

No Peace

A Drawing Installation

by

Ram Samocha

A thesis exhibition

presented to the University of Waterloo

in fulfillment of the

thesis requirement for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Studio Art

The Artery Gallery

158 King St. W, Kitchener, Ontario

March 28 - April 18, 2009

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2009

© Ram Samocha 2009

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

This paper is intended to serve as a supporting document for the exhibition *No Peace* that was held at the Artery Gallery, 158 King St. W, Kitchener, ON, Canada, March 28 - April 18, 2009.

This drawing installation presents the emotional restlessness of an immigrant who lives in a peaceful place but at the same time is tormented by the ongoing war in his homeland. The drawings make use of the vocabulary of abstraction while presenting the physical process of a repetitive line-based action. The work does not illustrate a political narrative but reflect on recent global issues by using the personal language of art. The *No Peace* installation combines drawing with video, animation, and performance in the hope of gaining a more communicative interaction with the viewer.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the following people for their contribution to the completion of this thesis exhibition:

The faculty members of the University of Waterloo, Fine Arts Department, Jane Buyers, Bruce Taylor, David Blatherwick, Cora Cluett , and Lois Andison for their valuable input, guidance, and encouragement. I am also indebted to my mentor Doug Kirton for his unique perspective, wisdom, and dedication.

I would like to acknowledge Rick Nixon, Jean Stevenson, and Laura Leslie for the creative technical support, and Lesley Hartley for her constant help and good will.

Dara Lane, Paula Katavolos, and Piroska Szabo for their attention, suggestions, and patience.

Galia Bar Or, Shlomit Saked, Benno Kalev, and Meira Perry-Lehmann for their ongoing interest and support.

My dearest family, my parents Yafa and Shlomo Samocha, my siblings Varda and Shay, my mother-in-law Esti Neta, my daughter Alma, and my wife Michal for their faith in me.

Dedication

To my wife Michal Neta

Table of Contents

| | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| List of figures | vii |
| Introduction | 1 |
| The restless line | 3 |
| No peace | 13 |
| Conclusion | 19 |
| Notes | 20 |
| Figures | 21-36 |
| Bibliography | 37-38 |

List of Figures

| | |
|--|-------|
| Figure 1. <i>Scarring</i> (detail), 2007, 16x16 inches, executed by surgical tweezers on paper | 21 |
| Figure 2. <i>Open-Ends</i> , 2007, 30x47 inches, pastel on paper, (installation view) | 21 |
| Figure 3. <i>Black hole sun</i> , 2007, 59x59 inches, black crayon on paper | 22 |
| Figure 4. <i>Night Falls</i> , 2008, Drawing Performance, University of Waterloo, Canada | 22 |
| Figure 5-6. <i>New Male Born</i> , 2009, (process documentation) | 23 |
| Figure 7-8. <i>New Male Born</i> , 2009, 72x84 inches, color pencil on unstretched canvas | 24 |
| Figure 9-10. <i>Criss-Crossfire</i> , 2009, (process documentation) | 25 |
| Figure 11-12. <i>Criss-Crossfire</i> , 2009, 72x73 inches, colour pencil on unstretched canvas | 26 |
| Figure 13-14. <i>Sand Clock</i> , 2009, (process documentation) | 27 |
| Figure 15-16. <i>Sand Clock</i> , 2009, 72x105 inches, colour pencil on unstretched canvas | 28 |
| Figure 17-18. <i>Concertina Wire</i> , (process documentation), 2009 | 29 |
| Figure 19-20. <i>Concertina Wire</i> , 2009, 60x87inches, colour pencil on unstretched canvas | 30 |
| Figure 21-22. <i>Green Cease-Fire</i> , 2009, (process documentation) | 31 |
| Figure 23-24. <i>Green Cease-Fire</i> , 2009, 72x87 inches, colour pencil on unstretched canvas ... | 32 |
| Figure 25-32. <i>No Peace</i> , 2009, (installation view) | 33-36 |

Introduction

The work presented here draws from the locale and the location of its creation. The majority of my time is spent drawing, painting, and sculpting works that derive from personal experience. My art does not portray descriptions of existing situations, nor does it examine political realities, but rather deals with these issues through observing the singular, private, and intimate. I consider drawing to be a significant, independent artistic form and, in particular, during the past seven years drawing has become the main media used to express myself. My interest in painting, sculpture, design, writing and motion continues to be reflected through of drawing. Within my work I combine drawing with installation, new media, and live performances to further explore the encounter between artifact and audience, between the process of creation and reception. Drawing permits an observation of the progression of my work and hopefully provides the opportunity to establish a more intimate relationship with my viewers.

I was born in Israel in 1966. In 1992 I received my B.F.A from the Bezalel Academy of Arts & design in Jerusalem. The following decade was intense, during which I developed my own artistic language through various media such as painting, sculpture, drawing and installation. During this period I taught art and design in several academic institutions gaining and sharing knowledge with my students and colleagues, and in the remaining time I worked on my art in the privacy of the studio. At a certain point I felt the need to break this solitude and initiate frequent gatherings with fellow artists. The desire for interaction and the success of these experiences encouraged me to initiate various, large-scale projects.

While sitting in some of my early exhibitions I realized that the gallery setting, where works of art that hang on a wall and a guard that sits to welcome people, does not really encourage interaction between the viewer and the artist. After devoting so much time to express myself artistically in the studio, I felt the need to get a direct response from the viewers: to engage them in a conversation instead of giving them a monologue about my feelings. The desire for a more meaningful connection with the audience led me to try various other options of communication. In some of the group shows, as a curator, I presented studio photos of the participating artists next to their work. I also organized solo exhibitions in my home and studio and commenced a series of video screenings in alternative urban spaces. The search for a direct interaction with the viewer was one of the main reasons for directing my artistic expression to the language of drawing, installation, and performance.

The restless line

Drawing is a fundamental action and the primary means of expression which is likened to leaving a trace, making a sign, or putting a mark. “Drawing seeks always to reveal the gesture of the artist through the space of the surface, to capture the moment that precedes the birth of the sign.”¹ While looking at a picture the viewer only sees the end of a process that took place in the past; frequently artists choose to erase the extra lines that led them to the final work. By using repetitive and dynamic lines in my drawings I hope to bring the audience closer to the construction of the image, and engage them in the process of creating the work. “Line drawings often reveal an immediacy and directness bordering on rawness. They show precisely what is needed, no more and no less. No other form is so flexible, responsive, or revealing.”² The multiple drawn lines are meant to present the varied ways in which I choose to explore ideas and show the struggle that preceded the final result. I give this distinctive way of using the line a specific name: the restless line.

Rhythm, movement, and time are important elements within this work. While searching for ways to show progression and movement I draw with an impatient line. I am fascinated with capturing the energy of the drawing performance and with the transformation of the image. The restlessly drawn line follows the traces of an action, movement, or thought and it becomes the main element that vibrates through all the layers of these drawings. Obsession, repetitiveness, precision, and control are some components that can be associated with the use of the restless line. Through an intense process of gradual building and rebuilding of the desired shapes or forms I find my way towards the articulation of an idea. In many cases this visual struggle allows the viewer

to follow the various paths I took in my search for meaning. The restless line is often gestural, thus becoming a form of artistic signature or logo that is immediately recognizable. Sometimes by using repetitive lines I am challenged to develop new technical solutions to best convey my ideas as seen in the series of drawings titled *Scarring* (Figure 1). In these drawings from 2007 I decided to apply surgical tissue forceps as a drawing tool and pressed the paper with it. Although the final images in the series became quite abstract, the physical experience of the three dimensional drawings remained very sensual and associated directly with the body and its wounds.

The body has been a source of motivation as well as a creative tool in my art. Since 2004 I have incorporated the body in drawing performances and in performance based video art. By engaging my body during the creative process and by including images of the aging body in the drawing I become more aware of my abilities, my limits, and the preciousness of time. The physical and visual connections to the body and to its proportions remain important even in my more abstract work. The association to the body is reflected in the rhythm and progression of the drawn lines that gradually build up to convey ideas. The body acts as a measuring tool that helps me understand my surroundings and my relation to the world. In some of my drawing performances I choose to expose my hairy body and thus elicit questions about masculinity and femininity, attraction and repulsion, and right and wrong in relation to the body and the self.

All of the work discussed here is spontaneous and the lines are saturated with instinctive energy. Recording my sensations by using drawn lines is a fundamental necessity in this work. When I draw a line it is always done with a physical, expressive

attitude, yet during the process of creating the image I need to stop and look, pause and reflect. This way of constructing the work connects my artistic approach more with design and craftsmanship, than with expressive artistic traditions. This work is self-referential and I see myself continuing the experimental investigations often used by post-war artists. Jackson Pollock, in particular, is a key figure in relation to my work because of his unique development of the impatient line and his successful way of translating emotional complexities into seductive, large-scale works. His primal and experimental paint dripping technique opened a window for the use of repetitive and evocative lines. Pollock's vibrating lines are magical in the way they record the rhythm of the artist's hand and the way they reflect the dizziness of his thoughts. The documentary photos and movies by Hans Namuth that recorded the way Pollock worked on his paintings were significant and influential in allowing the viewer to observe the self-controlled movements of the artist, and to witness the repetitive, ritual, and almost meditative way in which Pollock expressed himself. "In 1969, just after MoMA's Pollock show, the idea of liquidity and the process, the dynamics of Pollock's work, was used against the stasis of minimalism."³ In *Splashing Molten Lead*, 1969, by Richard Serra, the artist flung hot lead against the corner of a warehouse. "Each line formed by the lead casting itself in the corner was prized out and pulled away to become the sculpture. Now this points to another obvious Pollock- like aspect of minimalist literalism, and that is the evident declaration of process."⁴ Later on contemporary artists expanded Pollock's investigations, and applied the use of dynamic lines and gestures in experimental art fields such as installation, performance, photography, and video art. In the performance *Loving Care*, 1993, "Janine Antoni "painted" an entire gallery floor

with her long hair, dipping it frequently into a large plastic bucket of Loving Care's "Natural Black" dye. For her it was an ironic provocation of male-dominated legacies (in this case that of Pollock and Klein), a frequent theme in her work."⁵ In *Action Photo, 1997*, by Vik Muniz, the artist applied liquid chocolate syrup and used it as a drawing material for a series of photos which gave a surprising and humoristic interpretation on the famous image of Pollock at work. In the video art *Painter, 2002*, Paul McCarthy gave his "parodies psychological interpretations of abstract painting"⁶ by creating a fake documentation about a grotesque cartoon-like abstract expressionist artist who used gigantic paint tubes, braches, and canvases in his claustrophobic office-like studio. These artists continue to have an impact on my work and share some of the same media used in this body of work.

The radical investigations of artists from the 1960s and 1970s had a great influence on my production. These artists focused on questions concerning the boundaries of art, drawing and life. They searched for an immediate connection with their audience and tested the relevance of the gallery space. They also asked themselves basic questions about the aim of the artist within contemporary life, and about the relationship between time and matter, process and drawing. "Drawing puts into play what morphological readings of process art tend to obscure: the operational or temporal, rather than stylistic, dimension of process-oriented work... process art reveals much about process-minded issues, principally the way in which matter is figured through time or the way time is figured through matter."⁷ Sculptors, performers, as well as installation artists frequently used the conceptual language, the potential for chance within the creative process, and explored the possibilities for audience participation in

their work. The actions of these artists extended our notion of line and movement, of time and perception, and were deliberately intended to suggest that the work is in flux. Their experimental actions were open-ended and laid a path for closer integration of different media, styles, and concepts, such as video art, computer imagery, electronic sounds, and provocative performances. Joseph Beuys's temporary *Blackboard Drawings* were erasable evidences of the artist's drawing investigations done exclusively on chalkboard during his live performance lectures. Richard Long's *Walking Works* introduced the notion of a daily routine, such as taking a walk, and turned it into an artistic drawing performance gesture. Long used his feet to create straight lines in a field by walking back and forth and recorded his actions in photographs. Robert Morris experimented with the element of chance in his series of *Blind Time Drawings*, where he intentionally covered his eyes during the entire creative process. Morris used his hands and dipped it in powdered graphite to create rhythmical body gesture marks on paper. In Sol LeWitt's *Wall Drawings* "it was not necessary for the artist to carry out the drawing himself. Instead, a set of instructions, which then became the title of the work, were written out so that any competent draughtsman could execute the drawing."⁸

Innovative artists like Beuys, Long, Morris, and LeWitt with their sometimes odd, irritating, and repetitive experiments opened new possibilities for drawing by exploring the limits and the boundaries of art and perception. These artists searched for original ways of communication by experimenting with the limitations of time, the documentation of their actions, and by adopting alternative options of presenting their art. These radical investigations are now embedded into our present artistic practices.

In this work I try to develop the connection and relationship between the action of drawing, and between the documentation and presentation of the creative process following in the footsteps of the 1960s and 1970s artists. I consider the photo and video documentation of the creative process a significant element within my work. The final drawing is not always a conclusion for me, but rather a stage that leads to another continuous action. The documented development of the drawing presented simultaneously with the artwork gives the viewer the option to go beyond the flat surface of the work and observe the dynamic and evolving stages of its creation.

One of the latest examinations of drawing, documentation, and presentation was made in a series of drawings titled *Open-Ends* from 2007-08 (Figure 2). In this series of drawings I attempted to touch upon the complexity of being an immigrant. Each one of the drawings was a visual letter that had neither a beginning, nor an end and presented the complexity of a restless soul longing for understanding. My inability as a foreigner to express at a satisfactory verbal level was reflected through visual means. I chose to make these drawings using pastel on paper because this technique gave fragility to the work since the delicate drawings could be erased in a second by accident or by careless handling. The size of the drawings (44x30 inches) allowed me to become more physical while “writing” these letters. I decided to draw each image using a different color to reflect the different moods or states of mind that I was in while making the drawings. By choosing to work with orange, yellow, or red colors I strived to create more emotional and dynamic images. While by choosing to work with green, grey, or blue colors I attempted to create much more stable and calm shapes. From the beginning of the creation of this series of drawings it was decided to document the development of

each drawing by taking hundreds of still photos. At the end of the process all of the documenting photos were combined into a six minute stop-motion animation that showed in a fast-forward manner the construction of the final image. Sometimes the development of certain drawings was shown from the end to the beginning to create a mixed perception of the drawing sequence giving the viewer the option to visualize the final results in a more fluid way. The final drawing then became one suggested option for preserving the mark, one provided evidence for remembering the artist's action.

Currently I am inspired by the unique use of color and feel of movement created by Canadian artists such as: Tom Thomson, David Milne, Norman McLaren, Monica Tap, Denyse Thomasos, and Ed Pien. At the same time, coming from an Israeli ancestry, I feel that I am continuing the distinctive line oriented tradition with its dynamic and physical approach to art making as represented in the works of Israeli artists including Anna Ticho, Leopold Krakauer, Zevi Meirovich, Aviva Uri, Moshe Kupferman, Moshe Gershuni, Raffi Lavie, and Tal Matzliah. Throughout its history, Jewish tradition has displayed a particular interest in line drawing and the orthography of the written language. Drawing as a primal way of expression appeals to a culture that encourages an economical visual approach. The use of the restless line in Israeli art was first adopted in relation to the local landscape. The strong bright light, the open and clear skyline of the Mediterranean and the rocky and dry landscape, with its diverse wild life were a source of inspiration to many local artists from the beginning of the 20th century. In search for a precise visual translation for their impressions of the rich landscape and contrasting rocky deserts, some artists chose to apply repetitive, dynamic,

and broken lines. This approach was greatly inspired by the Impressionist and Expressionist line style of Europe and by the local topography of Israel.

Anna Ticho (1894-1980), for example, was deeply moved by the bright glaring light of the Middle Eastern sky and by the peculiar shapes of the hills and rocks that surround Jerusalem. Her distinctive drawings were based on both observation and abstraction and made use of many repetitive, energetic, rhythmic curved lines. These nature drawings were done using brown and dark gray charcoal on large white paper. They represent the dramatic and contrasting meeting of the sunny flat land and the shadowy, crowded, and stony hill parts. The use of the restless line often applied to describe the impression of the external landscape was gradually adopted from the 1950s on by more and more artists to portray the intimate internal landscape of the artists' personal feelings. Aviva Uri (1922-1989) was another Israeli artist that used to work exclusively with the medium of drawing to experiment with the possibilities of the drawn line in a very lyrical and sensitive way. "The radical significance of her drawings resides first and foremost in the liberation of the line from the burden of the cultural convention that adhered to it."⁹ Uri successfully shifted the focus from landscape painting to a more intimate and existential self-expression. She drew mainly with pencil, charcoal, and coloured chalks on paper and produced a distinctive, strong, and impressive "childlike" scribbled line built by the spontaneous and rhythmical gestures of the hand. "The impact of the early work of Aviva Uri, shown in the Tel Aviv Museum in 1957, on young artists of the sixties, resides not so much in her abstraction, as in her definition of line as a language. She isolated the line on the whiteness of the paper to expose the sensibility of the hand and the eye, using it as a seismograph of the

inner self.”¹⁰ Aviva Uri’s exclusive use of drawing and the power of her vibrant lines continue to inspire young Israeli artists.

In recent years, several international contemporary artists have reconnected themselves with the older tradition of drawing in new and complex ways. The medium of drawing today receives much critical attention, wide audiences, and since the end of the 20th century it has become one of the central art practices along with installation, multimedia, and photography. In an effort to become more in contact with their audience and to increase the impact of their large-scale wall drawings and installations, contemporary artists frequently embrace the use of repetitive and gestural lines. They are aware of the instinctive attention that these personal mark-makings create, and by applying these lines frequently in their work, they intentionally aim for a deeper connection with their audience. The urge to use restless lines can sometimes be found in the works of artists who grew up in an era of intense social, political, or economic tension. Contemporary artists like Arturo Herrera (born in Venezuela), Julie Mehretu (born in Ethiopia), and William Kentridge (born in South Africa), have received international recognition for their innovative investigations with contemporary drawing; each one of them has developed a special and distinctive style inspired by their intense life experiences, and fuelled by constant anxiety and a struggle to find hope.

Arturo Herrera uses characters from cartoons (especially the cartoons of Disney), coloring books, fairy tales, and comic books in his collages and large-scale wall paintings. He takes familiar images and distorts them to a point where they have just a few recognizable lines to give a hint about their original source. The final work becomes an obscure and dizzy piece of art which uses naïve and idealized images to

reflect our subconscious memories of sexuality and violence. Herrera uses the language of abstraction and combines it with the entertaining language of cartoons and comics to talk about political, cultural, and personal issues.

Julie Mehretu's energetic work assembles apocalyptic visions from our post 9/11 explosive urban world. She visually overwhelms her viewers with multiple layers of dynamic and dramatic ink lines and acrylic marks directly on walls and large canvases. Mehretu takes her inspiration from a variety of visual, technical, and natural phenomena: monumental and repetitive urban architecture, comics, damaged landscapes, chemical explosions, natural eruptions, fireworks, tornados, hurricanes, burning oil fields, aerial maps, lightning, and atomic boom photos.

William Kentridge develops a unique presentation of frame by frame animation. Instead of using hundreds of drawings to show a progression and movement in time, he uses only a few sheets of paper and draws and erases his lines over and over again. Kentridge leaves in the traces of his mark the history of his drawing and allows the viewer to follow the progression of the image. "The effect of layering and erasing to create the film, a process that continually reveals its own history and leaves traces of its past, can be seen as a metaphor for its subject matter."¹¹ Kentridge describes the controversial city where he lives and talks about the complex political situation of South Africa while addressing the issues of guilt and private responsibility.

No peace

More recently, my practice registers the tension between the private and public spheres combining an inward gaze to my intimate familial relationships, and outward gaze to the external socio-political realm. Although I am influenced by the innovative language of abstraction, my work remains connected to the lived reality of personal experience. For a long time I wanted to return to colour and break away from the black paint that was dominant in most of my drawings in the past ten years, but the experience of living in constant fear in Israel did not allow it to happen. The people of Israel were bombarded with images of terror, aggression, and violence on a daily bases in the media. Walking in the street or sitting in a coffee shop and constantly searching for a safety spot in case a bomb exploded was mentally exhausting. The routine of being physically checked by guards before entering public places like malls, restaurants, cinemas, and stores was frustrating. The sudden terrifying sound of explosions and then shortly after the troubled noise of ambulances sirens created depression and a feeling of helplessness. I thought I would start introducing colour in my art after getting married, or after having our first child but the intensity of life in Israel affected every aspect of my creative life and somehow blocked the possibility of working with colour.

Shortly after moving to Canada with my family in 2005 I gradually started to allow colour to appear again in my work. However, I had to draw one last big black drawing. *Black Hole Sun* from 2007 (Figure 3), is a large size drawing made with black crayon on paper. The disturbing image of a black hole that sucks in all the remnants of the past allowed me to move on and to bring colours back into the work that followed. Living in a much more relaxed environment did not erase all of the intense memories,

but it allowed me to concentrate again on the language of art, and gave me the opportunity to view my past in a more calm and peaceful manner. Living in a green environment, and in a friendly place like Canada, gave me the opportunity to reconnect with a deeper interest in abstraction and in primary art elements such as color, form, composition, and material.

Over the past seven years I found myself increasingly drawn to working with very basic materials. In direct connection with my status as an immigrant and a traveler, I often work with temporary, flexible, and transportable surfaces and materials such as paper, unstretched canvas, photos or video recordings. These items are easy to carry, roll, flip, store, transfer, reuse, or erase. Being a line oriented artist and wanting to produce well defined marks I prefer to use hard feeling equipments such as graphite and colour pencils, ballpoint pen, pastel, crayons, oil sticks, chalk, and markers. The approach used is quite simple and spontaneous: I sketch, draft, or doodle in a distinctive personal way. Some of my stylistic inspirations are taken from the remarkable visual language of children's drawings. I find the essential and expressive lines that children use to describe their impressions of the world very powerful and effective. In my drawing performances and installations I also frequently work with attractive instructional materials widely used by day cares, schools, or children museums for demonstration and entertainment. In these public shows I intentionally use everyday materials such as small magnets, masking tapes, photocopy prints, sidewalk chalk, crayons, sponges, and blackboards. These familiar tools help me to gain an immediate curiosity about my actions and undivided attention from the audience.

In one of my latest performances *Night Falls* from 2008 (Figure 4), a need was felt to connect with the place where I presently stay and to redefine the relationship with the place that I came from. During the live performance I used sidewalk chalk and drew directly on a black wall a large image of Niagara Falls as it appears lit up at night. The challenging combination of the black background with the contrasting neon colours was meant to express my ambivalent feelings about the past and about my present circumstances as an immigrant. The *Night Falls* performance presented the result that emerged from the coupling of contradictory elements such as: hot and cold, light and dark, calm and restless, fire and water, peace and war. The famous image of Niagara Falls was used in an effort to connect to a very powerful local landmark, yet I realized that no matter what image I created it always carried within it the memories of a complex past. While I was drawing, the intense sound of shattering chalk on the wall reminded me of the sound of smashing rocks that Palestinian protestors throw in a desperate act of frustration. Troubled memories came back unexpectedly through the active sound of my drawing and confirmed my deep unconscious bond with the Middle East.

After drawing on a black wall in the *Night Falls* performance, I continued to use this background colour exclusively for my new studio work. The *No Peace* series, which comprise my M.F.A thesis exhibition, were made with colour pencils on large unstretched canvases painted black on both sides. The interaction between the black surface and the brilliant colours created an intense and challenging contrast alluding to my past and present. The use of the gloomy, black surface suggested my past in war-torn Israel, while the application of vivid and bright rainbow colours on this background

reflected my current life in Canada. In this series of drawings combining a sense of celebration and distraction, chaos and organisation, aggression and concentration was a purposeful use of ambiguity. The kinetic, joyful, semi optimistic, and at some point psychedelic appearance of these works led the viewer to a more substantial and serious connotation introduced by the troubled titles that I assigned to these works. The titles: *Sirens*, *Family*, *New Male Born*, *Criss-Crossfire*, *Sand Clock*, *Concertina Wire*, and *Green Cease-Fire* were only introduced after the action of drawing had taken place. My anxious original ideas were expressed instinctively at first, but became finalized once I assigned specific and evocative titles to the work. In the *No Peace* series I attempted to touch upon the complexity of the family unit and our private and public lives as they become increasingly affected by social and political unrest. The exhibition reflected my current situation of living in a peaceful place but at the same time being affected by the ongoing war in my homeland.

Coming to Canada from an intense place like Israel increased my expectation of finally finding a peace of mind and a refuge from constant anxiety that gradually infused my art. At first I was concentrating on a series of drawings from 2006 titled *First Impression* that expressed my excitement about the quiet and serene snowy landscape in Canada and the healing power of the colour white. After four years of being outside of Israel I began to understand that no matter where I stay, there is an impatient voice within me that constantly reminds me of my past and of the complex situation the Middle East is trapped in. Inspired by the beliefs and actions of artists like Joseph Beuys, who believed in the transformative power of the artist and in the ability of art to affect and heal wounds, I intended this exhibition to function as a tool to

express my frustrations stemming from a constant yearning for peace. Frequently I try to dissolve my fears and doubts by using humour and, most recently, optimistic colours. In one of the *No Peace* drawings titled *New Male Born* (Figure 7-8) by using rainbow colours over a black background I tried to open myself to a more positive attitude. I used bold, sweeping gestures to record the repetitively circular movements of my arms over the canvas. The final image that emerged expressed my deep concern of having a newborn male child who would have to serve in the army and take part in an ongoing war, just as I did in Israel. On one side of the canvas I decided to draw an image of two merging rainbows suggesting a vagina encircling the emerging head of a baby about to be born, stuck in the birth canal. On the other side of the canvas in the centre of the rainbows I drew two big cartoon eyes that stare at the viewer with doubt and hesitation suggesting that the baby decided not to be born, but to stay safely inside.

The work of the American artist Leon Golub inspired me to adopt the use of large unstretched canvases for the *No Peace* series. Unlike Golub, when starting to draw on unstretched canvas, I instinctively felt the need to work on both sides of the fabric. The looseness of the canvas gave me the opportunity to work on two frames/sequences and continue to develop the image the way it had been done in narrative media such as animation or comics. The act of drawing on both sides of the canvas encouraged me to think about the installation and presentation of the artwork from the beginning of the creative process, and to think about the way the viewer interacted with the work. The component of time was very important when I created the work privately in my studio and when I presented it publicly. In an effort to connect with the fast paced and hectic present time I decided to think about creative ways to entice the viewer to stay a little

longer in front of the art work. My latest drawing installation *No Peace* was meant to lead the audience into an attractive maze formed by several canvases that hung down like curtains, flags, or screens from tight wire running from wall to wall in the gallery space. The black canvases acted like movie screens where only one still image was projected and the viewer could walk around the canvas to experience the total development of the image. While working on this series of drawings in the studio I constantly documented my actions on camera. The video and animated documentations played on a TV screen in the exhibition allowed the viewer to witness my emotions and observe my actions during the creation of the piece. Hence, an opportunity opened for the viewer to interact with the installation and follow the development of the work from beginning to end.

Conclusion

We live in a dramatic and intense time: the age of terror, radical fanaticism, bombings and explosions, weapons of mass destruction, war, genocide, hunger, empty materialism, and mindless fascination with celebrity. During extreme times like this some artists feel the urge to apply aggressive and dynamic modes of expression in their work. As a contemporary artist I have the obligation to talk about relevant issues and events that take place right here and right now. In the hope of increasing public awareness I employ certain strategies and specific drawing techniques to connect with a relevant situation. Although art might not be the most effective way to direct attention to urgent global issues, I still believe in the importance of individual initiative and in the mysterious power of art to reach out and transform society.

From early on I had an instinctive desire to get into a more communicative interaction with the viewer, but it is only now that I found effective ways to connect with and receive feedback from the audience. The act of drawing, performing, and documenting is challenging and demanding, but it is also extremely rewarding. The combination of performance, animation, video, installation, and drawing facilitates a more precise articulation of ideas and issues, and allows me to examine the relevancy of drawing as a modern medium.

I love the notion of leaving the interpretation of the artwork to the viewer, yet sense the importance of conveying a personal message in a precise way using simple and attractive artistic means. Although motivated by a restless need for personal expression I feel the urgency to connect to a much larger contemporary phenomenon of searching for peace in the world, even though it might be in vain.

Notes

- ¹ Fisher, Jean. *On Drawing*, in *The Stage of Drawing: Gesture and Act*
Tate Publishing and The Drawing Centre, New York, 2003, p. 222
- ² Carraig-Martin, Michael. *Drawing the Line*
The South Bank Centre, 1995, p. 10
- ³ Varnedoe, Kirk. *Pictures of Nothing: Abstract Art since Pollock*
Princeton University Press, 2006, p. 170
- ⁴ Varnedoe, p. 170
- ⁵ Goldberg, RoseLee. *Performance: live art since the 60s*
Thames & Hudson Inc, 2004, p. 137
- ⁶ Goldberg, p. 204
- ⁷ Butler, Cornelia H. *After Image – Drawing through process*
The MIT Press, 1999, p. 31
- ⁸ Kovats, Tania. *The Drawing Book. A survey of drawing: the primary means of expression*
Black Dog Publishing Ltd, 2005, p. 24
- ⁹ Bar Or, Galia. *Animating the Myth in her Aviva Uri – The Line Drawings*
Museum of Art, Ein Harod, 2005, P. 240
- ¹⁰ Barzel, Amnon. *Art in Israel*
Flash Art Books, 1988, p. 71
- ¹¹ Kovats, p. 35

Figures

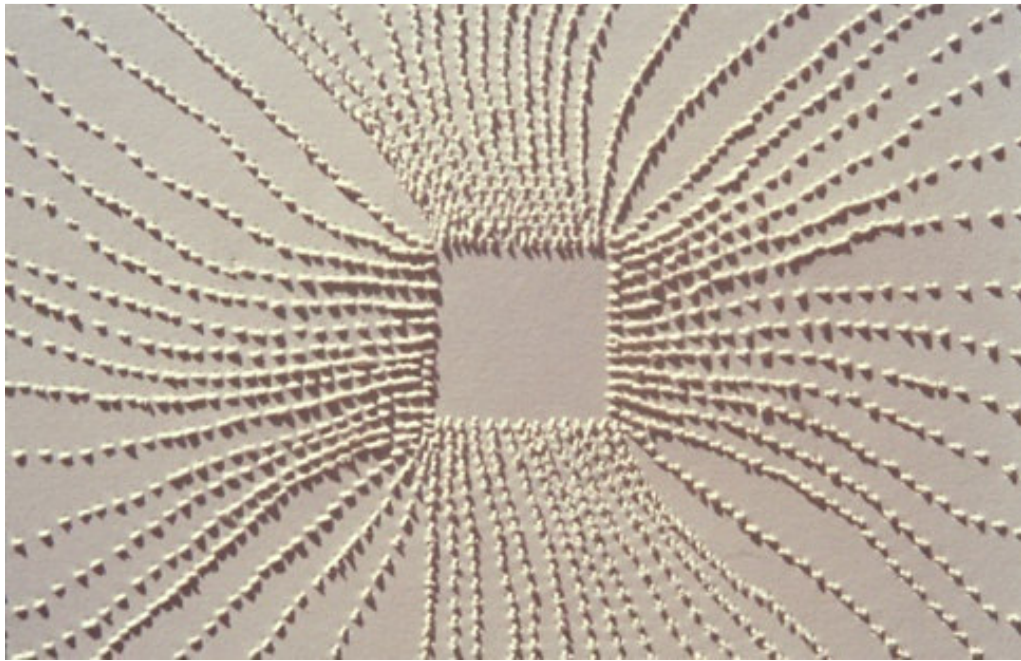


Figure 1. *Scarring* (detail), 2007, 16x16 inches, executed by surgical tweezers on paper



Figure 2. *Open-Ends*, 2007, each drawing 30x47 inches, pastel on paper, (installation view)

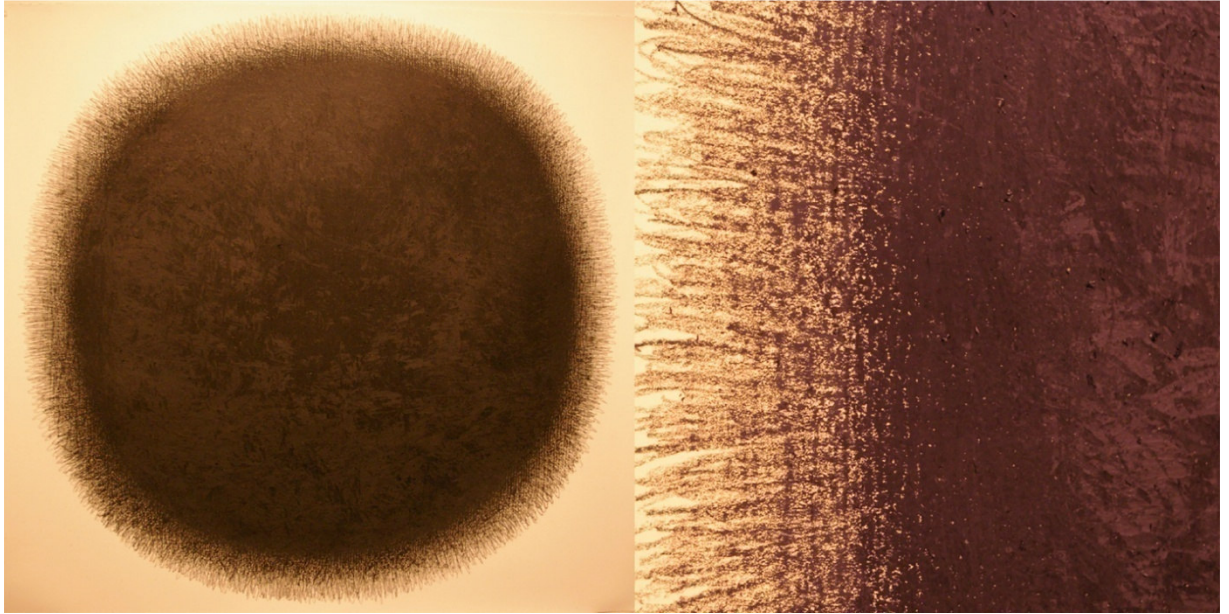


Figure 3. *Black hole sun*, 2007, 59x59 inches, black crayon on paper

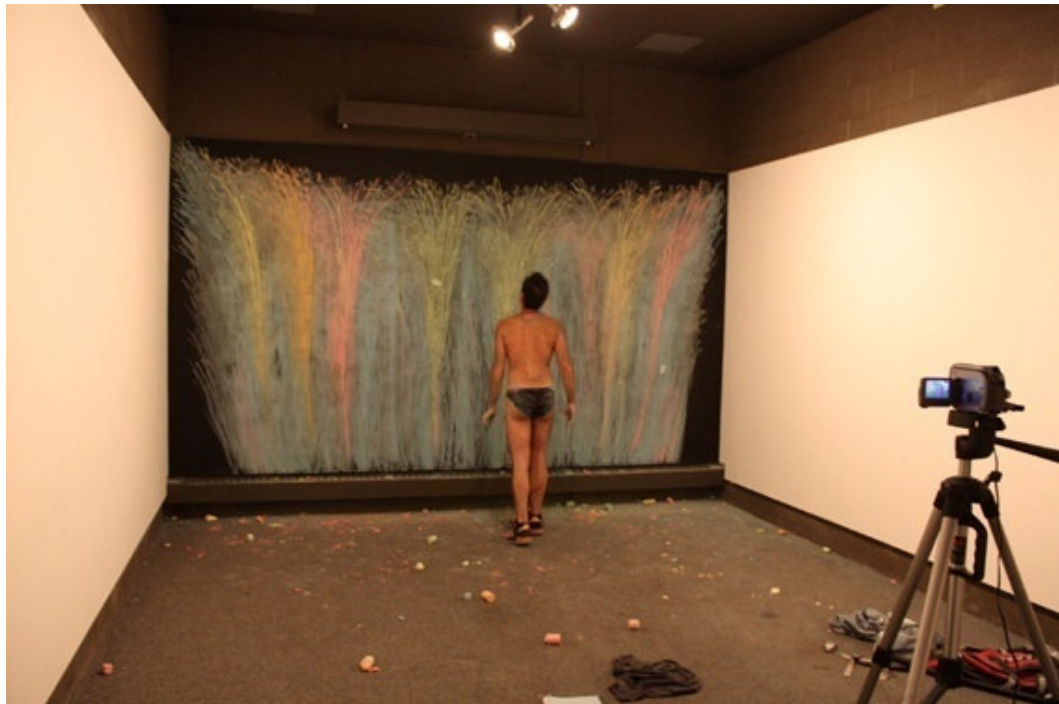


Figure 4. *Night Falls*, 2008, Drawing Performance, Front Gallery, University of Waterloo, ON, Canada



Figure 5. *New Male Born A*, 2009, (process documentation)



Figure 6. *New Male Born B*, 2009, (process documentation)



Figure 7. *New Male Born A*, 2009, 72x84 inches, colour pencil on unstretched canvas



Figure 8. *New Male Born B*, 2009, 72x84 inches, colour pencil on unstretched canvas



Figure 9. *Criss-Crossfire A*, 2009, (process documentation)

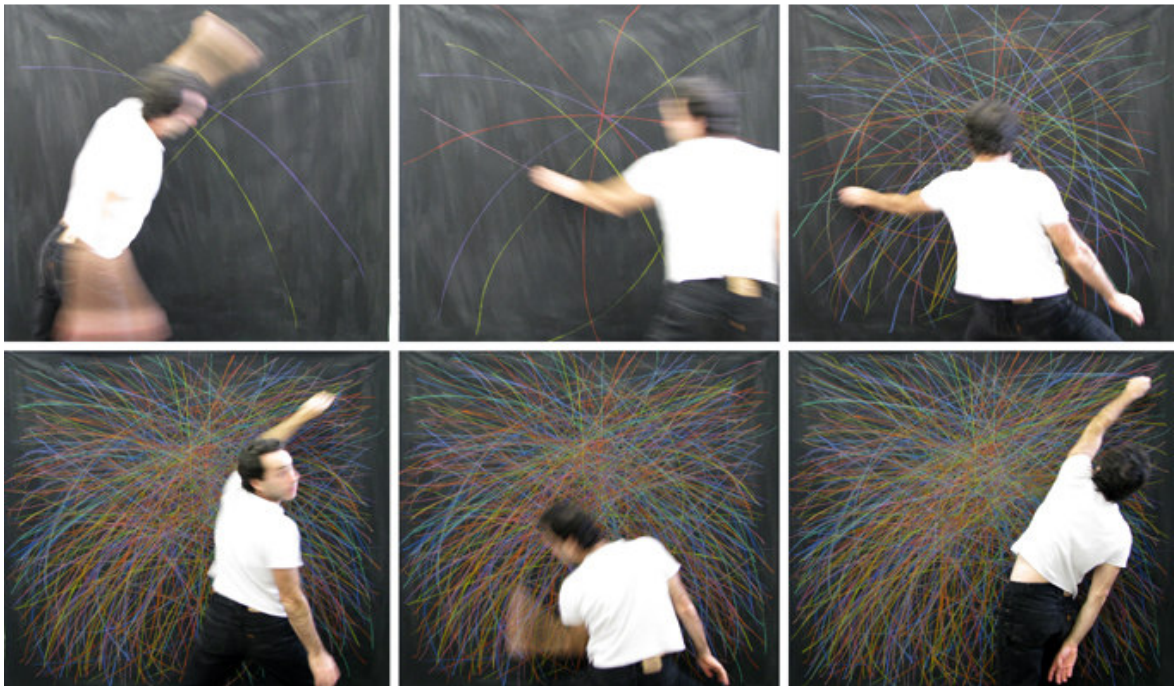


Figure 10. *Criss-Crossfire B*, 2009, (process documentation)



Figure 11. *Criss-Crossfire A*, 2009, 72x73 inches, colour pencil on unstretched canvas

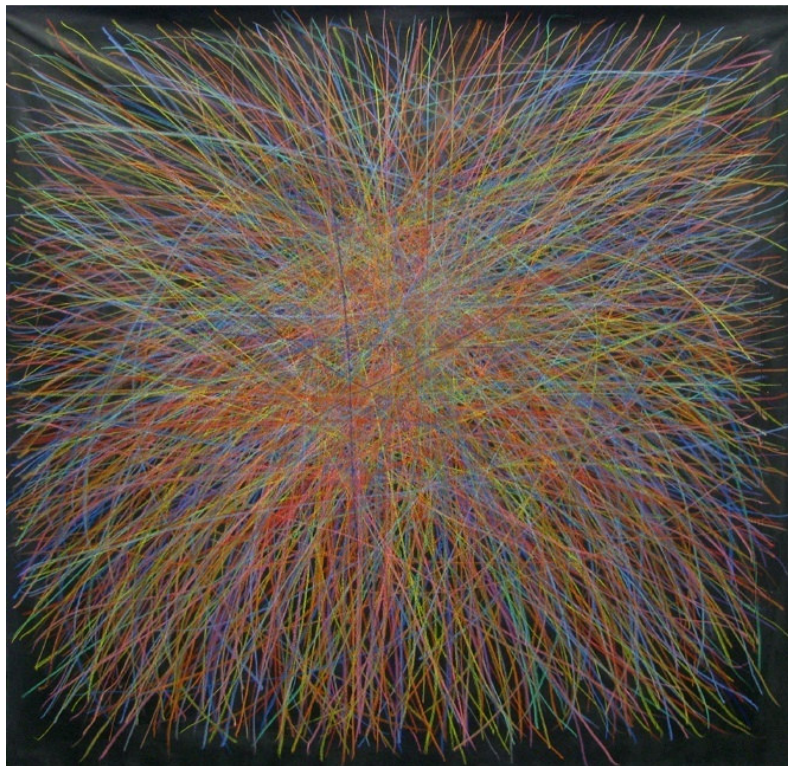


Figure 12. *Criss-Crossfire B*, 2009, 72x73 inches, colour pencil on unstretched canvas

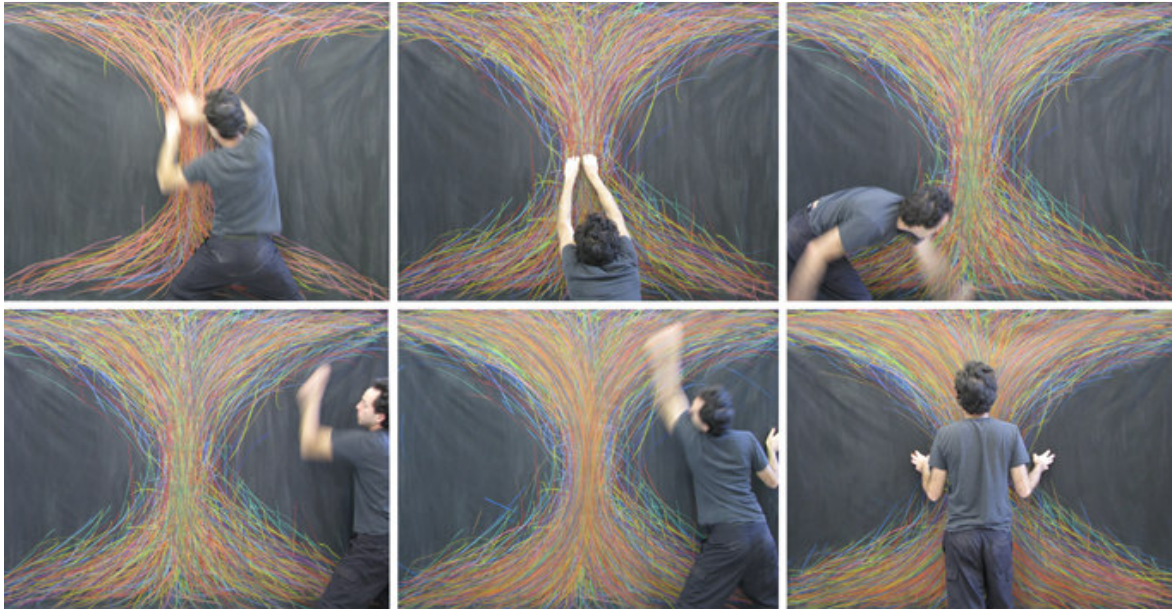


Figure 13. *Sand Clock A*, 2009, (process documentation)

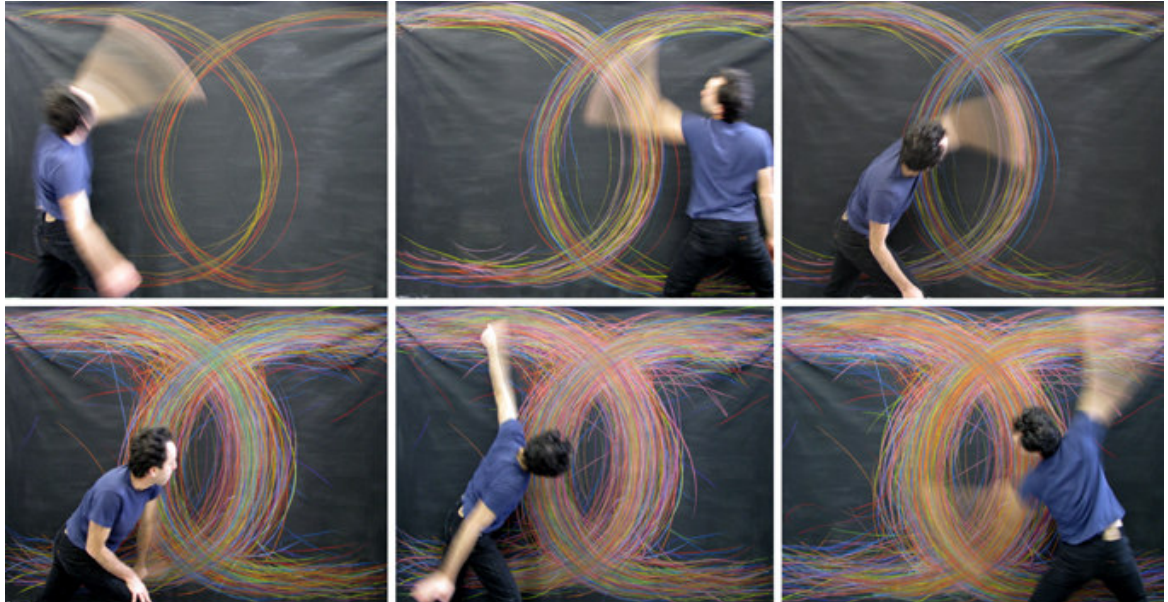


Figure 14. *Sand Clock B*, 2009, (process documentation)

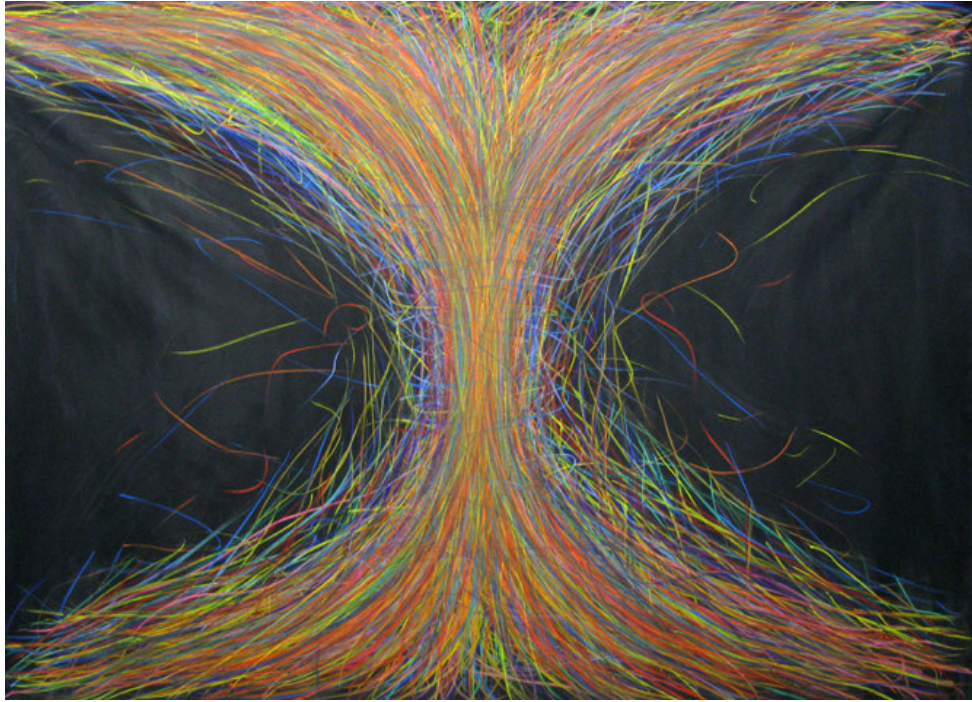


Figure 15. *Sand Clock A*, 2009, 105x72 inches, colour pencil on unstretched canvas



Figure 16. *Sand Clock B*, 2009, 72x105 inches, colour pencil on unstretched canvas



Figure 17. *Concertina Wire A*, 2009, (process documentation)

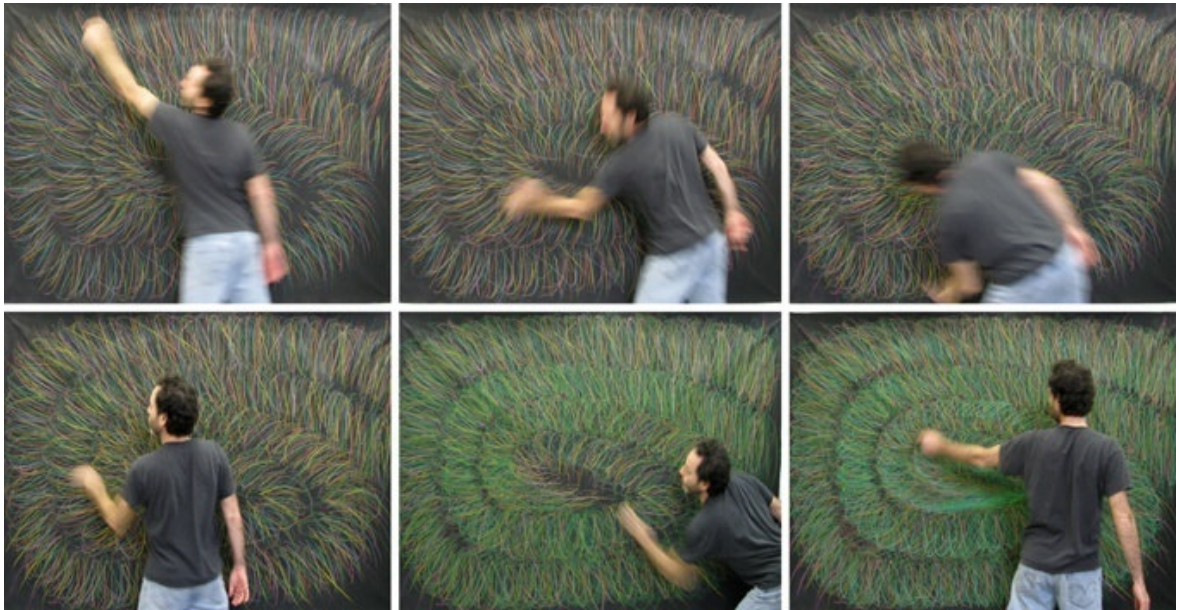


Figure 18. *Concertina Wire A*, 2009, (process documentation)



Figure 19. *Concertina Wire A*, 2009, 60x87inches, colour pencil on unstretched canvas

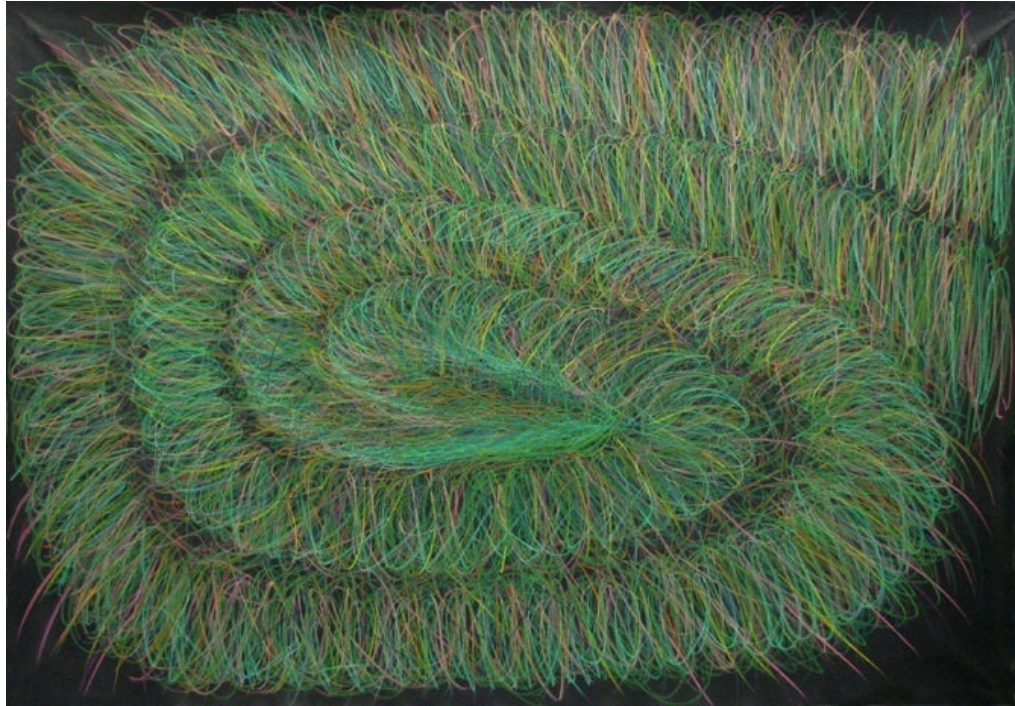


Figure 20. *Concertina Wire B*, 2009, 60x87inches, colour pencil on unstretched canvas



Figure 21. *Green Cease-Fire A*, 2009, (process documentation)



Figure 22. *Green Cease-Fire B*, 2009, (process documentation)



Figure 23. *Green Cease-Fire A*, 2009, 72x87 inches, colour pencil on unstretched canvas

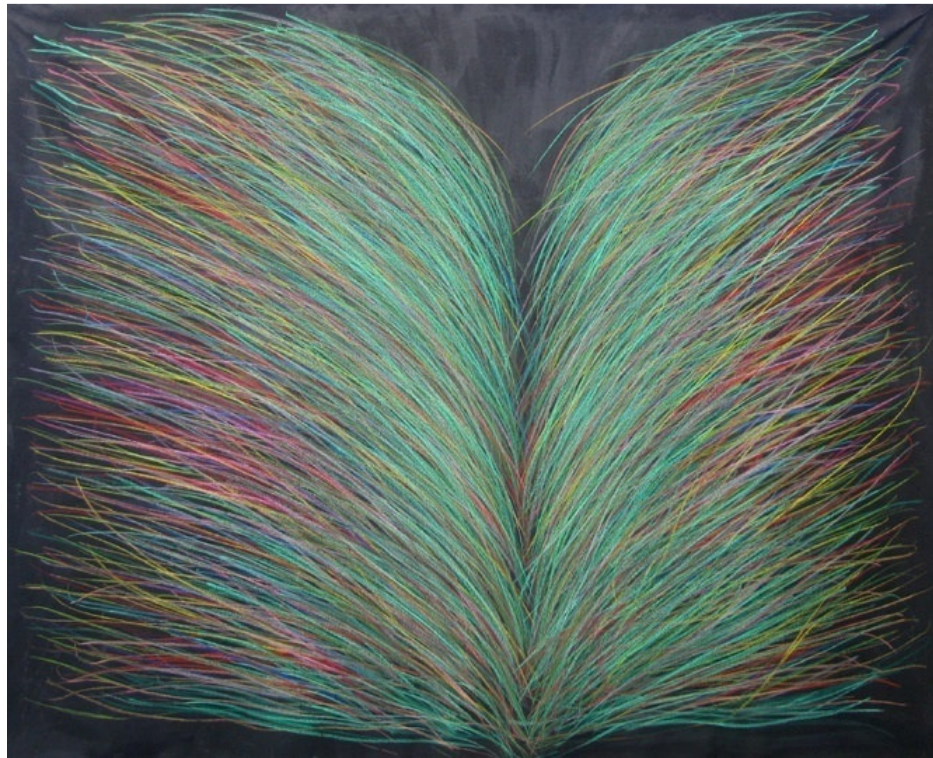


Figure 24. *Green Cease-Fire B*, 2009, 72x87 inches, colour pencil on unstretched canvas



Figure 25. *No Peace*, 2009, (installation view 1)



Figure 26. *No Peace*, 2009, (installation view 2)



Figure 27. *No Peace*, 2009, (installation view 3)



Figure 28. *No Peace*, 2009, (installation view 4)



Figure 29. *No Peace*, 2009, (installation view 5)



Figure 30. *No Peace*, 2009, (installation view 6)



Figure 31. *No Peace*, 2009, (installation view 7)



Figure 32. *No Peace*, 2009, (installation view 8)

Bibliography

Bar Or, Galia and Jean- Francois Chevrier. *Aviva Uri – The Line Drawings*
Museum of Art, Ein Harod, 2005

Barzel, Amnon. *Art in Israel*
Flash Art Books, 1988

Bendazzi, Giannalberto. *Cartoons: One hundred years of cinema animation*
John Libbey & Company Ltd, 1994

Bird, Jon. *Leon Golub: Echoes of the Real*
Reaktion Books Ltd, 2000

Butler, Cornelia H. *After Image – Drawing through process*
The MIT Press, 1999

Caraig-Martin, Michael. *Drawing the Line*
The South Bank Centre, 1995

Dexter, Emma. *Vitamin D: New Perspectives in Drawing*
Phaidon Press, 2005

Goldberg, RoseLee. *Performance: live art since the 60s*
Thames & Hudson Inc, 2004

Hopkins, David. *After Modern Art 1945-2000*
Oxford University Press, 2000

Hoptman, Laura. *Drawing now – Eight Propositions*
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2002

Houston, Joe. *Optic Nerve, Perceptual Art of the 1960s*
Columbus Museum of Art, Merrell Publishers Limited, 2007

Kantor, Jordan. *Drawing from the modern 1975-2005*
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2005

Kovats, Tania. *The Drawing Book. A survey of drawing: the primary means of expression*
Black Dog Publishing Ltd, 2005

Marcoci, Roxana. *Comic Abstraction: Image-Breaking, Image-Making*
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2007

Maynard, Patrick. *Drawing Distinctions: The Varieties of Graphic Expression*
Cornell University Press, 2005

Mehretu, Julie. *Black City*
Musac, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Castilla y Leon, 2006

Newman, Avis. *The Stage of Drawing: Gesture and Act. Selected from the Tate Collection*
Tate Publishing and The Drawing Centre, New York, 2003

Ofrat, Gideon. *One Hundred Years of Art in Israel*
Westview Pr, 1998

Rose, Bernice. *Drawing Now*
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1976

Stiles, Kristine and Peter Selz, ed. *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art
A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*. University of California Press, 1996

Varnedoe, Kirk. *Pictures of Nothing: Abstract Art since Pollock*
Princeton University Press, 2006