

Merav Shinn Ben-Alon, Jan 2019

I am not certain when I began to engage with the so-called “third generation” issue. The Holocaust had always interested me, but never to the extent in which it has preoccupied me in recent years. The death of my father and the mess he left behind were probably responsible. The past I had thought to be mine was suddenly gone. Around that time, I came across psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion’s term *Ceasura*. Bion talks about a severing after which there is a continuation in another place. In my family there were no Holocaust survivors, or children and grandchildren of survivors. Therefore, I did not consider myself third generation. Those who left before the war lived, those who did not, died. The realization that I am in fact third generation came with an understanding that this disconnection is the link between past and present.

Several years ago, I was invited to an artist residency in Latvia. This came about in, beginning with a curator who visited my studio with a group of visiting curators, and developed into a life changing journey. The most significant occurrences during the Latvia residency was a trip I took with the German artist Janine Gerber, from the residency, to my grandmother's small hometown. Returning for the first time to this place of thousand stories, the lakes, the forests, the snow, the yearnings and the guilt I had grown up with. Not having a specific address, I stood by a house numbered ten and asked my colleague to take photos of me. These became the basis for a series of drawings I made that were exhibited in Germany a year later.

Meeting with Janine Gerber in Germany was the beginning of a joint project we later called *Zusammen*. Throughout the collaboration we did not speak about the meaning of the term “third generation” that lingered there between us. The actual presentation of the equation made up of a German and Israeli artist was a liberation of sorts from the charged narratives. And so, through art, another, elusive and painful dialogue ensued.

Gradually we came to understand that the working process is ongoing. And that the geographic and mental distance demand time, and that each meeting is the foundation for the next. The joint exhibition at Minshar Gallery (2019) in Tel Aviv is based on the working materials made during a two-week residency we had at the K70 Gallery (2018) in Lübek, Germany. The continuity of the project allows the past to live in the present. Working with an artist who is connected to the past, but rather than a ghost, is a real woman carrying with her own “third generationess” turns us both into a mirror of sorts, in which to see each other’s reflection.