strong and virile, and to disavow the flawed body that belongs to the Diasporic Jew (Boyarin 1997: 277; Gluzman 2007: 18–19).[21] Nordau, specifically, developed the term ‘muscular Judaism’ to envision a new type of Jew, both physically and morally fit, who would embody the ideals of Zionism and, consequently, enable the national regeneration envisioned by it to take place.[22] Other studies also point to the way in which early Zionist texts align with the Western ideal in their disdain for the feminine body and their vehement repudiation of the homosexual as a spy and a danger to the nation. Theorist Raz Yosef goes as far as to define Zionism ‘not only [as] a political and ideological project but a sexual one, obsessed with Jewish masculinity and especially the Jewish male body’ (2002: 556).

Masculinity remains a central theme in Israeli literature and cinema throughout the twentieth century. From the late 1940s, the ideal Israeli body in literature, film and popular culture became unequivocally that of the soldier, while anti-heroic figures were portrayed as effeminized, suffering and weak (Gluzman 2007: 32). Moshe Shamir’s novel *He Walked Through the Fields*, written in 1947, is a foundational text in this respect, exemplifying how the newly born Jewish nation converted the European model into the body of the Tzabar. The book tells the story of Uri, a native-born Israeli Kibbutz member and a commander in the Palmach fighting brigades, who has a complicated love story with Mika, a Holocaust survivor, and who dies during a military training accident as he heroically jumps on a grenade to save his comrades. The novel was embraced by the newly formed collective, and won a literary prize in the year of its publication. It has been adapted as a play and a film, has been quoted in numerous texts, and is still included in high-school curriculums. *He Walked Through the Fields* is perceived as a biography of the Israeli generation at the time of the nation’s founding, and its title has become a byword for the Tzabar, the heroic, beautiful soldier who dies in battle.[23]

Uri’s character in Shamir’s novel was based on Alik, Shamir’s brother who died in battle, and whose story is told in another of Shamir’s books, *With His Own Hands: Alik’s Story* (1951). This book begins with the words, ‘Alik was born from the sea’, words that have become synonymous with the indigenousness of the Tzabar: born locally, born from the sea, without the weight of the

Diaspora. As with Uri, the figure of Alik is inherently connected with his heroic death. The two figures are inseparable in the early-Israeli literary canon: both are blond, well-built, composed and indisputably heterosexual. They are the embodiment of the 'living dead' ethos, which idealizes heroic death and endows its protagonists with eternal youth and beauty.[24] The Zionist body they represent is a celebration of hegemonic masculinity as well as of the fraternal social contract.

Many texts and artworks refer to these figures when attempting to rewrite or critique the Israeli normative body.[25] Nes' *Soldiers* series is not exceptional in this respect. His untitled 'Body Builder' image (Figure 2.5) exaggerates Nordau's notion of 'muscular Judaism', while his 'Last Supper' and 'Pietà' contemplate the 'living dead' ethos. An overt reference to Shamir's novels is found in the 'Suez Canal' adaptation (Figure 2.4). Here, the triumphant soldier who brandishes his rifle emerges from the water; he is literally born from the sea. Neither this image nor its referent (the cover of *Life* magazine) can be read in separation from that foundational Israeli trope. They focus not on a hero's death, though, but on his moment of triumph. Nes' composition surrounds Uri/Alik with fighting men, and so reveals a blatant desire to claim his body for the collective.

In addition, while the man on the cover of *Life* magazine represents a darker, thinner body type than the stereotypical Zionist ideal, Nes' adaptation (Figure 2.4) returns to an Uri-type figure, light-skinned and well-built. Here, Nes employs the device of quoting-with-a-difference to tease out the inherent Westernization of the stereotypical Israeli body, and to comment on ethnical inequalities within Israeli Jewish society.[26]

According to LeVitte Harten, Nes' artworks operate as the 'deconstruction of an old ideal' (2007: 140). Below I will add nuance to this interpretation, but for now it is important to acknowledge that Nes' *Soldiers* series does indeed expose and criticize central features of hegemonic nationalism and masculinity. The works ridicule the idea of virile masculinity, expose homoerotic traces within gestures of national triumph, and denaturalize the hegemonic Tzabar body. In its exposure of the desire that lies at the base of Israeli masculinity, the series depicts the carrier of 'muscular Judaism', preposterously, as an extremely fragile configuration.

If I return to Bal's theory of the politics of quoting, however, the story becomes more complicated. Bal argues that part of the work of quoting authenticates the fiction and endorses the iconographical precedent with authority (1999b: 10–15). Nes' photographs are direct or indirect quotations of images that are already 'etched on our visual cortex' (LeVitte Harten 2007: 141). Inasmuch as they are quotations, they require the authority of the originating myth to be recognizable as critical interventions. Therefore, at the same time that they call for a contemporary reconsideration of some of their precedents' concerns, they also strengthen those concerns that they leave untouched. The iterations of Peri's *Raising the Ink Flag in Um Rashrash* and of Cameron's *Life* magazine cover, for example, ridicule the masculine aspect of the military ethos, while simultaneously endorsing its narrative of victory with authority.[27] In what follows, the military uniform takes centre stage as means to reappraise *Soldiers*' critique within the framework of a militarized society.

Women soldiers

Nes critiques hegemonic constructions of masculinity in many of his works. The thread that runs through his oeuvre is the queer male body, which is not always draped in olive-green. Both his *Boys* and *Prisoners* series, for example, display young men with a homoerotic undercurrent, a polished aesthetics and references to sociopolitical issues.[28] What is, then, the extra layer that the military uniform adds to his investigation of sexuality and beauty? The fact that, in the *Soldiers* series, military figures personify the national body provokes certain avenues of interpretation and discourages others.

Soldiers has been often interpreted as an argument for gay social rights and visibility in its critical revisions of national myths of ideal masculinity.[29] The series, triggered by the dismissal from service of a soldier who carried the rainbow flag while wearing a military uniform during a Gay Pride parade, is indeed concerned with the marginalized gay and queer community of Israel, and with its position vis-à-vis the Uri/Alik type of ideal citizenship, embodied by the combat soldier (Zalmona 2010: 435). The combat soldier, a symbol for hegemonic masculinity, is often used as an unofficial criterion to determine levels of citizenship: one's distance or closeness to combatant-type masculinity is a measure for receiving both symbolic and material rights (Sasson-Levy 2006: 5). Those with non-hegemonic identities who are also drafted, including women, Jewish men of Middle Eastern origin, Druze men, and homosexuals, frequently renegotiate their social status through their military service.[30] Nes' *Soldiers* takes part in this struggle for social, gender and ethnic equality, but unlike the outsider communities in Mosse's accounts of early nineteenth-century Europe, the struggle that Nes takes part in aims to broaden the masculine ideal rather than fit within its boundaries.[31]

Interpretations of the *Soldiers* series that follow the above trajectory accept a taken-for-granted militarized masculine ideal. From this perspective, Nes' erotic soldiers unequivocally question hegemonic masculinity in Israeli society. The analysis that I have offered so far is largely consistent with this line of thought. An alternate analysis, however, contends with the fact that Israeli masculinities and femininities *are modelled militarily in the first place*. In accordance with the findings of my previous chapter, and with the notion of civilian militarism in mind, I argue that *Soldiers* cannot be interpreted merely as a transgressive reference to Israeli masculinity, but needs to be examined for its participation in the consolidation of military-inflected national identities.

One obvious catch in this respect is that the series is made up exclusively of male figures. Even the 'Pietà' (Figure 2.2), the emblematic image for a mother–son relationship, turns into a homosocial affair. The series pulls the masculine figure in different directions, but never out of the world of men: its interventions into Israeli masculinity remain limited to the confines of homosocial relations. Women play no part in Nes' reconstruction of soldier-figure imagery. This is significant because Israeli society prides itself on being egalitarian when it comes to compulsory military service. Both women and men have served in the Israeli army since its formation; women soldiers are part and parcel of the national ethos, and their representations have shaped a visual canon as well.[32]

That canon has also been preposterously reworked, although to a much lesser extent than its masculine counterpart.[33] Nir Hod's celebrated *Women Soldiers* triptych (Figure 2.6) perhaps forms the feminine complement to Nes' *Soldiers* series. The triptych is composed of three gold-framed bust-length portraits of women in military uniform. The two side-portraits reiterate the 1950s romantic representations of the woman–soldier-figure. In both, the model smiles tenderly as she rests her head on her fist and looks up,

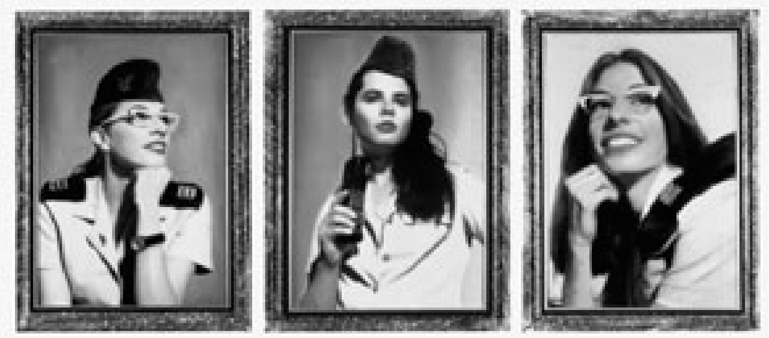

FIGURE 2.6 Nir Hod, *Women Soldiers*. Triptych, oil on canvas, 1994. Courtesy of the artist.

gazing behind coquettish pink butterfly glasses.[34] The central figure stands out in comparison. She wears her uniform and her hair more loosely, and suggestively strokes her face with the antennae of a walkie-talkie. She is easily recognizable as the artist himself, Nir Hod, known for his self-portrayal in military drag.

Hod's *Women Soldiers* received wide acclaim in the 1990s and, along with Nes' *Soldiers*, is referred to as a milestone in Israeli art, due to its unabashed treatment of desire and sexuality with respect to the military. What is interesting about the work's history is that, in the end, it was received as a work about *men*: the detail that caught the critics' eyes, more than the eroticization of the archetypal woman-soldier as such, was the artist's mimicry of femininity (Katz-Freiman 2005: 30; Talmor 2006; Sperber 2007). Hod's gender-bending underscores, in fact, the *taken-for-granted sexuality of the female soldier*. As curator Tami Katz-Freiman explains,

> [Hod's *Women Soldiers*] can be seen as a footnote to the ultimate Israeli cliché, which obfuscates all others. For 'a woman-soldier in obligatory military service' is a typical Israeli invention, a unique matchless model of equality between the sexes. . . . Perhaps it is time to re-examine this cliché, to expose the myth of women's equality, particularly in regard to the traditional role division so common in a society that lives from one war to the next.
>
> 1996: 50

The myth of women's equality has indeed been unpacked in various studies, which have shown it to be a mere footnote, a facilitator, within Israel's military ethos. The differences between feminine and masculine military identities are spelled out by the respective roles that the sexes play within the military apparatus: most women fill secretarial and other auxiliary roles, and many of the more 'prestigious' military occupations exclude them. In addition, men serve thirty-six months, plus compulsory reserve service until the age of forty-five, while women serve a shorter period of twenty-one months. Finally, marriage and parenthood are reasons for exemption for women, but not men (Klein 2002: 671; Kimmerling 1993b: 216). Uta Klein argues that these material differences have a symbolic effect, as they help to preserve military service as a rite of passage to male adulthood only and perpetuate the stereotype of women as subordinate (1999: 48, 2002: 671).

Similarly, Orly Lubin argues that while women have gained entrance to the modern nation's metanarrative through their military service, they provide that narrative with a veiling mechanism. In line with Sedgwick's theory, Lubin shows how the female body acts as conduit that protects the soldier from the threat of homosexuality, while her presence must constantly be repudiated as it provokes that exact fear of being penetrated. As a result, women are both present and absent within the military sphere, and their sexuality is a tool for their exclusion (Lubin 2002: 169). Despite the fact that in recent years women have been allowed to take part in certain combat roles, Eva Berger and Dorit Naaman have recently argued that the representation of women combatants in the media remains as gendered and sexualized as ever as a way to contain and minimize the challenge that they present to social codes of gendered femininity (2011: 282).

Thus, while the Israeli army is heterosocial in principle, it is still a place that maintains and nurtures male homosociality. Uta Klein concludes: 'All in all, in spite of the presence of women, the unit is perceived as a male peer group, as a place of male comradeship, as a place of brotherhood, as a community of warriors. As in companies or other institutions, many actions or conditions point to women as being different, thus constructing the difference' (1991: 56).[35]

Nes' photographs, their edginess notwithstanding, perpetuate the female invisibility pointed out by Klein and Lubin. Reading Nes through Hod brings up the phantom of a *heterosocial* Israeli army.

Clearly, no artwork or series could (or should attempt to) cover all aspects of the social issues it brings up. Nes' *Soldiers* focuses on one marginal group (gay and *Mizrahi* male soldiers) and avoids another (female soldiers). The erasure of women from the field of vision can be understood as an unavoidable consequence of the choice of subject matter. Yet, precisely because Nes' series fleshes out latent forms of desire within the military, the absence of women soldiers from his oeuvre is noteworthy. As Hod's work indicates and as we shall see shortly, women have always had an important role in the eroticization of the Israeli military: the abbreviation used for Women's Corps, 'Khen', translates as 'charm' and points in this direction (Klein 1999: 55).[36]

In her comprehensive study *A Fantasy of the State of Israel* (2012) Chava Brownfield-Stein analyses the effects of women-soldier representations on the military ethos. Through close readings of official state photographs of women soldiers from the late 1940s to the late 1960s, Brownfield-Stein argues that representations of female soldiers drew attention to their feminine sexuality not only to exclude them from the fraternal social contract, but also to underscore the pleasurable dimensions of military service itself. Through these photographs, military space is shown to be loaded with erotic imagination, and while visual pleasures are provoked from watching images of women soldiers' bodies, they are, at the same time and indirectly, perceived as enjoying military's norms and militarism (2010: 318–19). The effect of women soldiers' representations is thus twofold, 'contribut[ing] to the militarization of the civilian sphere, the private sphere, and the institution of family and motherhood [and at] the same time . . . facilitat[ing] the eroticization of military space as well as the IDF's image as a popular army' (2012: 184, my translation).

Thus, while representations of IDF women soldiers were used as visual instruments for the legitimization of an egalitarian ethos, they were also mobilized to naturalize militaristic values in Israeli society and make them appealing. Brownfield-Stein's analysis refers to images that are more than forty years old, but Berger and Naaman's recent review of contemporary media images of women soldiers suggests that not much has changed. Noteworthy in this respect is the July 2007 issue of the American men's magazine *Maxim*, that includes an article featuring Israeli models in swimwear and military garments ('Chosen Ones'). The models were presented as 'former Israeli women soldiers', and commended for their ability to ‘take apart an Uzi in seconds’, for bossing male soldiers around, or for having ‘top secret’ jobs (‘Chosen Ones’: 104). Significantly, the idea for the piece came from the Israeli consulate in New York, as part of its campaign to improve Israel’s image in the United States (Berger and Naaman 2011: 281). The alluring similarity between the witty central figure in Hod’s *Women Soldiers* triptych and the models in *Maxim* goes to show that the representation of women soldiers as erotic, desirable agents of the IDF is not an issue of the past, and remains unchallenged, at least in part, to this day.[37]

When representations of women soldiers are brought into the equation, then, the subversive aspect of Nes’ *Soldiers* becomes more complicated. While the series teases out the latent sexuality that fuels hegemonic masculinity and homosociality, it leaves out the female body, whose erotics were employed to turn the IDF into a locus of national desire. *Soldiers*’ celebration as an outrageous exposure of homosocial desire helps, unwittingly, to ignore the fact that *heterosocial desire has never been suppressed* in the Israeli army. This oversight, in turn, underrates the ways in which Nes’ soldiers are in fact part of a long tradition that emphasizes the pleasurable aspects of the military body, perpetuating what Brownfield-Stein terms the ‘erotic militarism’ in Israeli society (2012: 19, 2010: 324). According to Brownfield-Stein, the erotic representations of women soldiers contributed immensely to the fascination of Israeli society with the Israeli army. Nes similarly supplements the anthology of images that represents the military space as one ‘of enjoyment and fantasy in the midst of ideological structure’ (Brownfield-Stein 2010: 319). The only difference is that this is what Thomas Crow terms ‘a single-sex frame of reference’, since his works ‘imagine the entire spectrum of desirable human qualities, from battlefield heroics to eroticized corporeal beauty, as male’ (Crow 2006: 2). The next section will search for alternative narratives within this exclusively male frame.

Queer dreams of the nation

In 1967, just after the Six Day War, Yigal Tumarkin presented a statue made of bronze and firearms. The sculpture, entitled *He Walked Through the Fields*, comprises a life-size armless male figure, painted in black, red and white. The figure’s head is damaged;

its mouth hangs open with its tongue protruding; his trousers are rolled down and expose his penis; and gun barrels and cannon balls pour out of his torn intestines.[38] Tumarkin's *He Walked Through the Fields* was controversial at the time of its making, a time when, as we shall see in Chapter 5, victorious military figures were omnipresent within Israeli visual culture. Today, however, Tumarkin's statue is considered to be a landmark in Israeli art, a precedent for the political art that emerged in the 1970s (Manor 2008: 35).[39] The work is celebrated as an 'anti-monument of commemoration' in its presentation of death (a specifically Israeli death, following the trajectory of its title) as debased and unheroic (Possek 1999: 102). The grotesque body of the soldier breaks with the ethos of the 'living dead', the body that remains beautiful as it sacrifices itself for the nation.

Nes' figures are a far cry from Tumarkin's torn-open soldier, and their preposterous reshaping of the Tzabar figure comes about according to a different political vision. For Tumarkin, the allusion to Moshe Shamir's novel leads to a disparity between the idealization of death for the nation and the reality of death in battle. For Nes, the allusion ('born from the sea') is not concerned with war, but with manhood; not with national politics, but with the sociocultural aspect of national identities; not with the death of a hero, but with his birth. Some of the figures in Nes' *Soldiers* expose bare skin, but that skin is nothing like Tumarkin's burned flesh. The juxtaposition of Nes' beautiful and campy soldiers with Tumarkin's abject corpse makes clear what issues erotic figurations of soldiers bring up, and more importantly, what issues they leave untouched.

Two recent sculptures help to demarcate further the contours of Nes' critique. Erez Israeli's *Terrorist* (2007; Figure 2.7) shows a naked figure cast in marble-like material, his head covered with a stocking cap. The figure's hands are raised a little, his palms point upwards, and a few taxidermied pigeons sit on his head, shoulder and arms.[40] Ari Libsker's *The Draft Dodger* (2007; Figure 2.8) presents a rough concrete cast of a life-size standing figure, dressed only in underwear. The figure squats slightly, and his hands lie deep in his briefs. The two statues parallel Nes' *Soldiers* in interrelated ways: they reference the canon of art history in their allusions to outdoor sculpture; they comment on ideal masculinity in their debased representations of the male body; and they allude to the Israeli military ethos with their choice of titles.

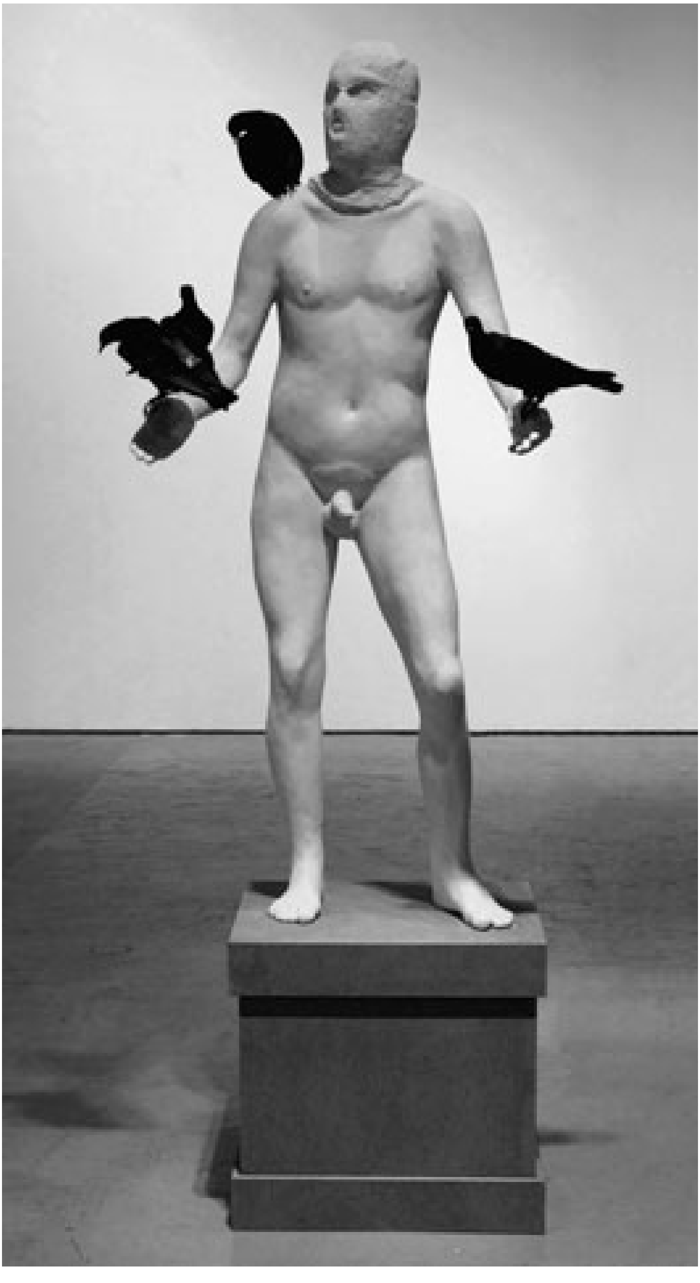

FIGURE 2.7 Erez Israeli, *Terrorist*. MDF, epoxy cast, and stuffed pigeons, 2007. Courtesy of the artist and Givon Gallery.

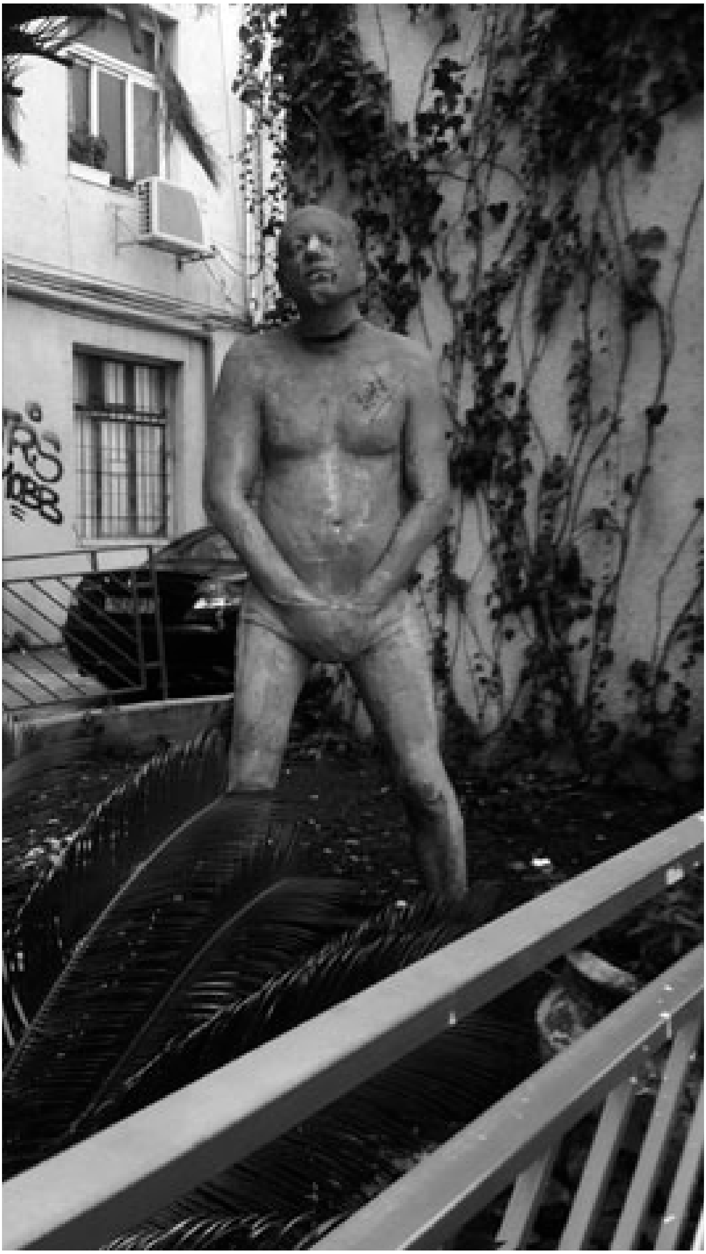

FIGURE 2.8 Ari Libsker, *The Draft Dodger.* Concrete cast, 2007. Courtesy of the artist.

However, the reference to the military ethos is inverted here. A terrorist is an illegitimate fighter, and a draft dodger is not a fighter at all; thus, the statues represent the soldier's alter egos. The figures' outsider social positions, stated in the titles, are put into form through the figures' sexuality. The genitals of *Terrorist* are exaggerated, and in combination with his covered face raise connotations of sadomasochism, while the *Draft Dodger*'s hands lie deep in his underwear and connote masturbation, that old enemy of respectability.[41] Crucial for my case is the fact that both *Terrorist* and *Draft Dodger* are *naked*. In a witty and critical inversion, the naked body belongs here to the outsider. Unlike their counterpart figures of early modernity, traitors do not need external features (long nose, dark skin, special garments) to mark them as such; *it suffices to strip them of the military uniform*. In comparison with the sculptures of Libsker and Israeli, who raise associated questions about the national body, the uniform of Nes' *Soldiers* takes the shape of a second skin: when men do not wear their uniform, when they are naked, their national allegiance is at stake. Nes' soldiers, erotic as they are, do not challenge the military uniform as a frame for Israeli manhood, but argue for an expanded space within it. At most, when Nes' figures take off a shirt or wear their uniform loosely, they intimate a diversity that lies underneath the khaki garments. Yet as a whole, the draping of queer sexuality with the national uniform runs the risk of promoting what Jasbir K. Puar terms 'homonationalism', the collusion between homosexuality and nationalism.

Puar coined the term in 2007 to indicate the emergence of a national homosexuality that 'operates as a regulatory script not only of normative gayness, queerness, or homosexuality, but also of the racial and national norms that reinforce these sexual subjects' (Puar 2007: 2). The concept is based on Lisa Duggan's notion of 'homonormativity', which points to the ways in which lesbian and gay movements have increasingly aligned themselves with neo-liberal culture and with heteronormative thinking and politics (Duggan 2002: 179).[42] Puar focuses on contemporary American politics in her conceptualization of homonationality, and opposes the patriot gay body to the queered body of the terrorist. Regardless of the long-standing outlaw status of homosexual subjects in relation to the nation state, she argues, 'some homosexual subjects are complicit with heterosexual nationalist formation rather than inherently or automatically excluded from or opposed to them' (2007: 4). Consequently, not all non-normative sexualities should be read as a defiance of the national ideal.

Puar marks the 'disciplinary queer' as a figure that assists the regularization of deviancy (2007: xxvii). When queerness is disciplined, 'freedom from norms' becomes a regulatory queer ideal that distinguishes the ideal queer from those who remain at the margins of discourse. In contemporary national and sexual politics, patriotism distinguishes the disciplined and incorporated queerness of the patriot gay body from the failed masculinity that is inscribed in the body of the terrorist as other (2007: xxiv). In this way, 'despite its claims to freedom and individuality, [deviance] is ironically cohered to and by regulatory regimes of queerness – *through, not despite, any claims to transgression*' (2007: 22–3, emphasis added).

Queer subjects are normativized through, rather than in spite of, their deviance. Their departure from the standards of hegemonic masculinity is embraced and celebrated at the price of the disqualification of racial and sexual others from the national imaginary (Puar 2007: xii, 2). According to Puar, in contemporary Western culture Muslim masculinities take the place of the pervert and traitor that homosexuals (and, if I may add, Jews) used to occupy in the imagination of the nation (2007: xxv).[43]

It would be unjust to read Nes' *Soldiers* series only in terms of Puar's critique of homonationalism. The series calls attention to the grand narratives of heterosexuality, virility and whiteness that have shaped the Zionist psyche and that are still prevalent in Israeli society. That being said, Puar's thesis may partly explain the institutional embrace of these works as deviant and transgressive political images (Puar 2007: 50). Puar interprets gay marriage as a mode of 'social cure-all', which confines non-heterosexual relationships to Western values and codes, refuels heteronormative logic in the production of the good gay subject, and at the same time, further oppresses and delegitimizes the practices of other minority groups (2007: 20). The conscription into military service can be read in a similar light, as it tags the participating bodies (normative or not) as civil, docile and patriotic. The *Soldiers* series is deviant in its celebration of the erotic desire of the male body, but the series also accommodates the regulation of deviancy when it tames the queer body and enfolds it within national visual norms, within the military uniform, within the body of the soldier. Puar's work makes clear that the critical edge of queer aesthetics and politics needs to be assessed anew at each junction and in each context. When queerness is investigated through the soldier-figure rather than against it, it inevitably shares and strengthens a military ideal and thus cannot help but deflect other critiques.

Norman Bryson writes with regards to the French army at the dawn of Enlightenment and nationalism:

> With its basis in national conscription, the military are no longer a group over there, and military service is no longer exactly a profession: The army in principle consists of every able-bodied male, everyone who counts fully as a citizen. The body is no longer leased to the state, it *is* the state; the state emerges as a new kind of biopolitical entity, and by virtue of gender the male body belongs to the state, as state property.
>
> 1994b: 247, emphasis in text

Bryson's insight is relevant for understanding contemporary Israeli society, in its lucid explication of the military's mediating role in the relationship between the state and its citizens. While, officially, the military is something 'over there' and military service is one profession out of many others, in fact, within the framework of national conscription, the soldier gives shape to the otherwise abstract state apparatus, which in turn endows *him* with full citizenship status. Nes' *Soldiers*, seen in this light, is an argument for the broadening of the criteria that define who counts as a full citizen. Yet, by arguing for a place within the biopolitical entity of the state (by redefining its military body in broader, softer terms), *Soldiers* refrains from arguing against the hierarchy that ranks citizens according to their military affiliation in the first place. Figures who attempt, alternately, to define their national identity against the uniform would not enter this debate, and are in fact muted by it.

Representations of erotic Israeli soldiers in art do not necessarily reproduce hegemonic masculinity, but they remain loyal to the idea of the hegemonic Israeli, whether on guard, at ease or in drag. These are debates about Israeli masculinity, not Israeli militarism, *but they are made through military imagery*. Thus, the military uniform is used as a naturalized container of identity that allows the debate to take place at the price of other debates that may well have a stronger potential for destabilization. *Soldiers*' display of desire ultimately does not break through the naturalized, taken-for-granted position of the military as a frame for national identity; neither does it break through the 'erotic militarism' that Brownfield-Stein points to in her analysis of representations of women-soldier imagery. On the contrary: with regards to civilian militarism, paintings and photographs of erotic soldiers – male or female – domesticate military service by foregrounding the pleasures involved in it over the violence inherent to it.

When interviewed, Nes refers to his detachment from the aggression that is a central feature of soldierhood. He says:

> When I began the series of photographs about soldiers a few years ago I decided that the soldiers in my pictures would never fight. I wanted the soldier to be a metaphor for humanity, not to be any specific soldier of any political significance or location. . . . I seek to sharpen – in the image of the ultimate soldier – humanness, fragility, childlikeness.
>
> quoted in Dugan 2008

The artist's proclaimed attempt to contend with the universal through the soldier, rather than to debate the legitimacy of the soldier-figure as a symbol for a nation state, is reflected in his oeuvre. It points to an *a priori* acceptance of the soldier's eminent place in society and makes it difficult to question that place through his work. It furthermore fits with a current trend in international film, photography and art, in which the intimate portrayal of soldiers as 'sleeping beauties' eschews the more violent aspects of battle and war.[44] However, visual quotations, according to Bal (in their third operation), point to ambiguities that exceed the artist's intentions. They 'demonstrate the difference between the illusion of wholeness and mastery pertaining to the artist of art history and the somewhat messy, yet much richer, visual culture of live images' (Bal 1999b: 15). Quoting leads the work of interpretation to the void between the quoted and the quotation; in that sense, Nes' *Soldiers* marks the gap between an ideal image and the effort that it takes to sustain it, and may open up to other ideal Israeli bodies, outside those dressed in the military uniform, that have yet to be imagined.

CHAPTER THREE

Looking through landscape

We encounter landscape more or less incidentally; it is there as a background to what we do. For much of the time we are barely conscious of it. . . . Every now and then it impinges on our conscious mind, but few of us have occasion to stop and ask serious, fundamental questions about it.

JAY APPLETON, *THE EXPERIENCE OF LANDSCAPE* (1975: 5)

On 8 April 2009, an image accompanied a *Haaretz* newspaper article, illustrating the location of nature-reserve sites that would be open to the public exceptionally during the Passover holidays. The sites are usually available only for military use, such as target or navigation practices, although parts of most of them can be visited at weekends. In the image, each marked location of a nature reserve was accompanied by a landscape image (a desert view, a fortress on the sea shore, a snow-covered mountain) and a caption which offered succinct information on how to reach each location. Nothing in the landscape images themselves indicated anything but open spaces available for outdoor hikes and picnics, and the contours of the military zones within which these sites are located remained unspecified. The related article explained this lack of information when it warned prospective visitors that the contours of active military zones change constantly, and that they should coordinate their visit with the information centre of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI), responsible for coordinating with army officials (Rinat 2009). The general relation of military to civil space thus remained blurred, in text and image alike, and led to a sense of ubiquity, a military omnipresence that was critiqued in the text of the article, but not in the image, in which a militarized space was visualized through the idiom of romantic landscape.

In this chapter, I explore two aspects of military landscape imagery that are borne out in Rinat's article and its illustration.[1] On the one hand, I look at the naturalized coalescence of military and civilian spaces as a case in point of civilian militarism. On the other, I am interested in how this coalescence is represented, circulated and critiqued in and through landscape painting and photography. Following previous chapters, here, too, I am interested in civilian militarism as an intangible social frame. Landscape shares with civilian militarism an inherent intangibility, being both the subject of our vision and the thing within which we exist; being neither foreground nor background, centre nor periphery, but rather a 'a kind of backcloth to the whole stage of human activity' (Appleton 1975: 2; see also DeLue 2008: 10–11). James Elkins defines landscape as 'something we inhabit without being different from it: we are in it, and we *are* it' (2008: 69, emphasis in text).[2] Hence, my focus on military landscapes offers the opportunity to examine a social phenomenon and an aesthetic one that both pertain to frames of vision and knowledge.

Landscape imagery in Israeli painting and photography went through several phases throughout its short history, ranging from biblical landscapes in the late nineteenth century, idyllic Zionist landscapes in the early twentieth century, photojournalistic landscapes in the 1930s, and abstract impressions of landscape imagery in the 1950s.[3] Since the 1970s, the archive of Israeli art includes a critical perspective in addition to traditional and idealized landscape images, whether in direct relation to militarism, or in relation to capitalism, nationalism, environmentalism or religious mythology (Raz 2004: 36–7). Certain paintings and photographs are more poignant than others, attesting to the critical tendency in contemporary Israeli landscape art, mirrored by the growing number of exhibitions on the topic.[4] In this chapter I investigate only a small sample of the works and focus on a few case studies in order to examine what insights landscape may offer with regard to the cultural condition of civilian militarism.

Landscape has been the object of study of various disciplines, including art history, geography, architecture, cultural studies and philosophy. There is no generally accepted theoretical basis for the aesthetic of landscape that encompasses all its trajectories (Appleton 1975: vii). While the following analysis deals with artworks specifically, I follow W.J.T. Mitchell's understanding of landscape as a medium, as a 'way of seeing', which frames vision within an extensive network of cultural codes both inside and outside the realm of art proper (Mitchell 2002a).[5] In the first part of this chapter I explore landscape-as-medium in relation to the effacement – and possible exposure – of ideology. I follow with a visual analysis of the mixed-media work *tso˘ob´ä* by Larry Abramson, which underscores the potential involved in critically engaging with landscape in the Israeli context. Next, I discuss sociological and geographical studies of military landscapes in Israel, and introduce two projects by Meir Gal that highlight the ubiquity of the phenomenon, as well as show how that ubiquity is lived in space. In the final section of this chapter I analyse the aesthetics of the *Necropolis* photographic series, by Roi Kuper and Gilad Ophir, to pinpoint the potentials and pitfalls of landscape imagery in relation to civilian militarism.[6]

The landscape way of seeing

In his well-known collection of essays *Landscape and Power* (2002a), W.J.T. Mitchell establishes a compelling connection between landscape in art and other fields, including political and cultural geography.[7] Mitchell emphasizes that the subject matter of landscape paintings – that is, land itself, perceived as landscape – is always already a representation in its own right, full of symbolism (2002a: 14). Categories such as the picturesque, sublime, heroic or pastoral apply to landscapes that are experienced outdoors just as much as they do to landscapes that are experienced through an artwork. The way we are prompted to look at landscape in open space is no different from the way we look at a painting. Consequently, Mitchell argues that landscape should be regarded as a medium rather than a genre: its aspects and effects transgress art history, and are also the proper subject matter of geography, anthropology, sociology and the like (Mitchell 2002a: 14–18).[8]

The constitutive interdisciplinarity of landscape is established also in the writings of cultural geographers, notably Stephen Daniels and Denis E. Cosgrove. Correlatively, Cosgrove and Daniels include art history in their definition of landscape, whether situated in a park, a painting or a poem, as 'a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring, or symbolizing surroundings' (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988: 1). Daniels defines landscape imagery not so much as a distraction from social and political issues, but rather as a mode of knowledge and social engagement; Cosgrove locates the origins of landscape in the technologies of vision and representation that go back to linear perspective in Renaissance Italy (Daniels 1993; Cosgrove 2008: 24). Both have also conducted studies of landscape representations in renowned works of art and literature (Daniels and Cosgrove 1993). Thus, for Daniels, Cosgrove and Mitchell, landscape indexes a way of seeing that relates to images as such as much as it does to the way in which those images are constructed and framed in the first place.[9]

Landscape, defined as a medium for a way of seeing – a frame of vision, if you will – is inherently cultural and ideological in that it prescribes a way of understanding one's surroundings. What is more, according to the studies mentioned above, 'landscape' is especially conducive to imperial and national ideologies. Cosgrove argues that landscape constitutes a visual ideology insofar as it presents a partial worldview, which is seen and understood from the position of those who own the land (1985: 47). Therefore, the history of landscape has to be understood as part of the way 'through which identifiable social groups historically have framed themselves and their relations both with the land and with other human groups' (Cosgrove 2008: 20). Cosgrove locates the ideological aspect of landscape in the harmonizing of social and environmental relations through seemingly disinterested visual pleasure. The landscape way of seeing involves an apparent detachment from the land, which actually conceals a sense of desire that directs our vision (2008: 25, 28).[10]

Mitchell, too, understands landscape as an instrument of power. That power is twofold, and resides both in the way landscapes represent artificial worlds as if they were simply given and inevitable, and in the way landscapes interpellate their beholders in relation to this given-ness (2002a: 1). The semiotic features of landscape allow it to be framed simultaneously as 'natural' and 'ideal' in ways that erase signs of its construction. This makes it tailor-made for the discourse of imperialism, which attempts to frame its expansion of and control over space as the inevitable progress of history (2002a: 16–17).[11]

According to Mitchell, 'ignorance, a certain kind of wilful unknowing, is central to the concept of landscape' (2002a: 265). The surface of landscape can open up to selective memories and self-serving myths, as well as enhance selective forgetting (2002a: 263). Israeli landscape is an exemplary case of a space that is ideologically constructed, both geographically and culturally, as the exclusive homeland for the Jewish people. It is in constant struggle with a contradictory understanding of the same space as Palestine, the geographical and cultural land of the Palestinian people. The two spaces – Israel and Palestine – overlap and intertwine, while the ideologies pertaining to these landscapes clash and contradict each other. When discussing Israeli landscapes, Mitchell refers to them as 'central to the national imaginary, a part of daily life that imprints public, collective fantasies on places and scenes' (2002a: 27–8). Signs of war, excavations and displacement, everywhere to be found in the land that is 'a palimpsest of scar tissue', are appropriated into the national narrative or otherwise ignored (Mitchell 2002a: 20, 27).[12]

Indeed, the project of early Zionism included the double reframing of the landscape of Israel. On the one hand, contemporary Palestine was viewed as an empty space that needed to be conquered and cultivated, typified by the phrase 'a land without a people for a people without a land', and that was visualized through pastoral desert imagery.[13] On the other, Israel was defined in messianic terms as the place that belongs to the Jewish people by right of ancient ownership, a tale that was enhanced through referrals to historical sites such as Masada, with its palaces and fortifications.[14]

The selective historical remembrance of past Jewish dwelling, combined with the selective geographical blindness to the presence of Palestinian abodes, was partly maintained through the visual arts. Landscape photographs from the beginning of the twentieth century were commissioned by Zionist funds (e.g. the Jewish National Fund, the Keren Hayesod Foundation Fund) in order to display a Zionist utopia in a form encompassing agricultural idyll, small-town urbanism, and the development of empty space (Raz 2004: 40; Oren 2006: 186). During Israel's early years, when there was a decrease in demand for propaganda photographs, landscape photographers were employed by postcard companies, and continued to produce idyllic images of the landscape of the new state (Raz 2004: 37–8). The landscape *paintings* from the first half of the twentieth century had less overt connections with the Zionist project than their sister art in their display of idyllic and picturesque sceneries for their Orientalist and Messianic themes (Ofrat 2004b: 26–8; Manor 2005: 115–19). Yet they too supported the rising ideology to the extent that their romantic and naïve vistas strengthened the connection between the 'New Jew' and his environment, obliterating the violence that was written on the land.[15]

According to Mitchell, landscape might not be the most immediate frame with which one might undermine a nation's basic premise (2002a: 29). On the contrary, when approaching the medium, one must be alert to the ways in which it 'serves as an aesthetic alibi for conquest, a way of naturalizing imperial expansion and even making it look disinterested in a Kantian sense' (2002a: 266). Since landscape is a tool through which the violence of imperialism is naturalized, '[t]he appreciation of landscape as an aesthetic object cannot be an occasion for complacency or untroubled contemplation; rather, it must be the focus of a historical, political, and (yes) aesthetic alertness to the violence and evil written on the land, projected there by the gazing eye' (2002a: 29–30).

The untroubled contemplation of landscape that Mitchell warns against is no longer common in the academic discourse, but it continues to prevail in popular, conventional landscape paintings and photography (Halkes 2006: 8, 145). Surprisingly, the critical potential that Mitchell advocates, the kind of alertness to landscape's complicity, lies in the medium itself, within its ability to act as background, to 'exceed the sum of its individual parts by virtue of encompassing them' (Casey 2002: 6–7). For, regardless of its support of a seemingly disinterested visual pleasure, landscape *includes the viewer within its frame*. That viewer, in turn, may choose to look back: not at the scene that unfolds in front of her, but at the frame that constructs it. Following Van Alphen, this aspect of landscape allows artists to conduct self-reflexive exploration of the space between viewer and image. By seducing the viewer to merge into the depicted space, landscape paintings include their beholders' lived space as one of the dimensions of the space of representation, and thus foreground the act of beholding as a bodily activity that is determined by its specific situatedness (Van Alphen 2005: 72, 84, 90).[16]

From this perspective, the legacy of landscape may just as well provide ‘a continued engagement, in the context of the visible, with that which is contingently excluded from the possibility of being seen and represented’ (Harrison 2002: 234). For the invitation to look at the landscape, according to Mitchell, is

> an invitation not to look at any specific *thing*, but to ignore all particulars in favour of an appreciation of a total gestalt, a vista or scene that may be dominated by some specific feature, but is not simply reducible to that feature. . . . The invitation to look at a view is thus a suggestion to look at nothing – or more precisely, *to look at looking itself* – to engage in a kind of conscious apperception of space as it unfolds itself in a particular place.
>
> Mitchell 2002a: vii–viii, emphasis added

For Mitchell, the abstracting tendency of landscape, its ‘mandate to withdraw’, enables it to situate its viewers in a safe perspective that resists the moral claims made by the scene (2002a: viii). But the quotation above suggests a critical potential that resides precisely in landscape’s distancing capability. It may be turned against the grain and used to survey the medium rather than the image. True, it might not be possible to detach one’s looking from the frames that construct what one sees as what one expects to perceive (DeLue 2008: 10). This conundrum of ‘our inability to see what we see’ (Butler 2005: 826) has already been introduced and elaborated in the previous chapters, and seems no less relevant for the case at hand. Nonetheless, since looking at landscape is to some extent an invitation to ‘look at looking itself’ (Mitchell 2002a), or to explore the space between the viewer and the image (Van Alphen 2005), images of landscape may engage with the frames of vision that surround their viewers. Thus, landscape may be fit for projects that wish to look at the act of framing rather than at framed content; that attempt to pinpoint the codes that enable the visualization of the image to begin with.[17]

Tracing erasure: *tso˘ob´ä* and Zionist scopic regimes

A model for the aesthetic alertness that Mitchell advocates, which corresponds to his understanding of landscape as the incorporation of setting, scene and sight, can be found in the oeuvre of Larry Abramson, notably in the installation *tso˘ob´ä* from 1993–4.[18] If, following Mitchell, the invitation to look at a landscape is a suggestion to look at looking itself (2002a: vii), then Abramson's project is an invitation to consider a mode of looking that has constructed an exclusive Israeli gaze at the expense of competing narratives.

tso˘ob´ä is composed of seventy-six blurred landscape images, half on canvas and half on newspaper sheets, as well as thirteen hyperrealist paintings of branches and uprooted plants taken from the site (e.g. Figures 3.1 and 3.2). The blurred images that make up the lion's share of *tso˘ob´ä* are all paintings based on a single photograph which is not included in the exhibit. This is an image of the landscape of what today is the Israeli kibbutz Tsuba but was, until 1948, the site of the Palestinian village Suba. After rendering each painting as realistically as possible in his studio, Abramson pressed a sheet of newspaper onto the wet oil surface and thus created two abstract images: the 'ruined' canvas, and the traces on the newspaper sheet. Additionally, samples of flora collected at the site were taken to the studio and depicted in hyperrealist style, without further 'abstracting' treatments.

The name *tso˘ob´ä* refers to a well-known series of paintings by the established artist Josef Zaritsky, known as 'The Tsuba Watercolors', which were painted between 1970 and 1985. Zaritsky was the leader of the art group New Horizons. Established in 1948, this group was the dominant art movement in the early days of Israel, and it advanced abstraction as the progressive artistic form of the time (Abramson 2009: 281).[19] Zaritsky's daily outdoor studies of the Tsuba landscape became legendary in Israeli art historiography. His semi-abstract landscapes were seen as the crowning contribution to Israeli modernism and became a reference point for younger generations of painters, a touchstone for a local tradition of painting (Tamir 1995; Abramson 2009: 280–1). The area depicted in Zaritsky's watercolours (as well as in Abramson's oil paintings), which surrounds the present Israeli kibbutz Tsuba, includes the archaeological site of Tel-Tsuba, attesting to ancient Jewish, Muslim and Christian settlements dating as far back as the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The place is also speckled with ruins of the Palestinian village Suba, which was depopulated in 1948, although signposts at the site omit mention of this part of the

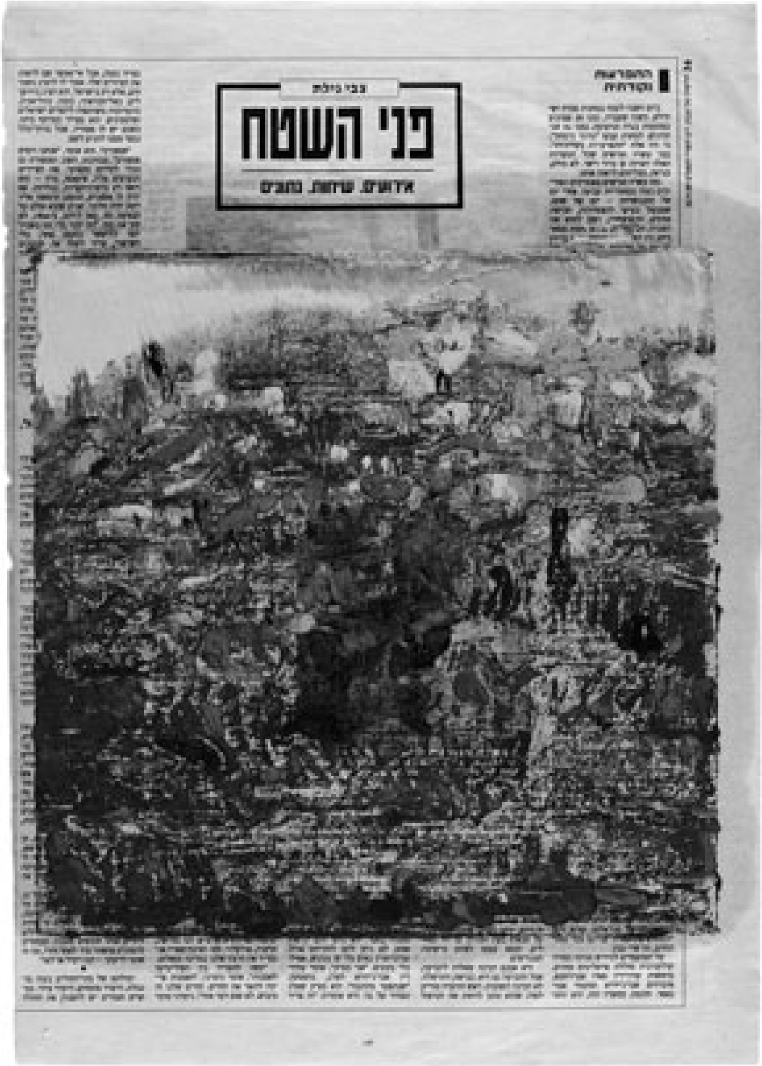
צבי גילת
פני השטח

FIGURE 3.1 Larry Abramson, from *tsoˇob´ä*. Impression on newspaper, 1993–4. Private Collection, Tel Aviv.

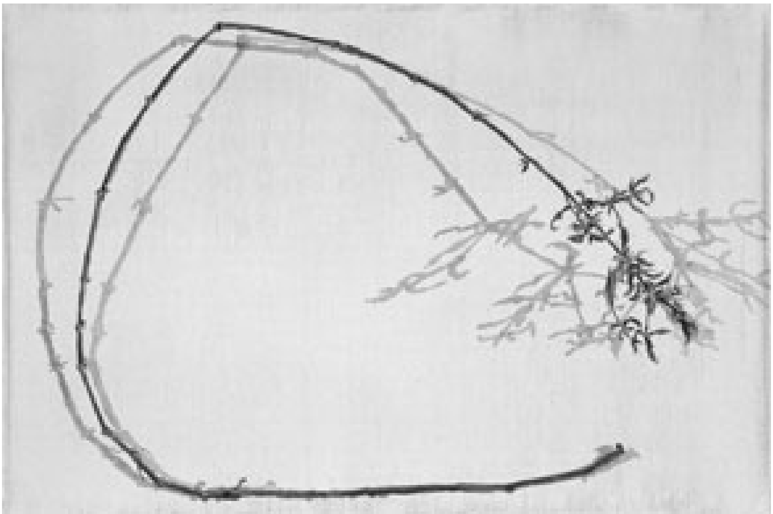

FIGURE 3.2 Larry Abramson, from *tso˘ob´ä*. Oil on canvas, 1993–4. Private Collection, Tel Aviv.

land's history (Tamir 1995; Mitchell 2002a: 281). The abstract aesthetics that Zaritsky and his contemporaries developed in the 1950s present a general impression of the Tsuba landscape and do not disclose details of its intricate history in general, nor of its Palestinian history in particular. Zaritsky's lyrical watercolours have mostly been understood in apolitical terms, such as their origin in the artist's love for the local landscape and his lifelong passion for the dazzling local light. Abramson's *tso˘ob´ä* installation points with aesthetic alertness (to use Mitchell's term) to the double erasure at the basis of Zaritsky's paintings. For Abramson, 'The Tsuba Watercolors' are emblems of what he terms 'the art of camouflage', a Zionist scopic regime that, through the language of abstraction, 'permitted Israelis to be at once Zionist and modern, to be blind to the morally challenging reality of Palestinian expulsion . . . while remaining progressive members of the universal community of modernism' (Abramson 2009: 281).

Abramson's *tso˘ob´ä* converses with Zaritsky on various levels. Its style results from a work process that challenges the pure gaze. While Zaritsky painted outdoors, Abramson worked solely in the studio.

The gradual withdrawal involved in his move from photography to realist painting to abstract newspaper prints underscores processes of selective remembering and forgetting that are inherent to Zaritsky's abstract style.[20] It also stresses the complicity of landscape more generally, making visible its 'mandate to withdraw' as what allows specific memories and myths to prevail (Mitchell 2002a: viii).

The employment of newspapers especially underscores the sociopolitical dimension of the installation. It ascribes the act of abstraction to a social rather than artistic medium, and thus undermines the notion of painting as a pure artistic practice that is free from worldly affairs. In addition, by covering newspaper items in landscape imagery, *tso˘ob´ä* points to the way in which the newspaper, as a collection of specific stories on current affairs, is itself an omnipresent and elusive framing device. In *tso˘ob´ä*, the medium of the newspaper erases details and makes things harder to see. Its juxtaposition with *trompe-l'œil* aesthetics, which are as deceptive as they are informative, puts the entire array of visual imagery under suspicion.

In any direction, *tso˘ob´ä* refuses to display a singular perspective: its seriality, its multiple mediums (oil on canvas, impression on newspaper), practices (picture-making, picture-destruction) and aesthetics (realism, abstraction, hyperrealism), all approach the same view without offering a final impression. *tso˘ob´ä*'s array of forms problematizes the act of seeing as being bound *a priori* to a specific form of 'semantics of consciousness' (Tamir 1995). The installation's phonetic title, *tso˘ob´ä*, encompasses the work's trajectory as it refuses to choose between Israeli Tsuba, Palestinian Suba, archaeological Tel-Tsuba and biblical Tzova, attesting to the impossibility of referring to a place without being semantically, culturally and politically biased towards one narrative or another. Thus, the installation refers to pictorial modes just as much as it does to the landscape that is represented: it criticizes the processes of artistic and political vision, and exposes both as already constructed, in the case of Tsuba, in national terms.

Most importantly for our case here, *tso˘ob´ä* underscores that in order to break the complicity between landscape and power it is necessary to reflectively engage with the *medium* of landscape as well as with its history as an art historical *genre*.[21] The politics of vision in *tso˘ob´ä* are analysed not only through a return to a known landscape, but also through a return to a known representation of that landscape; the installation thus strips the landscape view of Tsuba, whether seen or painted, of its deceptive innocence, mimicking the gesture that has thus far helped to maintain that deception.[22] As a result, the processes of seeing, depicting, knowing and representing the land are questioned and complicated in step with a renewed engagement with the place that is represented.

The specific insight that *tso˘ob´ä* offers with regard to Mitchell's call for 'aesthetic alertness' exposes the wilful unknowing involved in the experience of Israeli landscapes. Such unknowing reaches dramatic proportions when it comes to the militarized surface that covers the vast majority of the land, both materially and representationally. In the following section, I attend to the coalescence of military and civilian spaces in Israel.

The 'stifling of the gaze'

The 2011 annual report of Israel's State Comptroller and Ombudsman states that the IDF controls 39 per cent of Israel's land inside the Green Line, and that another 40 per cent of land in Israel is under building restrictions due to military considerations. The legal infrastructure offers the IDF significant mitigations regarding the construction of security facilities, and also allows it to close off areas in accordance with emergency regulations. In his report, the comptroller criticizes the IDF and related organizations, such as the Ministry of Defence and the Israel Land Administration, for abusing their privileges in ways that lead to the waste of land resources and public money and a neglect of the public interest, ultimately calling for a refurbishment of review procedures (Lindenstrauss 2011: 117–18).

Earlier studies by geographers Amiram Oren and Rafi Regev offer similar information on the control of Israeli space by the military and security apparatuses (Oren and Regev 2008: 11–20). Furthermore, they highlight the fact that this pervasive military and security-service land usage has thus far not been thoroughly addressed by cultural geographers, nor received the attention of professional planning committees outside the academic world (Oren 2007: 149–61). Granted, Oren and Regev's studies were published prior to the Ombudsman's recent report, and might even have led to it.[23] The report, in turn, might trigger a change and end the lasting lack of inquiry indicated by Oren and Regev. Be that as it may, such an oversight remains relevant today, and is all the more intriguing due to the shortage of land for private and public use in Israel and the widespread attention that militarism receives in other academic and sociocultural domains (Oren 2007: 159; Ben-Ari 2009).[24] While Oren and Regev examine various aspects of military land use in Israel and its effects on civil society, what is relevant for my case is their pointing to the ease with which a vast military spatial presence goes largely unquestioned.

The lack of public knowledge is usually rationalized as being the result of security censorship and a general lack of awareness; it is also simply said to stem from civilian indifference to the topic (Oren 2007: 160–3).[25] Such lack of interest in civil–military spatial relations is not a uniquely Israeli phenomenon. In *Military Geographies* (2004), her comprehensive study of military geographies in Britain, Rachel Woodward points to a similar situation. Woodward argues that, unlike overt control of space in times of war, military activities control space during non-conflict periods in ways that render that control invisible. Woodward distinguishes between 'military geographies' and 'the geographies of militarism': while the former are shaped by the production and reproduction of military capabilities, the latter have to do with 'the shaping of *civilian space and social relations* by military objectives, rationales and structures' (2005: 721, emphasis added). Both military geographies and the geographies of militarism are political through their reinforcement of gendered identities, the strengthening of national ideologies, the support of claims to territory and the prioritization of certain land uses over others (Woodward 2004: 108–11).

For Woodward, military geographies are everywhere: 'every corner of every place in every land in every part of this world of ours is touched, shaped, viewed and represented in some way by military forces and military activities' (2004: 3). Nonetheless, Woodward defines militarism as always culturally, locally and temporally specific (2004: 3). Thus, the Israeli case needs to be investigated in light of its particular mode of producing and experiencing space, in which military and civilian landscapes are frequently superimposed and inseparable, and where no non-conflict period of time exists.

According to social geographer Erez Tzfadia, part of the reason for the lack of interest in the subject lies in the fact that the borders between civil society and the security sector have always been blurred

(Tzfadia 2008: 46, 62). The growth of Jewish settlements since the beginning of the century, coupled with the restrictions on Arab geographical expansion, was seen as an essential element of *security* (Tzfadia 2010: 342–4). Tzfadia follows Kimmerling's thesis, specifying its geographical aspects. He calls 'spatial militarism' the phenomenon in which a military-inflected construction of space yields material and cognitive dimensions as it answers the interests of those involved in organized violence while naturalizing the military's status as the guiding principle of daily life (2010: 356–7). Tzfadia elaborates on spatial militarism in his 2010 article 'Militarism and Space in Israel', in which he describes how spatial militarism has outlasted fundamental social and hierarchical changes in Israel's history.

A case in point is represented by two installations, identically titled *~~Beit Hanina~~/Pisgat Ze'ev* (sic), by Meir Gal (1995–6). The works consisted of photographs of street signs from the Pisgat Ze'ev settlement, and of actual streets signs mounted on grave-like monuments (Figures 3.3 and 3.4).[26] Pisgat Ze'ev is located on confiscated lands that belonged to the Palestinian village Beit Hanina.[27] As Gal's installation makes clear, the vast majority of its street names

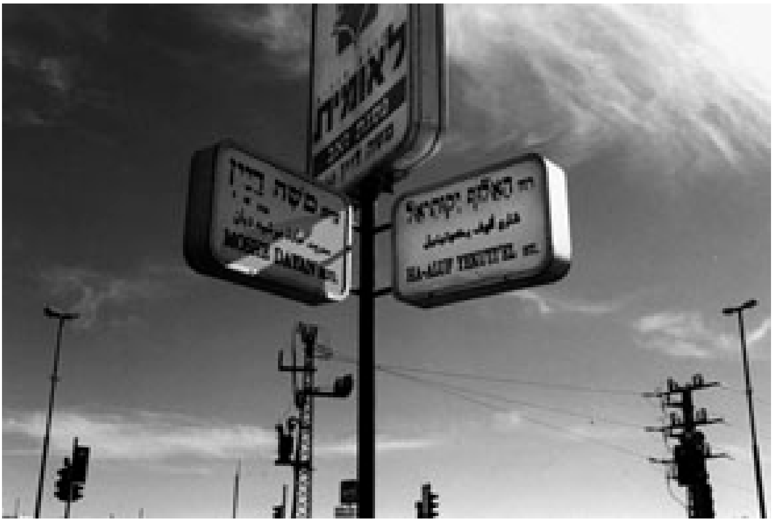

FIGURE 3.3 Meir Gal, *~~Beit Hanina~~/Pisgat Ze'ev (Chief of Staff Junction)*. C Print, 1995–6. Courtesy of the artist.

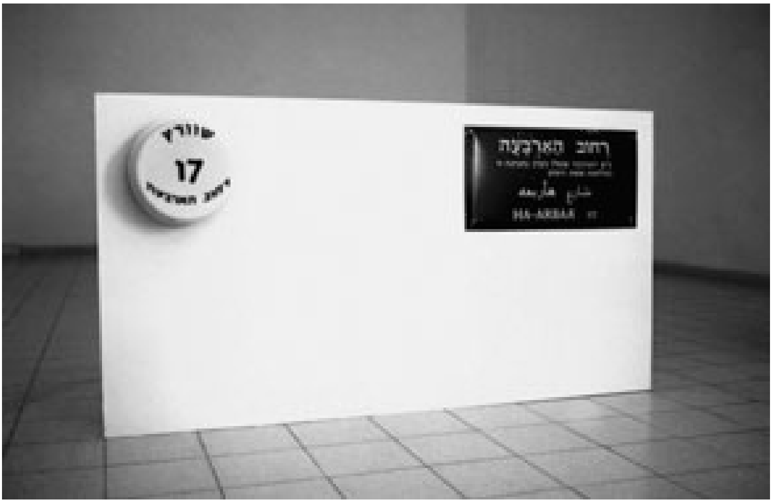

FIGURE 3.4 Meir Gal, *~~Beit Hanina~~/Pisgat Ze'ev (The Schwartz Family and the Four Fallen Soldiers Street)*. Metal street signs on dry wall, 1997. Courtesy of the artist.

are derived from the history of the IDF. Gal focuses on the street signs alone, at the expense of the streets and the doors that the signs mark, and so draws attention to the mapping out of Pisgat Ze'ev by military motifs. The erasure of Beit Hanina and the corresponding creation of Pisgat Ze'ev are shown to have been managed through a combination of military and civilian means simultaneously on literal (conquest and settlement) and metaphorical (street mapping) levels.[28]

~~Beit Hanina~~/Pisgat Ze'ev specifies Woodward's 'geographies of militarism' and Tzfadia's 'spatial militarism' both visually and conceptually. It makes use of a tangible case (the street signs) to challenge an amorphous principle as well as to reconsider the superimposition of military-mindedness on civilian spaces in ways that remain mostly unnoticed. Gal's installation hints at the way in which the name of a street becomes integral to one's signature: the Four Fallen Soldiers Street is part of the Schwartz family's daily life, inscribed on their doorstep and mentioned in their correspondence. The street name and the military memory that it carries participate in civilian life as a matter of routine.[29]

Tzfadia's academic analysis and Gal's installation can be taken as complementing each other. One studies civil space as a part of the security regime; the other pinpoints military excess in the construction of a semi-civilian neighbourhood. Both perspectives reveal the porousness between military and civilian constructions of space, suggesting why the territorial expansion of the military at the expense of domestic space has not been attended to for decades. When the boundaries between civilian and security-related spaces are always already blurred, the claims of the one are not seen as being jeopardized by the other to begin with.

Diana Dolev, a professor of the history of architecture, argues that this type of overlooking is not only the result of, but also a necessary basis for, the effective coalescence of military and civilian space. Dolev analyses yet another phenomenon of ‘spatial militarism’: the military institutions and bases that are located in and around city centres. On aerial maps, these buildings are erased according to censorship regulations, and are replaced by white shapes. According to Dolev, what is blotted out in the photographs is also expected to disappear from one’s experience on the ground, since passers-by are tacitly guided to ignore these constructs. Dolev names this mode of educated not-looking ‘the stifling of the gaze’ (2009: 3).

The stifled gaze comes into being through a double process of manifestation and retraction. On the one hand, the signs of military spaces are clearly visible in the form of signposts, fences, facilities, cemeteries and monuments. On the other hand, the same fences and monuments also signal to civilians that they should avert their gazes because those areas are off limits. Akin to the white blots on the censored aerial maps, the signposts both mark and camouflage military edifices.[30] Thus, military spaces remain vague and enigmatic regardless of (or even due to) the signs that denote them (Dolev 2009: 3–4). The same signs that announce a military space also render it inaccessible and uninviting:

> On the one hand [military landscape] presents itself and declares its existence, and on the other hand it disappears from our consciousness, especially if we are Jewish-Israeli. Our consciousness turns these areas into nowhere, erases their existence. . . . The result of both manifestation and retraction is one and the same: the narrowing of the visual field available to the civilian eye, and the allotment of some of this field to military and security-related events only.
>
> 2009: 3–4, my translation

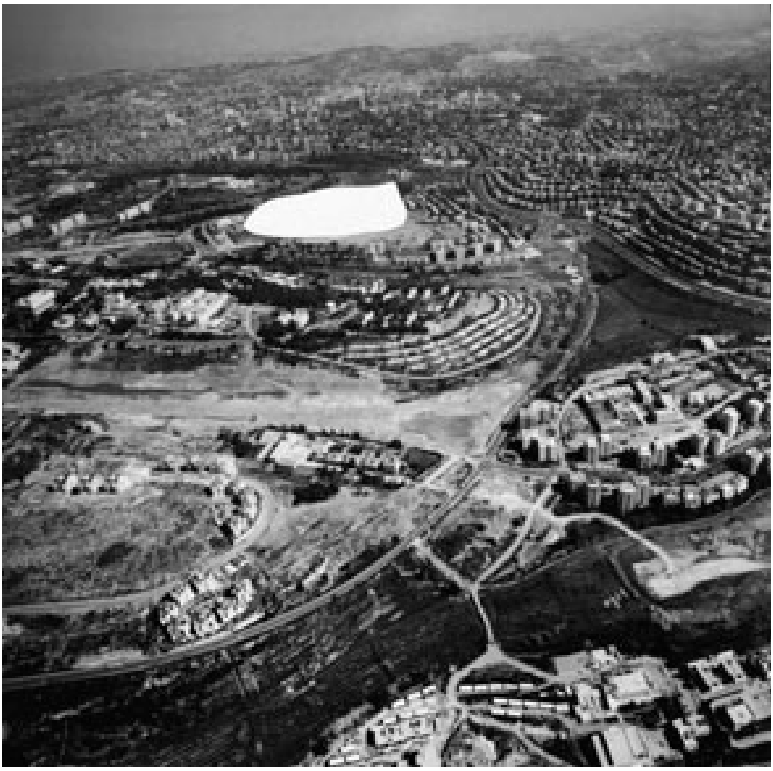

FIGURE 3.5 Meir Gal, *Erasing the Major Museums (Israel Museum)*. C print, 1995. Courtesy of the artist.

Dolev's stifled gaze pertains to active military sites, not to the military references that are included within civilian space. Gal refers indirectly to Dolev's thesis in another project, entitled *Erasing the Major Museums* (1995–6; Figure 3.5). In this project, aerial photographs of cities in Israel were modified so that one building is covered in white paint in each photograph, mimicking the common procedure of security censorship described above. As the title indicates, the building in Gal's work is not a military structure but a museum. When Gal paints the major Israeli museums in white he refers to the complicity of cultural establishments with the political reality within which they operate. Gal explains:

> Museums in Israel have ignored the political realities within which they are operating . . . As such, museums are nothing but a disguised function of state apparatus and therefore should be officially perceived as military facilities. I therefore decided, in compliance with army regulations, to erase museums, like other security sensitive institutions, so that their location will not be disclosed and state security compromised.
>
> 2010: 172, 176

Gal's *Erasing the Major Museums* echoes Dolev's concern with the premeditated erasure of space from one's path and view. As with Abramson's *tso˘ob´ä*, Gal reiterates a mode of representing space (or, more accurately, of camouflaging space) in a way that exposes and questions its assumptions. *Erasing the Major Museums* suggests that there are no non-military spaces in Israel, thus reflecting on the mechanism of civilian militarism and the cognitive disregard that is inherent to its concealment. Yet the main target of this work draws us away from questions of landscape. The last section of this chapter returns to the elusive rules of conduct that govern the stifling of the gaze, and looks into the combination of manifestation and retraction as the process that allows the military to fade away from the visible Israeli landscape.[31]

Israeli mindscapes

As indicated, landscape conceals and naturalizes the social relations that it disseminates (Mitchell 2002a: 15). Military landscapes form no exception in this respect. The geographies of militarism are often subtle, concealed or unidentified: when seen at all, they are presented as compulsory necessities of present times (Woodward 2004: 719, 732). Reading Mitchell's and Woodward's studies in juxtaposition makes apparent the parallels between the geographies of militarism (or, in Tzfadia's terms, spatial militarism) and the medium of landscape. Both act as backgrounds that enforce frames of vision and knowledge. The challenge of critical art in this regard is twofold: to denaturalize the acceptance of military geographies as necessary consequences of reality, and at the same time to question the perceived neutrality of a landscape view.

One such endeavour can be found in the series *Necropolis* by Roi Kuper and Gilad Ophir, the result of a five-year project in which the two artists photographed remnants of military architecture and machinery scattered throughout Israel. Mostly black and white, the photographs from *Necropolis* show abandoned military camps, skeletons of jeeps, forsaken storage shelters, and neglected embankments (Figures 3.6 and 3.7). All bear the scars of war as well as time. Desert sand, wind and vegetation reclaim the deserted war machines. At times, the remnants take up most of the image so that the landscape around them functions merely as background. At others, they are barely seen in what appears to be an unscathed desert view. No image stands alone: the many photographs of *Necropolis* compose sub-themes within the series, either according to geographical location or subject matter. The series is thus constructed out of groups of nearly identical images that are presented side by side. Whether these are deserted shooting posts on the Golan Heights or ruins of embankments that are almost entirely covered by the Arava Desert sand, the untitled photographs are barely distinguishable and challenge the viewer to contemplate their subtle differences.

The choice to display military ruins rather than active military sites enables Kuper and Ophir to present the militarized geography of Israel, which extends beyond fenced army posts and censored security zones. While the series does not picture the active military facilities to which Dolev refers in her study, they do bring up the elusive rules of the stifling of the gaze in their continual return to sites that were never meant to be noticed and therefore never had to be erased or forgotten. Corresponding to Meir Gal's *~~Beit Hanina~~/ Pisgat Ze'ev*, *Necropolis* brings into focus military markers that usually act only as a background to guide our frame of reference. The military insignias that are the object of *Necropolis* map the land in a more contingent but no less potent way than do the street signs of Pisgat Ze'ev. The accumulated evidence of their existence underscores their function as it partially removes their invisibility, in which one may walk the streets of a neighbourhood or the roads of the land (perhaps during a Passover holiday, following Rinat's travel recommendations) without taking notice of the way in which one's path is marked by military commemorations.

The contradictory combination of manifestation and retraction that lies at the heart of the stifled gaze is brought into view in *Necropolis* through a number of visual practices. On the one hand,

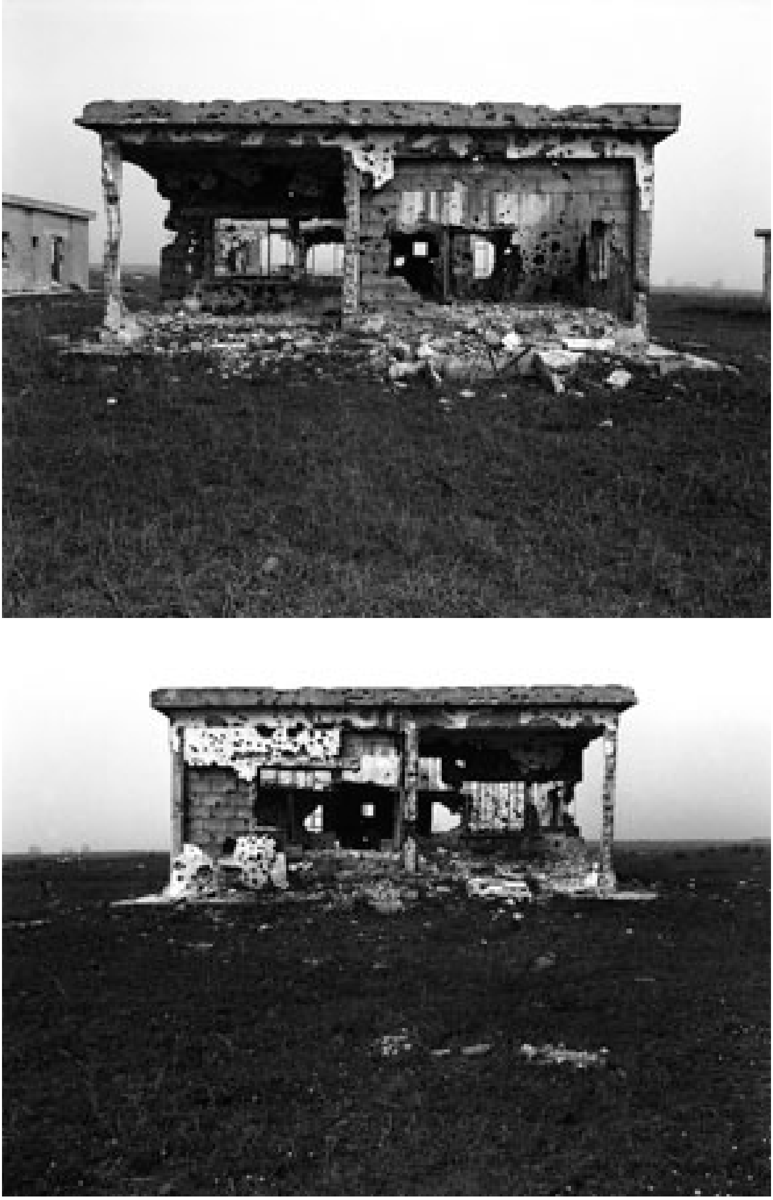

FIGURE 3.6 Gilad Ophir, from *Necropolis*. Black and white prints, 2000. Courtesy of the artist.

there is a clear attempt to make military landscapes visible, and, on the other, an effort to depict their imperceptibility without redressing it. The attempt to show, to make visible, is found first and foremost in the subject matter of the series, which unites the collection of works. The sheer abundance of images challenges the invisibility of the phenomenon by bringing its elements into view. Yet such a plethora of works runs the risk of failing to produce a critique of knowledge as soon as it would allow viewers to believe that the problem of unseeing can simply be undone.

This risk is not present in *tso˘ob´ä* or in *Erasing the Major Museums*, because these two projects work through negation. *tso˘ob´ä* makes one aware of the Palestinian ruins of Suba, but does not depict them. The installation frustrates the eye as it does not offer a solution to its critique of politically informed vision; its message lies within that very frustration. *Erasing the Major Museums* reproduces the aesthetics of authorized spatial censorship. Its focus is on the shape and significance of a visual impasse, not on what can be found behind it.[32] In contrast, every image in *Necropolis* depicts an existing military ruin or residue. And yet, *Necropolis* manages to touch on a fundamental inability to see details in space.

For one thing, the series' images by their sheer number do not just serve as archival documentary evidence. They also hint at the impossibility of encompassing the phenomenon as a whole, so that the incessant *attempt* to see takes over and sometimes even obscures what is being shown. The serial character of *Necropolis* denies the conclusiveness that might arise from the thematic focus on the military remnants. In Zaritsky's *Tsuba* watercolours, repetition leads to the establishment of a specific landscape as emblematic; in Abramson's *tso˘ob´ä*, repetition leads to the exposure and critique of a recognized model. The repetitive seriality of *Necropolis* underscores a Sisyphean search for comprehensive structure. Its meditative return to indistinguishable, uncaptioned objects hints at a phenomenon that lies beyond the visual surface altogether, which cannot be defined by documentation alone.[33]

In addition, *Necropolis* conceptualizes the framework that allows military spatial presence to remain unseen when it manipulates the genre of landscape photography. The recurrent display of imperial and military signs that have become opaque, unseen or unaccounted for is coupled with a critical acknowledgement of landscape as the framework that allows these objects to escape one's view in the first

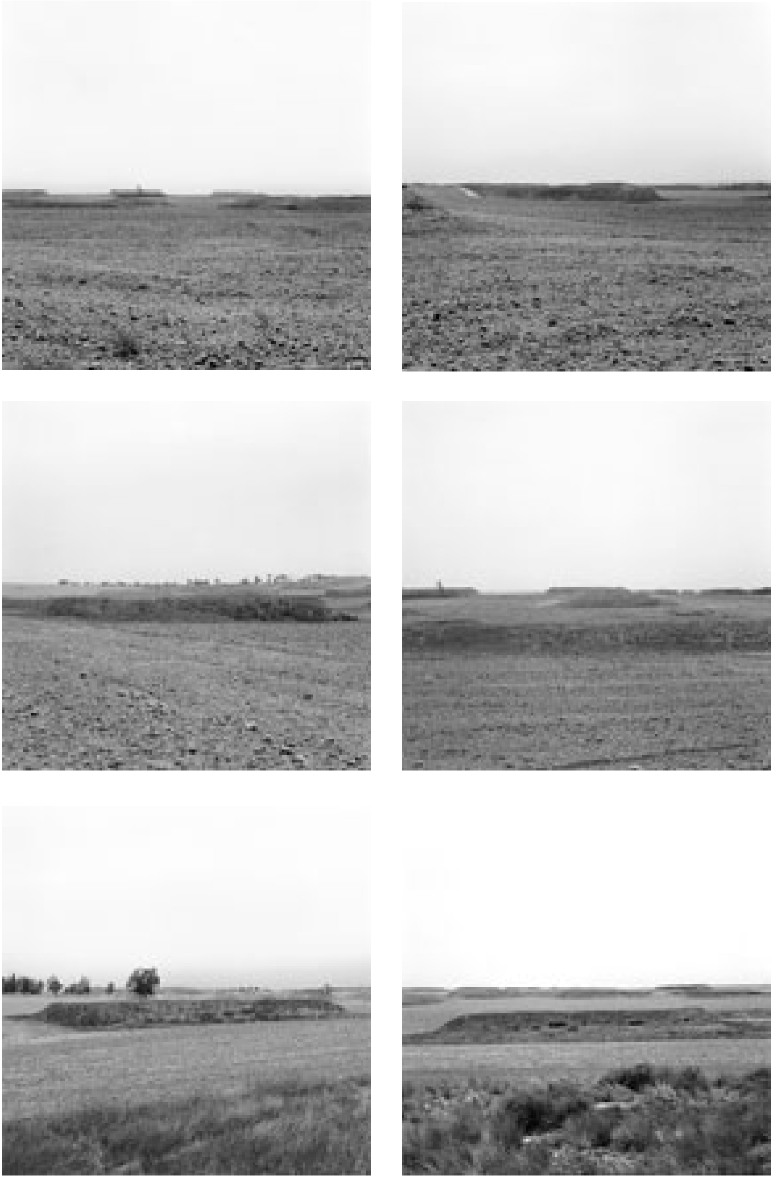

FIGURE 3.7 Roi Kuper, from *Necropolis*. Black and white prints, 1996–2000. Courtesy of the artist.

place. Most compositions in *Necropolis* are built around an object within the landscape, such as a deserted radar dish or a storage shelter, in a way that obliterates the overall view in favour of a closer inspection of how that specific body interacts with its surroundings. Even works that seem to open out to the horizon and so to follow the rules of landscape imagery, or to document the endlessness of the desert landscape, negate the depth of the composition by partly blocking the vanishing point or by accentuating details that push the focus to the front of the image. The foreclosure of the view goes against the convention of classical landscape imagery of offering a wide and uninterrupted outlook.[34]

The landscape view, whether painted or experienced by an educated eye, allows for detachment, as it transforms places into visual images and thus turns *sites* into *sights* (Mitchell 2002a: 265). The close-ups and flatness of the *Necropolis* photographs have been understood as reversals of this move. According to Jochai Rosen, such blockages have become prevalent in contemporary Israeli photography, in which a blatant obstruction of the view operates as a compositional analogy to the violence found on the land. Rosen explains that by allowing only a partial glimpse of the view that lies behind, photographs may frustrate viewers' expectations and oblige them to 'stand face-to-face with these victimized corpses symbolizing the Israeli mistreatment of its territory' (Rosen 2007: 24).

I would like to add to this analysis the observation that, while the *Necropolis* images indeed refuse to provide a sense of distance, they do not so much undo that distance, nor do they offer access to the objects depicted up-close. Rather, they frame their referents as enigmatic structures in space, detached from spatial context. The frustration is thus doubled: viewers are offered neither the knowledgeable distance of landscape, nor a contextual understanding of objects, which seem to hide their significance in plain sight.

The aesthetics of *Necropolis*, particularly as expressed through its monochromatic seriality and the repetitive return to similar architectural structures, alludes to the school of Bernd and Hilla Becher.[35] Thus, the works can be (and have been) interpreted as part of a typological project that aims to map out the characteristics of deserted military architectural structures according to specific traits (Sela 2009). But while the Bechers' oeuvre aims at an objective, impartial view achieved through their adherence to strict compositional regulations in their documentation of deserted industrial sites, *Necropolis* offers a wide range of visibility regarding military structures, encompassing anthropomorphic portraits of battered military remains that pain the eye (Figure 3.6) and vistas that are only barely marked by military signs (Figure 3.7). Rather than pointing to structural clarity, then, they gesture towards a process of withdrawal that makes military landscapes as intangible and elusive as they are manifest. In its insistence on closeness and intimacy, *Necropolis* challenges the contours of landscape and thus engages with that aspect of the medium that allows for 'a continued engagement, in the context of the visible, with that which is contingently excluded from the possibility of being seen and represented' (Harrison 2002: 234).

Mitchell's suggestion to approach landscapes with aesthetic alertness finds parallels in Woodward's call for a kind of analysis that 'takes the small, the unremarkable, the commonplace things that military activities and militarism make and do, and traces the networks or connections between them. It is often the seemingly prosaic things, the things that lurk at the edge of the big picture, which can tell us much about how systems (be they material or discursive or both) operate' (2005: 731).

Necropolis focuses on the unremarkable and forsaken remains of military activities throughout the Israeli landscape. The series creates a tension between the obviousness of its subject matter and the ways it is depicted. Seriality and confined composition create an uneasy sense of displacement, confronting the viewer with her inability to grasp what she is looking at: on the one hand, the work offers an abundance of images that testify to a militarized landscape; on the other hand, it underscores a way of seeing that effaces visual knowledge. Evidence of the omnipresence of the military in space is repeatedly captured and offered to the viewer, and yet the eye wanders as it looks at a non-event. This visual strategy does not and cannot solve the conditions of the stifled gaze. To some extent it repeats it, translates its operation into the field of representation. This, however, does not necessarily lead to failed critique; it can operate as a productive failure *à la* Butler, integral to the critical image in its exposure of this failure (Butler 2004: 146).

The use of landscape for a clear-cut critique of militarized space would be inherently contradictory, since the landscape way of seeing is derived from the vantage point of conquest. However, landscape has the potential to shed light on the act of framing rather than on its framed content, a potential brought out by *Necropolis*. The series' figuration of the inability to see or depict the visual and social phenomenon of geographic militarism, even when looking straight at it, articulates the way in which military landscapes interpellate the viewer within their frame in relation to the militarized history of its beholders (Mitchell 2002a: 2).

CHAPTER FOUR

Kebab in theory

Mapping vision

Zooming in on the thinking image

David Goss's *Lebanese Kebab* (1998; Figure 4.1), an oil painting on parquet wood, depicts a plate with pita bread and three kebab sticks topped with sauce, lying on a flat surface at the centre of a square composition. Coloured in a grainy green monochrome, the plate is portrayed from a bird's-eye view. The flat, decorated background that covers most of the wooden base is processed in a similar tone of intense green. A film of white dots partly veils the top right quarter of the image, and prevents potentially mimetic qualities of the second, smaller circle that it covers to emerge. A segment of the wooden base along the left edge of the painting is left bare.

This chapter will offer a close reading of *Lebanese Kebab*. I will ponder its various possible interpretations, and tease out some of its aesthetic and political insights. This single image, part of Goss' series *Table Maps*, allows me to expand on some of the issues treated so far in this study, such as the way that images compel viewers to reflect on their perceptual limitations, but it also opens up the related question of the distinction between 'art' and 'non-art' objects, a question that will become more pertinent in the chapters that follow. Most importantly, *Lebanese Kebab* allows me to elaborate on my understanding of how critical images participate in a sociopolitical discourse by way of straddling conflicting frames of

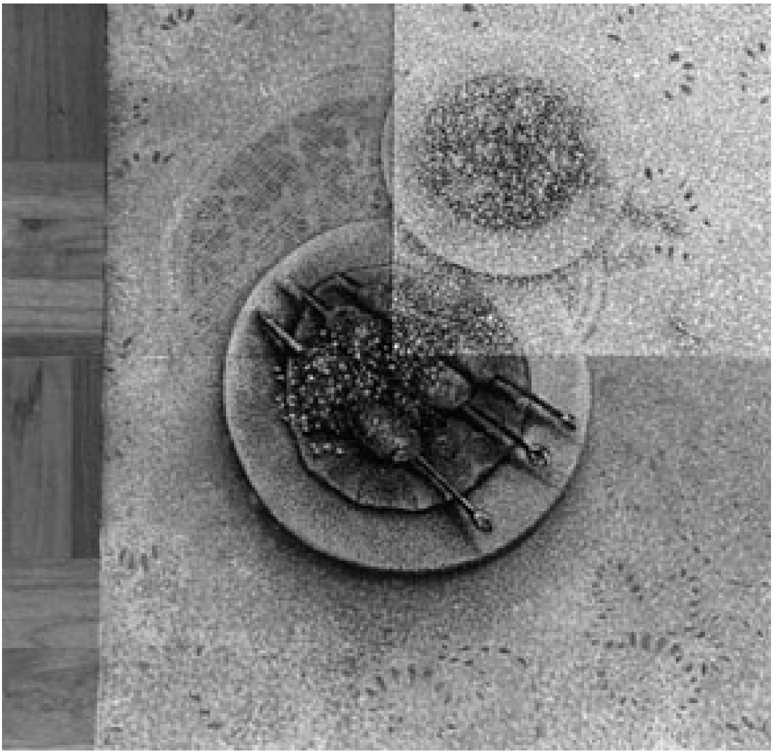

FIGURE 4.1 David Goss, *Lebanese Kebab*. Oil on parquet wood, 1998. Courtesy of the artist.

reference. The frames in question – the still life, the map and the border – will take up a major part of my investigation.

In the previous chapters I have discussed how civilian militarism operates as a naturalized conceptual framework within Israel society and (visual) culture. I have touched upon the ways it functions within the local art-historical discourse and within a selection of images of art. The scale and the form of the critique of civilian militarism has varied from work to work, from its mobilization in Adi Nes' *Soldiers* series (Chapter 2) and self-reflection in Dudu Bareket's *Self Portrait at the IDF Induction Centre* (Chapter 1), to compulsive documentation in Roi Kuper and Gilad Ophir's *Necropolis* and contemplative aesthetics in Larry

Abramson's *tso˘ob´ä* (Chapter 3). In all these cases the critical detail that solicited my reflection resided in some sort of friction, be it the discord between Bareket's installation and its reproduction on the cover of the *Uniform Ltd.* exhibition, or the tension that arises from the subtle changes between images in *Necropolis*' semi-identical repetitive photographs.

In this chapter I wish to develop the issue further by considering how *Lebanese Kebab* mobilizes an array of tensions to articulate the social imaginary of the Israeli subject and to map out its unconscious geographical and aesthetic fantasies. That mapping is carried out by an elaboration on the map as concept on the one hand, and on the still life as an art-historical genre on the other. The simultaneous reference to these two distinct categorizations is central to the painting's meaning and message: it compels a comparative interpretation from its viewers, an interpretation that stretches the contours of discourse. Following Ernst van Alphen's conception of the thinking image as an active agent in the social field, and Mieke Bal's formulation of the critical image as that which points both inwards at its own existence as an artwork and outwards towards the social and political circumstances of its production and display, I will show how *Lebanese Kebab*'s thinking resides in its staging of frictions, in its juxtaposition of conflicting traditions of visual recognition patterns.

In his book *Art in Mind: How Contemporary Images Shape Thought* (2005), Van Alphen proposes that we consider the act of painting as an intellectual practice, and paintings as visual modes of thought. Instead of being cultural products, paintings can be seen as cultural agents, framing culture just as much as they are being framed by it. Artworks, Van Alphen explains, do not simply thematize social or cultural issues. They participate and intervene in the cultural matrix in which they are created and displayed. Their potential lies in their ability to offer an alternative to positivistic understanding. Following Theodor Adorno, Christoph Menke and Hubert Damisch in this respect, Van Alphen argues that the crucial function of aesthetic thought is to make viewers confront their conventional assumptions (2005: xvi). The thinking image, accordingly, is that which stages thought not as a means to an end but as a valuable process in itself.

According to Bal, a similar process of staging thought can also take place when a work is exhibited. The open-ended modes of looking encouraged by the thinking image are in this case translated to the 'philosophical exhibition' that 'expos[es] thoughts without ending, problems without solutions, questions viscerally absorbed and not answered on the spot' (2007: 96). Goss's *Lebanese Kebab* is an exemplary case of a thinking image that encourages aesthetic and political reflection of this sort. It calls for regressive and circular contemplations that repeatedly question the basic premises of vision, perception and knowledge. Instead of reflecting a certain visual tradition, the painting *reflects upon* traditions of visual and categorical recognition patterns, and so theorizes the essence of perception as an indirect process and its dependency on pre-existing knowledge.

In this chapter, then, I will make a case for the critical image as that which enacts its critique through regressive – yet productive – contemplations. In the next section, I offer a close reading of the painting and focus on the ways it challenges and resists interpretation. Then, I explore the painting's allusion to the still-life genre and to cartography as tools for critical thinking. In the final section, I conclude by locating the analysis in contemporary Israel, and theorize the critique that *Lebanese Kebab* offers with regard to its (Israeli) viewers' construction of their identity and their social, cultural and political actualities.

Contesting mis/interpretations

The visual aesthetics of *Lebanese Kebab* draws from different styles of painting and confounds seemingly incompatible interpretative cues. Its title, *Lebanese Kebab*, along with the painting's naturalistic features, solicits an iconographic interpretation. Such an interpretation identifies the decorative green background of *Lebanese Kebab* as a flattened representation of a tablecloth, and the bare wooden base to its left as a segment of a wooden floor. The smaller circle at the top right quarter of the painting can be interpreted as another plate of food, a side dish of sorts, partly covered by an embroidered serviette. Yet the painting's formal elements – colour, perspective and composition – refuse a consistent identification of objects and events, and lead to a dynamic process of negotiation between various and contradictory possible interpretations.

For starters, the flatness of *Lebanese Kebab* conjures an abstract reading of the image as a modernistic geometrical game balancing shapes and tones. The colour fields do not correspond to the figures and create layers that have an autonomous visual existence: for example, the top-right square of white film (the 'serviette') effaces the faint depth cues as well as a clear outline of the 'food plates'. The painting thus hints at abstraction, in its encouragement of a non-figurative reading that negates reference to a material origin. What is more, the intense green monochromatic colouring of *Lebanese Kebab* further distances the represented objects from their material appearance, by grounding the image in a fantastic world of artifice. The meticulously rendered kebab plate is clearly based on a real-life model; yet due to its fantastic colouring, its reality exists inside the painting alone. This green, grainy food plate, and the table on which it appears to stand, clearly originate in paint. In fact, I could say with Michel Foucault, *ceci n'est pas un kebab*.[1]

It has not been uncommon for still lifes to challenge the representational suppositions of artworks. Norman Bryson interprets Caravaggio's *Basket of Fruit* (1602), and later Paul Cézanne's *Still Life with Apples* (1895), in this vein when he writes:

> The *Basket of Fruit* does not recede: it projects. And as it does so, it announces that the only space where the objects reside is in this projection that is sent out from the canvas towards the spectators. The painting shows objects that exist there, and only there – not in some prior, receding space that is neutrally copied or transcribed. The basket of fruit and the fruit are presented; they come into being on the canvas for the first time, not as transcription but as originary inscription.
>
> 1990: 80

Caravaggio's *Basket of Fruit* is, according to Bryson, a visual testimony of the artist's ability to create an image that is superior to the denoted, dispensable object (1990: 81). As such, it focuses on the *art* of painting, rather than on the painting's *subject*. In a similar fashion, Goss's elaborate processing of colour and texture in *Lebanese Kebab* directs attention to the artist's toil, and to the materiality of canvas and paint. The image's representational potential recedes before the labour involved in its production.

Caravaggio abstracts the fruit basket from any worldly context. The case of *Lebanese Kebab* is different, because the painting's title assigns the kebab to a specific culture and geography. I will come back to this point later, but for now, I wish to emphasize that the painting still follows Bryson's interpretation of the still-life genre as one of presentation (not representation), inasmuch as it stresses the artificial, fantastic and aesthetic qualities of the image over its representational aspects. In *Black Olives* (Figure 4.2), another painting from the *Table Maps* series, the point is made in a more overt way. *Black Olives*, a clear quotation of Caravaggio's *Basket of Fruit*, emphatically associates itself, and by extension the entire series, with an internal art-historical discourse.

Finally, in addition to colour and texture, volume too plays a role as a trigger for the viewer to go beyond iconographical interpretation. The combination of flatness and closeness with a bird's-eye view positions the viewer of *Lebanese Kebab* directly

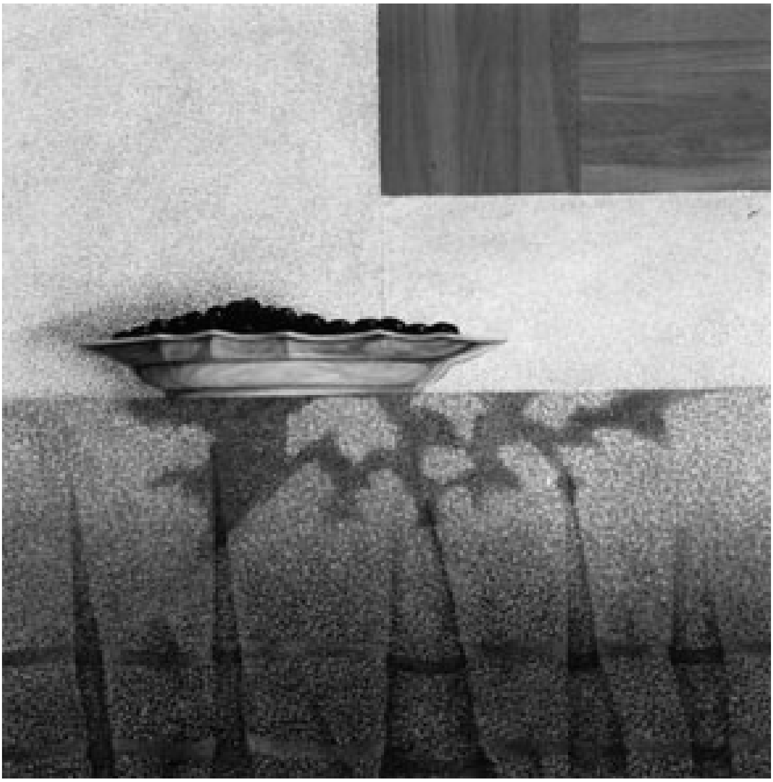

FIGURE 4.2 David Goss, *Black Olives*. Oil on Parquet Wood, 1998. Private Collection, London. Courtesy of the artist.

above the table, as if floating in air. The employment of a bird's-eye view, usually distant and disembodied, with an intimate closeness to the depicted object, unsettles a sense of location and balance. As a three-dimensional variation on the *trompe l'œil*, the painting 'provokes our eyes to the point of insult, and of doubt: the deceit undermines our reliance on our perception' (Grootenboer 2005: 5). *Lebanese Kebab* is clearly not a *trompe l'œil* in the traditional sense of deceiving the eye. However, it follows Grootenboer's definition as it manages, for a split second, to undermine the reliance on visual perception as a tool to locate oneself in the world. In so doing it underscores, and undermines, the intimate relation between perspective and point of view. What we see remains unstable; and the place from where we see it does not stabilize at any given point.[2]

Thus, the painting conjures several simultaneous modes of looking: realism, naturalism, abstraction and *trompe l'œil*. The represented object is both lifelike in shape and fantastically coloured; the position of the viewer shifts between pragmatic and imaginary points of view; and the task of perception and interpretation alternates between descriptive, representational and geometrical analysis. Yet an iconographical interpretation is not cancelled out, since the kebab plate still inhabits the processed image. No one single reading is satisfactory, and the image allows neither the eye nor the mind to rest. The planes of painting and viewer reflect their fragmented realities back and forth, and the attempt at an interpretation *à la* Panofsky turns instead into a 'tireless process that does not lead to interpretation, but to a process of thinking', provoking thought in its refusal to reveal a clear meaning or truth about its being (Grootenboer 2005: 158). Multiple readings are thus encouraged in a way that refuses a subsequent deterministic analysis. The painting's textural allusion to the test for colour blindness is a final, sarcastic pun on this matter.

The archaeology of the still life: bringing back the anti-image

Lebanese Kebab refers simultaneously to two visual discourses: those of the still-life genre and of cartography. On the one hand, the painting (as all the works from the *Table Maps* series) features inanimate objects as its subject matter, and thus can be easily categorized as modern still life. Its title, too, conforms to the tradition of the still-life genre. At the same time, the bird's-eye view and the flattened, geometrical composition allude to aerial photography and topographical maps, and situate the artwork in relation to the category of cartography.

When identifying *Lebanese Kebab* as a still life, I am bound to interpret the image within the framework of the genre and its history. Naturally the interpretative approaches to still lifes vary, but their connecting thread is the presence of contradiction and ambiguity.[3] When the still life is interpreted as an image of *vanitas*, portraying the humble mortality of man, it does so through the capacity of art to outlive its makers (Grootenboer 2005: 145; Bryson 1990: 116). If the still-life image can be understood as a scientific experiment in optics – a description of the world seen – it nevertheless exhibits a fractured, multiple world that exposes the deceptive aspects of vision (Alpers 1983: 22). When the still-life image is comprehended as a means to glorify artistic virtuosity, it does so by depicting un-glorified, dull and mundane objects (Stoichita 1997: 18, 33; Bryson 1990: 81). Thus, the notion of conflict, or paradox, seems to be constitutive of the genre.

In his study *Looking at the Overlooked* (1990), Norman Bryson engages with the genre and its conflicts from a sociopolitical perspective. For Bryson, a central feature of still-life paintings is the challenge they pose to humanistic values. A still life does not depict great dramas and does not follow the naturalized visual conventions of perspectival truth. Rather, argues Bryson, still-life images attend to the world ignored and, indeed, overlooked, by humanism, with its customary attraction to heroic plots or spectacular events. In other words, still life attends to 'rhopography': the world of small things, of the repetitious, the mundane. The genre offers an alternative to established aesthetic hierarchies in both content and form, intermingling megalographic 'high-art' style with rhopographic 'low-art' subject matter (1990: 81). Its plea to look at the overlooked by means of this 'transfiguration of the mundane' leads the way to social struggles as well (1990: 70). As a case in point, Bryson associates the marginalization of the art-historical still-life genre with gender marginalization, and argues that the segregation of still life into feminine space in seventeenth-century Dutch art contributed, in fact, to women's liberation out of the home and into the artist studio.[4]

Yet, here, too, lies a paradox. Once rendered in paint, the mundane or disregarded object becomes megalographic – distant, defamiliarized and elevated – and so, the everyday remains to some extent overlooked:

> What is shown is art itself, as something which in the presence of an everyday world always grows *impatient*; it is not content to be subservient to that prior world, and seeks autonomy and escape. And though what is painted remains humble and commonplace, in its state of restlessness and self-assertion, there is only one place rhopography can go – *megalography*.
>
> Bryson 1990: 86; emphasis in text

Lebanese Kebab contains similar paradoxes, and in this sense closely follows the genre's tradition. It confuses elements traditionally associated with 'high art', such as oil paint and meticulous performance, with the 'low art' depiction of banal objects of consumption from everyday life. It is rendered on a base of wood, which recalls not only sacred iconic paintings from the past but also ordinary wooden floors, since the wood used is meant for parquet. In addition, and not unlike other contemporary still-life paintings, *Lebanese Kebab* adheres to Norman Bryson's social analysis of the genre through its incorporation of politically tainted subject matter. And yet the image itself remains contemplative, even lyrical, distant from the heat of the cultural struggles it refers to.

So far, it would seem that the painting's staging of paradoxes remains within the genre's conventional boundaries. Yet *Lebanese Kebab* takes a further step by introducing an untraditional cartographical perspective. In so doing, it alludes to an older conflict or paradox already inherent in works that were the *precursors* of the still life genre. Victor I. Stoichita traces the origin of still-life images and shows how their subject matter, from food products spread on a table to flower bouquets in a niche, originally served as a form of subordinated illustration, understood to be in opposition to the central topic of the painting, which depicted biblical scenes and human figures. These 'pre-still lifes' were painted on the reverse sides of diptychs or triptychs, or in the margins of history paintings. They were supplementary, designed to connect the world of the image with that of the beholder.

In other words, precursors of still-life images functioned as *parergon* or frame and constituted the domain of the 'non-image', the 'anti-image'. They confronted the central scene, the space devoted to the 'image', with a reverse side that was devoted to the 'truth' (Stoichita 1997: 20). As a result such depictions 'brought into the work's field of vision a fragment of the spectator's space, that is to say what was (according to the norm) *this side of* the painting' (Stoichita 1997: 8, emphasis in text).

If the 'pre-still life' once employed characteristics of 'distortion' or 'cut' (Stoichita 1997: 23), hovering between the distant, imaginary space of the painting and the contemporary, actual space of the beholder, today still life imagery belongs wholly to the former realm. It is an established genre, where critical reflections are integral to its conventions. It is the mapping view, in Goss's case, that brings the precarious edge of the 'anti-image' back to the picture. Maps and pictures belong today to different visual regimes – art and science – and, as pictures, to different academic schools – art history and geography. They are read with different expectations in mind, as they portray different kinds of knowledge. Simply put, paintings are aesthetic objects that belong to the artistic sphere and, as such, they are expected to solicit a subjective view (hence, 'image'); whereas maps, belonging to the realm of science, are supposed to supply an objective (though iconic) description of the world (hence, 'truth'). Their incorporation in a single image employs the characteristics of a 'distortion' and a 'cut', mixing distinct modes of description and interpretation. And so, in *Lebanese Kebab,* the art-historical genre of still life, with its inherent theoretical reflections on vision, representations and social hierarchies, departs from the distant plane of the painting and locates its paradoxes back in the material, politicized space of the viewer's actuality.

Distortion and desire: the mapping impulse

The still life and the map, as respective instances of artistic and scientific representations, did not always belong to distinct visual regimes of knowledge. In fact, early map-making practices were quite decorative and coincided with landscape paintings to such an extent that there was no distinct terminology to set the two apart (Rees 1980: 60). According to Ronald Rees, until objective scientific schemes ousted pictorialism from cartography, maps and paintings had a reciprocal relationship and occupied a similar place in visual culture. Landscape paintings in particular were based on the same geometric principles as those of map-making, architecture and even artillery science (Clark 1984: 17–19; Cosgrove 1985: 46–52). In addition to their overlapping aesthetics, landscape paintings and maps shared a politics: in Denis Cosgrove's words, '[i]n painting and garden design landscape achieved visually and ideologically what survey, map making and ordnance charting achieved practically: the control and domination over space as an absolute, objective entity, its transformation into the property of individual or state' (1985: 46).

While Rees, Cosgrove and others concentrate on the particular conviviality of early map-making and landscape paintings, Svetlana Alpers makes a more general claim for the relationship between maps and paintings. Alpers argues that seventeenth-century Dutch paintings can be seen as the products of a 'mapping impulse' that translated into what Victor Stoichita calls a 'poetics of description' (Alpers 1983: 119–26, 147; Stoichita 1997: 174). Following Alpers, both paintings and maps shared a common notion of the knowledge that was to be gained through them: artworks were not strictly separated from the products of scientific inquiry, and were understood to be empirical observation on vision (1983: 119). Alpers concludes, 'what maps have in common with other Dutch pictures at the time is that they used to record something that was otherwise invisible. Like lenses, maps were referred to as glasses to bring objects before the eye' (1983: 133).

Seventeenth-century still life paintings, too, brought objects before the eye, describing them with a scientific and seemingly disinterested attention to detail. It was by using a microscopic approach that the painter's eye scrutinized objects in a still-life painting (Alpers 1983: 90–1), while the geographer's cartographic eye scanned the land from afar through maps and landscape paintings.[5] Both modes of description were joined in their desire to map out the world and obtain descriptive knowledge (Alpers 1983: 95–6, 119).

Alpers differentiates between *maps* as a specific type of visual image, and *mapping* as the superstructure of Dutch art and visual culture (1983: 147). Her definition of mapping, as the driving force behind and the connecting thread between all kinds of images, allows maps to be understood as an artistic genre, parallel to still life, portraiture and landscape, all subordinate to the scientific aspiration of the mapping impulse, to the quest to assemble knowledge through pictures (1983: 147, 165). Following Alpers, *Lebanese Kebab* can be read as a combination of these two distinct modes of description that nevertheless attempt to reach a similar goal, that of depicting scientific knowledge in representation. Yet, as argued above, the fortunes of the still-life genre reveal ambiguities and ambivalence to be foregrounded as one of its main features. Thus, the underlying 'mapping impulse' of the still-life genre, with its quest for – and assertion of – objective, scientific knowledge, is estranged and investigated through its very articulation.[6]

The rhetoric of the modern map is that of objective, scientific knowledge. Maps make it possible to see phenomena unavailable to direct seeing. They are immediately both visible and readable, and function as image-indexes (Jacob 2006: 1–3; Buci-Glucksmann 2004). Yet the descriptive knowledge that the map provides is never disinterested, as maps help to codify, legitimate and promote the worldviews fundamental to them.[7] According to Christian Jacob, the map's power of seduction and its status as an iconic image cannot be distilled from its rational construction as an intellectual space ruled by science.[8]

Numerous critical texts on the political undercurrents of maps and of mapping point to two distinct layers of misrepresentation. The first has to do with the paradox that the map can clarify only by means of distortion. Maps on a scale of 1:1 have been useful only as a speculative literary conceit.[9] The second, related layer has to do with the effect that this misperception has on the territory that is mapped. The juxtaposition of the still life and the map underscores both predicaments.

Clearly, *Lebanese Kebab* does not describe a specific geographical area. While its title references a specific geopolitical space, the visual 'map' that it forms through shapes and colours is wholly fantastic and generic. What is left from the area map is only the idea of Alpers' mapping impulse: the endeavour to represent space in a coherent way. The resulting conceptual map reflects on the kind of knowledge that the mapping impulse effaces, and on the kind of desire that maps are meant to serve.

In fact, the painting offers *the map itself* as the object under scientific scrutiny: it includes an actual depiction of a map – a 'table map', which is the Hebrew expression for tablecloth. Visually, the tablecloth/map is indicated in *Lebanese Kebab* by the ornamented decorations on the green background. Conceptually, this relationship is underscored by the series' title. While the painting's title announces a plate of food as its subject matter, the series' title effaces that plate and presents the tablecloth/map as its thematic focus. The map-as-object and the mapping view mirror each other in *Lebanese Kebab* and draw attention away from the contents of the table, from the professed subject matter of the painting. In an attempt to map out the table, the map envelops its object, and thus underscores the predicaments inherent to the mapping impulse, where one is prompted only to identify, but never to identify with, the matter at hand.[10]

What is more, the tension that is created between the distant gaze of an area map and the intimate closeness to objects on a tablecloth/map underscores the impossibility of discerning it all at once. It confounds a territorial gaze with an intimate indoor space. Each category demands a different tuning of one's sight, and whichever knowledgeable framework the viewer chooses to look from, each time, she cannot wholly familiarize herself with the subject of/on the map. This categorical impossibility is inherently related to the painting's political layer. It sketches the impossible desire of the Israeli subject to intimately belong to, and at the same time control, its geopolitical neighbours.

Through its title, *Lebanese Kebab* locates the categorical tensions that it brings up in a specific cultural, geographical and political arena. The designation 'Lebanese' refers to an old culinary tradition, traces of which are found today all over the world. It also refers to a nation state, a historically recent geographical entity. The latter affiliation turns the kebab plate into a symbolic shape of the Lebanese nation state, which was partly occupied by Israel when the painting was made. Certainly, the reference to Lebanon in the title *Lebanese Kebab* is more readily connected with a highly praised culinary culture than with notions of national geography, occupation and war. Many Israeli restaurants pride themselves for having a Lebanese cultural atmosphere, expressed in homeliness and hospitality complemented by a delicious aroma. These nostalgic and inviting notions of Lebanese culture circulate in dissonance against Lebanon's political connotations in Israel, which intimate combat, threat, violence and territorial dispute. The framing of the kebab plate in terms of the mapping impulse straddles a desired cuisine with its feared geographical roots, as it locates the spectator's gaze simultaneously inside the interior of a household and above a demarcated terrain. The depicted subject matter – be it a food plate or a figurative shape of a nation state – fades away in the process, and all that remains are the viewer's gaze and desires.

Thus, the map here is put on the table, so to speak, as part of the 'self-awareness' of the still-life image (Stoichita 1997). It accommodates a reflection on the distortion inherent to the metastructure of mapping the world, which is closely linked to its incessant desire to grasp that world. Instead of 'looking at the overlooked', to use Bryson's terminology, the still-life-as-map reflects on the act of overlooking as such. It emphasizes the transparent quality of the overlooked subject in the terrain of an abstract spatial comprehension of space.

Seeing green: shaping emplacement

Two fields of expectations collide in *Lebanese Kebab*: one emphasizes symbolic paradoxes and ambiguities, while the other underscores a desire for positive, descriptive knowledge. This collision, together with the political specificity of the painting's subject matter, affects the way the image lends itself to interpretation. *Lebanese Kebab* was painted before Israel's retreat from southern Lebanon in 2000, and long before the war between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanese territory in 2006. Its relevance, despite the dramatic political changes in the area, is due to the fact that it does not contemplate a specific state of affairs, but rather, considers the contingency of national borders and the precarity of nationally framed vision. The vision that it frames is, however, not Lebanese. In fact, and quite emphatically, the questions that *Lebanese Kebab* raises with regard to national border delineations are framed from – and for – the viewpoint of an Israeli beholder. That viewpoint is marked most effectively by the monochromatic green colour that covers almost the entire field of vision.

When I take the painting's allusion to Lebanon into account, then the pervasiveness of its green monochrome cannot but allude to the Green Line – the 1949 Armistice lines established between Israel and neighbouring countries (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt) at the end of the 1948 war. The Green Line separates Israel from the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as from the land of South Lebanon that was until recently under Israeli military control. Its validity as a determining factor for border delineation remains a crucial issue in the Israeli–Palestinian negotiations (Brawer 1994: 41). Thus the line constitutes a 'boundary in flux', whose formal and functional definitions are undergoing constant change (Newman 1995: 1). As a result of its oxymoronic nature, public references to the Green Line within Israel are not devoid of emotion or passion, while its actual contours are barely known.[11] A noteworthy incident dubbed 'The Green Line Affair' took place in December 2006. The then-minister of education, Yuli Tamir, decided to include the Green Line in maps to appear in future high-school textbooks so as to enhance class discussion regarding the debate around it. Her recommendation caused a general uproar in the media, received heated responses from politicians on the right, and was ultimately rejected by the Knesset Education Committee. This goes to show that the Green Line is much more than a mark on a map, and that its physical contours are infused with fears and desires.

Benedict Anderson's writing on mapping within colonial and nationalist contexts (1991) may shed light on the emotional intensity that the visualization of the Green Line causes in Israel. In his analysis of the relationship between cartography and scientific knowledge, Anderson proposes a more political interpretation of the map than Alpers' analysis would allow. For Alpers the visibility provided by the map was related to science and optics. For Anderson, mapping was part of an endeavour to create a coherent concept of the colonial (and later, the national) subject.[12] Anderson approaches mapping as a paradigm for military and administrative operations, where cartography is a discourse, rather than a science.[13] He analyses nineteenth-century maps of South-East Asia and sees them as assertions of power which 'shaped the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion – the nature of the human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry' (1991: 163–4). Following Anderson, the geographical shape of the nation state is a key form of national identification, regardless of its spatial context: the clear, unambiguous and unchanging boundaries delineated on a map turn into a logo of the nation (1991: 175). In Israel's case, there are no clear, unchanging boundaries. As a result, following Anderson's account, it would suggest that Israeli identity – and Israel itself, for that matter – is still in the process of being established. From this perspective the emotional intensity invested in the Green Line becomes clear, as the line is shown to be the emblem around which identity struggles are taking place.

It is not surprising, then, that Israel's unstable national borders are frequently referenced within Israeli and Palestinian art.[14] One of the more exemplary cases is to be found in the oeuvre of David Reeb, in particular in his oil paintings from the 1980s, where the contour of the Green Line is stamped over (military) figures, cityscapes, studio interiors and abstract backgrounds. Gannit Ankori describes how in Reeb's work, line and colour turn from artistic tools to political signifiers: 'The line turns out to be a border. The green colour turns out to be a pronounced political indicator. The territory that is defined by the "Green Line" imposes itself on the artist' studio . . . Following Reeb, it is impossible to make or see art without having the territorial dispute forced upon the fields of vision, production and cognition' (1996: 34–5, my translation).[15]

The Green Line and the related territorial and ideational struggles also impose themselves on *Lebanese Kebab*. But here, unlike Reeb's *Green Line* variations (e.g. Figure 4.3), the line stretches and swells: it is completely pervasive, invading the entire field of vision. More than an imprint on identity, it becomes a key device in constituting the subject, a filter through which the nationally identified subject mis/perceives the world.[16]

Finally, the painting's green monochrome is also unavoidably associated with military power, especially given the target-like composition. During the first Gulf War, footage of night combat was regularly seen on TV. Such footage covered the entire screen in fluorescent green. The painting's composition – circle in the middle of a square cross – and colour – pervasive, forceful green monochrome – allude to such images, and thus conjure associations of night-vision goggles used in military action, next to the associations regarding the Green Line. The allusion to the Green Line and to military night-vision through a singular aesthetic element irreducibly combines national identification and a militaristic point of view. The kebab plate, positioned at the centre of a square cross, turns into the target and future victim of this military weapon-like vision. The mapped land of *Lebanese Kebab* is thus furthermore covered with the colour and shape of combat, and the composition, read in such terms, *positions its viewers behind a gun sight*. On top of all other visual oxymorons, the kebab plate

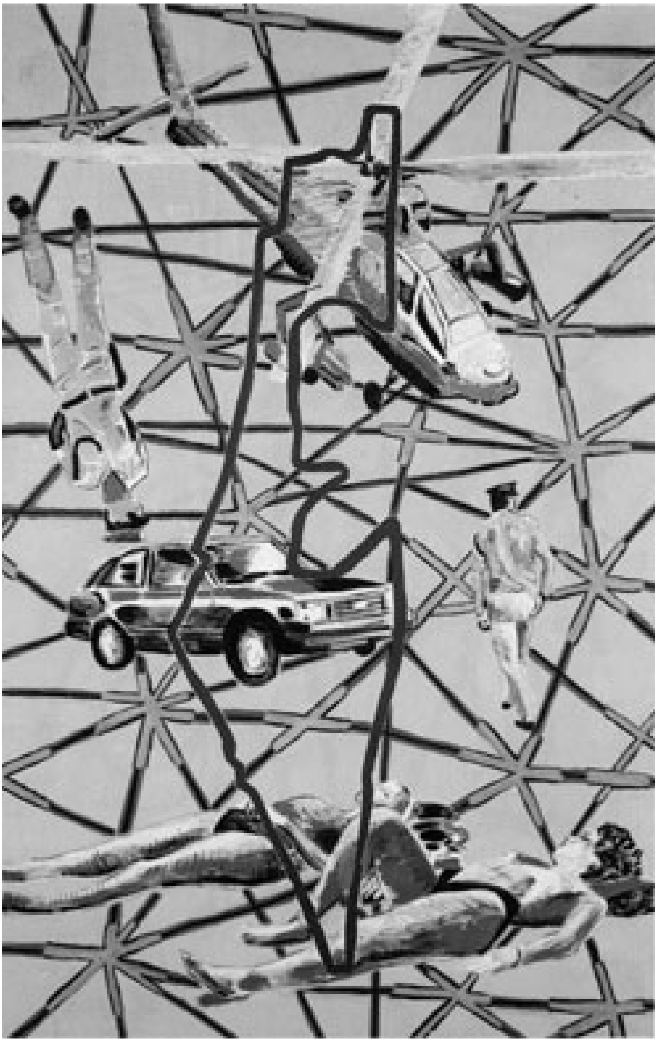

FIGURE 4.3 David Reeb, *Green Line with Police*. Acrylic on canvas, 1985. Courtesy of the artist.

becomes comprehensible only when its viewers accept an *a priori* complicitous position and join the painting's mapping impulse, with its fracturing and effacement of its own subject matter. Thus, in the end, the painting points back to its viewers, and drapes their vision in military green. This is perhaps its most poignant point.

In conclusion, *Lebanese Kebab* mobilizes its insights regarding the inconsistency of vision and cognition to reflect on the ephemeral quality of the shape of Israel, its status as an emblem of national identity, and the effects that such national identification has on one's perception. When political geography is constructed for military use, the subjects that it makes as well as the subjects that make it are forcefully and arbitrarily differentiated from others. To name the kebab *Lebanese*, or, for that matter, to know oneself as *Israeli*: both are acts that engender national subjects and subjectivities, as much as they describe them. *Lebanese Kebab* brings the absurdity of – and the violence involved in – spatial delineation to the fore, and examines the essence of the map as a dictator of borders, boundaries and definitions that are not bound to be.

Yet *Lebanese Kebab* does not compel a critical reading; it does not aspire to reveal the overlooked to a reluctant audience. Instead, fitting into Van Alphen's delineation of the thinking image, the painting allows the willing viewer to reflect on the blindness and distortion inherent to perception. In the course of this reflective process, the painting is 'able to make present that which withdraws from our cognitive power' (2005: 9), as it rethinks the naturalized and politically inflected truths, rooted at the base of perception and understanding.

CHAPTER FIVE

Greetings to the soldier-citizen

Consuming nostalgia

Memory as re-presentation, as making present, is always in danger of collapsing the constitutive tension between past and present, especially when the imagined past is sucked into the timeless present of the all-pervasive virtual space of consumer culture.

ANDREAS HUYSSEN, *PRESENT PASTS: URBAN PALIMPSESTS AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY* (2003: 10)

June 2007 marked the fortieth anniversary of the 1967 war, also known as the Six Day War, in which Israel conquered the Golan Heights, the West Bank, the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip. Forty years later, competing narratives tell different stories about that decisive war. On the one hand, the 'unification and liberation of the city of Jerusalem' was celebrated, as it is every year, by prayers, parades and dances, all part of the Jerusalem Day national holiday. On the other hand, the detrimental effects that the annexation of territory have had on Israel and its citizens were extensively debated in a day-long event led by various human-rights organizations in the port of Tel Aviv.[1]

Several exhibitions at the time were thematically related to the anniversary of the Six Day War. They were overwhelmingly aligned with critical re-evaluations of the conflict and its aftermath, focusing largely on the beginning of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and the corresponding military rule over approximately two million Palestinian refugees. From a mural composed of hundreds of images that were sent in response to an email invitation in *Desert Generation* at the Jerusalem Artists House (curators: Larry Abramson, Sliman Mansour, David Tartakover and David Reeb), to a historical survey of journalistic photographs from the last four decades in *Acts of State 1967–2007* at the Minshar Art Gallery (curator: Ariella Azoulay), these efforts amounted to a multifaceted declaration of the art world against the triumphalist narrative of the Six Day War.[2]

In this chapter, I probe the meanings and effects of one of those exhibitions: *40 Years to Victory* by Honi Hame'agel, an installation of enlarged and reworked New Year's greetings cards from the post-Six Day War era displayed on public-transport buses in the cities of Jerusalem, Haifa and Tel Aviv (Figures 5.1, 5.4). The exhibition consisted of reproductions of historical images that display military themes, including parades, portraits of generals, and war scenarios, alongside wishes for a happy New Year. Popular in the years following the Six Day War, these images disappeared from popular culture around the mid-1970s, and have since become significant markers of nostalgia, often found in collections or alluded to as well-known cultural-historical references.[3]

While my analysis is based on a wider understanding of the state of affairs that surrounded the exhibition, what follows remains situated in relative isolation from contemporaneous events. I attend to the exhibition's critique of a historical ideology, but what interests me most is the way its nostalgic insertion of ostensibly dated militaristic images into the public sphere challenges a contemporary frame of mind, an attitude pertaining to the conventional narrative of the transformation of Israeli identity. This narrative, as outlined in Chapter 1, maintains that the military apparatus is no longer a taboo subject, immune to criticism and scrutiny, as it used to be in Israel's early years.

Some of the case studies discussed thus far (mainly Adi Nes' *Soldiers* and Larry Abramson's *tso˘ob'ä*) exemplify this claim: they articulate their critique through references to well-known

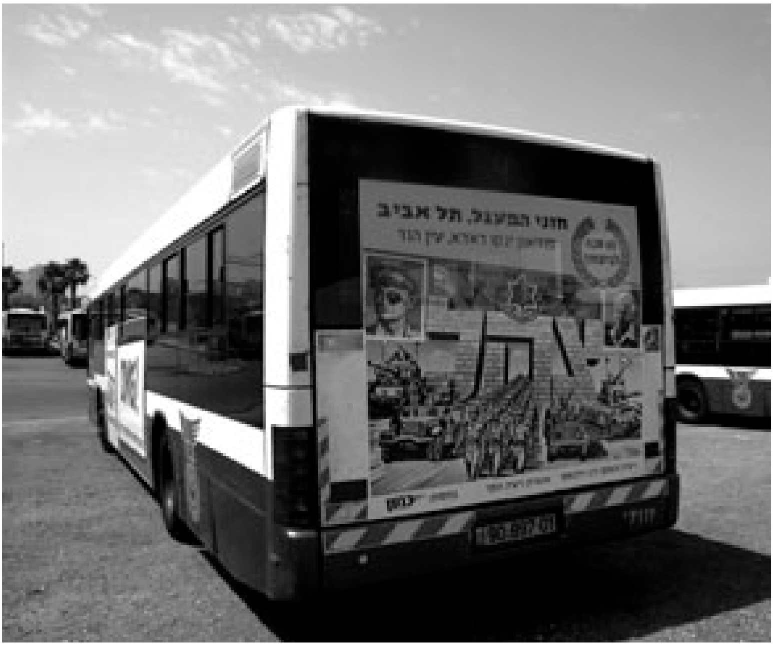

FIGURE 5.1 Honi Hame'agel, *40 Years to Victory*, street view (military march through victory gate and portraits of generals), Tel Aviv, June 2007. Courtesy of the artist.

photographs and paintings from Israel's early history. In light of the tendency to revisit and revise visual narratives of the past, also prevalent in the many exhibitions surrounding the anniversary of the 1967 war, the issue of memory stands out and calls for proper attention in terms of its effects on the present state of affairs. In what follows, I attend to the ways in which nostalgia, a specific type of memory with its own sets of operations and effects, is mobilized in *40 Years to Victory* to reflect on the fortunes of national memory within Israeli visual culture.

In the introduction to *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present* (Bal, Crewe and Spitzer 1999), Bal foregrounds memory as a cultural activity that, when probed, can provide insight into the ways in which the past lives on in the present (Bal 1999b: vii–xvii). Remembering is a variable and vulnerable operation, and memories, both personal and communal, alter over time according to present needs and constraints. The trajectory of the militarized New Year's greetings cards is telling in all its reincarnations, as it exposes transformations in the relationship between militarism, visual culture and national memory. In the first part of this chapter, I address the memory-act of the images in their original context: New Year's greetings cards that circulated just after the Six Day War. Next, I outline the place that the greetings cards hold in today's culture and discuss them in light of theoretical approaches to the role of nostalgia in nationalism. Finally, I present an overview of *40 Years to Victory*, followed by an analysis that centres on the exhibition's contradictory play with memory and its relation to art. I return to Bal's notion of preposterous history, introduced in Chapter 2, now accompanied by Svetlana Boym's non-traditional interpretation of the work of nostalgia (2001), in order to help illuminate the act of memory that *40 Years to Victory* carries out.

Peace, security and sparkles

A small greetings card from the late 1960s presents a simple drawing of a desert battlefield with tanks scattered across the dunes (Figure 5.2). The tanks that point to the right (or the East), ruined and burning, are located in the background of the image. In the foreground, tanks marked with the seal of the IDF and carrying the Israeli flag advance towards the left. The tank at the forefront trespasses across a barbed-wire fence to demonstrate the extension of Israeli borders to the West. Three portraits of commanding officers in the Israeli army who played a key role in the 1967 war conceal part of the right side (or the home front) of the image.[4] An inscription on the thin strip of sky, surrounded by smoke from enemy tanks, seems oddly disconnected from the violence of war. It reads 'Happy New Year' in English, and adds the wish for 'Utter Joyfulness' in Hebrew.

The custom of sending a greetings card just before the Jewish New Year originated in Germany during the Middle Ages, and later spread to Eastern Europe and the United States, where it joined similar commercial greetings cards appearing in the nineteenth century (Sabar 2001: 11–12, 18). As the Zionist movement took hold, the cards began to express a Zionist-secular message of

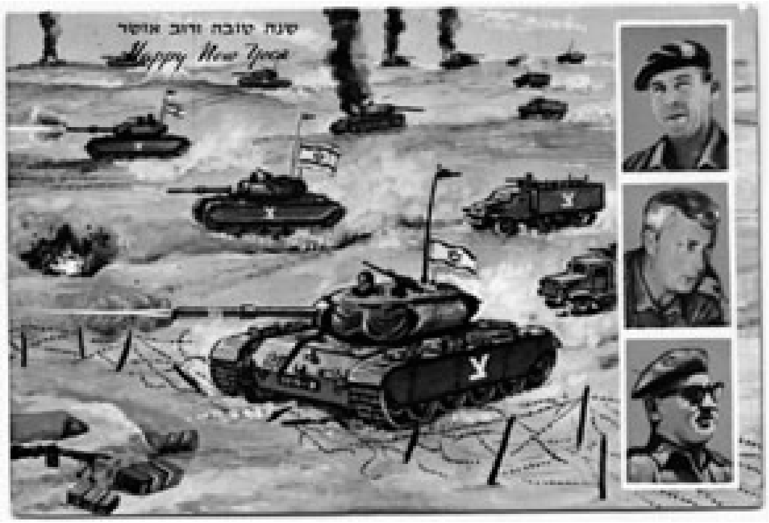

FIGURE 5.2 New Year greetings card (battlefield), 1960s. Collection of Prof. Shalom Sabar, Jerusalem. Courtesy of Shalom Sabar.

pioneering spirit, and the long-established custom of the Diaspora was modified to fit the newly emerging secular tradition of the state of Israel.[5] The 1960s showed a significant growth in the variety and quality of the New Year's cards, pointing to the burgeoning of Israeli society. The most prominent images depicted blooming landscapes, happy family life and, relevant for our case, celebratory representations of the Israeli military. Soon after the 1967 war, the popularity and variety of the greetings cards reached its peak, reinforcing the status of the triumphant military of that era (Sabar 2001: 33; Grossman 2003: 51).

The aforementioned battlefield greetings card circulated for a very short time just after the Six Day War.[6] Thematically related greetings cards, more popular at the time and more typical of what Honi Hame'agel would reproduce in his exhibition four decades later, feature parades, arsenals, or portraits of soldiers and generals, all accompanying tranquil verbal greetings for 'A Happy New Year' in English and 'A Year of Peace and Security' in Hebrew. The martial themes were softened by the small size of the cards, their naïve style and a garlanded or glittering frame. The figures of power in the IDF, or the map of Israel encompassing the annexed territories from the Six Day War, were transformed into miniatures that could fit, together with a marching division and a few jets, into the small space of a locket or a greetings card. Indeed, representations of similar themes circulated on lockets, key chains, table games and other small-size objects of everyday culture. The greetings cards were only a part of a material culture that flaunted military power while at the same time domesticating it as benign and appealing. They helped to spread the popular adoration of the IDF as the people's army as well as the idolization of its generals, the celebration of a glorious military past and the assertion of its promising future.[7]

In a recent study of Israeli and Palestinian picture postcards, Tim J. Semmerling asserts that the postcard played a potent role in the culture and politics of national identity. Postcards, Semmerling writes, express national identity through the stereotypical signs that make up the picture: '[Postcards] are not merely mundane objects but provocative and active presentations of "national self." Their makers and sellers consider them expressive declarations and performances of national status' (2004: 1–2). Semmerling conducts a close analysis of Israeli and Palestinian postcards, showing that each group advances its national narrative through the medium.[8] The numerous military illustrations on Israeli postcards come as no surprise in light of the pervasiveness of military themes within Israeli visual culture.[9] Contemporary versions of such military postcards vary, ranging from portrayals of soldiers as sensible, peaceful bodies to more explicit displays of military vigour (Semmerling 2004: 37–41). The blatant celebration of military strength, however, belongs specifically to the greetings cards of the years just after the Six Day War. Semmerling does not include these images in his study, but his research remains relevant because the cards used to play a role similar to that of picture postcards within Israeli cultural politics in earlier periods (Sabar 2001: 29–35).

Dr Haim Grossman, an Israeli folklore and material culture researcher, observes:

> The military New Year's card, one of the more popular types of greeting cards sent in the 1950s and 1960s, is part of a cultural ensemble that belongs to the unofficial texts that make up the communal image. Sometimes these texts, which take part in the

> historical discourse, disseminate a message more efficiently than the official historiographical ones. The life span of the New Year's card is short . . . but its importance as an expression of a visual model that presents the spirit of society is significant.
>
> 2003: 42, my translation

The cards were replete with signs of Israeli collective identity. They displayed a montage of cherished symbols carrying a colourful and clear message, not unlike an advertisement would for its target audience (Grossman 2003: 46, 53). An advertisement accommodates optimal reading, and its use of signs and symbols is intentional and transparent. In Roland Barthes' words, 'the advertising image is *frank*, or at least emphatic' (1997: 33, emphasis in text). That is why advertisements provided, for Barthes at least, a solid basis for the elaboration on the rhetoric of images. Similarly, Victor Burgin argues that advertising is the most obvious place to find rhetorical figures: 'In the first place, there is no doubt that someone is setting out deliberately to persuade; in the second place, there is little doubt that everything in the advertisement has been most carefully placed for maximum effect' ([1976] 1999: 47). The same can be argued in the case of the New Year's greetings cards, which promote cultural and national identity as their merchandise.

Grossman's analysis of the New Year's greetings cards shows how their rhetoric was aimed at delivering an ideal image of military power. The text on the cards ('Happy New Year') prepares for a positive, domesticated reading of the military image. Together with the kitschy style and surrounding glitter, it pushes aside the more intimidating aspects of the subject matter. The visual image, correspondingly, translates the wish for 'Peace and Security' to imply that only security through military power is able to provide an enduring and authentic peace (Grossman 2003: 48–9). The selective display of ideal symbols, in combination with the absence of enemy figures or potential harm to the self, sets out to present military power as naturally beautiful, desirable and constructive.[10]

But the greetings cards operated well beyond their visual frame. They acquired affective significance through their circulation as postcards, sent from a sender to an addressee in anticipation of the Jewish New Year. Rosh Hashanah, or Jewish New Year, takes place in September, almost half a year removed from the military parades on Independence Day in May. The cards depicting those parades

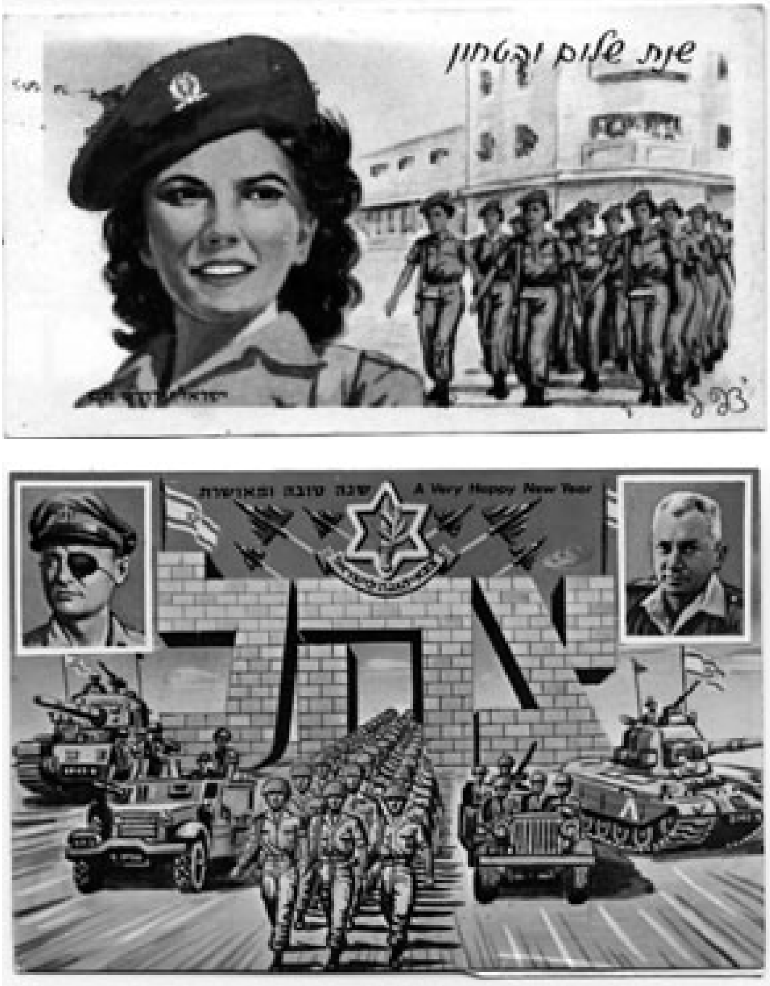
שנת שלום ובטחון
שנה טובה ומאושרת
A Very Happy New Year

FIGURE 5.3 New Year greetings cards (military marches), 1950s–1960s. Collection of Dr Haim Grossman, Tel Aviv, courtesy of Haim Grossman.

helped to consolidate a narrative of victory throughout the year, connecting Jewish and Zionist heritages. If, every May, citizens gathered in public spaces to participate in the parade, every September they took part in a commemoration that brought that event, and their participation in it, back to life.

In his well-known book *Imagined Communities* (1991), Benedict Anderson posits that one of the things that makes it possible for national communities to 'think the nation' is the transformation of temporality that is involved in historicizing national identities and the rise of interest in the past.[11] Other critics have pointed out the role calendars and holidays play in the ordering of societies, 'enabling and constraining their abilities to remember different pasts' (Olick and Robbins 1998: 116).[12] Communities are constituted by their past to a large extent through collective memories. National identities are established and maintained through a variety of mnemonic sites, practices and forms (Eyerman 2004: 161; Olick and Robbins 1998: 124).[13]

Eric Hobsbawm's well-known formulation of 'invented tradition' encapsulates the way in which the nation, as a relatively recent historical phenomenon, is constituted by a set of practices and rituals that 'seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviours by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 1). The New Year's greetings cards provide a rich example of the way an invented tradition connected the military, Jewish culture and the state of Israel in a narrative of heroism and redemption. In the late 1960s, the experience of the Six Day War as well as the vigorous national pride that it engendered was still fresh. The greetings cards fixed that pride in memory through the inclusion of citizens in their intimate and domestic realms within the sweeping, impersonal narration of history. Their trajectory captures the way 'the nation-state at best is based on the social contract that is also an emotional contract, stamped by the charisma of the past' (Boym 2001: 15).

The website 'Nostalgia Online' recounts the days when the greetings cards were a substantial industry (Sela 2004). A few days before New Year, displays full of the cards appeared on every corner, and the number of cards one would receive indicated social status. The relation of consumers to the images on the cards was ostensibly personal, as their specific choices reflected on how they imagined themselves and their social relationships. Recipients, too, were expected to share a similar nurturing attitude towards the emerging national narrative.

Clearly, the greetings cards of this era were a part of consumer culture: they were created in order to be sold and visualized consensus primarily for that purpose (Grossman 2003: 52).

Nevertheless, they should not be read as mere reflections of the Israeli psyche. Rather, in line with Butler's theory of performative reiteration, the cards arguably served as tools for the consolidation of the national body. The repetitive acts of selling, buying, sending and receiving the greetings cards as integral parts of a festive holiday tradition naturalized the status of the military as interwoven with the fabric of civilian life.

In addition, the greetings cards enabled the consolidation of an emerging narrative of victory. The construction of a hegemonic (Jewish, militarized) collective identity took place, in part, through a mnemonic practice that started to narrate a historical moment shortly after its occurrence. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag argues that 'what is called collective memory is not a remembering but a stipulating: that *this* is important, and this is the story about how it happened, with the pictures that lock the story in our minds' (2003: 76–7, emphasis in text). In that regard, the New Year's greetings cards were part of the active creation of collective memory. They embodied the endeavour to secure a folksy national narrative that framed the memory of the Six Day War as a virtuous moment in Israel's history.[14]

From guns to cream cheese

The overtly militarized New Year's greetings card disappeared from popular culture abruptly during the mid-1970s, together with other applied-art objects that featured similar themes. The yearly Independence Day military parades were cancelled around the same time, the last one taking place in May 1973 to commemorate Israel's twenty-fifth anniversary. Grossman associates this change with the after-effects of the Yom Kippur War of 1973, which in Israeli collective memory serves as the antithesis to the triumphant 1967 Six Day War. He interprets the disappearance of soldier-figures and military themes from applied-art objects in the 1970s to be a consequence of that war, when the consensus around the military ideal began to waver (Grossman 2003: 53, 2004b: 100–1).[15]

Yet it is important to note that related themes have not altogether disappeared from popular and everyday culture. The flamboyant annual military parades were cancelled, but military air shows and naval displays still take place occasionally, and military exhibitions occur all over the country on Independence Day, inviting visitors to climb on tanks and play with weaponry as a family activity fitting the occasion.[16] While army heroes are no longer depicted next to tanks and missiles on greetings cards and medallions, military figures continue to be present in popular culture. They now star in numerous television series, including a reality show, and are also frequently found in commercials and advertisements.[17]

A travelling exhibition by the feminist organization New Profile (2009) presents a contemporary collection of militarized images from entertainment magazines, commercials and educational material. A quick glance at the online version of this exhibition reveals that in later occurrences of consumer culture the military imagery has been stripped of overt signs of power and violence.[18] Instead, the unarmed body of the soldier is employed to sell a variety of products, from underwear to mobile phones, cookies and cream cheese. Signs of potential violence are kept away from the images, and the military uniform now serves as the generic marker of the body as Israeli. Often, figures are not fully dressed, thus hinting at the soft side of the all-Israeli *Sabra*, hiding beneath the roughness of khaki-coloured denim. By and large, the military aspect of these commercials remains accepted as a taken-for-grated component of Israeli-ness.[19]

Thus, military imagery still plays a key role in the way mainstream Israeli society constructs its sense of collective self through consumerism. But that sense has evolved over the years, and now fits a more conscious, wary and individualized approach. This phenomenon corresponds to the discussion on representations of soldiers in the art world in Chapter 1, where I argued that the deconstruction of the soldier serves the existing national narrative to the extent that it enables the figure's endurance and prevalence in visual culture. The domesticated appearance of the soldier in the applied arts, advertisements and commercials can be understood, correspondingly, to disguise an enduring militaristic frame of mind rather than to indicate its disintegration, as glittering images of military power have been replaced by intimate allusions to the prototype of the Israeli soldier-citizen.

Meanwhile, the military New Year's greetings cards have been relocated from consumer culture to private memorabilia collections. They are often alluded to on websites such as 'Nostalgia Online' and in socio-historical reviews. No longer agents of memory that take part in the dissemination of a national narrative, the greetings cards are now themselves objects of memory, having become integral to that narrative. They conjure up a forsaken tradition, functioning as signposts for ‘the way we were’. In other words, the cards have become nostalgic markers, indicating a frame of mind that is irretrievable for the present.

The politics of nostalgia

Nostalgia is generally defined as the longing for a home that no longer exists or that has never existed (Boym 2001: xiii). It marks a general and abstract sense of loss for a ‘world of yesterday’ that can only be made present through memory (Hirsch and Spitzer 2002: 258). A medical term in the seventeenth century, nostalgia has evolved to be regarded as an incurable condition of yearning for the unattainable, linked to specifically modern conceptions of time, history and progress.[20] It has frequently been condemned as reactionary or as a sort of ‘guilt-free homecoming’, allowing the individual to abdicate personal responsibility through the idealization of the past (Boym 2001: xiv). Among its many detractors is Raymond Williams, who warns that dwelling in a romanticized past deflates a critique of the present.[21] Alternative studies take effort to demarcate a potentially utopian aspect of nostalgia, based on its resistance to what Walter Benjamin regards as homogenous, empty time. In ‘On the Concept of History’, Benjamin contrasts homogenous, empty time with messianic time: the former adheres to the modern conception of progress while the latter can ‘blast an era out of the homogeneous course of history’ ([1940] 2003: 396). More recently, Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer discuss the potential of ‘resistant nostalgia’ in the form of a ‘critical utopianism’ that helps to imagine a better future (2002: 256).[22]

Whether reactionary or utopian or both, nostalgia is generally regarded as an act of memory happening in the present, marking a current relation to the past that allows the past to engage with the present and the future (Bal, Crewe and Spitzer 1999: xi–xv).[23] In *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym distinguishes between two type of acts of memory that nostalgia brings into being: restorative nostalgia stresses the *nostos*, attempting a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home, while reflective nostalgia stresses the *algia*, dwelling on the irrevocability of the past (2001: 41–9). Restorative nostalgia is closely related to public memories and manifests itself partly through invented traditions, which 'offer a comforting collective script for individual longing' (2001: 42). Reflective nostalgia, on the contrary, is aligned with personal memories and individual narratives, and combines longing with a thinking that does not attempt to recover a lost identity. The modern (reflective) nostalgic can be homesick and sick of home at once (2001: 50).

Following Boym's typology, the New Year's greetings cards appear to have been nostalgic objects from their very nascence, part and parcel of an anxious restorative endeavour to hold on to a specific narrative that was already in the process of disintegration at the time of its creation. In their later incarnation as dated memorabilia, however, the greetings cards fit the notion of reflective nostalgia. They no longer attempt to recreate an unattainable moment but dwell on times gone by.

For Boym, reflective nostalgia has critical potential, as it may mock past national ideals while appealing to shared frameworks of memory.[24] The dated greetings cards indeed point to two separate types of memory: on the one hand, they invoke what is now seen as a controversial national ideal, and on the other, they allude to a supposedly trouble-free cultural tradition. They might even contain a combination of longing (for an outdated consensus) and reflection (on what was wrong with that consensus).

However, self-aware longing is not critical by definition. In the context of the appreciation and collection of memorabilia, the greetings cards fit more closely with the detractors' view of nostalgia as a guilt-free homecoming, allowing the subject to dwell on lost traditions. For, as memorabilia, the greetings cards stress the fact that they indeed indisputably belong to the past. The criticism they may trigger about that past does not necessarily reflect on the present state of affairs. On the contrary, the greetings cards' contemporary cultural reincarnation as collectors' items distinguishes them from their applied-art counterparts and television and billboard advertisements, which all play an active role in today's consumer culture in disseminating toned-down versions of military scenarios. The distinction easily installs a sense of cultural progress in the form of a more cautious approach towards military violence. Hence, it can be said to camouflage the *continuities* between the present and the past, including the idealization of the military subject and the commodified blending of civilian and military life. Nostalgia, like progress, is based on the modern conception of unrepeatable time (Boym 2001: 10). What we long for ('the way we were') marks the way we are no longer. The dwelling upon a lost past may thus serve to keep at bay only those aspects of past national narratives that no longer fit the image of the contemporary nation.

Preposterous postcards

And so, in June 2007, the exhibition *40 Years to Victory* presented poster-size adaptations of the 1960s New Year's greetings cards on 300 public buses in Jerusalem, Haifa and Tel Aviv. Each poster was composed of a collage of elements from the military greetings cards, blown up in size but otherwise untouched: the same smiling woman-soldier is leading a parade around the city streets; the same generals present an overview of military jets or of a map portraying 'greater Israel'; the same texts call for a 'Happy New Year' of 'Peace and Security'. In addition, each poster boldly displays the following pieces of information: the name of the artist (Honi Hame'agel, Tel Aviv); the name of the museum (Yanco-Dada museum, Ein-Hod); a short colophon (mentioning producer Dani Vilensky, curator Raya Zommer-Tal and sponsor Cnaan Media in Motion Ltd.); and the exhibition title, *40 Years to Victory*, designed as a medal of valour (Figures 5.1, 5.4).

Restaging well-known images, the exhibition operates on the basis of citation. It takes an iconographical precedent and refashions it in preposterous ways, which exceed direct comparisons even as they direct analysis to the void between the quoted and the quotation (Bal 1999b: 10–15). Similar to Adi Nes' untitled 'Um Rashrash' and 'Suez Canal' adaptations (discussed in Chapter 2), the posters of *40 Years to Victory* both reinforce and challenge the authority of their iconic predecessors. However, here, the manipulation does not so much reside in the editing of the original images. There are no missing or additional figures and no updated dress codes. Rather, the gap that is created between quoted and quotation in *40 Years to Victory* pertains to how the older images are reframed and presented anew. The focus is redirected towards the change in their mode of

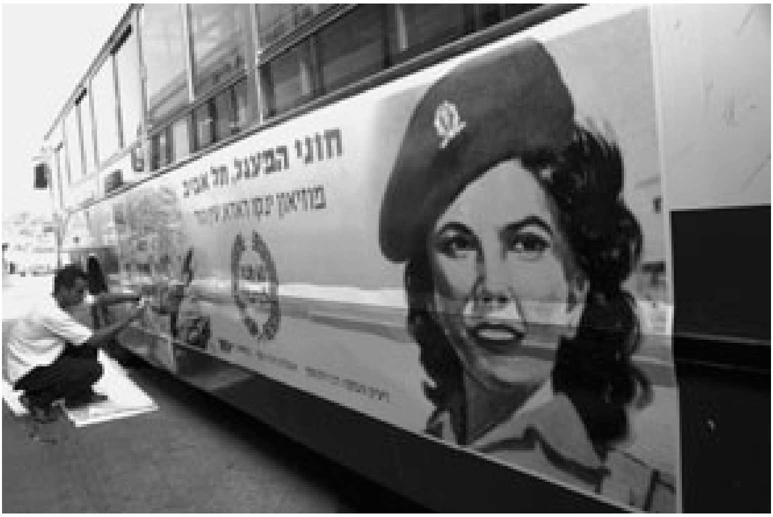

FIGURE 5.4 Honi Hame'agel, *40 Years to Victory*, street view (women-soldier portraits), Tel Aviv, June 2007. Courtesy of the artist.

circulation: from small and personal New Year's greetings to large-scale advertisements on public buses.

Buses in Israel carry a variety of advertisements. Most are commercial, but it is not uncommon to observe messages from political and/or civil-society campaigns.[25] The sponsor of *40 Years to Victory*, Cnaan Media in Motion Ltd., holds the tender for advertising on public buses in Israel. On their website, Cnaan (2009) outlines the benefits of advertising on buses, emphasizing the images' hard-to-ignore size, their mobility that allows them to reach a large number of potential clients, and the fact that the target audience is a 'captive audience', which has little control over their exposure to the material. Israeli city dwellers see a wide variety of messages on buses as an ordinary aspect of urban life, and *40 Years to Victory* fitted nearly seamlessly into this context. The curatorial information displayed in bold letters across the iconic images accommodated their presentation as contemporary advertisements, perhaps for a faraway exhibition. The evocative images and the memories that they engendered were presented in the exhibition as objects for consumption in the present.

The makeover that the New Year's greetings cards underwent calls for a comparison between the two modes of visual propagation. At face value, there is a world of difference between a greetings card and a commercial billboard, or between a postcard and an advertisement. The obvious point of divergence is that the card includes a personal message as it is sent by a specific sender to a specific addressee, while the transport billboards display general messages to an anonymous crowd. Greetings cards take part in a cultural and social tradition while advertisements belong first of all to a world of commerce and capitalism. Moreover, postcards belong to the past, to a dated historical consciousness in that they can be understood to be emblems of modernism in their attempt to capture an authentic impression of place (Brown and Turley 1997: 4, 17). Advertisements, contrarily, fit within postmodernism and the contemporary global market.

However, those differences may not be as pronounced as they seem. First, postcards and greetings cards are just as public as they are personal. They inherently lack privacy, as their private side is potentially public. The gesture of sending and receiving a postcard is personal and affective; yet, the message on the postcards remains generic (Brown and Turley 1997: 3). On the other hand, advertisements also often engender intimate involvement: they invite consumers to project themselves into situations or emotions (O'Donohoe and Tynan 1997: 227). Second, the distinction between ideology and commerce is not crisp. Commercials often involve ideological messages and cultural codes as part of their selling strategy, and the greetings cards have always been part of that enterprise.[26] Postcards and advertisements send out a message for their target audience to identify with. When referring to national ideologies, both do so in order to sell products by means of a common denominator, their target audience being the citizen-consumer who will identify with their message and propagate it through consumption.

In that sense, the greetings cards, reframed as public-transport advertisements, direct attention to the common ground between the two. Hame'agel's *40 Years to Victory* circulated on the streets that previously hosted the May military parades as well as the September card-stands. The work underscores the fact that both modes of presentation distributed the same images through the same city streets and to similar publics. The exhibition presents the greetings-card images as natural components of contemporary consumer culture, and points to the fact that ideology and commerce are intimately intertwined, then as well as now. What seems at first to mark the difference between old and new (then we had tradition, now we have commerce) ends up conflating temporalities, alluding both to the calculated commercial aspect of the old greetings cards and to the affective social bond that the current bus advertisements are based on.

The exhibition preposterously reproduced the inconspicuous existence of military images in the public sphere. Advertisements are as routine today as were objects of popular culture forty years ago, and so the imagery of the New Year's greetings cards, presented in the form of advertisements, were reinstated into visual culture to take part, again, in the daily customs of their viewers. The differences between past and present now become more particular, focusing on the changed interaction between consumers and products. If, in the past, the act of sending and receiving the greetings cards involved the citizen-consumer on an intimate level, that relationship is more passive today, as the images target a 'captive audience' that has little control over their exposure. Whereas in the past, the greetings cards incorporated the recent memory of the war into the September New Year festivities, now the fortieth anniversary of the war in May cited the wish for a happy New Year and thus included the Jewish calendar within its frame. If previously the greetings cards were composed of a personal message on one side and a generic greeting on the other, the bus billboards of 2007 made no distinction between the voice of the artist and that of the curator, sponsor or producer. These differences, however, can emerge only when the rhetoric of the images is analysed on equal grounds in relation to their varying historical contexts: both then and now, images of idealized and glorified militarism are offered to the receptive citizen-consumer.

This is not to say that the bus advertisements are simple reiterations of their earlier counterparts. In fact, the exhibition's logic is based on an understanding of the New Year's greetings cards as a thing of the past. However, while *40 Years to Victory* refers to a frame of mind that no longer exists, it does so by making that past emphatically present. What it displayed (content) no longer identifies a mainstream spirit, so that the images could be understood only in a nostalgic sense, while its mode of presentation (form) was adapted to contemporary culture. The combination of a dated message with an up-to-date format creates a temporal conundrum – perhaps the most interesting aspect of the exhibition. The New Year's greetings cards were configured anew as memory agents that function in the visual culture of today. As a result, they did not operate exclusively within the frame of reflective nostalgia, but also performed an act of restorative nostalgia, attempting a transhistorical return to their original role as sculptors of national memory (Boym 2001: 46). A short comparison helps to make this point more clear.

During the time that *40 Years to Victory* was exhibited on buses, the exhibition *Six Days Plus Forty Years* was on display at the Yad Lebanim section of the Petach-Tikva Museum, not far from Tel Aviv. The exhibition, curated by Rona Sela, presented archival photographs and memorabilia of the 1960s next to contemporary artworks offering re-evaluations of that same time period. It included a small but striking collection of works that amounted to a reflection on the militarized consciousness of the 1960s, including its persistence in the present.[27] The juxtaposition of present-day contemplative artworks and historic propagandistic photographs from victory albums, presented side by side in *Six Days Plus Forty Years*, confused the distinction between these periods. Yet, the New Year's greetings cards were portrayed as belonging fully to the past, presented with other commercial-art objects (medallions, bubble-gum wrappers and children's games) in a glass box at the centre of one of the gallery's rooms.

In many ways, *Six Days Plus Forty Years* offers a more comprehensive and critical analysis of the militarized state of affairs in Israel past and present than does *40 Years to Victory*. Nonetheless, a comparison of *40 Years to Victory* to *Six Days Plus Forty Years* pinpoints the disparate ways in which each locates the greetings cards in time. In *Six Days Plus Forty Years*, the cards are crystallized in the past tense together with other commercial-art products. They are presented as evidence, memory-objects that no longer function as creators and propagators of a sociopolitical message. Under the glass frame, the cards become static signs documenting 'the way we were', their content reflected upon by contemporary artworks and theoretical analysis.

In contrast, the cards in *40 Years to Victory* are designed to propagate restorative nostalgia and to redistribute their message in the present, for the present. They are configured to function in the culture of today. Doing so, *40 Years to Victory* proposes that the memory and identity as portrayed in the greetings cards may not be as dated as they would seem. In addition, the actuality imprinted on the images in their reincarnation as travelling billboards highlights the fact that the greetings cards have never stopped playing an active role, and that their mnemonic significance as memorabilia is no less pertinent to the present construction of the Israeli psyche than their historical role as carriers of holiday salutations.

The limits of critical discourse

Honi Hame'agel's name sounds like a suggestive pseudonym (it is the name of a Jewish scholar and miracle worker from the first century BCE), yet it is the artist's actual name. The name's obscurity fits the artist's performative handling of his identity, which often leaves interviewers baffled or otherwise sceptical (Perry 1996; Fox 1996). A professed follower of the Dada movement, Hame'agel is known for exhibitions, installations, films and performances that stage absurd situations questioning the standards of art. Often his work takes crude, even vulgar forms. On one occasion, Hame'agel locked his audience inside a cage, on another he dripped blood on their heads. Other performances, such as the recreation of a bathroom showroom in a museum, were more subdued, although they also included physical confrontations.[28]

In their restraint, the bus advertisements of *40 Years to Victory* seem distinct from the artist's prior projects. The usual sort of images found in Hame'agel's work, such as naked bodies with hints of sadism or portraits with provocative aesthetics, seem missing from the images on the buses. Yet *40 Years to Victory* does in fact include images that fit Hame'agel's customary style, where pseudo-pornographic figures are superimposed onto the collage of the New Year's greetings cards. Tellingly, these manipulated images were displayed only in the space of the Janco-Dada Museum on the date of the travelling exhibition's opening event, and on the artist's website as archival material. Thus, the exhibition comprises two separate body of works: one with almost exact reproductions of the greetings cards circulating on the buses (Figures 5.1 and 5.4), the other with more provocative images confined to the museum grounds, and to the artist's website.[29] The catalogue of the exhibition

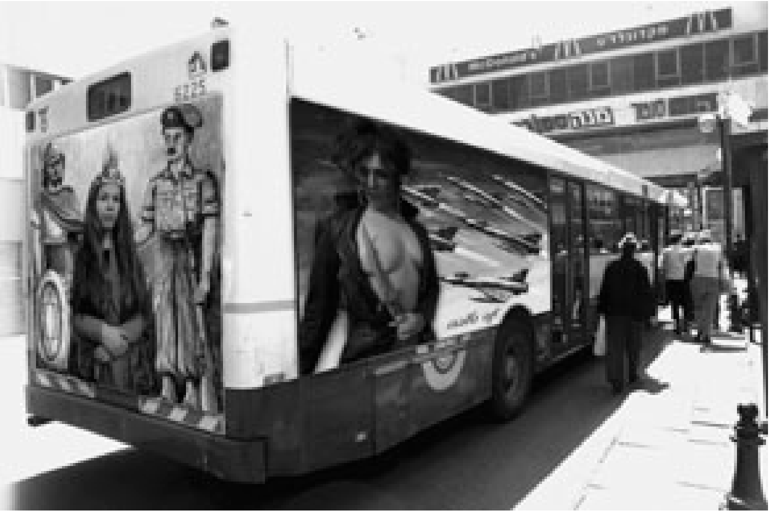

FIGURE 5.5 Honi Hame'agel, 'Tel Aviv under Attack'. Manipulated image, 2007. From *40 Years to Victory* exhibition catalogue. Courtesy of the artist.

offers a synthesis of both treated and untreated images in a way that implies that the more provocative collages also circulated in public space, as it presents edited versions of street views of the exhibition, with the manipulated version of the postcards digitally pasted on the buses (e.g. Figure 5.5).

In response to queries, both the artist and the curator explain that the bus operators did not approve of the provocative versions of the postcards, and that if they were insisted upon the mobile exhibition would not have taken place (Mark-Reich 2007).[30] Indeed, working within the public sphere demands a certain extent of conformity, and the dynamic between the art world and the market, the question of what can be addressed where, runs through the artist's oeuvre. For example, in March 1996 Hame'agel turned a candy store in a Tel Aviv shopping centre into a temporary museum, changing the names of products and directing the behaviour of the salesmen, all with the consent of the Centre's director. His exhibition *Baptism*, also from 1996, was sponsored by a retail chain for bathroom furniture and reconstructed one of the chain's shops, including its workers, at Ein-Hod's Janco-Dada Museum. Hame'agel's *40 Years to Victory* follows the trail of previous exhibitions in its confusion of art and artefact as well as museum and commercial space. In this light, the intent of the large space occupied by the colophon on the circulating bus billboards becomes clear: because the sponsor and the location of the exhibition belong to the advertising world, the work itself turns out to be an advertisement, advertising its own existence.

However, Hame'agel insists that his political critique comes through just as well in the tamer images, the split between the images on the buses and in the museum/website notwithstanding. According to him, the mere act of reinserting dated visions of military glory in public space should lead to critical reflection on those days (Gilerman 2007). The framing texts of the exhibition support his claim by pointing to clues that emphasize the artist's intentions: they explain how the once-adored generals are degraded by being featured next to everyday consumer goods on the buses, and how the promise of peace is emptied out when presented on the vehicles that were the main target of suicide-bombing attacks in the 1990s (Zommer-Tal 2007).[31]

Surely it is possible to read the exhibition in this way. As indicated in the preceding section of this chapter, the mode of circulation of the images as mobile billboards offers additional layers of memories and associations to the otherwise well-known images. And yet, the travelling exhibition, when experienced separately from the catalogue's explication (and from the archived material on the artist's website), remains far more ambiguous than the explanations of its makers would allow. Visually and functionally, the exhibition's advertisements do not present a thematic reversal in relation to the 1960s greetings cards. After all, one could argue that the generals are no less degraded when their portraits are presented on commercial advertisements on public buses than when they are represented on miniature postcards. The reading depends entirely on the eyes of the beholder. Many political campaigns show portraits of their representatives on bus billboard advertisements: the location of the *40 Years to Victory* images does not in and of itself lead to reflective criticism. Hence, the work does not intrinsically mark the present as more aware or critical of military ideology.

Thus, the artist's expectation that the public receive *40 Years to Victory* as an 'impossible' gesture, a failed performative, and come to terms with the exhibition's sardonic undertones, depends not on the exhibition's denoted (or even connoted) message, but on its temporality: on the infelicity of its blatantly dated celebration of military power in the present. Ritualized repetitions of invented traditions have a performative function: they refer to the past in a way that allows the modern nation to assert its history, community and value system as natural and true beyond doubt (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 2–4, 14). But invented traditions, as much as any other performative, depend on repetition for their power (Butler 1993: 12–15). In the past, the military images circulated at regular intervals. For years, however, they have been taken out of the loop, so that they no longer take part in the annual life-cycle of the nation. Thus, the gesture of reinstating the visual culture of those times cannot but fail, in the sense that it cannot pass unnoticed.

In his review of *40 Years to Victory*, Haim Grossman (2007) questions the intelligibility of this move. While he acknowledges that the 'positioning of material that belongs completely to the past, in an urban setting of the present . . . leads to an uncomfortable dialogue', he argues that the exhibition was generally received not as sarcastic commentary but as an enjoyable nostalgic journey in the context of current hard times. Grossman points to the fact that *40 Years to Victory* was not vandalized, while contemporaneous street-art images went through 'street censorship' and were torn apart soon after being mounted. One example is a poster made by artist David Tartakover, entitled *40 Occupation* and composed of images, statements and colours that promote the Palestinian counter-narrative to the 1967 events.

Tartakover is a well-known artist and graphic designer, as well as a dedicated collector of Israeli memorabilia. During the past decades, he has published books and articles that survey the field of visual popular culture in the early days of Israel and has curated exhibitions on the topic.[32] While most of his writings on militarized memorabilia remain descriptive, Tartakover also uses these objects as raw material in his posters and artistic projects for his own political messages, which at times have led to controversy. The New Year's greetings cards have also passed under his hands: at the occasion of Israel's fifty-fourth Independence Day in 2002, Tartakover designed a provocative cover for *Ha'ir*, a Tel Aviv weekly, which located a postcard image of marching soldiers on the ruins of a house, alluding to the destruction of Palestinian houses.

Moreover, he replaced the original portraits of the military heroes of the 1960s with those of Yigal Amir (the assassin of Israeli Prime Minister Itzchak Rabin in 1995), Ariel Sharon and Efi Eytam (two right-wing politicians) (Meiri-Dan 2008). The publication of this cover led to reader complaints, and provoked the cabinet's legal adviser to warn that the artist was coming dangerously close to crossing the line with his 'repulsive' and 'outrageous' work (Livneh 2004). Just two days after the warning was given, Tartakover received the prestigious Israel Prize for his work as educator, designer and documentarian within the field of Israeli design; yet, his combination of a New Year's greetings card with controversial political emblems did not pass without turmoil in the public arena.[33] The destruction of his poster in 2007 strengthens Grossman's cautious view with regard to the limits of critical discourse in contemporary Israeli visual culture.

Grossman (2007) explains the difference in reception between Tartakover's and Hame'agel's interventions by pointing to the fact that *40 Years to Victory* failed to present an alternative narrative, and concludes by dismissing Hame'agel's project as a flirtatious dialogue with the symbols of Israeli society. This critique to some extent already exists *within* the exhibition, in its peripheral visual additions, the opening event, the catalogue and the archival material on the website. For, faced with the artist's confidence in the transparency of his critique, one cannot but wonder why the more provocative versions of the billboards were necessary, if not as a supplement to make sure the bus billboards were not to be misunderstood as sincere gestures of unreflective nostalgia.

Indeed, the exhibition is filled with conceptual contradictions. On various levels, *40 Years to Victory* evokes a specific interpretation and negates it at the same time. For one thing, the institutional embrace of the Janco-Dada Museum and the generous patronage of the Cnaan advertising company temper the critique of consumer culture that Hame'agel stages when he conflates art with advertisement. Furthermore, the absence of the semi-pornographic images from the buses and their confinement to museum space goes against the framing of *40 Years to Victory* as street art that is free of (a museum's) constraints (Zommer-Tal 2007). A similar discomfort arises in relation to the exhibition's assertion of its critical stance towards historical ideals: the smooth glide of the images through the city streets seems all too easy when taking Hame'agel's signature style into account. Thus, while *40 Years to Victory* is regarded by its maker as a firm artistic critique, it remains, to some extent, a tamed aesthetic event, a co-production of various institutions that are all too happy to participate in an avant-garde event as long as it does not create too much provocation.[34]

What makes *40 Years to Victory* pertinent in my view is precisely the fact that it remains ideologically ambivalent. This ambivalence prevents ethical complacency on the part of the art critic or the collector of memorabilia, triggering an 'uncomfortable dialogue', in Grossman's terms, as it restores a frame of mind from the past. I would argue that *40 Years to Victory* is more relevant in its debatable version on the buses than in its clear-cut provocative adaptations in the museum and catalogue. Precisely because the advertisements do not steer clear of the original performance of the greetings cards, because they flirt with the postcards' message and meaning, they allow for a glimpse into the very mechanisms that engender collective memories and identifications. The pseudo-advertisements carry the danger of being interpreted as frank and emphatic (Barthes 1997: 33), but they also carry the potential of exposing that danger, of illustrating that they are, in fact, accepted at face value today. Thus *40 Years to Victory* can just as easily be interpreted as a celebration of militarism, as a felicitous performative: this weakness is, perhaps inadvertently, the exhibition's strongest point.

Hame'agel's provocative version of the greetings cards in the Janco-Dada Museum and the exhibition catalogue, Tartakover's collage on the magazine cover and the glass display at the *Six Days Plus Forty Years* exhibition all maintain a temporal as well as ideological distance in relation to the greetings cards. They frame the memory of the militant 1960s state of mind as naïve in comparison with that of the more self-aware present. Such recontextualizations, critical as they are, do not challenge the way that the cards operate in contemporary culture. In contrast, the revived, but not revised, greetings-card imagery on the buses refuses to make this distinction and conflates present and past. More subtly perhaps, it raises doubts as to whether times have really changed and whether its consumers on Israeli city streets can wash themselves free of the overt militaristic identity and ideology that seem at first to fit only in historical collections.

In *Twilight Memories*, Andreas Huyssen reminds us that the past is not simply there in memory, but must be articulated to become memory. There is an unavoidable fissure between experiencing an event and remembering it through representation (1995: 3). The trajectory of the New Year's greetings cards illustrates that the act of remembering is far from static, and that it has more to say about the culture that performs it than about the event that is brought back to light. Following Boym's distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia, *40 Years to Victory* can be understood to use both, referring in different ways to the different pasts of the greetings cards. On the one hand, the visual citation of the greetings cards follows their current existence as nostalgic markers and invokes reflections, critical or uncritical, on 'the way we were'. On the other hand, the relocation of the greetings cards into contemporary consumer culture makes a restorative move, bridges the gap between past and present, and so claims relevance for the cards' message today. Both moves are nostalgic, overlapping in their frame of reference but not in the narratives they construe (Boym 2001: 49). The one keeps the past at bay but dwells on it, while the other makes it preposterously present.

In Chapter 2, I introduced the term 'preposterous history' to describe a course of events in which the work of the past is interpreted as an after-effect of its later recycling (Bal 1999b: 7). The past and the present are kept in their rightful places but the linear narrative of influence from past to present is refused. Here, the preposterous event is slightly different, as the work of the past is repackaged as a contemporary occurrence. And so, not only the narrative, but also the temporality of its protagonists are put into question. There are no clear boundaries between what is past and what is present, what is remembered now and what was remembered then, and the ways in which those memories shape and reshape the bodies to which they belong.

Hame'agel's *40 Years To Victory* enacts melancholic remembrance and utopian re-enactment at one and the same time, straddling the seduction of national nostalgia with the exposure of the mechanisms of nostalgic imagery. It conflates opposing ideals that belong to different forms of temporal consciousness, and so fails to offer a stable vantage point for moral judgement. The exhibition targets neither those who might agree with the postcards' original message, nor those who side with Hame'agel's provocative adaptations in the Janco-Dada Museum. Rather, the truly subversive message of this work resides in its effect of destabilization, the potential unsettling of those viewers who treat the greetings cards and their messages as belonging to the past. The exhibition creates an impossible mnemonic constellation that goes against the idea of progress, while simultaneously not idolizing dated ideals. If the revolutionary potential of nostalgia lies in what Benjamin terms ‘blast[ing] open the continuum of history’ ([1940] 2003: 396), *40 Years to Victory* blasts open that continuum in order to insinuate to its Israeli audience that they have not changed as much as they would like to think.

CHAPTER SIX

Fence art

Re/framing politics

> *Art is not political because it deals with political matters or represents social and political conflicts. It is first political because it reframes the distribution of space, its visibility and – let us say – its habitability. This reframing itself implies a duplicity of space, a traveling, or a negotiation between a proper space where art shows as such, as the object of a specific experience, and an outward space where art is not only confronted with non-art but appears to be destined as art to its self-suppression.*
>
> JACQUES RANCIÈRE, *KLARTEXT!* (2005B)

Bil'in and beyond: aesthetics of disagreement

The 2006 exhibition *Fence Art*, mounted at the Minshar Art Gallery in Tel Aviv, was composed of sculpture-like objects of different sizes, shapes and materials, which were all marked with signs of usage. An enormous black viper made of cloth was placed in a half-circle on the floor close to the entrance door, greeting visitors as they entered the gallery with its mouth wide open and tongue protruding. L-shaped segments of rusty pipes hung in a row on the wall behind it, arranged in different angles and lit by spotlights. A locked iron cage, a huge metal scale, Styrofoam coffins, and mirrors with inscriptions in red paint were spread around the gallery floor together with other 'enigmatic sculptural objects' (Tzur 2006). The riddle of the installation was partly solved inside a small side niche in the gallery, where a series of photographs was spread out on a wall, documenting the way in which the sculptural objects functioned in their original context. The photographs displayed people sitting in the large iron cage, carrying the black viper and the mirrors, or standing inside blue tin barrel constructions, which now turned out to be home-made knight's armour. Together with the accompanying captions, what unfolded materially as well as visually in the gallery space was the story of the Bil'in demonstrations.

Bil'in, a small Palestinian village of 1,700 residents in the West Bank, has become an international symbol of Palestinian non-violent resistance to the Israeli occupation, particularly to the separation wall being built on Palestinian grounds.[1] In this chapter, I address the role of the sculptures, both in their original context as material parts of a performance of resistance at Bil'in, and in their secondary context as objects displayed in a white-cube gallery in Tel Aviv. In both locations, the objects challenge the boundaries that separate art and social struggle, aesthetics and politics. Thus, they allow me to foreground re/framing as an immanent quality of critical art. As I have argued in Chapter 1, the act of framing produces an event, and awareness of the frame as event calls for the accountability of its performing agents (Bal 2002: 135). Here, I wish to show how the sculptural objects destabilize the framing narrative of the spaces in which they are used and presented, prompting the educated eye to reflect on its accountability in the sustenance of the metanarratives of both art and national politics.

In both locations, one marked by political struggle, the other a part of the art world, the sculptures remain in between the respective realms of art and national politics, belonging to both yet never more to one than the other. My choice to refer to them at certain times as 'sculptures' and at others as 'artefacts' or 'sculptural objects' is based on their irresolute character. Akin to the effects that the different appellations of the separation wall have on its perception, naming the sculptural objects as either sculptures or artefacts would

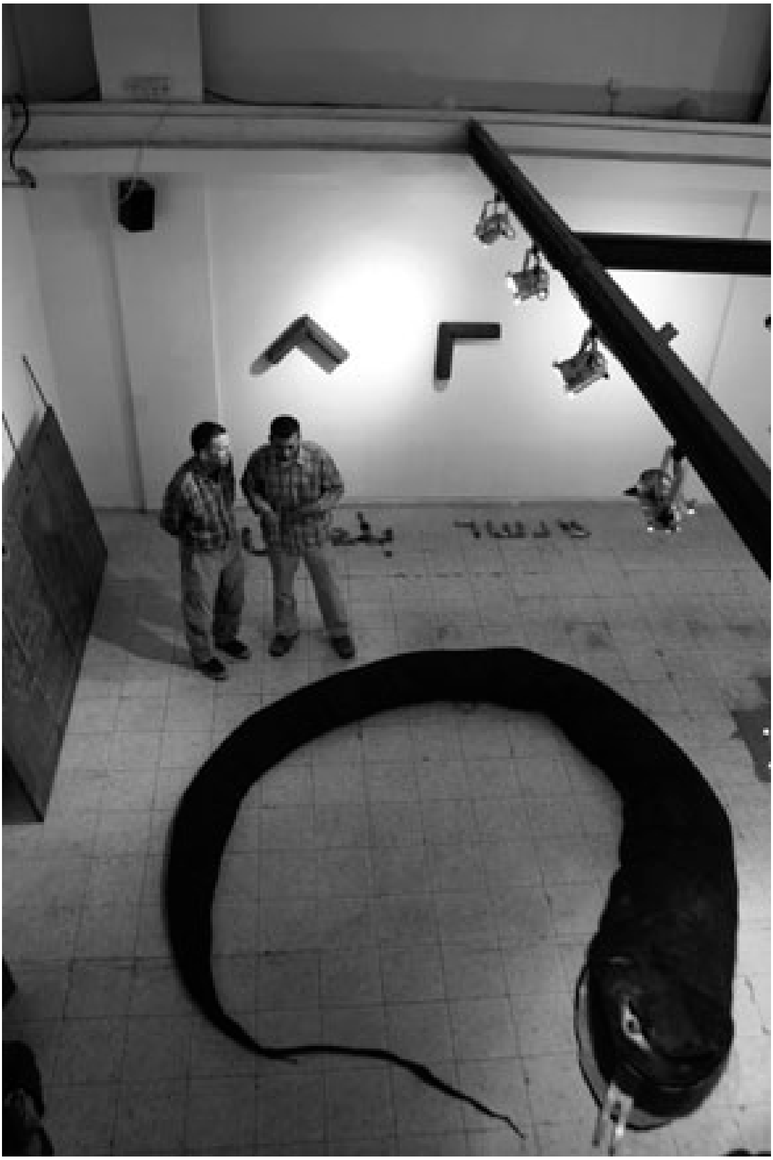

FIGURE 6.1 Gallery overview, *Fence Art* exhibition (snake). Minshar Art Gallery, Tel Aviv, March 2006. Photographer: Yotam Ronen/Activestills. Courtesy of Minshar Art Gallery and Yotam Ronen.

point to an *a priori* perspective, and would have immediate consequences on how they are comprehended. The shifting designations used in this chapter, then, indicate not an attempt at objectivity, but an acknowledgement of the sculptural objects' vagueness that is central to their essence.

In what follows, I chiefly draw on Jacques Rancière's definitions of aesthetics and politics, in which the two are essentially interrelated. Rancière understands politics to be an event of disagreement that is aesthetic in principle, because it leads to the redistribution of what is seeable and sayable in a certain constellation of space and time. He thus opens up the possibility of comparing the effects of the aesthetics of art with those of a political struggle. However, Rancière is careful to distinguish between the notions of aesthetics and politics, as well as of art and the political. What makes art political for him is not its subject matter but a certain reframing of space and of visibility. This reframing implies 'a negotiation between a proper space where art shows as such . . . and an outward space where art is . . . confronted with non-art' (Rancière 2005b: 2).

Following Rancière's proposition, I examine what happens to the sculptural objects when they travel between proper art and non-art spaces, and when they reside in each. To some extent, I pursue questions that arose in Chapter 5 with respect to *40 Years to Victory*'s oscillation between art and non-art spaces.[2] In the first part of this chapter, I analyse the creative uses of the sculptural objects in Bil'in's popular resistance against the separation wall.[3] The second part compares the ways the sculptures operate as aesthetic objects and political arguments in Bil'in, as well as in Tel Aviv. The chapter ends with a tentative definition of 'political art' as being related to but by no means dependent on national politics, a definition that serves as an addendum to the objects discussed in previous chapters as well.

The inclusion of creative-resistance performances in this study, which has focused for the most part on 'proper' art objects and related phenomena, allows me to investigate art itself as a frame, to examine its surplus value for critical discourse. Furthermore, I extend the internal discussion of civilian militarism to include the alter ego of the Israeli militarized self: the Palestinian civilian resistance movement. Civilian militarism resides here on the other side of the frame, targeted by the sculptural objects as the worldview that constructs the gaze of their beholders – the Israeli military and border police at the site of the demonstrations – but also the civilian artistic milieu of the Tel Aviv gallery. The policing structure of the military mind is challenged through the staging of events that refuse its categorizations.

While this chapter focuses solely on the demonstrations of 2005 and 2006, and on the *Fence Art* exhibition that was on display at the time, it is important to acknowledge that the demonstrations are not the same today as they were a decade ago. For one thing, the separation wall has now been built. Current demonstrations can no longer try to disturb its construction, as those discussed in the present chapter used to do. In addition, Bil'in's status as a symbol of Palestinian non-violent resistance has since been fortified. As a result, the village has become a locus of international support, drawing well-known Palestinian and international figures, among them Salam Fiad and Naomi Klein, to the weekly demonstrations and the yearly conference. At the same time, military attempts to suppress the demonstrations have escalated as well. These include night raids, child arrests, imprisonment without charges and the withdrawals of work permits, in addition to more aggressive immediate responses to the demonstrations, which have resulted in many injuries and several deaths. Keeping these changes in mind, this chapter attends to the earlier stages of Bil'in's struggle, before the wall was an established fact, and during a time when the village's stature as a symbol of Palestinian non-violent resistance was still in the making.[4]

Redistributing visibility

Bil'in is a small Palestinian village located on the West Bank. The village is under the civilian control of the Palestinian Authority, but remains under the military control of Israeli security forces, both army and border police. As with many other Palestinian villages, Bil'in has suffered from the loss of land to Israeli settlements in the last four decades, and is now facing impoverishment because most of its agricultural lands are located west of the separation wall erected on their lands. The wall, a combination of barbed wire and concrete, includes locked gates. Officially, villagers who can prove land ownership are allowed to cross it and reach their lands. In practice, however, this proves to be almost impossible.[5]

Since 2005, the residents of Bil'in have fought against the imposition of the wall. Under the leadership of the Bil'in Popular Committee Against the Wall, the villagers filed numerous appeals with the Israeli Supreme Court.[6] The Popular Committee has also filed a lawsuit in Canada against the companies that are building settlement housing on their lands. In addition, the village hosts international conferences on the subject of popular resistance, as well as weekly demonstrations that include residents, Israelis and international supporters. The Friday demonstrations, consisting of a march from the village houses to the trajectory of the wall, are decidedly non-violent. This is not to say that the demonstrations are calm occurrences: demonstrations in the occupied territories are entirely forbidden under Israeli military law, which means that any protest or procession is deemed illegal (Marom 2015). Army forces break up the demonstrations using tear gas, grenades, rubber bullets and noise ammunition, and discourage them by imposing collective punishments such as curfews, night arrests, child arrests and the denial of permits to work in Israel. In spite of this, and although recent years have shown a great escalation in the army's use of excessive force to disperse the demonstrations, the Bil'in demonstrations remain focused on creative non-violent resistance as a major component of their approach.

Most demonstrations have a specific theme; the various themes can be divided into three groups. One type is thematically shaped with reference to its participants, such as demonstration of children, women, people with disabilities and so forth. A second type is dedicated to relevant historical dates or contemporary events, both political and cultural, such as the FIFA World Cup, May Day, the Gaza siege, James Cameron's box-office success *Avatar* or the Memorial Day for Yasser Arafat. A third variety of demonstration is aimed at emphasizing the consequences for the village of Bil'in resulting from the construction of the separation wall. In these demonstrations, protestors chained themselves to olive trees, or locked themselves inside an iron cage, in an attempt to impede the construction of the wall. Other demonstrations of this sort were more conceptual, such as the one in which demonstrators wore black viper dolls around their neck to symbolize the psychological, cultural and economic suffocation that the wall causes. The sculptural objects that were on display in the 2006 *Fence Art* exhibition were all used as part of this third type of weekly demonstration.

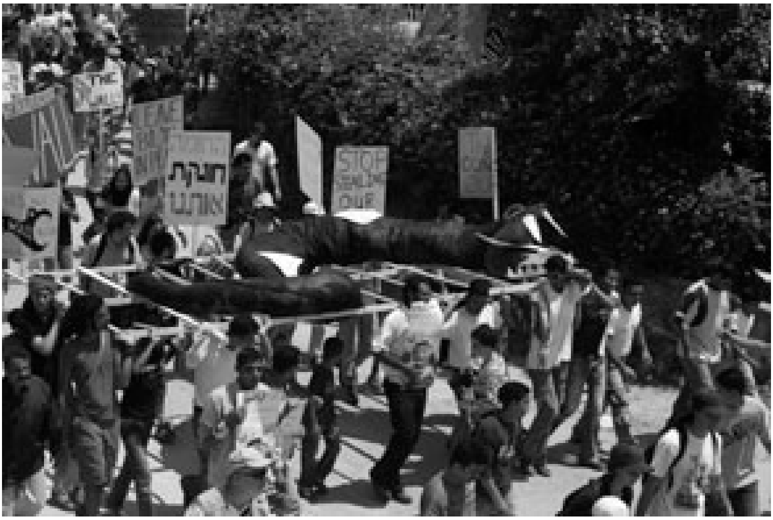

FIGURE 6.2 Bil'in demonstration (large snake constellation), August 2005. Photographer: Oren Ziv/Activestills. Courtesy of Oren Ziv.

In the early years of the demonstrations, Bil'in received an unusually extensive amount of media attention, especially compared to the many other villages that were afflicted by similar events, such as Biddu, Beit Surik, Nil'in, Beit Ulla, Nebi-Saleh and Kufar Kadum.[7] Brief reports about the weekly demonstrations in Bil'in appeared in the mainstream Israeli media, detailing how many demonstrators and soldiers were injured or detained, emphasizing the violent aspect of the demonstrations. Other reports in mainstream newspapers and TV channels were concerned with related legal trials, which pertain either to the demonstrations (cases in which claims of soldiers against the supposedly violent protestors were found to be untrue) or, more importantly, to the villagers' court cases against the trajectory of the wall through their lands. At alternative-news websites, the village received special attention of a different kind. Its mode of creative protest (together with the army's aggressive response) was described by eyewitnesses or shown in short videos.

Within the cultural arena, visual and textual material featuring excerpts from the demonstrations abound.[8] Films documenting the struggle of Bil'in have been screened in international festivals, and members of the village are frequently invited to conferences across Europe, Canada and the United States.[9] The village's success in drawing well-known Palestinian and international figures to the weekly demonstrations and the yearly conferences has helped to turn Bil'in into a symbol of successful non-violent political struggle, attracting attention both in Israel and abroad. That said, the average Israeli viewer who does not seek information beyond what is offered by the mainstream media will not necessarily be aware of the creative and non-violent aspect of the demonstrations. The spokesman of the IDF considers this lack of knowledge a tactical success (Levi and Kremnitzer 2005).[10]

Already in its early stages, those involved with organizing the demonstrations associated their success to the creative aspect of the weekly events. Abdullah Abu Rahmeh, coordinator of the Popular Committee of Bil'in, highlights two aspects: innovation and non-violence (Abu Rahmeh 2007; Daraghmeh 2005). Mohammed Khatib, another member of the Popular Committee and the mind behind many of the sculpture-objects, emphasizes their function within the demonstrations. He, too, contends that the objects undermine the possibility of violence and relieve the demonstrations of the repetitiveness that may minimize public interest. In addition to delaying the construction of the wall and getting a political message across, the artefacts attract people. He states:

> Even the village people started asking what we are planning for the next demonstrations. Israelis are also coming for this reason. . . . Every time there is something new that attracts the media. It is much more interesting to publish a photograph of a [Styrofoam] coffin than another group of people walking and holding signs. We also managed to show the world that we are not violent. The only violence that comes through the photographs is that of the soldiers.
>
> quoted in Gilerman 2006, my translation

As Khatib notes, the creative aspect of the demonstrations encourages residents and attracts supporters as well as media coverage. Hence, the sculptural objects seem to have an effect in three directions: inwards, to keep demonstrators motivated and to direct the energy of youth away from violence; forwards, towards the soldiers and construction workers who face the demonstrators, so as to change their conception of the demonstrations and to keep their use of force minimal and the disruption of the wall construction maximal; and outwards, to the media, to sustain their interest by adding the aspect of entertainment to an overexposed political struggle.

These claims are supported by studies of similar direct actions and protests around the world. They witness the increasing popularity of grassroots political movements that employ artistic tools for their goals, as well as of contemporary art groups that are involved in political struggles.[11] Well-known examples of creative resistance include the British movements Reclaim the Streets and The Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA), the Italian collective Tute Bianche, and the Argentinian groups Etcétera and H.I.J.O.S.[12] Those and similar endeavours were the main topic of *KLARTEXT!*, a series of discussions with international artists, activists, curators and theoreticians that took place in Berlin in January 2005, just around the time of the first demonstration in Bil'in.[13]

During his intervention in *KLARTEXT!*, cultural critic Brian Holmes offered a short review of several of the aforementioned cases, concluding that 'the imprint of artistic experimentation on the current political generation is undeniable' (2005: 3). Holmes, who in a different context analysed the Argentinean cultural-activist scene in detail, suggested that there is a correlation between post-vanguard art and contemporary social movements in that both treat process as a value in and of itself. Holmes defines process as an expressive and interactive matrix, 'constituted by the meeting of catalytic artefacts, more-or-less conscious group interactions, and the dimension of singular chance inherent to the event' (2005: 3). The 'processual passion' found in such artistic-activist events can have political effects, according to Holmes, because it has the potential to forge a political generation (2005: 4).

Although not mentioned specifically in *KLARTEXT!*, the demonstrations in Bil'in resonate with contemporary creative-resistance movements, and can be understood, at least in part, in light of other social protests, such as the Siluetazo project, where life-size silhouettes of human bodies took over the streets of Argentina in the 1980s, or the street-theatre performance of Arde Arte and H.I.J.O.S. in 2002, when participants held mirrors covered with slogans in front of the mobilized police force (Graeber 2002; Holmes 2007). Yet, while those protests may be comparable on a visual, tactical and even conceptual level, and while they all may lead to 'the forg[ing] of a political generation' in one way or another, each case remains unique in its specificity. Each addresses different social struggles in different social contexts, and has a specific underlying social goal, which determines the performances and their effects. In Bil'in, as elsewhere, the sculptural objects create a buzz that sustains the continued interest of the media in the village, and they visualize social concerns in ways that encourage participants to join and keep up the protestors' motivation. However, the use of the objects in Bil'in differs from the other events in the sense that this use applies to the demonstrators themselves rather than merely emphasizing their message. Indeed, the sculptures have helped the demonstrators to redefine the meaning of political resistance in the Palestinian context. This, I believe, was the deeper cause for the media success of the demonstrations.

The widespread perception of Palestinians as an occupied people is that of fighters and/or victims. Palestinians appear in the (Israeli and Western) media regularly, either as a mass of young men who fill the streets in demonstrations and funerals, shooting in the air or shouting slogans, or as individual women, children or old men, helplessly telling stories of suffering and loss. Palestinians are thus typically portrayed as either dangerously powerful or utterly powerless. The first type of image brings home a potential for violence; the second bears witness to a victimhood that may elicit a sense of either guilt or indifference.[14] Yet, whether they inspire outrage, pity or indignation, such media reports emphasize the distance between the fates of those who are participants in and those who are observers of the occupation.

The use of sculptural objects makes it difficult to perceive the villages of Bil'in in terms of these roles. The demonstrators-turned-performers become a part of the contemporary international (activist) art world, as well as a part of the larger Palestinian community. By appropriating the art world, their political claims acquire a different tone. This conceptual shift in the politics of resistance can best be explained thorough Jacques Rancière's theorization of aesthetics and politics.

For Rancière, politics is first of all a battle about perceptible or sensible material. Politics aims for the rearrangement of the existing 'distribution of the sensible', the laws that prescribe what can be heard and seen in a political and social constellation (2001: thesis 7, 2004: 12–13). A politics of recognition is central to Rancière's theory, but in a more radical sense than that of identity politics. It 'does not simply presuppose the rupture of the "normal" distribution of positions between the one who exercises power and the one subject to it. It also requires a rupture in the idea that there are dispositions "proper" to such classifications' (2001: thesis 3). In other words, the essence of political struggle does not consist of gathering people into communities and fighting for the rights of these communities. Rather, it consists of tracing subjectivities that challenge existing social delineations.

Rancière contrasts *politics* [*la politique*] with *police* [*la police*]. He defines the police as 'not primarily a strong-arm repressive force, but a form of intervention which prescribes what can be seen and what cannot be seen, what can be said and what cannot be said' (1998: 28). The manner in which the police interfere with public space does not so much lie in interpellation ('Hey! You there!') but rather in the regulation of what will and will not be seen ('Move along! There is nothing to see here!') (Rancière 2001: thesis 8).[15] Political action is defined in opposition to this prescription of the police, and consists of 'transforming this space of "moving-along" into a space for the appearance of a subject' (2001: thesis 8).

Politics and police are thus in constant struggle. Politics, by definition, must break with the social order and create subjects and scenes of dialogue that did not exist before. But when does this take place, and how can the policed 'distribution of the sensible' be remobilized, redistributed? Spectacle could be one tool to compel acknowledgement: there is definitely something to see when there are costumes and sculptures around. However, for Rancière, spectacle is not enough. He discusses a deeper level of invisibility, in which people and events are seen but are not acknowledged as meaningful subjects. In many of his writings, primarily in *Nights of Labour* (1989), Rancière points to the double bind of social struggle. Whenever minority groups achieve recognition, they are simultaneously subjected to a reaffirmation of the existing power structure, resulting in a retrenchment of their position within its terms (Deranty 2003: 152). In answer to this predicament, Rancière uses the rebellion of the workers in nineteenth-century France as his prime example of a successful redistribution of the sensible.

The nineteenth-century French workers subverted a paralysing 'order of things' by claiming the right to be *something other than* workers: to be recognized as poets. While their social status demanded that they work during the day and sleep at night, these workers distributed their time differently to transgress the formation of their expected labour. This, according to Rancière, was the means through which workers claimed a voice beyond the constraints of their destiny and gained a new lived world for themselves (Deranty 2003: 152; Dasgupta 2008: 71).

The worker-emancipation movement disrupted the organizational principle of society and made workers visible as social partners through their appropriation of the tools of the bourgeoisie (Deranty 2003: 151). The unsettling effect that the Bil'in popular resistance movement has caused can be understood in the same light. 'The particular feature of political dissensus', Rancière writes, 'is . . . the ones making visible the fact that they belong to a shared world the other does not see' (2001: thesis 8). By writing poetry, the French workers made visible the fact that they belonged to a world they shared with others, the upper classes, with whom the art of poetry was more readily matched. In part, the Bil'in inhabitants mould sculptural objects to reach a similar goal. Their art made visible their creative equality with that of the occupying forces, comprising Israeli citizens and soldiers, and opened up a space of possibilities for speech and dialogue that did not yet exist.

Rancière names this space *le politique*: the space in which two principles of visibility, *la police* (policing the distribution of the sensible) and *la politique* (contesting the existing distribution), confront each other. This confrontation can lead to the recognition of individuals as speaking subjects (in a different world, previously unseen) rather than as mere rebels (against the world as seen and known), shifting the positions of power of the parties involved. Rancière summarizes this aspect in 'Ten Theses on Politics':

> If there is someone you do not wish to recognize as a political being, you begin by not seeing them as the bearers of politicalness, by not understanding what they say, by not hearing that it is an utterance coming out of their mouths. . . . And the politics of these categories has always consisted in re-qualifying these places . . . of getting themselves to be seen or heard as speaking subjects. . . . It has consisted in making what was unseen visible; in getting what was only audible as noise to be heard as speech; in demonstrating to be a feeling of shared 'good' or 'evil' what had appeared merely as an expression of pleasure or pain.
>
> 2001: thesis 8

When the case of Bil'in is examined from Rancière's perspective, the demonstrators' use of artistic form can be understood as a tool through which the clear 'division of labour' between the oppressors and the oppressed destabilizes, and the existing 'distribution of the sensible' is reconceived.[16]

The demonstrators thus manifest themselves as occupied people and free artists at the same time. Of course, the notion of the artist as a free man is problematic to say the least, as it does not take into account the circulation of art objects in the art world and the way that artists may be heavily dependent on its politics and economics.[17] The Bil'in demonstrators do not explore this fallacy; instead, they exploit the myth of artistic freedom for their own purposes. The demonstrators employ the symbolic capital of the art field where the lifestyle of the 'artist' presupposes 'a particular type of asset structure in which time functions as an independent factor, partly interchangeable with economic capital' (Bourdieu 1984: 295). They do so in order to assert their right to belong to a world that includes leisure time for contemplation, and to voice their claims not only as people under occupation but also as men and women of the world. Their appeal to the basic right to keep their land – the main purpose of the demonstration – is empowered by an aesthetic manoeuvre that asserts their right to appeal as equals in the first place.[18]

In this respect, too, the sculpture-objects effectively work in three directions, addressing the demonstrators, the soldiers and the media alike. In all directions, they redistribute what is visible and sayable in the confrontations between Palestinian inhabitants and Israeli security forces. They bring into view values that are not connected with the policed version of Palestinians under occupation: leisure, creativity, humour, artistic vision, modernity, universality and freedom.

The Bil'in sculptures functioned as political arguments in the sense that they demonstrated a possible world where the argument could count as argument, 'addressed by a subject qualified to argue, upon an identified object, to an addressee who . . . [would normally have] no reason to either see [the object] or hear [the argument]' (Rancière 2001: thesis 8). They confounded a denial of recognition, and each week created a possible world where the colonizing parties were required to see the colonized in a light that they have had no reason to see. By way of reconfiguring the sensibilities of this overexposed struggle, the sculptural objects asserted the equality of the subjects who made them in relation to the subjects who view them from the other side of the wall.

Changing contexts, shifting frames

During the demonstrations, the sculptures and the demonstrators merged. At times, this interaction was as simple as people carrying the constructions in their hands or around their necks. In one demonstration several protestors carried above their heads a huge black viper made of cloth with a pigeon in the colours of the Palestinian flag in its mouth (Figure 6.2). Other protestors carried smaller versions of the viper around their necks. Other demonstrations were more theatrical, such as the one headed by a row of Styrofoam tombstones. These cases are exemplary of many other demonstrations in which the sculptural objects operated as three-dimensional banners. The huge viper, for example, served as a visual supplement to the surrounding banners and graffiti that accused the serpentine wall of suffocating Palestinian livelihoods, connecting the politically motivated roundabout route of the wall with its consequences. The tombstones, too, related directly, if symbolically, to the life-threatening aspect of the wall. However, both viper and tombstones (as well as many other sculptures) are more demanding than literal messages. They operated on a symbolic level that necessitated translation, and they required more engaged handling and a closer connection from their makers. This last point, the physical correlation and even dependency between the people and the sculptural objects, distinguishes Bil'in's demonstrations from customary protest actions.

There are also cases in which flesh, iron and earth interacted more intimately, as when the sculptural objects fastened protestors to their places so that they could not easily be moved. During one demonstration, for example, protestors stood inside blue barrels that were tied to each other, creating a roadblock made of Don Quixote-like knights in tin armour. During another, a dozen demonstrators locked themselves in an iron cage that was attached to the ground, blocking the road that led the bulldozers to the trajectory of the wall. Other examples include demonstrators transfixed to the ground by the metal foundations of a model of the separation wall, tied to olive trees with metal chains, or fastened to the road with the help of 'lock-ons' (Figure 6.3).[19]

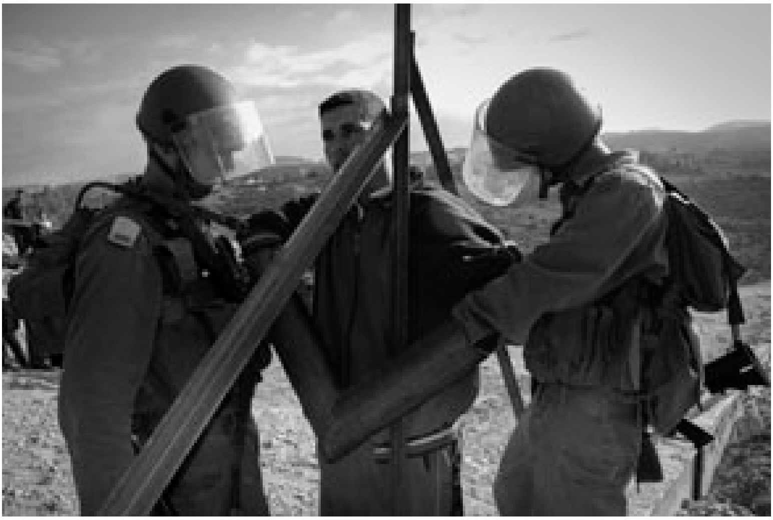

FIGURE 6.3 Bil’in demonstration (lock-ons), August 2005. Photographer: Oren Ziv/Activestills. Courtesy of Oren Ziv.

Notably, in addition to reframing protestors as performers, the employment of such sculptural objects in the demonstrations demanded the active involvement of everybody – including the soldiers whose job it was to safeguard the construction of the wall. While the soldiers were busy taking a fence apart, breaking a metal cage open, arguing with absurdly dressed demonstrators, or cutting chains loose from the trees, they found themselves involved in bizarre happenings, participating in actions the rules of which were determined by the party that they were supposed to contain.[20] Thus, while the soldiers were, from a certain perspective, fulfilling the role of the police in restoring order, they were also inadvertently aiding the protestors’ redefinition of the terms of discourse by participating in their play (Figure 6.4). The sculptural objects worked to enhance the redistribution of the sensible, not only by reframing the role of protestors as performers, but also by reframing the position of the soldiers, disrupting their ability to fulfil their usual role. The sculptures configured the disputed borderland as a theatrical event, in which the opposing parties found their roles disturbed and even exchanged. This framing of the dispute in theatrical terms destabilized the roles of demonstrators and soldiers alike.[21]

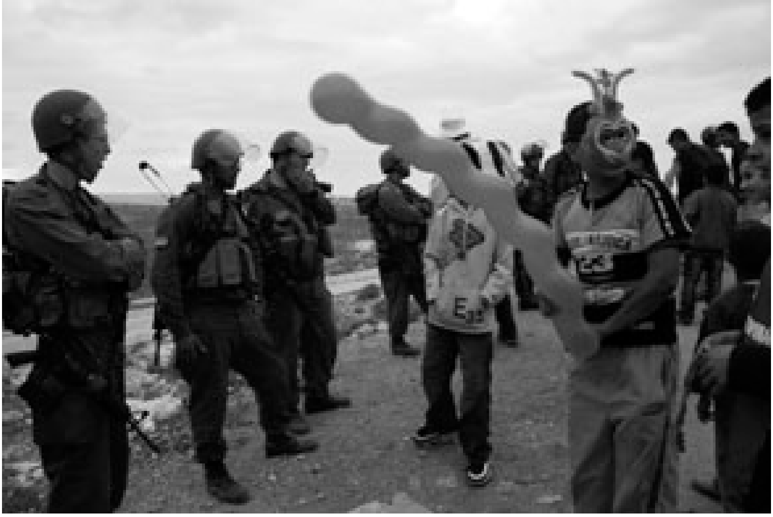

FIGURE 6.4 Bil’in demonstration (costumes), November 2004. Photographer: Oren Ziv/Activestills. Courtesy of Oren Ziv.

Clearly, all this was not repeated in the Minshar Art Gallery in Tel Aviv. Once there, the sculptural objects were detached from the people who built and carried them, from the event of the demonstration, and from the ground and the bodies that were an integral part of their role in Bil’in. The disputed route of the separation wall – the sculpture-objects’ *raison d’être* – persisted only as an appellation (*Fence Art*), its impenetrability somewhat diminished by the objects’ ability to cross through it and arrive at the hub of Israel’s creative scene. Gallery visitors that entered, willingly, to see the *Fence Art* exhibit took the place of the baffled or reluctant border police, and experienced the snake, the cage, the mirrors and the rest of the objects in the sterilized, white, cubic space of the gallery. The role of the sculptures in their original context was documented in a side space in the gallery, but the objects themselves were presented stripped of their primary symbolic, practical and, most importantly, political functions. Their textured surfaces, ragged from the confrontations on the field, received the audience’s attention.

The relocation of a Palestinian resistance performance into an Israeli art gallery includes many controversial aspects, starting with the way such a move affected the sculptures' basic function and significance. For one thing, in Bil'in the sculptural objects were connected through time, as each object was the focus of a separate demonstration. Over the years, every week a different sculpture was created. In the gallery, the objects from various demonstrations were presented together, which led to a visual conversation in space that did not exist previously. In Bil'in, motion was an integral part of the objects' performance, be it towards a target (as with the snake and the scaffold that moved with the demonstration in the direction of the wall) or as a counter-force against a flow (as with the model-fence or the tin barrels that blocked the soldiers' advance). In the gallery, the sculptures stood still; movement was restricted to the audience. The lock-ons were not locked to anything but hung on the wall at fixed distances, lit by spotlights; the snake lay on the floor without the pigeon in its mouth, creating a clean circular shape; a copy of the cage, too small for an adult to stand inside it, was presented, vacant, next to the bare and stationary scaffold.[22]

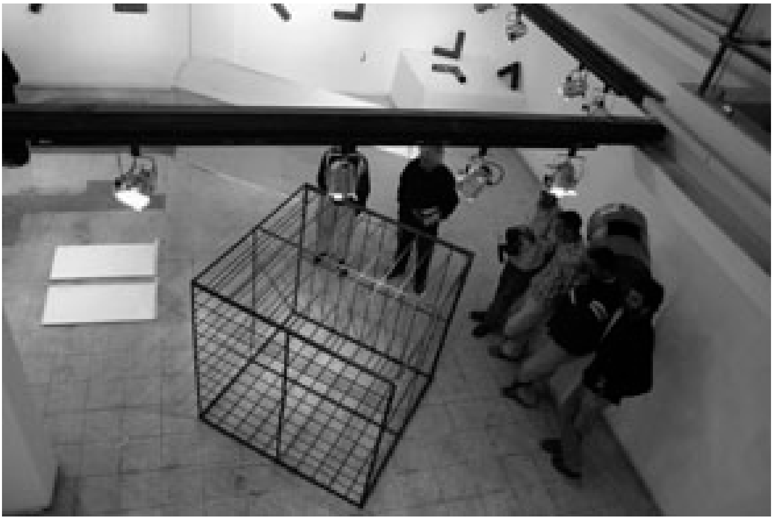

FIGURE 6.5 Gallery overview, *Fence Art* exhibition (cage). Minshar Art Gallery, Tel Aviv, March 2006. Photographer: Yotam Ronen/Activestills. Courtesy of Minshar Art Gallery and Yotam Ronen.

What is more, most sculptural objects were not made to last. Many demonstrations resulted in their disintegration. In the gallery, however, the objects were presented in a manner that preserved their form. Each sculpture was placed in enough space for viewers to walk around it without entering into contact with it, so that it would remain marked only by the Bil'in events, not by the Tel Aviv presentation. Thus, while the demonstrations can be compared with art performances in which the event, rather than its object, forms the centre of attention, the Tel Aviv exhibition focused on the sculptural objects as such. Brian Holmes' notion of process, involving catalytic artefacts, group interactions and a singular chance-event, does not apply to the sculptures once they were displayed within a gallery (Holmes 2005: 3).

An additional and crucial transformation related to the audience. In Bil'in, the direct addressees were Israeli soldiers and border police who in theory were forced to 'switch sides' at times. A strong case in point was the demonstration of 10 August 2005, when protestors held mirrors covered with slogans such as 'No to the wall' or 'Do not shoot, do not cry'.[23] Soldiers who faced the demonstrators saw their own reflections covered with slogans. The sun projected the inscriptions onto the soldiers' bodies as well, so that the demonstrators saw the same contradictory image: activist slogans imprinted on army uniforms and soldiers' faces. In Tel Aviv, the sculptures were presented to a civilian (and probably sympathetic, if detached) audience. When facing the mirrors that were placed on the floor and against the walls, visitors were not necessarily confronted with a contradictory image, nor were they necessarily engaged or affected. The soldiers in Bil'in had an active, if reluctant, role in the sculptures' performance, through their physical engagement; the gallery visitors remained distanced from the sculptures as they experienced them in the sterilized space of the gallery.

This is not to say that the mirrors (and the rest of the objects) were stripped entirely of their defiant political character. A gallery visitor that now looked at the mirrors preposterously replaced the soldier that stood there before her. Similar to the effect of quoting analysed in Chapter 2, in which soldiers replaced the twelve disciples in Adi Nes' untitled 'Last Supper', here the civilian art connoisseur replaces a member of the border police in front of the sculptural objects, bringing up the void, the entangled relationship, between the two types of audience. The objects carry within them memories from the old location into the new, and in this sense cast the new audience (comprising Israeli civilians) with shadows of the old (comprising Israeli armed forces). They conjure an exact image of civilian militarism, militarizing the art connoisseur. However, this critique remained implicit, befitting the contemplative attitude that an art space exerts on its collection on display.

It is possible to read *Fence Art* in light of Joaquín Barriendos Rodríguez' analysis of the politics of mobility in contemporary art. In 'Global Art and Politics Of Mobility' (2011), Rodríguez understands space as striated by social relationships and practices, which are always in flux. He argues that the global art exhibition system is simply a continuation of colonial expansionism, in which 'alterity, the exotic, the diverse, or in one word, the Other, have aroused the interest of museums, galleries, macro-exhibitions, and commercial contemporary art fairs' (2011: 322). The integration of the periphery within the internationalization process of contemporary art is, according to him, 'probably the most misleading and contradictory forms of multiculturalism', as it leads to 'the fetishization of alterity and the aestheticization of what is subordinate or at the frontier' (2011: 323). The display of Palestinian activist art in an Israeli gallery is, to some extent, a clear case of the colonialism that Rodríguez describes. The displacement of the sculptures from Bil'in to Tel Aviv runs the risk of turning their potential into fetishized representation and, as a consequence, of taming the rebellious message they carry.[24]

Holmes makes a similar cautious point when he distinguishes between expressive artworks that symbolize the radical process of art and activism, and the distribution of these artworks, which gradually reaches institutional formats (2005: 8). Unlike Rodríguez, Holmes sees as positive the consistency that institutions offer to rebellion. However, because institutionalization requires selection, framing and repurposing, the displays 'will slice out a few visual and conceptual elements from a longer, broader and more complex history, leaving the viewer untroubled by any kind of processual passion' (2005: 8). In other words, Holmes doubts the ability of institutions to represent an intersubjective process of transformation.

While I agree with Rodríguez' analysis in general, and while I see the danger that Holmes indicates, I find that *Fence Art* attended to the predicaments of aesthetic exoticism by redirecting the objects' potential to the artistic sphere. Crucially, *Fence Art* did *not* linger on the performance of the sculpture-objects in their original context. The exhibition was staged in a way that emphasized the sensual character of the sculptures, and their relation to art forms and debates: the metal pipes on the wall, for instance, can be more readily connected with Robert Morris' untitled L-Beams than with their function as lock-ons in the field.[25] From this perspective, the aesthetics of *Fence Art* fit better with Jill Bennett's notion of 'surprise event' than with either Rodríguez' or Holmes' cautious descriptions. Bennett understands exhibition aesthetics in terms of process and movement rather than representation (Bennett 2011: 112–13). For Bennett, art 'does not offer up a representable condition of belonging so much as an account of process and movement: new sets of conjunctions, a surprise event' (2011: 113). This formulation offers an understanding of *Fence Art* as another step in the fortune of the sculpture-objects rather than as their post-mortem presentation. It is strengthened by the exhibition's allusion to minimalism, with its assertion of art's theatricality and its call to examine art's conditions of display.

The way in which the sculpture-objects were presented in their new location, asserting their existence as art objects yet marking their toil as political artefacts, called for a conceptual discussion of their significance. In this light, the exhibition's move away from the sculptural objects' original function and emphasis on their immediate form and context allowed the objects to retain their dissident character, avoiding their fate of becoming representations of an external, completed process. In other words, if, in the field, the Bil'in inhabitants transgressed the order of things by being something other than workers, in the gallery, the Bil'in sculpture-objects subverted this order by being something other than art. Once more, Rancière's theorization of aesthetics and politics proves relevant.

Like his definition of politics, Rancière's definition of aesthetics is atypical. Rancière uses the term in two different senses. The first, broader sense refers to the aesthetic dimension of the political experience. Far removed from Walter Benjamin's discussion of the aestheticization of politics in the age of the masses, for Rancière the political is aesthetic in principle. He describes the aesthetic as 'the attempt of reconfiguring the partitions of time and space' to bring new forms into vision (2005a: 13). Consequently, his notion of the political has an inherent aesthetic dimension. The political creates a renewed perception of the relationships between the sayable, the seeable and the doable in a social reality (Guénoun and Kavanagh 2000: 17). The politics of the Bil'in demonstration are intrinsically aesthetic in this sense, as they involve a reorganization of the visible within the terms of Israeli–Palestinian politics.

The second, more narrow sense of the term 'aesthetics' in Rancière's writings refers to 'a specific regime for identifying and reflecting on the arts' (2004: 10). This understanding does not imply a theory of art; rather, aesthetics is a specific configuration of the domain of art, which is based on distinguishing a sensible mode specific to artistic products. However, while 'the word aesthetics . . . strictly refers to the specific mode of being of whatever falls within the domain of art' (2004: 22), an art object can only be an aesthetic object when it is 'something else than art', posing as what Rancière describes as a 'form of life' (2002: 137). This definition is contradictory and abstract, and, as Rancière himself admits, eliminates a pragmatic criterion for distinguishing art from non-art. Instead, it results in a focus on the thought that art contains and engenders.

This focus marks the difference between the aesthetic and the representational regimes of the arts. The latter, according to Rancière, is a pragmatic system that differentiates between artworks according to forms, genres, mediums and so forth, outlining the proper ways for making and judging art (2004: 91). The way in which the 'distribution of the sensible' takes place within the representative regime of art parallels the policing of the social order outside this regime: every artistic form has its clear place, and there are no exceptions, no voids. The aesthetic regime, on the other hand, approaches art objects from a conceptual point of view and relates to their mode of being, extricated from their ordinary connections (2004: 22).

Thus, aesthetics in the broad sense (relating to the distribution of the sensible) and aesthetics in the narrow sense (referring to a specific regime of art) are related. Both refer to 'a specific sphere of experience which invalidates the ordinary hierarchies incorporated in everyday sensory experience' (Rancière 2005a: 14). The way in which the aesthetic regime opposes the representational configuration, freeing art from rules and regulations, is equivalent to the rearrangement of the sensible that occurs through a political struggle. The prism of the aesthetic regime of art allows art objects to accomplish a similar task to political actions, the task of disturbing accepted perceptions of reality (Deranty 2003: 137). Brian Holmes offers a comparable formula, when he suggests that 'art can be compared to activism through the metaphor of an intervention on "social material"' (2005: 4).

In the demonstrations, the sculptures take part in events that fit Rancière's broad definition of aesthetics: events that attempt to undermine the policing division between different sociopolitical groups. At the same time, they also correspond to his narrower definition of the term, and can be interpreted as belonging to an artistic regime of the sensible 'that is extricated from its ordinary connection and is inhabited by a heterogeneous power foreign to itself' (Rancière 2009: 23). In Tel Aviv, alternatively, the sculptural objects were commanding an art-historical perspective, framed as unambiguous art objects in a constellation that comes into dialogue with the canon of contemporary art. And yet, the exhibition left its audience with no clear answers, because it could only cordon off but not fully remove the sculpture-objects' prior functional aspect that, to complicate matters, was symbolic in essence. The sculptures thus brought to the fore their aesthetic quality, their 'mode of existence as "free" objects, not the projects of will' (Rancière quoted in Guénoun and Kavanagh 2000: 22), by way of manifesting simultaneously their functional and contemplative aspects, asserting and negating their place within the representational regime of the art at one and the same time.

Therefore, and despite the fact that for Rancière the distinction between art and non-art is irrelevant to the aesthetic regime, precisely this distinction – or better yet, the questioning of this distinction – remained at the core of the politics of the *Fence Art* exhibition. The sculptural objects remained politically poignant by challenging the policing of the representational space that hosted them. Their displacement broke with their ontology, but not with their erratic character and provocative performance. The volatility of the sculptures' definition, as well as the constantly failing need to define them *either* as art *or* as artefacts of a political struggle, turned into the 'thinking' that inhabited the objects in the gallery space.

In an interview with art critic Dana Gilerman, the curator of *Fence Art*, Oded Yedaya, asserted that the sculptures were first and foremost artworks, and that Muhammad Khatib (the maker of most of the sculptures) is an artist in this respect (Gilerman 2006).

Khatib himself opposed these definitions in the very same interview, making clear that he would have preferred the sculptures to appear in a documentary fashion, in close connection with the explanatory material that was found in the next room, rather than for them to be separated from each other. Israeli curator and Palestinian creator also differed with regard to their reasons for mounting the exhibition to begin with. While Khatib's sole objective was to get further exposure for Bil'in in the Israeli media, Yedaya also wanted to provoke an intellectual discussion that would explore the possibilities of the terms 'drafted art' and 'drafted gallery'. In her article, Gilerman finds the curator's choice infuriating, 'as if the art world found a new toy to adorn itself with', but felt this way only until, having interviewed Khatib, she too came to the conclusion that he works 'as a true artist' (2006). The attempt to define the different agents and objects takes up most of Gilerman's article.

Khatib's refusal to be labelled as an artist contradicts, at face value, the analysis I have just proposed. I suggested that the demonstrators were empowered by the fact that, through the sculptural objects, their identity oscillated between that of occupied villagers and that of artists; clearly when this oscillation is refused by those I write about, it is anything but empowering. However, and crucially, Khatib's rejection of the title 'artist' was uttered in the context of the exhibition, and in that context alone. As Khatib tells Gilerman: 'The power and the beauty of the tools that I made manifest themselves in the demonstration itself. As far as I'm concerned, only there are they art' (quoted in Gilerman 2006; my translation). By denying the artistic aspect of the sculptures in the gallery space, Khatib emphasized their – and his – political character. This move is the mirror image of the way in which the sculptures operate in the politically framed space of Bil'in, where their artistic aspect is frequently emphasized. What Khatib accentuated is the objects' adherence to two incompatible classifications of the representational regime, as artefacts (engaged and functional) and art (autonomous and formal) at the same time, never completely one or the other. In the vein of Rancière, precisely that feat accounts for their political potential.

Yedaya approaches the issue from a different perspective. As artworks, the sculptures allow Yedaya, who is an artist and an active participant in the Bil'in demonstrations, to question his role as curator-activist as well as the political potential of an art-gallery space. In the introductory text to the exhibition, Yedaya outlines a mutual process of stimulation between the sculptures and the gallery. By means of classical curatorial practices such as the isolation of objects and their placement in space, the gallery is able to serve the cause of Bil'in on the one hand and, he writes, to 'exploit all of art's shrewdness to create a political provocation' and alert the public to the village's circumstances. On the other hand, the Bil'in sculptural objects allow him, as curator, to exhibit something different from what is usually labelled political art: either high art that comments on the political situation, or documentary art that records it. Yedaya writes:

> Documentary art remains documentary art even when it is displayed in a gallery, and high art remains high art that talks to a closed circle even when it makes an effort to take a stand and make a difference. The fence-art from Bil'in offers us a different possibility; completely authentic products, made by locals and not by onlookers, that are displaced to the 'art' environment, an environment of citations, appropriations and post-modern simulacrum, and thus examines them from various levels, and maybe examines anew the notion of 'political art'.
>
> Yedaya 2006; my translation

Yedaya follows the logic of the representational regime in that he distinguishes between 'documentary art', 'high art' and 'authentic products', and places the Bil'in sculptures in the third. He claims that a displacement of the first two types would have no effect on their ontology while the third type, 'made by locals and not by onlookers' and displaced to the art environment, introduces a different possibility. Yet, the exceptionality of the idea of bringing the outside world into the gallery can be disputed, as it is based on the historical precedent of the readymade.[26] In addition, the text's generic assertion that categories belonging to the art world are not challenged when its objects are displayed outside their home field can be debated. Maaike Bleeker, for example, argues for staging art outside the museum as a means to destabilize self-evident modes of looking.[27] More problematic still is the fact that Yedaya's thesis leans on the notion of authenticity. He discusses 'displaced authentic products' as bringing forth a new examination of political art, a logic which comes dangerously close to what Rodríguez describes as the fetishization of alterity (2011: 323), and also seems to follow what Rancière describes as an attempt of contemporary art to equate political commitment with the search for the real (2005b: 3).

During his short intervention in *KLARTEXT!* (2005b), Rancière was hesitant to define art's tendency to intervene in the social world as political, arguing that the political content or context of an artwork does not ensure that work's political character. Taking into consideration that, for Rancière, politics is about reconfiguring the terms in which the real is distributed, and not about any specific political reality, it is easy to see how, in his terms, the sculptures' 'authentic' origin outside of the art scene would not constitute their defining political feature. Furthermore, Rancière argues that the debate about the relation of 'outside' to 'inside' regarding art and politics is in itself apolitical, since it cements consensual notions such as outside and inside, authentic reality, and artistic fiction. In his words, '[s]uch a "politicization" of art actually means the contrary of politics. Politics begins when there is a disagreement on the "reality of the real", a dispute on the "given" itself, a controversial fictionalization of the relationship between the inside and the outside' (2005b: 3).

Focusing solely on the sculptures' displacement from Bil'in to Tel Aviv, as Yedaya's text does, would lead to the conclusion that the *Fence Art* exhibition is not a political project, as it keeps in place the distinction between political reality and art. Focusing on the sculptures' reception in the gallery, and building on Khatib's contradictory context-based definitions, however, could indeed lead to a re-examination of the notion of political art, but in a way that differs from the curator's approach. If we accept that politics happens precisely when there is a disagreement about what is politics, 'when the boundary separating the political from the social or the public from the domestic is put into question' (Rancière 2011: 4), then we can see how the sculptural objects play out their politics and disturb the powers at play within the discipline of art through their very aesthetics. Gilerman disagrees with Yedaya's choice to appropriate the sculpture-objects from the political sphere and to label them as art, contrary to their maker's will. At the same time, she disagrees with Khatib when she finds him to be a 'true' artist. This contradiction cannot be solved; it is not meant to be solved, but may lead us to question the axioms of the discipline of art itself. The sculptural objects are simultaneously already engaged and autonomous, and this is a contradiction only as long as one insists on the separation of aesthetics from politics.

This makes *Fence Art* political in the sense that Rancière gives to the word. The exhibition does not only 'presuppose the rupture of the "normal" distribution of positions' as the curator's text seems to suggest, but also requires 'a rupture in the idea that there are dispositions "proper" to such classifications' in the first place (Rancière 2001: thesis 3). As for the sculptures, they are 'in place' and 'out of place' in both environments, and challenge the imposition of divisions between social identities, whether they relate to national subjectivities or artistic categories, and whether they are kept apart by the separation wall crossing through Israel and Palestine, or by the walls of the gallery that distinguish between the realm of reality and that of representation. In both locations, they negotiate the tension which pushes art towards 'life' with that which sets its aesthetics apart from other forms of sensory experience (Rancière 2009: 46).[28]

Reading the sculptural objects of Bil'in and *Fence Art* through Rancière suggests that the attempt to separate politics from aesthetics is futile because the two are bound together from the outset. This bond, of course, is not to be equated with an amalgamation of the artistic and the political. Rather, it should lead to a careful accentuation of the various elements at play: art, political action, aesthetics and politics. The sculptural objects relate to each of these four elements: they are framed at times as art and at other times as political artefacts, and they include, at all times, aesthetic and political dimensions. What is, then, the notion of political art that the sculptures prompt? Because they work as political arguments and aesthetic objects in a 'proper space where art shows as such' but also in 'an outward space where art is . . . destined . . . to its self-suppression' (Rancière 2005b: 2), the sculptural objects offer a nuanced interpretation of the term. In Bil'in, the connection between art and politics follows Brian Holmes' definition of process as matrix of artefacts, group interaction and a singular event. In the gallery, the sculptural objects lead in the direction of what Jill Bennett terms the 'surprise event', a process that includes the interceptions and collisions of art objects and audience. Holmes' and Bennett's analyses are not compatible. The first discusses specifically non-displayed actions and the latter analyses exhibition practices. The double function of the sculptural objects frames both processes as disagreements, or breaks in the consensus, where the fictions of politics in one case and art in the other 'blur over the very borders defining [their] activity' (Rancière 2005b: 3).

While the sculptures could not be more deeply caught up in struggles of national politics, they emphasize that it is not so much the 'content' of an artwork that makes it political or not. The objects exemplify the way in which the political significance of art arises from aesthetic process rather than content or form (Bennett 2011: 116). At the same time, the sculptures' political content does not negate their political agency. Art does not have to engage with realpolitik in order to be political, but it can. When it does, the challenge is to find a balance between the elements of art history and national politics in a way that challenges the boundaries of both. In this regard, *Fence Art* is a most fitting title for art that endeavours to remain on the border between action and representation, fiction and reality, art and politics.

Conclusion

The work, the world and the critical image

When you walk out of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, with your back turned to the entrance hall displaying the price list that welcomed you at the opening of this study, you find yourself in the museum square, a wide, open space. Henry Moore's *Reclining Figure* (1969–70), Menashe Kadishman's *The Binding of Isaac* (1982–5) and Motti Mizrachi's *Icarus* (2002) are only a few of the sculptures that surround you. To your left, you can find the magistrate and district courts of Tel Aviv. To your right stands Beit Ariella, the city's central library. And in front of you, beyond the square and across the busy King Solomon Boulevard, stands 'Ha-Kirya', a large fenced area that contains a number of government structures, including the major IDF base hosting the IDF headquarters.

Whether you enter or exit the museum, military structures and signs are everywhere to be seen. Ha-Kirya, once a Templar settlement, with its satellite towers and landing fields, is a well-known landmark of the city, and is always surrounded by swarms of young soldiers. So well known, in fact, that it would hardly grab your attention. Crossing the street to catch a bus, you might come across a banner declaring, 'A true Israeli does not dodge military service'; if you came by private transport, you might listen to 'IDF radio' on your way home, and when arriving home, you would hear a military expert commenting on today's events on one of the evening talk shows on TV. It is impossible to escape the presence of the military in Israel, and it is exhausting to take note of every one of its ephemeral and mundane manifestations. In this study I hope to have unpacked the way in which art and visual culture contend, not with the military itself, but with its foundational impact on Israeli identity, culture and society: its influence on bodily images and national affiliations; its impression on landscape; its authority as a coercive glue that encompasses collective memories; and, most importantly, the acceptance of those numerous militarized aspects and elements as unproblematic parts of civilian life.

The necessary conclusion from the various facets of civilian militarism outlined in this study is that the struggle for the demilitarization of Israeli society (or, as the feminist organization New Profile puts it, the struggle for its civil-ization) must also take place visually. We must learn to see surroundings differently, so we can discern the manifestations of civilian militarism and give shape to the phenomenon itself, which remains powerful due to its ungraspable essence as what guides vision but remains, precisely for that reason, out of sight.

Yet, I maintain a doubting stance toward the epistemological and political promise of merely making something visible: the promise of an ultimate, ideal image that could reveal – and thus transform – aspects of reality that are hidden in plain sight. That is why my search for a civic aesthetics focused on images that offer reflections on, rather than solutions to, the complicitous ways of seeing and knowing that enable civilian militarism to endure. The insistence on art as the home base for a nuanced and cautious evaluation of our sociopolitical life is based on my understanding of artworks as theoretical objects that offer an articulation of the ideals, values and presuppositions we live by.

In a study about works of art that reflect (on) issues of contemporary society, the question of 'political art', or the relationship between politics and aesthetics, is pertinent. While I address this question directly only in Chapter 6, analysing the *Fence Art* exhibition through Jacques Rancière's work, my view of this relationship is embedded in and developed through the rest of the chapters as well. To bring my argument to a close, I wish to offer some remarks on the way the critical artwork is conceptualized in this study. In what follows I briefly reflect on the related (and interrelated) aspects of critical art that all chapters have brought to the fore.

The first aspect is perhaps the most crucial. The works I engage with make a statement about the world, and in so doing, transgress the artwork's frame as the cut between aesthetic images and political realities. Yet they simultaneously take their own place in that world into account. They thus mark the relation between politics and art as a relation of exchange, not of negation or subordination. Dudu Bareket's *Self Portrait in the IDF Induction Centre*, introduced in Chapter 1, makes a case for such a convivial relationship between the domains of 'art' and 'politics'. Its title refers both to the complex art-historical tradition of (self-) portraiture and to a significant moment, a rite of passage, in an Israeli youth's development. The installation's engagement with societal norms is enacted through a questioning of the mechanisms of visibility and the relationship between artist, artwork and art consumer: Bareket's militarized portrait is multiplied on projector slides and put in the hands of the viewers, for them to either protect or destroy. The act of making and exhibiting art is intertwined here with the act of melding a militarized, national subject in ways that complicate both rather than submit one to the other.

Exposing the politics of the aesthetic, the historiography of line and colour, is thus intrinsic to the exposition of the work's sociopolitical content, which is then delineated in, by and through those lines. This simultaneous focus points both inwards, to the work, and outwards, to the reality in which the work is made and on which the work wishes to comment, and can be found in many of the cases in this study. It may have been the trigger that drew me to those cases from the start: Adi Nes' actualization (and militarization) of masterpieces in his *Soldiers* series offers a self-conscious palimpsest of signification that conflates art history and social hierarchies; Larry Abramson's *tso˘ob´ä* alludes to a lineage of landscape painting as integral part of its comment on a geopolitical Zionist scopic regime; the ways that Kuper and Ofir's *Necropolis* series undermines traditional modes of photography cannot be separated from the issues that it raises in relation to the landscape that is photographed. All these cases suggest that 'political art' can avoid becoming political propaganda by questioning issues that subsist both within and outside the frame of art. More poignant perhaps is their suggestion that the radical conflation of politics and aesthetics is a necessary means to avoid both political and aesthetic redundancy. Only when aesthetic and non-aesthetic matters become irreducible to each other while remaining inseparable do they provide the ground for critique. When that is the case, then 'art [may "work"] as art because it works politically' (Bal 2010: 2).

The critical artwork is not by definition better, or more morally sound, than any other. It is a type of image that has the potential to reflect on social issues aesthetically. The works in this study are part and parcel of the aesthetic and political systems that they comment on, and do not employ the frame of critique as a shield from acknowledging their – and their viewers' – participation in those systems. On the contrary, the moments of insight offered by the works allow complicity, limitation and failure to come forth. This is the second aspect I would like to underscore here: the critical image, as it has emerged in this study, involves the acknowledgement and exposure of the work's participation in the very genres, traditions and world views that it opposes.

One way that the works contend with complicity is directly related to civilian militarism, and lies in the way they address their viewers in military terms. Bareket's 'self-portrait' replaces the anonymous soldier who photographed him at the induction centre with the museum visitor who projects his image on the wall. The portrait's reproduction on the *Uniform Ltd.* catalogue cover is, in turn, surrounded, almost drowned in a sea of military seals. Similarly, the inscribed mirrors in the *Fence Art* exhibition (Chapter 6) correlate the soldiers that faced them in the village with gallery visitors, and the composition of David Goss' *Lebanese Kebab* (Chapter 4) positions the viewer behind a gunsight and reflects on her location within the visual matrix of civilian militarism. In Meir Gal's *~~Beit Hanina~~/Pisgat Ze'ev* (Chapter 3) the gallery visitor is addressed by the same militarized city street names that await her on the way home. All these works come together in their colouring of the field of vision in khaki-green. To that extent they reiterate most forcefully the social position that they call into question.

The civic sights that these works offer are given form, then, not through a straightforward denunciation of civilian militarism, but through a staging of simultaneous and irreconcilable modes of looking that disrupt civilian militarism's authoritative claim. David Goss' *Table Maps* series, discussed in Chapter 4, makes this point clear in the way it extends reservations on optics (what do we see, where do we see it from) to politics (what is our subject position, how does it determine our vision) as well as the domain of genres and categories (how should we begin to approach an image). The juxtaposition of multiple viewpoints takes shape differently in the various cases I have dealt with, yet the generally shared result is a shift in focus from the image itself to the dialogic relation between the image and its interpretations, or, maybe, the image and its interpreters. One way to enact this destabilization is to focus simultaneously on the work's political matter and aesthetic practice, as I have described above. Another way is to be found in the works' engagement with visual histories and traditions.

Those histories varied according to the particular cases examined, from representations of bodies to those of landscape, from the genre of still life to the medium of installation art. The intensity with which the contemporary artworks attempted to revise their respective traditions was also diverse. Yet, as a whole, a refusal emerged, a refusal to position a current point of view as a clear-cut remedy for a past wrong. The spaces that open between 'present' and 'past' in many of the works turn out to be central components which cast their shadows on the works on display just as much as they do on the older, quoted references. For example, while the palimpsestic aspect of Nes' *Soldiers* has often been interpreted in terms that assert the series' moral superiority over the images that it preposterously deconstructs, my counter-analysis, foregrounding the series' selective attention to militarized traditions of desire, is enabled by the same referential elements. In *tsoˇob´ä*, that sort of critique is already embodied in the installation's aesthetic, which acknowledges the dependency on a lineage of painting tradition that is at the same time ruthlessly critiqued. Here and elsewhere, on varying scales, the attention to visual histories plays a part in the works' disclosure of complicity.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the case of *40 Years to Victory*, discussed in Chapter 5. Here, the renunciation of a 'better present' is aimed exactly at those educated readings that understand the earlier celebration of militarized postcards to be locked in an outdated frame of mind. The exhibition's radical celebration of complicity involves a double temporal destabilization. On the one hand, history is shaken up, framed as a part of the present inasmuch as it is exposed to be a contemporary act of memory. On the other hand, history is mobilized to critically capture a present that is otherwise in flux. The engagement with images whose meanings seem to be congealed in time not only opens up those past works for renewed interpretation, but also leads to a momentary arrest of the present and allows for reflection on the current state of affairs.

Hame'agel's *40 Years to Victory* underscores an additional aspect of the awareness of complicity intrinsic to the critical image. It stresses that, in the process of self-indictment, the cultural analyst is not spared. In this work, as well as in others, no reading can place the reader outside the scope of civilian militarism; perhaps no reading should. The questions and doubts posed throughout this study are tackled from various angles but are not answered or solved. The resulting experience is affective rather than merely cognitive; it is closely linked with the labour of the critical image itself, as it negates the prospect of a morally, politically or aesthetically correct alternative from which one could evaluate the field of vision. My dwelling on artworks that themselves dwell on the limitations of artistic and political vision comes from the apprehension that a 'new and improved' position will end up including the same drawbacks, the same blindness to one's frame of mind. Thus, finally, the critical edge of the critical image, as it has been outlined in this study, lies not in an attempt to solve, but in an attempt to complicate, to shift understanding; to keep us viewers on our toes, always aware of the limitations of clearly delineated fields of knowledge and vision.

NOTES

Introduction

1 The entrance hall will soon go through extensive renovations and it remains to be seen whether the new price list plaque will be presented in the same prominent fashion. Entry fees can also be found on the museum website at http://www.tamuseum.org.il/entrance-fees.

2 The Praetorians were soldiers of the nine cohorts of Rome, who became a powerful political force that installed or deposed emperors at will. In contemporary political science the term denotes the army's possible intervention in politics under the threat or actual use of arms (Ben-Eliezer 1998: 10).

3 For elaborated explication of Vagts' distinction see for example Regher (1980).

4 In the first works of Israeli political science, Israel was considered an exceptional case, in which the permeable borders between the civil and the military spheres help to balance the two domains and allow for democratic rule to exist alongside a powerful military apparatus. These earlier studies focused on examining why (rather than if) there was no militarism in Israel, even when there were such optimal conditions for it to develop. The more recent, critical approaches of Ben-Eliezer and Kimmerling have reformulated the question, redefining 'militarism' in ways that allow it to be understood as having a convivial relation with democratic rule. For overviews of the earlier approach see for example Peri (1983); Schiff (1992); and Kimmerling (1993a).

5 Some of these studies will be introduced in the following chapters in more detail, in relation to my analysis of specific sub-themes within civilian militarism such as gender, geography and memory. For an overview of military topics in the social sciences see Rosenhek, Maman and Ben-Ari (2003); for a comprehensive collection of essays on militarism in Israeli society and culture see Lomsky-Feder and

Ben-Ari (1999), and for the militarized aspect of Israeli visual culture see Kantor (2005).

6 Azoulay elaborates on the concept of 'civil malfunction' in her book *Constituent Violence 1947–1950*. See also Azoulay (2006) especially Chapter 1. Her view is in line with Enloe's definition of militarization as 'a step-by-step process by which a person or a thing gradually comes to . . . depend for its well-being on militaristic ideas' (2000: 5).

7 Adorno, too, calls for a focus on 'the shock of the unintelligible' in the appraisal of artistic commitment ([1962] 2003: 243). Butler's and Rancière's approaches will be elaborated on further in Chapters 1 and 6, respectively.

8 For a lucid schematization of vision as an embodied, subjective experience see Bleeker (2008), especially the introduction.

9 Mitchell critiques what constitutes to his mind the main fallacies of the Pictorial Turn in his article 'Showing Seeing' (2002b). A recent special issue of *Culture, Theory and Critique* (Curtis 2009) was dedicated to a renewed reflection on the topic.

10 Nicholas Mirzoeff (2005, 2011) has written extensively on visuality in relation to imperialism and contemporary warfare, arguing for the need to counter the authoritative claim of visuality-as-law.

11 That context is spelled out most prominently in Chapter 6, when I discuss the use of artistic artefacts in Palestinian resistance movements, and the reframing of those artefacts in an Israeli art gallery. The role that Palestine plays in Israeli visual imagery comes up also in my analysis of the representation of militarized bodies (Chapter 2), spaces (Chapter 3), and borders (Chapter 4). Gil Hochberg's recent and comprehensive study of visual politics in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (2015) is a crucial complement to the study of militarized vision presented in this book.

12 Mieke Bal, Norman Bryson and Keith Moxey make a case for semiotic analysis of artworks in their seminal essays 'Semiotics and Art History' (Bal and Bryson 1991) and 'Semiotics and the Social History of Art' (Moxey 1991). A critique of their approach can be found in Elkins (1995); see also the discussion between Elkins and Bal on the matter (Bal 1996b; Elkins 1996).

Chapter 1: Can(n)ons of Israeli society

1 Butler expands on this argument in *Frames of War*, where she 'draw[s] attention to the epistemological problem raised by this issue

of framing: the frames through which we apprehend or, indeed, fail to apprehend the lives of others as lost or injured' (2009: 1).

2 The reliance on context in the construction of meaning has been problematized by Jacques Derrida in 'Signature, Event, Context' (1977) and elucidated in Jonathan Culler's *On Deconstruction* (1985). Culler and, later, Bal and Bryson suggest 'framing' as a concept that may circumvent the limitations of 'context' as it offers a heightened awareness to the constructedness of meaning involved in the interpretation of signs (Culler 1988: xiv). See also Bryson (1994a). For the fortunes of 'context' in the social sciences and the humanities see Dilley (2002).

3 A few examples include The Khaki Color (curator: Gideon Ofrat, Habima Theather, 1991), Olive-Green (curator: Ariella Azoulay, Bograshov Gallery, 1992), Fire Zone 1 and Fire Zone 2 (curator: Tali Tamir, Ha'Kibbutz Gallery 2002), and Etchings, Scratches and Scars: Changing Representations of the Israeli Soldier (curator: Sigal Barkai, Petach-Tikva Museum, 2008).

4 The first text, authored by the main curator, Haim Maor, reviews soldier representations in the Israeli art scene and locates the current exhibition within this trend. The second text, written by cultural theorist Haim Grossman, narrates the demythologization process that the figure of the soldier has gone through in popular culture since the early 1970s. The third text, by co-curators Ofer Antebi and Carmit Dahari, introduces the exhibition and its sub-themes. Because the texts contain similar attitudes towards the place of the soldier in Israeli visual culture, I henceforth discuss the catalogue as a whole.

5 See, for example, Grossman (2003, 2004a, 2008). I argue against Grossman's conclusion in Chapter 5, and show that soldiers are still promoted as figures of ideal citizenship in Israeli popular culture, albeit in more subtle ways. I follow Grossman's thesis in marking the early 1970s as a turning point in the aesthetics of soldier-figures in popular visual culture.

6 For a historical analysis of the shift that took place in Israeli society regarding collective memory and national identity around the 1967 and 1973 wars see for example Ram (2000) and Segev (2007). A similar thesis is offered in other exhibitions as well, for example in *Desert Cliché*, where curator Tami Katz-Freiman writes: 'Since 1973 many sacred cows in Israeli society have been slaughtered, one by one. . . . The military myth, which for years served as the principal glue and the most resistant collective focal point, has also been undermined in various frameworks' (1996: 49).

7 See Rosenhek, Maman and Ben-Ari (2003) and Maman, Ben-Ari and Rosenhek (2001, especially the introduction), for an overview of the study of 'things military' in Israeli academia. Within the humanities, existing studies include Gluzman (2007), Yosef (2002), Lubin (2002), Brownfield-Stein (2010) and Barkai (2011).

8 See Peri (1996) for a critical overview of these studies. See also Carmi and Rosenfeld (1989).

9 For a short summary of this argument see Feige (1998). Ben-Eliezer analyses Israeli society according to both praetorian and civilian forms of militarism in his book *The Making of Israeli Militarism* (1998).

10 The Hebrew version of the article makes an even stronger statement: 'This is an all-encompassing militarism, or at least encompassing the central fractions of the collective. . . . Inwards, the army constitutes a symbol and a myth that has direct consequences on setting the rules of the game and the boundaries of the collective' (Kimmerling 1993a: 128; my translation).

11 Analysing Israeli literature from the 1980s, Yuval Benziman reaches a similar conclusion, showing how 'the IDF can be criticized severely and depicted pejoratively, but there is always some justification for its actions, and in spite of all the condemnations that might be made against it, in the last analysis it is still portrayed as doing the best it possibly can in the difficult circumstances that are apparently forced upon it' (2010: 343).

12 Butler distinguishes the resisting subject, who is part of the intelligible domain, from the 'excluded and illegible domain that haunts the former domain as the spectre of its own impossibility' (1993: xi). The paradox of subjectivation, where the subject is always already part of the domain of intelligibility and is therefore limited in her ability to undermine it, does not negate the possibility of agency, but simply locates agency as something immanent to power, rather than external to it (1993: xi, 15).

13 The only additional variation between the Hebrew and English booklet covers is the position of the yellow army stamp, which appears on the left of the Hebrew title, and on the right of the English one.

14 The installation was first shown as part of the exhibition Fire Zone 1 (curator: Tali Tamir), Ha'Kibbutz Gallery, Tel Aviv, in 2002.

15 In theorizing the performative, Jacques Derrida stresses that meaning is produced through the accumulation of recurrent and varied performances in time rather than from an autonomous language

structure, as Austin has suggested (Austin 1975: 179–82). Butler continues this line of thought when she stresses that the authority of an utterance lies with accumulative repetitions of the norm. Her contribution to performative theory lies in its extensions beyond speech-acts to the realm of gender and bodily, non-spoken gestures as well. See Culler (2000) for a clear account of the fortunes of the performative in literary theory, philosophy and gender studies.

16 Such translation is also based on the notion of visual art as a performative speech-act as developed by Bal in *Double Exposures* (1996a).

17 Alternatively, the portrait can be interpreted through its resemblance to a mugshot, and from this perspective, shown to hint at the ‘frame-up’ aspect of the exhibition that is developed in Bal (2002).

18 Bareket’s installation itself pushes the point further by staging a cyclic, endless process of exposure and destruction, as well as by turning the audience into accomplices who take active part in the process of overexposure. The dynamics of repetitions and reiterations in art practice will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

19 Maor’s argument is based on Yagil Levy’s groundbreaking work, *A Different Army for Israel: Materialistic Militarism in Israel* (2003). In his book Levy pushes the argument further, and maintains that the army has never been a people’s army and has always favoured certain social groups over others.

20 In this case, too, Maor notices a transformation, but a positive one: an opening-up to new sensitivities, manifested in a range of non-masochistic artistic depictions of the Israeli soldier (2004: 108).

21 The relation between masculinity and militarism in Israel will be the focus of Chapter 2. For sociological studies of the phenomenon see for example Klein (2002) and Sasson-Levy (2006).

22 The subheadings’ gendered aspect is most evident in ‘mother’s voice’ and ‘the gender-less soldier’, but it also resides in the Hebrew translation of ‘puppet soldier’ and ‘field artist’ because, in Hebrew, all nouns are gendered.

Chapter 2: Bodies of the nation: eroticized soldiers

1 *You’re a Cannon: Icons of Masculinity* (curator: Limbus group), Limbus Gallery, Ramat Ha-Sharon 1997; *Gvarim* (curator: Sagi

Refael), Ramat Gan Museum 2006; *Gever Gever* (curator: Nira Itzhaki), Chelouche Gallery for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv 2006.

2 The exhibition marked three additional aspects of contemporary representations of Israeli masculinity: self-portraits in drag; the infiltration of technology, fashion, and gay culture into mainstream popular culture; and the use of ready-made images of men from different magazines (Refael 2006: 7–8).

3 A selection of sociological accounts that develop these issues includes Lieblich (1989); Yuval-Davis (1997); Helman (1999); Sasson-Levy (2002, 2006); and Sasson-Levy and Rapoport (2003). Kimmerling (1993b) interprets gender inequality as a direct consequence of Israeli militarism.

4 The work was sold at an auction in Sotheby's for a record price in 2007; appeared on the front page of the *New York Times* in May 2008; and is on display in the Israel Museum's permanent exhibition of Israeli art.

5 See Steinberg (2001) for a comprehensive overview of the visual reproductions and theoretical studies of Leonardo Da Vinci's *Last Supper*.

6 I relate to Nes' restaging of master artworks as adaptations at times and as quotations at others. The difference is subtle: adaptations refer to works in their entirety, while quotations refer to particularities such as details, styles and techniques. Bal's analysis is helpful for interpreting the effects of adaptations as well as quotations, both of which subsist within Nes' oeuvre.

7 Similarly, Pierre Bourdieu claims that the constant reference of artworks to art's arsenal of topics and iconology is what keeps high art defined as such and differentiates it from supposedly lower forms of expression (1984: 4).

8 Another thread within *Soldiers* that links up with LeVitte Harten's allusion to enchantments or tricks ('fluctuating [images] . . . which cannot be trusted') resides in the series' recurrent allusion to soldiering as a circus performance. On this note see Zalmona (2010: 435).

9 Coplans warns that 'to paint in series, however, does not necessarily mean to be serial', and differentiates between a series, which is the simple grouping of forms in a set, from serial imagery or seriality, which he associates with 'forms linked by a macro-structure', apprehended in terms of relational order and continuity (2003: 10, 19).

10 According to Samuel Presner, Peri's photograph was an explicit re-enactment of Rosenthal's (2007: xxii).

11 For a radical deconstruction of Peri's photograph, which goes far beyond Nes' critique of the masculine military ethos, see Azoulay (2011: 170–3). Azoulay analyses the testimonies of fighters who participated in the occupation of Um Rashrash to show that, in fact, no battle ever took place. The fighters entered an empty village, and the aura of combat was added to the event after the fact. This staged aspect of the battle remains outside of the by-now incontestable narrative that was constructed through and around Peri's image and does not interfere in its function as a mythical icon of military victory.

12 Mosse's study was revolutionary in its linkage of national and sexual identities. Subsequent studies on the meanings of masculinity in ancient, early modern and contemporary (visual) culture include Bryson, Holly and Moxey (1994); Solomon-Godeau (1997); Dudink (2001); Pateman (2002); Van Alphen (1992b, 2005 – especially Chapters 5 and 6); and Connell (2002). For a radical rethinking of masculinity in relation to the male body in theory, art and pornography, see Aydemir (2007).

13 Succinct overviews of Sedgwick's thesis can be found in Solomon-Godeau (1997, especially Chapter 2: 42–97), Van Alphen (2005, especially Chapter 5) and Adams and Savran (2002).

14 See Bryson (1984, especially Chapter 3: 63–84), for a sharp analysis of *The Oath* in terms of the politics of gender and patriarchy.

15 See also Potts (1990); Dudink (2001); and Solomon-Godeau (1997).

16 A reproduction of a sleeping-soldiers image from the series is available on the website of Praz-Delavallade galley, at http://www.praz-delavallade.com/artists/Adi_Nes/selected_works.html?img_id=763.

17 The homoerotic undercurrent of Winckelmann's writing has only been recently acknowledged. For a comprehensive overview and analysis of Winckelmann's writing see Potts (1990, 1994).

18 The series' allusion to circus life, specifically, was interpreted as a comment on normative masculinity on the one hand and on military mythology on the other (Zalmona 2010: 435).

19 See Presner (2007) for description and analysis of muscular Judaism; I elaborate on this concept later in the chapter. On the relationship between bodybuilding and cultural constructions of masculinity see Van Alphen (1992b: 180–4, 2005: 128–9).

20 Sander Gilman makes a similar argument, and goes on to show how different groups of outsiders (for example, Jews and blacks) were stereotypically conflated. See Gilman (1986, especially the

introduction and Chapter 4). See also Garber (1992: 224–33) for the derogatory associations between the Jewish and the homosexual body in European cultural history.

21 Boyarin challenges the derogatory view of traditional Jewish masculinity as effeminate, but he also challenges the understanding of this view as an anti-Semitic invention. As his analysis makes clear, the image of the traditional ideal Jewish male was based on mental rather than on physical strength for centuries, and became problematic only during the time of Jewish assimilation at the beginning of the nineteenth century (1997: 14, 68). Boyarin defines his project as an attempt to 'reclaim the eroticized Jewish male sissy' as a positive role model for (post)modern masculinity (1997: xxi).

22 See Presner (2007) for a comprehensive study of the modern origins and invention of 'muscular Judaism'. Elaborate accounts of Zionist homophobia can be found in Boyarin (1997); Gluzman (2007); and Pinsker (2008).

23 The title is taken from a poem by N. Alterman, 'The Third Mother', and a loose translation of the poem reads:

My son is big and quiet
And here I sew him a shirt for the holiday
He walks in the fields
He will come back here
He carries in his heart a lead bullet

Ramraz-Ra'ukh 1989: 97–8

24 See Hever (1986) and Gluzman (2007, especially Chapter 5), for elaborations on the 'living dead' ethos in Israeli culture.

25 The appeal that Alik and Uri have for those who attempt to rewrite the canon could be explained through Michael Gluzman's anti-canonical analysis of *He Walked Through the Fields*. According to Gluzman, Uri collapses under the collective gaze that constantly examines his body and conduct. He argues that, in fact, 'the founding text of the Tzabar – which is also the founding text of self-sacrifice – is in many ways a text that deconstructs the myth of the heroic Tzabar' (2007: 188–9, my translation).

26 An opposite aesthetic move – that nevertheless leads to similar critical conclusions – is to be found in the 'Body Builder' image (Figure 2.5), where the ur-figure of muscular Judaism (based, as argued above, on a Western bodily ideal) is embodied by a dark-skinned body type. Nes' casting choices, throughout his oeuvre, consciously comment on internal Israeli politics in terms of the state's unequal treatment of Jews of Western and Eastern origin. Texts that focus on this issue in Nes' oeuvre include Ginton (2001) and Shenhav (2001). For the role that the Israeli military plays in reproducing or mobilizing social inequalities of ethnic origin see Levy (1998).

27 On the fictional and performative aspects of this narrative see Azoulay (2011).

28 His more recent *Bible* series, however, departs from questions of sexuality and focuses more on the preposterous quoting of Old and New Testament narratives in terms of contemporary sociopolitical reality.

29 Examples include Cornell (2004); Sherman (2002); Schalit (2006); and Sperber (2007).

30 On this note see Sasson-Levy (2006).

31 Interestingly, erotic male soldier imagery gained currency in Israeli art during a time of liberalization in army regulations regarding the recruitment of gays and lesbians. Up until 1983, the IDF tended to discharge openly gay soldiers. In 1983, gays and lesbians were officially permitted to serve but were banned from intelligence and top-secret positions. Since 1993, they have been permitted to serve without restraints, but may be exempted or released from service if admitting to pressure connected with their sexual orientation (Belkin and Levitt 2001: 543). While recruitment regulations have indeed improved, a 2006 survey shows that 52 per cent of gay soldiers still experience some form of sexual harassment during their army service (Shilo et al. 2006; Lefkovits 2006).

32 Historical analyses of the female soldier visual canon can be found in Lubin (2002) and in Brownfield-Stein (2010).

33 Two recent exhibitions that have dealt with the topic are *Women Soldiers in Focus* (curator: France Lebee-Nadav), The Tel Aviv Performing Arts Centre in 2008, and *Women of Valour: Representations of Fighting Women During the Establishment of the State of Israel* (curator: Nitza Levavi), The Negev Museum for Art, also from 2008. The only artist who takes up IDF women-soldier representations as a serial theme is Rachel Papo, in her 'Serial No. 3817131', but her concern lies less with the national ideal and more in the daily psychic reality of the girl-soldier.

34 For close reading of comparable portraits from official IDF photography archives see Brownfield-Stein (2012, especially Chapter 4).

35 On further studies of gender inequality in the IDF see for example Sasson-Levy (2007) and Sasson-Levy and Amram-Katz (2007). For studies on the way military service affects women roles in anti-war protests see Sasson-Levy, Levy and Lomsky-Feder (2011). Recent studies attend to the growing influence of the military rabbinate on Israeli military norms of conduct, and to the additional tensions and challenges this poses to the integration of women in various military roles. See, for example, Levy (2010); Cohen and Susser (2004); and, in Hebrew, Gal and Libel (2012).

36 On this note see also Yuval-Davis' *Gender &Nation* (1997, especially Chapter 5 (93–115)). For an international perspective on the militarization of women's lives see Enloe (2000). The IDF Women's Corps was dismantled in 2001, replaced with a Women's Affairs advisor to the chief of staff.

37 Even Hod's critical exposure of the inherent eroticism of the female soldier is subdued by his own impersonation, which shifts the discussion. The *Maxim* photo spread caused turmoil and the economics committee of the Knesset filed an official complaint to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemning the initiative to employ photographs of semi-naked women as a part of Israeli public diplomacy. The fact that these photographs presented soldiers raised additional indignation, as it was seen to degrade both the state and the military institution (Cachlon 2007).

38 A reproduction of Tumarkin's sculpture can be found on the website of the Tel Aviv Museum, see http://www.tamuseum.org.il/collection-work/8290.

39 For a comparative analysis of Tumarkin's and Shamir's *He Walked Through the Fields* see Possek (1999).

40 Erez Israeli's oeuvre contends with masculinity, nationalism and art history in complex and intriguing ways. His work, while well known in Israel and abroad, has yet to be properly researched. For a brief introduction into his oeuvre see Wizgan (2008: 86–8) and Zalmona (2010: 438–9). For an extended study of *Terrorist* and related sculpture from Erez Israeli's oeuvre in relation to the politics of national representation see Ginsburg (2010).

41 *The Draft Dodger* was displayed in public space during the Herzelia Bienniale in 2007, and was later placed in a privately owned but publicly accessible garden near Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv. In both places it was received with mixed feelings, including sabotage as well as indignant calls for the removal of profanity from public space (Libsker 2014).

42 Duggan coined the term 'homonormativity' in relation to Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner's analysis of 'heteronormativity' (1998). Berlant and Warner define heteronormativity as 'hierarchies of property and propriety, the institutions, structure of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent . . . but also privileged' (1998: 548). For elaborations on homonormativity see also Muñoz (1999); Ferguson (2008); Stryker (2008); and Agathangelou, Bassichis and Spira (2008). For a case study on the convoluted relationship between nationalism and queerness in the American context see Berlant and Freeman (1992).

43 Adi Kuntsman's ethnographic study (2008) of erotic representations of Israeli soldier and Palestinian figures on Russian–Israeli LGBT websites builds on Puar's insights to show how both figures – the soldier and the terrorist – function in tandem in this context as mirror-image synecdoches of the nation, playing a part in the affective consolidation of national identification for queer immigrants.

44 For a critical introduction and analysis of this trend see Dasgupta (2011). Dasgupta points to a growing proliferation of a specific, intimate type of soldier imagery in fiction films, documentaries, photography and visual art worldwide. He further argues that the pathos and aestheticism with which the everyday life of the soldier is being portrayed distances the work of war from combat. His answer to the emerging cultural dominant of 'soldier intimacy' is the analysis of the frameworks that configure the soldier as an aesthetic object of contemplation, a solution I endorse and hope to have performed in this as well as in the previous chapter.

Chapter 3: Looking through landscape

1 The article and accompanying image are available on the *Haaretz* repository, see http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/science/1.1254928.

2 Similar descriptions of landscape as simultaneously elusive and omnipresent can be found in, for example, Casey (2002) and, earlier, Appleton (1975).

3 For historical overviews of landscape photography, painting and sculpture in Israel dating back to pre-Israeli Jewish Palestine, see, for example, Raz (2004); Oren (2006); Ayal (2004); Manor (2005); and Ofrat (2004b).

4 Surveys of contemporary approaches in Israeli landscape painting and photography can be found in, for example, Maor (2003), Raz (2004) and Rosen (2007). A partial list of exhibitions on the topic includes *Landsc@ape: Matrixes of Representation* (curator: Sigal

Barkai), Petach-Tikva Museum of Art, 2009; *A Point of View* (curator: Ellen Ginton), Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 2004; and the pair *Our Landscape: Notes on Landscape Painting in Israel* (curator: Avishay Ayal) and *Framed Landscape: A Comment on Landscape Photograph* (curator: Guy Raz), both at the Art Gallery of Haifa University in 2004.

5 The term 'way of seeing' in this context was brought into wide currency by Berger (1972).

6 Other noteworthy projects that will not be discussed further in this study, though they, too, could shed light on the operation of militarism's landscapes, include Yanay Toister's *Visible Colour* (2005), Guy Raz's *Roadblock Project* (1992–2006), Yaron Leshem's 'Village' from the *Panoramas* series (2004), Efrat Vital's *Quiet Beach* (2011) and Orit Ishay's *Public Domain* (2009; see Sela 2009).

7 The edited volume includes various entries by Mitchell: a preface to the 2002 second edition (vii–xii) and an introduction to the volume (1–4), as well as the essays 'Imperial Landscape' (5–34) and 'Holy Landscape: Israel, Palestine, and the American Wilderness' (261–90).

8 Mitchell introduces this argument in an earlier article (1995), where he maintains that the confinement of landscape to the art-historical genre is not only lacking, but actually misleading. In this article Mitchell reads Ernst Gombrich's apparently apolitical (and strictly art-historical) approach to landscape, to show how it takes part in the way that the Western-imperial tradition looks at and frames landscapes. Petra Halkes (2006) takes the argument further and outlines the ways in which historical Western landscape paintings have not only participated in, but actually helped to shape modernity's views of nature. For an interdisciplinary introduction to the history of landscape representation in Western art see Andrews (1999).

9 Other cultural geographers who attend to landscape imagery include Edward Casey, who argues that 'to be a landscape is to be a place already on the road to representation: at the very least, it is to be the more or less coherent setting of an embodied point of view', and Peter Howard, who defines landscape paintings as 'excellent clues to the ways in which places are perceived' (Casey 2002: xv; Howard 1991: 1). Alternately, Ernst van Alphen defines the realm of landscape paintings as that where artists explore the lived space between the viewer and the image (2005: 84). The pioneering works of John Berger (*Ways of Seeing*, 1972) and Raymond Williams (1975), which examine landscape representations as part of social and political

constructions, have inspired many studies on the social implications inherent to landscape (Mitchell 2002a: 15; Cosgrove and Daniels 1988: 7; Rose 1993: 89; Smith 1993: 81; Said 2000: 182).

10 Jonathan Smith, too, defines landscape as complicit with the social pretentions of privileged persons and groups (1993: 78). For a feminist analysis of landscape theory see Rose (1993: 86–112).

11 A partial list of additional studies that support the notion of landscape as a medium that conveys and supports ideologies in general, and national ideologies in particular, include Schama (1995); Godlewska and Smith (1994); Hooson (1994); Rosenthal, Payne and Wilcox (1997); Daniels (1993); and Miller (1993).

12 Studies of the political landscape of Palestine, and of the struggles between Israeli and Palestinian landscapes and memories, include Bardenstein (1999, 1998), Said (1980, 1999, 2000), and Mitchell (2002a: 261–90). In this study I focus on the Israeli eye, and on the way that Israeli landscapes are constructed in military terms.

13 The phrase is often quoted as part of early Zionist literary history, but its history has been widely disputed. Regardless of its true origins, it does typify a certain mind frame, which can be detected in many writings and images of the time. For two opposing treatments of the phrase see Said (1980) and Garfinkle (1991).

14 The ideological aspects of Israel's landscapes have been extensively researched. A partial list includes Azaryahu and Kellerman (1999), who discuss the evocation of ancient history in symbolic locations such as Masada and Modiín, and Bardenstein (1998), who analyses the planting of forests that were officially supposed to 'make the desert bloom', and unofficially helped to cover up traces of deserted Palestinian villages. Benvenisti (2000) reviews the construction of the Zionist geographical history of Israel and examines, among other things, the significance of renaming geographical sites, and Gregory (2004) surveys the (past and present) political significance of Jewish settlements across Israel and the occupied territories. Finally, Azaryahu and Golan (2004) introduce the term 'homelandscapes' to examine how Zionist landscapes are constituted within Israeli geography.

15 Dalia Manor stresses that early landscape paintings were not made to be Zionist propaganda. She argues that while landscape artists were indeed followers of Zionism, in their paintings they avoided obvious Zionist themes and locations in favour of religious or oriental ones (2005: 113–33). Yet her analysis does not refute the notion that the portrayed vistas ended up supporting the tenets of Zionism nonetheless, in their emphasis on the Jewish past of the land and in their portrayal of Arab figures as an integral part of the landscape rather than its inhabitants (2005: 115, 125).

16 Van Alphen's conceptualization of landscape foregrounds the way in which it seduces the viewer into the image (2005: 75). As such, it seems to contradict Mitchell's description of landscape's distancing effects (2002a). Yet, to my mind, the viewer's immersion in landscape's representational space does not necessarily contradict her detachment from that land's lived politics. Furthermore, the two studies seem to correspond in the potential they see in landscape's ability to engender contemplation regarding the viewer's lived space (Van Alphen) or her ways of looking (Mitchell).

17 Petra Halkes makes a corresponding claim for 'landscape paintings that are *about* landscape paintings', where the hidden codes of the genre are revealed by the self-reflective attitude of the works (2006: 9, emphasis in text). That attitude emphasizes the viewer's embodied existence within nature as well as within the exhibition space, and allows the act of *representing* landscape and the (always frustrated) desire to give shape to a natural view of nature take centre stage over the nature that is represented (2006: 9–16).

18 *tso˘ob´ä* was originally displayed at Ha'Kibbutz Gallery in Tel Aviv in 1995 (curator: Tali Tamir), and then reconstructed for Abramson's retrospective exhibition at the Tel Aviv Museum in autumn 2010 (curator: Ellen Ginton). Abramson and Mitchell have been engaged in a theoretical and aesthetic dialogue regarding landscape throughout the last decade, and Mitchell has also recently contributed an article to Abramson's latest catalogue, offering a political interpretation of his work as a 'bi-national allegory' (Mitchell 2010). Yet while *tso˘ob´ä* might appear to be a direct visual reference to Mitchell's work, it was created before the first encounter between the two, and before Abramson was aware of Mitchell's writings (Abramson 2009). For a comprehensive analysis of Abramson's oeuvre, which points to key images that repeat in *tso˘ob´ä* and other series and constitute a specifically Abramsonian visual genealogy see Ankori (2010).

19 For detailed studies of Zaritsky's work see, for example, Omer (1987) as well as Yariv (1992). For an analysis of Zaritsky's influential position in the Israeli art world see Manor (2009) and for a historical overview of New Horizons see Tammuz (1980: 151–211) and Zalmona (2010: 163–95).

20 In the series *Yechiam* from 2008–9 Abramson refers to yet another series of paintings by Zaritsky which bears the same name, and which too references an Israeli kibbutz where Zaritsky used to paint outdoors. In this series, however, Abramson investigates Zaritsky's ways of seeing rather than his blind spots (Ankori 2010: 394–7).

21 Mitchell makes a corresponding argument (1995: 115). See also Halkes (2006, especially Chapter 1).

22 The way in which *tso˘ob´ä* was installed in Ha'Kibbutz gallery and later in the Tel Aviv Museum pushed this message further: as Gannit Ankori makes clear, hanging the canvases at eye level in both installations created a symbolic 'new horizon' that offered an alternative vista to the New Horizons group's way of (not) seeing (2010: 383).

23 Amiram Oren was invited to submit a lengthy report to the Ombudsman's research committee (personal communication, 8 May 2011).

24 Only a handful of researchers have touched upon the topic, in comparison to those in other social-scientific fields. Notable exceptions are mostly recent and include Soffer and Minghi (1986); Weizman (2007); Hanafi (2009); and Tzfadia (2008, 2010). Outside Israel, important contributions to the understanding of geographical militarism include Tivers (1999); Woodward (2004); Gregory (2004); and the essay collection edited by Gregory and Pred (2007).

25 These issues have been further elaborated in interdisciplinary research-group discussions directed by Amiram Oren at the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem between 2003 and 2010. Some of the discussions have been published in the 2008 essay collection *An Army That Has a State?* (Sheffer, Barak and Oren 2008).

26 The actual street signs on small tomb-like walls was presented at the Ami Steinitz Gallery, Tel Aviv in 1997; the second installation, consisting of photographs only, was on display at the Tel Aviv museum of art in 1998.

27 Israel and the United States consider Pisgat Ze'ev to be a neighbourhood of Jerusalem; the United Nations, World Court and European Union consider it to be an illegal Israeli settlement. Gal's installation follows the latter definition (Gal 2010).

28 Gal's website offers an overview of the installation at http://www.meirgal.com.

29 Furthermore, the tomb-like walls on which the street signs were mounted are meant to suggest that the entire country is, in fact, one large cemetery (Gal 2015).

30 This is especially true in the case of signposts that commonly display codes and numbers rather than names or descriptions (Dolev 2009: 4).

31 Gal's critique of the museum apparatus, as well as his method of partially covering a photograph in white paint, appears also in *Don't Call Us, We'll Call You* (2002), where the artist erased major museums and galleries from street photographs of New York City. Despite the thematic similarities, the two projects are visually and conceptually distinct. *Erasing the Major Museums* alludes to Israeli military censorship in its bird's-eye view, while *Don't Call Us, We'll Call You* refers to the commercial aspect of the international art market.

32 On this note see Van Alphen's distinction between landscape's seduction through a blockage of the view, and alternative pictorial forms that frustrate that seduction and confront viewers with their limited perspective (2005: 90–2). In Abramson's and Gal's works frustration takes on a different form from the architectural grids discussed by Van Alphen, yet it results in similar self-reflexive consequences.

33 Even the contours of *Necropolis* as a series are not clearly defined: the project was never displayed in its entirety, nor was it ever announced as clearly completed. There is no definitive body of works comprising the series, which becomes in that sense an eternal fragment. Figuring out which part of *Necropolis* is the result of the joint work of Ophir and Kuper, and which part is the result of their individual approaches may leave one puzzled: all tours in search of the *Necropolis* landscapes were conducted together, but each artist worked alone upon reaching a site; the works were sometimes presented together and sometimes separately in joint exhibitions; texts have been written on the body of work of each artist although the series has always been referred to as belonging to both. See for example Sela (2001); Kuper and Ophir (1995, 2000); and Raz (2006).

34 Comparable analyses of *Necropolis* can be found in Ben-Dov (1995), Shalem (2001), Burstein (2006) and Amir (2006b). For the history, conventions and developments of the landscape genre within the art-historical field (which are then contested in *Necropolis*) see, for example, Friedländer (1963), Gombrich (1961), Clark (1984) and Hunt (1992). This is the place to mention a third defining frame for *Necropolis*: the concept of *photography*, with its visual, technological and theoretical baggage, is as relevant to the understanding of the work of Kuper and Ophir as are landscape and civilian militarism. Both Ophir and Kuper are known for their long-standing break from traditional photography in general and from the accepted norms of Israeli photography in particular, and both investigate the medium and what it can offer in many of their projects. Kuper's investigations

include the overexposure of images and photographs taken with disposable or underwater cameras; Ophir's explorations focus on the materiality of the depicted objects and include, among others, a series on smoke. For analyses that concentrate on how *Necropolis* engages with the history and theory of photography see, for example, Shapira (2001), Sela (2001, 2005), Shalem (2001) and Amir (2006a).

35 The Bechers' signature style was forged through their extensive series of photographic images of industrial buildings having a seemingly objective and scientific character, which exposes a pattern within those structures and comments on the relation between humankind, machine and the photographic image. For more on the Bechers' work see, for example, Lange (2006), Stimson (2004) and James (2009). The relation between *Necropolis* and the Bechers' school has been acknowledged by various studies, including Sela (2005, 2009) and Ben-Dov (1995).

Chapter 4: Kebab in theory: mapping vision

1 In his essay *This is Not a Pipe,* Michel Foucault (1983) analyses René Magritte's famous painting *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (1926) as an argument against a system of seeing that links reality with visual representation.

2 A comparable analysis of the destabilizing effect of a bird's-eye view can be found in Van Alphen (2005: 81–3).

3 The most prevalent approach to the genre understands still-life paintings as images of transience. Texts by Ingvar Bergström (1983) and more recently by John Ravenal (2000) are exemplary cases. Svetlana Alpers (1983) interprets still lifes, rather, as optical scientific experiences, and Ernst Gombrich (1966) approaches still-life paintings as demonstrations of artistic virtuosity. Overviews and appraisals of these and other accounts can be found in Stoichita (1997); Grootenboer (2005); Jay (1988); and Bryson (1990).

4 This argument is elaborated in the third and final chapter of Bryson's *Looking at the Overlooked* (1990: 136–77).

5 I borrow the term 'cartographic eye' from Christine Buci-Glucksmann (2004), who reads desire and fantasy in the seemingly disembodied perspective of the map by associating the bird's-eye point of view with the Greek myth of Icarus and his fatal flight.

6 Alpers too refers to the inherent ambiguity of the still-life genre and to its potential to problematize the 'truth' of a representation in her discussion of the paintings of Constantijn Huygens (1983: 22–3).

7 Elaborations of this argument can be found in Frieling (2004); Crampton (2001); and Harley (1989).

8 In his classic study *The Sovereign Map*, Jacob offers a historical overview and a comprehensive analysis of 'the nature of the cartographic object in the diversity of its materializations and its possible uses' (2006: 8) by exploring the components that make up the map, including borders, grids, legends and decorations, but also aspects of memory and imagination.

9 Examples include Lewis Carroll, 'Silvie and Bruno' ([1889] 1988), Jorge Luis Borges, 'On Rigor in Science' ([1946] 1972), and Umberto Eco, 'On the Impossibility of Drawing a Map of the Empire on a Scale of 1 to 1' (1995).

10 This disjunction between the map and its object is made more explicit in two other paintings from the series, *Couscous* and *Turkish Coffee*. In *Couscous*, the food stuffs falling from the silver spoon change texture and shape according to their spatial location in one colour field or another. In *Turkish Coffee* the spilled coffee creates a similar composition, but instead of mutating according to the map's delineation it spoils the neatly cut grid-like symmetry.

11 On this note see Fleishman and Salomon (2008); Newman (1995); and Warschawski (2005).

12 However, Anderson does not deny that 'this style of imagining' was a product of optical technologies – astronomy, horology, surveying and so forth (1991: 184–5). The mapping impulse and the desire for visible knowledge are, in his view, the precursors of naturalized (mapped) national identification.

13 An expanded argument of the mapping discourse can be found in the writings of J.B. Harley (1989).

14 Noteworthy examples include the works of Joshua Glotman, Asim Abu Shakra, Michael Druks, Gal Weinstein, Sliman Mansour, Mona Hatoum and Joshua Neustein. The exhibition 'Borders', on display at the Israel Museum more than thirty years ago, was the first to present a comprehensive overview of Israeli artists working on the theme (Rachum 1980). More recent overviews and analyses of the use of borders and maps in Israeli and Palestinian art can be found in Ankori (1996, 2006, especially Chapter 6); Boullata (1989); Rogoff (2000, especially Chapter 3); and Gilat (2010).

15 Reeb's political art is both exceptional and revolutionary within Israeli art historiography. For more on his work see, for example, Faulkner (2008); Roei (2014); Faulkner and Reeb (2015); and Azoulay and Reeb (1997).

16 It is important to note that the maps that Anderson refers to are neither the same as those analysed by Alpers, nor those created by Goss in the *Table Maps* series. Anderson refers specifically to so-called Mercatorian maps from the middle of the nineteenth century, which assisted the colonizing enterprise. The Mercatorian map is a cylindrical map projection of the globe, initially made for navigational uses, that has come to serve as the conventional mapped representation of the world. As an inevitable outcome of translating a curved surface onto a flat sheet, the shape of the Mercatorian map distorts the layout of the land it purports to represent. While the distortion remains on the level of representation, it nevertheless has consequences on the comprehension of the represented space. Anderson's discussion of the Mercatorian map intersects with Goss's *Table Maps* in its critical assessment of perceptual and political distortions engendered by the map.

Chapter 5: Greetings to the soldier-citizen: consuming nostalgia

1 For a short introduction to the Jerusalem Day national holiday, see the official Knesset website at http://www.knesset.gov.il. For an overview of the human rights debate and related protests in 2007 see Keller (2007).

2 Additional examples include *The Last Forty Years* on the Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv (organized by the NGO *Yesh Din*) and *Six Days Plus Forty Years* at the Petach-Tikva Museum (curator: Rona Sela).

3 The English title of the exhibition appears in the catalogue as *The 40th Anniversary of Victory*. This translation lacks the more assertive quality of the Hebrew title, which literally translates as *40 Years to Victory*. Since the exhibition title appears, in Hebrew, on each of its images and affects their legibility, I use the literal translation throughout this chapter.

4 The portraits are of Israel Tal, Ariel Sharon and Shmuel Gonen, also known as Gorodish.

5 On this note see Grossman (2003: 42); and Sabar (2001: 26–7). For a comprehensive survey of the literature on Jewish New Year cards see Sabar (2011: 279–90).

6 Apparently, its message was too blunt even for its time. For a close analysis of this postcard see Grossman (2003: 47–8).

7 For thorough studies of the part played by the popular culture of the 1960s in the dissemination of military-inflected ideology, see for example Grossman (2004b, 2008) and Sela (2007).

8 The book was praised for its ability to show how 'seemingly random scenes of people and places can convey important political meaning', and criticized for its comparative strategy that obliterates the political inequality between the two national communities (Zunes 2006: 368; see also Boullata 2005: 109–10).

9 Clearly, the military cards compose only part of the field. Other examples of postcards as presentations of the national self in Semmerling's book include panoramic views of religious sites, leisure beaches and groups of Hora dancers. The Palestinian postcards, in turn, include artwork reproductions, portraits in traditional costumes, views of religious sites and documentations of clashes with the Israeli military.

10 In this context, Brownfield-Stein's analysis of 'erotic militarism' (2012), on which I have elaborated in Chapter 2, seems pertinent.

11 See especially Chapter 11, 'Memory and Forgetting', in the 2002 expanded edition of the book (187–206).

12 See Zerubavel (1985, especially Chapter 3, 'The Calendar') for an elaboration of this argument.

13 Hodgkin and Radstone's *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory* (2003) offers a large collection of essays that discuss memory in the national context.

14 Curator Rona Sela offers a thorough explanation of how the 1967 war imagery affected Israeli national memory through a close reading of victory albums. See Sela (2007: 53–100).

15 Maoz Azaryahu, alternatively, links the cancellation of the annual military parade to a sense of profound security following the Six Day War, so that the need to display military might as a source of deterrence was no longer deemed necessary (1999: 105, 107).

16 A salient critique of this newer tradition can be found in the work of the comic duo Yossi Atia and Itamar Rose, featured in the film *State Of Suspension* by Mieke Bal and Benny Brunner from 2008, where exhibition visitors create on-the-spot *tableaux vivants* to portray the ambiance of a war of their choice. The fortunes of the military parade as a patriotic ritual are detailed and analysed in Azaryahu (1999).

17 Examples include the TV series *Tironut* (*Basic Training*), aired between 1998 and 2001, and *Miluim* (*Reserves*), aired between 2005 and 2007, as well as the documentary series *Ken Ha-Mefakedet* (*Yes, Ms Officer*) and *Medina BeMil* (*A Nation in Reserve Service*), both from 2009.

18 The exhibition *Let Them Study War No More* is available online at http://newprofile.org/english/Exhibition. Slides 15, 22, 23 and 26 feature soldiers in commercials for baking yeast, supermarket chains, washing machines and boxer shorts respectively.

19 A significant exception is a recent TV commercial by the telecommunications company Cellcom. The commercial featured a group of soldiers playing football with an invisible team on the other side of the Separation Wall. The commercial sparked heated discussions debating its ethics, as well as demands for its removal. It would be interesting, in a further study, to analyse why this commercial hit a nerve while many others pass unnoticed. See, for example, Freedman (2009) and Nessan (2009). In defence of the commercial see Oppenheimer (2009).

20 For historical overviews of the fortunes of 'nostalgia' see Davis (1979) and Hirsch and Spitzer (2002). Vromen outlines the various (and sometimes contradictory) understandings of the term in 'The Ambiguity of Nostalgia' (1993), as do Pickering and Keightley (2006).

21 Williams' argument is succinctly summarized in Vromen (1993: 71–2).

22 Other studies, too, argue for nostalgia as a productive concept, when critically tempered and historically informed. See, for example, Tannock (1995: 453–64); Bal, Crewe and Spitzer (1999: xi); Bardenstein (1998: 19–21); and Verhoeff (2006: 149–50).

23 A different attitude is presented by Christopher Lasch's 'The Politics of Nostalgia' (1984: 65–70). Lasch reproaches nostalgia for betraying the past by isolating it, and thus denying its influence on the present. His view, however, can be understood as articulating another aspect of how nostalgia operates as a memory-act in the present.

24 Boym defines restorative nostalgia quite negatively in comparison as being in line with state propaganda that leaves no room for ambivalence.

25 In this respect, see Uri Ram's article 'Citizens, Consumers and Believers' (1998). Ram outlines the relationship between consumerism and localist identity culture in Israel through an analysis of the Israeli general elections of 1996, and argues that the methods of the promotion of parties were detrimental to the practice of democracy.

26 In fact, the earliest picture postcards were developed by consumer goods manufacturers as advertising vehicles (Brown and Turley 1997: 2).

27 Some of the artworks in the exhibition used the documentary material from the Six Day War period as their raw material, such as David Reeb's painting *Dayan & Arik* (1999), David Tartakover's collage *Victory* (1989), and Suka Glotman's movie *1968 Reversed Parade* (1999). Other works pointed to aspects of militarism in contemporary visual culture, and included works already discussed in this study such as Adi Nes' 'Suez Canal' adaptation (1999; see Chapter 2 in this volume), the Limbus Group's *Embroideries of Generals* (1997; see Chapter 2), and Gilad Ophir's *Shooting Targets*, from the *Necropolis* series (1997; see Chapter 3).

28 Hame'agel's oeuvre deals predominantly with the place of the Holocaust in contemporary Israeli culture, an issue that has not been addressed in this chapter, nor, in fact, in the study as a whole. In some of his other projects the artist makes explicit connections between Holocaust memory and the militaristic aspects of Israel today.

29 The material on the artist's website is available at http://honihameagel.com/?page_id=2.

30 The rules of censorship that Cnaan Media abides by refer generally to 'public sensitivity'. While it is hard to pin down what this means in terms of exact regulations, there are a few clear cases where advertisements were not mounted on the buses, mostly in relation to the portrayal of women within the Jerusalem district. See, for a case in point, Lis (2008).

31 These points are pushed further by the titles that accompany the documentation in the catalogue. Photographs depicting the exhibition as it travels through the streets are entitled 'Tel Aviv Under Attack' (Figure 5.5), 'Area Prone to Suicide Bombings', 'National Consensus' and so forth.

32 See, for example, Tartakover (1978) and Dankner and Tartakover (1996).

33 The Israel Prize is an award handed out by the state of Israel yearly on Independence Day and is largely regarded as the state's highest honour (Azaryahu 1999: 105).

34 Curator Zommer-Tal further delimits the critical aspect of Hame'agel's work when she defines him, in relation to another installation, not as a 'prophet of the apocalypse', but as someone who turns everything into a celebration (quoted in Perry 1996).

Chapter 6: Fence art: re/framing politics

1 What I call 'separation wall' or 'wall' throughout this chapter is officially termed 'security fence' by the Israeli parties and 'apartheid wall' by the Palestinian parties, and has many more appellations. My choice of wording is based on web research by Rogers and Ben-David (2010) who studied the distribution of the different appellations of the construction among grassroots and official web communities. Bil'in's creative resistance is one of many artistic projects that document, respond and criticize the wall. See Eidelman (2011) for an overview and analysis of this phenomenon.

2 Yet in the case of *40 Years to Victory*, its dual existence in- and outside the museum space did not add to the exhibition's political poignancy, but rather tamed and flattened its message. For analysis of additional cases in the Israeli/Palestinian context that mobilize their ambivalent location between art and politics as part of their performance see Roei (2006, 2014).

3 Simon Faulkner's 2014 study of the politics of visibility in the Israeli/Palestinian context offers a similar analysis, but focuses less on the sculptural objects and more on the demonstrations' mediated afterlife through photographs, videos and works of art based on documentary material. Faulkner reads the demonstrations as 'image events' that are representational in principle, intended both for eyewitnesses and for faraway viewers as agents for the redistribution of the sensible.

4 Dror Dayan's film *Even Though My Land Is Burning* (2016), available at www.mylandisburning.com, offers an updated overview of the dynamics of the Bil'in demonstrations as they occur today, ten years after their inception.

5 See the website of the International Court of Justice for information regarding the court's 2003 ruling on the illegality of the route of the wall (http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/index.php?p1=3&p2=4&code=mwp&case=131&k=5a&p3=0). On 24 June 2011, the army began to

dismantle the wall around Bil'in in order to rebuild it further away from the village, and so to allow villagers access to a part of their properties and comply with the ruling of the Israeli high court four years prior. Thus, the wall, even when erected, continues to be a shaky construction and a site for negotiation; see 'Palestinians Ram' (2011) and Matar (2011).

6 In fact, on 4 September 2007, Bil'in won a major court case against the state of Israel, in which the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that the route of the wall must be moved so that the village regains about 250 acres of its land. This is an exceptional success considering the fact that very few out of ten dozen such cases have been ruled in favour of petitioners since the beginning of the construction of the wall (Asser 2007). However, the court's verdict was counterbalanced only a day later, on 5 September, when the same court approved retroactively the settlement Mattityahu East, built illegally on Bil'in grounds east of the wall (Yoaz 2007). Most other appeals related to Bil'in and to neighbouring villages are either denied or are pending judgment.

7 The villages Nil'in and Nebi-Saleh have been receiving growing attention as well, and the IDF's lethal measures against the demonstrators, caught on camera on various occasions, have gained world recognition and disdain.

8 Examples include David Reeb's recent exhibition at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art in 2014 and the many photographic exhibitions of the collective Activestills.

9 Notable examples include Oscar-nominated film *Five Broken Cameras* (Emad Burnat and Guy Davidi, 2012), and the earlier *Bil'in Habibti* (Shai Carmeli-Pollak, 2006).

10 For a short historical overview of the relation between Palestinian resistance and media visibility see Faulkner (2014: 155–9).

11 A recent essay collection edited by Firat and Kuryel (2001) offers a comprehensive overview and analysis of contemporary practices of cultural activism.

12 Studies of these groups include Doherty (2003); Cuevas (2000); Graeber (2003); Holmes (2007); Bogad (2011); and Scholl (2011).

13 Statements from the *KLARTEXT!* conference can be downloaded from the conference website at http://klartext.uqbar-ev.de/services.html.

14 On this note see, for example, Faulkner (2014: 156–9); Hochberg (2015, especially chapter 5); Saloul (2012: 168–9); and Sorek (2011: 193–6).

15 Interpellation is a concept developed by Louis Althusser as part of his theory of ideological state apparatuses. Althusser illustrates his concept with the example where, by responding to the police hail 'Hey, you there!' an individual is turned into a subject of the state (1971: 174). Rancière's 'Move along, there's nothing to see here!' responds to Althusser's well-known illustration and highlights a different function of the police in the state apparatus.

16 The army's refusal to accept the new division of labour offered by the demonstrators' creative approach is captured in a telling case from 2009 where Abdullah Abu Rahmeh, coordinator of the Bil'in Popular Committee Against the Wall, was charged with illegal weapon possession following his display of empty tear gas canisters (fired previously by the army to disperse demonstrators) in a street exhibition in Bil'in (Hass 2009).

17 Bourdieu addresses this issue throughout his book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984), and especially in the postscript. For the economic, ideological and political constraints that enable artistic practice (in the French context) see Clark (1999).

18 Rancière makes a parallel claim for the workers' emancipation when he argues that the *possibility* of leisure and the ability to look at paintings might have been more significant than the specific poems or paintings in themselves (in Dasgupta 2008: 74).

19 Lock-ons are metal tubes with bars inside them, often used in direct action protests. Demonstrators lock onto a location by placing their hands inside the tubes and clipping their wrists to the bars. When the lock-ons are embedded in concrete they are hard to remove (Doherty 2000: 68).

20 The film *Bil'in Habibti* by Shai Carmeli Polak (2006) documents many of these performances and encounters.

21 On this note see also Faulkner (2014: 160–4). For analysis of comparable projects see Hochberg (2015), especially chapter 4.

22 The original human-size cage was destroyed during the demonstration. The smaller version made especially for the exhibition is the only telling exception.

23 The latter is a paraphrase of the Israeli slogan 'shooting and crying', described in the *Babylon Hebrew Thesaurus* as 'the feeling of soldiers who continue their mission notwithstanding the difficulties and the pain that this mission entails'. For a critical analysis of the phenomenon of 'shooting and crying' in Israeli society see Handel (2008).

24 Along these lines, see Eidelman's summary of the contradictory aspect of the Minshar exhibit (2011: 104–5).

25 I owe this insight to Ernst van Alphen.

26 Yedaya contends that *Fence Art* breaks away from the ready-made because its 'found objects' were initially made for creative use (personal communication).

27 Bleeker finds the concept of s*taging* useful for avoiding the pitfalls of the inside–outside debate, because it negates the distinction between the categories of 'real' versus 'representational' (Bleeker 2011: 146–8).

28 For an elaboration on Rancière's understanding of critical art and its application to soldier imagery in a broader global context see Dasgupta (2011).

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