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Ariella Azoulay Israel

The author

Ariella Azoulay teaches visual culture and contemporary philosophy at the Program for Culture and Interpretation, Bar Ilan University. She is the author of *Once Upon A Time: Photography Following Walter Benjamin* and *Death's Showcase: The Power of Image in Contemporary Democracy*, winner of the 2002 Infinity Award for Writing presented by the International Center for Photography for excellence in the field of photography (MIT Press, 2001).

Works

The Civil Contract of Photography translated from the Hebrew by Reli Mazali and Ruvik Danieli (Zone Books, 2008)

Testimony, with photographs by Gillian Laub and essays by Ariella Azoulay and Raef Zreik (Aperture, 2007)

Efrat Shvily: New Homes in Israel and the Occupied Territories, introduction by Catherine David, photographs by Efrat Shvily, text by Ariella Azoulay (Witte de with Center for Contemporary Art, 2003)

Death's Showcase. The Power of Image in Contemporary Democracy, translated by Ruvik Danieli (Cloth, 2001 – MIT Press, 2003)

Once Upon A Time: Photography Following Walter Benjamin (Bar Ilan University Press, 2006)

Reviews

« This is a significant, deeply moral book that should undercut complacent thinking. Azoulay's renewal of cultural attention to the state and her view of photography that requires us to dispute prevailing interpretations of evidence must surely be welcomed as we are, once again, thrown headlong back to reality. »

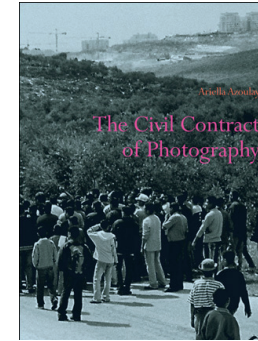
Steve Edwards, Times Higher Education

«*The Civil Contract of Photography* considers the crucial role of photographs in the making and unmaking of citizens. Azoulay situates photography within the context of political theory, challenging Susan Sontag's important work on photography and war. For Azoulay, the photograph of politically induced suffering makes an appeal to rights and constitutes an emergency demand. The text works with an array of photographs that make urgent appeals, marshalling autobiographical, political, and theoretical perspectives to establish the role of the photograph in creating the visual space for politics. This is a moving, urgent, and thoughtful work. »

Judith Butler, author of Precarious Life: Powers of Violence and Mourning

Zoom

The Civil Contract of Photography (Zone Books, 2008)



In this groundbreaking work, Ariella Azoulay provides a compelling rethinking of the political and ethical status of photography. In her extraordinary account of the "civil contract" of photography, she thoroughly revises our understanding of the power relations that sustain and make possible photographic meanings. Photography, she insists, must be thought and understood in its inseparability from the many catastrophes of recent history.

Azoulay argues that photography is a particular set of relations between individuals to the power that governs them, and, at the same time, a form of relations among equal individuals that constrains this power. Her book shows how anyone, even a stateless person, who addresses others through photographs or occupies the position of a photograph's addressee, is or can become a citizen in the citizenry of photography. *The civil contract of photography* enables him or her to share with others the claim made or addressed by the photograph.

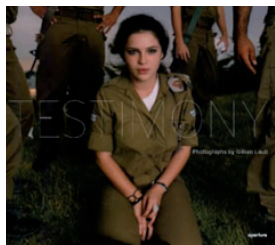
But the crucial arguments of the book concern two groups whose vulnerability and flawed citizenship have been rendered invisible due to their state of exception: the Palestinian noncitizens of Israel and women in Western societies. What they share is an exposure to injuries of various kinds and the impossibility of photographic statements of their plight from ever becoming claims of emergency and calls for protection. Thus one of her leading questions is the following: under what legal, political or cultural conditions does it become possible to see and to show disaster that befalls those flawed citizens in states of exception? The book brilliantly examines key texts in the history of modern citizenship, such as the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, together with relevant works by Giorgio Agamben, Hannah Arendt, Olympe de Gouges, and Jean-François Lyotard; it rigorously analyzes Israeli photographs of violent episodes in the Occupied Territories and it interpretively engages photographs of women from those of Muybridge to recent images from Abu Ghraib prison. At the same time she provides new critical perspectives on well-known texts such as Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others* and Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*. *The Civil Contract of Photography* is an essential work for anyone

seeking to understand the disasters of recent history and the consequences of how these events and their victims have been represented. Azoulay charts new intellectual and political pathways in this unprecedented exploration of the visual field of catastrophe, injustice, and suffering in our time.

« Ariella Azoulay makes a simple and profound claim. Every photograph bears the traces of the encounter between the photographer and the photographed, and neither party can ultimately control that inscription nor determine what happens to those traces. The photograph, she tells us, fixes nothing and belongs to no one. This untethering of photography from responsibility, at least in its traditional sense, allows her to approach the ethics and politics specific to photography in a completely new way. Even or especially when it is a photograph of a crime or an injustice, a photograph is more than evidence. It imposes another sort of obligation on us, to address and readdress it in a way that challenges what it shows of our life together. Azoulay's breathtaking book finally demands nothing less of us than to reimagine how, in the age of the photograph, we might become citizens again. »

Thomas Keenan, Human Rights Program, Bard College

Testimony, with photographs by Gillian Laub and essays by Ariella Azoulay and Raef Zreik (Aperture, 2007)



For the past four years, Gillian Laub has worked in Israel and Palestine, producing portraits of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Haifa, Tel Aviv, Ramallah, Nablus, and other locations in the region. *Testimony*

contains fifty of her portraits of Israeli Jews, Israeli Arabs, displaced Lebanese families, and Palestinians—each personally affected by the geopolitical context in which they live, and each unveiling one more essential element in the puzzle of peace for the Middle East.

In some of Laub's photographs, the traces of conflict are immediately observable—teenage boys without limbs; a young woman enveloped in scar tissue and a burn-recovery suit. Others are seemingly free from the disfigurements of violence. Yet in the interviews that accompany each portrait, a common thread of survival is revealed. Resilience, pride, defiance, vulnerability—and most astonishing of all, optimism—emerge from one statement to the next. Author David Rieff has said of Laub's work, « To consider [these] images is to be reminded not just of human cruelty and human stupidity but also of human tenacity. »

Two essays, one by Palestinian-Israeli civil rights lawyer Raef Zreik and one by Israeli professor Ariella Azoulay, underline the complexity of the work and the dialogue Laub hopes it will spark.

Efrat Shvily: New Homes in Israel and the Occupied Territories, (Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 2003 - University Press, 2006)



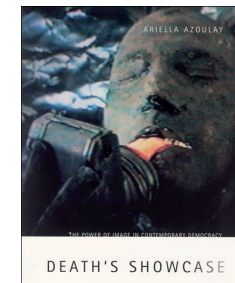
Efrat Shvily's *New Homes in Israel and the Occupied Territories* is a series of black-and-white photographs of houses and suburban neighborhoods that sometimes faintly echo the forms of « the

ideal city. » The disconnection of the buildings from their surroundings points to the problematic relationship between the Israelis and their land. The series arose in response to the large number of Jewish settlements that were realized in Israel and in the Occupied Territories in the 1990s.

The *New Homes* series was part of the exhibition [based upon] *True Stories at Witte de With* (January 24 - March 30, 2003).

In June 2003, the first book by Efrat Shvily, titled *Palestinian Cabinet Ministers*, 2000 was published by Witte de With.

Death's Showcase. The Power of Image in Contemporary Democracy, translated by Ruvik Danieli (Cloth, 2001 - MIT Press, 2003)



This is a book about the public display of death in contemporary culture. It consists of a series of essays on specific cases in which death is displayed in museums and in photography. The essays focus mainly on representations of violence

and death in events in recent Israeli history, including the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the Palestinian Intifada, and on the visual presence of traumatic events in Israeli culture throughout the twentieth century. They show how images of these events both shape and aestheticize the viewer's experience of death.

The book offers a new reading of the work of Walter Benjamin, particularly his essay « The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. » Engaging the disciplinary perspectives of philosophy, art history, cultural studies, and photographic theory, the book also draws upon the work of such writers as Jean Baudrillard, Pierre Bourdieu, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas, Jean-François Lyotard, and Jean-Luc Nancy.

« Azoulay has an eye for seeking engaging artwork and combining theoretical tools. »

Doris Bittar, Aljadir

« A book of both profound and theoretical weight and immediate social resonance. »

James Cunning Holland, Afterimage

Winner of the 2002 Infinity Award for Writing presented by The International Center of Photography for excellence in the field of photography.