

## PROFILES

### Translatable Narratives

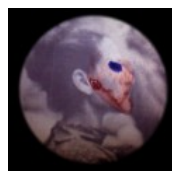
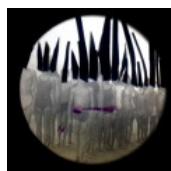
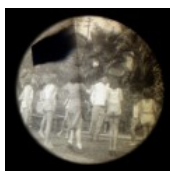
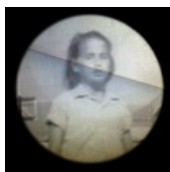
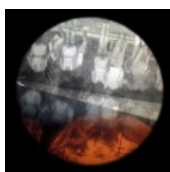
Rena Silverman | November 2012 - Issue 3 | No Comments



Nothing is more powerful than the transmission of signals from one human to another. Language, music, and the arts are only a few methods we use to perform in this system, we call communication. But, the Israeli Brooklyn-based artist Ofri Cnaani employs several mediums—often at once—to create a hybrid of translatable narratives that both play on the viewer's perspective and beckon his or her interpretation.

In her 2011 mixed media installation, *The Sota Project*, Cnaani covered the walls of a rectangular room with 10 connected projectors, each with different scenes. But, the scenes were all part of the same spacial narrative, which Cnaani constructed out of her own interpretation of an ancient and controversial Talmudic tale. But, each viewer saw something unique, as they had to choose between several points of focus throughout the narrative. The viewer's position in the rectangular room often impacted his or her decision. This interactive feature formed quite literally the viewer's interpretation. This key word, which floats between many worlds, including art and psychology, nearly bloomed into life in the *Sota* rectangle, which was, after all Cnaani's re-interpretation of an ancient text written about two women, but historically interpreted by only men.

Earlier this week, I spoke to Ofri Cnaani on the phone about her latest project, *Yes, Yes, Yes*, which explores—through a guided tour of female ecstasy—the relationship between pleasure and creativity, as translates, say, between a typewriter and an image or a computer and a piano.



**Rena Silverman:** You produce art through a lot of different mediums. How are you able to work with so many parallel tracks?

**Ofri Cnaani:** I work in different mediums and produce different bodies of work, but they relate to each other in terms of subject matter. I often think about these projects at same time, but in the end, they appear different. *The Sota Project*, which is a large scale video installation that reenact a controversial story from the Talmud, took five years to make —from working with the story from

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#### EDITOR'S NOTE

Stanley Siegel - Editor-In-Chief

Whether it's through sex, meditation, or making art we open our consciousness to the essence of who we are as individuals. The artists and writers presenting in this issue enliven our awareness by sharing the creativity and insights found during their own unique journeys. [Read more ...](#)

#### CURATOR'S REVIEW

Radka Salcmannova - Curator

In this issue of *Psychology Tomorrow Magazine* we give special attention to the concept of meditation both as a psychological/spiritual practice and as a potential experience when we interact with art. [Read more ...](#)

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the Talmud, to writing script with the collaborator, to funding the project—but I had other, shorter projects going on at the same time, like my cyanotypes or drawings. These are much more tangible and related to the studio.

**RS:** In a way these mediums reflect the space you use to make them. Spatial awareness is an important part of your work. I wonder if you could talk about how you use space to explore reality and perspective?

**OC:** We assume we know space. We assume we know reality. We assume we know our way around. But, we only know it from our own perspectives. We rarely see the world from underneath. And when we do see the world from a lower point, we suddenly cannot access that familiar reality we though we knew. The physical space translates very quickly to a psychological space. I built a large installation from translucent material [*Patrol* (2003)] where I showed images below, that were projected them from above. It was a claustrophobic space, a reality from the footsteps' perspective. It is very interesting to see those kinds of transformations, when a chair is reduced to just four dots where the legs touch the floor.

**RS:** How does using a projector help express that reality?

**OC:** Like translation there is so much space in between the medias, related to time, a moving object, or the way it's been produced. The spatial projections are actually similar to what I do and when I work with cyanotypes and engravings. The results may look different, but the concept is very similar. When I work with cyanotypes, I place three dimensional objects and sometime my own body on a paper coated with a UV sensitive material. Although this is a photography process without camera, when I'm imprinting my own body, to create double exposures. I put myself down, then I come up. Then I go to other side of that same sheet of paper and do it again. The making of it has a time-based process, just like performance and like the projections. To me, projections and cyanotypes are the same. They are both about objects and the way we think we know our way around physical word, which always seems to prove that there is a gap between what we know and how we perceive it.

**RS:** You often speak about your work in psychological terms. Can you explain why that is?

**OC:** Psychoanalysis is a language for me and I often think of my projects- from subject matters to working methods- using this terminology. My new work, *Yes, Yes, Yes*, is a journey following ecstasy, the history of ecstasy, the way to reach it, and the fantasy of creating it. It is a performance that takes the form of a guided tour (I used to do the Hebrew tours in Chelsea). I'm interested in the meeting point between body and mind in the moment of the heights of emotions and so for this project I looked at the documented history of ecstasy through the stories of six eccentric female characters. There are stations, each one comes with a character and his or her own story, which always unfolds into a more complex story, since ecstasy as a philosophical idea means being out of one's self. Each person is presented by one audio-visual machine. Each of the audiovisual machines are performing different translations, from one language to the other. So far, I have a typewriter that is connected to a series of images. Every time I type, an image is projected. [Laughs.] It's the only time I can type without typos, finally! Another machine translates information from a computer to a piano, so it produces music of chance. There are 6 of these machines and 6 minutes on each station. Each character uses one of those machines. The characters are all different. There is an OCD banker and Bemini's Teresa.

**RS:** What happens with Teresa?

**OC:** A lot has been written about her lips, the fact that they are open in the sculpture . She is experiencing ecstasy, religious ecstasy, but in my presentation, I connect her lips to different elements. You need but go to Rome and see the statue by Bernini to immediately understand that she's coming. There is no doubt about it. I hope to compare Teresa's open lips to a 1933 Czech film titled *Extase* which dated to the first time female orgasm is shown on the big screen. all what we see is the her face and open lips. from there i'm going to Australian website called Beautiful Agony, where people take videos of themselves having orgasms, but they only show their faces, no body or anything. This worked well with Teresa's open lips.

**RS:** You seem to integrate humor into your work. How delightful and rare! Can you tell me about this?

**OC:** I had two kids in the past five years. Becoming a mom added a lot of playfulness to my work. You have a few channels in your life. Don't get me wrong, I'm heavily invested in my work, but not in a way that is kind of ridiculous.

Cnaani will premiere *Yes, Yes, Yes* on November 17th at Princeton University.



About Ofri Cnaani

Ofri Cnaani (b. Israel, 1975) lives in New York and works in time-based media, and large-scale

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





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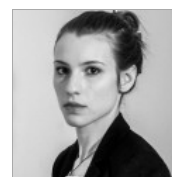
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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rena Silverman is a cultural journalist who covers and photographs the personalities and politics of the New York City Art World. As a writer for *BlackBook*, *Bomb*, and *The Photo Review*, she has gone inside the controversies, breaking news, and market trends of leading arts institutions and events, such as the Gagosian Gallery, the Smithsonian Institute, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Paris Photo, and TEFAF in Maastricht. With other contributions to *Fine Books & Collections* magazine, *Marie Claire*, and *National Geographic's* "Pop Omnivore," her profiles, interviews and photographs of leading art figures include features on art legend Sally Mann, photographer Mark Seliger, Gregory Crewdson, Cindy Sherman, musician Paul Simon, and artist Kiki Smith. Passionate about design, Rena collects rare books with a special interest in typography.

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installations. Ofri Cnaani graduated from Hunter College's MFA studio program in 2004. Recent projects include a large-scale commission to create 10 site-specific video installations relating to the architecture of 10 museums of contemporary art in Italy. Solo exhibitions / performances include: PS1/MoMA, NYC; Twister, Network of Lombardy Contemporary Art Museums, Italy; Andrea Meislin Gallery, NYC; Braverman Gallery, Tel Aviv; Pack Gallery, Milan; Haifa Museum of Art, Israel; Herzliya Museum of Art, Israel. Group exhibitions include: Moscow Biennial; The Kitchen, NYC; Bronx Museum of the Arts, NYC; Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna; Arnolfini Foundation Museum, Bristol, UK; Tel Aviv Museum; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Prague Triennale.

## Artist CV

Born in Israel, 1975. Lives and works in New York.

### Education

2002-2004 MFA, Hunter College Art School, New York

1997-2000 BFA, Beit-Berel College – School of Art, Israel Magna Cum Laude.

### Solo Exhibitions

#### 2012

The Sota Project, Fisher Museum of art at USC, Los Angeles (forthcoming)

The Sota Project, Macro Museum, Rome, Italy(forthcoming)

Special Effects, Andrea Meislin Gallery, NYC.

#### 2011

Public Notice: An Exhausted Film, BMW GUGGENHEIM LAB, NYC

performance by Ofri Cnaani, Cheryl Kaplan and Kathryn Alexander

The Sota Project, Rothschild 96, Tel Aviv

The Sota Project, Kunsthalle Galapagos, Brooklyn, NY

Three Acts of Betrayal, lecture- performance by Ofri Cnaani and Hadas Cohen, Galapagos Art Space, Brooklyn, NYC.

#### 2010

The Vanishing Woman, Live-cinema performance at PS1/ MoMA(as part as Greater New York performance program), NYC

Manja, The Bialik House, Tel-Aviv, Israel

#### 2009

Twister, Network of Lombardy Contemporary Art Museums (10 sites in 10 different museums), Italy.

Ofri Cnaani, Galleria Ugo Ferranti, Rome, Italy.

Tale of Ends, Le Poisson Rouge, New York.

#### 2007

Two Dimensional Days, Andrea Meislin Gallery, New York. (catalog).

Decreation, Braverman Gallery, Tel Aviv, Israel.

#### 2006

Death Bed, Haifa Museum of Art, Haifa, Israel (Curator: Ilana Tennbaum) (catalog).

#### 2005

The Blind Scenario, Pack Gallery, Milan (curator: Claudia Zanfi) (catalog).

The colonel and I, Andrea Meislin Gallery, New York.

#### 2004

WE, MFA Thesis Show, Hunter College / Times Square Gallery, New York.

The Sun Still Shines, Pack Galleria, Milan.

#### 2003

The Black & White Theater, Alon Segev Gallery, Tel-Aviv.

Art Focus 4, Jerusalem (curators: Yigal Zalmona and Susan Landau).

Patrol, Herzliya Museum of Art, Herzliya (curator: Dalia Levin)

#### 2002

Ofri Cnaani – Dror Daum, Alon Segev gallery, Tel Aviv.

#### 2000

Waiting Room, Peer Gallery, Tel Aviv.

### Group Exhibition

#### 2012

The Fertile Crescent: Gender, Art, and Society, Princeton University and Rutgers University (curators: Judy Brodsky and Ferris Olin) (forthcoming)

Marie –Laure Fleisch Gallery, Rome, Italy (forthcoming)

Video works from Hamidrasha Art School, Museo Laboratorio di Arte Contemporanea, Università di Roma La Sapienza (curators: Giorgia Calo, Doron Rabina, and Ben Hagari)

Accelerating Toward Apocalypse, Works from Doron Sabag Art collection, ORS Ltd., Givon Art Forum, Tel Aviv

2010

Handheld Histories, Queens Museum of Art, NYC  
 Corsiedpondense, Bezalel Academy Art Gallery, Jerusalem  
 Longitude & Latitude, Tivon Art Gallery, Israel (curator: Taly Cohen-Garbuz)  
 Finzioni-videoracconti contemporanei, Museo internazionale delle marionette Antonio Pasqualinodi (curator: Paola Nicita)  
 Looking In, Looking Out,, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem (Curator: Hagit Alon).  
 Rupture and Repair, The Adi Foundation and The Israel Museum, Artists' House, Jerusalem. (curator: Emily Bileski)  
 Metamorphoses: Error, Ofri Cnaani, Tamar Halpern and Vlatka Horvat, Braverman Gallery, Tel-Aviv.  
 Ecstasy, The former convent of St. Cecilia's P 21 Monitor Street, Brooklyn, NY

2009

FORUM DES IMAGES, Nuit Blanche in Paris, Paris (curator: Marie Shek)  
 The Situation, Moscow Biennial (special project), (curator: Elizabeth M. Grady)  
 Wild Exaggeration, Haifa Museum of Art, Israel (curator: Tami Katz-Frieman)  
 Fresh Fruits, Ten Haaf Project, Amsterdam.

2008

Video Zone, The 4th International Video-Art Biennial in Israel.  
 A Re-reading of the future, ITCA 2008 – International Triennale of Contemporary Art, National Gallery in Prague (curator: Danna Taggar)  
 Real Time: Art in Israel 1998–2008, Israel museum, Jerusalem (curator: Amitai Mendelson, Efrat Natan).  
 LOOP, Video Art Festival, Barcelona, Spain.  
 Mexico NewYork Paris, Estación Indianilla Centro cultural, Mexico City.

2007

Playing with Solitude, Ursula Blicke Videolounge at the Kunsthalle Wein, Viena (Curator: Tal Yahas).  
 Port-City, Arnolfini foundation Museum, Bristol, UK. (Curator: Tom Trevor)  
 Storytellers, Castello Dell'Acciaio, Scandicci, Italy. (Curator: Pietro Gaglianò)  
 The Space Between, Petach Tikva Museum, Israel (Curator: Drorit Gur Arie)  
 Bat Yam Museum, Israel (Curator: Neta Gal-Atzmon)  
 Art and Urban Practices- New City-Territories. Venice, Italy

2006

Disengagement, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv, Israel  
 Floating Symmetry, Going Public '06- Atlante Mediterraneo, Nicosia, Cyprus.  
 I Cant quite Place It, smack Mellon, Brooklyn , NYC (Curator: Elizabeth M. Grady)  
 LOOP, Video Art Festival, Barcelona, Spain

2005

AIM 25, Bronx Museum of Art, New York  
 ARCO 05, Madrid, Spain

2004

Going Public 04: maps, confines, new geographies, aMAZE cultural lab, Modena, Italy (curator: Claudia Zanfi)  
 Visionaries, Makor Art Center, New York.  
 Video:1Min:1800 Frames, City without Walls, Newark, NJ.

2003

Artik 5, American – Israeli "Sharet" Cultural Foundation Winners Exhibition, Ramat-Gan Museum, Ramat-Gan.

2002

The Kiss, Kalisher Art Gallery, Tel-Aviv

2001

Action Express, Kalisher Art Gallery, Tel-Aviv  
 Graduate Exhibition, Beit Berel-College-School of Art – "Midrasha"  
 Artik 3, American – Israeli "Sharett" Cultural Foundation Winners Exhibition, University Gallery, Tel-Aviv  
 VideoTrip, Video Art Nightly Project, Rosenfeld Gallery, Tel Aviv

Awards and fellowship

2007

HBI Research Award, Hadassah- Brandies institute, MA.  
 Six Point Fellowship, NYC

2005

AIM – Artist In the Marketplace fellowship program at the Bronx museum  
 2003-2004

American Israeli Cultural Foundation Overseas graduate scholarship.

2000- 2001

American Israeli Cultural Foundation  
 Beit Berel Certificates of Honor for artistic excellence

1999  
The Germany Foundation Certificate of Honor for academic excellence.

1998  
Beit Berel Certificate of Honor for academic achievements.

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