

## A BREAK IN THE LINEAR

# SIRAH FOIGHEL BRUTMANN & EITAN EFRAT BREATHING, IMPROVISING & LISTENING

TEXT BY [JESSICA GYSEL](#)

[I SEE / YOU MEAN](#)

**Each Issue, Jessica Gysel invites an artist to take up space under the title I See / You Mean. A nod to the title of the 1970 collage novel by New York writer Lucy Lippard, an editorial snapshot, a carte blanche with an open ending.**

I met Sirah and Eitan for the first time during the COVID-19 lockdown. As the world shut down, the couple looked for new ways to interact with people and started to produce bread, selling it at cost price to friends from their apartment in Saint-Gilles in Brussels. And so it happened that my partner and I found ourselves talking to them and their kids for a long time through the window of their house. Sirah was very involved in Engagement, the artist-led movement tackling sexual harassment, sexism and abuse of power in the Belgian arts field, part of her ongoing engagement with society at large and Israel/Palestine in particular.

Sirah and Eitan first kissed as pre-teens at school in Tel Aviv. They parted ways only to meet again in 2003, when Sirah — at that time studying at PARTS school for contemporary dance in Brussels — attended a concert where Eitan performed while she was visiting home. The two started dating, their long-distance relationship in the early days kindling a desire to work together, using video as both a communication tool and a shared artistic medium. Video created a language between the couple. It helped draw them together; they enjoyed the research aspect and the ongoing conversation. Eitan says Sirah as a dancer brought questions of the body to the space. How does the body move beyond the camera? How to make this present in the filmed image? This video collaboration became their common ground.

Sirah and Eitan's work is a tool for grieving. Their videos ask us to interrogate ideologies, mourn the impossibility of nostalgia for a place. A good example is their work [Orientation](#), a twelve-minute video from 2015 which was filmed in Tel Aviv. It shows the public sculpture [White Square](#) (Dani Karavan, 1977–88) commemorating the founders of Tel Aviv. In the next frame, we see the dome-shaped shrine of the Palestinian village Salame on which ruins the Israeli monument is built. From the top of the monument, a view of the city and then the sea. Sirah and Eitan filmed the vista through the plexiglass, which was full of children's spit. It's their way to say how they feel about the city they come from. How they

see it. As Eitan says: breaking apart the image of the city. And understanding the price of it: what's not visible in that landscape, what's been erased ...

The collaborative work of Sirah and Eitan can be seen as a lifelong journey to undo what they describe as the Zionist indoctrination of their early years, metaphorically shedding their old skin while growing a new one, which at times doesn't seem to grow fast enough.

Over the years, the couple has been travelling, revisiting their homeland, digging into their ancestors' archives while finding a new home in Brussels, and — maybe not so surprisingly — discovering Chantal Akerman along the way. Sirah and Eitan's video work *Un Ane* (2023) reacts to Akerman's final film, *No Home Movie* (2015). In this film, Chantal documents the Palestinian/Israeli Al Naqab/Negev desert without revealing the location (a deliberate choice). Sirah and Eitan recognised the setting and decided to film on location, making alternative images that show the settlers' influence, the lack of water, the American tourists ... As the artist duo cannot engage in a direct dialogue with Chantal, they create their own narrative in which they hint at certain underlying processes and beautiful landscapes — things that lend themselves to all kinds of fantasies.

The same process is applied in Sirah and Eitan's visual contribution on the following pages. This time the interventions were small enough to not destroy the filmed image, instead adding a sci-fi layer. In this way, the interventions reveal themselves to be beyond what the artists could have controlled.

When I shared bread with Sirah and Eitan during the COVID lockdown, I could sense their wish for community. Talking to them now, it seems that they have found communities in Brussels that nourish them. The atrocities from the last months only accelerate their activism and commitment. Understanding how much work there is to do here. And there.



Image by Sirah Foighel Brutmann and Eitan Efrat



Image by Sirah Foighel Brutmann and Eitan Efrat, text layout by Ot Lemmens.



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