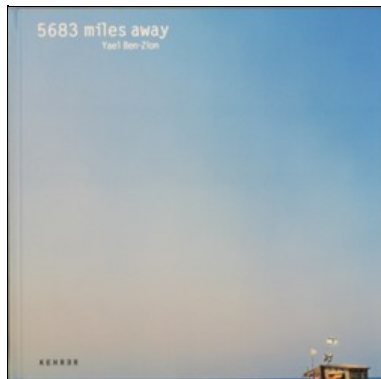


5683 Miles Away

REVIEWED BY GEORGE SLADE, PUBLISHED ON MONDAY, AUGUST 22, 2011

[VIEW COMMENTS \[0 \]](#)

Yael Ben-Zion | **5683 Miles Away**
PHOTOGRAPHS BY YAEL BEN-ZION
Kehrer Verlag, Heidelberg, 2011. Hardbound. 88 pp.,
55 color illustrations, 9-3/4x9-3/4".



5683 Miles Away Photographs by Yael Ben-Zion
Published by Kehrer Verlag, 2011.



How far away do you have to get to see a thing whole? Depends on how big it is.

The thing, the phenomenon, the state named Israel is big. Very big. When you are as close to it as Yael Ben-Zion has been, you need to get quite a ways away to see it, objectively if not in its entirety.

The distance noted in the title connotes a flight between airports in New York City and Tel Aviv. This is a gap Ben-Zion has crossed numerous

times as a resident of the former and a daughter of the latter; as Joanna Lehan notes in her foreword, these trips were "homecomings" for this Minnesota-born, eastward-looking semi-exile.



5683 Miles Away, by Yael Ben-Zion. Published by Kehrer Verlag, 2011.

Her photographs veer toward, but refuse to acquiesce to, a familiar mode of wry indifference characteristic of much modern image-making. Tension and implication charge and personalize her work; even a photograph with a benign title like "Milk and Cookies" employs a window-cast shadow with stick-figure strangeness to imply the constant undercurrent of unease in Israel. We see loving homes, everyday rituals, common objects, and a general sense of settled domesticity. We also see weapons, police tape, checkpoints, and

guarded looks in public spaces, potential violence lounging in dappled shade.



5683 Miles Away, by Yael Ben-Zion. Published by Kehrer Verlag, 2011.



5683 Miles Away, by Yael Ben-Zion. Published by Kehrer Verlag, 2011.

Some of the photographs rely on some deeply coded cultural metaphors for their most profound revelations; not all readers (this reviewer among them) will know the meanings of sabras or black irises. Close looking gives clues, and meaning accrues in the book's carefully-edited sequence. The photographer must be congratulated for her boldness in delving into the symbolic aspects of content, and for willing the significance to define the narrative. In her captions and images, utilizing the advantages of her inside/outside, micro/macro perspective, Ben-Zion has drawn a uniquely successful portrait of everyday life in a war zone. —GEORGE SLADE

[purchase book](#)

GEORGE SLADE is the program manager and curator at the Photographic Resource Center in Boston, and the editor of the PRC's magazine Loupe. He maintains an on-line presence at the [PRC's blog](#), here on photo-eye, and at [re:photographica](#). Occasionally his writing even appears in print.

© photo-eye Magazine. This article is printed from photo-eye Magazine (<http://www.photoeye.com/magazine/>) and is intended for personal use. Please contact us if you would like permission to reprint this article for commercial or educational use. Text © by the author, all images © their respective owners. All rights reserved.