

member spotlight

Yael Ben-Zion

By George Slade

This spotlight previews coming attractions. The last portfolio review I had during my June sessions on Wednesday the 23rd was with Yael Ben-Zion. Yael came up from New York City to show me her work about Israel. Although she was born in Minneapolis (will I always find Minnesota connections?) in 1973, she left my home turf after three months and grew up in Israel with dual citizenship.

She returned to the United States to attend Yale Law School, and earned degrees in 2001 (LL.M.) and 2004 (J.S.D.). While in New Haven, she met photographer and assistant professor of photography David Hilliard, who encouraged her to take intro and intermediate photography as electives in 2002 and 2003. Before long, she was hooked, and knew that she wanted to pursue photography full time. (She can always fall back on the law career, right?)



Milk

Yael completed color printing coursework at New School University and the General Studies program at the International Center of Photography in New York. During all of her studies in New Haven and New York City, Yael was mindful of her distance from home (5,683 miles from Israel, not the 1,020 miles to Minnesota). Her wondering and reminiscences about Israel, about the nature of, as she puts it, "everyday life in a state of constant emergency," led her to use photography and her unique inside/outside status to examine the metaphors that define contemporary Israel.



Still Life with Headless Angel

What Yael shared with me at the portfolio review was a Blurb “draft,” a maquette of her monograph 5683 miles away, the final version of which is about to be published by Kehrer Verlag. What moved me, after an initial fascination with the images themselves (and this, with minimal awareness on my part of vernacular meanings, was notable), was the sequence, the page spreads that use photographic syntax to convey the urgency and ambiguity of life in this contested country. Also, her very simple captions are little “value-added” tags that gently advance the book’s sequence and intentions.

I was very pleased that Yael was my last meeting that day; our conversation lingered long past the allotted time. She’s planning a limited edition of 100 copies of the book with an 11 x 11 inch print; the price is 120 Euros, or around 145 dollars. Worth considering. The trade edition, according to Kehrer’s web site, will be available “soon”; Yael’s prints will be on view in New York City, in the Weill Art Gallery at the 92nd Street Y, early next March.



Ceremony

To read more about the book and the limited edition, click [here](#).

To see more of Yael’s work, visit her website [here](#).

Once the NEO feature is redesigned and running, those portfolios will replace the Member Spotlight. Until then, members are encouraged to email information about exhibitions, book releases, and other current events for consideration in the