



2008 Benjamin
MENSCHEL
Fellowship
EXHIBITION

12-22 November 2008

Dorit Aviv

Theodora Doulamis

Tomashi Jackson

Anna Zagol

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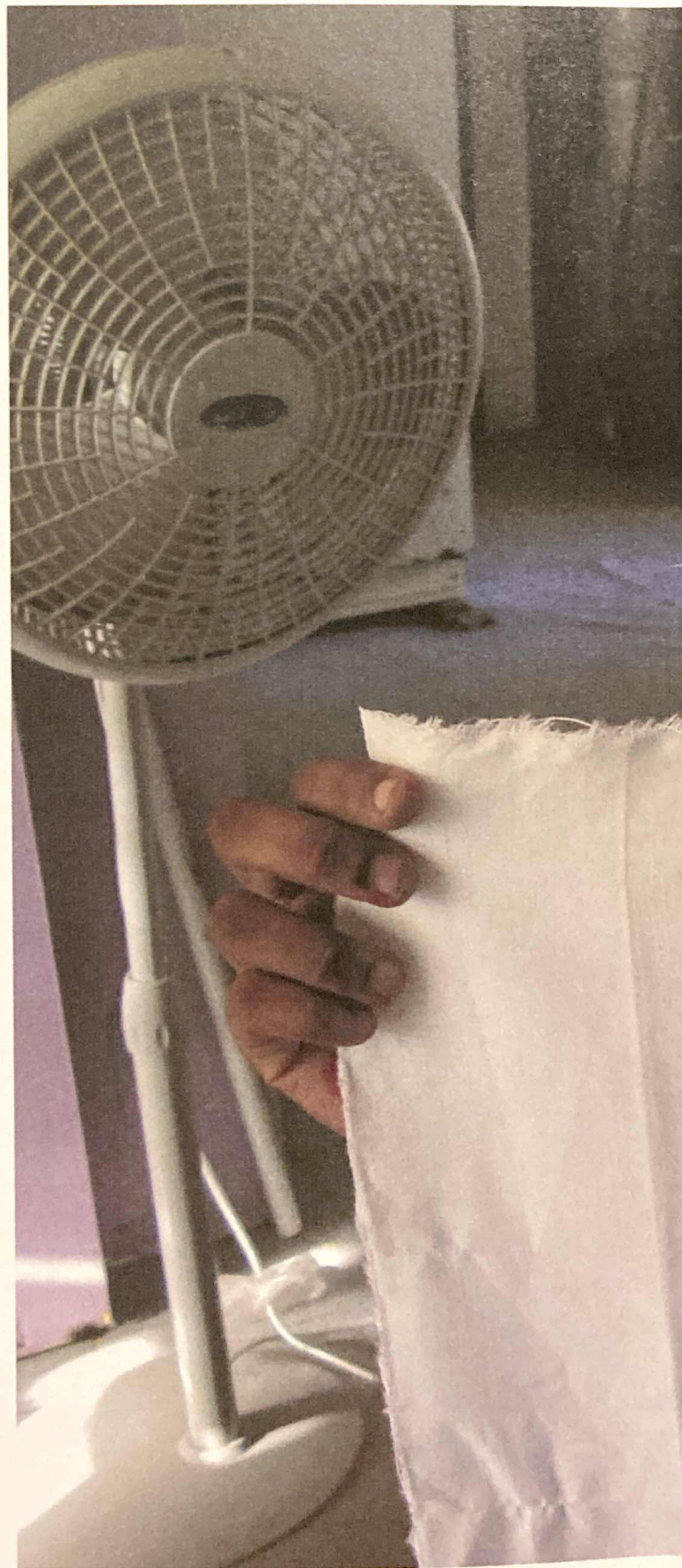
The Cooper Union
for the Advancement
of Science and Art

The Benjamin Menschel Fellowship Program to support creative inquiry was endowed by a grant given to The Cooper Union by the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation in 1994 to support work in the fields of art, architecture, design, and engineering. This generous grant was intended to provide funding to exceptional students who propose scholarly, independent projects that will in some way provide a culmination to their educational endeavors at The Cooper Union. It is the hope of the Goldsmith Foundation that students designated as Benjamin Menschel Fellows will be encouraged by their awards to complete bodies of artwork, develop scientific protocols, or otherwise further their intellectual investigations in a manner that will provide inspiration and illumination to the community as a whole.

Tomashi Jackson

Front cover: The Grass of Stann Creek

Right: Kadijah printmaking at the offices of P.O.W.A.
(Productive Organization of Women in Action),
Dangriga, Belize





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JAFFA | 1915–17 JAMAL PASHA BOULEVARD | 1918–48 KING GEORGE AVENUE | 1949–2008 JERUSALEM BOULEVARD

Something will come one day,
Hope will be its cradle
Earth will forgive it
As it will pierce it with its eye
Breathe its navel
And cross all these muddy roads.
Something
Will come one day...
A different language will prevail
After the melting of the walls
In all
That has yet to be said.
Abed El Kader El Janaby
(translated from the Arabic)

A walk through Jerusalem Boulevard, the main street and defining axis of Modernism in Jaffa, reveals a forceful meeting of opposing voices. Photographing the facades of the Boulevard, I became conscious of layers veiling the sound of the stories that the street holds. Latent in the architecture of the street is the collision between the force of Modernism and the architectural language of a place with an ancient history and a strong tradition of structure and form. Changes in regimes, immigration, and new construction systems, along with the struggle to maintain autonomy and to strive for self-definition, construct the identity of the Boulevard in a conversation of different voices.

In 1915 Jaffa's Ottoman governor ordered the paving of a grand boulevard, outside of the Old City's walls. The Boulevard was carved into the orange groves of Jaffa marking a line in the land which stretched from the train station in the north of the city into the orchards in the south, where a future city would rise. Through the First World War and the British colonization of Palestine, the Boulevard persisted in its development. Arab families built residences there, interposing family life between the orange trees, changing the place into a vibrant modern street, lined with theaters and cafes, with mosque and hospital, residence and school, court house and city hall, across the street from one another.

All of these were voided in the war of 1948. The Boulevard's apartments were deserted by residents fleeing the war. When it was re-inhabited, the neighborhood became marginalized. Still, the sounds of Egyptian films playing at the Red Cinema have been locked into its walls. All of the walls along the Boulevard have a thickness and the rooms have a depth to contain the stories of how they were built, who lived in them, and who resides there now, overlapping moments in the same space.

The surfaces of the streets are now covered with many layers of forgetfulness. The central promenade and its trees have been neglected. No one comes to take a walk in the Boulevard; everybody passes through in cars on the way to somewhere else.

In drawing the plans and sections of the public and private buildings of the Boulevard, I tried to see once more what is there. I tried to listen

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to the hidden voices. In the street I found the bulldozers demolishing the promenade in preparation for a light rail commuter train that will replace it, severing the Boulevard's urban form. Once more, the streets of Jaffa, an ancient city, a modern city, a slum, and a dream at once, are going through destruction and reconstruction.

A photograph was taken of children playing at the construction site of the boulevard. Is the street being built or demolished? One cannot tell.

Life comes into the stone; the children play.

A view of the Boulevard
from the south.
Photographer:
Willy Polender
Courtesy of Tel-Aviv
Jaffa Municipal Archive



Abu-Omar Darwish "El-Kundargi" (the shoemaker):

"The Turks called it Jamal Pasha Boulevard. After the First World War the English called it King George Avenue, and the Israelis, Jerusalem Boulevard. We used to call it 'Nuz'ha', which means a place for strolling. In the middle of Jamal Pasha Boulevard was a fountain. There were stores, and there were many orange groves along the Boulevard; some of them bordered on the edge of the street."

Shaaban Balha:

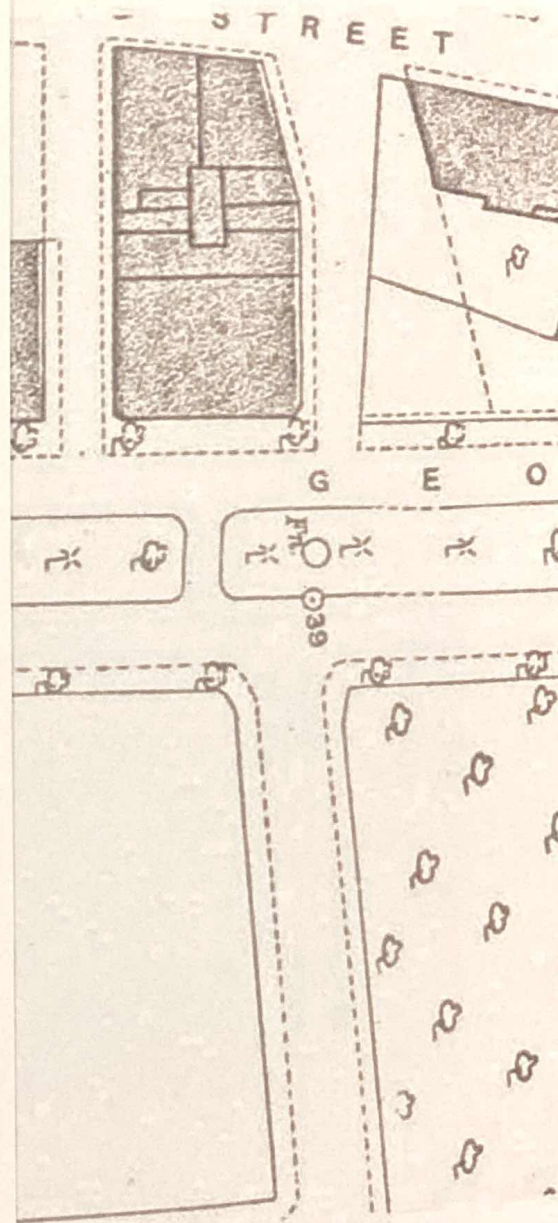
"Around the fountain square there were two coffee houses facing each other. In the coffee houses, especially the popular ones, used to sit storytellers who told stories about the world and about local events and places."

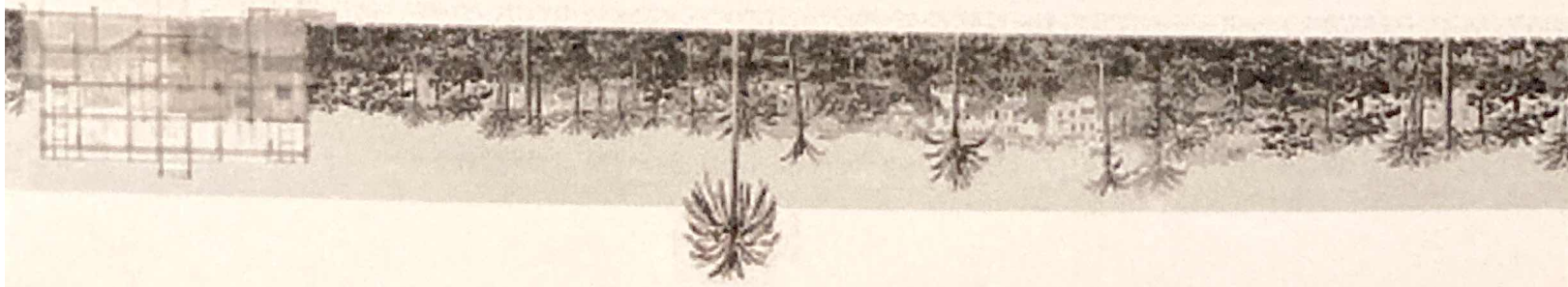
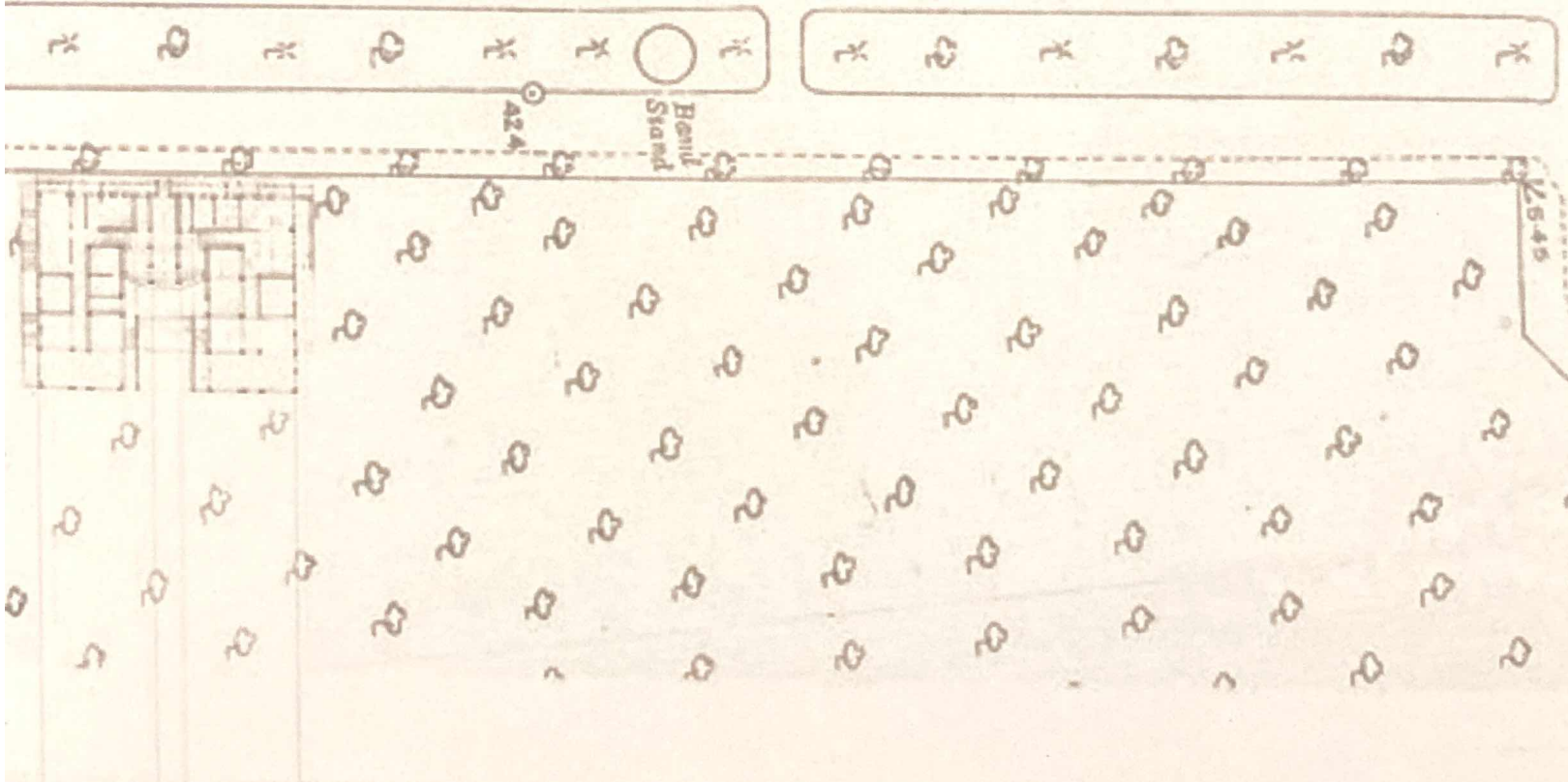
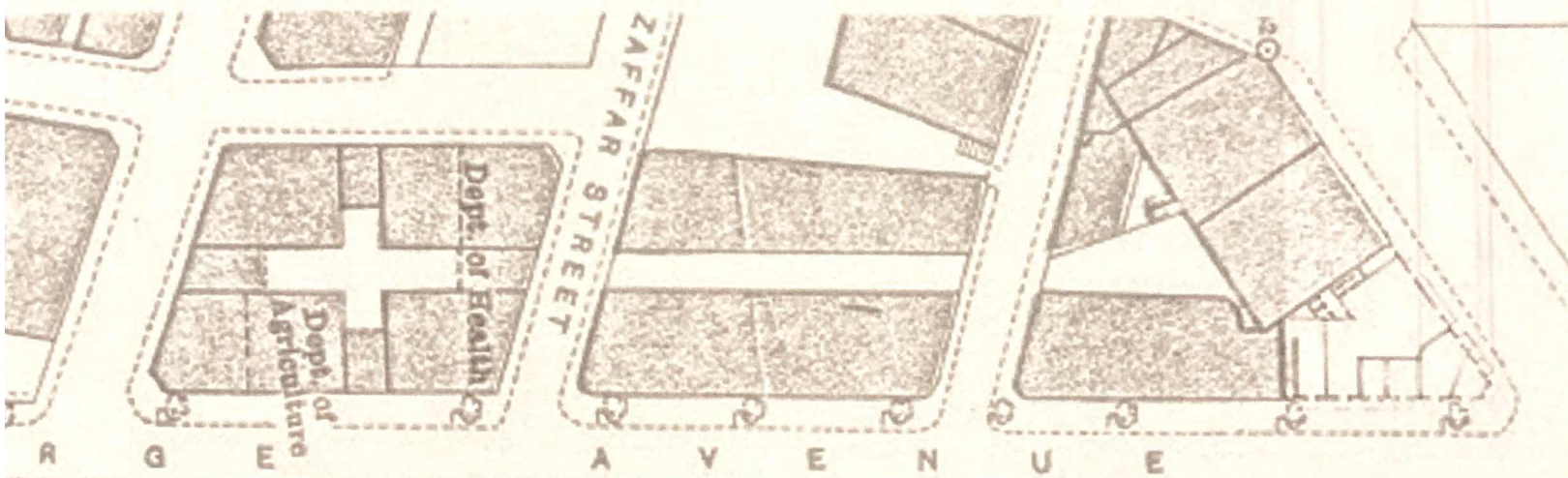
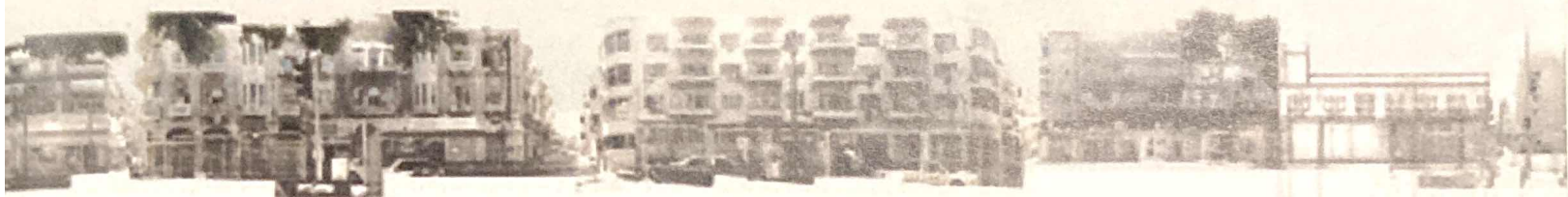
Jawad Hamdan:

"It was a beautiful boulevard, and there was a special worker who tended the trees and the plants in the middle. During the weekdays there were many officials, military men and policemen who walked to their offices and sat in the coffee houses. In the holidays people would come to walk and to look at the beautiful buildings. No one remained in the Boulevard among those who lived there before the war. The families escaped; the dignitaries, like the Austrian Ambassador, who had lived in the Boulevard, left too."

"The Boulevard was full with coffee houses. People sat inside the coffee house and outside, on the pavement. Those who came on a horse or a cart remained outside, to keep an eye on their horses (to prevent them from being stolen)."

-Excerpts from interviews conducted in Jaffa, Summer 2008





"I am a child of Anatolia. Everything on me is Turkish. My roots are in Central Asia. I am Turkish in my language, my culture and history. My country is my motherland. Cyprus culture, Turkish Cypriots, Greek Cypriots, a common state, all these are nonsense. The Greek Cypriots are Byzantine; they are Greeks, we are Turks. They have their Greece and we have our Turkey. Why should we live under the same state? We declared once taksim or death. Now that we are so close to taksim why should we choose death? Some people talk about the so-called Turkish Cypriots or Greek Cypriots. There are no Turkish Cypriots, no Greek Cypriots. Do not dare to ask us if we are Cypriots! We would take this as an insult. Why? Because in Cyprus the only thing that is Cypriot is the donkey."

Rauf Denktas, former leader of the
Turkish Cypriot Community

*"The Cyprus flag is the best in the world;
because no one would die for it."*

Glafkos Clerides, former President
of the Republic of Cyprus, 1990

Border. Barrier. Barricade. They are terms that bear the weight of division, some more accepted than others. Cyprus is a land divided, a term used to explain the turmoil and chaos not only in Cyprus but in many areas of conflict around the world. The partition of a state and the separation of a people lie in the politics of two nations, Greece and Turkey. What happens, however, when a political wall is slowly deteriorating, but a physical one still exists?

My documentation contains images of both sides of the physical partition of the buffer zone between the Northern and Southern sides of Cyprus, which has been patrolled by the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) since its controlled opening. The physical partition varies in its material and construction: Walls have been cut through the capital only a few feet high; iron fences and oil barrels have forced abandonment of entire villages and cities; paint has been drawn on asphalt roads. In 2003 the political powers on both sides of the partition decided to allow the crossing of the buffer zone for the first time since its construction in 1974. Five checkpoints now mark the permitted pedestrian and road crossings between the Northern and Southern sides of Cyprus. Citizens from both sides can now travel through the buffer zone. Resolving the internal problems in Cyprus has usually assumed the eventual complete dissolution of the physical partition between Northern and Southern Cyprus.

There is a contentious debate about the value of physical partition as an extreme measure to reduce ethnic or internal conflicts. Cyprus is often cited by

THEODORA DOULAMIS





both proponents and opponents of physical partition as a case study in either its success or failure. On a strategic level, the physical partition helps clarify the local and regional balance of power. Underlying conflicts of economics, ideology and religion between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots created a foundation of intercommunal conflict. There was also a presence of two incompatible views for the future of Cyprus: Enosis (state), the Greek Cypriot desire to strengthen its relationship to Greece, and Taksim

(partition), the Turkish Cypriot call for the separation of Cyprus into Greek and Turkish states.

The history of Cyprus' ethnic heterogeneity lies in its geography and its circumstances. As an island at the far east of the Mediterranean Sea, Cyprus has served as a prosperous and lucrative port in trade and a military docking post between Europe and the Middle East. As a region at the junction of Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, it was an island to conquer, rarely staying in the hands of one nation



for long. After Ottoman rule, Cyprus came under British control. The Greek Cypriot revolt against British colonial rule began in 1955, causing the British to align themselves with the Turkish Cypriots. A cease-fire was agreed in 1960 with the founding of an independent Cyprus.

The Cypriot constitution adopted with Cyprus' independence proved to be a catalyst for intercommunity violence. A series of Greek and Turkish *coup d'états* ensued. Turkish Cypriots made up 18% of

the population of Cyprus and, between 1963 and 1974, Turkish Cypriots had taken control of 37% of the island, effectively partitioning it. Both Turkish and Greek Cypriots experienced death and destruction during this period, and one-third of the Greek Cypriot population became refugees as it left the Turkish controlled parts of Cyprus. 250,000 people out of a population of 650,000 were without homes. The buffer zone, the so-called "green line" that represented the physical partition of the island, was



created in 1974 and the UNFICYP was established, immediately ending the intercommunity violence. Currently, The Republic of Cyprus, the government of Southern Cyprus, is internationally recognized as the sole legitimate authority on the island. The government of Northern Cyprus, which calls itself the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, is recognized only by Turkey.

During my study of the physical partition of the buffer zone between Northern, referred to by Greek Cypriots as "occupied land," and Southern Cyprus, I looked specifically at the physical changes to the buildings, streets and cities that were forcibly abandoned in the weeks, days or minutes leading up to the impending Turkish invasion. As the peace talks between Greek and Turkish Cypriots have advanced and the physical partition between the two sides of the island has opened, I wanted to document what

lay untouched and unseen on both sides of the island along the line of partition. Unlike a border or a checkpoint between most recognized countries, the physical partition between Northern and Southern Cyprus is a constantly surveyed and protected barricade of different materials, dimensions and distances. It separates land but sometimes, as in the case of Nicosia (Turkish Lefkosa), the capital city of the "Republic of Cyprus," the physical partition cuts right through individual buildings and streets. The port city of Famagusta (Turkish Ammoxostos), which lies north of the green line, was a city with a primarily Greek Cypriot population. After being heavily bombed and anticipating approaching Turkish forces in 1974, the whole city of almost 40,000 inhabitants was evacuated in a matter of hours and has since remained untouched, barricaded from the public by Turkish forces.



Cyprus' struggle to solve its divisive ethnic problems and heal as a nation is as pertinent as it is unique. Issues of borders and the unification and division of nations and continents are at the forefront of international political dialogue. War and subsequent peace have taken on many forms, socially and architecturally. This green line of Cyprus was a structural solution to the war that broke out between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. The partition has had success in pacifying relations between Greek and Turkish Cypriots and reducing the day-to-day incidents of violence between the two communities. Incidents of violence dealt with by the UNFICYP are higher where the physical partition is narrower than where it is wider. Unlike the Berlin Wall, the physical partition in Cyprus, especially in Nicosia, is not meant to keep citizens from fleeing from one side to another, but to enforce peace between the two communities.

The wounds of the people of Cyprus, both Greek and Turkish, are deep, and the images of what each side lost after the partition are devastating. The barricaded homes have been empty for over thirty years and are no longer inhabitable; the infrastructure of abandoned cities is no longer navigable, but the ghosts of the past can still be felt through the images of what once was a unified island. A solution for unification may still seem like a distant reality in the eyes of the people, but the opportunity to cross the buffer zone that has long separated the populations has served the awakening reality of present day Cyprus and exposed Greek and Turkish Cypriots to each other, giving some support to the message of hope that is presented by the politicians initiating the peace dialogue. ■

FEVER GRASS | A BRIEF STUDY OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND WASTE MANAGEMENT IN DANGRIGA TOWN, BELIZE

What is the nature of the relationship between oral histories that, without accurate documentation, change and fade with the passing of time and chemical-based consumer products that stay intact for thousands of years? How is creative productivity and expression related to collective remembrance? How is collective remembrance related to agricultural sustainability? What solutions exist inside of indigenous collective memory for the contemporary problem of non-biodegradable packaging waste?

These questions are not meant solely for the community in which this brief study has taken place. They are intended for all of us who rely upon food, air, water, soil, and memory to function. The proliferation of harmful packaging materials, cultural amnesia, and the unlearning of unofficial histories leaves no one without responsibility.

The Fever Grass Project seeks to contribute to the ongoing international conversation about post-consumer packaging and its dangers. The study presents still- and time-based documentation of the stories shared with me by members of the community of Dangriga Town, Belize. It is my hope that the project will illuminate the dysfunction of “one time use” polystyrene and plastic commercial packaging, its accumulation, disposal, and unethical sale.

The people of Belize have a rich and empowered history rooted mostly in agriculture and creativity. This project provided an opportunity to participate in a contemporary discourse on the importance of sharing and documenting stories that reflect upon



TOMASHI JACKSON



the histories of families in this community. Such an inquiry demanded that we all look critically at what is happening now regarding agricultural stability and public recollection.

How is food security linked to cultural memory in Dangriga? The town has transitioned from a primarily farming and fishing community to one dependant upon importers and packaging for the delivery of food and water. People of Dangriga now live, like me, in response to the influx of specific materials both necessary and detrimental.

For three weeks I worked with a small team of people with these common objectives: (1) conducting interviews focused on regional collective memory and waste management; (2) facilitating printmaking workshops using discarded polystyrene clam-shell plates as surfaces to create culturally reflective imagery to be printed onto sewn tote bags, a viable alternative to plastic bags; (3) documenting the National Garifuna Council's Habinaha Garinagu or Dance Garifuna, a three-week summer program for Belizean youth to celebrate and preserve their indigenous language through ceremonial song and dance. The experimental plan drawings and research of team member and School of Architecture student Omar Walker illustrate the possibility of a facility that could function as an active alternative to small imported environmentally harmful packaging as well as a space for printmaking exploration.

I have chosen the languages of drawing, sculpture, printmaking, and installation to translate my experiences. I seek to utilize material as a cue for memory,

while questioning ideas of material as progress. The Fever Grass Project is an ongoing inquiry of possibility and interconnectedness that would have been impossible to initiate without the kindness and generosity of our hosts, educators Eugene and Felicia Hernandez. The Fever Grass Project team consists of Nia Evans, Jessica Lee, Zoe McCloskey, Omar Walker, Alana J. Fitzgerald, Lindsay Willemain, and myself, Tomashi Jackson.

"The density (or weight of a memory) is shaped to a large extent by the dramatic nature of the experience, its uniqueness, its being reconsidered or reinterpreted after the fact as a turning point."

Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan

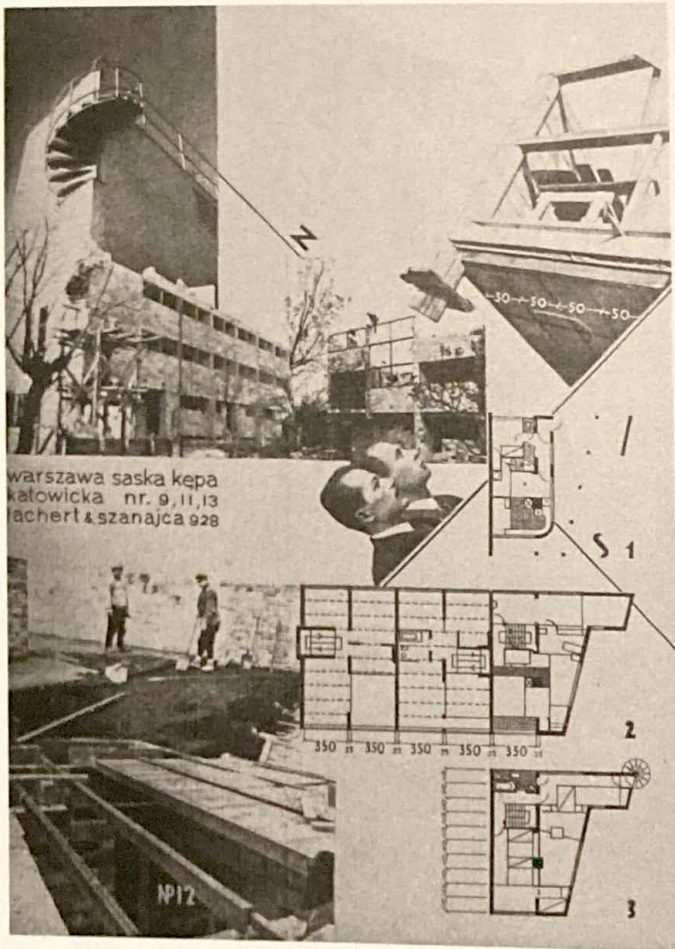




Above: Group photo of Habinaha Garinagu/
Dance Garifuna 2008 participants and Facilitators
Eleanor Castillo Bullock and James Lovell
Far Left: Michelle Irving printmaking at the offices
of P.O.W.A. (Productive Organization of Women
in Action)
Left: Zoe McCloskey discusses image selection
during the first printmaking workshop with the
women of P.O.W.A. (l to r) Deitha, Tomashi
(holding Aiden), Ifasina, Maria, Zoe



SZANAJCA'S AVANT-GARDE ARCHITECTURE AND RECONSTRUCTING WARSAW'S PALIMPSEST



Præsens, 1928

Before the Second World War, Poland, despite being in the midst of an economic crisis, was an important part of the international modern movement, and Józef Szanajca was its foremost activist. Szanajca was the Polish representative to the first key Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) meetings; he was part of the Polish team at the 1937 Paris Exposition, and he co-founded the critical modern magazine of the period between the wars, *Præsens*.

This prolific architect was killed in the war at the age of thirty seven, but he left behind about one hundred and fifty projects ranging in scales and levels of development. Forty of his buildings were realized. Despite his importance, only one catalog of his work has appeared. The ideology of Szanajca's architecture was in conflict with the interests of the subsequent communist regime. The post-war ruling Party's propaganda employed reconstruction of the historic old town. They erected monumental buildings ornamenting them with socio-realist sculptured pediments. The censorship of history books, which incorporated erasures, further obstructs the understanding of Poland's history. For me, as an architect, it was a *test* to return to the country I left with my family long ago, and to make sense of its history directly through its architecture.

In my photographic exhibition I (re)present two main problems: how the architect's ideas have survived the complex changes made by the buildings' inhabitants; and how the avant-garde architecture Szanajca represents influenced the post-war rebuilding of Warsaw. The exhibition juxtaposes the original photographs and drawings of his buildings against my documentation of their present states. Photographs and documentation of his exemplary building, Katowicka 9-11-13, are housed within a quarter-scale model of it. This structure acts as a soundboard for my exposure of the current states of still standing projects. To take the photographs I used the same techniques and equipment as those employed in the original published photographs,



keeping the visual language consistent with 1930s vocabulary. Szanajca's buildings are functional, modern, modular, and deeply humanist; reading their concrete alterations of structures speaks volumes about the architect's utopian vision confronted with the grayness of communism.

The technique of photomontage, which Szanajca himself often used, allows for the layering and tracing of the avant-garde's influences on the architecture that followed. My use of this method replicates the palimpsest of *Warszawa*. Warsaw is a montage; ninety to ninety-five percent destroyed in World War II, it is a new place rebuilt on top of ruins. There are few cities in Europe whose tragedy and sorrows are so visible in layers. The documentation of buildings that survived against the odds, and the changes made to them, inform the reading of the new Warsaw.

First, by occupying the physical architectural spaces Szanajca made and then by giving myself over to Warsaw, I came to feel history bearing down on me in a way that is hard to articulate or under-

stand, yet is conveyed here analytically. In exposing this neglected current of inspired and innovative architecture that sprung up between the wars, I have come to terms with the city that I always thought sad and have avoided, until now.

