

## *Chronicle of a Fall*

Nadav Assor and Tirtza Even

May 27 – August 6, 2022

*Chronicle of a Fall* is an immersive, feature-length video installation depicting the fragmented, transient experience of a group of immigrants in the US. *Chronicle of a Fall* confronts a period in which interpersonal relationships, the experience of home, and one's sense of presence and belonging have all been transformed and fragmented by global capital and electronic media, as well as by government policy.

*Chronicle of a Fall* begins with a simple question asked of a group of six immigrant cultural workers, primarily from the Middle East and the Global South: "What is home to you?"

Many of *Chronicle of a Fall's* immigrants or immigrant-born subjects (including the artists themselves) have left one country in which democracy is cast in shadow, for the US, only to find it too cast in a shadow of its own making. The work's multiple videos convey the disjointed, partial nature of the immigrant subjects' experiences, providing an intimate and visceral insight into their daily lives and domestic environments. *Chronicle of a Fall* extends its referent, the 1960s documentary *Chronicle of a Summer* by Jean Rouch<sup>1</sup>, into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and updates the former film's cinema verité approach by using emerging technologies such as parallel body worn cameras used by both subjects and filmmakers, as well as through volumetric capture and projection mapping.

Like *Chronicle of a Summer*, *Chronicle of a Fall* considers how its participants negotiate the concepts of home and happiness in an increasingly fraught social and political landscape. As in the earlier film, the subjects interview each other, gather for dinner, work, or wander with only the filmmakers as company. Unlike its predecessor, however, *Chronicle of a Fall* is created in a period in which electronic media itself has become a space to be navigated, a nonplace in which the protagonists are immersed, often experiencing two places at once, or one place from multiple perspectives. In an echo of that dislocation, the videos depicting the participants' daily life and private conversations are immersed in a pointillist 3D environment created from interconnected fragments of the immigrants' shifting domestic spaces, as well as the public environments they navigate. Created by means of an architectural laser-scanner that converts places into 3D "point-clouds," the encompassing semi-abstract animations depict intertwined, constantly slipping spaces—spaces that envelop and conceal the more intimate point-of-view stories of love, loss, and longing.

### **Artists' Bios**

#### **Nadav Assor**

Nadav Assor (b. 1979, US / Israel) lives and works in Providence, RI. Assor's work takes on systems of technological mediation that are frequently military-industrial in origin, from eye-tracking cameras to drones, telepresence-robots, and mixed-reality environments. Low-fi versions of these are critically repurposed in his

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<sup>1</sup> The term *Cinema verité* was coined by Jean Rouch to describe a truth generated by the camera rather than found outside it.

work to function as a means for creating communities, connections, intimate human dialog and visceral audio-visual-tactile experiences.

Assor's videos, installations and performances have been featured in film festivals, museums, galleries, and live venues across North America, Europe, and Asia. Recent venues include Arsenal Berlin, the Oberhausen Film Festival, Video Vortex XI at Kochi-Muziris, India, Hong-Gah Museum Taipei, La Casa Encendida Madrid, Edith-Russ Haus Oldenburg, Transmediale Festival Berlin, the Soundwave Biennial San Francisco, Residency Unlimited NYC, Julie M Gallery Toronto + Tel Aviv, Fridman Gallery NYC and more. Assor's work has been reviewed in publications such as *Artforum*, *Vice Motherboard*, *Art Monthly UK* and *Haaretz*, and recently featured in "Rêvolution Digitale", an overview of international digital art by CANAL's Museum TV channel. His single channel video work is distributed through Video Data Bank, Chicago. He is an Associate Professor of Expanded Media at Connecticut College's Studio Art department and is the Director of the Ammerman Center for Arts and Technology there. He is currently a Fellow at the Open Documentary Lab at MIT.

### **Tirtza Even**

A documentary maker and video artist for over twenty years, Even has produced both linear and interactive video work representing the less overt manifestations of complex and at times extreme social/political dynamics in specific locations (e.g., Palestine, Turkey, Spain, the U.S., and Germany).

Even's work has been shown at the Museum of Modern Art, NY, at the Whitney Biennial, the Johannesburg Biennial, as well as in many galleries, museums and festivals in the U.S., Israel, and Europe, including The Museum of Modern Art, NY, Doc Fortnight, RIDM Festival, Montreal, Rotterdam Film Festival, San Francisco Film Festival, New York Video Festival, Lincoln Center. Even's work has won numerous grants and awards, including 3ARTs Visual Arts and Next Level Awards, Fledgling Distribution Fund, Artadia Award, Chicago (winner of top award); Golden Gate Awards Certificate of Merit, San Francisco International Film Festival; Media Arts Award, the Jerome Foundation; Individual Artists Program Awards, NYSCA, and many others; and has been purchased for the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art (NY), the Jewish Museum (NY), the Israel Museum (Jerusalem), among others. Even has been an invited guest at many conferences and university programs, including the Whitney Museum Seminar series, MIT Open Doc, the Digital Flaherty Seminar, SXSW Interactive Conference, Art Pace annual panel, ACM Multimedia, and others. Her work is distributed by Heure Exquise, France and Video Data Bank (VDB). Even is currently an Associate Professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago's Film, Video, New Media, and Animation department.

### **Support**

Support for *Chronicle of a Fall* is provided by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and the School of Art & Art History, College of Architecture, Design, and the Arts, University of Illinois Chicago. The exhibition is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

*Chronicle of a Fall* was developed by the artists in part through a fellowship with [MIT Open Documentary Lab](#), 2019-2021, with additional support from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Connecticut College, and the City of Chicago.



[Downloadable pdf: Statements from the Artists]

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### **Statements from the Artists**

#### **Nadav Assor:**

I grew up in the south of Israel: a military-industrial-technological state founded by refugees, that has generated many more refugees in turn... It is a land of many dichotomies and contradictions, including that between direct, tactile conversation, and so much unspoken violence and trauma - much of it enacted using the latest technologies. This background was part of what drove me to investigate notions of land, home, technological mediation and control and the way that history and conflict are layered and made manifest in a place.

Embodied experience is key to my work. I believe that honest, critical artwork should be rooted in direct, sensory, lived experience: The infinite complexity of physically attending to another person's story, of moving through this particular building, of living in that particular community.

In recent years I've become increasingly invested in creating participatory, polyphonic work, embedded in a place and/or a community. I see an urgent need, in this media-saturated world, for creating environments and systems that leverage technology not to harvest and monetize people's experiences but rather to allow them to be shared and encountered in the most essential manner.

All of the above inform my drive to use experimental technologies to document and create moments of human connection, vulnerability, and intimacy - especially in the present xenophobic, white-supremacist political moment which to me and many non-American friends feels too much like a *deja-vu*.

#### **Tirtza Even:**

Over the last twenty years I have been developing a language for communicating human social and political realities in visual media, through almost imperceptible digital manipulation and careful sequencing of (or navigation through) the recorded moments. Both my linear and my interactive video work have consistently been engaged with representing the encounter with a variety of groups and individuals, typically ones whose lives embody complex social/political settings (in Palestine, Turkey, the U.S., and Germany, among other locations). At the same time (and perhaps especially) my work could also be described as an exploration of the inevitable, yet detailed, failure of this very act of representation.

When recording the encounters with freshly nuanced and never fully known concrete lives and moments, I look for ways to destabilize any projected unities with which I (or the viewer) could assume control over difference. The visual language I developed is thus set to fracture the various frameworks which safeguard the stability of narrative structures and hierarchies (the in/out of a story, the uniformity of character); and to complicate the separation between documentary and fiction. My goal is to express the freedom from narrative or ideological framework that the details I found embody.

Relying on subtle digital disruptions of images and sound, I elicit those singular signs of human life that might otherwise remain latent or oppressed but which interrupt any uniform perspective. I use ellipsis and contradiction to frustrate my effort to hold on to what I am at the same time grasping to know and tell. Failure to contain, to tell a coherent story, is an aesthetic driven by a political and an ethical goal. My intent is to bring to the fore the multiplicity, partiality, and transience of perspective, and thus possibly facilitate tolerance, if not acceptance, of views foreign to one's own.