



On the 27th of October, 2023, artist Yael Serlin's first solo museum exhibition was set to open at the Bar-David Museum of Art and Judaica in kibbutz Bar'am. The kibbutz and the museum were evacuated following the events of October 7th and the Swords of Iron war, and now the exhibition is hosted at the Art Lounge of Tel Aviv's Beit Alma.

Yael Serlin grew up in kibbutz Yir'on, next to kibbutz Bar'am. In recent years, she has been researching disintegrated Jewish communities around the world, seeking out their absent presence by mapping symbols and using visual materials which she collects in places where only traces or fragments of memory remain. By using materials and characters, she seeks to pave a path into the communities whose memory she records, among other things through private databases such as family albums, and public resources available online and in national archives.

In this exhibition, Serlin journeys into the heritage she had grown up with as a kibbutz member. She returns to the community's individual and collective memories through the museum's Judaica collection, which she studied and documented over a six-month period – and with which she creates, using collage and photography techniques, works that incorporate items from the collection next to items she inherited from her grandmother.

At Beit Alma, Serlin chooses to display parts of the original setup planned for the Bar'am exhibition, and hangs a Shabbat table on the gallery walls – a tablecloth, a tray, Shabbat candlesticks, and more. Yet the table is incomplete, the exhibition is no longer at the Bar-David museum, and the artist now finds herself recording her own community which has been dispersed indefinitely to foreign places.

Next to the Shabbat table, a music box plays the song "Somewher over the Rainbow" from 1939, originally composed for the film *The Wizard of Oz* by Yip Harburg and Harold Arlen and inspired by yearning for the Land of Israel (the promised land). The song – sung by Daniela, the artist's close friend and a departed member of kibbutz Bar'am – now becomes a prophecy that is tightly linked to the sense of exile forced upon northern Israelis in general and the kibbutz members in particular. Next to the music box, facing north, is a video projection comprising WhatsApp snaps sent to Serlin by a member of kibbutz Yir'on's security team, documenting the "nothingness" – a deserted kibbutz landscape, the petting zoo sukkah still un-dismantled from Simchat Torah, and Mount Lebanon.

Time is woven throughout these works – the period preceding October 7th, in which most of the works were created, and the period following – and conveys the additional weight with which the works have been charged as a further sign of the times.