

# sid motion gallery

## *Thinking in Fragments*

Essay by Dr Briony Carlin

This text is a collaborative response to a conversation between Hannah, Dafna and myself, in which I posed the question, “If languages are formed by and situated within cultural values, what are the values of your hybrid language?”

After coming together in Hannah’s studio, we corresponded and traded words from our notes. This wordplay forms the backbone for another glossary of fragments that responds to their combined practice. The fragments have been reassembled into a discourse that navigates the material, ethical and epistemological terrain of Hannah and Dafna’s thoughtful responses to my question.

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### hybrid

Hybrid describes the new language that is more things at once. It grows from, grows beyond, the old language, the maker of singularities. The old language separates and sorts. To cut, to catalogue, to discipline and divide and conquer. The parallel practices of cutting that bind this new language make possibilities, opportunities, ambiguities and questions.

### process

This is a many layered process of cutting, then reorienting ourselves in relation to new landmarks. Hannah’s cuts, Dafna’s cuts, and now also my cuts, we each gather our selections from bits of information, visual, verbal, worked independently, collectively, now brought together. A photograph brings together brief moments of decision and longer stretches of indecision and labouring and waiting. Process is as much about the space in between the stages of making.

### margins

This process, this language, occupies many in-between spaces. It sits at the intersections of art practices. It is rooted in the tools and chemistry that belong to photography, but combines other references. Painting, Pictorialism, drawing, in traces of pen that disguise and redirect the edges of form and matter. In sculpture, collage and photography, a positive form is conjured out of a negative space. We sit in the margins and see more of what we have in common in our shared discourse.

### material

What we see when we look at this language has come far from where it started. The source material is a vernacular that began in the world, in open landscapes, and closed rooms of studios and auction houses. The value assigned to these former images shifts as they are used, recontextualised and re-materialised. They have a different currency: an image made as a memento has less meaning for another person; an image made for a magazine might not mean much to anyone.

### transformation

The images in the old language represented objects in space. For Dafna, these determinate objects disrupt what she seeks in the background. For Hannah, the backdrops that frame objects for auction perform as sites of transformation and desire. This quite different image vocabulary was collected, dismantled and transformed. It became celluloid then paper then scans then movement then cuts, then the process repeats. As it is transposed through many machines, it flits from something embodied to something immaterial, chemical or digital, and back again.

### throwaway

We choose not to discard what others throw away. We carry our sources with us. Dafna keeps a detailed catalogue of where her fragments are cut from; the void spaces still signify. Hannah’s catalogue is the absences in the archive of source material; the cut out spaces; her negatives are the fretwork of pages from which matter is removed. My thinking and making thoughts are traced in pencil. The sources are absent

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presences: materially elsewhere, but inseparably traced. The tangled roots are obscured by a logic of their own, but nevertheless are rooted in the real.

## fragment

This is a language of photographic fragments that transcends all our notions of what photographs are for. It is more expansive to think of images as fragments. These fragments are archaeological miscellanies of other cultures and other times; we use them to imagine, incompletely, the worlds we do not fully understand. They are a vocabulary of images, but their information is no longer intelligible to us. Their refusal to represent is a playful rebellion against the values of that old language of photography.

## index

Index is a word that sits at the core of what we understand as photographic. The new hybrid language of fragments are visual traces that index many moments: being, photographing, deciding, incising, inscribing. Time, thought, and many manual, dextrous, embodied cuts, made by bodies, people, alone and together. Traces of guiding lines show uncertainty and planning. While these images may seem abstracted, they offer glimpses of past lives of former images, objects and actions. We search for a logic to put them back together again, using the shadows of things that used to exist in a world in three dimensions. They are a genealogy of how these new volumes and forms are made, rephotographed and reused.

## boundary

A boundary is made by drawing dividing lines. If we really think about bodies and forms –and their common, carbon matter – there is no possible, single outline. A scalpel makes edges appear where there were none, separating something that was whole into more parts. A photograph in the old language constructs a separation between observers and objects; these photographs have their boundaries crossed and re-crossed many times. New relationships betwixt new forms; new discursive borders form. Gaps appear.

## conflating

We put things back together again, combining multiple sets of information into one plane. The shape of the new language relates to bodies, time and movement. It recalls other civilisations and othered ways of articulating the world: cuneiform, hieroglyph, scroll. The forms reveal their own inherent logic for you to interpret. By conflating multiple views of the world, it becomes impossible to hold fast to one fixed perspective. Laying out fragments in a non-hierarchical grammar plays with space and symmetrical power.

## untethered

These fragments are untethered; they have no holding structure. This language's grammar is unfamiliar to us. Untethered, they are floating in a space that is half full and half empty. Both negative and positive, they float outside the structuring binaries of the old language.

## holes

Much is withheld in this language. We have gaps in our comprehension. Things are cut from context. The network of connections is erased, the thread becomes lost.

## abstraction

The fragments are freed from their frames, and hang in an air of possibility. There are many ways they could be rejoined, new languages they could construct. Beyond them lay countless strange flat lands to encounter.

## notation

The new language could be that much older language of abstraction that is notation. One form gives a solidity, a roundness; the other is more fragile, dancing around and over the rounder grounds.

## space

The space in between vibrates as much as the notes, the chorus of dancers, the figures floating off the ground. The space hums with the static of possibilities of combinations, new configurations, new forms,

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surrounding bodies in Cage-like signifying silence. It leaves space for us to activate the fragments, to make our own choices about how to fill the gaps.

## agency

There is agency in cutting, in remaking. To cut is to differentiate. In cutting out, matter is cut together into new shapes and forms. In putting these fragments of the world back together, we remake it with a different value system, where meaning is relational, instead of essential. To distinguish between one form and another, one body and another, paper and paper, skin and paper, is to cut things apart by language more than matter. Matter does not refer to a fixed substance; rather, matter is substance – not a thing, but a doing, a congealing of agency<sup>ii</sup>.

## reconfigure

Through cutting apart and cutting together, what is removed is reconfigured as the positive object. Take the unimportant parts, cut them into something other, highlighting a shadow. The new volume takes on new agency as something with worldly weight. It can be combined in new ways. It makes other relationalities. It reconfigures what we value – we no longer value representation and information, but possibility, plurality, ambiguity. Reconfiguring the world is always a political gesture. We are not merely differently situated in the world; each of us is part of the intra-active ongoing articulation of the world in its differential mattering<sup>iii</sup>.

## unlearn

The new language is an unlearning of language as we know it. The old language valued order, information, authority, hierarchy, power. It was a language of a bygone time. We learned its codes and they structured our culture and thought. That old language cannot comprehend the messy plurality of the worlds we now inhabit. We unlearn its rules and codes, but we do not discard them. We make use of them to engender new possibilities. Discipline and structure serve as intentional parameters, frameworks that move with their own intuitive logic. Cutting becomes reconfiguring and abstracting, which becomes potentiality, movement and fluidity. Language is liberated.

## defiance

This hybrid language is in playful defiance of the old rules. It resists the need for easy understanding; it does not explain itself; it does not translate back into that old language. For a century before us, subtly subversive makers, many of them women, have remade their worlds through cutting and collage. There are echoes of strange, hybrid words – femmage<sup>iv</sup>, perzine. We re-value the knowledges that emerge with trial and error and play; we re-value materials deemed throwaway. Hannah and Dafna make their otherworldly worlds smooth out of a haberdashery of remnants and old scraps. Taking something that is not the main part of the story and recentring it is always in dialogue with structures of power. Recentring what is marginalised. Reasserting what is overlooked.

## plurality

Plurality can be the condition of photography in the new language. Photography creates plurality through making things multiple. Photography makes things come into being through their relation to one another, chemically and optically. The camera reconfigures in the same way as the cut. New, imagined spaces are made when plural forms are configured together in a spatial relationship. In reorientating ourselves around fragments, we have less attachment to specific forms, and more interest in the new kinds of objects and relationalities that can be made with their reconfiguring.

## dialogue

Many dialogues have shaped this work: many former moments with objects and places; many past encounters between photographers and the photographed; past meetings between Dafna and Hannah and their fragments and their cuts; many conversations, walking among regular rows of stones; multiple pasts and presents that collapse together into pasts, brought into dialogue through making and re-making. The book too, for which I am writing, becomes another discursive meeting place of possibility. Things will behave differently here in this space of pages and textures. It is another imagined reconfiguring of form and process.

## glossary

A conversation between forms and languages and temporalities as we make sense and make common understandings. A gathering of potentialities.

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The writing gratefully finds fragments in the works of Karen Barad, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Michel Foucault and Luce Irigaray.

<sup>i</sup> Spivak, 1989. 'In a Word' Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies 1 (2): 124-56.

<sup>ii</sup> Barad, 2007. Meeting the Universe Halfway, p.151.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid., p.381.

<sup>iv</sup> Meyer and Shapiro, 2015. 'Waste Not, Want Not: An Inquiry into What Women Saved and Assembled — Femmage', Artcritical [online].

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## Artist Biographies

Hannah Hughes (b. 1975) is an artist working primarily with collage, photography and sculpture. She graduated from the University of Brighton in 1997, and has since exhibited in the UK and internationally. Group exhibitions include: 'Shapely', (two person show) CSA Space, Vancouver, BC, (2011); 'In The Future We Will All Be Modern', Arcadia Missa, London (2014); 'A5', LUBOMIROV EASTON/Platform Projects at Art Athina, Athens (2014 & 2015); 'Where One Form Began Another Ended', (two person show) The Bakery Gallery, Vancouver, BC, (2016); The Pie Factory, Margate, (2017); 'These Fingers Read Sideways', Fettes College, Edinburgh, (2018); 'Concealer', Peckham 24 Festival, curated by Tom Lovelace, Copeland Gallery, London, (2018); 'The Momentum', curated by Saturation Point, Angus-Hughes Gallery, London, (2018); 'A Romance of Many Dimensions', Sid Motion Gallery, London, (2018); Photo London, Sid Motion Gallery, (2019); 'The Office of Revised Futures', Format Festival, Derby, (2019); 'New Formations', Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago, USA, (2020); Art Rotterdam, NL, Galerie Wouter Van Leeuwen, (2020); 'The State of Things', curated by Rodrigo Orrantia, Landskrona Festival, Sweden, publication and exhibition (2020-22); 'Super Flatland' curated by Paul Carey-Kent and Yuki Miyake, White Conduit Projects, London, (2020); 'Gleaners', a two-person exhibition with Olivia Bax at Sid Motion Gallery, London, (Nov 2020-Jan 2021); 'Pacific Breeze', White Conduit Projects, London; and 'Summer Camp 2021', Eastside Projects Stream Digital Platform (Online). Solo presentation with Robert Morat Galerie, Photo London and Paris Photo (2022). Her work is included in an experimental publication by Rodrigo Orrantia, 'Material Immaterial', which has included performances at Cosmos, Arles and Offprint, Paris.

Her work has been published in the FT Weekend Magazine, AnOther.com, Art Licks Magazine Issue 25, ArtMaze Magazine Issue 22, the RPS Journal, Trebuchet, Photomonitor and the British Journal of Photography and she has been interviewed on the Art Fictions Podcast and 'Chats with Artists in Lockdown' podcast. Her work is also featured in the publication 'Look At This If You Love Great Photography: A Critical Curation Of 100 Essential Photos' by Gemma Padley, published by The Ivy Press, 2021.

Dafna Talmor is an artist and lecturer based in London whose practice encompasses photography, spatial interventions, curation and collaborations. Her photographs are included in public collections such as the National Trust, Victoria and Albert Museum, Deutsche Bank, Hiscox and in private collections internationally. Talmor's work is included in 'Look at This If You Love Great Photography' by Gemma Padley, Ivy Press, (2021); 'Post-Photography: The Artist with a Camera' by Robert Shore, Laurence King Publishing, (2014) and 'Alternative Photographic Processes: Crafting Handmade Images' by Brady Wilks, Focal Press, (2015) and has been featured in publications such as Architectural Review, The Guardian, Paper Journal, c4 journal, American Suburb X, 1000 Words, Elephant Magazine, Arena, Camera Austria, ArtReview, IMA, BJP, Hotshoe, GUP, Photomonitor, Artra and BLOW. Her first monograph - Constructed Landscapes - published by Fw:Books was released in October 2020 and longlisted for the 2021 Kraszna-Krausz Photography Book Award.

Recent group exhibitions include 'Known & Strange: Photographs from the Collection' at the V&A Museum (London) curated by Lisa Springer; 'Stories We Live With - Selection from the Somlóí–Spengler Collection' at QContemporary (Budapest) curated by Mónika Zsikla and 'Occupying Photography: To the Milky Way via the Sea' at NÖUA (Bodø) curated by Sergio Valenzuela Escobedo.

Recent solo shows include Carmen Araujo Arte, Caracas, Venezuela; 'Constructed Landscapes (vol. III)', TOBE Gallery, Budapest, (2022); 'Straight Lines are a Human Invention' at Sid Motion Gallery, London, (2019); 'Constructed Landscapes', TOBE Gallery, Budapest, (2018); and Photofusion, London, (2017). Recent group exhibitions include 'No Place is an Island' curated by Rodrigo Orrantia, Photo50, London Art Fair, (2022); 'Unseen Photo Fair 2021' and 'Filling the Cracks', curated by Marcel Feil, Unseen Unbound, TOBE Gallery, Amsterdam, (2021); 'Women in Photography: Lay of the Land', Informality Gallery, (2020); 'Her Ground: Women Photographing Landscape', Flowers East, London, (2019); '...on making', curated by Sian Bonnell, Gdansk National Museum, Poland, (2019); 'Moving the Image: Photography and its Actions' curated by Duncan Wooldridge at Camberwell Space, London, (2019); 'Unseen Amsterdam', London Alternative Photography Collective, Amsterdam, (2018) and 'Synthetic Landscapes', curated by Meadow Arts at Weston Park, (2017).

Talmor was commissioned by the FT Weekend Magazine for the Photo London (2018) supplement and showed work in the concurrent 'My London' group show in Peckham 24 curated by Emma Bowkett, (2018). With Sid Motion Gallery Talmor presented a solo booth at Photo London, (2021), and was in-conversation with Beate Gütschow, chaired by Olga Smith, as part of the talks programme curated by William A. Ewing. Talmor was a finalist of the BNL BNP Paribas Group Award 2019, shortlisted for the MACK First Book Award 2018 and the Unseen Dummy Award 2018. Talmor was the recipient of a Breathing SPACE Bursary, (2016); Arts Council England Grants for the Arts Awards, 2017, 2014 & 2013; the Photofusion Select Bursary Award, (2013).

Talmor has just been awarded an Honorary Fellowship by The Royal Photographic Society for her exceptional and innovative work.