



Diary for a Portable Landscape - Part II

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The Deller's Sukkah Replica

After selling The Eternal Sukkah to the Israel Museum, we thought we should bring something out of the museum and into real life. We became interested in a painted wooden sukkah from Bavaria dated to the 1840s because of the sukkah's beauty – the panels feature an impressive panorama painting of Jerusalem, seamlessly melding the holy city's landscape with that of the pastoral Bavarian village of Fischach – and because of the sukkah's biography. In 1937, in Nazi-controlled Germany, the sukkah was moved from the attic of the Deller's house in Fischach to Berta Fraenkel's house in Munich. Fraenkel, who fled Germany with her five children to Palestine where she was reunited with her husband, smuggled the sukkah in one of her lifts. She did so at the request of a close relative, Dr. Heinrich Feuchtwanger, a scholar, collector of Judaica, and dentist who had convinced the Dellers to donate their sukkah to the Bezalel National Museum, which had opened in Palestine in 1922.

The inside walls of the Deller Sukkah are painted with original paintings of the local Jüdenhof (Jewish street) and Fischach landscape and freestyle reproductions of the works of others. The main wall, showing a painting of Jerusalem, is based on a lithograph by German geographer Jeoseph Schwartz. The painting on the right wall represents both sides of the Jüdenhof. The first house on the right is the Deller house with its garden, where the sukkah was erected every year. Other notable buildings are the synagogue and what was apparently the Jewish school. The wall on the left depicts Fischach's forests, and a house. The last wall shows two men, the

¶ “Deller Sukkah (1840 ~ - 2017)”, still from installation at Mamuta Art and Research Center, 2017.

local baron and his hunter, or perhaps Abraham Deller with his son or servant, going hunting with a dog.

Over the years, the Deller sukkah was widely reproduced in pictures, sometimes as an iconic item representing the Jewish diaspora's longing for Jerusalem, sometimes as a representation of the central role the Jewish community played in Fischach's development, and often as a valuable piece of Jewish material culture. But we find the role played by the Deller sukkah and its reproductions as part of the heritage of three families – the Dellers, Fraenkels, and Feuchtwangers – to be of the greatest interest: they developed a parallel family tradition in which a picture of the Deller sukkah hangs on the wall of their contemporary family sukkah. The actual sukkah becomes a backdrop for displaying another sukkah displaying paintings representing objects of longing and belonging, including both a personal and a collective heritage. The act of remembrance of the days of wandering in the desert during the Jewish exodus and the remembrance of the days of the Jewish diaspora in Germany are represented or practiced through this *mise en abyme*.

The Replica

In the winter of 2017, we invited the carpenter Nir Yahalom and the painter Ktura Manor to join us in the project of building and painting an unauthorized but accurate replica of the Deller family's painted wooden sukkah. We photographed the original sukkah at the museum and began our research into it.

We had to adjust the construction to the quality of the local wood and to the budget we had, creating a local version of a Bavarian sukkah. We constructed it with low quality lumber. Unable to use Bavarian flora for the roof as was the custom in Fischach, and instead of installing plastic ornaments and artificial flora as is often practiced in Israel, we covered the roof with palm branches

from the Hansen House garden. The sukkah was resized to allow it to be installed indoors in the room devoted to it. During the creative process, we constantly looked at the pastoral pictures of the village in the sukkah and, later on, at the few pictures of Fischach we located via Google images. We found ourselves suddenly longing for a place we had never before seen and were in no way attached. We decided to visit Fischach to see what remained of the painted landscape: we wanted to enter the painting. In February 2017, we started a reverse pilgrimage: we and our children traveled to Fischach on a “roots trip” of a family we never heard of before.

Many buildings still remain in Fischach: the Deller house, the synagogue, and the Jewish school. But the absence of Jews was extremely present. We therefore abandoned the idea of a faithful replica, or we understood it differently. We decided to intervene in the replica slightly:

The walls of the synagogue in the new sukkah feature two graffiti inscriptions in pencil: a Magen David that shows that the current dental clinic was once a synagogue; a copy of the sign installed by the director and owner of the clinic; and a sign with Dr. Dominkus Wunderer’s name, a copy of the sign in front of the building attesting to the actual function of the former synagogue as a dentist clinic.

Instead of the figure of Esther Deller pictured in front of the Dellers’ house, there is graffiti with the names of the families living there when we visited, the Gross family and the Ozdel family (a German and a Turkish family respectively).

Standing in front of the Deller house in Fischach, the most surprising fact for us was the presence of the monumental village church, which was missing in the background of the original sukkah. We debated the issue – to bring the church back or leave it absent in the reproduction – until a week before the opening, when we invited the curator of Judaica at The Israel Museum, Rachel



▲ Fischach Postcards, Adi Kaplan and Shahar Carmel, oil pastel on paper, 2017.



▲ Model of the “Deller Sukkah (1840~2017)”, Adi Kaplan, Shahar Carmel and Sala-Manca, Balsa, oil pastels, hinges; 25*25*18cm, 2017.

Sarfati, who didn't know about the project, to visit the new Deller sukkah. We shared our discovery about the church with her. Rachel answered that she was already aware of it: during the restoration process of the original Deller sukkah done in 2000, the restorers discovered that the church was indeed painted on the sukkah, but was later erased by another generation of the Deller family or perhaps by the owners of the sukkah themselves after seeing the church painted for the first time.

On the Politics of Historiography, Restoration, and Narrativization

Although the new sukkah would finally be almost identical to the original, it would have the opposite meanings: the paintings on the walls of the sukkah would be subtly transformed, changing the depicted environment. The image of Jerusalem on one of the walls, which in the original was an object of yearning, would become a kind of proprietary statement as it was painted in Jerusalem; the scenes of the pastoral German village, which used to provide a kind of visual record of the original local landscape, would become a wistful memorial of a community and time that no longer exists. The new sukkah, or the artists, were yearning for exile, or yearning for the possibility of finding Jerusalem in another place.

Kingston Sukkah: The Erased Landscape

In August 2018, we started what we thought might be a long period of being out of home/land.

We moved from a small rented apartment in the intense neighborhood of Musrara, in Jerusalem, previously a Palestinian neighborhood that became the birthplace of the Israeli Black Panthers, into a 1960s bungalow with a garden in bourgeois neighborhood.

We rented the only furnished house we could find in the small city of Kingston, Ontario, Canada, and decided to build a sukkah in the backyard, adjacent to the Cataraqui Golf Course. The Sobermans, the owners of the house, had died at the beginning of the previous decade, and their children had put the home up for long-term rental “as-is”—a kind of “family museum,” with a 1960s decor, just as their parents had left it. We lived in the house for a year, inside the set of another family. It was the first time we were building a sukkah in the house where we now live: a temporary structure in the courtyard of the Soberman family house, in the Canadian city of Kingston, adjacent to a golf course built on the lands of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples.

The sukkah’s structure was a replica of the replica of the Deller sukkah – a structure as a quotation of a quotation. We bought the lumber at the local Home Depot branch. What in Jerusalem was a long process of acquiring, cutting and painting the lumber to make it look old, was here as easy as taking a supermarket trolley and putting the cut lumber into it and paying for it with cash. The walls remained decorated with some bird toys bought at a Dollarama and some other paraphernalia produced by our daughter and her friends. Not having had enough time to paint, the walls remained bare.

For Sukkot, we organized a series of events around the holiday and our former projects: relating to temporary dwellings, the situation of the Bedouin in Palestine/Israel, public housing, and home insecurity.

Against the tradition in which you are supposed to build a sukkah for a week and dismantle it, our sukkah remained in the yard for the whole year, creating a parallel of time, in which the symbology of the holiday was challenged or stretched. Although we were not living in it, the temporary dwelling turned into our object of reference in the Soberman house and became a reminder of our temporality, fragility, and migratory status.









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▲ Model of the Kingston Sukkah, Ktura Manor and Sala-Manca, balsa, acrylic and water colours, 25*25*23, 2020.

▲ Image on p. 276-277: "Deller Sukkah (1840~2017)", Sala-Manca in collaboration with Ktura Manor (painting) and Nir Yahalom (construction), wood and acrylic colours, 250*250*180, 2017.

▲ Image on p. 278-279: "Kingston Sukkah", Sala-Manca in collaboration with Brian Hoad (painting), 250*250*230, 2019. 250*250*180, 2017.

During the winter, we came to see the green landscape vanish beneath the snow. We realized that we wanted to make this temporal landscape into the eternal fixed landscape of our sukkah. In painting the walls this white desert, we wanted to express not only the already growing feeling of longing for the snow, the winter silence, but also that this snow desert was a place of liminal stability. It was an expression of social loneliness; a counter reference to the threatened desert geography of the Jahalin tribe, a consequence of the Israel territorial politics; and an anti-quote to the lied history of conquering the desert we grew up with in Argentina, which was in fact an Indigenous genocide.

For this project we commissioned Brian Ohad to paint on the chemical treated wood acquired in the local branch of Home Depot. To paint the snowy and vanishing landscape of the frozen lakes in our temporary/eternal and symbolic home, nude trees and snowed fields become a painted quote of a place and a time we are leaving behind.