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NOA YEKUTIELI | RESEARCHING MEMORY THROUGH PAPER-CUTTING APRIL 15, 2014  
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In her elaborate two and three-dimensional works, Israeli artist [NOA YEKUTIELI](http://www.noayekutieli.com/) ([HTTP://WWW.NOAYEKUTIELI.COM/](http://www.noayekutieli.com/)) relies but on a simple set of artistic tools – black paper and a knife, which require only a skilled hand and a creative mind to guide them. Yekutieli is, undoubtedly, as technically accomplished in her chosen medium, paper-cutting, as she is creative, having taught herself the technique and established a distinct visual voice of her own. Extensively exploring the nature of

memory and longing, she lets the relatable stories unfold themselves from a basic premise and creates a reality in which viewers can attempt to comprehend the full complexity of remembrance.

What moved you to explore and research paper-cutting technique in the first place?

What drew me to the manual paper-cutting technique is that it was, and still is, like an ongoing research of a very basic thing that creates different 'colours', shades and emotions, like different brushes from only a piece of paper and a knife. I initially drew, and then started working with the material in a long process, during which I also changed – pieces are slowly cut out of the paper, a texture is created, and a story reveals itself to me. I think there is something very basic in the black and white contrast of the positive material of the black paper and the negative space of what is cut out. I think that life can be described on a very simple level, although we never really experience it that way. Mostly, we exist in the in-between, in the vague area of a lot of misunderstood moments, mostly the unspoken ones. Also there is a big matter of time and temporariness in this technique, the moment I cut out a piece of paper there is no going back, just like in one's daily life - moments pass and we can never change it or really glue it back, there will always be scars. Unlike other art techniques where you usually add material, like in drawing, painting and sculpture, in paper cutting it is a process of subtraction, my starting point is a whole paper and slowly I cut out and create holes in the paper; the void, the missing, creates the image and the memories.

Did you work with anything else as an artist prior to paper-cutting or has it become your sole artistic occupation from the very beginning?

I grew up in a family where everyone was, and still is, an artist, so I was around it my whole life - instead of watching TV, my brother and I would hang out in my parents' studio, drawing and working with different materials. When I finished high school I kind of tried not to be an artist and was looking for something more functional than only conceptual, so I studied drafting and pattern making in fashion design, but the long process was always in art. I would create drawings and paintings of feelings I wanted to create in the garment but I actually found myself starting from a deeper point and reaching surface, instead of starting from surface and diving into the blue unknown. Then I made a paper-cut piece of a feeling I wanted to make in a garment, but I couldn't stop myself and kept on exploring the technique, and to this day I never made that one garment I was planning to make. I am a person who really believes in process and research, both in the technique and the conceptual aspect, I see myself as a memory researcher who comes to life as a visual artist. Collages and writing are a very big part of my creative process as well, but I don't exhibit them. Now I am working on an artist book in which I will be talking about the idea of 'missing'; it will be made out of my collages, writing and paper-cut pieces and the dialogue between them all.

Is there anything about your work technique that people are generally unaware of?

Like I said before, I think that when you really explore and observe the simple things you see and understand that everything could be seen there. There are people that deal and work with a wide aspect of different fields and materials but I am from the other type that believes in seeing colour in things that don't seem to have colour in them. People always ask me how long it takes me to make a piece and it always feels so irrelevant because things take time, sometimes less and sometimes more. It's like asking how long it took you to think of an idea, to understand something or write a beautiful sentence. The time it took could be a second or more, but where it came from and its process is much longer, larger and more interesting.

As a very prolific artist, do you ever struggle with your search for new ideas or forms to express through your work?

For me it is all one big process, exhibitions are just a stop on the way, when I offer people to come for a short or a long walk in the ideas and issues that I deal with at the present moment. Of course, I can't say that it comes down to a stop on the way because I am mostly an installation artist where I really think of the reality, environment, space and feeling I want to create for the viewer. I work mostly on site specific installations, but my installations mostly involve the meeting point of pieces that I create for a long period of time, which represent very clear understanding points and also not so clear or understood moments. I see pieces as a capsule of time that capture the specific moment as well as the unspecific. Memory and time are semi-controlled and mostly uncontrolled and random, that's what I try to bring to my installations. The transition from two-dimensional work to installation derived from my desire to deviate from the single narrative; installations span a wider range of works, which enables you to experience moments of clarity and obscurity, desolation and interest. It is an experience better suited to our perception of time, which is not the sum of a process, but an abstract of a long process, in which one thing leads to another. In the past two years, ready made objects are also a big part in my work, where I see them as a very big inspiration point. I think that objects contain memories in the most authentic way, so obviously I can't not involve them in my work, while talking about memories. Sometimes I also combine the two and create paper-cut pieces in the ready-made objects.

Natural and ever changing shadow has become an important element of your work. How does it influence the perception of scenes that you portray?

In the past, the shadows were a big part of my work – I found that the ongoing change of the pieces and shadows is like a metaphor of our inability to really control. Lately I changed the way I frame my work and the shadows are less present, although they still exist in specific areas of the pieces but much less than before. I think that the decision to frame the pieces in a more simple way comes from a different need of mine to treat the pieces more randomly and not as individual art pieces. Also, there used to be negative space around each piece in the frame that I don't do anymore because I find a lot of meaning in the void in the pieces themselves, so I don't see any meaning in the space that is around each piece.

What draws you to the themes of human struggle, longing, memory, natural disasters, vividly present in your work?

I explore the fickle nature of memory through natural disasters, which erase an entire physical reality, leaving only memories that gradually blur and dissolve to make room for a newly evolving reality. The disaster, however, is not the subject of my work, but only the frame story whereby I observe the resulting void, the locus, whose absence we feel and strive to fill, the place which we miss. The ruined house, which metaphorically expresses the concept of the empty space, is not only a physical place, but also an emotional one, which carries an entire world of memories and experiences with it, a place whose disappearance elicits the need to reconstruct it completely. I arrived at the all-so-sensitive and volatile subject of natural disasters because there is something about such an extreme event that leads to a concise process of memory construction. We can never see the whole picture with clarity. Unintentionally, we omit many moments that occurred and are unable to experience the moment and know what preceded it.

The memory eliminates almost everything that happens and I believe we need to accept the missing and the void. If we had to carry the entire baggage of personal, familiar, social, and political memory of our history, we would not have had the room to absorb our experiences and develop a subjective point of view on what happens to us. We endeavour to fill the gaps, so we do not feel the void, but these gaps form a significant part of our lives. They are present all around us, both physically and mentally, and I believe we must always leave room for what is absent and is missing, and accept it because this is what allows movement and change.

What is the "new reality" as a concept in your work?

The "new reality" is the memory. I think that it is usually very far from what really happened; we start from a point of remembering specific parts of what happened, illuminating so many details. These images slowly develop into less and less images, so that we end up remembering an abstract image of something that reminds us of something much bigger. This 'final image of memory' also changes all the time according to our emotional ability and need. We often regret not being able to remember a given

moment of great happiness or pain, and feel angry that we fail to recall the things as they happened. In my recent installation *Through The Fog, The Distance* at the Wilfrid Museum, and in my work in general, I would like to create an experience which explains why we cannot remember everything. Had we remembered everything, we would have felt suffocated and would not have been able to go on. I also think that the feeling of missing and longing is something very dominant in our 'new reality' which I believe we need to accept and don't need to try to fill.

Do you feel liberated or constrained by the fluidity of interpretation that your work is subjected to?

I think that the sooner you understand that things are always read and understood differently than what you meant to put out, the easier it is. I cannot control the personal baggage that people come with, and I think that in art that's a lot of what they see. I learned to accept and enjoy the different levels, on which people interpret my work, just like anything else.

Your most recent solo exhibitions included site-specific installations. How different does it feel to work within a given space rather than accommodate the space to suit your vision?

Installation allows reference to the space. I like the connection with the space, with its movement, the need to relate to the limitations of the space and make them an anchor in the work. Moreover, the work in space leaves physical, three-dimensional room for the void too. By imposing limitations on one's movement in the space, the viewer is forced to heed the nonexistent as well as the existent. I love that in installations I have the ability to create a whole reality for the viewer as opposed to leaving them in the position of observing others.

What role does modern art play in Israel at the moment?

Contemporary art is very developed in Israel. I think that in a place where life, in all aspects, is so charged and loaded, the need to create and speak out is bigger. But I also think that every place has it in their own distinct way.

What are you working on now or planning to work on in the near future?

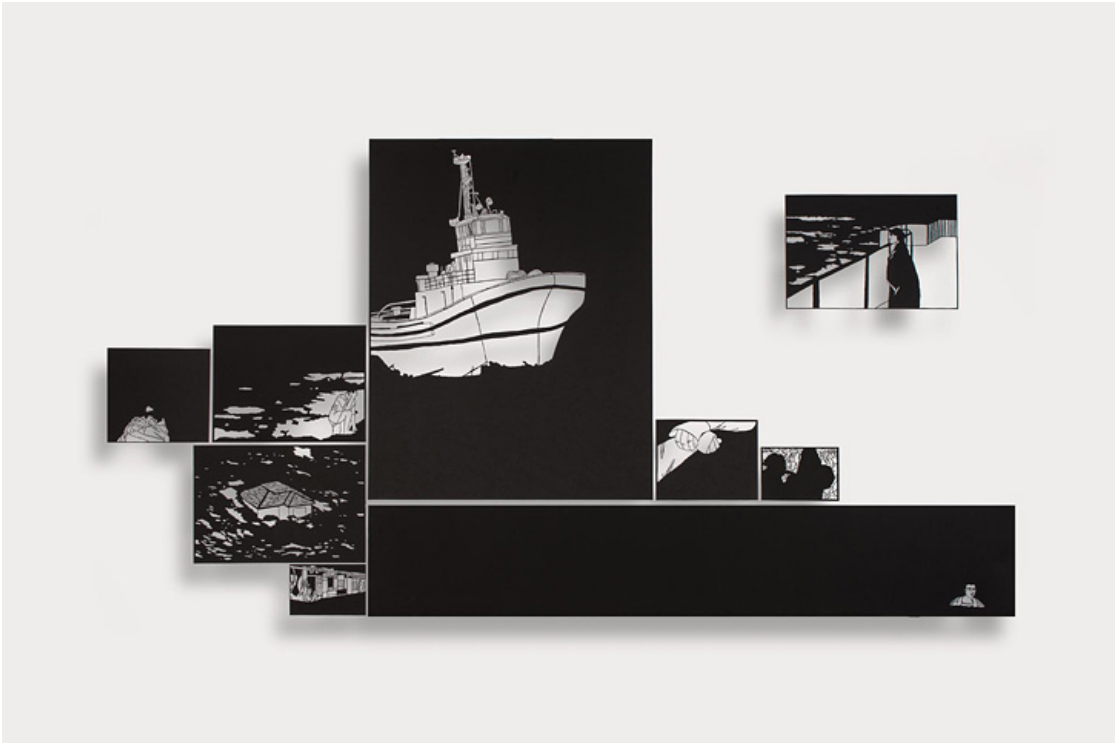
I have exhibitions planned both in Israel and abroad for the next year, but my next project is definitely my book that I will be launching in June. I am really excited about it and looking forward to going back to the studio.

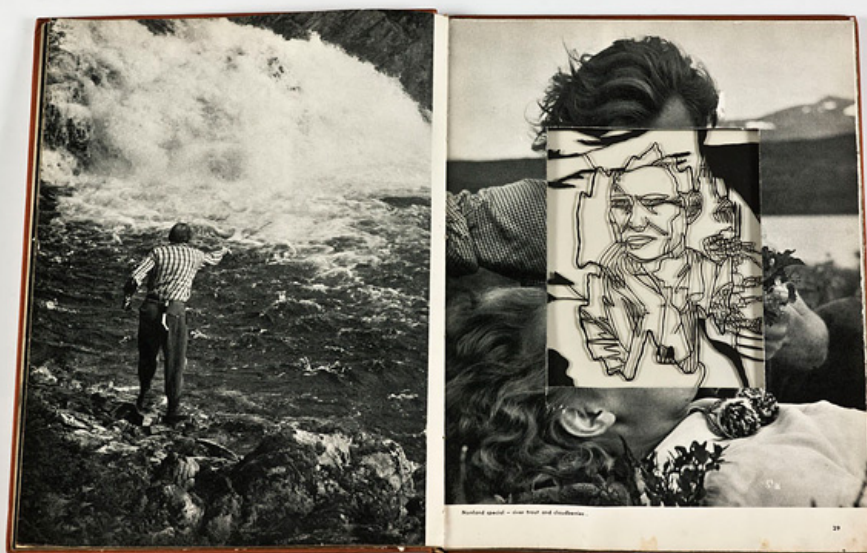




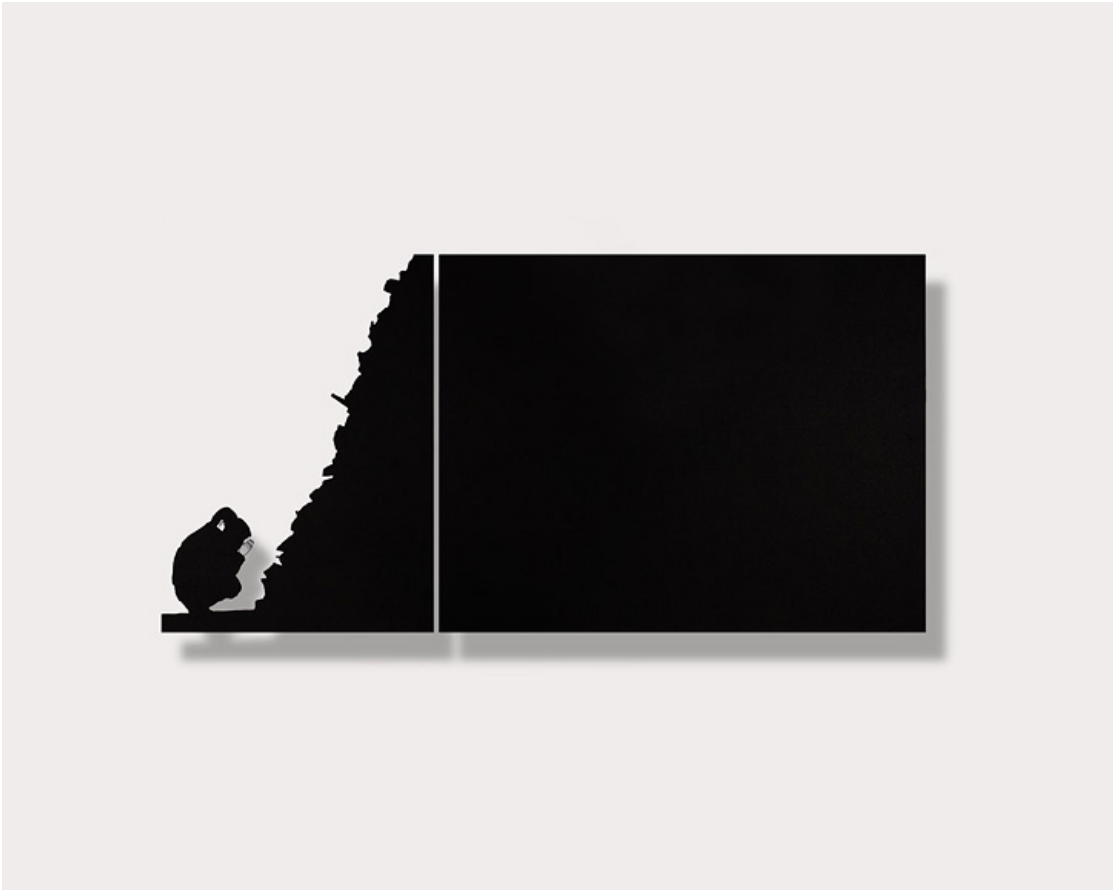


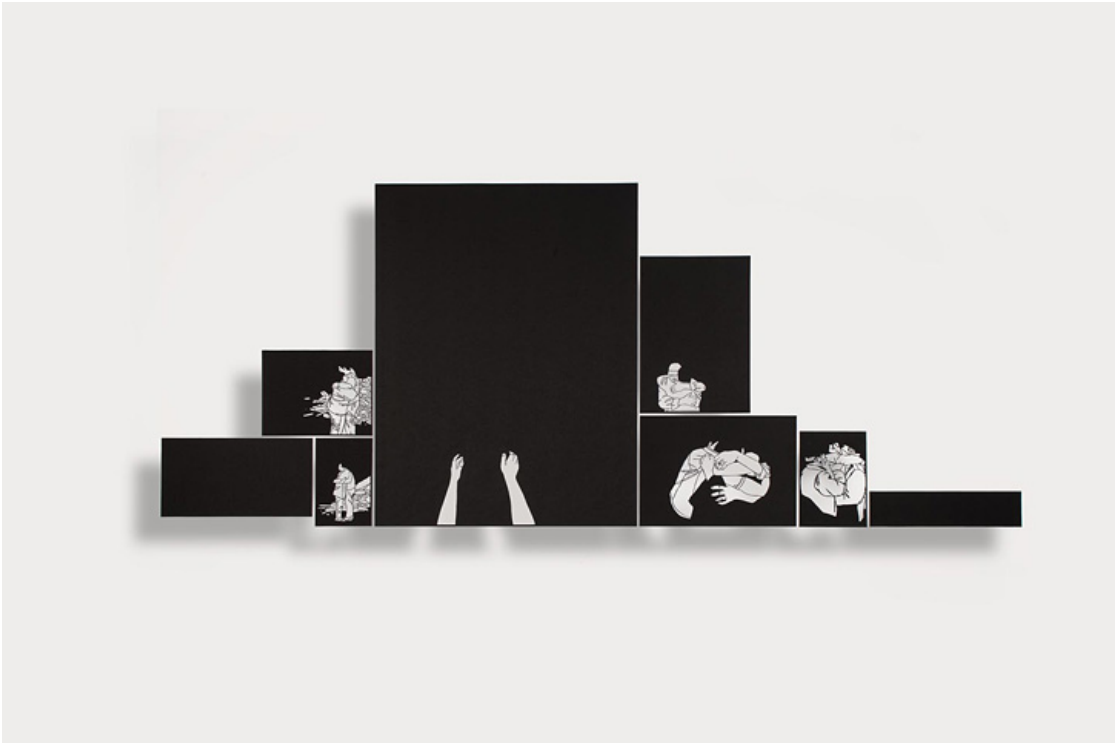






Richard's portrait - after David and Chaudhury.











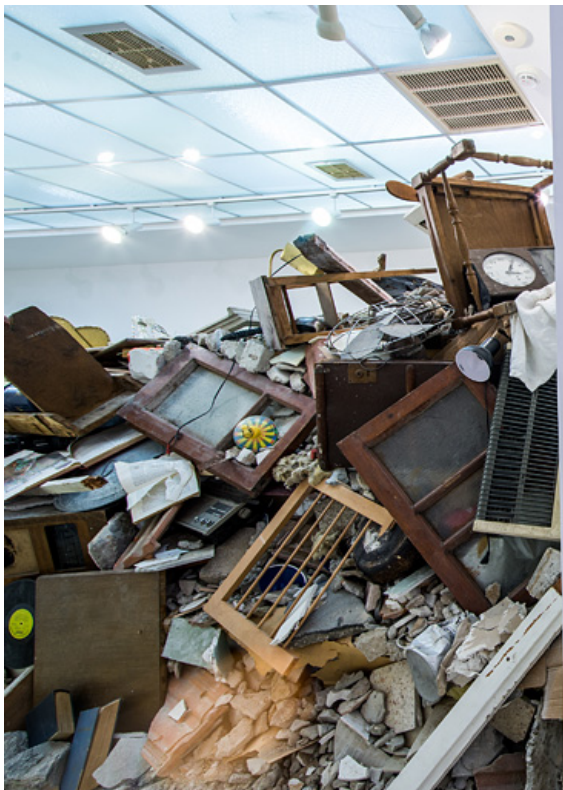
















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