

**Renske Janssen**

**Noa Giniger**

What was the first work of art that made a big impression on you, and why?

I don't think I ever thought or felt in those terms – I mean, the existence of the first. It's Probably the living room in my grandmother's apartment in Tel Aviv. The whole apartment was a rational, yet spontaneous, display of furniture, objects and souvenirs. A mix of practical, found and decorative objects, tapestry, pillows and dolls she made for us and for her own pleasure. Everything was accessible to us, the children, except for the living room. Its doors were constantly closed. There were times I had the chance to get a glimpse of the space. It all looked very still and arranged. Very silenced. Very museum-esque. This tension she unconsciously created between the accessible and the unreachable inside the domestic environment was very strong, redefining the notion of daily from sacred and natural from considered arrangements.

Tube-emptier



**RJ**

How do you treat the objects that I have encountered in your studio – photos, smallsculptures, toys, all kinds of objects? What is their status, function, or role?

**NG**

Nothing has a stable definition. They are temporary episodes and great entertainment for my eyes, mind and soul. They are souvenirs, memories, the detritus of my everyday life. Their role shifts between inspirations, sketches, reactions and the alter-ego of my realised work.

Atelier (detail)



**RJ**

**NG**

Where is your work contextualised best?

Where and when sufficient space is provided to build a narrative or an emotion around it. This is why my works are typically exhibited on their own and not in conjunction with other pieces. It's like chemists examining reactions in a vacuum to achieve the best results. Some pieces could not be combined, as it would reduce their concept, which from the beginning deals with isolation and folding.

**RJ**

**NG**

Recently you presented a work in a group show at De Nieuwe Vide in Haarlem. Can you tell me how you dealt with isolation there?

The space of De Nieuwe Vide has no windows and that was the only conceptual requirement for my work being presented there. It's a piece that exhibits a garden solar lights collection in abnormal conditions as a departure point. In *nature*, a garden solar light should be placed where its solar panel can collect the maximum amount of direct sunlight. During the day, the solar panel converts sunlight into electricity and recharges the battery. Once night falls, a sensor turns on the light automatically. In 'On-going collection' (2008), the solar lights are placed in a glass showcase, illuminated by bright fluorescents. This collection never sees daylight and night never falls on it; their essence becomes almost entirely about aesthetics. There is a cruel tension between the solar lights, reduced here to an object, and the artificial light that illuminates them. The solar lights, originally intended to be economical and practical, lose their function under the fluorescent light and are transformed into waste. The fluorescents do not operate merely to make the collection visible but also to incessantly energise it. And so the collection is prevented from ever turning on.

Noa Giniger,  
On-going collection (2008),  
detail



**RJ**

**NG**

So 'On-going collection' doesn't come from an environmental concern? Absolutely not.

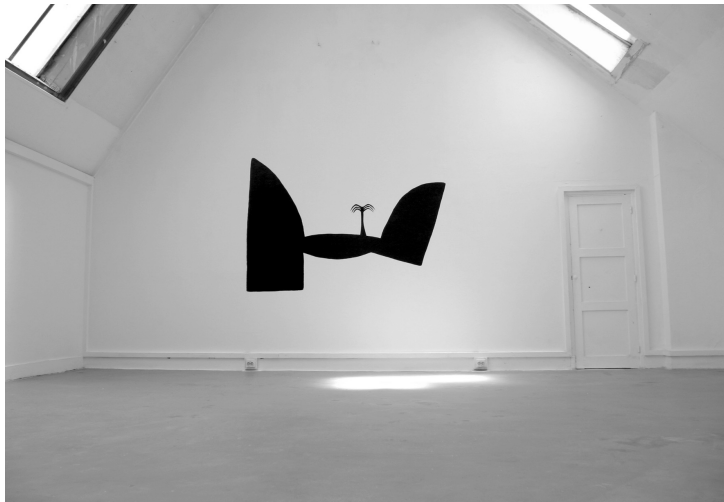
RJ

Where does your fascination for light and illumination come from?

NG

I exploit light beyond its common use, beyond making seeing possible or making things visible. The use of light serves to capture and undo capture. I often examine the meaning of failure through building scenarios with a potential for achievement, which are actually doomed to fail. For instance, in 'Still Fata Morgana' (2005), my intentions were to prevent a Fata Morgana from disappearing when approached. The painting is based upon an imaginary, non-existent landscape, executed in black directly on the wall to ensure its immobility. So it never vanishes but also, to be more accurate, it keeps the viewer away when physically reaching *it*, the landscape that anyhow is unreachable. A ray of sunlight entering the space moves from the ground towards the image, linking this motionless space to the outside.

Noa Giniger,  
still Fata Morgana, 2005



RJ

It seems you give access only to the experience of the artwork via the surface: you offer access and you hold back at the same time. What does it mean to keep the viewer at a distance?

NG

I think that in today's world everything is possible and everything is out of reach at the same time. Simulations are produced in high definition and yet there is a nostalgia and longing for the previous. It is a constant attempt to grasp the impossible. Some things are irreplaceable and any attempt to do so will remain merely their imitation. My work is not there to argue with reality or to declare sacred concepts that risk later turning into dogma. At the end of the day, artists are gadget-makers. Though the difference between their gadgets and those in the everyday world is that the latter appear super-useful but are totally unnecessary in most cases. Art actually works the other way around...

Firefly catcher  
(from *Glowing fireflies* by Ito Shinsui, 1931)



RJ

Can you tell me more about what a plot means to you?

NG

My definition of plot is not one of the traditional narrative. Rather it is fragments and sequences coming together from my everyday life. Happening upon a sentence in a novel or a scene in a film or a term in physics or my daily horoscope or a conversation with someone or an on-going relationship, or a no longer one. It's all clichés at the end. It's all so real and overused. That's what makes them clichés. Once you work with one, it demands concentration to find the thin line that separates it from being boring. The reduced presentation is part of my working process: opening up an issue while narrowing down to what seems to be the essential. The other day I was passing a construction site, which was located in an upper basement of a building. As I walked past the main entrance, a man came out of the door, carrying a long piece of wood on his shoulder. We had this brief encounter. We didn't even have eye contact. I heard him absentmindedly singing 'everybody loves somebody sometime'. It was such a brief encounter. I just kept on walking. But the line has repeated endlessly in my head since that day. The physical experience of the random meeting. The isolation of that one line from this love song. A love song originally dedicated to one person. So melancholic, so open for any possibility. So narrow that it is overwhelming.

Interview by Renske Janssen, curator of the Witte de With Centre for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam, 'Offspring' at De Ateliers exhibition catalogue, Amsterdam 2008.