

**LEE YANOR**

<http://www.leeyanor.com> / +972 50 838 7071 / [leeyanor@leeyanor.com](mailto:leeyanor@leeyanor.com)

## **MEMORY FIELDS**

By Milana Gitzin- Adiram

Memory, in the work of Lee Yanor, does not content itself with documenting, preserving and commemorating reality. It calls for a much more substantial form of action. It urges us to revitalize the frozen image; to denude the figurative and the taken-for-granted; and to dive into a private and collective world of associations, in which reality is composed of an abstract, alternative language of symbols and unifying signs.

The duality of memory – the constant tension between its elusive, fragile quality and the eternal, frozen character it lends fragments of dynamic and ephemeral events – are interwoven throughout Yanor's work. As a photographer, she recoils from the standard documentation of everyday life and seeks instead to expose, with great sensitivity, the very core of motion: the moment when the movement of the bodies around her ceases to be an aspect of the whole and becomes an independent and self-sustaining flash of light that is filled with energy.

In the exhibition "Memory Fields," Yanor creates a kind of monumental and infinitely layered memory game, which weaves together a multitude of images and associations. She draws together, exposes and conceals memory images from numerous places and periods – transforming them into a unified whole. She reexamines the right to freeze movement and to break it down into individual components. At the same time, Yanor wishes to examine the ability to recompose the frozen image-fragments into a vital flow.



Yanor's installation combines large-scale still photographs and a video work projected along an alleyway composed of nine screens. In her unique language, Yanor examines images from the world of flora and fauna, including images of moving animals and pseudo-documentary scenes of human beings in motion.

The connection between video art and photography and the combination of images taken from different realms, enable Yanor to underscore the polarity between movement and memory – while simultaneously emphasizing the Gordian knot that unifies them. For Yanor, memory and movement are inextricably intertwined, and engage in a fascinating dialogue.

Situated at the center of the exhibition space, these two bodies of work – which are each composed of numerous fragments – form a fully unified and mature artwork. Yanor carefully and delicately weaves together a private labyrinth of images; she guides the viewer through the memory chambers of Western art and culture, and enables him to move freely through his own personal world of images and interpretations.

Yanor seems to present the viewer with a completely unstructured and free world. The associations that she weaves together in space have no beginning, middle or end, and their amorphous narrative is only one of many possibilities. The image's immateriality – which stems from its inconceivable size, its duplication and its replication, its irregular appearance and disappearance – creates an intoxicating feeling of chaos and of limitless freedom. It seems as if positive and negative, presence and absence, have come together in order to rebel against the familiar and rigid order of the world.

Nevertheless, Yanor's choice to present primeval, almost primitive images on a giant scale transforms the space into a kind of ordered cathedral, a complex space that awakens in the viewer a sense of awe. The works flood this space with fragments of splendor-filled light; they sing a song of praise to nature and to Mother Earth and dwarf the presence of man in relation to that of the wilderness. Yanor thus snares the viewer within a honeyed trap, in which he experiences emotions similar to those of a believer in a sacred space – awe and an intimation of divinity. Yet as the viewer is overcome by a sense of total freedom and of sublimity, he is simultaneously reminded of his own worthlessness and of the harrowing possibility of an impending apocalypse.

"Memory Fields," the title of this exhibition, also alludes to the ultimate sensory experience that is supposed to accompany the observation of the perfect life cycle. The seasons of the year follow one another in a symmetrical order, sublime beauty surrounds the viewer on all sides and aesthetic perfection flickers upon the nine inflated screens and through the ethereal photographs. Yet the title also hints ironically at the ephemerality of happiness – since at any moment clouds may gather in the sky, leaving the viewer with nothing but frozen fragments of memory and a shattered dream.



## VIDEO INSTALLATION – CLOUD NINE

The multilayered video work that welcomes visitors to the exhibition draws in the viewer and completely monopolizes his attention. Like the Romantic painters, Yanor presents sublime nature in its full glory. She enlarges images from the world of fauna and flora and imposes onto the space an order and a rhythm that allude to the seasons of the year; the viewer is thus dwarfed by his inability to control the situation and to predict what will come next.

The artist leads the viewers through the labyrinth of her own rich and associative world and presents them with an abundance of scenes taken from the world of dance or related to the cycle of nature. There is seemingly no connection between the different realms that succeed one another upon the long alleyway of screens. Nevertheless, the carefully thought-out manner in which Yanor interweaves them, defines and examines the transformation of movement into light and shade and the moment in which this amalgam of different associations is detached from its context and transformed into a n intense emotional and visual experience.

The viewer is unable to contain all the visual and audio information projected in front of him at any given moment, and is required to focus his attention on a single screen, or at most on three screens. In this manner, the artist confronts the viewer with a unique challenge; by further fragmenting the already fragmented images, she demands that her viewers take an active role in dismantling and reassembling these constantly changing fragments.

The act of dismantling and reassembling these different images into a "unified whole," as well as the connection and separation between the scenes projected upon the nine screens, enable Yanor to neutralize the natural search for a linear narrative. The conscious play between the photographed object and its reflection; the intentional blurring and graininess of some of the scenes; and the duplication of the same images upon a number of screens enable Yanor to operate in a gray area, in which the endless movement seems to momentarily stop, and is replaced by free flow of memory.



The video work envelops the viewer on all sides, acting simultaneously upon all the senses; it becomes a kind of centrifuge into which images and memories – both those of the viewer and those of the artist – are cast. At the same time, the artist punctuates this intense and total viewing experience with delays, which provide the viewer with a space for processing – and shedding – his individual identity and experience.

The film, which is projected in a loop, brings together almost static shots of landscapes – scenes in which animals move across the screen and detached photographs of dancers in motion. The golden wheat fields and the sea of red anemones swaying in the wind are transformed, in Yanor's expert hands, into a natural stage upon which professional dancers and animals replace one another indiscriminately. Even though the images that succeed one another upon the improvised stage are all essentially different, they come together to create a common language that addresses man's deepest and most basic experiences. The film's endless loop echoes the cycle of life and death, while the fertility and eternal quality of the earth and of life are unified with the ephemeral and random essence of movement and memory. The emergence and disappearance of the various images upon the screens creates a profound and primal experience of existence that encompasses all possible elements – including those that remain invisible.

Although this work is concerned with the transformation of personal experience into a universal experience, it is embedded with milestones related to Yanor's autobiography and to the society in which she creates. Even though the film has no specific geographical or temporal context, it is infused with a profoundly Israeli quality and sense of belonging. One senses the Mediterranean influences imbued within it, as well as the unusual longing with which Yanor captures the images of movement interwoven throughout.





## THE STILL PHOTOGRAPHS

On the other side of the wall that cuts through the exhibition space is a large-scale series of photographs, which are printed upon ethereal stretches of cloth. In this body of works – which includes a series of photographs of dancers in motion alongside photographs of moving octopuses – Yanor uses the camera lens in order to freeze movement and to distill from it a poetic memory of the moment in which the image is transformed into a single flash of light.

In these photographs, the visual richness of the video work gives way to an almost ascetic series of choices. The lone figures that inhabit each of the works expand across the entire stretch of cloth and their bodies are cropped by the frame as they exceed its limits. In one of these works, Yanor even forgoes the need to include an object, and instead simply presents the viewer with the orphaned stage. In doing so, she dialogues with the writings of Paul Verlaine, who argued that "Everything that is not visible – exists."

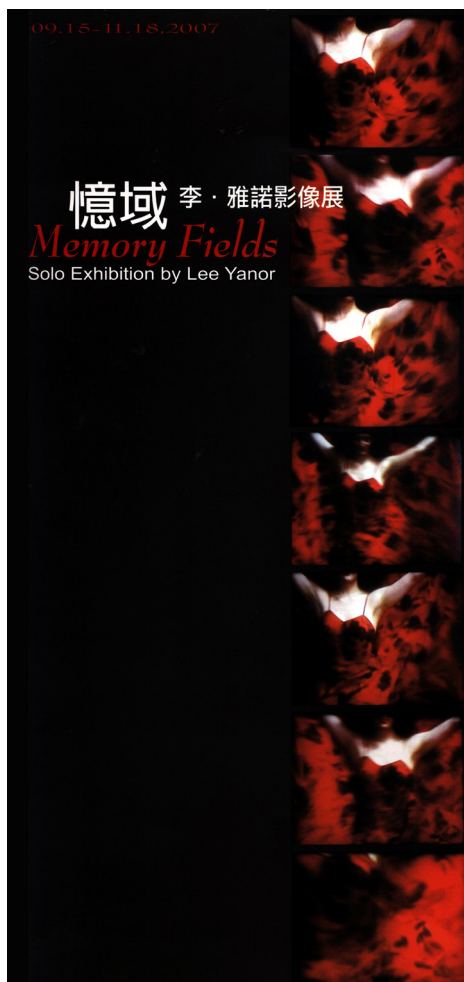
These black-and-white photographs stand out in stark contrast to the bright palette of the video work, and detach the images from the everyday, worldly context in which they were photographed. The dancers appear to be rising above the stage and seem to forge a symbiotic relationship with the octopuses, which appear beside them surrounded by their numerous tentacles. This expressive image, which cannot be associated with a specific time or place, becomes atemporal – and is related to the magic and pagan function fulfilled by dance in various ancient cultures.

Yanor appropriates for herself images that form an integral part of Western culture – including images of mourners, of the pietà and of religious gratitude – and transforms them into universal symbols that enable her to examine the relationship between life, loss and death. The series of images taken from the piece "The Rite of Spring" by Pina Bausch – a work that seemingly underscores the elements of freedom and liberation embedded in a bacchanalian celebration – finally reinforces the morbid feeling that accompanies the freezing of movement.

The fragile quality of the images that appear in Yanor's photographs is echoed by the materials they are printed upon, and by the choice to photograph some of them within a body of water. This translucent material – whose fluid quality starkly contrasts with the arrested motion – both duplicates and fragments the figures that dive into it; its destructive delicacy seems to drown their desperate attempts to keep moving, and to sabotage their struggle to stay alive.

The world astounds me more and more  
with every day that passes. It becomes vaster or more marvelous,  
less easy to grasp, more beautiful. Details  
awaken my passion, small details like  
an eye in a face, or the moss on a tree. But not  
more than the ensemble, because how can one  
differentiate between the detail and the ensemble?  
It is the details themselves that constitute the ensemble...  
the beauty of a given form."

*Alberto Giacometti, La Passion du Lithographe. Alberto Giacometti, oeuvre gravé.*



九重天 影像裝置 144 x 193 cm x 9pcs. 2007  
**Cloud 9** video installation, each screen, puffed fabric on wooden frame

Edited by Yair Nahshon  
 Composed and performed by Udi Henis  
 With Cristiana Morganti (Wuppertal, Ger)  
 Cristina Formaggia (Ubud, Bali, Ind)



烏帕塔舞蹈劇場 綜合媒材  
**Stage, Wuppertal, Tanztheater**  
 mixed media, print on voile fabric, framed on stainless still  
 127 x 192cm  
 1994 / 2007



法蘭西斯卡 綜合媒材  
**Francesca**  
 mixed media, print on voile fabric, framed on stainless still  
 127 x 192cm  
 1993 / 2007

## **CREDITS**

Curator: Milana Gitizin-Adiram

Co-Curator: Fang Wei Chung

Editor: Ariel Adiram

English translator: Talya Halkin

## **Credits for the video installation Cloud Nine**

Editor: Yair Nahshon

Composed and performed by: Udi Henis

With: Cristiana Morganti (Wuppertal, Germany)

Cristina Formaggia (Ubud, Bali, Indonesia)

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