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“He shows me that you can free yourself from being German or Israeli and his childhood playground becomes my own roots”

Alona Harpaz //
19/9/1971 //
Israel

Education:

2 years at Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem; B.Ed., International Center of Photography, New York; Beit Berl College, Kfar Sava

Places I have lived:

Tel Aviv; New York; Berlin

Outside of Israel:

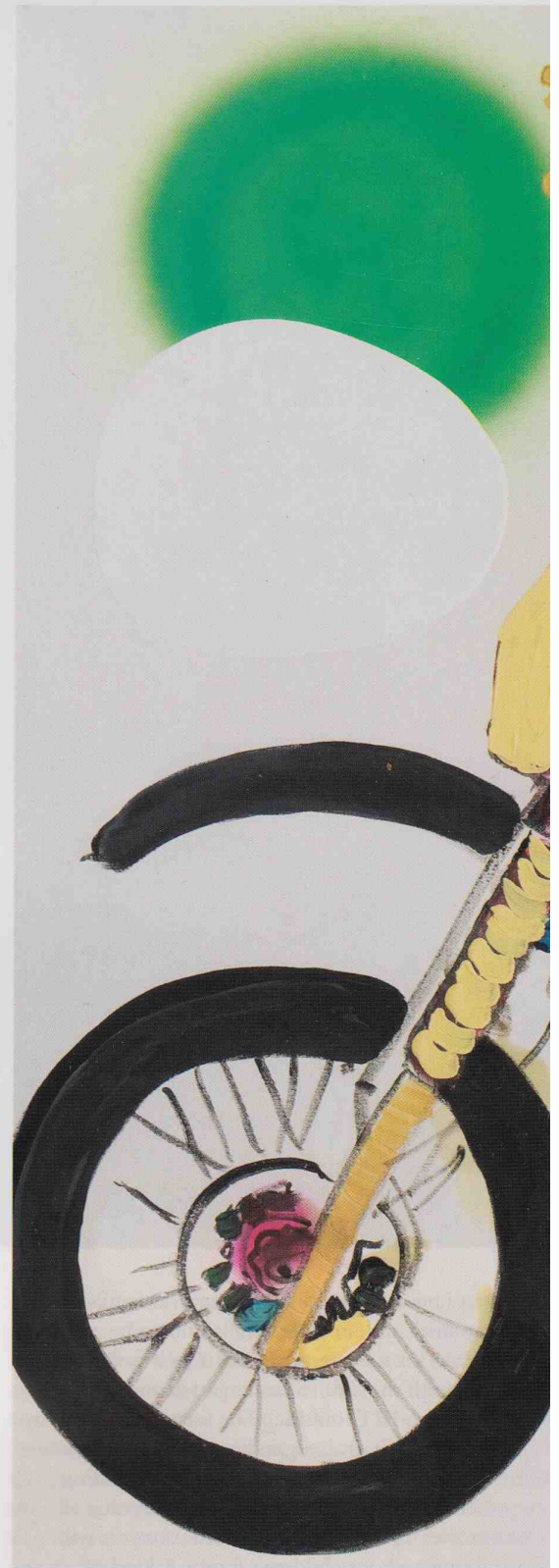
8 years

Residing in:

Berlin, since 2002

Berlin is a strong place. You can tell. All the cells of the body are affected by thoughts, my thoughts and the thoughts of others. Something has happened here, there is some commitment I feel between myself, an Israeli, and Germans. For me, speaking German is when I feel the most alien, but actually I don't feel alien here at all. My son runs after me with his German accent, speaking to me in Hebrew, inserting a few German words from time to time. For this reason, the German accent is now my favorite because he is the best thing I ever saw. He is the one I can be with and free myself from my roots without feeling guilty or nervous. I can feel how he loves my impulsive behavior and how sometimes he feels how mixed he is – he shows me that you can free yourself from being German or Israeli and his childhood playground becomes my own roots.

The connection with German is already very much ingrained in my life. I have lived here for almost nine years, with a German. There is a new mixed generation of people who are trying to understand what happened here. Small



reminders appear on the streets and come inside your daily life and they can throw you. Golden stones, *Stolpersteine*, memorials placed in the sidewalks, are located in front of a building I pass on the way home. They remind me that a family exactly like mine was taken from my street to a concentration camp. First the mother and the child; the father only arrived the day after.

From my experience, the Germans' attitude of guilt created a shell of suppressed nationality that came out



in the last World Cup games when the German flag was first collectively allowed to appear on every corner. Even though they didn't ultimately take the games, Germany treated the national team like they were winners – and they definitely were.

Germans were walking in the streets celebrating something that they didn't really understand, but I felt that they really waited too long to do that. In the streets, during those days, feeling this powerful, strong, almost violent energy of

the Germans, I could feel the city radiate a unique energy. Berlin is extreme and that is what is so attractive about it as well.

The culmination of the experiences I have as I walk down these streets has no choice but to find its way into my work. All of the layers of the city are slowly making their way inside me and it feels open and natural that all of the experiences come into my studio. I am an artist. And, as I see it, foreignness no longer exists.