Susan Hazan
Curator of New Media
The Israel Museum, Jerusalem
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shazan@imj.org.il
http://www.imj.org.il

Locating [Israeli] digital art - artists think global and act local

Introduction

This paper focuses on the problem of **locating** digital art using the test case of Israeli digital artists. Acting either globally or locally depends on three factors. The first would be concerned with affixing the national label, (such as *Israeli artist*), which would mean that at least the artist, if not the art work, could be actually located in a specific country. Through the Israeli case study it is apparent that many Israeli artists are not actually located in Israel and even if they are, they often reside and exhibit abroad.

The second factor that determines how artistic [digital] work is disseminated and consumed globally or locally is a matter of artistic content. One of the ways that digital art becomes localised is through language, and through the incorporation of the Hebrew language into their palette, Israeli artists effectively limit their global reach. Of course this is not only a problem for Israeli artists but for all artists who draw on the written word as a crucial element of their digital creativity.

The third issue this paper explores is concerned with locating digital art. When artists choose to exhibit their works online discarding both the physical museum and often their own national affiliation, the provenance of *netart* as a result becomes somewhat obscure. Both the physical museum and the national anchor have traditionally served as institutionalising devises of contemporary art and without one or the other, netart may appear to be illusive, ephemeral or dislocated.

Through a series of examples drawn from Israeli works and elsewhere, this paper illustrates how netart may be anchored either in local cultural activity or more ephemerally disseminated across global networks. Where artistic creativity is no longer situated in the physically-located museum or restrained by a nationally-affixed identity this paper will consider emerging scenarios by which digital creativity may be located elsewhere and may be simply denoted as *online*.

The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

The Israel Museum, one of the ten largest encyclopaedic museums in the world, serves local visitors from Jerusalem and throughout Israel as well as the thousands of visitors who come to the museum from all over the world. Its terraced 20-acre campus includes a 6-acre art garden, with the main museum comprising nearly 50,000 sq. m. encompasses the Archaeology, Judaica and Jewish Ethnography and Fine Art wings. The three curatorial wings of the main museum include 22 departments with extensive holdings of the archaeology of the Holy Land, and fine art holdings from Old Masters in European Art, through international contemporary art. In addition to the art collections, visitors throng to the Shrine of the Book to see the internationally renowned Dead Sea Scrolls, the five-acre Sculpture Garden designed by the Japanese-American sculptor Isamu Noguchi, and archaeology collections that reflect Israel's position as a bridge between the great civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia.

As Curator of New Media at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (since 1992), I have been active throughout the Museum in many ways, with responsibilities that include identifying and implementing electronic applications for the galleries, and outreach programs.   This year I have been involved in several new projects, including curating *Living Together[i]* at the Israeli Knesset (Parliament), the *SEE* project and a video conferencing series *The Dead Sea Scrolls Live[ii]*. The project *Living Together* initiated by Member of Knesset Yuli Tamir, emerged from discussion in the Knesset (Israel's parliament) Education and Culture Committee about the difficulties that young people in Israel face in dealing with the complex reality of their lives. The discussion in the Knesset revealed a range of negative stereotypes, fears and suspicions, which surface when young adults perceive others as 'different' from them. *Living Together* brought together one hundred and forty youth from all parts of Israel, offering them an opportunity to describe how they perceive the society in which they are living, how they feel about themselves, and how they feel about others who are different from them. Students came from all sectors of Israeli society: from the affluent neighbourhoods of Tel Aviv, from agricultural schools in rural communities, Bedouin living in the Negev desert and religious students. The young adults came from Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities and they spoke Hebrew, Arabic, Russian and Amharic.

חיים ביחד
نحيا سوية
living together

עברית
عربية
English

The Project 'Living Together' brings together youth from all parts of Israel and offers them an opportunity to describe how they percieve the society that they are living in, how they feel about themselves, and how they feel about others who are different from them.

התכנית "חיים ביחד" מקבצת יחד בני נוער מכל רחבי הארץ ומעניקה להם הזדמנות לספר איך הם רואים את החברה בה הם חיים, איך הם מרגישים כלפי עצמם וכלפי אלו השונים מהם.

برنامج "نحيا سوية" يجمع معا مائة وأربعين شابا وشابة من جميع أنحاء البلاد ويمنحهم فرصة التعبير عن رأيهم بالمجتمع الذي يعيشون به وكيف يشعرون تجاه المختلفين عنهم.

Screenshot of *Living Together*

Students were invited to the museum and at the end of the day, were given their own disposable camera and invited to describe their notion of 'other' using the analytic tools they had received during the visit, the exhibition texts, and a critical understanding of how photography can be used as a social tool. Drawing on their museum experience, students were directed to look through the lens into their own homes, schools and neighbourhoods, focusing on those in their own community they felt were different from them in some way. The stories and images the young adults created produced critical insights into the complexity of cultural, national and religious subjectivity that comes with living together in the mosaic of Israeli life. The project culminated in a modest but prestigious photographic exhibition held in the lobby of the Knesset, and a comprehensive website that presented the images and voices of each participant. The personal narratives were reproduced with the photographs in an online database accessible by image title, student's name or school with the original texts in Hebrew and Arabic subsequently translated to English.

Working with Dr. Adolfo Roitman, Curator of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the New Media Department has been developing an innovative online project, conducted together with the Politecnico di Milano bringing participants from around the world into the [virtual] Shrine of the Book. The *SEE* (*Shrine Educational Experience*) is 3D educational space that brings together students aged 12 to 19 from all over the world in an innovative experience. During the real-time sessions, students interact and cooperate in the virtual world while learning, playing and discussing cultural issues inspired by a close investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the 2000-year-old manuscripts found at Qumran near the Dead Sea. SEE is a unique educational experience, a bridge between cultures in a shared 3D space that represents the Shrine of the Book at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem and the desert community of Qumran.

Several other exhibitions over the past year throughout the Museum incorporated new media elements, including *Sports and Art*[iii], in the Ruth Youth Wing, the education

3

wing of the museum.   The exhibition combined objects from the Museum's collections, works created by Israeli artists especially for the exhibition, photographs, installations, film excerpts, and activity corners.   Curated by Efrat Nathan, the exhibition also included a number of digital, interactive, installations - Ariel Almos' *Virtual Playground*, 2003, and Buky Grinberg's *Gate*, 2003.

Ariel Almos, *Virtual Playground*, 2003

Almos's *Virtual Playground* invited visitors to don coloured hats which are individually 'read' and enable players, each in their turn, to hit a moving ball with their own coloured bat – much like the classical screen game *Pong*, only this time using their body (and hat) rather than their hands.   The game is set against the background of a sandy beach where other visitors can casually relax against the background of a video seascape.

Buky Grinberg, *Gate*, 2003

Grinberg's *Gate* tracks a gymnast leaping into thin air while somersaulting twice before he miraculously lands safely on the ground, only to repeat his looped feat over and over again. Visitors stand below the archway of monitors watching his daring act, wondering whether this time he will actually make it. (He always does).

Additionally, the Museum exhibited *Liquid Spaces*[iv], curated by Alex Ward, Curator, Department of Design and Architecture showcased a group of five artists who reside, exhibit and teach in New York. Trained as a jazz musician, Amit Pitaru writes his own software for his work and has collaborated with illustrator and printmaker James Paterson on an interactive project combining drawing, sound, and video. Under the name of *InsertSilence*, their projects (which include Bjork's *Pagan Poetry*, *Delight for Diesel*, and 222 for Sony PlayStation[v]) have been exhibited in venues such as the Design Museum, London, the Pompidou Center, Paris, the Sundance Film Festival, and the Seoul Metropolitan Museum of Art. The recipient of several awards, including Ars Electronica and Sundance Online Nomination for 2003, Pitaru leads creative workshops for IBM, AT&T, MTV, Sony, and Warner Bros., as well as teaching at the Pratt Institute and the Interactive Telecommunications Program at New York University.

Pitaru's work may be *played* online, and galleries or museum, including our own, point to his site when exhibiting his work online. In a specially sound-proofed room in the Israel Museum Design Gallery, Pitaru exhibited a number of looped projects which ran from a local server and included a special interactive version, of *Hammond Flower*[vi], a 3-minute recording of the artist performing on the *Hammond-Flower* instrument. Visitors were able to 'interrupt' the *Hammond Flower* by interacting with

the instrument using a touch-screen and watching the 'flower' respond to touch and listening to the sounds evoked by the finger-tip explorations.
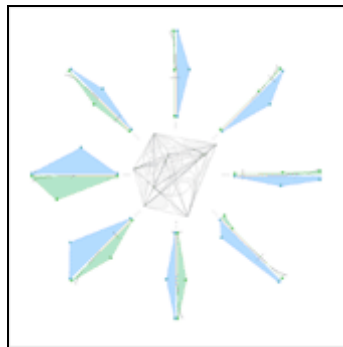
Amit Pitaru, *Hammond Flower*

Pitaru also exhibited *Pagan Poetry* which resonated with the eerie tones of Bjork's voice, with the animated images that followed the mouse acting in perfect harmony to the timbre and rhythm of the music. Visitors enjoy interacting with the dance laid out before them on the screen, quickly falling under the spell of both Pitaru and Bjork.

Pitaru and Paterson (InsertSilence) + Bjork + Nick Knight (ShowStudio). *Pagan Poetry*
Medium: Interactive Software, Recorded Animation, Pilot-Pen Illustrations.

The spatial metaphors that connect sound and motion in Pitaru's work recall the work of Russian physicist Lev Termen, who in 1919 invented the Theremin[vii], an instrument played by moving around the device without actually touching it. The dance-like hand gestures that create the sound in fact move through two electromagnetic fields - one that increases and decreases volume, and the other for pitch, creating an eerie electronic sound still popular today with several folk and rock groups.

Global Versus Local

Romy Achituv (www.gavaligai.com) is an Israeli artist currently living, working and teaching in Seoul. With a formal background in sculpture, his work often includes photography, video and performance art, both in traditional and new media settings. Camille Utterback & Romy Achituv first exhibited *Text Rain* in 1999 in New York

and it was included in the inauguration show of MOCA Taipei, Taiwan in 2001. The work has since been exhibited in several locations around the world, including the Kiev International Media Art Festival, Center for Contemporary Art, the Kiev, Ukraine; the Microwave International Media Art Festival, Hong Kong City Hall, Hong Kong; at the WRO Biennale, WRO Center for Media Art, Wroclaw, Poland; in Montevideo/Netherlands Media Art Institute, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Ars Electronica Center, Linz, Austria; the Seoul Metropolitan Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea; at the European Media Art Festival 2000, Osnabruck, Germany; at NTT InterCommunication Center, Tokyo Japan; Postmasters Gallery, New York, NY, at the New Langton Arts Gallery, San Francisco, CA, as well more recently at the Reading Festival in Tel Aviv in 2003.

Camille Utterback & Romy Achituv, *Text Rain*, **1999**

Visitors are mesmerised by the falling text which settles like raindrops on their reflection on the screen, and as they reach out to catch a handful, or an armful of falling letters they try to make out what they are saying. *Text Rain* in fact gently reveals a poem by Evan Zimroth, *Talk, You* and as more letters are harvested, so words begin to come together and phrases of the poem appear. Visitors not only interact with the installation but also with one another as they endeavour to accumulate enough 'rain' to be able to read the text. In the version that was shown in Israel, the poem by Amir Gilboa falls on the visitor in Hebrew letters. The Hebrew text in the site-specific version of *Text Rain* is critical in that it allows local audiences to become absorbed in the piece without the language barrier of English and once read, the cultural specification of the poem then reaches directly into the Israeli psyche.

Michal Rovner's *Time Left,* exhibited at the Israel Pavilion[viii] of the 50th Venice Biennale (15 June - 2 Nov 2003), curated by Mordechai Omer, included two digitally manipulated works that captured the imagination of many of the thousands of visitors that came to the Israel Pavilion.
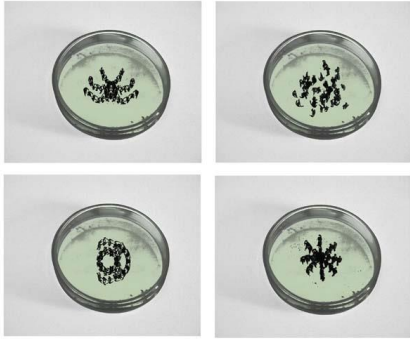
Michal Rovner
Datazone, **2003, the Israeli Pavilion**
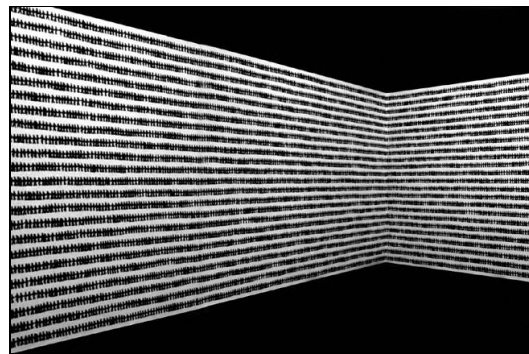**50th Venice Biennale**

Michal Rovner (close up)
Datazone, **2003, the Israeli Pavilion**
50th Venice Biennale

Visitors peering into the tiny Petri dishes could make out what appeared to be monochromic constellations, reminiscent of genetic coding. On closer inspection, these 'gene-swarms' emerged as minuscule people, forming and reforming patterns almost devoid of any human characteristics – even at the microscopic level.

Michal Rovner
Time Lefte, **2002, the Israeli Pavilion**
50th Venice Biennale

Michal Rovner
Time Lefte, **2002, the Israeli Pavilion**
50th Venice Biennale

Screened on all four walls of the pavilion, the tiny black figures that appear to move in a relentless but aimless procession stand out against the stark white walls. Rovner's video footage was shot in Russia, Romania and Israel, but the minimalist manipulation of the video scrupulously erased any identifying information that could locate where these people were going to or from whence they came.

Hila Luli Lin, *Ein Gabot*, **2004**

The Israeli Center for Digital Art's recent exhibition *Shame[ix]*, curated by Hanna Farah, presented Hila Lulu Lin's work in an unusual location – the gallery's public toilets. The selection of the location was not in itself original - some months previously, Sigalit Landau had shown her bronze man-urinal in the toilets at *Art Focus*, the fourth international biennial of contemporary art in Jerusalem held in the Museum of Underground Prisoners during the winter of 2003-4, but in the Digital Artlab in Holon the location served well to stage the work. Through the open bathroom cabinet, a woman's face looks into the mirror and into the visitor's eyes as she shaves off both of her eyebrows. This intimate act is both silent and violent and as we watch this act of self-mutilation in mute compliance we cannot but wonder what sort of shame the protagonist is revealing or hiding through the cupboard doors. A clue is offered in the Hebrew name – *Ein Gabot*, a title that is misspelled (in Hebrew) to sound like the name of an Arab city rather than a reference to 'no eyebrows' which is what the title would read had it been spelled correctly. Is Lin referring to Arab communities wiped off the map either physically or semantically in this word-play, referencing the way that Arab towns and villages are replaced on current maps by Hebrew names? *Ein Gabot* is not an electronically fabricated intervention. This woman is clearly removing her eyebrows in our presence. Our witnessing of the event and our compliance in the act serves as a reminder of our mute acquiescence to other violent deeds that take place elsewhere.

While Lin's eyebrow removal documentation is very real, subverting reality however is a recurrent feature of contemporary digital creativity. Images are manipulated to produce new truths. Video footage is edited to narrate false reality. Watching Boaz Arad's *Hebrew lessons*, 2000, from the exhibition *Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art[x]* at the Jewish Museum, New York, 2002, the images recalls an infamous figure gesturing on the screen while the familiar voice in the background offers proof enough that we are watching authentic cinematic footage of Adolph Hitler in a surprising, 13-second monologue. The screen portrays a tiny Hitler, - animated in his famous gesticulations - trapped in the loop of an eternal sound byte. Through the manipulation of authentic audio documents, Arad assembled 10 inter-cuts that dupe the Nazi leader into a public apology in the language of his victims –

Hebrew. When I first came across this work, I was frozen in total disbelief. I stood by this mesmerizing installation for many minutes, delighting in Hitler's unbroken Hebrew announcing over and over again for the benefit of anyone who cared to listen, "*Shalom Yerushalayim, ani mitnatzel*" - Shalom Jerusalem, I apologize. The impact of Hitler's apology, especially in that it was in Hebrew was shocking - but for non-Hebrew speakers, this would be less immediate.

According to Joan Rosenbaum, Director of the Jewish Museum:

> *Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art* focuses on thirteen contemporary, internationally recognized artists who use imagery from the Nazi era to explore the nature of evil. Their works are a radical departure from previous art about the Holocaust, which has centered on tragic images of victims. Instead, these artists dare to invite the viewer into the world of the perpetrators. The viewer, therefore, faces an unsettling moral dilemma: How is one to react to these menacing and indicting images, drawn from a history that can never be forgotten?
>
> (Rosenbaum 2002[xi])

This was not an exhibition for everyone. The banal and irreverent treatment of the subject could be seen as abhorrent, even unbearable for some. This was an exhibition that was developed for a media-saturated generation, for visitors who had probably harvested most of their own fact or fiction about the Nazi era though the media or from Hollywood movies. Holding up a mirror to this kind of imagery, the exhibition presented a critical and sometimes shocking repertoire of experiences. According to James E. Young, Professor of English and Judaic Studies at the University of Massachusetts:

> For a generation of artists and critics born after the Holocaust, the experience of Nazi genocide is necessarily vicarious and hypermediated. They haven't experienced the Holocaust itself but only the event of its being passed down to them. As faithful to their experiences as their parents and grandparents were to theirs in the camps, the artists of this media-saturated generation make their subjects the blessed distance between themselves and the camps, as well as the ubiquitous images of Nazis and the crimes they committed found in commercial mass media. These are their proper subjects, not the events themselves
>
> (Young *2002[xii]*)

Mirroring Evil breaches the sacred wall of the silence of the Holocaust, opening up new spaces, in an effort not only to understand the history of the events that took place during the Nazi era, but in a brave attempt to do the unthinkable, to look evil in the face.

One of the key moments of the breach of Holocaust remembrance protocol took place in an exhibtion at the Israel Museum. The 1997 exhibition of Roee Rosen's *Live and Die as Eva Braun* first described Hitler through images and texts as a flesh and blood individual whose mistress's persona was so palatable in the exhibition, that visitors

could all but identify with her. This was perhaps the first instance that the taboo of naming and depicting Hitler was broken within the public spaces of Israeli museums and galleries, thereby setting a precident for further exhibitions and works such as Arad's. However, as powerfully as Arad's *Hebrew Lessons* in the New York museum resonated for some people, for those who remained behind the language barrier, their responses were predicated on a translation, and once translated, the work lost its immediacy and much of its transgressive potency.

Barriers of Language - Online

In an interview[xiii] in April 2000, when asked by Sven Spieker about the state of net art and net artists in Russia, Olia Lialina, the Moscow-born, practitioner and theoretician of the Internet replied:

> As far as the Russian internet is concerned, the internet itself is obviously about the abolishment of borders. It is true that in the age of the internet it has become very easy for people in Russia to communicate with their relatives in Israel. At the same time there are new borders that have appeared because of the internet. These are borders of language.

> (Lialina, 2000)

Much has been written on the borderless Internet and the way in which art and artefacts slip silently across geographic boundaries and international borders. Producing and disseminating art in this way may be truly global but the decisive moment in the appropriation and reception of the artwork lies in the moment of consumption. These factors may be technical (the user's access to suitable hardware and software), or alternatively culturally-based. Perhaps the most radical of cultural divisions is that which is brought about by language. Artists like Achituv are well aware of the language factor when they construct their text-based works to insure that they are meaningful. Site-specific art adaptations of course are don't only apply to works created in the digital arena. Where art works integrate text, artists have often breached the language border in order to make their work more meaningful to local communities such as Robert Indiana's internationally recognised *Love* sculpture which has been translated to Hebrew in the Israel Museum's Billy Rose Art Garden.

Robert Indiana
AHAVA
sculpture, 1976
The Billy Rose Art Garden, The Israel Museum

Robert Indiana
LOVE
sculpture, 1976
John F. Kennedy Plaza, Philadelphia, US

Digital arts incorporate many strategies. Some digital projects are predicated on the subversion or augmentation of reality - both easily accomplished through digital manipulation. Other net art projects rely heavily on the dissemination of the written word. Even access to a networked project presupposes a familiarity with a www domain, an alpha-numeric inscription that points to the art. URL's (Universal Resource Locaters), are currently in English, and their functionality is determined by at least a minimum familiarity with English (as well as an English keyboard and operating system). Once inside the site, navigational tools and systems may or may not be in a language that is familiar to the surfer. More importantly, the language that is embedded in the content must be accessible to the user in order for the work to be relevant. As Lin's installation illustrates, a certain familiarity of language skills and local politics is required in order to access the culturally-specific codes embedded in her work. Without either the language, or a certain political awareness, visitors are unable to unlock the underlying principal of the art, while at the same time remaining unaware that they have missed the point altogether.

In the online project *Roses[xiv]*, Jerusalem, 2004, Tal Adler and Yuli Haromisjenko encourage surfers to send 12 roses to 12 people whom they suggest 'really deserve them'. Each electronic postcard depicts a red rose, with a thank you note to be sent to 12 Israeli leaders expressing gratitude for their 'valuable contribution'. The thank you note designated for the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, for example, reads – "for your spotless, open and effective leadership, for your personal example and integrity, for security, peace and economical prosperity, for the hope for a better future."
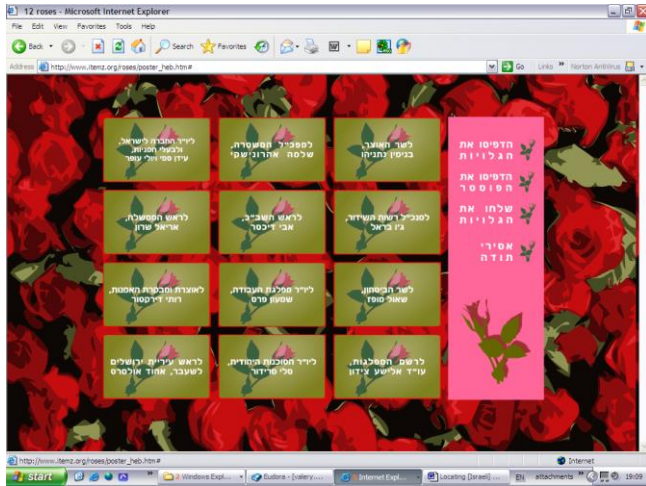
Tal Adler and Yuli Haromisjenko
12 Roses, **screenshot**

Tal Adler and Yuli Haromisjenko
12 Roses, **postcard to Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon**

Adler and Haromisjenjko clearly feel that this is a local issue and anyone outside of the Hebrew speaking world is not included in the mobilisation of public support for their endeavours. Perhaps the artists presuppose that only Israelis would in fact be interested in sending these post cards to the Prime Minister, the President of Israel or the ministers listed online (with the specific e-mails linked to the appropriate postcard). Galvanising the public into political action through protest art has a long history, from the Dadaist theatrical performances and graphic design activities, to the Fluxus group sit-ins and vigils of the sixties and seventies. Postcards as art can be traced to Marcel Duchamp who sent cards to his neighbours in 1916, set in incoherent but exquisitely designed text, with the postcard-platform acting as artistic gesture, and the postal system as a distribution medium[xv]. If the Dada activities can be seen more as an anti-art protest, Adler and Haromisjenjko's *Rose* protest is more politically than artistically-driven and remains bound by its language specification and political affiliation.

Net art is essentially limited by net boundaries and its dependence on dissemination over electronic networks. These networks in turn rely heavily on art discourse which is again, language specific with, as Oliano suggests a reach only to those who share a common language. For example, a new webzine, Maarav.co.il[xvi], has recently made its debut and promises to promote and distribute netart in Israel.
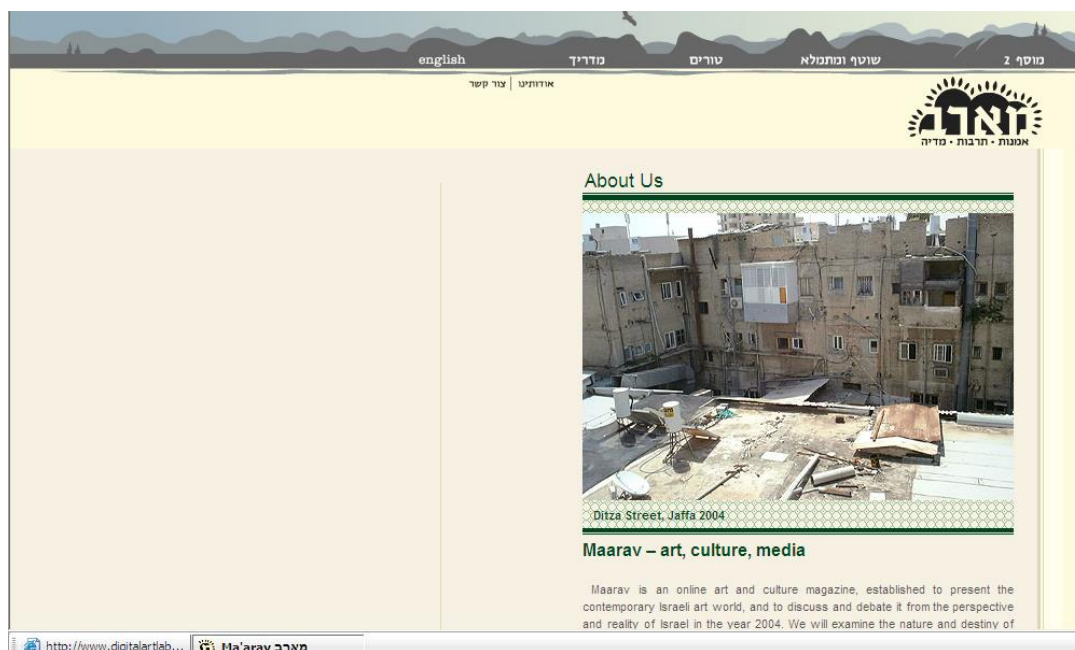
Maarav **Screenshot – October 2004**

The exquisitely designed website carries articles and links to leading art venues and performances, and acts as a platform for the dissemination of critical art discourse. Much in the same way that artzines such as *Altx*, http://www.altx.com/ *Transmediale*, http://www.transmediale.de, *Ctheory Multimedia* - http://ctheory.concordia.ca, *Iola* - http://artnetweb.com/iola/ and the seminal *Rhizome*, http://www.rhizome.org/ all act as foci for digital art across the English speaking world, so *Maarav* is set to take its place as one of the local foci of the contemporary art scene in Israel and across the Hebrew speaking world.

Maariv **Screenshot – Second Edition - October 2004**

*Maariv* **Screenshot – About Us (English) – October 2004**

At the moment of writing (October 2004), there is a brief introduction to the site in English but the creative animations seem to break through the linguistic barrier and appeal to all users whether they join in the discourse and read the articles or not.

Beyond the Physical Museum and the National Anchor

Breaching the local specificity of the language and of local politics is the prize winning net project, *World of Awe*[xvii], 2000**,** by Yael Kanarek, a New York born artist (1967), who grew up in Israel and who currently lives and works in New York. According to the project's website:

> **World of Awe**, created by new media artist Yael Kanarek, is a multi-media narrative that revolves around the story of a traveller in search of a lost treasure. The project engages the ancient genre of the traveller's tale to explore the connections between storytelling, memory, travel and technology that ranges from the lament over the absence of a lover to a comical declaration of loyalty to a floppy disk. To expand the story, **World of Awe** spins a network of projects and collaborations online, in galleries and in performance spaces.
>
> (http://www.worldofawe.net)
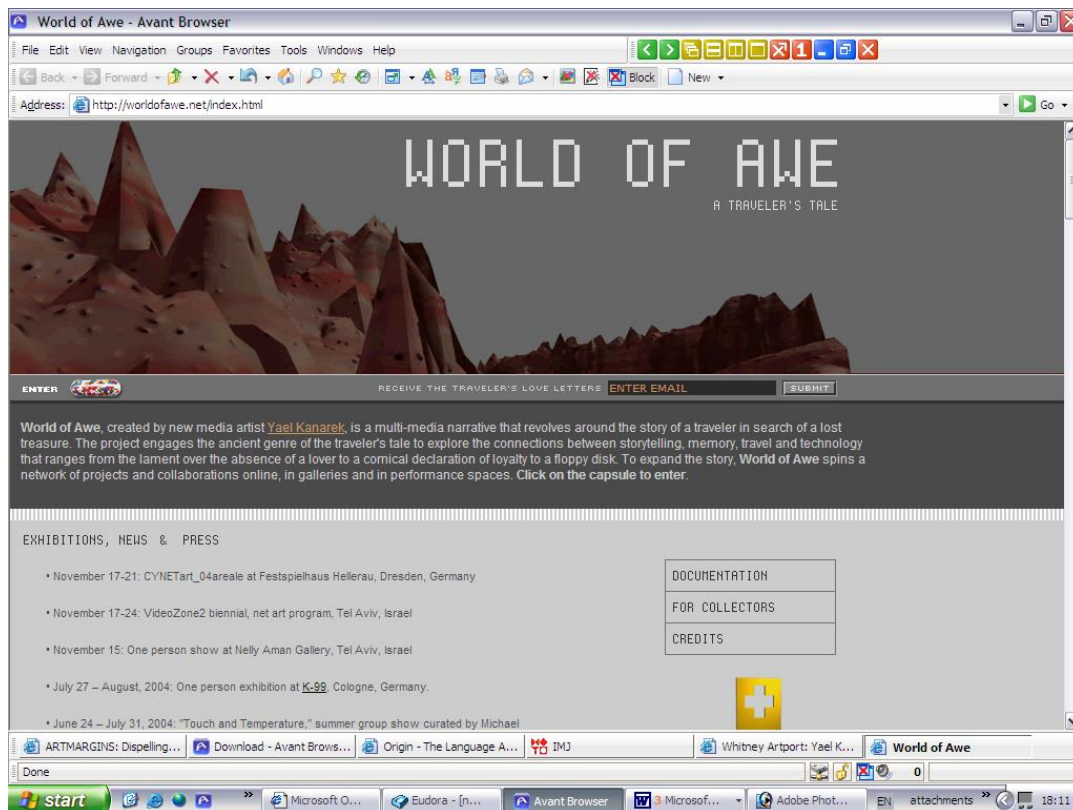
Yale Kanarek, Screenshot of *World of Awe*, Home Page, 2004

Surfers are invited to click on the capsule to enter Kanarek's *World of Awe* where they are pulled into a non-linear narrative through a portal on 419 East 6th Street in Manhattan, across 48 Nowheres (a series of outputs from the 3D environments), into *Sunset/Sunrise*, 'a dessert terrain locked into the mindframe between night and day' (http://worldofawe.net/index00.html).   Kanarek first launched the site in 1995, based on a journal describing the adventures of a traveller in search of lost treasure that keeps on relocating – leaving behind a trail of crumbs that fall from the body of the treasure. The more recent version of the website was launched in July 2000. Over the years the *World of Awe* has been discussed (and linked) in articles all over the world - the New York Times, Le Monde Interactif, Tema Celeste, Art News, Time Out, Flash Art Italy, Firma, Paper Magazine, The Industry Standard, Wired, The Journal News and ArtByte. *PORTAL*, the three-part, interactive net.dance work was inaugurated as a Turbulence Project[xviii], on the Turbulence website – New Radio and Performing Arts, Inc. (aka Ether-Ore). The on-going project has been shown at festivals and exhibitions in Brazil, Italy, Canada, France, England, Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands, Israel, Korea and the USA, and the site now resides at its signature location http://worldofawe.net. The work resists a geographic-location and anyone who wishes to venture into the ongoing project, or in fact to correspond with the artist herself, may find both at the Internet domain, including Kanarek's e-mail address at yael@treasurecrumbs.com.
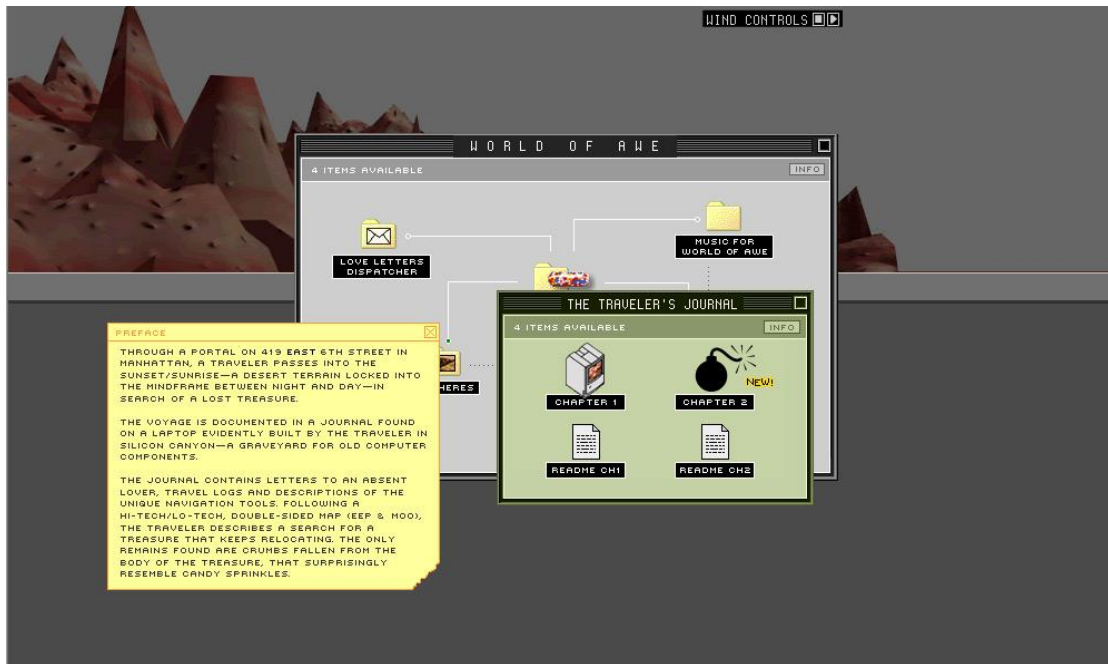
Screenshot of *World of Awe*, navigation page, Yale Kanarek 2004

Kanarek's journey takes the user on an adventure. From the portal across digital landscapes, through video, text and imagery, Kanarek's *World of Awe* presents new twists of the plots with almost every screen.

Travel log 85.6/98

Sunset/Sunrise

I'm looking back. Peeping through the hole I just passed my body through. I can still see 6th street and the apartment complex across. In a blur though. The deafening noise of adjacent worlds rubbing against one another was replaced by a deep quietude. A whispery wind is blowing constantly. I am in the Sunset/Sunrise.

It is a major leap of faith following the trail of my imagination. I look through the hole and I see the familiar world I just left. What it has in store for me I put on hold. I turn my head looking into the vastness of the Sunset/Sunrise and I see a magnificent desert terrain. What future it holds I do not know. Yet the wondrous sense of adventure that has charged my spirit is unparalleled to anything I had experienced before. Therefore, with no further delay I will follow the tracks of the lost treasure. Once found, I will carry its brilliance over to light up my mundane world.

(http://worldofawe.net/portal_netdance.html)

Once drawn into this world it is difficult to leave, and each screen brings new dimensions to the experience. Treasure/Crumbs launched the *Love Letters Dispatcher* in June 2001. The love letters are described as 'not a virus, this feature of World of Awe (WOA) will enable subscribers to receive love letters via email approximately

once a month through 2003'. The letters are signed "Yours forever, your sunset/sunrise forever yours, yours forever yours." Entering my own e-mail at the dispatcher at the time of writing (November 2004) produced an immediate response, with a love letter to an absent lover arriving within minutes…with a heading - To: Beloved

>Love letter 54/39
>Sunset/Sunrise
>
>Beloved,
>
>I have found the key to extreme beauty but
>I don't have the key hole. So I tried all the holes in
>my body but none seem to fit.
>
>Confused and bewildered.
>
>Yours forever,
>your sunset/sunrise forever yours,
>yours forever yours.

Are we the absent lover? Are we partners in the search? The extension of the world into our own mailbox extends the project's reach and allows the surfer/participant entrée into the online world. Visitors/surfers/lovers participate in difference ways including the nurturing of the online mRB - a prototype of the moodRingBaby described in the Traveler's Journal. According to the journal, the moodRingBaby — a mass-produced object purchased at Duane-Reade for $1.99, was used by the traveller to soothe the effects of loneliness. Visitors in the *World of Awe* can manipulate the mRB on their own screen, adding to the bizarre list of experiences this world offers.

Kanarek identifies herself as an artist living and working in New York and in November 2004 is curating a net exhibition, *Net Art – 6 Works* at *VideoZone2[xix]*, in Tel Aviv, at the 2nd International Video-Art Biennial in Israel. The artists listed in this upcoming exhibition include: Peter Horvath, David Crawford, a collaboration between dancer/filmmaker Evann Siebens and Kanarek, Olia Lialina and Dragan Espenschied, and Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries.

Simply denoted *online*

This paper has explored a range of digital, art projects that have been developed by Israelis, and others living both in Israel and elsewhere. Some of the projects illustrate the global or universal reach of digital art, while others have indicated the site specificity that is bounded by language. The invisible boundary, in the boundary-less Internet creates new borders that are defined by language and shunt the discourse into gated-gardens. While artists have the choice to denote themselves either as Israeli, or not, in their self-promotion, those who have incorporated the Hebrew language have inherently indicated their cultural association as well as their national affiliation.

In the same way that net projects may slip silently through these barriers they also resist their preoccupation of national provenance, indicating their location and non-specific nationality through their URL as does the *World of Awe*. This paper has endeavoured to set out the options open to artists who take up the digital palette – to be able to think global and act local or as the alternative would suggest – to think local and to act global.

[i] *Living Together* The Israel Museum, Jerusalem
http://www.imj.org.il/youthwing/livingtogether/

[ii] *SEE* (*Shrine Educational Experience*)
http://www.seequmran.it

[iii] *Sports and Art*, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem
http://www.imj.org.il/eng/exhibitions/2004/sport/index.html

[iv] *Liquid Spaces*, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem
http://www.imj.org.il/eng/exhibitions/2003/liquid/index.html

[v] *Pagan Poetry*, By Pitaru and Paterson (InsertSilence) + Bjork + Nick Knight (ShowStudio)
http://www.insertsilence.com/paganpoetry

[vi] *Hammond Flower,* Amit Pitaru
http://pitaru.com/72s

[vii] See http://www.interfold.com/rabit/Theremin.htm for a sound sample.

[viii] *Time Left,* Michal Rovner's, the Israel Pavilion of the 50th Venice Biennale, 2003
http://www.labiennale.org/2003/en/visualarts/pavilions/participants/israel.html

[ix] *Shame.* the Israeli Center for Digital Art, 2004
http://www.digitalartlab.org.il

[x] *Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art,* 2002
http://www.thejewishmuseum.org/site/pages/content/exhibitions/special/mirroring_evil/mirroring.html

[xi] Rosenbaum, (2002) *Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art*, Exhibition Catalog, edited by Norman L. Kleeblatt, the Susan and Elihu Rose, New York: The Jewish Museum and Rutgers University Press.

[xii] J. Young, J. E. (2002) *Mirroring Evil: Nazi Imagery/Recent Art*, Exhibition Catalog, edited by Norman L. Kleeblatt, the Susan and Elihu Rose, New York: The Jewish Museum and Rutgers University Press.

[xiii] Lialini, O. (1999) Dispelling the Myth that Net Art is (not) a Commodity: Olia Lialina (Los Angeles 12 April 2000) ©ARTMARGINS 1999
http://www.artmargins.com/content/eview/third.html

[xiv] *12 Roses*, Tal Adler and Yuli Haromisjenko
http://www.itemz.org/roses/index.htm

[xv] A Brief History of Postal Art
http://www.echonyc.com/~panman/one/history.html
Duchamp Postcard
http://mosaic.echonyc.com/~panman/one/duchamp.jpg

xvi Maarav.co.il
http://www.maarav.co.il

xvii *World of Awe*, Yael Kanarek
http://www.whitney.org/artport/exhibitions/biennial2002/kanarek.shtml

xviii Turbulence website – New Radio and Performing Arts, Inc. (aka Ether-Ore)
http://turbulence.org/Works/yael/frame.html

xix Videozone2, Tel Aviv, November 2004
http://www.videozone.org.il