

Nira Pereg LA Visit: January 10th - 22nd / 2010

Sabbath 2008 & Kept Alive

January 15th

Opening of "Sabbath 2008" at the Santa Monica Museum of Art

The screenshot shows the website for the Santa Monica Museum of Art. At the top, the museum's name is displayed in a dark grey bar. Below it is a navigation menu with orange highlights for 'ABOUT', 'EXHIBITIONS', 'PROGRAMS', 'SUPPORT', 'CALENDAR', 'NEWS', and 'SHOP'. A search bar is located in the top right corner. The main content area features a large image of a still from the video 'Sabbath 2008', showing a street scene in Jerusalem with a person walking. To the right of the image is a white box containing exhibition information: 'EXHIBITION INFORMATION', 'project room nira pereg: sabbath 2008', and 'January 16 - April 17, 2010'. Below the image is a caption: 'Nira Pereg, Sabbath 2008, still, one channel high definition video with sound, 7:12 loop, Edition of 7, 16:0 PAL 2 Ch Stereo, Installation dimensions variable, Courtesy of Braverman Gallery, Tel Aviv, Israel'. The bottom section of the page has an orange background and contains text about the opening reception, a description of the video, a biography of Nira Pereg, and a list of related events.

SANTA MONICA MUSEUM OF ART

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EXHIBITION INFORMATION

project room
nira pereg: sabbath 2008
January 16 - April 17, 2010

Nira Pereg, *Sabbath 2008*, still, one channel high definition video with sound, 7:12 loop, Edition of 7, 16:0 PAL 2 Ch Stereo, Installation dimensions variable, Courtesy of Braverman Gallery, Tel Aviv, Israel

Opening Reception: Friday, January 16, 7 to 9 p.m.

SMMoA will present the United States premier of *Sabbath 2008*, a video which documents the closing down of the ultra-orthodox neighborhoods in and around Jerusalem on the eve of the Sabbath. In most cases, public access to these neighborhoods is blocked by means of temporary barriers, which remain closed for 24 hours—thus creating an artificial border between the orthodox areas and the rest of the city. The barriers are put in place by neighborhood residents, with the approval and support of the Jerusalem municipality and the police. The city therefore becomes topologically transformed into two cities—one with and one without cars. Although the value of these somewhat rickety barriers may appear symbolic, their presence is sometimes a source of friction and conflict; they delineate a clear cut boundary between the sacred and the everyday. Pereg's subject matter is often full of political tension, but in *Sabbath 2008*, she has created a film that is objective in offering a documentary view of an important aspect of religious Jewish life.

Pereg was born in Israel in 1969, and now lives in Israel and Germany. She received her B.F.A from Cooper Union in New York, and graduated from the Bezalel M.F.A studio program in Jerusalem. Her works have been exhibited at such venues as PS 1 New York; HDK Berlin; ZKM Karlsruhe; the Israel Museum in Jerusalem; Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art; Liverpool Biennial, England (2006); and Loop Video-Art Fair, Barcelona, Spain (2006).

Nira Pereg: Sabbath 2008 has been supported in part by The Jewish Federation's Tel Aviv/Los Angeles Partnership.

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related events

OPENING RECEPTIONS: Diana Thater, Jeffrey Wells, Nira Pereg
2010-01-15

OPENING DAY Diana Thater, Jeffrey Wells, Nira Pereg
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CONVERSATION 67 Bows and Loops: Nira Pereg and Paul Young
2010-01-19

PANEL DISCUSSION Sacred Life/Secular World
2010-01-21

CLOSING DAY Diana Thater, Jeffrey Wells, and Nira Pereg
2010-04-17

January 16th

Opening of "Kept Alive" at the Shoshana Wayne Gallery



NIRA PEREG

Kept Alive

January 16th - February 27th

Opening reception: January 16th, 5-7pm

Shoshana Wayne Gallery is pleased to present the first solo exhibition of new work by Nira Pereg. Kept Alive is a three-channel video and photo installation focused on Jerusalem's Mountain of Rest. The installation's documentary approach is employed to address the enormous cemetery's three primary activities: construction, burial, and visitation.

Filming on location for a full year, Pereg investigates intersections between the living and the dead. The cemetery is one of Israel's largest, however, burial grounds are precious and expensive, due to geographic location and general lack of space. Despite the site's intense density, with just over 10 inches between graves, it is still possible to purchase and reserve plots.

In the West gallery, a selection of photographs documents numerous markers placed on the empty, reserved graves, presented as portraits of their purchaser. Each stands for a living individual offering the means to occupy territory in the land of the dead.

The multi-channel video installation reconstructs the mountain, in which all the cemetery's conflicting processes occur simultaneously. The work's sound is also artificially constructed, sampled from various sources and pieced together in a studio. Through the almost-real, Pereg re-choreographs the Mount of Rest, isolating gestures and movements, giving them new roles.

As with previous work, Pereg's investigation of a specific location and the interactions it hosts serves as a microcosm for general human polemics. Her work in Jerusalem for the past two years has focused on ways that space is marked and divided. Alternating between close-ups and long shots, pans and still camera, speech and action, Kept Alive provides a range of perspectives on how the living cohabit with the dead.

Pereg's work is typically documentary based, transforming reality into tightly controlled, quasi-theatrical events. Her projects focus on the intersections of social structures with the authority of the individual.

Nira Pereg holds degrees from New York's Cooper Union and Jerusalem's Bezalel Academy and splits her time between teaching and creating video-works that have been exhibited at PS1 New York, the Tel-Aviv Museum of Art, Germany's ZKM, and the Tate Modern.

Kept Alive (a literal translation from Hebrew) refers to the text engraved upon headstones to reserve pre-purchased burial spots. The custom arose from bureaucratic necessity, but grew to function as a popular charm to ensure a healthy and long life for the purchaser.

This film was produced with the assistance of The Center for Contemporary Art Tel Aviv and with the support of The Israeli Film Council

For more information please contact Kerry O'Bryan (310) 453-7535.

January 19th

Nira Pereg And Paul Young in conversation:



January 21st

11am: Lecture at Otis college of Arts and design

Invitation by :Meg Linton

www.otis.edu/benmaltzgallery

January 21st

7 pm: PANEL DISCUSSION Sacred Life/Secular World

Thursday, January 21

Sacred Life/Secular World

7 pm: Panel Discussion at SMMoA

(6 - 7 pm: View works by Nira Pereg: at SMMoA, Sabbath 2008, and Kept Alive, at Shoshana Wayne Gallery, Bergamot Station, B1.)

How do we blend the spiritual and sacred aspects of our lives in a secular world?

Participants: Rabbi Brad Artson, Vice President, American Jewish University, Rabbi Sharon Brous, Founding Rabbi of IKAR, and artist Nira Pereg, moderated by Sonia Cummings.

Nira Pereg: Sabbath 2008 at SMMoA is supported in part by The Jewish Federations Tel- Aviv/Los Angeles Partnership



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Jan30th 2010- L.A Times

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Art review: Nira Pereg at Shoshana Wayne

January 30, 2010 | 9:00 am

Nira Pereg's three-channel video, "Kept Alive," is an engrossing meditation on some of the physical and social implications of death and burial in Israeli society. Projected in an asymmetrical arrangement on two adjacent walls at Shoshana Wayne, it documents everyday activities at the Jerusalem cemetery, Mountain of Rest.



Yet the piece is anything but restless. One screen shows a continuous loop of a man digging a grave, filling the room with an almost constant drone of scraping and scuffing. On the other two screens, long shots of the hillside cemetery – a veritable city of concrete tombs – are interspersed with scenes of mausoleum construction, weed cutting, stone clearing and the carving of grave markers.

These markers, it turns out, are not tombstones but merely labels indicating plots purchased for future use. They read simply in Hebrew, "Kept Alive."



This sentiment applies to the still-living buyer but also the memory of the dead, which is kept alive both through mourning and physical maintenance of the graves. Strikingly, these two activities are performed by two groups. The visiting mourners are mostly fair in complexion, often attired in Orthodox Jewish garb; the cemetery workers are almost all slight, dark-skinned men. The video quietly but emphatically registers class, racial and religious differences, contrasting a long shot of a group of Jewish men swaying in

prayer with a close-up of the dust-whitened hands of an elderly worker and another man who kneels and prays toward Mecca.

Yet the overall impression is of hard work: the constant, monotonous physical labor that goes into caring for the dead. On one hand this speaks to the importance of tradition and memory in Israeli society. On the other, it reminds us that the houses of the dead are not so different from those of the living – built, cleaned and maintained by an otherwise invisible underclass.

– Sharon Mizota

Shoshana Wayne, 2525 Michigan Ave. B1, Santa Monica, (310) 453-7535; through Feb. 27. Closed Sundays and Mondays. www.shoshanawayne.com

Image: Kept Alive. Photo credit: Courtesy Shoshana Wayne Gallery / Michael Spezialy.

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Sabbath and Self-Assurance

L.A. Expanded: Notes from the West Coast
A weekly column by Catherine Wagley

Religion and art seem mostly good at revealing people's vulnerabilities, which is perhaps why the sacred often works so well as a subject for artists.



Nira Pereg, "Sabbath 2008," Still, 2008. One Channel High Definition Video with Sound, 7 min. 12 sec. (aig); Edition of 3, 16:9 P/R, 2 Ch Stereo. Courtesy Brummer Gallery, Tel-Aviv, Israel.

A month ago, I attended mass and was struck by how devout the amir looked, holding his brass candle-holder and wearing his white robe. Then, following the service, I saw the same boy late uniform, dressed in baggy jeans and impatiently chasing girls through the parking lot. I did some cursory research after that, looking into how protests came to be the church's temporary lighters and snafus of after services.

What I discovered wasn't quite what I was looking for: the story of St. Tiburtius.

Tiburtius died at age 12, the victim of bad timing, bad luck, and mistreated parents. An acolyte in the early church, Tiburtius job probably didn't differ much from today's acolytes and altar boys: lighting candles, holding books, sitting and standing at the right times.

His problems began when a blackie came up missing (I don't know whether said blackie felt closer to Roman senators, or a commoner) — No one could take the sacrament to the elderly and ill Christians, so Tiburtius hid the holy bread and wine under his coat — At this point, Christianity was against the law and went out.

There's some controversy over what happened next. Some say Tiburtius met two hostile Roman guards. Others say he met a group of boys, non-Christians his own age, some of them former playmates. For partial to the second version, in it, the boys asked Tiburtius to join their game (try as I might, I can't picture them playing anything other than basketball), but he said "no," maybe with a little too much self-importance (after all, he had Christ's body and blood under his coat). Feeling slighted, the boys began to tease Tiburtius, asking what he was hiding. Feeling bold and maybe even a little holier-than-thou, Tiburtius became slightly obstinate, like Dean of Ar-jona with a tiny Paul Newman from Carl Hiaas-Luke. One boy let slip that Tiburtius was Christian, unleashing a brutality that surprised Tiburtius' assailants as much as it surprised him.



Silviana Wilky, "Christian Martyr Tiburtius," 2008, oil on canvas and the 1868 sculpture by Alexandre Falguière. French copy which I see based.

I thought of Tiburtius while at the Santa Monica Museum of Art (SMMOA) this weekend, watching Nira Pereg's video Sabbath. While not at all about child brutality or premature martyrdom, Sabbath is about the self-importance that comes from having sacred responsibilities (or responsibilities someone had to something sacred) and it gives a pitch-perfect portrait of the sincere (and of confidence, the kind that belongs only to those who believe in what they're doing).

Set in orthodox Jerusalem neighborhoods, Pereg's video depicts the ritualistic closing off of roads and thoroughfares in anticipation of the day of rest. Wobbly poles are dragged across streets, primarily by young men, and the grating of the metal upon the pavement is often the only sound. The video has the slow, non-reverent feel of a documentary.

In one scene, a teenager who has just conditioned a fear, unwelcoming across a relatively wide road urgently waves both hands, warning an approaching vehicle to stop; it won't be so through. In another scene, a younger boy gets distracted mid-job and quickly stands in a merge lane until the hook of an oncoming car brings him back to attention.



Nira Pereg, "Sabbath 2008," Still, 2008. One Channel High Definition Video with Sound, 7 min. 12 sec. (aig); Edition of 3, 16:9 P/R, 2 Ch Stereo. Courtesy Brummer Gallery, Tel-Aviv, Israel.

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Nira Pereg: Sabbath 2008

Posted by [artreview.com](#) on 4 February 2010 at 1:03pm in [First View](#)
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by [Jonathan T.D. Hall](#)

It gives me no particular pleasure, nor pain for that matter, to know that outside my well-lit living window on Manhattan's Upper West Side, there exists an invisible boundary-line that some believe to be an expansion of the domestic space of my apartment by, oh, something a little shy of 175 million square feet. This is the Jerusalem area, a zone that offers orthodox Jews a reprieve from the prohibitions on doing any kind of 'work' outside their home on the Sabbath, such as carrying bags or pushing a stroller, by relaxing the boundaries of the 'home'. Orthodox Jewish life places great store by such socio-territorial divisions: think of the numerous synagogal edifices and meeting areas for men and women, or of the separate zones of prayer, again for men and women, at the western wall of the temple mount in Jerusalem. Such spatial boundaries are the very fabric of orthodox daily life.

It is the setting that is the subject of Nira Pereg's *Sabbath 2008* (2008), a seven-minute video which shows 'ultra orthodox' Jewish men and boys sitting up the police barricades that seal off their windows from the rest of the world on the eve of the Sabbath. It is a film that occurs every week, and for that one might expect it to be carried out with a kind of administrative boredom. Not so. Pereg's quiet cinema has religious belief breathe such intense awe with the seriousness of great epiphanies, even when being carried out by the kids. In one scene, a young boy of five or six, barely taller than the barrier that he has just manoeuvred into the street, stands transfixed – the way that boys of five or six can – by something off screen, just as a cat noses up the street behind him. (Even time I watch this film, I'm convinced it isn't and English, but I love me. *Sabbath 2008* is something of a comedy, you see. The boy jumps up short, turns, and the street boy jumps to the side, but not without managing an awkward yet all-offensive little wave through – just, one might say, but he's already seen his elders do thousands of times.



Pereg adds the sound in *Sabbath 2008* to great effect. In one busy street scene cars are passing, people are walking by, though all we hear are the quiet hushfalls of one section of the faithful as he rushes to raise the barricades, which he then proceeds to drag, like *Angels in an Apartment*, across the curbside and into place. Apart from the embarrassment of the sound itself, the gag here is that the fellow's strategy of placement seems to follow no lower board of logic, and to give us for way too long (an allegory of religion itself perhaps).

It is incorrect to say however that *Sabbath 2008* is a comedy; rather, it is comic, but without mockery. Though the loudest sound strategy is borrowed from *Apocalypse* – Pereg has admitted to thinking of Chaplin and Buster Keaton at the time – the video's documentary character keeps us firmly in neutral territory. In the past he has funny moments, all of which rely on the brilliant *Journal*, but these comic aspects do more to simply hold our attention than to offer us any sense of pleasure or knowing comprehension.

This is not to suggest that there is no consideration of Jewish, but it is more of the Jewish setting, fortified by words such as 'guard'. Yes, there is a certain irony about the emergency barricade gangs or police in *Sabbath 2008*, but we tend to forget that Jews themselves, knowing full well that what we are witnessing is something from which we are excluded, and that what is being pictured is a very real, very physical manifestation of that exclusion. By we breathe a bit (after all, we are like being left out), but we also breathe because we at once deny and dislodge the complexity of such exclusion and the wonder they may create. *Sabbath 2008* shows that you are either inside (or outside) of this line. The line, you are either of "home" here, or you are not.

Nira Pereg's Sabbath 2008 (2008), is on view in the Project Room of the Santa Monica Museum of Art in Santa Monica, CA, through April 17.

[Photo](#)