

**CONSTRUCTING A PLACE OF BELONGING**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the ways displacement is reflected in artistic practices dealing with land, landscape and geography. Land is addressed here as context for histories of displaced persons and it is assumed that connection with the environment affects the human sense of belonging. The theories presented in this essay contextualize practices that turn to subjects of land and displacement approaching them in the light of embodied<sup>1</sup> cognition. By investigating emergent and alternative patterns of agency that these theories offer, I trace a current epistemological shift described by a curator and theorist Irit Rogoff which resituates a theory of cognition within lived experience. This shift is important for considering the phenomenon of re-building a “sense of place”<sup>2</sup> after the rupture of displacement - as a process of identity and knowledge formation. My research views painting as a practice of agency in examining the experience of concrete subjects rather than seeking formal, transcendental conditions of subjectivity. Employing a theory of embodied cognition I approach the matter of land as place and abstracted landscape painting as an artistic practice and an attempt to actively re-build my own sense of belonging.

Through a better understanding of the mechanisms involved in the “representational events”<sup>3</sup> of similar practices it is my intention to create a context for my own practice of painting. Work of Ana Mendieta, Julie Mehretu, Huma Bhabha, Joshua Neustein, and Anselm Kiefer is referenced in this paper for evidence of how living away from one’s home country or questioning its history is reflected in artists’ work. I test the potential of embodiment theory and terminology application within the realm of these practices.

As an immigrant I had to forge a new identity in adopted environment. In this thesis I intend to elevate the subject of displacement and migration from the matter of universal empathy to the

level of identity and knowledge formation. I examine stages in my own new identity development from the rupture of displacement to the awareness of being defined by several cultures. I register how different cultural ways of seeing overlap and influence each other in my work.

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## **DEDICATION**

To my husband Igor Kwetny who has supported me throughout this journey.



## GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

***Aboutness*** - relationship between a living thing and its environment (See endnote #4). This phenomenon includes everything the organism is, everything that fits it to live in its world

***Base-level schemas*** – dynamic somato-sensory maps derived from the body and embodied interaction with the world (See endnote #6)

***Conceptual metaphor*** – encompasses similes, analogies, and metaphors in a more traditional sense. Using a structure from a concrete domain in order to understand and talk about an abstract structure. Conceptual metaphors are fundamental for our reasoning about ourselves and the world

***Counter-cartography*** – acts of mapping and re-mapping in artistic practices

***Displacement*** – a physical and emotional state after leaving one's homeland

***Embodied cognition*** – a theory that breaches the dualist mind/body divide and constructs whole-bodied persons as knowledge

***Embodiment*** – a theory that puts an emphasis on understanding human life as the life of a physical body

***Epistemological shift*** – embodied cognition theory grants an interpretative authority of lived experience to actual subjects and not to an 'objective' system of knowledge. In this light concrete individuals contribute to knowledge formation

***Half-ascribing*** – seeing 'as-if'. Voluntary ascribing of qualities to an object that does not or cannot have them (see 'voluntary synaesthesia')

***Living-on-a-hyphen*** – living in a hybrid culture or being defined by two or more cultures

***Metaphor*** – linking of otherwise apparently unrelated concepts. In embodied cognition theory it is more than a fixed linguistic convention. Metaphors are ‘surface’ manifestations of deeper, active, and largely unconscious conceptual structures

***Multicenteredness*** - a result of living in a ‘hybrid culture’ or being defined by two or more worlds (See endnote #8)

***Non-dualistic approach*** – an embodied approach to human-level truth for which mind is the body and the body is the mind

***Representation*** – (here) is not synonymous to cognition. It is a collection of social practices by which cognitive beings regulate each other's structural aboutness. Representation is inherently social (See endnote #3)

***Rupture*** – (of displacement) a trauma of being taken or torn out of a familiar environment

***Spatial synchronicity*** – experiencing of two or more places as blended in one

***Synaesthesia*** – involves an unusual blending of two or more senses. It is a systematic but perceptually irrelevant co-activation of different neurological centers

***Voluntary Synaesthesia*** – voluntary ascribing of certain qualities to an object that does not or cannot have these qualities



Fig.1: **Galia Kwetny**, *In Formation (Sheltered Series)*, 03/2012. Gouache, synthetic polymer, and oil on canvas,  
72"x90

## INTRODUCTION

My research focuses on human connection with the environment as it is reflected in artistic practices that deal with land, displacement, and geography. I believe that land can be viewed as context for creating new histories of displaced persons and that stronger ties with the environment help restore immigrants' sense of belonging. The meaning of land as a place which one can belong to grows manifold when you leave your home country. To forge new identities that are tuned into an adopted environment immigrants have to acquire new knowledge. Old connections and patterns that made people fit into their original place have to be re-structured. Emergence of new bonds with the surroundings helps re-build a sense of place. Awareness of one's own active role in this process eases the pain of displacement and speeds the adjustment to a new culture.

Theories I reference in this thesis contextualize artistic practices that turn to subjects of land and being or feeling displaced - approaching them in the light of embodied cognition<sup>1</sup>. Embodied cognition theory views whole-bodied persons as loci of knowledge formation. By investigating emergent and alternative patterns of agency, I trace a current epistemological shift as described by a curator and theorist Irit Rogoff which resituates a theory of cognition within lived experience. This shift is important for considering the phenomenon of re-building a sense of place and belonging after leaving a homeland - as a process of identity and knowledge formation. Employing theories of embodied cognition offered by Canadian scholars Ellie Epp and Edward Singerland I approach the subjects of land as place and landscape as a painting practice situated within my research.

While recognizing that embodiment theory and terminology comes from neuroscience and philosophy, I explore possibilities of their application in visual arts. Following the demands of my research I reference insights into the changes occurring in the embodied mind of displaced persons.

Leaving the land... I have done that twice. The first time I left Soviet Union for Israel and then, eleven years later I immigrated to Canada. I remember several stages in my first immigration. I recall fear of the unknown while leaving the USSR as a young mother: we were denied our Soviet citizenship and had officially no country to belong to. Then, there was a tremendous hope for a re-union with the historic Jewish homeland. It was mixed with anxiety: raised as atheists we could not be a perfect fit in a state where religion is a big part of education and politics. It was followed by a strong cultural shock and realization that everything around was unfamiliar: new geography, extreme desert climate, tiny size of the country. I could see some of the borders from the place where we lived. We moved from a vast country with severe restrictions of freedoms to a freer country with borders within half-an-hour reach. During the first years I had to get used to daily shelling at the Northern border which was just five kilometres away. The value of land as a place to belong to became very real for me. I hiked in the Judean and Negev Desert and in the Golan Heights with my high-school students. I felt Israel was my land. Leaving it was very painful, but staying in the country, torn by terror was even harder. I wish I could say that leaving Israel was not my choice. I question it in my art by repeatedly turning to the subject of Israeli geography and landscape.

Another important stage in the process of being adjusted to a new country is withdrawal into one's culture of origin. It can immediately follow the "shock" stage; it can also be a point of no

return in somebody's history of migration (Alba and Nee, 139). In my experience it has been a re-current event. Every time I feel uncertain about my future I find new sources of energy and inspiration in Israeli culture, in my memories of that land, in speaking Hebrew. At those moments I conceive of paintings that for me are connected to Israel's history and geography (See *Promised*, Fig 4, p 19 and *Qumran*, Fig 9, p 36). I never feel the need to withdraw into my Russian heritage, but Russian has always stayed the language I speak at home. I speak Russian to my husband, Hebrew to my children, and English to my friends. Sometimes it feels as if I live in three worlds simultaneously. Do I belong to any of them? In this paper I offer my own insights into what might contribute to re-building a sense of belonging for a displaced person. It could be that recognizing traces of similarities between different places and thus bridging the gap between them - is one of the most fundamental conditions for successful adaptation of an immigrant.

Re-inventing new sense of place and “aboutness”<sup>4</sup> – adjustment to the environment (a term introduced by Ellie Epp) - results in reconstruction of metaphors that we think with. Ellie Epp defines aboutness as engagedness between a living thing and its environment. In her dissertation paper *Being About: Perceiving, Imagining, Representing, Thinking* she admits that this term “acknowledges that we are not in a position to be very exact but we want to ground our thinking about cognition in the understanding that it is accomplished by spatiotemporal means, by bodies. Doing so, we can include perception and action in what we mean by knowing, because they are forms of successful contact with things in the world”, (Chapter 1, *Intrinsic Aboutness*).

Re-gaining a sense of belonging requires constructing of new contexts for individuals and their histories. Displaced artists may address this when they create imaginary or abstracted landscapes or when they turn to mapping, re-mapping, and body-in-place subjects. Examples of

several artistic practices are referenced here in their relation to the subject of my research. Is geography a language in crisis for artists who feel excluded? Most artists whose work is featured in this paper are people living “on-a-hyphen” – with identities defined by more than one culture e.g., Polish-Israeli-American, Pakistani-American, or Cuban-American. As a Russian-Israeli-Canadian myself, I find it helpful to look for inspiration and possible answers in the art of other immigrants.

In this thesis I examine painting in its agency and direct access to the lived experience of a subject. I investigate how the phenomenon of spatial synchronicity is connected to embodiment in my practice. Viewing painting as an act of embodied mind allows it to be explored as instrumental in bearing witness to displacement in one’s personal history.

## **RATIONALE, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY**

My chosen medium is painting. As an immigrant I use expressive means available to me to seek a sense of place. As a displaced person I retain an emotional connection to the places left behind; the resonance of the original places is enhanced and intensified by distance. This connection is reflected in painting large-scale imaginary landscapes that for me combine features of my new adopted place and the lands I left. Very often the original and the adopted places interact and result in artwork that visually highlights similarities between both.

Can painting bear witness to cultural displacement in its vision of adopted places and homelands left behind? My practice explores this potential through combined means of abstraction, representation, and elements of cartography in painting. Painting is being examined here in its direct access to my lived experience. How are different stages of re-building a sense of place manifested in an artist's work? How do they show in my work? I register changes in my practice of painting abstracted landscapes happening over a period of time. These changes often coincide with and are emblematic of different stages in my adjustment to a new environment. Are there any similarities in practices of displaced artists that engage with issues of place and identity? Through linking my own experience to histories of other immigrant artists I trace commonalities in how displacement as a phenomenon of the contemporary world is reflected in artistic practices similar to my own.

Thinking about several lands at the same time while making my art I hope to convey a message of spatial synchronicity. Creating body-sized imaginary space in which the left behind and an adopted place interact allows me to build my own shelter between cultures, a combined place of experience that I can call my own.



## CHAPTER 1 SITUATED PRACTICE

### 1.1 Theoretical Contextualization: Geography of Human Experience

By breaching the mind-body divide and approaching an embodied mind as always in touch with the world, neuroscience offers us a clearer view of human perception than a traditional model of inner representations-formation and their ‘storage’ in particular parts of human bodies. I believe that this understanding of the mechanism of human perception is beneficial for viewing painting in general as a medium with a direct access to individual experience. It has even greater significance for imaginative or constructed landscape painting as I assume here that layers of different cultural experiences might be registered in rendering landscape in painting. In the absence of an ‘Absolute Observer’ (Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception*, 41), or a ‘Ghost in the Machine’ (Singerland, *What Science Offers the Humanities*, 3), we might want to explore similarities found in individual practices as actually “reflecting contemporary conditions” (Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma*, 74). For accomplishing this task we will need a closer look at the loci of individual experience and knowledge formation: the spatiotemporal means – the bodies.

In light of recent achievements in neuroscience and philosophy of neuroscience, this thesis views a “theory of representation as implied within a general theory of cognition but not the theory of cognition as implied within a theory of representation”<sup>5</sup> (Epp, Chapter 6). There are no representations of external reality stored in human brain. In this thesis perception is viewed as a relation between a whole-bodied organism and its environment and cannot be localized to the brain. Knowledge acquisition happens through sequences of pattern-like, re-linkable connections between whole-bodied persons and their environment.

As the embodied approach to perception holds, our whole bodies are oriented and structurally responsive to their environments and whole persons refer to and are about things in those environments. Perception, as University of British Columbia Canada Research Chair in Chinese Thought and Embodied Cognition Edward Slingerland argues is not concerned primarily with representation, but with action. He comes to the conclusion that “Concepts are therefore not amodal, abstract, and propositional, but perception- and body-based (sic)” (34). Meeting his views from the other side, contemporary scientists describe base-level spatial schemas<sup>6</sup> – recurring patterns arising from our sensory-motor interactions with the world - as sources of logics used abstractly. Their argument is that a non-propositional, analogue, embodied structure - the schema - is the fundamental unit of meaning.

The first philosopher who wrote about painting as an act of embodied mind was Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908 – 1961). In “Eye and Mind”(1961) he posed a question of a painter’s intention in the following way: “... incontestably sovereign in his rumination of the world, possessed of no other “technique” than the skill his eyes and hands discover in seeing and painting, he gives himself entirely to drawing from the world... What, then, is the secret science which he has or which he seeks?” (32). Merleau-Ponty believed that a painter “takes his body with him”, that it is by lending his body to the world he “changes the world into paintings” (32). In his opinion a painter’s world is nothing but visible no matter if he paints from nature – he paints because he has seen; because the world at least once “emblazoned in him the ciphers of the visible” (35). He explained that it is impossible to say where nature ends and the human being or expression begins, and this is also the reason why “the dilemma between figurative and non figurative art is wrongly posed” (48). A non-dualistic approach to art that Merleau-Ponty advocates questions the possibility of assigning to any genre either connection with disembodied

Reason or with the burdensome Matter<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, by allowing an integration of data and theories between humanities and natural sciences, this approach can grant an access to an intellectual pool of shared knowledge. This integration can provide a better understanding of an embodied mind's connection to its environment.

Merleau-Ponty provided an insight into the developments in landscape painting possibly initiated by German painter Caspar David Friedrich (1774 - 1840) who sought to convey a subjective, emotional response to the natural world. The Romantic landscapes and seascapes of Caspar David Friedrich were open to different interpretations by viewers. Merleau-Ponty elaborated on the subject of connection between human beings and their environment and its reflection in landscape painting in his series of lectures *The World of Perception* (1948). He presented an idea of perceiving a landscape as opposed to conventional arrangement of a traditional landscape painting. He offered a different vision of space in a landscape painting – one that emerges over time; space which is “no longer a medium of simultaneous objects ... apprehended by an absolute observer” (41). He proclaimed that “the space of modern painting is space... in which we too are located... and with which we are organically connected” (41). (In his lecture delivered in 1948 the word “modern” should be understood as “contemporary” to that time.)

Human organic connection to the environment was examined in the phenomenological investigations of another French philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962). In 1958 he published *The Poetics of Space* in which he elaborated on the subject. I see three aspects of space/land representation that were addressed in his writing as related to my research: First, Bachelard believed that “space, vast space, is the friend of being”(208), - this thought echoes my theme of connection between individuals and their environment.

Second, this author opined that “Elsewhere and formerly are stronger than the *hic et nunc*. The *being-here* is maintained by a being from elsewhere...” (208) Original ties with the environment that any being develops to fit into it form a strong basis for any future changed patterns in case a person moves away. These original ties will always determine the later developed ones. They will serve as a background for any transformations and changes that people undergo in their lifetime. This consideration led me to the idea of spatial synchronicity – a feeling that you are in more than one place at the same time - as something displaced persons can experience while thinking about their experience. Lucy Lippard - a writer, activist and curator, describes a similar phenomenon as “multicenteredness”<sup>8</sup> – being defined by more than one world or culture; having many centers.

Third, Bachelard named “great, lasting realities and fundamental, material images” as the basis of all imagination: “...nothing in other words, that is either chimerical or illusory” (207) - this view is favorable for imaginative painting or creating imaginary landscapes. In my opinion, Bachelard foresaw the future developments in cognitive psychology and neuroscience that prove that thinking, imagining, remembering, comparing – are equally valuable cognitive functions. They are all culturally developed variants of base level schemas (See Endnote #6).

Quest of bridging the mind-body divide in humanities departments continues into the twenty-first century. Edward Singerland in his book *What Science Offers the Humanities*, 2008, insists that though embodiment as a non-dualistic approach to a person promises no privileged access to objective truths, it can result in a stable body of shared knowledge, verified by proofs based on common perceptual access. He argues for an integrated, “embodied” approach to the study of human culture. This approach to human cognition will help challenge such dogmas as “blank slate” theory of human nature, strong versions of social constructivism, linguistic determinism,

and the ideal of disembodied Reason. For building his argument Singerland summons research findings of recent movements in the study of perception, AI, psychology, cognitive science, linguistics, and behavioural neuroscience. This evidence brings him to the conclusion that perception is not simply passive representation of the external world inside the individual's head, but inextricably bound up with embodied action in the world.

To elaborate on the structure of human cognition Singerland employs a concept of “voluntary synaesthesia”<sup>9</sup> for metaphor, analogy, and metaphoric blends. Voluntary synaesthesia is an act of knowingly ascribing qualities to an object that does not or cannot possess them. For example, trunks of centuries-old olive trees that grow in Israel always reminded me of old human limbs twisted by arthritis. Describing those trees as having “arthritis-twisted limbs” and implying that they are “in pain”- would be a case of invoking of voluntary synaesthesia. According to Edward Singerland humans became capable of voluntary synaesthesia between sixty and thirty thousand years ago. He believes that as a result of one or a short series of mutations that happened at that time to human brain, *Homo sapiens* acquired what he calls ‘cognitive fluidity’ (20) that allowed information to flow freely between different cognitive modules or cognitive centers of the brain. This dramatic change helped *Homo sapiens* to spread and thrive around the globe. (At approximately the same time the first known artefacts – figurines and cave-paintings - appeared.) Ability to connect distant concepts helped humans adjust to new and changing conditions on Earth from then on. This theory is called conceptual metaphor theory. It argues that analogue image schemas derived from the body and embodied interaction with the environment serve as primary tools for our reasoning about ourselves and the world, especially about relatively abstract or unstructured domains. Singerland insists that all cognitive and cultural innovation human beings are capable of has to be seen as ultimately grounded in and constrained by the

structure of our body-minds. It is plausible that the same mechanisms are at work in our embodied mind when we are withdrawn from our original environment and have to survive and succeed in a new one. We rely on our old metaphors we think with, re-structuring, improving, and embellishing them to fit into the changed conditions. The degree of re-construction required in each particular case depends on the difference between the new and the old environments.

Building a body-based philosophical platform for artists' work is an imperative for a Canadian scholar and artist Ellie Epp. In her PhD dissertation paper *Being About: Perceiving, Imagining, Representing, Thinking* (2002) she investigates ways in which artists know and come to know. The central concept of Epp's work is aboutness – an organism's interaction with its environment. “*About* thus evokes at one time all three parts of the mutual event: the organism in its doing, the object it wants or wants to avoid, and the background location that supports its doing by holding them related to each other” (Chapter 1, “About Aboutness”). Epp argues that because aboutness is a relation it cannot be localized to the organism at all. Viewing knowledge not as what humans ‘have’ but what they ‘are’, leads Epp to a theory that constructs whole-body persons as knowledge. This theory brings power of interpretation of lived experience to concrete subjects and original voices and allows us to question Postmodernist art's skepticism of ‘authenticity’.

How is my research connected to the theoretical material I presented in this thesis? First, reading the work of Edward Singerland and Ellie Epp coincided with changes happening in my own relations to the environment. I felt a growing awareness of becoming part of this land and a “part of the landscape”<sup>10</sup> – as it was described by a writer, activist and curator Lucy Lippard in “The Lure of the Local” (34). This environment was affecting and transforming me while I was

travelling to the place of my Internship in Calgary. I believe it was reflected in my practice in rendering land not in what can be described as aerial view, but from the ground level (Fig.2, *Soil Matters*, 10/2011). It could be also traced in mapping my actual commute through the agricultural land from Red Deer to Calgary (Fig.3, *Ungoogled Earth*, 11/2011). It felt as if I was deciphering the map of Alberta between these two points.



Fig.2: **Galia Kwetny**, *Soil Matters*, 10/2011. Gouache, synthetic polymer, and oil on canvas, 65”x110”

Second, Ellie Epp views art-making in general and painting as “sorts of intervention in the making of persons” (Conclusion Chapter, *Being About*). She believes that these activities can testify to the degree to which artists are adapted to their environment. I explore changes in my own ties to the new place and the way they are reflected in my paintings. In her lecture “Leaving the Land: Perception and Fantasy” (2001) Ellie Epp said that the better we know the land the more “we are able to see the particularity of it” (8). One of the things that we can make is “our

own ability to be with where we are. We begin instinctively, but then we can work at it more deliberately” (9). As I look at the land around me, gather new visual data and register it in my art - even as hints or fragments of something glimpsed - I learn more about the place I live in.



Fig. 3: **Galia Kwetny** *Ungoogled Earth*, 11/2011. Gouache, synthetic polymer, and oil on canvas, 60”x92”

Finally, the main focus of my research resides in ways of perceiving and representing environment by displaced persons. Some theorists view the event of leaving land as “rupture”<sup>11</sup>. Ellie Epp’s conclusions allow clearer vision of changes happening in the embodied minds of displaced persons. She shows that human bodies adapt through multiple ‘reconstructions’. These changes are the ways in which bodies come to be about their circumstances by altering in response to them. Epp describes cognitive processes employing concepts of voluntary synaesthesia which she calls “half-ascribing”<sup>12</sup>, conceptual and structural metaphor:



If we understand that our theoretical discourses are grounded in structural metaphors, which in turn are elaborated uses of base level schemas built into the body through the whole of a childhood, we could consider what it might cost, in terms of body-restructuring, to change the metaphors we think with, and what that cost may have to do with resistance to paradigm shift. (Chapter 7, “Thinking as a Structural Metaphor”)

Envisioning human cognition in terms of close organic connection with the environment and accepting the proposition of constructing whole-body persons as knowledge, we will approach an understanding of radical changes that occur in the embodied mind placed in a new environment.

## 1.2 Art Historical Contextualization

*...some postmodernist art, skeptical of 'authenticity', prides itself on departing from original voices. The sources of land-based art and aesthetics remain opaque to those who only study them* (Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local*, 37)

Rich art-historical material fertilizes this philosophical ground. The works of art-theorists quoted here contribute to the 'mapping' of an epistemological shift of repositioning theories of cognition within lived experience of concrete individuals.

Evidence of this shift as extrapolated from concrete artistic practices during the past two decades was described by Irit Rogoff in her book *Terra Infirma*. Her epistemological inquiry stresses difference rather than universal truth. Subjects' experience of disruption (leaving homeland) is paralleled in her work to disrupted knowledge orders. In the light of embodied cognition the interpretative authority of concrete lived experience is being granted to actual subjects, and not to an 'objective' system of knowledge. Rogoff demonstrates that commonalities found in the artistic practices of individuals actually reflect contemporary conditions. These commonalities include addressing the concepts of identity, place, and space and are manifested through acts of mapping, re-mapping, and counter-cartographies. Rogoff believes that displaced artists engaged in counter-cartography contribute to writing alternative and emergent collective histories of those who "have not fitted into patterns of agency within universal overarching histories" (74).

My research views the act of mapping and addressing the land within the context of visual arts as an encoding of accumulated knowledge as well as claiming of territory required for creating new contexts. "Beyond borders", writes Edward Said in "The Mind of Winter –

Reflections on Life in Exile”, “lies the perilous territory of non-belonging” (51). Re-gaining this sense of belonging for displaced persons is contingent on re-building of aboutness. It seems to me, however, that this new sense of place will be always inscribed with lack: paraphrasing Derrida’s words it will be partially “not there”, and partially “not that” (qtd. in *Terra Infirma*, 69). On the positive side of this phenomenon the new aboutness will have an additional element of a different, cross-cultural way of seeing. It can be traced in representing objects and events in my practice and other immigrant artists’ practices and interpreted as overlaid histories and cross-cultural mapping.

‘Living on the hyphen’ is described as living in a hybrid space or in a “shelter between cultures” in Lucy R. Lippard’s book *The Lure of the Local*. In her opinion while a hybrid culture can be fertile ground for multicenteredness, assimilation might be a “weapon against history, burying multiple pasts under a single marker” (sic.) (62). This view supports my prediction that a newly acquired aboutness will inevitably qualitatively differ from the original one. A statement of Lippard’s work that resonates with my research lies in the belief that “despite the fragmented configuration of all our centers, common ground among ethnicities can be offered by geography” (63). Rogoff arrives at a related conclusion that “introducing questions of critical epistemology, subjectivity and spectatorship into the arena of geography we shift the interrogation from the center to the margins, to the site at which new and multi-dimensional knowledge and identities are ...being formed” (20). “Shifting” the focus to “the margins” will mean delegating agency and power of interpretation to concrete individuals. It will also mean trusting original voices of artists speaking about their lived experience.

Lippard interweaves pressing issues concerning land, culture and place and a possibility of an art that shows stronger contextual ties. The author highlights the route to re-inventing aboutness: “even if one’s story [somewhere] is short, a place can still be felt as an extension of the body ... passing through and becoming part of the landscape” (43). Treating landscape as an ‘extension’ of a living organism fortifies the logic of knowledge being structured by the complex organic relation between an embodied mind and its environment.

Why am I attracted to the genre of landscape painting? From the very first step on Canadian soil I remember myself looking around and comparing this new land around me to places I had experienced in the past. Some views and smells reminded me of Russia, others of Israel. Getting used to a new place, different mentality and unfamiliar way of life was challenging. It was difficult for me to feel as an outsider, a person who does not belong. I tried to do my best in adapting my skills and education to fit into a wider community of the city and province we lived in. I studied painting at the University of Alberta. I had an epiphany moment when I tried to re-create the watermarks left by scarce rainfall in the desert which I saw and photographed in Grand Canyon, on a trip to USA. The drawing reminded me simultaneously of the Negev Desert in Israel, rock formations in the Rocky Mountains in Alberta, and tundra vegetation of the Russian north. It felt as if I managed to connect all the places in the world that mattered to me on one surface. My work is abstract and not really abstract as it speaks to me of more than one place, or more than one landscape. I believe it is always about land, about that combined place of experience that I can call my own. I often choose large scale for my work because I ‘inhabit’ it almost literally while painting.

Addressing questions of land and landscape in visual arts was the focus of attention of a diverse group of scholars and practitioners at *The Art Seminar* at the Burren College of Art, Ballyvaughan, Ireland in June 2006. As reported by Rachael Ziady DeLue et al in *Landscape Theory*, the participants formulated several updated conceptualizations of landscape in/as art that I see as contributing to my research.

The participants of *The Art Seminar* agreed that one of the most significant realizations that came with Postmodernism is that landscape resists the illusion of an observing subject. “Like the body, landscape is something we all feel ourselves to be inside” (*Landscape Theory*, 88). It echoes an earlier claim of Merleau-Ponty that landscape denies the presence of an absolute observer, or a body without a spatial position (“The World of Perception”, 41). It seems appropriate here to consider the distinction between ‘-scape’ of the word landscape (which is closer to German *Landschaft* where *-schaft* or *schaffen* means “to shape”) and ‘scope’ (view) which was brought into the discussion at *The Art Seminar*. There is a notion of mutual shaping of people and place as embedded in the original word ‘landscape’. There is also an implication of ‘partnership’ in the Old English word ‘landscape’. Today the meaning of ‘partnership’ in landscape is often replaced with ‘view’. With certain conceptual slippage I apply the term ‘partnership’ to the very process of creating landscapes in my practice. In my practice I see it manifested in deliberate physicality of paint and its application. The materiality of medium and the scale of surfaces I work with remind me of working on a real piece of land. The colors I choose: orange, brown, blue, purple, and yellow- are the colors of Israeli landscape in my experience that I reconstruct in my paintings. Applying the term voluntary synaesthesia or conceptual slippage here I can compare a dialogue with a painting to an act of partnership. I

think of ‘working the landscape’ and not ‘working on a landscape’ – as in literally working in the land, shaping it while being shaped by experience myself.

Conceptualization of landscape as embedded ideology was also discussed at *The Art Seminar*. Landscape paintings have often been regulated by ideological concerns. Historical examples of this could be the European colonial project or the idea of communist victory over subordinated nature (this polemic was reflected in my practice during the work on paintings *Promised* and *Duomo*, 05/2011, Fig.4, 5). Politics and history always influence landscape rendering. Marking of presence in the actual soil, or marking it on a map or an image of land - will always be making a claim of ownership and territoriality. Addressing geography in individual practices is contributing to re-situating of interpretative authority and knowledge formation to the margins.



Fig.4: **Galia Kwetny**, *Promised*, 04/2011. Gouache, synthetic polymer, and oil on canvas, 69”x104”

The notion of landscape as a context for socio-political identity encompasses ideas of home and belonging, locality and identity, social and environmental dangers of modernization, as well as displacement and re-building of the sense of place. One of the central arguments of my thesis is that strong connection with the environment is necessary for forging a new identity and re-inventing the sense of belonging.



Fig.5: **Galia Kwetny**, *Duomo*, 05/2011. Gouache, synthetic polymer, and oil on canvas, 85"x85"

One more conceptualization of landscape that is relevant to my research comes from Lucy Lippard: landscape as a way of seeing. She believes that “if a landscape is a way of seeing, there are potentially as many landscapes as individual ways of seeing, or at least as many as cultural

ways of seeing” (*The Lure*, 61). I would like to add here that for a person whose identity is defined by more than one culture these two or more different ways of seeing will be overlapping and influencing each other. In a landscape painted by an artist ‘on-a-hyphen’ it might be realized in literal overlapping of two or more landscapes. I believe that it happens in my work.

In the next chapter I will reference practices of several artists I feel affinity to. At certain points in their careers they had to either grapple with leaving their home country and re-creating themselves somewhere else, reflect on their own history as immigrants as an Israeli-American artists **Joshua Neustein**, a Cuban-American artist **Ana Mendieta** or a Pakistani-American artist **Huma Bhabha**, or ask questions to the histories of their homelands as German artist **Anselm Kiefer**. In these practices several places on the globe are sometimes addressed at the same time. There are elements of re-mapping or counter-cartography in some of the work of **Joshua Neustein** and **Julie Mehretu**. These pieces are often large-scale as if the artists were creating an actual place or a stage that could be acted on. Is geography a language for an immigrant artist in crisis of not-belonging? Is counter-cartography an active position for overcoming this crisis? As an artist dealing with displacement myself, I can say that for me incorporating elements of cartography in my paintings and thinking of the places I lived in socio-geographic terms feels like constructing a new place that I can rightfully inhabit.



## CHAPTER 2 CONSTRUCTING A PLACE OF BELONGING

### 2.1 Analysis of Related Practices

*Visual language is discourse, not reality...* (Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma*, 102)

Poland-born, New-York-based, Israeli-American visual artist **Joshua Neustein** often turns to images of maps in his paintings. **Neustein** also uses cartographic encoding in installations. His series of paintings of maps can be viewed as contributing to the visual discourse on a major post-structuralist polemic – the location of theories of cognition and the epistemological shift described by Irit Rogoff (*Terra Infirma*, 74). This work combines a scale alien to the tradition of map-making and an austerity alien to painting or picture-making. It is easily ‘measurable’ or size-related to a body, the center of it accommodating what appears to be a cartographic image of Israel. Is it a landscape or a map? Though it can be deciphered as an aerial view, I found myself immediately ‘in the center of the region’ as I approached the painting.

**Joshua Neustein’s** installation piece *How History Became Geography* (Fig 6) can be considered symbolic for understanding of transformation of an individual’s history into geographic images and cartographic symbols. Speaking of his work, Irit Rogoff wrote: “While not wanting to privilege biography as an analytical tool, one must nevertheless recognize the degree to which moving borders and shifting identities in the art correlate with the artist's own itinerant history” (“The Discourse of Exile”, 11).



Fig. 6: **Joshua Neustein**, *How History Became Geography*, 1990. Wood podium, hand-painted map, cut glass, and crystal chandelier, 210"x100"x100"

A Pakistani-born American artist **Huma Bhabha** had been well-known for her assemblage-based sculptures when she turned to two-dimensional work. Her subject matter includes war, colonialism, displacement, and pop culture. **Bhabha** starts with taking pictures of desolate landscapes and abandoned construction sites in disparate locations, later layering images with inks in saturated colors and sharp gestural figuration, lending the works spontaneity and raw materiality. Her references come from different disciplines. She re-contextualizes them, “often misassociating them to create a larger, more comprehensive and oddly inclusive visual language” (sic.) (*Modern Painters*,55). Often bringing together figuration and landscape she “presents a state of decline that seems to be neither past, present, nor future”(57).



Fig. 7: **Huma Bhabha**, *Red Desert*, 2010. Ink on photographic print, 60”x94”

Colors and materials used in **Huma Bhabha** work can allude to trauma, violence and decay, but also “connote reuse and re-birth through creative process” (57). This feature of **Bhabha’s** work - allowing the possibility of “re-birth through creative process” - I consider a meeting point of our practices. Creating new histories for their places and for themselves is what people who left their land do, according to Lucy Lippard (*The Lure of the Local*, 66). **Bhabha’s** ink paintings over photographs are often large-scale, immersive. They look as if they were created for an actual body to occupy. Very often she places images of a body or a part of human body (like a huge foot) right in the center of her landscapes.

*Silueta* series of Cuban-American artist **Anna Mendieta** forecasts art-historical developments ahead of her time. **Mendieta’s** work combines concepts of earth art, performance, and body art. The pieces in the *Silueta Series* include imprints of the artist’s body in the sand, on cloth, and on a tombstone. Its outline is constructed in twigs and enhanced with wild flowers which look as though they are growing through the body. **Mendieta’s** body-earth sculptures are open to the elements as part of the environment in which the artist is aspiring to find her place and to leave her mark. She is carrying on a dialogue between a landscape and a female body. She writes about *Silueta* series that, “...this has been a direct result of my having been torn from my homeland” (Ana Mendieta – “Press Release”). The untitled works that comprise the *Silueta* series, which she performed as she traveled between Iowa and Mexico, reveal her interest in the earth as a site to address issues of displacement by recording the presence of her body—or the imprint it left behind—within different natural environments.

Several issues discussed in this paper are at intersection here: the artist’s living away from her country and rupture in her aboutness, cultural fragmentation, claiming of territory, and

partnership or dialogue with the landscape. “Transience and discontinuity are inscribed in every aspect of this project”, writes Irit Rogoff (127). The artist is desperately trying to establish her connection with the new land – in this light I see our practices as addressing similar issues.

**Julie Mehretu** is an Ethiopian-American artist based in New York. This artist makes use of cartographic symbols and elements of architecture combined with more organic-looking mark-making. **Mehretu** is interested in the process and history of ruination and in bearing witness to the physical aftermath of war around the world. Destruction, ruination and recovery as it gets recorded in this artist’s work can be paralleled to rupture of displacement and re-building connections in my practice.

In this artist’s opinion, paintings are essentially ‘layered’. Her pieces grow out of drawing and mark-making, where every mark has a “character, a *modus operandi* of social behaviour” (“Ethiopian Passages”). **Mehretu** says she hopes to build a different kind of dimension of space and time into her narratives. Layering of different drawn and painted marks in **Julie Mehretu’s** paintings can allude to the layering of events in any individual’s history. This aspect of **Julie Mehretu’s** work is important for my research. Through layering of mark-making events I am exploring the potential for conveying a different kind of dimension of space and time in my own narrative. The manner of **Mehretu’s** mark-making in her ‘psycho-geographies’ – meticulous in cartographic elements or frenetic in organic-looking imagery – signifies social agency in making her own vision of the world or re-writing its history. The scale of her work – often significantly larger than the human body - and the exaggerated ‘absorbing’ one-point perspective of the geometrical ‘bones’ in many pieces do not leave an option of spectatorship to the viewer. They imply agency, urgency, and partnership in the process of creating-viewing.

German artist **Anselm Kiefer**'s work often addresses land and history. It is a recurrent theme in his practice and also one of the loci for asking questions about his country's heritage and painful history. In the 1960-s he insisted on digging into the minefields of Germany's recent horrible past when many of his countrymen would have preferred not to remember. Land as a recurrent theme in paintings of **Anselm Kiefer** began to emerge in 1974. Often they were specific German landscapes that are broad cultivated plains. In this artist's rendering these were dark, tortured fields, suggestive of scorched earth after some apocalyptic battle. One of his favorite techniques is to pour a blob of melted lead onto an already ashen canvas. **Kiefer** is a self-conscious, "deliberately "German" artist" (Ronald Goetz). As such he is constantly engaged in an on-going dialogue with his heritage.

While there are some figurative elements incorporated into paintings and those paintings often start as (or on) a photograph – they grow into prolonged dialogues or collaborations of the painter and the painting and end as vast abstracted creations. His paintings look like they have been 'lived in' or 'fought in'. The painter often makes use of lines or written words and found objects in his work.

I feel affinity to the practice of this artist for his persistency in asking questions to and through the land. He sees himself as belonging to the land– through which he investigates his heritage and history. I sometimes use the coined term "forensic" – combining the words 'forensic' and 'frenzy' – to describe the physical evidence of the bodily presence in my paintings. I see this feature present in **Kiefer's** landscapes as well. They are often quite visceral, have accentuated or exaggerated physicality (ashen canvas, added melted lead pored directly on surface), and many of them are deliberately immersive.

Employing rendering of landscape and geography for raising questions on land, heritage, and belonging, as well as our own active role in shaping the landscape and geography of this planet by our experience – is a common feature of all the practices I referenced here. This is how I see my own practice of landscape painting as connected to the events in the contemporary art history.

## 2.2 Painting: Contemporary Condition

I believe that painting in its current state defies a single definition. One of the important features of contemporary painting as a genre as art critic Barry Schwabsky admits in preface to *Vitamin P<sub>2</sub>: New Perspectives in Painting* (2011) is the difficulty of adequately defining it or “laying any definitive statements about it” (11). Another feature that could be extrapolated from this account of contemporary painting practices around the world is that “painters are necessarily conscious of their production as sharing an array of practices and conventions with deep roots in history”. And as today every medium represents just one possibility among many – painting is hardly the only form of visual input that painters attend. It is also evident from the examples of practices summoned for this research that nowadays if a conceptual statement can be adequately formulated in terms of painting – then artists paint. If a different medium proves to be more effective – they turn to video, installation, or site-specific art.

Painting whether it is a medium of choice for a project or a medium preferred by an artist, engages an artist in two kinds of dialogue: a dialogue with the medium itself and a dialogue with the history of the genre. Yve-Alain Bois – an art-historian and critic of modern art, believes that “painting is essentially conceptual when it is self-referentially and self-critically addresses its material qualities as well as the symbolic grammar of its own formal language” (qtd. in “Why Are Conceptual Artists Painting Again?” 10). In relation to this “immanent criticality” the strategic placement of painting in a network of internal references has the status of a “meta-critical gesture”. Of course, this conceptuality is only a potential. To activate this potential a painter must create contextual relations and practice continuous formal self-scrutiny. This opinion mediates between conceptual and medium-specific perspective. Painting can no longer



be just painting. It has to be a form of conceptual art, as it is judged in relation to conceptual practices in other media (“Why?”, 13).

My paintings can be described as landscapes with elements of cartography or other recognizable imagery. Many of them start as image-based or image-inspired. This is how Schwabsky alludes to similar projects: “they speak of promise, of the pursuit of something glimpsed rather than of mastery” (*Vitamin P2*, 14). Schwabsky shows that abstract painting takes many forms today. He emphasizes that many contemporary painters work “on the borderline” between abstraction and images, seizing the moment when “the potential for transition had become more urgent than identification with a fixed position” (14). Following this logic I can describe my practice as situated in-between abstraction and representation where any given mark can read as abstract or as image-bearing, depending on how you look at it. Schwabsky uses an art-historian Dario Gamboni’s term ‘potential images’ whose property “is to make [the viewer] aware either painfully or enjoyably – of the active, subjective way of seeing” (14). This quote recalls Lucy Lippard’s thought that “there are potentially as many landscapes as individual ways of seeing, or at least as many as cultural ways of seeing...” (*The Lure*, 61). If we accept Irit Rogoff’s claim that new-knowledge-generating activity from the margins adds to re-situating cognition through the networks of inter-subjectivity, these individual ways of seeing can be embraced as valid and valuable contribution to the accumulated knowledge in any nation’s narrative and history.

How is the genre of painting instrumental in constructing a sense of place and belonging? Rogoff believes that painting provides “view from the body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere” (25). Ellie Epp

argues that a [landscape] painter is being formed by a landscape while also being “formed by many paintings; that he has taken these paintings into his wrists and shoulders as well as into his eyes” – she views this intelligence as being “grounded in contact with the natural world and at the same time the very opposite of primitive” (Conclusion). Mira Schor – an artist, a writer and a feminist insists that “metaphorically expressive possibilities of the materiality of painting” contribute to “the complexity of [its] visual language” (*Wet*, 169). The unmediated nature of the genre allows it to be nourished by a lived experience of a subject.

Having a “split identity” (Irit Rogoff) or being defined by several cultures in my case also means being formed by diverse artistic traditions. Though I had not had any professional training in fine arts till I arrived in Canada, I was always exposed to art in Russia and Israel. The government-enforced utopian idealization of nature and people within Socialist Realism as the only style allowed in Soviet Russia was in sharp contrast with a much more contemporary openness to global artistic influences that I witnessed in Israeli museums and educational institutions. Having my training in painting at the University of Alberta is sometimes seen as being shaped by the ‘Prairies’ color-field’ school and action-painting, though conceptualism and other more contemporary styles were welcome there during the last decade. As a painter I feel that it is my responsibility to evaluate my work in relation to several theoretical discourses and critiques of painting. After Mira Schor, I can say that I want to “engage with the language of painting”, and explore the “metaphorically expressive possibilities” of its materiality (*Wet*, 169). In the spirit of “correspondence” or a dialogue with art-historical styles offered by a Korean-Japanese artist Lee Ufan (Joan Kee, “Lee Ufan: Marking Infinity”, 147) I sometimes see myself following the tradition of action-painters treating a surface as “an arena in which to act” (Rosenberg, 22). When I paint, I often start working on the floor. My composition and general

color-scheme are always planned because my pieces are inspired by images. Gouache print mimicking rock formation and natural growth is laid at the initial stage. After that I raise my canvases and finish them in oil in the upright position. Details, text, and cartographic elements are added on the upright canvas. This layering of events is symbolic for me reminiscing palimpsest recording of encounters in my personal history. Scale of a piece is determined by the initial idea or an image that inspired me and also by the planning of movement for my body while working on it. The imprint of my body is thus being made into the surfaces of my paintings – having no place to call my own I create paintings giving a physical body to an experience.

## 2.3 Embodiment and Spatial Synchronicity

*We are in the epoch of simultaneity; we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of near and far, of side-by-side, of the dispersed* (Michel Foucault, qtd. in *The Lure of the Local*, 4)

According to Thesaurus ‘embodiment’ means:

1. A new personification of a familiar idea
2. A concrete representation of an otherwise nebulous concept
3. Giving concrete form to an abstract concept

(<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/embodiment>)

At its most general, ‘embodiment’ in my discourse is an emphasis on understanding human life as the life of a physical body. The following definition of embodiment as a new academic approach comes from Lise Weil, an author and a faculty advisor at the Goddard College (<http://web.goddard.edu/embodiment/epistemology.html>). It is in direct connection with the embodiment theory I have outlined earlier in this thesis:

We have thought of knowledge the way we think of wealth, as something that can be put away in treasuries or concentrated in precious objects. If knowing is something I am, not something I *have*, an implication is that knowledge as such is not storable outside bodies: knowledge as effective cognitive structure can only be constituted and reconstituted in individual bodies. *Middlemarch* and the *Philosophical Investigations* cannot *hold* knowledge - they can evoke, build, organize it, but only in bodies already capable of reorganizing themselves to fit, and only in a world able to produce such bodies.

Experience and knowledge structuring my body was acquired in three different countries, three cultures, and can be verbalized in three different languages. When I paint I give physical body to experience of different warmth (climate) I have felt, texture (terrain) that I have moved in, intensity (safety or danger) I have experienced. I can re-structure memories in my body with as little a prompt as a sound of a name of a distant place. My re-gained aboutness has multiple layers. I can testify to experiencing spatial synchronicity while painting – just the sensation as someone who once visited e.g., Egypt might have had watching TV reports of street demonstrations in Cairo in 2011.

While working on *In Formation* (Fig 8), I was thinking of how well I know the region I now live in: I hike and drive in Alberta surrounded by its plains, fields, and mountains. I feel at home here while staying in my own shelter ‘between cultures’.

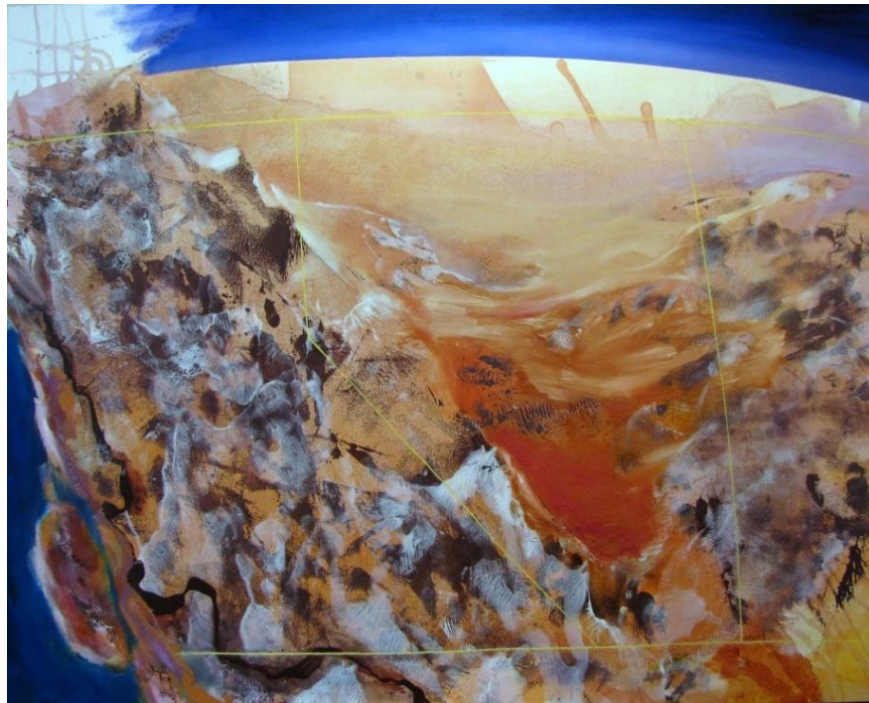


Fig. 8 **Galia Kwetny**, *In Formation*, 03/2012. Gouache, synthetic polymer, and oil on canvas, 72"x90"

I explore British Columbia skiing sites and wilderness routes. My annual drive to my university in Vancouver helps me experience these two provinces as connected in one landscape I am now a part of. Actual driving or moving through the land as opposed to flying above it makes me experience what Lucy Lippard described as ‘becoming part of the landscape’. The title of the work reflects awareness that my sense of place is still ‘in formation’. At some point during working on this piece I realized that the colors I chose for the plains in Alberta were too warm and what I was thinking of was no longer a Canadian landscape but the Negev Desert in Israel that I frequently hiked in. Orange, brown, blue, purple, and yellow – are the colors of Israeli landscape in my experience that I re-constructed in this painting. When I oil-painted the borders of the two provinces on top of that landscape I knew that for me it encompassed two places in my experience – knowing that gave me great satisfaction.

*Qumran*, (Fig. 9) started as an image-inspired piece and homage to Edward Burtinski photography. One of his pieces titled *Silver Lake Operations #1*, 2007, evoked a memory of looking down at the Dead Sea from a cliff in the Judean Mountains. That, in turn brought in the memories of the chill and slightly sour smell of caves in those mountains, history of Qumran scrolls and cave paintings, as well as the brutal harshness of the afternoon hot wind in the Dead Sea valley that dies off after sunset. While I was working on the upper part of *Qumran* painting I felt compelled to add several pieces of paper with relief marks made by literally blotting the excess of paint off oil-painted field in *Sheltered*, 12/2011. The orange oil area in *Sheltered* had a map of Red Deer scratched in later. Embedding pieces of the image of Alberta’s ‘oil-field’ into the painting of the Dead Sea was a symbolic act for me, and another case of metaphorically expressed spatial synchronicity.

In my paintings embodiment manifests itself through size-related to my body scale of work; through unsuppressed physicality of the medium and often through exaggeration of it – using conceptual slippage I can describe it as trying to give more physical ‘body’ to an experience. It can be traced in energetic marks of metaphorical ‘working the land’ in the dialogue or partnership of creating a landscape.



Fig. 9: **Galia Kwetny**, *Qumran*, 04/2012. Gouache, synthetic polymer, and oil on canvas, 72"x90"





Fig.10: **Galia Kwetny**, *Community*, 05/2012. Gouache, synthetic polymer, and oil on canvas, 65”x120”

How is my latest painting, *Community*, 05/2012, (Fig.15) related to the subject of embodiment? Certainly, it is a product of my embodied mind’s experience of several cultures in a form of a painting. But there are deeper ties here as the idea of creating this painting came from mistaking a photograph of one of the Dead Sea scrolls damaged by time - for an image of Pangaea – an undivided prehistoric super-continent. Seeing an ancient scroll ‘as if’ it were a map of some land was a case of voluntary synaesthesia, which was described by Edward Singerland in his interpretation of embodied cognition theory. Deliberately painting the image of the scroll as a map of undivided world was a symbolic act of reaffirming the power of the phenomenon of voluntary synaesthesia, which I have been referring to in this research in its importance for adaptation of individuals in a new environment. There was also an additional link to embodiment in the process of creating this piece: as I planned to copy the exact outlines of the damaged manuscript I only had to preserve the ratio of its measurements. I had not intended to make this



work large-scale. When I started working on the painting however, I had to change the scale several times till the width exactly matched my height: 5.5'. Only then I was comfortable to work on it. It felt as if I was describing an actual space that my body could inhabit.

This painting refers to spatial synchronicity in a more conceptual way. More focused research of that particular Qumran scroll yielded several metaphors that I gladly embraced – such as the title of it: “Community Rule” and the name of the community that produced it – “Yahad” – meaning “unity” or “togetherness” in Hebrew. I interpret rendering a scroll as a map of a ‘world’ as homage to the world of biblical wisdom and to the interconnectedness of the world cultures. For me it also has a symbolic meaning of different continents connected in my personal experience.

## CONCLUSION

Discussion of an embodied mind's connection with the environment and adjusting to a new place has been intended by me to elevate the matter of displacement from the convenient language of universal empathy to the level of contemporary discourse on identity and knowledge formation.

Philosophical and scientific insights into the cognitive processes of an embodied mind offered some explanations of transformations involved in the process of re-building the sense of belonging. If we accept that knowledge is not what we have but what we are, then we may agree that an effective cognitive structure can only be constituted and reconstituted in individual bodies. Resituating a theory of cognition within lived experience grants individuals power, agency, and interpretative authority. This in turn means that experience of concrete individuals taken in its shared commonalities with others can outline social and cultural tendencies in contemporary society. While this approach promises no privileged access to objective truths, it can result in a stable body of shared knowledge, verified by proofs based on common perceptual access. Within this thesis I applied it to the work of several artists who address problems of place, heritage, and identity in hope that it might contribute to a more integrated, "embodied" approach to the study of painting and culture.

Conceptualizations and contextualization of different stages of displacement (rupture, cultural shock, withdrawal, multi-centeredness) offered by the theoretical investigations summoned here have been instrumental in achieving a clearer understanding of the ways how living away from one's home country is reflected in artistic practices. Examples of the artists' work reflect a widespread nature of the phenomenon of displacement and a spectrum of themes addressed. Asking questions through representations of land and questioning one's country's history and

heritage (as in the practice of Anselm Kiefer) can take shape similar to dealing with issues of place and identity in visual arts. Commonalities in the ways of addressing land in the works referenced in this thesis included elements of cartography, large scale of work, expressed physicality of material, as well as partial abstraction of the images. Images of land were interpreted as being about more than one concrete place, or more than about one particular country. With artists who live 'on-the-hyphen' or 'in a shelter between several cultures' it can easily be the case.

Painting as a medium has been examined here in its potential to serve the formation of emerging epistemological systems and as means and field for future explorations. Painting in its current state defies single definition. Many painters work on 'borderline' between abstraction and images, exploring a potential for transition, preferring it to any fixed position. Today, when a different medium seems to be more efficient for conveying a conceptual message - then painters turn to other media.

An overview of my practice in the light of embodied cognition theory has been combined with a report on experiencing multi-centeredness interpreted as spatial synchronicity in my work. In this time of simultaneity and juxtaposition, time of a side-by-side co-existence of different cultural ways of seeing, the unmediated nature of the genre of painting allows it to reflect the overlapping of several ways of seeing within individual practices.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>At its most general, ‘embodiment’ in my thesis is an emphasis on understanding human life as the life of a physical body. Embodied cognition theory bridges the classical mind/body divide and views whole-bodied persons as locus of knowledge formation.

<sup>2</sup>“Sense of place”- according to theorist Lucy Lippard and “a serial sensitivity to place, are invaluable social and cultural tools, providing much-needed connections to what we call “nature” and, sometimes, to cultures not our own” (*The Lure of the Local*, 33).

<sup>3</sup>The term “representational events” is introduced by a Canadian scholar and artist Ellie Epp in her PhD dissertation paper *Being About: Perceiving, Imagining, Representing, Thinking* (2002). “Representational objects and events” are phenomena produced by representational practices, and “representational effects” are structured by representational objects and events (Introduction).

<sup>4</sup>Aboutness – It is engagedness between a living thing and its environment (Ellie Epp). “The term acknowledges that we are not in a position to be very exact but we want to ground our thinking about cognition in the understanding that it is accomplished by spatiotemporal means, by bodies. Doing so, we can include perception and action in what we mean by knowing, because they are forms of successful contact with things in the world” (Chapter 1, *Intrinsic Aboutness*)

<sup>5</sup>In Ellie Epp’s formulation ‘representation’ and ‘cognition’ are not synonymous. Where other writers talk about ‘mental representation’ she speaks instead about ‘cognitive structure’ or ‘structural aboutness’. A theory of representation in Epp’s understanding - is implied within a

general theory of cognition; a theory of cognition is not implied within a theory of representation (Chapter 6, *Representing*).

<sup>6</sup> Schemas in this discourse are base-level sensory-motor units. Cognitive psychologist George Lakoff describes base level spatial schemas as sources of logics used abstractly. This scholar accumulated significant evidence that the structure important to sensori-motor spatial function (schema) is used act-metaphorically in a very large group of cognitive operations. One of main claims of Ellie Epp is that the “humanly prestigious abilities we call thinking are culturally developed variants of base-level schemas and base-level aboutness” (*Being About*, Ch.7) In his book *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination and Reason*, 1987, philosopher Mark Johnson sketched out “geography of human experience” firmly grounded in the body. He argued that embodied structure, ‘the schema’ is the fundamental unit of meaning (qtd. in *What Science Offers the Humanities*, 163).

<sup>7</sup> The traditional dualistic approach to art that harkens back to Aristotle could be traced in connecting e.g., drawing and writing with the realm of the Mind and painting – with the Body. Mark Johnson provides a concise summary of the “cluster of claims” that makes up what Edward Singerland calls ‘objectivism’: “The world is as it is, no matter what any person happens to believe about it, and there is one correct “God’s-Eye-View” about what the world really like” (qtd. in *What Science*). Within this frame of thought Mind has a potential of transcendence – coming close to the understanding of the singularly correct “God’s-Eye-View”, while the Body only serves as a container for the Mind. An American philosopher, mathematician, and computer scientist Hilary Whitehall Putnam notes that “[Interactive qualities such as] color and warmth

seemed to have no place in such a conception of nature and were banished to the status of mere subjective affections...” (qtd. in *What Science*, 34).

<sup>8</sup> Lucy Lippard considers ‘multicenteredness’ a result of living in a ‘hybrid culture’. Displaced persons have many centers – they lived in and experienced several countries, or several cultures; they speak several languages. They can live in what Lippard calls “a shelter between cultures” and be identified by two or more worlds (*The Lure*, 62).

<sup>9</sup> The term “voluntary synaesthesia” is introduced by Edward Singerland in *What Science Offers the Humanities*. Synaesthesia involves the unusual blending of two or more senses. Recent research suggests that it is the result of “neurological cross-activation” (21). Voluntary cross-activation of cognitive modules is called voluntary synaesthesia.

<sup>10</sup> Lucy Lippard opines that “the land and even the spirit of place can be experienced kinetically, or kinaesthetically, as well as visually”. “Even if one’s history there is short, a place can still be felt as an extension of the body... passing through and becoming part of the landscape” (34).

<sup>11</sup> Irit Rogoff in *Terra Infirma*, p.39: “...the tragedies and human ruptures involved in forced migration and flight...”, Lucy Lippard in *The Lure of the Local*, “Out of Place”, p.62.

<sup>12</sup> The term “half-ascribing” corresponds to the term ‘voluntary synaesthesia’ used by Edward Singerland. Epp describes synaesthesia as systematic but perceptually irrelevant co-activation of different subnets of a wide net, so that we feel a sensory quality as belonging to an object that can’t have that quality. (Half-ascribing e.g., knowing that pain is not ‘yellow’, but still describing it so) (Part 3, Chapter 7, *Metaphor*).

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