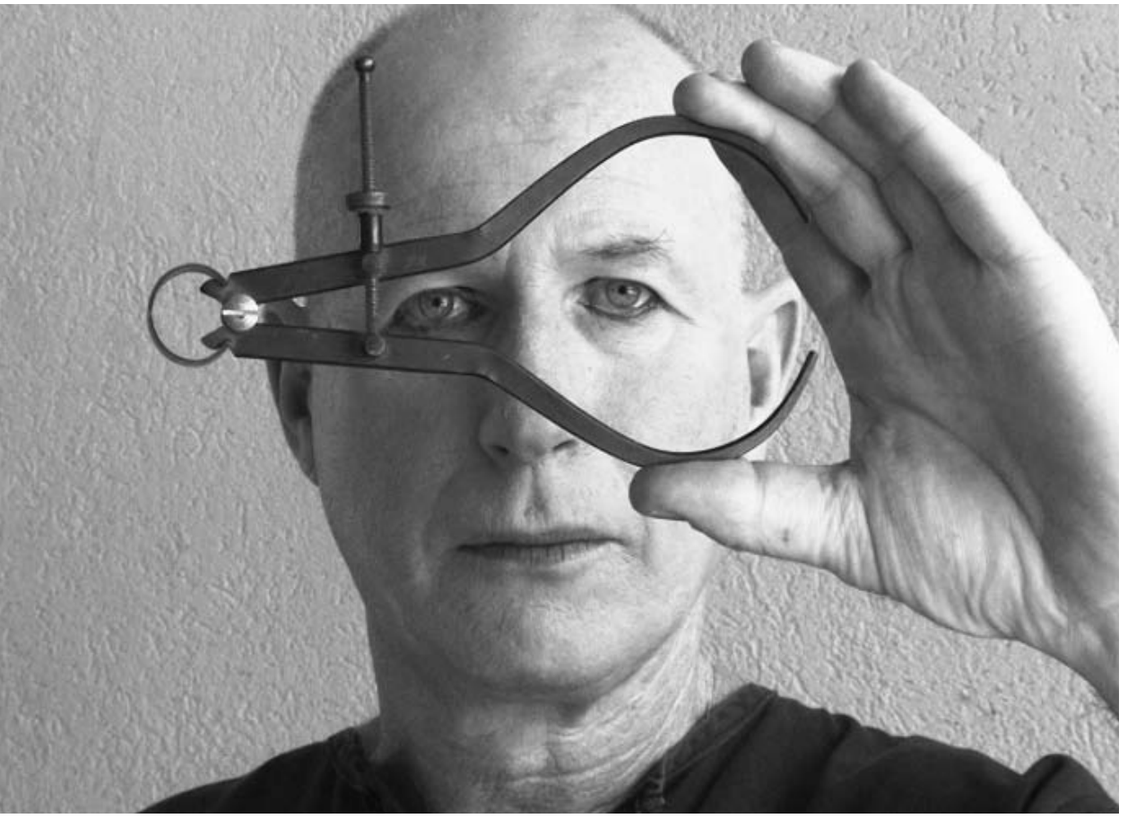


Free Mason, 1998, video still

The Crutches of an Architect

Installation and Performance

Tali Tamir

"I planned the garden as a large-scale model of my right hand. Besides the anatomical structure, I based the paths on the lines that traverse the palm of my hand..."

"Damn limp [...] each step is a defiance against the ground. [...] Planting the foot is an acceptance."
– Hadas Ophrat [1]

"...nothing one thought superseded by history has already disappeared. All the archaic, anachronistic forms are there ready to emerge, intact and timeless, like the viruses deep in the body. History has only wrenched itself from cyclical time to fall into the order of the recyclable."
– Jean Baudrillard [2]

The idea of a Renaissance garden, which acts as a hermetic universe centered around a circle that embodies the cyclical power of birth and death, appeared already in Hadas Ophrat's 2006 work *Renaissance*. The installation, which stood at the heart of his one-person exhibition at the Israel Museum Jerusalem, was built as a demarcated garden on a wood platform carved with a pattern of myrtle leaves (whose Hebrew name – Hadas – is also the first name of the artist). Cypress trees, in the form of cones, punctured it in regular intervals, while dark urns made of dense foam emanated a traveling sound of a murmur from speakers that were hidden inside them. The image of the artist wearing a puffy

[1] Hadas Ophrat, *Sun Rise Sun Set* (Tel Aviv: Shades of Black, 2004), texts no. 15, 34 (Hebrew).

[2] Jean Baudrillard, *The Illusion of the End*, translated by Chris Turner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 27.

Seed-Beard, 2006, video still

HO, 2005, video still

The Milky Way, 2001, video still

"fetus suit" that secreted rustling seeds was projected in the central circle. The image of the "baby" lying on his back, at once embryonic and ancient, emerges as an invalid: he has no arms, and so, any attempt to rise and stand on his legs is doomed. "If the garden is a womb, [...] exiting it is a birth," wrote Dror Burstein in the exhibition catalogue, "A birth that is an awakening, a birth that sustains a vital connection [...] with the past and to the future, from within the present."[3] Burstein sees the garden as an ideal and universal essence that exists in constant tension with the outside world. The expulsion from the garden already hovers along its trails. And so, like in the book of Genesis, we have to expand our perspective on the garden to include what lurks beyond its walls: the story of Caine and Able and the first murder.

While Burstein perceived the idea of the garden on a moralistic base, I wish to propose that the idea of the closed garden in Ophrat's work is rooted in the tension between ideal abstraction and live corporeality. The early iteration of the garden as a drawing on (a model of) the palm of his hand, attests to the prominence of the body in Ophrat's practice and to his tendency to examine each abstract idea through the physical. Thus, for example, he signs his signature on the bottom of his feet while the wisps of white and hairy "parachutes" in *Seed Beard* (2007) floated around his torso, entangling in his body hair. In the performance *The Milky Way* (2004) he produced cheese, carrying cloth "udders" with curdled milk on his shoulders, as he walked in circles for 12 hours. "I am a kibbutz,' I am a cooperative. A social collective. I am productive, autonomous, an autarky," wrote Ophrat vis-à-vis *The Milky Way*, "... I create, I produce, I am the model and the source..."[4] Here, the artistic act does not stand for the omnipotent, all-powerful artist, but as a total internal responsibility, embodied in the body, as an amalgamation of the sower and the reaper, the thinker and the performer.

These installations and performances reveal a recurring deep-concept in Ophrat's work: an abstract image of an Ouroboric system,[5] whose head and tail connect to form a closed, self-sufficient, universe. Being cyclical, it never stops its flow, constantly propelling itself forward. In Ophrat's thinking, the artistic act, like the immaculate conception, is tantamount to an autarky that is independent and self-sustaining; the artist's mission is first and foremost to carry this economy on his body and reflect it, but at the same time also deliver it to the society in which he acts. Following this idea, after circling Kibbutz Nachshon for long enough in *The Milky Way*, he moved from the peripheral trails inside, into to the central arena, where he offered the ripe produce: fresh butter/cheese, which had absorbed the heat of his body. With this metaphorical act, the masculine and the feminine were united, and the marginal (artistic) and the mainstream (community) completed one another.

The large-scale installation at Herzliya Museum, *La Rotonda and I: Remix* (2017), reverberates *Renaissance*, the installation presented at the Israel Museum a decade earlier. It holds the same tension between the abstract unified Idea and the handicapped physical presence and continues Ophrat's exploration of Renaissance imagery. *La Rotonda and I: Remix* revolves around the iconic image of the Palldian Villa La Rotonda. What is at stake here is not only the Italian Rotonda, but rather eight other "Rotondas," which were chosen by Ophrat from the many partial-quotes and replicas of the Palladian building around the world,[6] built between the 17th century and the threshold of the 21st. The fundamental tension in Ophrat's work between the idea of perfection and the physical body, brings to the fore additional questions concerning the relation between original and copy, disparities between periods and cultures, conflicts between ceremonial and everyday life, and the human desire for an image.

The building designed by Palladio – after Alberti, after Vitruvius – centralized, symmetrical, and harmonious, is based on the principle of two basic geometric shapes enclosed in one another, namely a circle inside a square, "the most beautiful and well-ordered shapes, from them all the other shapes get their measure," to quote Palladio himself.[7] These are the two basic shapes that also underlie the figure of the Vitruvian Man ("the well-formed man") drawn by Leonardo da Vinci in 1490 (based on the calculations of the Roman Vitruvius). The scholar of Renaissance art Lea Dovev sees the Vitruvian Man as no less than "An icon of modern progress and a horizon of hope for Western culture as a whole."[8] Emphasizing the fact that the entire discourse revolves around the male body and concerns pure masculinity, Dovev stresses that "This man, with his outstretched arms, his fierce gaze and frown, has become the image of a subject of rationality, around whose measurements the entire cosmos is set, subjugated to his discipline."[9]

The crucial line demarcated by Western thought, claims Dovev, stretches between the quantifiable and the unquantifiable, and between the measurable and the elusive and vague. Thus, Palladio's Villa La Rotonda, which is the embodiment of the overriding principle of proportions and mathematics, proves that beauty, in its Classical sense, is an abstract category that shifts from the visual and the aesthetic to the laws of numbers and calculations. Writing about the image of the Vitruvian Man and the prominence

[3] Dror Burstein, "Meditations in Four Gardens" in: Timna Seligman and Tali Tamir (eds.), *Hadas Ophrat: Comeback*, exh. cat. (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 2007), 96-97.

[4] Hadas Ophrat, *Sun Rise Sun Set*, text no. 58.

[5] From *Ouroboros* – the ancient symbol depicting a serpent swallowing its own tail and forming a circle.

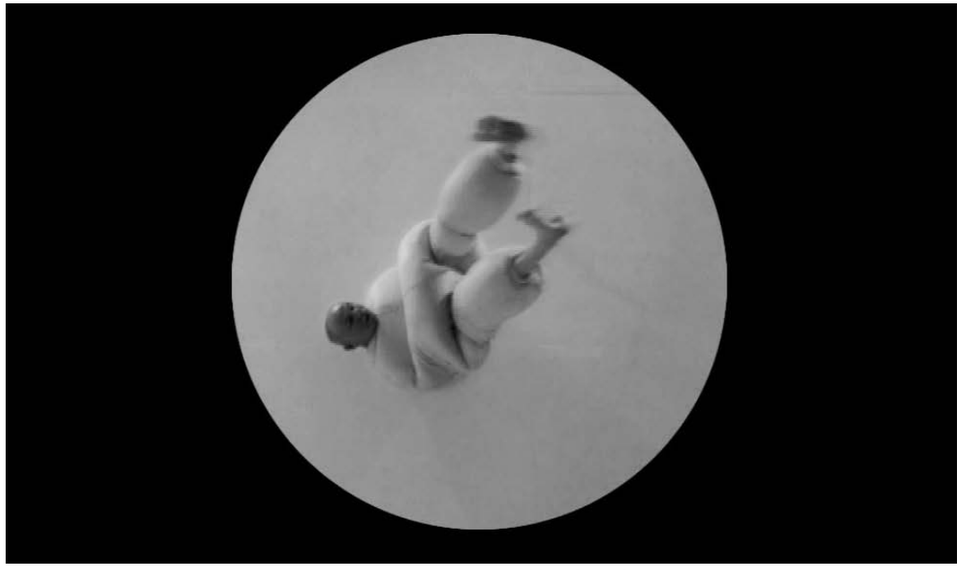
[6] See pages 70-71.

[7] Denis E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 138.

[8] Lea Dovev, *Subjecthood in the Flesh: The Discourse of the Body in the Anatomical Corpus of Leonardo da Vinci* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2015), 45 (Hebrew).

[9] Ibid.

You are Sleeping, 2008, sound installation, Haifa Museum of Art



Old-Embryo, from **Renaissance**, 2006, video installation

Renaissance, 2006, installation view, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

of proportions theory in Renaissance Neoplatonism, the cultural geographer Denis E. Cosgrove maintains: "...this was more than analogy, it was a coherent theory. What human reason could reveal were the actual principles whereby God had created the world and man in a consistent and orderly way."[10]

The male body, bound and tethered to a rigid geometry, strives for stability and stasis, "wherein nothing can be added or subtracted without destroying the whole."[11] As a counterpart to this unified Idea, Leonardo developed the technique of "sfumato," which confers an aura of grace, *gratzia*, on the landscape and the female figure. This painterly invention is based on the unraveling of edges to form soft shading, which fades into the space. The Idea of grace, characterized by soft boundaries, also holds ethical implications that involve modesty and sanctity, but cannot be quantified by mathematical calculations and is not bound by a geometrical language. It follows that the relationship between La Rotonda's geometric structure and the landscape around it should also be conceived as an encounter between self-enclosed geometry and soft, unquantifiable sprawl that fades into the far distance. Within this space, Villa La Rotonda has been prominent as a hermetic image – "a magnetic, cardinal point in the landscape"[12] – that represents abstract insights, but at the same time also projects status, power, and domination.

An attempt to decipher the fascination of Hadas Ophrat, an Israeli artist, with the famous Italian icon that is so removed from his own culture – in its class and social associations as well as its Neoplatonic elements – reveals the recurring tension that exists in his work between an autarkic, independent essence, aloof and abstract, and the vital, challenging presence of the acting body. His attraction to the ideal, to the organized and formulated, is also undermined in this project by the live action he performs in the museum gallery.

Between the installation and the performance, the exhibition unfolds the historical, social, and cultural research carried out by Ophrat on the original villa and its duplicates. Wondering about the fundamental incongruity between 16th century way of life and life in the 21st century, Ophrat sought to understand how an ideal system operates when it is removed from the cultural context in which it was created and severed from its origins. What does day to day life look like in a ceremonial and symbolic architectural configuration, which does not take into account the needs of contemporary life, and how is the relationship between the abstract model and quotidian life navigated? Beyond these interests, Ophrat's *La Rotonda and I: Remix* is also a profound homage to architecture, and to its power to shape a space, estimate scale, set proportions, and impact people's life and movement in their living space.[13]

[10] Cosgrove, 84

[11] Ibid, 85

[12] From an interview with Niccolo Valmarana, Vincenza, 8.10.2016

[13] As part of his theoretical studies at the Department of Architecture in the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa in 2014-2016, Ophrat wrote a thesis on the link between urban space and artistic activity. Architecture courses, which he attended at a relatively late age, and the insights of the research informed and motivated the Rotonda project.

The Garden, the Landscape, and the Ideal City

In the lower gallery of Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art, which can be viewed from two perspectives – from above and frontally, stands a wood and plaster model that represents the basis of Villa Rotonda, surrounded by symmetrical staircases on its four sides. The entire building – with its grand Classical façade, which boasts six Ionic columns, pediment, and dome that crowns its center – is absent from the exhibition and its truncated manifestation distills the Rotonda into its ritualistic and theatrical elements. Clear and refined, Hadas Ophrat's Rotonda is inscribed with Palladio's original architectural plan of Villa Rotonda, as it appears in the second volume of *The Four Books of Architecture*. The drawing, which can only be viewed from the museum's upper level, underscores the abstract Idea of the building and the conceptual status of the entire installation: "...the plan [not the building] is the original," maintains Julian Bicknell, the British architect who specialized in restoring historic buildings, and reconstructed La Rotonda for Sebastian Ferranti in the mid 1980s,[14] "It's a meta-image. We are inventing an idea...of an image that has to do with symmetry, and the four points of the compass, and the dome... an idea which is so immediately accessible."[15] Bicknell stresses the significant contribution that printing the building's plan in Palladio's books has had on its reception as a crystalized shape and a conceptual icon.

The spatial perception of this idea is revealed only upon entering the inner space of the installation's model/platform, where a 360-degrees video projection strings together the vistas surrounding the eight Rotondas included in the project into one sequence.[16] The viewer is engulfed by a virtual image of a mega-landscape, forming fabricated unity from the eight views that were filmed in Italy, Poland, England, and the Palestine Authority. The projection of the outside at the heart of the interior resonates the tremendous significance of the landscape for Villa La Rotonda itself, and the fact that it is a part of the iconic Idea of the "villa on a hill," as Guido Beltramini, director of the International Center for Architectural Studies Andrea Palladio in Vicenza, stressed: "It is exactly the same idea – to have a square villa with *belvedere* all around it, and same location – on top of a hill."[17]

The aspect of pleasure and joy, which links the private residence with the retreat to the countryside, while fixing the elevated point of view, gained its perfect formulation already in the descriptions of Pliny the Younger, the Roman senator who travelled between Rome and his two villas in the countryside. In a letter to his friend, he writes: "My house is on the lower slopes of a hill but commands as good a view as if it were higher up [...] Picture to yourself a vast amphitheater such as could only be work of nature..."[18] Describing the views seen from his house's windows, Pliny is aware of the theatrical aspect derived from the location of the house – the heart of "nature amphitheater," which overlooks the sea on one side and the forests and distant mountains on the other side. Already in Pliny's early interpretation, this panoramic vista is framed within a picturesque context: "...for the view seems to be a painted scene of unusual beauty rather than a real landscape, and the harmony to be found in this variety refresh the eye wherever it turns."[19]

Hence, the Palladian villa cannot be examined solely through the architectural lens, on the merit of its perfect proportions and dimensions, unless the view will expand to include the space around it. "Villa Veneta is a philosophy of life," says Niccolo Valmarana, who grew up in the villa, while talking about the immanent connection between architecture and landscape: "The only way to escape from the building is to come inside and only inside you join the outside."[20] In his book, Cosgrove quoted the scholar of architectural history Nikolaus Pevsner, who articulated this notion, while writing about the Palladian Villa Rotonda: "...for the first time in Western architecture, landscape and building were conceived as belonging to each other, as dependent on each other. Here for the first time the chief axes of the house are continued into nature; or alternatively, the spectator standing outside sees the house spread out like a picture closing his vista."[21]

Influenced by the newly formulated linear perspective theory, Palladio aligned the building's perspective with that of the landscape, which was shaped accordingly. The perspectival correspondence was so significant, that in some cases, the paths of rivers and streams had to be diverted, or the calculation of the building adjusted so as to fit into the unified building/landscape vision.[22] Guido Beltramini described the critical relations between the Villa and the landscape in a very clear manner: "I look at the Rotonda as a big machine in the countryside, to see the landscape."[23]

In the spatial, visual, and power relations manifested in the country villa, the landscape was divided into three levels, according to its distance from the architectural center. The garden is the space attached to and surrounding the building: designed and stylized, organized between gravel paths and lawns and flower beds, dotted with sculptures and fountains. Further away stretched the cultivated agricultural lands, mostly vineyards and wheat fields. These not only delineated geometric demarcations in the view, but also reinforced the villa's autarkic and autonomous status as a self-sustaining

[14] In 1983-1986, Julian Bicknell built a Palladian style country home for the British Ferranti family, Henbury Hall, located in Cheshire county in North West England.

[15] From an interview with Julian Bicknell, London 3.4.2017.

[16] This collage video was created in collaboration with video artist Jonathan Shohet Gluzberg, who was its cinematographer and editor.

[17] From an interview with Guido Beltramini, Vincenza, 7.10.2016.

Attributed to Fra Carnevale
The Ideal City, 1480-1484

[18] Letter to Domitius Apollinaris in: *The Letters of the Younger Pliny* vol. 5, translated by Betty Radice (London: Penguin Books, 1963), 20.

[19] Ibid. It is interesting to note that Henbury Hall (1986) was inspired by a painting by Felix Kelly, an English painter who specialized in landscape and haunted castles in an 18th century style. Kelly painted a Palladian Villa in the countryside, and the painting's collector initiated the actual construction of the physical building. Kelly was involved in the interior design of the Neo-Renaissance villa.

[20] From an interview with Niccolo Valmarana, Vincenza, 8.10.2016

[21] Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture*, quoted in Cosgrove, 135.

[22] What in cinquecento Italy was considered "distance view" or a beautiful view – *belvedere* – still reflected the overlap between "landscape" as a land and a territory and "landscape" as a painting term, and has yet to gain the cultural and artistic significance of "landscape" as it would be perfected in English and French painting two centuries later.

[23] From an interview with Guido Beltramini, Vincenza, 7.10.2016.

system. On the furthest plain, yet still in the domain of the private mansion – forests, hills, and groves merge with one another: wild nature, the realm that begins to blur, fading in soft sfumato into the horizon, the edge of the landowner's control. The treatment of the fading distance demanded a shift from the rules of linear perspective, which supports the meticulously designed architecture and garden, to atmospheric perspective based on shading and blurring. In terms of Renaissance painting, the vision of the villa and its surroundings summons an intersection and amalgamation of Giotto, Masaccio, and Piero Della Francesca's Florentine perspective theory, with Titian, Giorgione, and Bellini's Venetian painting theory.[24]

Some scholars perceive the Villa and the surrounding landscape as a "micro polis," in the Greek spirit – an image that paints it as an autonomous sphere of life, in which the private and the public as well as the formal and the natural interact with one another. However, the reference to the *polis* is manifested in a more profound way in the conceptual affinity between the Palladian villa and the Neoplatonic notion of the "ideal city." This Renaissance Idea, which associates the modern era with growing urbanization, wishes to see the harmonious planning of the city as a means to ensure the cultivation of perfect and virtuous citizens: "Individual structures are to be designed according to the rules of the classical orders, thus each is rendered a microcosm of the same geometrical principles that govern the harmony of the whole city and which are displayed in the physical and intellectual properties of its citizens."[26]

And while nature can be unruly and unpredictable, the ideal city is a "theater of reason and harmony,"[27] a formalistic idea that represents a combination of proportion, cosmology, politics, and morality. Those cities are "social as well as architectural utopias..."[28] wrote Cosgrove and highlighted the concept of the Palladian villa as a minor Ideal City.

Ophrat's exhibition and the panoramic film created in collaboration with Shohet Gluzberg are well aware of the panoptic vantage point engendered by the "villa on the hill." At the same time, its sovereign gaze is depleted of meaning, as it is subjected to its own endless replication. In a late elucidation to their seminal 1984 book, Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels commented: "from today's perspective landscape resembles 'a flickering text displayed on a screen whose meaning can be created, extended, altered, elaborated and finally obliterated by the merest touch of a button.'Such 'virtual landscapes' represent the furthest extension so far of the idea of landscape as a distanced way of seeing developed in this book: moving beyond even symbolic landscape, in some representations to landscape simulacra."[29]

[24] Valmarana, who is a garden designer by profession, stresses the difference: "Landscape is wider," he says, "I am in the garden." From an interview with Niccolo Valmarana, Vincenza, 8.10.2016. Valmarana's decision to specialize in garden design sheds light on his deep commitment to the legacy of La Rotonda and its landscape-garden associations.

[26] Cosgrove, 94

[27] Ibid., 96

[28] Ibid., 94

[29] James Elkins and Rachael Ziady DeLue (eds.), *Landscape Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 32

Ophrat and Shohet Gluzberg's panoramic film whirls its vistas and juggles stunning beauty. It blends in the capitalist, touristic, and fictional perspectives, unifying and reducing everything into a simulacrum of the virtual landscape. With that, the "panoramic sublime" loses its vanishing point, muddling all the sites and producing a landscape that has been depleted of meaning. "Like envelops like, which in turn surrounds the other," writes Foucault in *The Order of Things*, "and perhaps to be enveloped once more in a duplication which can continue ad infinitum."[30]

Duplication / Reproduction / Copying

"...Villa Rotonda, the least functional of all the villas, [is] the most admired and copied by later 'Palladians'..."[31] 'writes Cosgrove, outlining one of the signs of the Palladian obsession and pointing to the problematic relations between origin and replica and between representation and the real. Unlike him, British architect Julian Bicknell believes that the Palladian Rotonda has no replicas at all, since every building uses the same basic formal vocabulary: "the vocabulary that Palladio invents, and is then used in France, Poland, Germany, England, and America over the next 300 years – is the same vocabulary, but every building is different. And on a quite simple level, the Rotonda in Vicenza has six columns and the Rotonda in Henbury has four."

The London-based Studio FAT (Fashion, Architecture, Taste) chose Palladio's Villa Rotonda as the focus of a discussion on the subject of architectural copying, in the 13th Architecture Biennale in Venice, 2012. "Historically, copying was the means by which architecture disseminated language and culture into common use," they argue in support of the practice, "Palladio's *Four Books of Architecture* (1570, Venice), for example, were explicit manuals published to be copied by other architects (while at the same time synthesising an architectural language by copying antique architecture)." However, the copy, they continue, has been ascribed with schizophrenic characteristics "at once fundamental to architecture's mode and its nemesis [...] the enemy of progress, an inauthentic, pastiched and faked dead end of invention."[32]

But, with its all-embracing power and being a source to so many imitations and variations, the Palladian icon inevitably conjures contemplation about what Baudrillard called "the murderous power of images."[33] They are the murderer of their own model, he claimed. The duplication of the image instills in it an annulling power, which is exerted on the real, until it turns it into signs, "dedicated exclusively

[30] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970), 20

[31] Cosgrove, 138.

[32] The exhibition *The Villa Rotunda Redux* represented the U.K. in the 13th Venice Architecture Biennale in 2012. The quotes are from the exhibition's catalogue, available on FAT Studio website. The exhibition focused on the deconstruction and reassembly of the structure, and on shifting the Palladian vocabulary into copying practices and technologies.

[33] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, translated by Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), 5.

[34] Ibid., 20

[35] Jorge Luis Borges, *Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote*, 1939

[36] From an interview with Niccolo Valmarana, Vincenza, 8.10.2016.

to their reoccurrence as signs, and no longer at all to their 'real' end."[34] While Baudrillard pointed to the loss of the path back to the real, Jorge Luis Borges wished to reinstate it via a different reading. In his story *Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote*, Borges describes "the heroic, the peerless,"[35] work of a 20th century French novelist by the name of Pierre Menard, who wished to write anew the ninth and thirty-eighth chapters of the first part of Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. Menard's mission was, then, "To be, in the twentieth century, a popular novelist of the seventeenth":

> He did not want to compose another Quixote – which is easy – but the Quixote itself. Needless to say, he never contemplated a mechanical transcription of the original; he did not propose to copy it. His admirable intention was to produce a few pages which would coincide – word for word and line for line – with those of Miguel de Cervantes.

How can one repeat an idea to the letter and still indicate the temporal disparity? How can one build Villa La Rotonda in 2000, without "being Palladio" and becoming a 16th century architect? Borges himself pointed to this paradox: "To compose the Quixote at the beginning of the seventeenth century was a reasonable undertaking, necessary and perhaps even unavoidable; at the beginning of the twentieth, it is almost impossible..." Nevertheless, Menard, Borges's "alter ego," finds the solution by shifting his gaze from the textual source to the reader, to the interpreting consciousness rather than to reality itself: "The Quixote – Menard told me – was, above all, an entertaining book; now it is the occasion for patriotic toasts, grammatical insolence and obscene de luxe editions. Fame is a form of incomprehension, perhaps the worst."

Ophrat applies a similar reading to Villa La Rotonda, directing the question to Niccolo Valmarana, who grew up in the Villa as a child in the 1960s. Imbued with a sense of tremendous responsibility for the family legacy and believing that it has to remain private and not become a museum or a public institution, Valmarana nevertheless recognizes that living in it has become almost impossible: "...the pleasure to stay as in 1960 is little by little disappearing. The feeling is, that if you close the gate, you want to live as in a golden cage – you are narcissistic, arrogant, whatever..."[36] The Palladian architecture has lost the ability to embody pure formal values, alongside the concreteness of status and prestige, with the "ravages of fame" that stuck to it and the radical social changes that have taken place around it. In the democratic age of standardized housing, "the villa on the hill" is a clear signal, as Julian Bicknell

Unraveling, 2005, performance, Center of Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv, photo: Natan Dvir

aptly put it: [the villas] "...are built by powerful people as symbols of something that is important to them... Their own power. Because each and every person knows instantly: this is most important image of a building."[37]

Italian architecture theorist Manfredo Tafuri, who in the last decade of his life resumed his study of Renaissance architecture, saw the harmony of the Palladian architecture as one that "... created a virtual reality that contrasted with immediate reality".[38] These abstract, conceptual messages, challenging as they were, were projected beyond the Villa's time and sphere, and enabled its perseverance throughout the centuries. This outsider status of the Villa eschews an unequivocal surrender to the anonymity of the crowd and the contemporaneity it demands, as Benjamin suggested.[39] But technical reproduction does not stand still, and Ines Weizman, a theorist of modern architecture, asks what is the nature of a copied or restored building at an age of laser scanners and 3D printers that can print a scan of a building on a 1:1 scale, down to the millimeter.[40] In a lecture she gave on copies of buildings, Weizman introduced the question of architectural origin in a discipline that is fundamentally comprised of series and recurring and universal elements. She proposed to consider the duplication of a building a necessary product of the media form, rather than the architect's copyrighted original. Since duplication has become infinite and uncontrollable, she claimed, media form is a universal uncopyrighted original. Weizman's argument sheds light on the unique status of Villa La Rotonda as a universal agent of an architectural idea, an abstract Idea of beauty, based on geometry and harmonious proportions. "It is time for the building to be its own master," she stated, without searching for references and sources as its support. Bicknell concurs, while widening the Rotonda's definition, stating: "Well, they also are celebrating civilization, and civilization has to do with history, literature, mathematics, geometry, craft – all these things brought to a very high standard and then integrated in a single artefact."[41] In Ophrat's reading of Villa La Rotonda, it is conceptualized as a theater of order and abstraction. This conceptual outlook is the basis from which he turns to face it with physical and subjective means.

[37] From an interview with Julian Bicknell, London 3.4.2017.

[38] Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance,* translated by Jessica Levine (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), 128.

[39] "...the technology of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition. By replicating the work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to reach the recipient in his or her own situation, it actualizes that which is reproduced." Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version, "in: Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin (eds.), *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 2008), 22.

[40] Ines Weizman's talk *Copying as a Media Form* was given at *Add Metaphysics Project* in Helsinki (14.3.2013). The lecture was viewed online.

[41] From an interview with Julian Bicknell, London 3.4.2017.

Body, Space, and Action

Stourley Kracklite, an American architect at the prime of life, is the protagonist of the film *The Belly of an Architect* (1985), written and directed by Peter Greenaway. Kracklite travels to Rome to curate an mega exhibition dedicated to the 18th century Parisian architect he admires, Étienne-Louis Boullée. Centered around the symbolic figure of Boullée, the film is set against the backdrop of Rome's ancient, monumental architecture, and populated by specters and living figures of architects from all periods and eras, from the Roman Vitruvius to the young interns who assist the American curator. Greenaway, who sees parallels between the figures of architect and film director in their ability to create a building or a story from nothing, which they then imbue with their own world view, builds the tension in his film along the axis between the concrete and the utopian. Alongside this binary tension, a circular path is delineated: as the cry of his newborn baby girl is heard in the background, Kracklite jumps to his death.
"Rome in ruins has had more influence on architecture than it ever would brand-new" states Julio, the art curator, on behalf of Greenaway who navigates his camera between ruins and grand buildings, as well as between sickness and health and between birth and death. On the one hand, Greenaway wished to give his film "a very strong image of townscape – a continual background of architecture" but this only to indicate that "man is persistently lost in its shadow."[42] In his interpretation to *The Belly of an Architect*, David Pascoe also underscores the association between body and architecture: "Roman art, in the form of fragments and ruins, here provides a fitting and terrible symbol of the breaking down of the fabric of Kracklite's body."[43]

While he works on the Boullée exhibition, researching and sorting through the images of his monumental, unrealized buildings, Kracklite's personal and professional life unravels; he is diagnosed with a terminal disease, his pregnant wife leaves him, and the movie ends as he jumps to his death. The breaking point is alluded already by the sound of his name – k(c)rack(lite). According to Greenaway, he is cracked by the very fact that he is human, a physical entity with a limited lifespan, composed of vulnerable materials.[44] His soft, flabby belly, which hides the prophecy of his imminent death, becomes a metaphor for the brittleness of his entire body, contrasted with the chiseled abdomens of the ancient marble statues and the sturdy buildings. The film touches not only on the fragility of the male ego, but on anything tainted by ephemeral humanity, which is doomed to be defeated. In his low moments and breaking points, Kracklite turns to face the lofty and bright Pantheon, sarcastically clapping

[42] Peter Greenaway, script of *The Belly of an Architect*, final draft, January 1986

[43] David Pascoe, *Peter Greenaway, Museums and Moving Images* (London: Reakton Books, 1997), 128

[44] Amy Lawrence offers a different interpretation to the unusual name of the American architect: "Krack-lite' evokes the 'sudden sound of thunder followed by a flash of lightening," while the archaic English expression "to be stourley," she claims, brings to mind the slow and winding Stour River, figuratively referring to a man who is "thick in the mind" and somewhat child-like. While her interpretation of the name does not coincide with the ideas introduced in this paper, it is noteworthy that she sees the protagonist's name as a linguistic allusion. Amy Lawrence, *The Films of Peter Greenaway* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 124.

Peter Greenaway
The Belly of an Architect, 1985

[45] It is interesting to note that the round Pantheon was a source of inspiration for Palladio's Rotonda as well as Isaac Newtown Mausoleum, the fantastic building designed by Étienne-Louis Boullée, which stars in Greenaway's film.

[46] Greenaway, scene 10, 30.

[47] Don Ranvaud in: Vernon Gras and Marguerite Gras (eds.), *Peter Greenaway: Interviews* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 49. I would like to thank Chen Sheinberg for bringing Pascoe's book to my attention.

From the series **The Fall**, 2016

in defiance.[45] Confronted with the sheer power of these structures, he can no longer bear the challenge of their "native idealism, their exuberant health, their bogus, assertive vitality."[46] What the people of the Renaissance considered perfect proportions, inspired by the Classical Idea of the Vitruvian Man, has stunned 20th century's man, Kracklite and destabilized his life as a human being.

Hadas Ophrat's project is also carried out as a metaphoric dialogue between an artist and a Classical architect. Like Greenaway, Ophrat is fascinated by the way the past dominates the present, exploring the dilapidation of the original through the question of duplication and reproduction. Ophrat strings together views through manipulative video editing, while Greenaway puts a Xerox photocopier center stage, planting it in Kracklite's Neoclassical hotel room, where it is used to duplicate hundreds of pictures of Roman emperors' statues. When asked in an interview with Don Ranvaud: "Why the obsession with photocopying?" the director replied: "But it's all in quotes, as it were. There is a photocopier in every office, like sellotape... Most people photocopy texts, here it's works of art."[47] The dramatic scene in *The Belly of an Architect*, set in Flavia's photography studio, on the backdrop of the long wall of photographs, clearly delineates the discourse surrounding the power of the duplicated image.

However, the profound similarity between these two projects lies in the relationship between architecture and the body, and in the manner in which both Ophrat and Greenaway expose the weakened body against the indifferent perfection of the architectural building. In his visit to the site, Ophrat walks along La Rotonda's gravel paths, filming his feet as he walks. His steps sink into the gravel, making a rustling sound. Sharp eyed viewers will notice his lopsided stride, the result of a limp on his left leg, which has become a part of his life in recent years. The right slant of the shadow attests to the trail: circling the square in front of the building, marking the round form. Then, he enters the realm of the building. With the Classical façade and six columns towering over him, Ophrat is seen collapsing on the stairway, lying on his back or sprawled face down. The (photographed) image he creates oscillates between sleep and death, or between falling and tripping. Gravitation contributes to the amplification of the destabilized physical dimension, underscoring the weight of the body as it collapses to the ground. Against the verticality of the building, Ophrat's fall seems like an abrupt deviation, when only the gleaming white shirt maintains a sense of solemnity. For Ophrat, this is an extension of the reversal hanging, sleep and blindness live actions that he carried out in the past. It is inevitable to think about these images in relation to Greenaway's film and the Pantheon's scene: both reveal the theater of the human body against the architecture.

As a performance artist at his core, his body and physicality are fundamental tools in Ophrat's practice: breathing, walking, sleeping and talking are all familiar components in his performative vocabulary, which he compresses in his actions until they exceed the biological procedures and become entities in their own right. But it is the disability, and not death, which Ophrat is interested in as a marker of activity and resistance. In his book *Sun Rise, Sun Set*, he wrote: "If we add up all of my disabilities (drowsiness, lameness, cortical hyperactivity, memory dislocation) including disorders that originate in deviant, some might say psychotic, behavior (voluntary blindness, suggestive vision, initiated muteness, invention or fiction impulse, telepathic surveillance and rambling, compulsive eavesdropping, borderline pyromancy, impulsive resonance) we will have a critical mass of a mind that is alternately collected and disintegrated..."[48]

Ophrat sees disability or handicap as a sign, in the sense of stigmata: a scratch or a scar, subtraction or impairment, marking the mind of an artist and singling him out, explicitly or surreptitiously. From another facet, he sees the physical limitation as a challenging mechanism, which leads to sensory amplification and heightens extreme states: "In my mating games, I would walk behind or towards my girlfriends with my eyes closed. A test of some sort, I guess."[49] As an artist, he revisited the subject of blindness several times. In *Blind Journey to Barcelona* (2001) he traveled with his student and co-creator Guy Briller to "Jerusalem Street" in Barcelona and back, in a reversed pilgrimage of sorts, keeping his eyes blindfolded throughout the journey.[50] In *Naked Eye* (2002), he walked through the "cloister-like" Saidoff court in Jerusalem, wearing a Baroque suit, holding two white canes and looking for a water source.[51] That same year he allowed a sheep to lead him with his eyes closed, in *Like Lambs*. In *Insomnia* (2003), Ophrat slept at the entrance to the exhibition venue, relinquishing any active involvement. The tactic consists in the superimposition of layers of reality, honing them to the point of "too much reality," which seeps into a different reality. The handicap is one of the ways to trigger and exacerbate this excess.

Disability as a metaphor makes its first appearance in Ophrat's performance pieces in *Unraveling* (2005): dressed in a dark, authoritative, well-cut suit, Ophrat started unstitching it slowly over three hours, until he was left in his underpants, leaving around him pieces of the once-whole. Before he started the action of unraveling, Ophrat demarcated the site of the action as a circle around his body, using a piece of charcoal affixed to a crutch. The aluminum crutch

[48] Hadas Ophrat, *Sun Rise Sun Set*, texts no. 16, 22

[49] Ibid., texts no. 9, 15

[50] In his article "Blindness," Gideon Ofrat stresses the spiritual aspects of blindness in Ophrat's (his young brother) work, stating that "Ophrat imposed darkness on himself as someone whose 'voyage' is an act that transcends the empirical [...] Ophrat's 'blindness' is always an act of religious pilgrimage." Gideon Ophrat, *"Blindness," Gideon Ophrat's Storeroom* website. (Hebrew).

[51] The shift to the Baroque period, like the current shift to the Renaissance, underscores Ophrat's interest in temporal distancing as a way of stressing the significance of the action itself and extricating it from contemporaneity.

served as an arm, a compass, and a brush, marking the perfect shape on the floor. Already in this 2005 live action, we find the juxtaposition (at that time still unwitting) of disability and perfection.[52] While unraveling the suit, Ophrat hangs the crutch by his side, as a sign of a handicap and defiance of power and authority.

Ophrat's book *Too Much Reality: On the Art of Performance* opens with a description of a personal experience, an encounter with a beggar who used to sit on the ground for hours on end, his back hunched and his head bent down, his hands stretched out before him.[53] Ophrat wished to decipher the strenuous pose and imbue it with meaning. In the performance *Not in Heaven*, carried out at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem in 2010, Ophrat knelt on the ground for almost nine hours, during which he copied the surviving 18th century decorations of the wood ceiling of the synagogue brought from the German town Horb am Main, onto a mirror laid on the floor. While connecting to his hand a pair of compasses and drawing tools – the attributes of an architect – Ophrat created a final image on the floor: a rectangle holding a circle at its center. Geometrical language which can be read as a hint to his future architectural interests.

Here Ophrat's gaze bifurcates, branching from Palladio to another Renaissance artist, the Flemish painter Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525-1569), whose height of artistic activity coincides with the construction of La Rotonda. Painted in 1568 (a year after Villa La Rotonda's construction started), towards the end of the artist's life, *The Beggars* (also known as *The Cripples*) portrays a rather alarming band of five cripples, each turning in a different direction. While literature still considers this painting to be an enigma, like many of Bruegel's other paintings it attests to the other side of the 16th century, which despite falling under the definition of "High Renaissance" still carried many of the ills of the middle ages: "Beggars were a common sight throughout the countryside and in the towns [...] The beggars were the dregs of the masses: the naturally handicapped, the victims of congenital diseases, those crippled by inadequate care, plagued by chronic ills, mutilated by barbaric legal penalties, and incapable of any useful occupation."[54] Various scholars identify Bruegel's band of beggars as a representation of lepers, heretics, or renegades, a status that supposedly explains the indifference of 16th century society to poverty, infirmity, and sickness. While in *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, Michel Foucault wrote that: "Brueghel's lepers attend at a distance, but forever, that climb to Calvary on which the entire people accompanies Christ. Hieratic witnesses of evil, they accomplish their salvation in and by their very exclusion."[55] Foucault stresses the exclusion of beggars and lepers

[52] In this sense, it is interesting to point to the similarity to the works of Tamar Getter, in which she practiced drawing perfect shapes blindfolded, from an interest in Renaissance and Classical icons. Gideon Ophrat wrote: "all these restrictions that the artist inflicted on her painting body, all the "imperfection' supposedly hindering her skill, assured 'failure,' distortion, interference, which undermined the human status of the exemplary model." Gideon Ophrat.

[53] Hadas Ophrat, *Too Much Reality: On the Art of Performance*, (Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuhad Publishing, 2012), 6 (Hebrew).

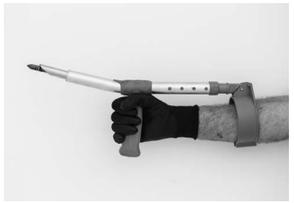
[54] R. H. Marijnissen, M. Seidel, *Bruegel* (New York: Harrison House, 1982), 22

Pieter Bruegel the Elder, **The Beggars** (or **The Cripples**), 1568

Naked Eye, 2002, performance, **Heara 2**, Batei Saidoff Court, Jerusalem

[55] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, translated by Richard Howard (New York: Random House, 1988), 7. Foucault stresses the link between the leper in the Middle Ages and the fool in the Renaissance. The metaphor of the Ship of Fools, which Foucault discusses at length, describes peripheral paths outside the city walls. In its later metaphorical incarnations, the modern artist was considered to be an outsider to the mainstream.

[56] Marijnissen, 51



Drawing Kit, 2017, detail

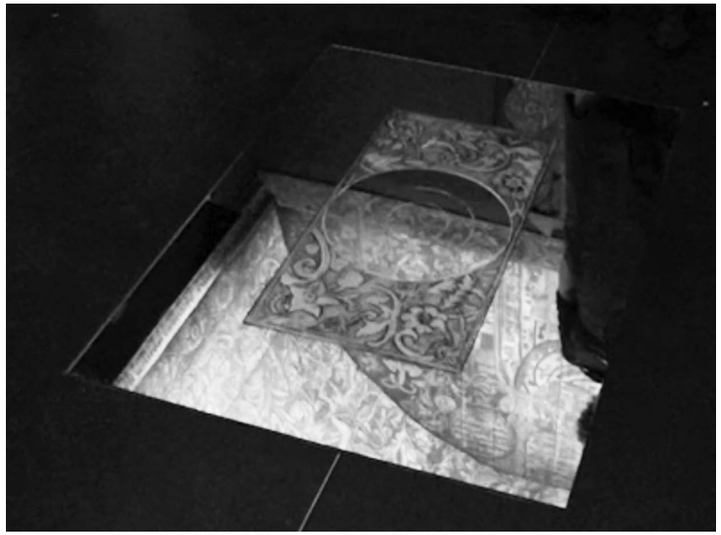
from society, in a way that places them in a circular trajectory around the center, never inside it, while Ophrat, in *Where is Wally?* (2004), lived for two days on a tree, managing from there his out-of-sight activities, demonstrating the alienation of the artist/the fool – the outsider.

The gaze of Bruegel himself, the painter of villagers, the poor, and the cripples, was not seen by his contemporaries as a compassionate gaze, but rather an astounding ability to depict nature. On the back of the painting appears an inscription in Latin, praising Bruegel's extraordinary skill: "Nature has nothing that is not to be found in our art; so great is the grace bestowed upon the painter. Here Nature, expressed in painted images and seen in her cripples, must recognize with amazement that Bruegel is her equal."[56]

Bruegel's *Beggars*, as well as *The Parable of the Blind* (painted that same year), served as another source of inspiration for Ophrat while he worked on the Rotonda's exhibition, complementing Palladio as the dark image of the bright villa.[57] More than a symmetrical completion of the different social classes, the beggars and the blind men represent the anti-Classical element and the corporeality that presents itself as what it is, warts and all. The figures of the lame, the amputee, and the blind are not directly present in the installation, but they do resonate in a series of objects that Ophrat created for the action, comprised of the hybridization of disability mobility aids and drawing and drafting tools. He embedded the long white cane, the wooden stumps and wood board with wheels from *The Beggars*, in industrial crutches with hand rests, to which he affixed pieces of charcoals and graphite, block stamps, or a compass needle. Silver aluminum was attached to the carved wood, forming an arm's length drawing device, rendering his arm an "instrumental arm."[58] Equipped with this aid/drawing instruments, Ophrat moves around the exhibition space on a wheeled wood board, circling the Rotonda's model and using block stamps and black paint to imprint "gravel-marks" on the museum's floor. Adopting the persona of the gardener/draftsman, Ophrat uses his extended arm to recreate in the exhibition space the map of garden paths surrounding the original villa.

"The arm is a creating, womblike, conceiving organ," notes Lea Dovev, with Leonardo da Vinci in mind, "it is the like of the soul and an extension of thought."[59] The arm, which executes man's wisdom, is the "instrument of instruments," claimed Aristotle (also quoted in Dovev's book). While Gideon Ofrat, addressing Ophrat's *Naked Eye* performance, wrote: "The canes served as extensions of the hand – meaning, the hands replaced the eyes. These are the

feeling hands, but also the marking (writing) and creating hands.[60] Ophrat's arm/crutch feels its way, imprinting shapes and trails, which throughout the exhibition will multiply and cover the gallery space with the paths of the garden. While doing so, he returns to himself and to the original tiny garden drawn on the palm of his hand – the miniaturized idea, which is folded and embedded into his body.



Not in Heaven, 2010, live act, The Israel Museum Jeruslam

Pieter Bruegel the Elder
The Parable of the Blind, 1568

[57] Bruegel's painting *The Parable of the Blind* (1568) was the central motif in another performance of Ophrat, in which he enacted, in collaboration with the audience, **The Blinds** (1933) - the dramatic text by Michel de Ghelderode, the avant-garde Belgian poet and dramaturg, from the first half of the 20th century. Inspired by Bruegel's painting, this text describes a metaphoric excursion of blind men that is revealed as walking in circles. Ophrat's performance was held in Hansen House, Jerusalem, September 2016.

[58] Lea Dovev, 231-232

[59] Ibid., 229.

[60] Gideon Ofrat.

Imprint, 2017, installation detail, Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art