

Sommerhaus - Cutout

Hila Laviv

The table in the middle of the oval library is set with scissors, glue, xeroxed pages and empty cards. It invites visitors to sit down and participate, guided by a stop-motion video, which correlates to a similar set of actions used by scholars in the Warburg Institute; sitting, sorting, cutting and gluing - creating archival cards. This participatory action brings to mind the mechanism of archival construction and its inseparability from emotional meaning. The repetitive act of cutting and pasting becomes an automaton, like an empty motion, although the content is historically and mythically charged.

In her works Hila Laviv deals with the mechanism of memory preservation and the emotional component rooted in it. Her starting point is the personal stories and objects left and passed on, and through her installations and malfunctioning reconstructions, they become abstract and thus inclusive and global. There is a direct relation between the reconstructions of the library which was emptied from books, and Hila's use of memory relics; they both hold an intellectual richness asking to be realized once again.

'Sommerhaus-Cutout' is inspired by the separation and farewell album of the Warburg family from their summerhouse and estate in Kösterberg, Hamburg. Made in 1938, by Anna Warburg, for her family, before fleeing from Hamburg, the album was eventually passed on to Hila by her grandmother Noni Shalmon-Warburg, who is Anna's daughter and Aby Warburg's niece. For Hila, the album functions as a time capsule, a madeleine cookie, defying time and space.

Aby, in his panels, placed emotionally powerful, symbolic, and intellectual images side by side believing this will give the viewer an immediate synoptic insight into 'Bewegtes Leben' (life in motion). In her album, Anna aims to do the same; the album is unusually structured, holding a thematic and formalistic approaches rather than chronological. This unique structuring and the manner in which it unifies images bring to mind Aby's ordering of the panels – juxtaposed and placed in sequence.

'Sommerhaus-Cutout', is a 'cutting ceremony', an invitation to participate. The event is inspired by Anna's album and refers to Aby's teaching boards, memory panels and archival card making. The family's mythology reveals that during WWI Aby forced his children to assist him in creating an archive of the 'War', clipping eight or nine local and foreign newspapers daily. Most of Aby's WWI clippings collection (the 'Kriegs-Kartothek') disappeared, the whereabouts of all but 4 small boxes preserved in the London archives are unknown.

Gil Cohen,
Curator