

What Should we do Today?*

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An old copy of a handwork book for children lies at the heart of Hila Laviv's exhibition. Originally titled in Swedish "What Should We Do Today?" ("Vad Ska Vi Göra?") the book was translated into English under the title "My Rainy-Day Book." This book was written by Hila Laviv's great grandmother, Anna Warburg, in collaboration with the illustrator Elsa Beskow. First published in Sweden in 1917, the book was translated and printed in several editions in different countries across the globe, and held a profound interest in a material/educational foundation, both aspects of which are touchingly relevant to the identity and contexts of transmitting knowledge, cultivating the skills of making objects that shift between the practical-functional and the decorative. The book contains a proposal for an entire replicated universe, which in fact allows one to give access, through paper objects, to its contemporaneous and subsequent reality. The exhibition features photographed and scanned objects originating in Hila Laviv's grandmother's house, in Omer, Beersheba, in the desert. These are also accompanied by the presence of the passage of accumulating time in the unfolding lineage of women who hold the book, and has

* The text from the exhibition My Rainy-Day Book, Artist's Studios, Tel Aviv, June 2016

now reached Hila Laviv, a Tel Aviv-based artist who has been using paper sheets and cellophane as the materials of her art clearly and distinctly, long before her encounter with the book.

The presence of the book offers a broad context of tradition to her practice as a person and as an artist. In these parts, the break in the flow of time between familial histories and the life of artists (and people in general) in the present is more common than the preservation of knowledge and continuity, and the clear reference to the existence of such tradition is rare and unique. Alongside the direct perspective that emanates from the immediate, the here and now, it is also important to keep in mind the context in which the book was created, when knowledge, education, and the ability to transmit them from women to other people were not commonplace. Some women were able to acquire an education, some of them published books that communicated practical knowledge about arts and crafts, which were translated and published across the world. This way of life was interrupted, and some of the women in the family found themselves in a kibbutz in Israel. Of all places, this is where this book will become a central interest of one family member, who was already born in a country where rainy days are few and far between, and discovers through her artistic practice, a personal family history embodied in one of the book's translations. The translation from Swedish into Hebrew of the words that carry professional relevance to Laviv's practice and art, taken from a hobby book in an unfamiliar language, is one aspect of the conceptual and material engagement with the book. The strange capacity of the dimension of time to float and rise from this continuous process and crystalize in an artist book that accompanies the show: this time without instructions, but rather from a continuing action of photographing and cutting that allows her to animate and bring forth the ghosts of the past.

This exhibition opens a complex reality that juxtaposes photography, scanning, cutting, and installation of works in the gallery space that wish to scratch, peel, and dig into the desire for a seemingly impossible collaboration – between the present and the past that carries on the story while also altering it. The common language of thought and action produces objects that in themselves are related to times and places but also wander between them, bridging and linking people who do not share the same era, yet their proximity and presence exist not only as a memory, but as a shared practice of material and conceptual continuous, changing, and forming knowledge.

Their material presence in the space oscillates between states of planning to realization and execution in which the principles of disassembly, assembly, and the traces of time – evident in the surfaces that were photographed, scanned, and enlarged or reduced – attest to the clear affinities between imagination and reality and their interdependence.