

"MEIN JERUSALEM"

A Performance by Sabine Sauber

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A Memorial ceremony commemorating the professional and personal highpoints of a German photographer on her journey towards a sense of belonging, following her wish to experience the "here and now". It is a farewell tour of a woman who asked to leave her past behind and move forward to a present, actual existence; to take risks, to do the unexpected, to get directly involved in and with what surrounds her.. She uses the written lecture format as an anchor to hold on to, to lean on the familiar. The artist, on stage, will try to break the boundaries of the event, of own self and go on to direct confrontation, into a new realization of art, to the performance, to the live act.

FALL OF THE WALL – 1989

(Amateur video photography of the fall of the wall)

This specific moment, at that time, represented for me a concrete approval to be optimistic.

When I heard about the developments, surrounding the wall, I took all my savings from my "Spar-Schwein", my piggy-bank and drove to Berlin. With my savings and with the 100 marks the "Begrüßungs Geld", the "welcome money" that the West German Government gave to all the "new tourists" from the East, I bought a simple video camera and instinctively started to film.

You can see the time code at the left side of the picture. It is 12/11/1989, morning time. I am 19, it is winter and it is very cold outside but the excitement keeps me there for many many hours.

The splitting of the world into Ost and West, red and blue, into two systems of Socialism and Capitalism, dissolved during those moments. There was hardly anyone who did not feel this.

We find ourselves facing an event that its whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

The personal is mixed with the historical.

The act of photography was not at all rational, it was pure impulse. I am almost "in the experience".

Even though I've been practicing professional photography for many years now, I still wish to reconstruct that innocent, honest, virginal feeling.

I thought at that time that this acquaintance with the camera at that point, will allow me, for the first time, to live my dreams, and in Susan Sontag's words: "by this medium to reveal them".

(The film ends, Sabine is on stage at the beginning of her lecture, she reads her text loudly and clearly)

Sabine Sauber. 1970-2011

Simple, honest, poetic perspective

Conceptual artist, Photographer, Vegetarian, a woman of words...

An introverted spirit that asked obsessively to touch, to be a part of...to become close...closer...to every single one of us...

Was it enough?

Time will tell..

ICH BIN EIN BERLINER – 1991

(I am a jelly doughnut)

1990 – Sabine is accepted to Berlin University of Art.

Although the environment in the University was quite open and welcoming, Sabine finds out that Germany did not really succeed in erasing 40 years of different realities.

Perhaps she herself, like West Germany, stumbled into the same trap, fighting the walls in her own head.

I will now read a few notes from the diary Sabine left us:

"November 1990. Just came back from university; work critiques. I showed my pictures for the first time.

I can't stand your arrogance, I just can't.

What does "naïve" mean professor Hoch?

What does "naïve" mean?

What does "naïve" mean, Frau "Dozentin"?

Was zur hölle heist naïve?

Am I being defensive?

You get me all wrong!

Why don't you understand me, my art?

You stare at me in class; I know what you are thinking, here comes that unfashionable "Ossi" from the East...

Am I really not letting the outside to enter inside me?

How can I break through my own boundaries?

Why am I so frightened?

Warum bin ich so veraengstigt?"

So basically that was the only way for her to do art at that time. It was a spontaneous act by someone who asked to look at herself in order to know herself better, become stronger and only after that, to interact with the world around her.

Light, weak light, Sabine is alone, by herself, in her small apartment. Lonely, near the window, trying to catch some light from the outside... alone...a little oxygen...on rainy days she uses the lamp next to her bed as her lighting equipment, pale light, pale life, her lonely bed, her solo bed, "no one other than her" bed, Sabine's self-portrait.

(In the presentation appears a picture of a banana)

During that period, many East German artists used this motif, the forbidden fruit...

This is a short memory she wrote down on the back of one of those pictures:

"My home neighborhood, before Christmas, my Mutti und I used to wait for five hours at the Kaufhalle, at the line, for bananas. She never admitted it but she loved bananas very much, so she commanded me to stand apart from her in another line, as if we were strangers, in order for us to get as many bananas as we could. Is there anything more pathetic than this?"

Poor Sabine, Pure Sabine, there in Berlin, not related to her past but at the same time not related to her present.

As is obvious in this picture, she often used self-pity to cope with her situation. Here she stages herself as a cold, dead body; after she commits suicide, she asks if anyone really cares.

"April 1991. Who am I? Am I really so provincial? Do people see how much effort I am putting into being integrated? Do I need to keep my designation or do I need to devote myself to the West and let it make a revolution in me?"

End of quotation.

FENSTER – 1991

(Windows)

Gothestraße 51

Kantstraße 2

Hauptstraße 75

Wegenerstraße 9

Feurigstraße 66

As a natural part of her process of finding herself in this new atmosphere, she begins integrating in her surroundings.

She starts taking photos of the buildings around her, mapping the space, and by doing so she hopes to feel more connected to it.

For her it was a kind of therapeutic act.

Grunewaldstraße 162

There are still no people in her photos, there is no eye contact, there's only her riding her bicycle in the streets of West Berlin, replacing in her memory the signs of her childhood home with her new ones.

Berlinerstraße 136

"I've been looking so long at these pictures of you that I almost believe that they're real, I've been living so long with my pictures of you that I almost believe that the pictures are all I can feel". April 1991. Sabine quotes the words of "The CURE" song in her diary; she believes that the only way for her to truly belong is through her photographs, always standing within a distance.

She observes the space.

Imagines what life exists behind the windows. What kinds of scenes occur out there? What kind of intimacies? What kind of love stories?

Despite her attempts to connect with the city, she was still haunted by the shadows of her past, by her insecurities.

She felt that West Germany, who had won the war of ideologies, had also earned the right to dictate the terms of surrender, one of which was forcing East Germany to always be the subject of their jokes.

This is a hypothetical dialogue that Sabine wrote.

It is a dialogue between the West and East, Wessis und Osis.

"GraueMaus" (*Grey mouse*)

"I hear you Wessis, I hear your voice:

(Sabine plays both a fictional Wessi and herself)

Wessi: Why is she so clumsy, is that's how they behave in the east?

Ossi: Are you any better, ha?

Wessi: She is so passive, what is it, some kind of Stasi Post-trauma?

Ossi: I can decide for myself.

Wessi: The "Mauerblumchen" (*Wall flower*) is waiting for someone to tell her what to do.

Ossi: Shut-up!

Wessi: Look at her, a gray mouse with a Saxonian accent,

Ossi: Stop!

Wessi: Wearing her VEB Jeans (*phonetic: Fau E Be Jeans*)

Ossi: Please, have mercy...

Wessi: Look at her, again in front of the shop windows, should we call the police?

Ossi: Shut-up, stop, Please!

Wessi: Hey. Ossi brauchst du funf mark?

Ossi: Genug!

Wessi: Get a life!

Ossi: Shut the fuck up!!!"

She called her works with names of streets, of addresses, of houses. Next to the pictures she added imaginary stories she wrote about the life behind the windows:

Max who whose slightly tipsy thanked Biatta Muller for her hospitality, while struggling to hide his indulgence on the crispiness of the lemony cheese cake served as desert. He apologized for his eating frenzy, explaining that it's a direct result of the fatigue of the previous week. "A well-earned comfort, isn't it?" said Andreas Muller, Eva's husband, while patting him lightly on his shoulder. Max wished to raise an additional glass of Riesling wine in honor of the success of the imported clothing store the three of them had recently opened. "My friends, I raise this glass in honor of healthy business, may the grey mice learn what French fashion is, stop staring at the display windows and this time, remember to open their wallets." All three touched glasses. "To the future and to great success!"

In some ways, and perhaps even unknowingly, the act of photography was also a small, sweet revenge for her. They used her as the subject of their jokes - She used their homes, their private spaces as her art.

DER ERSTE MAI – 1995**(The 1th of May)**

(Sabine start to sing the DDR Scout's anthem while hanging the napkins flag)

Sonne erhellt
 unsere Welt
 täglich mit goldenen Strahlen.
 Schnell bringen wir
 sie aufs Papier --
 Spaß macht es uns, sie zu malen.

Immer lebe die Sonne,
 Immer lebe der Himmel
 Immer lebe die Mutti
 Und auch ich immerdar!

Garten und Beet
 kunstvoll entsteht,
 Baume mit Blättern und Blüten
 Malen die Welt,
 wie's uns gefällt,
 woll'n sie in Frieden behüten.

Immer lebe die Sonne,
 Immer lebe der Himmel
 Immer lebe die Mutti
 Und auch ich immerdar!

The 1st of May was always a special event for a child in the DDR.
 It was a day off from school; quite a happy day for a little girl who hated studying.
 The mothers used to decorate the front of the houses with the DDR flags that their
 children used to bring from kindergarten. The only TV channel would broadcast the
 patriotic demonstrations and parades, and Honecker standing smug on the pedestal,
 waving back at the masses marching by.

And then there were the red carnations.

The fraternity flower of the Communist Party.

Beneath the cynicism that Sabine developed over the years about the socialist doctrine, in the last years of her studies she was dealing with the loss...her loss of a sense of community, that made her feel so detached.

This is actually a point of doubt in Sabine's artistic career, a point where she stops and thinks maybe she made a mistake when she decided to come to the west. She feels distant from everyone around her and wonders whether she should go back home.

To overcome her inner obstacles, she chooses to take a significant active step; she possesses the new space by intervening it and changing it from within.

Autumn, 1994.

Today, on the way back from university, while sitting on the S-Bahn I noticed my neighbor, Emmerich Hueber, An arrogant, middle-aged dentist climbing on at the Tiergarten station. At the very moment he stepped on the bus, I immediately got up and gave him my seat.

Why?

I deserve a place just as much as they do.

After all, it was the tooth he pulled out of my mouth a few weeks ago that paid for his ticket...

I'm here, I'm here with my past and I'm here to stay. I will invade their space and make it my own.

In these series of photos she artificially attached the carnation flowers with a masking tape to the trees near her apartment, another way for her to re-define her new territory, a public space that at that moment would be her home.

(Sabine takes out a flute and plays the Scout's anthem trying to remind herself that period in her life)

GASTEBUCH – 1997

(Guest Book)

Sabine's first real friend in the West was Stefan. It was easy for her to fall in love with him. He was gay. He was amused by her shy behavior and crowned her as his "P.P", "personal project", transforming her into a "Party girl". It wasn't so difficult, she was thankful to collaborate with his ambitions.

Stefan introduced her to the gay scene of Berlin, he arranged for her to work as a coat checker in the KitKat Club and after that to photograph in several gay newspapers.

Stefan about the KitKat period, Interview:

(Sabine interviewing Stefan, her gay embittered friend she met 15 years ago - Voice over. While the interview is playing she enters the projecting area and tries to dance)

Stefan: I feel like an old cow talking about the 90's, the love parades, how we used to fuck and do drugs and suck everything we found in the club...

Sabine: and what about Sabine?

Stefan: I told you...I told her "Sabine you have to take pictures; people love to be photographed"....

...and like this, I knew that people will not feel that she is judging them with her silence, always so silent, so embarrassed. I thought that with the camera she will be more a part of us, because she will have a function, she will do something instead of just sitting there, staring at us like we were her private peep show.

...she started... you know ...shooting everything she saw, everything... people getting it in and out, taking MD and Ecstasy, sniffing Ketamine, vomiting in the bathroom, everything, she wanted to see and look at everything...

The little fucker so ungrateful... I arranged her to work in the Kit-Kat Club in the dressing room, they paid really good money, I arrange her also to photograph in the "Schwuz", I convinced everybody to make her feel a part of us, of something...but she didn't take photos of me.

Can someone perhaps get me a drink here?

Barmen: can I help you?

Stefan: oh...gutenmorgen...Full es auf!...sexy....where were we?

Ah, yes, even with the camera, she always chose to be the aussenseiter, and we were already outsiders, I mean - everybody was gay, so... it was fucking stupid to feel this...

But maybe it wasn't for her. You have to understand, it was really extreme; alcohol, semen, drugs, sweat, urine, semen all mixed up in a big pipe and you drank it like hot soup, Sabine couldn't drink it. Maybe it is true, what they say: there are people who observe things and people who experience things...

I just can't believe she never took any photos of me, Fuck you Sabine...this interview is over, fuck you, Sabine. I need another drink...

(Sabine dance to the Techno music trying to recreate that period in her life. The music change into Cello Suite No.1 of Bach)

Sabine:

In the following pictures, the "Guest-book" series, we can understand her desire to feel...

In 1997, when she exhibited these pictures, next to them she attached small memos that were written in the morning by her one-night partners who visited her body.

(After every comment Sabine stamps her body with a stamp used in the entrance selection of Clubs)

I'll be back with more stuff, get ready, soon we will continue to fly. Claus.

God! You are the DJ. Adam

The ecstasy was so cool, Love you, Love you, Love you... call me after you get some sleep. Gunter

Ho Sabine,
Distant passion
Apple couple
Burning ejection
Self-control cracks
Your hole
Ho, Sabine
Markus

Can I bring more friends? ...If you'd like?? Peter

Thank you for the hospitality, it was fun. Peter, Gerald, Gilbert and Leon

I am also surprised; I will be at the club tonight, kisses...Johana

Only a woman knows what a woman needs...Susi
Wait on your knees bitch; I will be back at 21:00. Master A

Hey Rubber girl, I told you "it is all question of will". Isidor

Best Halloween ever! Phone me? Fritzi

I am a woman in love...Barbara

Some dance to remember, some dance to forget. Oliver

Barbara is just jealous...enjoy the moment...you are sexy...Samira

You were there but it felt as if you were not, are you O.K.? Helmut

Ketamine is a tough drug, baby. Jeremy

38 TAGE – 2000**(38 days)**

Even in the most liberal place, she didn't really feel free...

She understood that the hedonistic night scene wouldn't provide her with the intimacy she had longed for.

10 years after the fall of the wall, she returns to her childhood home...

In order to connect again to her roots... to feel safe in the place that once was hers.

But she doesn't know how her father will react? Will he welcome her? Will he hug her?

She had been so self-centered all these years; she was not near her mom when she passed away.

Once again, she uses the camera to protect herself.

Her father opens the door but he is silent....

She stays there for 38 days and documents his "present absence".

She continues to deal with the connection between visual objects and texts and basically what she is doing is keep a diary where she collects her father's leftovers, at the side of them she writes what she imagines his thoughts are.....That was her way to get close to him, to obtain some compassion from him, to understand him.

Kopfhaar, Schlafzimmer, head hair, bedroom

Ich brauche dich hier

I need you here

Her father had his daily routine; listening to the radio, smoking his cigarettes, drinking his filtered café. Time stood still, the decorations of her childhood stayed the same only now had a thick layer of dust and tiredness. Her father, whom she

remembered as a solid, impressive man, suddenly looked to her vulnerable and worn-out.

Monday, fingerprint, cafe, leaving room, Montag- Fingerabdruck, Kaffee,Wohnzimmer
 Es wird mir nicht wieder passieren
 It will not happen to me again

Sunday – Pillow Feather, Bedroom
 Sehnsucht
 Longing

Friday – Head hair, Bedroom
 Zweifel
 Doubts

Mud from the shoes, Living Room
 Sonntag – Zigarettenasche, Wohnzimmer
 Sunday – Cigarette ash, Living Room.
 Besser, Wenn sie dort blieben wurde.
 Better if she'd stayed there...

Mittwoch, Rasierwasser, Dusche
 Wednesday, Aftershave, Douche
 Wir sind das Volk!
 We are the people!

Samstag - Pullover, Kleiderschrank
 Saturday, Sweater, wardrobe
 Nicht gut genug fur dich
 Not good enough for you

Her father could not really forgive her;

They ate their dinners in roaring silence, hearing, without saying a word, each other's thoughts.

She felt as if he is accusing her of his wife's death

Fingerprint, Vodka, Living Room

Ich werde bald nachkommen

I'll soon join you

At the end of her diary Sabine writes:

"February 1999. I feel sorry for him for not containing my need to rebel. Humanity stands at the brink of a new millennium and he chooses to be a prisoner of an old world that actually stopped existing".

Cigarette ash, living room

Those who come late will be punished by life.

DER VERLORENE SOHN - 2009

(The lost son)

The false security that her childhood home had provided her through rough times dissolved the moment she left home for the second time.

All her anchors broke down.

Her dreams fell at her feet and smashed to the ground.

She returns to her apartment in West Berlin, back to the place that had become her familiar environment.

Once in a while, while hanging out with her very few friends in the streets, in the Cafes, bars, libraries, in the university, it would strike her again; every time succeeding in overwhelming her; that strong pain, that sense of detachment, suspended between two world that none of them can really be her home.

And then, right when she's certain she would never develop any sense of belonging - she meets him, another stranger; psychology student at the Humboldt University.

Sweet smile, tender voice, a look in his eyes that embraces you.

An Israeli guy that succeeded in obtaining a German citizenship through his grandparents, one that allowed him to go to college almost for free.

El-ad.

For the first time after a long period she stops photographing.

She feels as if she is all in the experience.

She writes in her diary:

"July 2005. I don't want any interference, not even the camera, I found what I wanted. El-ad loves me, he really does. With him I feel like I belong, the city is mine, I am at home, this is a pleasant sensation, unconditional love. I am fortunate"

"December 2005. Last night we had a heated discussion about Freud. I found it hard to listen to cliché chauvinistic theories of a cocaine addict who claims that all human motivation is based on sex and aggression.

This morning El-ad highlighted a few lines of Freud from one of his study books and placed it near our bed: "It's possible for the loveliest flowers of love to grow from the soil of our own self-hatred", Next to it he wrote down: "Kisses from me and the other Jew..."

El-ad and her, moved to an apartment in the east side of the city. For her it was an opportunity to confront her homeland again and to come full circle with it.

"October 2007. El-ad asked me yesterday if I want to have a child.

I laughed hysterically, I couldn't help it.

It was kind of an involuntary reflex...

Funny (pause), but I can't imagine myself as a mother"

"April 2008, we are in Israel, at El-ad's parents.

At dinner El-ad once again raised the possibility of us moving to Israel. His mother's eyes shone with happiness. When we went to bed El-ad didn't understand why I was

so quite. He blamed me for not being excited about his new opportunity; finishing his Ph.D at Jerusalem University next year. He gave all the logical reasons as to why we should move there and above all was the fact that his mother would love to help us with her new grandchild to come.

Why is it that every time he asks me to commit, all I want to do is run away? I want to go back to Berlin, now".

She starts to collect old family photos she finds in the flea markets, imaging how would it be to answer El-ad's wishes.

How would it be to stop being afraid?

Stop being threatened...put herself aside and invest all of her in someone else...

How would it be to create a home within her-self?

(Sabine responds to one of the pictures in the exhibition)

Back then, this image brought to the surface a great anxiety of hers. She writes about it:

"December 2009. Here I can see a child; he is looking at the camera with a serious gaze, as if he knows something that the photographer does not. I can see he is worried; it almost looks like he is the responsible adult, as if he wants to protect the photographer from something bad that might happen, as if he wants to prevent the pain from me."

After El-ad left, she buried her potential son. She stamped the back of the pictures with her own blood.

JERUSALEM - 2011

(Sabine opens her Gmail account and scrolls the photos from her trip to Jerusalem as part of her photography diary journey)

Hey,

It's been a long time...

We haven't spoken since you went back to Isreal

Well...I'm here in Jerusalem.....for three weeks now....

I could not think of a better place in which to end my new project...

I miss you

My time here makes me think.

Pictures of us are running in my head

I try to explain to myself why I couldn't take that next step, what was it that scared me so much?

Maybe you were right; I always gave myself up to a point, never all the way, I was never in the thing itself.

Maybe it is true that I was afraid that if I would give up my fears, I would probably disappear.

While I am here....I observe again....

Everywhere I go, everywhere I look,

I see vague identities who seek to define themselves through walls

It's so intense that it turns into self-destruction, into a desperate chase after a proof of ownership.

People, who live in fear of "the other", people who don't allow themselves to be.

I recognize myself in them...

My journey begins with a fall of one wall and ends with one that still stands. One had fallen over 20 years ago, but still continues to echo in my mind, and the other makes me realize in the most profound way the price I'd payed for my fears.

Sabine

*(Sabine pushed the "Send" Key on her computer and sends El-ad the E-mail
She enters the stage, take off her clothes and fall asleep beside the fragments of
her life, like them she becomes a work of art).*

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