

# The Line and the Circle

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The video work of Sharone Lifschitz is the artist's journey back to her childhood through the eyes of her mother the photographer. Two women converge upon the darkroom and from within the darkness and tranquility the world of a young Kibbutznik, a pioneer, a mother, a photographer is unveiled. The darkroom becomes a confessional. Confessions spoken in whispers are reciprocated over white photo papers gradually becoming images of a disappearing world. For the mother, the darkroom was a sanctuary, the place where she went to be alone away from the tumult of the kibbutz commune, whereas the daughter remembers the interludes with her mother in the darkroom as the only time that she had her mother to herself. An echo of a nagging memory of kibbutz childhood – the tumult of society on the one hand and the nights spent faraway from mother on the other.

The journey of Sharone Lifschitz and

her mother slices through three circles: the first is the close one of the private family album; the broader circle is that of the Kibbutz archive which preserves the fabric of kibbutz community life, a moment before the downfall when faced with the waves of capitalism and the determining force of affluent society. The third circle – the broadest – embodies the viewers' collective memory created in a world whose memory was moulded by the photographic image of the mid 20th century.

The first image appears, 1959 two years after establishing the settlement  
"What did you think....?"  
I felt great, I thought, you know, pioneers!  
We were educated for that, to build our country....."

The explanation is in the spirit of the socialist propaganda for which photography was instrumental in its expression. A second image appears between two pairs of hands

belonging to artist and mother dancing over the tray of chemicals: "Naomi hanging laundry". The mother is referring to a woman who was her friend and says: "distance creates distance". This utterance is also able to articulate one of the fascinating questions relating to the photographic medium. The photograph that negotiates between the original occurrence and the individual who is looking at it, shifts from bridging between the present time and the photographic moment that took place in the past, to embodying the formed shape of memory and, consequently, 'distances' us from that unadulterated experience towards a mediated experience, a pictorial experience.

In the third picture, a crack in the nostalgia becomes manifest; the first confession regarding discrimination in the kibbutz, it's about rejection. The photographic discourse extends beyond the realm of fact portrayed in the image; this is the moment where the

limitations of the photograph's ability to hold on to the complexity of sentimental memory become apparent. The picture does not tell the whole story. 'The whole story' can never be reduced to photographic concreteness.

A metaphor for this dichotomy between the concrete and the elusive, which exists within the photographic object, is articulated through the line and the circle reflecting in the developer tray. That line and circle are a reflection of a safety lamp and a neon light; they flicker, disintegrate and consolidate in endless motion, transitioning between coherent and amorphous and abstract form. The agitation of water accelerating the appearance of an image upon the photo paper is captivating. Momentarily, the line and the circle are a solid patch, a defined form and then, like flames of fire, a whirlpool of dissolution appears and the whole process repeats itself over and over again; similar to those insights inundating Sharone

and her mother and refusing to recede into the pictorial mesh.

An image depicting children and parents on the grass. The daughter asks: "When do you think it was taken?" The photographer engages in speculation: maybe after the war, maybe while celebrating the men's return... The image does not represent an absolute moment frozen in the time and space of prevailing memory; it represents one out of several possible moments in the time space continuum. Photography's hegemony as the superior chronicler of human culture regresses in the presence of uncertainty of what the photograph represents.

The video's language is linear. The images emerging from the white paper are only glimmers of selected photographic moments. The order of their emergence into the feminine discourse does not purport to be chronological but is arranged according

to the viewing timeline. In this manner, the reporting force of documentary photography is undermined in favour of engagement with the emotional labyrinth which overlays the conversation. One example is a sequence of images starting with a lawn mower pulling a train of small carriages on which kibbutz members are sitting having fun as if they were kids ("...the people seem happy", says the mother), the images go on to a pile of children's heads floating in the developer tray... Talking about the kindergarten teacher prompts the photographer (the mother) to request that the camera be turned off. At this point, the viewer is being led to the archive's blind spot, the sealed drawer, the silence of the women and the words that were spoken in front of a deactivated camera. The secret is insinuated in the photograph but its ungrounded story is created in the imagination of the viewer.

In the video work, several fundamental questions relating to photographic thought

are implied. While Sharone Lifschitz's statement "I cannot believe you thought it could work...." reflects the process that the Kibbutz underwent, it also enfolded a question concerning the medium of photography. The idea of the kibbutz did work. The certainty that it worked exists in the image that represents it; the image is both reflecting and present. This is also the improbability of the photograph – reality has changed, moved on; involvement is essential as it is part of cosmic law. Every living being is in a state of constant change, whereas the photographic image does not change, it remains alienated from the changes of time. In this way, photography disassociates itself from the truth value it carries in the moment of its creation - it lacks the ability to change and transform; an ability that exists and becomes realised in every instance of the photographed moment.

The question whether or not there was a time "you wanted to leave?" remains

hovering in thick darkness and drifting into the future...The conversation becomes detached from photography the moment it becomes preoccupied with the future, and with speculations. The photographic moment is left somewhat hesitant in light of its limitations. The photographic act always occurs in the present; the image always holds the past. The viewing experience brings us back again to the present. The future is not there for us, the photographers; we will have one more role of unexposed photographic film reserved for that, waiting in the drawer for one more moment of present.

The artist confesses that she did not shoot even one photograph for the purpose of the work. The video, however, arouses the archive from its hibernation and, in a way, creates a rebirth of the photographs giving them new life in the course of the conversation between the two women. Forty years of 'photographic pregnancy'

come between the photographed moment and the video timeline - the time when the printing of the pictures occurs while two women agitate the line and the circle in the developer tray.

On another level, in relation to the fact that the photographic process comprises many stages until realisation of the image, the video work examines the question which asks: When is a photograph actually created? Is it at the moment of the 'click'? Or, perhaps does that moment only create the pictorial potential, while the photograph itself is produced only after being preserved in development and the fixing of the negative? Perhaps the birth of the photograph occurs only at the stage in which it transforms from negative to image? Yet another possibility that the video work raises, is that perhaps only the redemption of the object from the depth of darkness of locked drawers and its deliverance to the viewer breathes life into it and makes it real.





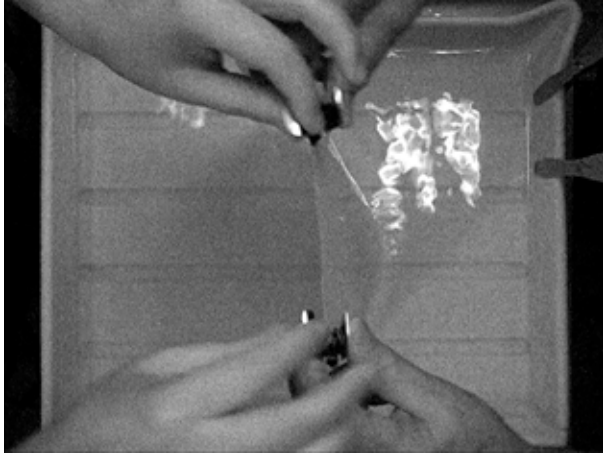
Sharone Lifschitz, Kibbutz: Archive No 06, 2009, B&W print on Ilford paper, 50x40cm (image Yoram YOLOVITCH)

Sharone Lifschitz, Kibbutz:Archive No 02, 2009, B&W print on Ilford paper, 50x40cm, (Image Yoram YOLOVITCH)

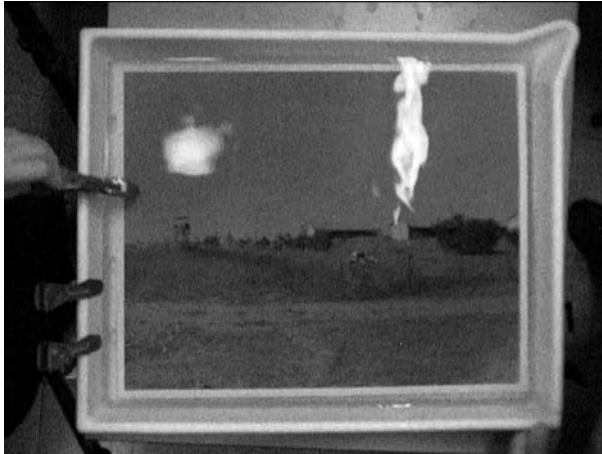




Sharone Lifshitz, Kibbutz:Archive No. 16, 2009, B&W print on Ilford paper, 50x40cm, (image Yochke Lifshitz)







Sharone Lifschitz, stills from video, *The Line And The Circle*, 2009, 19:26, 4:3 Single Screen SD Projection

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