# Civic Bi-longing: The Politicization of Domestic Site in Eternal Sukkah

**Daphna Ben-Shaul**

In October 2015, during the Jewish holiday of Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles), I visited the exhibition We The People (Hebrew title: Guf Rishon Rabim) at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, which included an installation titled Eternal Sukkah, comprising a Bedouin home and an essential component of the Jewish sukkah—a *skhakh*, or roof of branches and date palm fronds. Not far from the museum cafeteria, an actual festival sukkah (tabernacle) had been set up, suitably decked out, where families sat down to eat. The museum's Jewish Art and Life wing[1] thronged with visitors, who gazed at a late nineteenth-century sukkah that had been smuggled out of Germany in 1935 and donated to the Bezalel National Museum in Jerusalem, a wooden sukkah with painted walls that had served the Deller family in northern Germany. The standard public sukkah near the cafeteria was a natural and transparent rendition of the community's expectations—while the wooden sukkah is part of the archive of collective memory, with its implicit message of the Jewish nation keeping itself distinctive in the diaspora, and the portents of displacement in the wake of the Holocaust. The Eternal Sukkah installation, however, transcends the usual reference contexts, and confronts its viewers with political message that challenges the notion of belonging.

About a year before the museum's purchase of the Eternal Sukkah installation for its collection, I attended several events related to it, after Lea Mauas and Diego Rotman of the Sala-Manca Group and the directors of the Mamuta Art and Media Center had been invited to set up a sukkah for the holiday in the courtyard of the Hansen House Center for Design, Media and

---

[1]  Its full name: The Jack, Joseph & Morton Mandel Wing for Jewish Art and Life.

Technology. The Eternal Sukkah installation—created in collaboration with Itamar Mendes-Flohr and Yeshayahu Rabinowitz—was the result. Before Sukkot of 2014, its creators—along with other partners at The Underground Academy, a research study group run by Mamuta Center—visited the Jahalin Bedouin community who reside between Jerusalem and Jericho, near the Jewish settlement of Ma'ale Adumim,[2] where they heard firsthand about the tribe's expulsion from their land and the itinerant lives imposed upon the Bedouin population as a whole since 1948. Their story is part of the tragic and fragmented fate of Palestinian refugees since the Israeli-Arab wars of 1948 and 1967—although it is virtually absent in direct references to the Palestinian right of return. In their present plight, these Bedouin are, as the artists put it, "the Other of the Other."

The artists appointed themselves an "ethnographic delegation"—a performative practice in the manner of the delegations dispatched by S. Ansky (author of The Dybbuk) to Jewish communities in Russia in the years 1912—14. In the course of their meeting with the Bedouin community, they spotted and bought a tin shack from the Al-Kurajan clan (represented by one of its members, Abu Suleiman) that had been set aside as the clan's winter quarters (and different from the archetypal structure that they had been offered earlier). They bought it for NIS 6,000—from the NIS 10,000 budget allocated for the construction of the sukkah—and used the balance of the funds to cover its transportation and other needs of the project. After carefully labeling the various parts of the structure, they dismantled it under cover of darkness, packed up the components in a container, and transported it to Jerusalem, where it was unloaded and reassembled, with the addition of a sukkah element. The Al-Kurajan clan used the proceeds of the sale to build themselves an improved version of the old shack during

[2]  Also involved in the project are Ktura Manor, Hagar Goren, Chen Cohen, and Nir Yahalom.

the night. In December 2014, the components of the disassembled structure and the documented record of the action were displayed together in an exhibit titled The Ethnographic Department—part of the artists' Museum of the Contemporary project that they had curated at the Mamuta Art and Media Center, following negotiations with the Israel Museum.

For me, the artistic and performative score surrounding Eternal Sukkah is a means of examining the artistic stance that generates politicization of the Bedouin home and the sukkah as a domestic site, thus exploring how it realizes their inherent political potential. The installation's political dimension is naturally related to the Bedouin's present plight and to the issues of displacement and identity politics at the heart of the discourse. But before that, I propose examining Eternal Sukkah as a test case of the terms for the manifestation of the political.

To this end, I propose three dimensions, or perspectives. The first is a broad definition, with a view to understanding the portrayal of the home as a means of political transcendence—i.e., reaching beyond one's group of belonging. I shall then examine the politicization itself in a bid to understand how the home is made into a symbolic public event—in this case by highlighting its transient nature, and changing its contexts of belonging. Finally, I shall propose that we see in Eternal Sukkah symbolic pro-civic ways of repeated enactments of the abandonment of homes, through the field of art and its conventions. This significant and fascinating project, which is founded on a simple constellation, is an opportunity and an invitation to carry out textual deconstructions and reconstructions that seek to reveal something of its complexities.

## I: Political Transcendence

What is it that makes Eternal Sukkah a political statement? At the most obvious level, it is an architectural object that invites political examination and serves as the focus of performance—in this instance, of actions that imbue it with a political content. These actions, carried out within an artistic framework, express a civic commitment toward a marginalized population—a minority group of little power suffering from discrimination—while at the same time linking it to other spatial and cultural contexts. In it, the Muslim Bedouin identity is merged with the Jewish one; one ethnic group whose life is associated with displacement and a nomadic lifestyle is interlinked with another ethnic religious and national group.

However, notwithstanding its encapsulation of a historic and mythical shared destiny, structure does not negate the political significance of the action—indeed, it heightens the stark asymmetry of power and control of the parties involved.

In the spirit of Jean-Luc Nancy's distinction between politics and the political, Eternal Sukkah does not directly belong to politics or to the political arena per se, but is a political aesthetic articulation of the critical difficulties involved in control and the imposition of sovereignty—i.e., the application of policies and regulations that do not accommodate alterity, and are oblivious to, or perpetuate, differences.[3]

As Adi Ophir points, unlike politics, which is "the realm of matters in which everything that appears is already political," the political requires politicization, or in other words, an attributive act that serves as a "political

---

[3] Jean-Luc Nancy, Philosophical Chronicles (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 23–28.

baptism."[4] In this instance, that act is the casting of the Bedouin structure as an "Eternal Sukkah." It began with the self-formation "ethnographic delegation," which dislocated the structure from its original setting. From an external point of view—one outside that of place and community—this meant removing it from its usual situation in the dusty ethnic landscape that we are accustomed to drive by, in which the arid nature is equated with the poverty-stricken encampment of tin shacks and tents, goat herds and wandering camels. The structure thereby lost its affiliation, yet continued to be associated with the historiography of real people, and with the stories of the families expelled from the Negev region in southern Israel in 1949 to the areas of Abu Dis and Al-Azariah, then subjected to repeated evacuations and a peripatetic existence in the Judean Desert, their temporary settlements and dwellings perennially under threat of demolition, and their existence at the mercy of the Israeli Civil Administration and military authorities.

Since the development of the Adumim region in the northwestern corner of the Judean Desert after 1967 and the establishment of the Jewish town of Maale Adumim near where the Bedouins reside, the latter's fate has been determined by the Jewish settlements in the region, where many of them work. For the past decade or so, they have resided at Khan Al-Ahmar, in the area known as "E1" (East 1)—a funnel-shaped area of 12 sq. km. between Jerusalem and Maale Adumim, the site of Palestinian and Bedouin villages, that Israel considers as part of Jerusalem's "security zone." In the terminology of the Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestinians, this area, which is also known as Mevasseret Adumim ("Adumim Gateway") is a "C"-type territory—namely, a region of the occupied West Bank under full Israeli civilian and military control—and therefore under the

---

[4] Adi Ophir, "Political," *Mafteʾakh – Lexical Review of Political Thought* 2 (Summer 2010): 92-93 (in Hebrew), http://mafteakh.tau.ac.il/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/2-2010-06.pdf

jurisdiction of the Mevasseret Adumim regional council. The aspects of the political attribution are intermingled with this charged score, such that is no longer possible to separate it from the sequence of actions—including the structure's sale, transportation, disassembly, temporary installation, and other stages.

Added to the performance are various discursive events held in the Sukkah in its capacity as a hospitality space during the Sukkot holiday. At the opening event, the artists launched the project by presenting it to an audience, with lectures about the Jahalin clan and the wider Bedouin community, and with a meeting with Rabbi Jeremy Milgrom, who spoke of the renewed religious experience in the Sukkah, in which disparate types of itinerant life and displacement were linked together. Abu Suleiman Al-Kurajan had also been invited, but was denied a permit to travel to the event. Another event featured an open meeting with experts and activists about the issue of public housing and the lack of housing security in the Israeli urban domain. After that, we ate together and listened to a performance of percussion music played against the walls of the tin shack. In another event—titled What Did You Do Last Summer?, organized by the independent online magazine Erev Rav—the Sukkah served as a focus of a gathering dedicated to the responses of cultural artists and activists to Israel's Operation Protective Edge in Gaza in the summer of 2014.

Through these events, Eternal Sukkah served as a public sphere of critical discourse (albeit a uni-directional one). Embedded within this shared space are hope and commitment to change—a kind of civic "Hosanna." These meetings suit well Miwon Kowon's observation, regarding the discursive paradigm that tends to characterize contemporary site-specific art: there is linking of the site to discursive frameworks and to the creation of

interdisciplinary meetings between various bodies of knowledge.[5] In this regard, talks and negotiations—with Hansen House, with representatives of the Jahalin clan who took part in the first phase and made suggestions, and with the Israel Museum—are also discursive situations, just as the labeling of the structure's components for the purpose of disassembly and reassembly is a research act involving study and skill. These encounters and research are an integral part of the project's political construction. Although the structure preceded the artistic creation, from the moment it became subject to a range of actions and transformations, its value and meanings were governed by the related discourse frames of reference.

Eternal Sukkah does more than merely draw attention to a story of continual uprooting. The various actions that place the structure squarely in the political realm are also those that give the work "an aspect in which the government is presented or publicly shown as problematic."[6] Understanding such actions (in this case, artistic ones) as political is because they are a "public problematization of the government or of the power play that is (or should be) involved in their regulation."[7] Chana Katz and Erez Tzfadia link the hegemonic manifestations of regulation to a neoliberal logic of socio-economic stratification that is aimed at securing the status of a group framed by a collective national identity.[8] This entrenchment of identity politics inflicts damage on groups that threaten the socio-economic order, who are denied the right to quality of life. This reality of detrimental disparities, as highlighted in Katz and Tzafdia's study (at the local level and

[5] Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 11–32.

[6] Ophir, "Political," 86.

[7] Ibid., 92.

[8] Chana Katz and Erez Tzfadia (eds.), *Abandoning State – Surveillancing State: Social Policy in Israel, 1985-2008* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2010) (in Hebrew).

in Jewish Israeli policies in general), often confirms the stratification created by past Israeli welfare policy and its association (or, in the Bedouins' case, the lack thereof) with the Hebrew nation-building processes.[9] Ensuring the territorial, national and cultural existence of identity requires a heightened degree of disciplinary surveillance, that is founded on the creation of an identity-based and legally-sanctioned government discrimination in a system of simultaneous abandonment and surveillance (which, according to Katz and Tzafia, is encapsulated in the hyphen between them).[10]

The scattered Bedouin population is a quintessential example of government discrimination between surveillance and abandonment, whereby their areas of herding and roaming are restricted, their communities are denied connection to utilities infrastructure, thousands of demolition orders are issued on tents and shacks, and homes are demolished on a wholesale basis—especially in the West Bank, the Jordan Valley and in southern Mt. Hebron. In addition to these are the plans and execution of forced concentration of Bedouins in a number of permanent settlements. These solutions serve as a government and community-based solution, but raise severe issues, including the lack of sufficient consultation with the communities themselves, and enforced changes of lifestyle.

Yeela Livnat-Raanan has examined how the surveillance-abandonment apparatus has been applied to the issue of the unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev region. In her view, this is a form of colonial rule, involving an ethnic struggle between the state and its citizens, and an heightened conditioning between abandonment and surveillance. Thus, the massive apparatus used in the demolition of illegal homes may be seen as a

[9] Ibid.

[10] Chana Katz and Erez Tzfadia (eds.), *Abandoning State – Surveillancing State: Social Policy in Israel, 1985-2008* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2010), "Introduction: The Hyphen Between Abandonment and Surveillance," 9–31 (in Hebrew).

product of enhanced surveillance (which establishes that construction done without permits is considered a hazard), while demolition may be carried out on an arbitrary basis, or simply in retaliation for refusal to comply with administration's directives.[11] In this context, Livnat Raanan cites the words of Yehudah Shenhav: "If the sovereign authority turns a blind eye to violations of the rule of law in the colony, and allows the exception to become the new permanent paradigm—i.e., the exception would become the rule—there is no point in complying with the rule of law."[12] This idea is expressed in the constant construction of homes without governmental oversight. Within this vacuum—which increases the need for control and policing—and in the absence of any adequate treatment by the local authorities, the Administration for the Advancement of Bedouins in the Negev fulfils the ambivalent role of sovereign control and provision of services and welfare, alongside various civilian organizations that have sprung up and operate as well. The harsh outcomes of control of lands—which, in the Bedouins' view, belong to the community—together with the lack of a bureaucratic apparatus or planning, are indicative of a policy rooted in collective, legal, and moral justification: "This is not abandonment due to weakness, but of the state's volition."[13]

The subversive nature of Eternal Sukkah is not in its explicit depiction of the abandonment of unsanctioned villages and homes, but in its suggestive portrayal of the government behind it. The structure is not an expression of direct civic protest activism and a proposal for a solution, but an expression

[11] See Livnat-Raanan, Ye'ela, "Colonial rule of civilians: The case of the residents of the unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev," 291–308 (in Hebrew). According to this article, at the time of its publication (2008) there were approximately 84,000 registered cases of illegal urban construction throughout the country—42,000 of them in Bedouin communities.

[12] Ibid., 296.

[13] Ibid., 296.

that raises questions and unravels definitions of belonging. The action—which the artists describe as the planting of a piece of reality within another reality—is carried out physically and conceptually through dislocation and redefinition, followed by relocation and reframing. The structure that is uprooted from its geographical, community, and plan belonging no longer serves as a place of habitation, but assumes a Jewish identity and becomes a scenographic installation in the artistic realm. It serves as an unstable point of reference for an event that takes place amidst the flux of profound change. Although the action is based on understanding and ethnographic knowledge achieved through study and direct dialogue, it does not confront the sovereign politics so much as it grapples with what Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe dub "the retreat of the political."[14]

One of the key meanings of this retreat is a communal social life, marked by a New Totalitarianism, within which the political is self-evident and unquestioned. It is a retreat to a life that provides an answer for the legitimate need for belonging and welfare, and a response to the crises of democracy, to the loss of the secure foundations related to supreme authorities and the loss of hierarchies, by means of an ingathering in a shared internal space. Even if the space exists in a highly stratified and contrasting social make-up, its related tendency is to reject heterogeneity from its imaginary boundaries. For this reason, as Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe point out, it appears as a state of "total immanence."[15] The demarcation of the political (or the re-treating, as they call it) is not merely a binary challenge to the sovereignty of a total power, but rather, as they put it, a transcendence beyond the closed or introverted nature of identity and identification that this inexorable

[14] Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, "The 'Retreat' of the Political," in *Retreating the Political*, ed. Simon Sparks (London & NY: Routledge, 1997).

[15] Ibid., 122—134.

power generates.[16] The entrenchment within the boundaries of belonging may also explain the outlook that gives rise, among other things, to the policy toward the Bedouin population and the scant interest that their living conditions raise within the Jewish Israeli public. Even if living conditions are not easy, one must still distinguish between the perpetual state of crisis, or emergency routine, of the Bedouin community and a legitimate and privileged affiliation to a national and religious group of belonging.

In these terms, Eternal Sukkah is a form of "political transcendence"—not only because it channels the tangible structure to something beyond the empirical (environmental, material, and functional) existence, but because it points us to what lies beyond all that is closed, secure, and defined (or circumscribed)—beyond the circle of immanent belonging to an all-Jewish Israeliness, or to any other particular group. That circle—symbolic, stratified, conflicted and heterogeneous—may be seen in the performative ritual of dances around the bimah (dais) of a synagogue during the Jewish holidays of Sukkot and Simhat Torah. In Eternal Sukkah the corrugated tin shack is transposed to the privileged setting of a well-kept cultural centre in an upmarket neighbourhood such as Talbieh in Jerusalem and to the drawing power of a proper Sukkah. However, this is not only a simplistic transition from a forgotten corner of the country to a privileged one, but a dynamic and unresolved unraveling of the demarcation lines of belonging and power relations. The political transcendence that occurs through the use of the physical structure, points to the acute problematic nature of those very conditions. It is a form of multi-faceted release—which is both successful and prone to failure—from the thrall of a social space scrubbed free of Otherness.

In Eternal Sukkah, the numbered diagram for the disassembly and

---

[16] Ibid., 122-134.

reassembly of the structure are an allusion to the rituals of constructing a sukkah, which in turn are reminiscent of repeated biblical instances of "divine architecture" embedded in the routines of human endeavor (such as the instructions for the construction of the Tabernacle of the Ark, and the Jewish Temple, in the book of Exodus 25: 27). The logos beyond the execution is also dependent in this case on a natural partnership between art and skill. However, here the artists have changed the rules, subverting the divine commandment for the community to be responsive to political problems. The relevant commandment in Levit 23:42, "At Sukkot, ye shall sit seven days **all members of Israel in booths"** (my emphasis–DBS), is subtly changed in *Eternal Sukkah* by the implicit addition of a question mark to underline that, in the words of the Talmudic Sages: "All of Israel are worthy of sitting in a single sukkah"?

## II: The politicization of the dwelling

How is the politicization that takes place in Eternal Sukkah related to the relocation of the structure and its designation as a sukkah? It begins with the rendering of the structure into a public performance space—which is public inasmuch as it is overt, and aimed at encouraging gatherings that turn individuals into a public. Between the artists' "ethnographic delegation" and the negotiations conducted over the structure's public installation and its rendering into a museum exhibit, the boundary between interior and exterior dissolves, and the difference between intimate and social relations, and between the private domain and the social, civic, and institutional space, is blurred. Any performative politicization of a dwelling undermines its existence—such as installations that remove the function of habitation from its domestic setting and expose it (or block it) to external

circulation[17]—as in the case of performances that are held at private homes in recent years, including in Israel.[18]

The decision to perform in an actual home is a political one, in part because it challenges designated performative spaces (such as theatres and galleries) and the institutional regulations surrounding them. This dissolving of the boundary between interior and exterior gives rise to further manifestations of entrenchment in the field of belonging. This is evident in the symbolic rhetorical uses of the word home in a bid to designate the national group, in expressions such as "national home" (or "Home of the brave"), or by incorporating the word home in the names of political parties.

In the symbolically loaded case of Eternal Sukkah, in which the word home is absent, the home's open character lies in the identity and the form of the structure itself: it is in the rickety temporary nature of the tin shack and in the architecture of the sukkah, which in this case has four built sides. Traditionally, a sukkah is set up and dismantled every year to serve as the family's habitation and place of eating and sleeping for the seven days of the Sukkot holiday, as though it were a real home (women and children—and

[17]  For example, Gordon Matta Clark's split house (*Splitting*, 1974); Rachel Whiteread's houses that were filled with concrete and the outer walls were peeled off (e.g., *Untitled [House]*; 1993); or Micha Ullman's outline of a house plan, *Foundation* (1989), on Rothschild Boulevard in Tel-Aviv.

[18]  Israeli instances of the global phenomenon of holding performances at private homes include, inter alia, those of the In-House Festival that has been running since 2011 under the artistic management of Dafna Kron as part of The Jerusalem Season of Culture; *The Peacock from Silwan*, directed by Sinai Peter and Alon Chen at a Palestinian home in Acre at the Akko Festival in 2012; The Apartment, directed by Michael Ronen in production by The Arab-Hebrew Theatre in Jaffa at the apartment of the theatre's manager in 2012; Tamar Raban's  The House of Rabandra Abla in an apartment in Haifa with Ensemble 209, Bamat Meitzag in 2012; and The History of Batya M.: The Return Home by Sala-Manca artists Lea Mauas and Diego Rotman, at their home in Jerusalem in 2013–14.

anyone who is seriously inconvenienced by this, for any reason—are exempt of this commandment). Traditionally made with walls of fabric (rather than wood or corrugated tin, as in this case), they allow a view of what happens inside, and the outside to penetrate in. The thatched roof of branches and fronds—an essential theological component of every sukkah—is not intended to provide total protection from the elements, allowing the elements and the sky to penetrate as well. In this case, the commandment of hosting others in one's sukkah is—with deliberate irony—linked to the opening of the structure to guests and offering "Bedouin experience". Thus, the act of crossing the dwelling's threshold, its opening up to guests and its inclusion turn into inter-national (or at least, a Judeo-Bedouin) statement.

In his work Politika, Aristotle pointed out that the home (oikos) and household economics (oikonomia) are designed to satisfy the daily needs of a family and ensure its continuity. For this reason, the home should be regarded an essential place that is run along stable, hierarchical lines. The polis, and political power in general (politikos) are the essential antitheses of the home.[19] Everything that is carried out outside the domestic realm is in the public realm, which allows for plurality, freedom, change and creativity. Alternatively, everything within the home setting is ostensibly beyond the political, clearly demarcated by boundary lines (horoi) and by the hearth, or heart, linked to the domestic element associated with Hestia, the goddess of home, hearth, and family.

However, already in the writings of Aristotle we can see how the home and the state are linked together. The polis itself is made up of many households and is dependent on their existence, and the private ownership of a given piece of land is contingent upon entering a partnership with the

---

[19]  Aristotle and Carnes Lord, *Aristotle's Politics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 1–24.

▲ Model of the Eternal Sukkah, Ktura Manor and Sala-Manca, Balsa, bamboo, aluminium, paper, oil pastels, acrylic colours, 2016.

polis. As Hagar Kotef points out, the political turns out to be the nature of the household, while the essence of the household is revealed to be political.[20] There is no dichotomous distinction, because the state, as the political entity, is made up of households. Thus, the household is essentially political—just as the state, which consists of houses "exists by nature." [21]

When seen in this light, the presentation of Eternal Sukkah as a public space merely uncovers the political nature that is already inherent in the relationship between interior and exterior. However, the nature of a structure that is built without a permit is primarily to be rejected; inhabitants thereby find it difficult to fulfill their natural and essential needs, and their equitable partnership within the state entity is unwelcome. The performative artistic action that blurs the boundaries of the private also casts a spotlight on the fact that the ties of dependence between home and state, between the part and the whole, are in acute dissonance with each other.

In Hannah Arendt's well-known discussion of the human condition before the modern age, when the distinction between the private and public becomes a political question, "privacy was like the other, the dark and hidden side of the public realm, and while to be political meant to attain the highest possibility of human existence, to have no private place of one's own (like a slave) meant to be no longer human."[22] According to Arendt, in the modern era the household has been made into an organizational unit that is dependent on the institutional, bureaucratic and normal infrastructure of the state. At this stage of history, the private has been assimilated into the manifestation of the social and in the body politic. That assimilation

[20]  Hagar Kotef, "Ba'it" (Home/House-Hold), in *HomeLessHome*, ed. Ariella Azoulay (Jerusalem: On The Seam Museum, 2010).

[21]  Ibid., 384.

[22]  Hanna Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 64.

made possible the rise of all things public—the social existence in which "our feeling for reality depends utterly upon appearance"—a sensation that becomes particularly evident, in part, "in artistic transposition of individual experiences."[23] The legitimate attribution to the political realm is not exclusive to the contemporary Bedouin home; however, now that we have internalized our dependence on state institutions, its politicization is made possible through artistic expression. Thus, although it is not a direct activist action, and its effectiveness is moot, Eternal Sukkah is a site in which individuals can take part in the body politic.

Arendt points that there are "a great many things which cannot withstand the implacable, bright light of the constant presence of others on the public scene."[24] In other words, these aspects of intimate existence are kept out of sight, for private matters; they are the little things that remain within the magic (or the nightmare) of one's four walls. The merciless light of the Judaean Desert in itself is not enough to fulfill a political function, nor does Eternal Sukkah reveal its residents' private lives. However, the public nature of a dwelling that is removed from its original setting does make it possible to cast a bright light on the relationships of subordination to which it is subjected.

The trend of actions that turn the private into public, and the individual into a public, is also what gives the home its metonymic status. In the words of Henri Lefebvre, the home has become a representational space; for example, one that is "directly lived through its associated images and symbols, […] space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays

[23] Ibid., 50.
[24] Ibid., 51.

physical space, making symbolic use of its objects."[25] In this case, the images and symbols are associated with the iconography of both the tin shack and of the sukkah. The highlighting of archetypal values of public interest, like the publicizing of an object, is a basic political practice: even if we were to differentiate the Bedouin dwelling from the sukkah, we could still link it to a range of meanings that are part of the political dialectic. Its nomadic nature is replete with many direct and indirect allusions: from the lack of housing security, to familiar cultural and historical associations, and even an ironic reference to the voluntary mobility of the global age. As a catalyst of political discourse, the home creates an interplay of ever-widening circles of representation: from family to local community, from community to the wider Bedouin population, from the experience of transience at the heart of the Palestinian displacement to all refugees and forced migrations—and from them to the discrimination of ethnic groups and populations who are denied equal civic status (or indeed any civic status whatsoever).

The political dialectic inherent in the Bedouin home points to a dual representation of belonging and its absence, of putting down roots and uprooting. The lack of personal and civic security is cast into the notion of the home as a focus of belonging; even in the transient and threatened conditions in which it is built, it continues to serve as a home base, and to broadcast a sense of stability and continuity (notwithstanding its repeated dismantling and re-erection). The domestic presence is particularly evident in the structure's internal space, which (apart from providing shelter and decoration) was reconstructed from mattresses, mats and carpets, cushions, and wall coverings that work purchased as part of the

[25]  In Henri Lefebvre's terms: "*Representational spaces*: Space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, […] space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects." Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 39.

deal. At the launch event, the Sala-Manca artists recounted the words of Abu Suleiman, the family representative who—once all the various fabrics and internal coverings that had been woven by the women had been removed—commented that it was no longer their home. The duality of the domestic belonging and its revocation is another outcome of the dwelling's designation as a sukkah and in its association with the deep-rooted cultural affinity (which is not necessarily religious) felt by the Sukkot visitors, who included holiday travelers as well as art buffs.

The sukkah, as is well known, represents the temporary dwelling in the desert during their protracted displacement between Egypt and Israel, but is also linked to the Festival of Sukkot as an ancient agricultural festival, when temporary structures may have served as temporary dwellings in the fields during the autumn harvests. It may also be associated with the pilgrims who sought shelter in temporary structures surrounding the Jerusalem Temple during Jewish holidays. This symbolism is also implicit in the nature of the thatched roof, which comprises plant material that used to be rooted in the ground, but has been cut and detached from it.

Miriam Lipis sees the Jewish sukkah as a form of family, community and urban architecture that functions as a ritual and symbolic immersive environment, one that involves the entire body.[26] This experience creates the physical conditions of a complex belonging that incorporates the notion of exile, and the tension between presence and absence. In her view, at least four real and imaginary locations are represented in the sukkah: 1) A local and transient place, which creates a tangible belonging that simultaneously veils the exilic yearning for a place that no longer exists, and highlights it. The local sukkah is demarcated as a protective home, while tied to its external

----

[26]  Miriam Lipis, "A Hybrid Place of Belonging: Constructing and Siting the Sukkah," in *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place*, ed. Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt, Alexandra Nocke (Ashgate, 2008), 27–41.

surroundings, thus claiming its place in public and community spaces, and occasionally directing attention to abandoned areas and encouraging urban transformations; 2) Being in a sukkah in Jerusalem and the Land of Israel as the epitome of belonging and the home of the Jewish nation; 3) The sukkah as a biblical representation of the narrative of wandering, migration, and displacement, and as a generic verbal basis for realizing the sukkah at a material and environmental level; 4) God (one of whose names in Hebrew is makom—"place"), who also resides in the design of the sukkah and its perception as a channel for communication, through its permeable roof, not merely to the exterior, but to the sky and the stars, where the divine resides, or to the "clouds of glory" that protected the Children of Israel in the desert.[27]

These presences are ideas that tend to take on tangible expressions. For example, they may appear as the drawings on the internal walls (which may include the Ten Commandments, the holy guests of Sukkot, and symbols of Jerusalem, as well as local landscapes and people), or in the Four Species of Sukkot, which are linked to allegorical values (such as various types within the Jewish people). There are many foci of belonging, of course, throughout the period between Sukkot and the Jewish holiday marking the giving of the Torah in the Sinai, in the form of prayers, poems, and the various Hosannas—Hoshaana Rabah (the seventh day of Sukkot) and Shmini Atzeret, and the festival of Simhat Torah (the Celebration of the Torah) at the end of Sukkot. According to Lipis, those locations validate a hybrid social identity that is neither circumscribed by religious identity, nor an enduring hangover of absence from the Diaspora.[28] Because it lies somewhere between exterior and interior, between real and imaginary places, and between here and there, the sukkah embodies a paradigmatic

[27]  Ibid., 27-41.
[28]  Ibid., 27-41.

notion of identity—one that is a dynamic site of differences and belonging possibilities.[29]

Eternal Sukkah also serves as an immersive environment, although not everyone can pass the barrier and immerse themselves within it with their entire body. It is an environment marked by a double duality: a duality of cultural identities (Jewish and Bedouin), each of which features a tension between belonging and non-belonging, between settlement in a place and wandering. The local place itself is split between its new surroundings (Hansen House) and the original surroundings of the Jahalin tribe (the home itself). The association with its original surroundings is disrupted: the desert—the environment of the perennially displaced—is left behind, and replaced with an imaginary "Diaspora-like" space.

Placing the Eternal Sukkah structure in the courtyard, in a walled garden that is distinct from both the building and from the outside public space, is not only an act of affiliation to a given institution, but a ready trigger of the mythological connotation of the Garden of Eden, or the hidden garden—a place that is both a non-place and an object of yearning.[30] This location gives rise to a thought experiment involving a twofold desire, or a yearning of belonging that might be termed bi-longing. In this guise, the sukkah is wrenched from its exclusive Jewish connotations to become a hybrid immersion (between identities) and liminal one (between locations)— between the home that we have left behind and the one which we have

---

[29] Ibid., 27–41.

[30] In Hotel Paradise-Inn—a work by Sala-Manca and Nir Yahalom in the summer of 2015—paradise is a direct reference, through an ironic marketing of an unattainable utopia as a tourist attraction. In it, the Hansen House courtyard was surrounded by white plaster walls (walls within walls), and viewers could only peer through it to view various actions and works of art. Only one guest artist— Itamar Mendes-Flohr— was allowed to enter and stay at this "hotel".

not yet reached, even when it depicts a struggle for a national state and a yearning for the homeland.

The theological dimension of the places implicitly present in the sukkah continues to be relevant, but undergoes a transformation into a civic thinking that might be seen as an artistic and conceptual play on "civic surveillance." Ruthie Ginsburg offers this definition in her discussion of a photograph taken by human rights organizations in the Occupied Territories, noting that civic surveillance "shows how concern for Palestinian rights is interlinked with protecting officials acting on behalf of the state and operating under its auspices."[31] Divine protection is apparent when the artists themselves respond to the directive "And ye shall keep it a feast unto the Lord seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations" (Levit. 23:41).

However, like the dual game of the civic surveillance—which both protects the guards and generates its own form of patronage toward the surveilled—the Eternal Sukkah artistic project also plays on the authoritarian status. Being politically transcendent itself, it places the problematic tensions between abandonment and state surveillance at the front and center of the home. From that perspective, the fusion of the Bedouin tin shack and sukkah—which turns displacement into a kind of common denominator—may also give rise to sense of solidarity between groups and individuals who live in constant threat from the authorities (for reasons of national security or otherwise) within the confines of their homes. That shared homelessness also directs attention to the fact that the endless Jewish Israeli efforts to justify the nation's belonging to the land and to portray the Israeli state as a national home involves demolishing the homes of anyone who is perceived as a foreign element under its sovereignty.

[31] Ruthie Ginsburg, *And Ye Shall Serve as Our Eyes: Israeli Human Rights Organizations as Seen Through the Camera Lens* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2014), 11 (in Hebrew).

### III: Protocols of Abandonment

What are the manifestations of abandonment that attain public, artistic, and political representation in Eternal Sukkah? How is it possible to express the undermining of the home by conceptual use of the artistic context itself and linking it to social generalizations? As previously noted, a home that is politicized is at risk by turning into a public entity, and through representational values that cast the domesticity as something problematic, or a political dialectic. However, there is another dimension, which is apparent in the repeated symbolism of the undermining itself—namely, the symbolic repetition of the act of demolition. In other words, even if the artists (in this case, the members of Sala-Manca) are empathetic agents who are expressing solidarity with the victims of surveillance and abandonment, their action effectively replicates that harm in various ways. This is apparent in Adi Ophir's description of the conditions for the emergence of the political, which includes the severing of the automatic repetition of patterns of takeover and imposition of force. Accordingly, he notes that the freedom to act and the desire to bring about a new reality lies in the ability to trigger the "fundamental impermanence of relations of subordination."[32] Performance and political action in the artistic realm have the power to subject the repetition of forcible impositions into a symbolic spatial representation. This results in making it possible to reveal how they work and transcribe them, and make the artistic act to assume a dual or multifaceted purpose—even if its ethical aim is clearly pro-civic.

Similarly, the repeating patterns of harm that are implicit in Eternal Sukkah can be broken into three artistic and performative strategies. Fundamentally, these are the expositions of dismantling and destruction; of the threat inherent in a foreign presence; and of intensified relations of

---

[32] Ophir, "Political," 90.

power and control. These strategies may be implemented out in tandem, and any one of them may result in dominance. Because these are all methods of ushering in the appearance of the pro-civic political by means of symbolic reproduction of abandonment of the home, and since coercive actions toward civilians is an integral part of the state politics, it is probably better to define them as tactics that face or confront strategic policy. Of these, finding symbolic or radical ways of portraying the dangers involved in dismantling—as in the dismantling and reassembly of the tin shack as a sukkah—is the most total and at least the most direct. The relations of power and control are less obvious then, and might be incorporated within the household management.

These relations are part of the oikonomia that is part of the social fabric that Giorgio Agamben dubs a dispositif (apparatus): a set of practices that require "[t]he intersection of power relations and relations of knowledge."[33] However, one must distinguish between a routine economy of relations and the artistic political preoccupation with a critical intervention that is destructively applied on the home. The appearance of an alien presence of one sort or another within this score may also be identified as the threatening penetration from the outside, although it tends to erupt from within. If the home is defined by the boundary lines that link it to the outside and by the hearth within, its artistic and political violation may be explained as disruption of the fragile equilibrium that is forged between them. In other words, the protocols of abandonment are the product and invention of practices that generate and simulate a menacing eruption that is liable to break out within the home or without.

The performative aspect of these methods of depiction—which is evident

---

[33] Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 3.

in the interactions carried out in public—also takes place without an artistic context, especially with regard to the massive presence of the destruction of the private home both in the historical past and in the Israeli present.[34] It is possible to gauge the degree to which such demolitions are public by the degree to which they are covered in the media and in fulfillment of the government's desire to demonstrate a show of force for deterrence purposes, or by the degree to which there is a need for civic activism, to bear witness to the destruction, to draw attention to it and criticize it.

This includes, for example, the paucity of evidence of the obliteration of Palestinian villages in 1948 (which has been highlighted by civic organizations such as Zochrot); the highly selective revelation of details about the Palestinian and Bedouin homes that have been demolished on the pretext of the lack of building permits; the rendering of the destruction of thousands of homes in the attacks on Gaza and of homes in Israel by Palestinian rockets into a media and Internet spectacle; the reporting of the destruction of the family homes of insurgents as a deterrent measure; the saturation television and press coverage of the Disengagement Plan (Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip) in 2005; and live documentation

[34] See Ariella Azoulay's analysis of "archetypes of destruction" in Ariella Azoulay, *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* (New York: Verso, 2012), 156–180. In her view, this is the key to reading sovereign interventions into space which are various forms of presence aimed at preserving relationships of subordination. These include demolition as a form of spectacle, and as an enduring testament of the damage (in the form of ruins and abandonment, which is intended both as a visible deterrent and as an integral part of the landscape. One of Azoulay's explanations is the "condition of unprotected exposure to power" (141): instead of making the individual's affiliation to the state contingent upon their residence within the national territory, the destruction of houses serves to deny his civic belonging by approaching his domestic setting—thus, the dismantled private space no longer grants the right to a place in the public realm or in the body politic. See "Three Forms of the Relation between the Private and the Public." Ibid., 138–142.

of enforced evacuation and destruction of marginalized neighbourhoods and communities for economic reasons. Among the many harsh images of the evacuation of the Givat Amal neighborhood in Tel-Aviv in 2015—involving primarily clashes between police and demonstrators—one image has remained with me, which is not of the evacuation itself, but of activists (most of whom are clearly from elsewhere), who demonstrated their support by sitting on a row of chairs and watching the proceedings.

Domestic power relations also involve a form of performance, in that they involve an enforced surveilling and circumscribing oversight. Aristotle noted this in his definition of the various types of control relationships within a household, for example control by a husband of his wife, a father of his son, the master of his slave. He also distinguished between a man's dominion over his wife (which he likened to the rule of the polis over its freemen) and his dominion over his children and slaves (which is akin to the rule of a king).[35] In other words, Aristotle found parallels between the overt power relations within the public realm and those within the private realm. Following Hannah Arendt, Ariella Azoulay explains the threat inherent in the takeover by the public space (which is based on equality) of the private space (that is characterized by differences): "This desire aspires to create racial, ethnic or religious uniformity in the private domain, and in the image of this purified space, to mark the boundaries of the body politic and 'egalitarian' political space that would accommodate it."[36] In these terms, which she uses in connection with the destruction of homes, power relations are aimed at obliterating differences and at publicly erasing the singular existence that is identified with the home, which then becomes plural, homes.

[35] Aristotle, *Politics,* 21–24.

[36] Ariella Azoulay, "When a Demolished home Becomes a Public Square," in HomeLessHome, ed. Ariella Azoulay (Jerusalem: On The Seam Museum, 2010), 418.

However, this drive for uniformity or equivalence between exterior and interior and the desire to achieve these by undermining the home is doomed to failure. The reason is apparent in the complex notion of what Freud, in 1919, dubbed the unheimlich (the "uncanny") and linked to the literal possibility that the terrifying erupts within the tangible home itself (both within the domestic and family *heimisch*, and the domestic and secret heimlich).[37] In his description, the uncanny emerges through the appearance of certain aesthetic and mental symptoms—a kind of theatre of alien presences that erupt before one's gaze through the boundaries of the home, yet effectively from within. The images of the stranger, the doppelgänger, the shadow and the ghost are all threatening echoes of the home entity; a mechanical, repetitive, and compulsive presence within the home heightens the grid of routine. The fear of blindness and of the dark (which Freud, in his discussion of Hoffmann's "The Sandman", links to the fear of castration), of death and of being buried alive, all produce an explicit disorientation and denial of belonging to the home itself. In these symptomatic expressions there is a mechanism that is political no less than mental. The differentiation of the home threatens to nip any appearance of social estrangement in the bud, before it erupts and comes to light. Within the home, plurality—which in the public space is constantly putting equality to the test—turns into a fear of strangers and to xenophobia of all kinds. The "un" in unheimlich, which according to Freud is a sign of the repressed that is revealed in its aesthetic and mental embodiments, is also the mark of the alien, meaning he who is politically repressed.[38]

[37] Sigmund Freud et al., "The Uncanny," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 17 (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 219–252.

[38] See the parallel drawn between the uncanny as a mental construct and manifestation of political estrangement in Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 192.

These methods of undermining the home—a type of symbolic protocol of abandonment—appear repeatedly in Eternal Sukkah. The combination of temporary, foundation-less construction (the structure is literally placed on the ground) and the finality of the act of demolition is commuted into various forms of dismantlement. The artists also took pains to execute it themselves—thereby giving it a completely different character. Contrary to the familiar brutality of home demolitions (for example, by the standard D9 army bulldozer), the careful labeling of the various parts of the recycled structure is reminiscent of the meticulous care for highly valued buildings marked for conservation. In all likelihood, if these elements had not been taken, they would have been reused in the erection of other illegal homes. Transporting the structure to Jerusalem replaces both the repeating pattern of changes and transfers of the home and the mobility and transportation of a work of art in a legitimate container. After its installation during the Festival of Sukkot, it was once again dismantled. From December 2014 onwards, selected packaged parts of the structure (collections of various materials) were exhibited at The Ethnographic Department exhibition in glass cabinets (including one which visitors illuminate themselves), as well as a scale model (a miniature of the assembled structure), an explanatory text, and in a film documenting the action. This phase—which also included research and discursive events about the exhibition as a whole—turned the Eternal Sukkah exhibit into a conceptual memento, or artistic traces of previous disassemblies and assemblies. The object and the event thereby became a form of self-incorporation and self-reflection (mise-en-abîme—like a theatre within a theatre) at The Museum of the Contemporary.

In every sukkah involving the routine of disassembly and assembly, a continuity is forged that is linked to national revival. This is evident in the biblical verse "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins,

and I will build it as in the days of old" (Amos 9:11), which is cited, in slightly modified form, in the traditional blessing of the food in a sukkah. The familiar modern custom of buying an "eternal sukkah" highlights the ritualized continuity of the action, and the durability of the structure (as reflected in the advertising slogan of a typical brand of sukkah, "Quality and Durability for Years"). This repeated construction is not only a representation of the actual, indiscriminate demolition carried out within the territories of abandonment, but is repeated, in tame form, in the artistic disassembly and reassembly.

Unlike the assembly and erection of IKEA furniture (an association that struck some visitors, including myself), this "gentrification" of the demolition act can indeed carry on indefinitely. Through the artistic template, which is detached and possibly increasingly distant from the desert reality, the demolition of homes is portrayed not as an expression of resurrection, but as a form of inertia, of the use of excessive and limitless force on behalf of the dominant group of belonging, while recalling the tendency for "total immanence" (as defined by Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe). It is the same inertia that is evident in the collective and well-internalized Jewish-Israeli rituals of permanent destruction or wandering, migration and unending exile. Judging by the plethora of parallels between the tribes of the same region, the destruction of the home is a multifaceted and persistent threat.

The repeated re-assembly, which as previously noted was carried out after the structure was sold to the Israel Museum and first displayed in September 2015 at the exhibition We the People, challenges this eternal sequence and subjects this inertia to an almost comic degree of manipulative gentrification. The entrance to the museum (graciously sponsored by the museum's "Here & Now" Contemporary Israeli Art Acquisitions Committee) is a conscious play, on the part of Sala-Manca and the curators (Amitai Mendelson of the Israeli Museum, and Rita Kersting the exhibition curator), on the new

conceptual value that the work has acquired after its display at *The Museum of the Contemporary* at Hansen House, and its monetary value (ten times the original purchase price). Although the structure was displayed at the museum at its New in Contemporary Art exhibition (which was the subtitle of the We the People exhibition), the broader framework of the curation surrounding the tension between the individual and the title We the People (the opening words of the U.S. Constitution) is the museum as a whole. The museum houses a national collection and collective memory archive attesting to the eternality of the Jewish people—including models of synagogues and the painting of the wooden Sukkah. Thus, at the museum, the Eternal Sukkah installation takes on a dual or triple metonymic status: it represents at once the Sukkot event, the museum-like display at the Hansen House, and (through those two) the action involved with the original tin shack.

Although the structure on display at the museum was assembled and complete, the accompanying text specification was an echo of its fragmented nature, underlining that it is an artistic assemblage: "Wood, corrugated tin, nails, mattresses and fabrics, mats, thatched roof and a decorative paper; 7 x 2.5 m; video, 15 min." As befits this further phase of the work's appropriation by the art world (after the fundamental link of imparting it a renewed value by its display at the Hansen House exhibition), the interior of the structure at the museum was of a more minimalistic and sterile design. The palm fronds that make up the thatched roof were somewhat wilted and most of the roof was made of a commercial woven-mat reusable sukkah roofing material made of strips of wood woven together. The original decoration (of strips of newspaper print) was hanged again, after having worn out. Within the structure a TV documentary was projected, giving the fleeting impression of a domestic living room and the appearance of a frame-within-a frame which heightens the self-reflexive iconography. The placement of the structure within the white cube brought the series

of transformations and settings to the point of excess, which would likely grow with future dismantlings and installations. This stage, too, has been a kind of stand against the inertia of demolition that occurs in the areas of abandonment, involving a discursive and documented events in various parts of the museum, this time with the Jahalin representatives, further meetings with families of the Jahalin tribe where they currently reside, which continually reintroduce the work's political function.

The practice or perpetuation of the relations of power in Eternal Sukkah began with the arrival of "the ethnographic delegation," which was steeped in a conscious post-colonial pursuit of a genuine ethnic item. Eternal Sukkah became an "exemplar" (one of a series) that indicates to the public obliteration of innumerable homes, while reproducing an act of obliteration of a singular home. The dismantling of the tin shack under cover of darkness and replacing it with an improved version with the proceeds of its sale, and transporting it as building waste, is depicted by the artists as though it were a smuggling operation, with particular emphasis on the checkpoints that the local (Arab) inhabitants would have found difficult to pass through. This chain of events places the tension between permission and transgression squarely within the representational space.

The political parallel that Aristotle drew between the dynamics of control within the home and between the state and the individual undergoes yet another playful order. Although the response to the consensual invitation to build a sukkah was an anti-opportunistic action, it plays by the rules of the game—and yet, its acts of political attribution do succeed in forging a tangible and symbolic partnership in conditions of "legally sanctioned lawlessness." The freedom of conceptual art is the freedom to diverge from relationships of subordination in situations of institutionalized abandonment. *Eternal Sukkah*'s very entry into the museum collection heightens the ambivalent ethics of the relations of power (putting an interesting spin on its illustration).

On the one hand, the museum economy is an authoritarian analog of the control of the individual's life and property and of the initial conscious appropriation carried out by the artists. This extends to the surveillance and internal control maintained within the museum (although the Sukkah is open to the public, when I attempted to enter it, I was immediately stopped by a guard's reflexive "No entry allowed"). On the other hand, the museum has also joined in the civic-political benefaction: half of the work's purchase price was given to the Jahalin tribe, and its support for the work has increased the visibility of the project and of the plight of the Bedouin community. Moreover, the sale of the piece to the museum has allowed the artists to assume a secondary role of being subordinate, themselves, to the museum institution. The consensual tactic of introducing the tin shack into the museum hall has meant that their own courtyard has acquired an intermediary status between community and establishment.

The theme of repeated demolition and the relations of power are well established in the initial concept of welcoming the stranger guest—first into the tribe, then into the sukkah. Instead of repressing the stranger, he or she becomes a doppelganger, or overt shadow. The Jewish identity, or perhaps the Bedouin presence, are both parasites, in the sense that they are both forged through the site (para-site), where it is unclear who is possessed by whom. The manifested symptoms of the uncanny is embodied in the sukkah home as a two-way anxiety, although it is powerless to change the asymmetry of power or the discrimination or blinkered attitude to which they are usually associated. Its placement at the Hansen House—built in 1887 as a leper hospital, its traces present and documented in the preserved and restored building—adds yet another dimension to the amalgam of social Otherness.

Unlike the radical eruption of the repressed uncanny in Freud's depiction, Heidegger characterizes the uncanny as a kind of initial and persistent

▲ Transpoting the Eternal Sukkah into the Museum.

Possession and Dispossession: Performing Jewish Ethnography in Jerusalem

unsuitability for existence (dasein) in the world. If so, turning the foreign identity into something hybrid and simultaneous (one that is not "merely" Jewish nor Bedouin), heightens the condition of mutually spurned differences, and makes it possible to attribute the uncanny experience to a persistent universal sense of not-being-at-home.  Thus, Eternal Sukkah conjures up not only the common space, but also a kind of mirror image of liberation and utopian equality. If we are not equal, we might at least enter (albeit, not all at once) a home where difference and threat are in common, and be reminded thereby that this is our enduring common ground.

The estrangement inherent in Eternal Sukkah is also an inevitable outcome of its quintessentially singular nature. This is not a scenography of tents, such as the one that swept the Israeli urban landscape in the demonstrations for social justice of 2011, and was a particularly prominent expression of a collective sense of socio-economic abandonment. Those provisory tents, which created an imaginary sense of "us," was riven by a multiplicity of voices and encampments aimed at deliberately introducing a heterogeneous politique—one that is highly stratified and accentuates the problematic nature of the Other. Eternal Sukkah, on the other hand, imposes the opposing patterns of repetition upon the unique solitary object, making it an uncanny mechanism. Thanks to the preservation of the specific home and the adaptation of the sukkah to the needs of Hansen House, it is still a site-dependent installation, while also alien to it. As the ultimate antithesis to the home, the museum divests Eternal Sukkah of its "sukkah-tic" credentials. In the museum context, it would be more appropriate to call it a Duchamp-like "readymade object" (objet trouvé), to be situated alongside the works of Duchamp and the Dada movement in the museum's wings.

Eternal Sukkah is reminiscent of the variability of readymade objects that are based on a clear manipulation (such as a bicycle wheel mounted on a

▲ Installing the Eternal Sukkah.

Possession and Dispossession: Performing Jewish Ethnography in Jerusalem

stool). But even the most radical of these (where the new artistic value does not involve a physical change) are in fact uncommon objects—the kind that change by rejecting their everyday purpose, purely by virtue of the nature of the installation, or the artist's stamp. In addition to being a rare Judeo-Bedouin artifact, the strangeness of Eternal Sukkah is derived in its most institutional incarnation so far from the fact that it is an uncommon object. The museum domestication of abandonment practices underlines the simulation of detachment—one that returns us, in the heart of this hall, to viewing the landscape of tin shacks through the window of a passing car.

*

The political transcendence beyond one's group of belonging, the politicization of the domestic site (including the sukkah) by making it public and a representation of political dialectic, as well as the activating repetitive methods of abandonment— these are not merely abstract dimensions of politicization. In Eternal Sukkah, these dimensions become tangible and active pro-civic practices. The economy of destructive forces directed against an "Other" population is practiced in a unique and uncommon, eye-opening context: the encompassing of the two sides in a shared cultural and geopolitical space elicits a profound parallel between them. In the economy of satisfaction that the artistic and performative domestic site tends to summon and challenge, there is a certain utopian liberation from differences. Yet, it is hard to feel quite at home in the Eternal Sukkah. Any visiting outsider should expect to be confronted with an explicit presentation of the Bedouins' plight: they will experience the difficulty of imagining people who are not there, yet are prevented from moving about, and are kept homeless and outside, as though not invited either to their own home or to ours.