

Slough: Fragments of Memory—Yael Atzmony:

Timna Seligman, Senior curator, Ticho House, the Israel Museum, Jerusalem

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In Yael Atzmony's installation at Ticho House, elements from earlier works are reimagined for the space, adding her own narrative layer to its permanent display. For a brief time she augments the House's memory strata with her own.

During a residency in Holland in 2012, Atzmony created a series of flat and rolled up porcelain maps, obsessively reworking her father's drawing of the Sobibor concentration camp layout, which he survived. These maps embody a profound paradox: crafted from delicate porcelain, they defy their intended function. The flat sheets shatter easily, while the rolled maps remain sealed, their information hidden. They prompt reflection on the fragile, fragmented nature of memory—particularly inherited memory, rather than lived experience. The broken porcelain transcends mere materiality, becoming a metaphor for fractured histories, lost homes, and the elusive nature of the past. Visually delicate yet conceptually heavy, these works offer a tactile language through which historical trauma and displacement are sensed rather than explained.

Refined and beautiful, porcelain is historically linked to both value and fragility, yet in Atzmony's hands, it becomes a record of rupture. Cracked or incomplete, each fragment represents a dislocated piece of a once-whole narrative,

evoking interrupted lives, cultures shattered, and landscapes reshaped by violence and oblivion. The works cannot be “read” like traditional maps; rather, they are felt through their absences and ruptured logic. The cracks stand in for generational gaps, erased family lines, and the distortions of remembering what one has never lived.

Grounded in the concept of inherited memory, the notion that traumatic histories are passed down not only through stories and documents, but through sensations, objects, and silences, Atzmony's porcelain pieces do not illustrate memory in a linear or didactic way, but rather echo it. Some sheets survive as shards, others as sealed scrolls. A few incorporate Braille, prompting the viewer to “read” them through touch. Our hands yearn to hold these maps, to feel their physical and emotional weight, yet their brittleness denies access. They offer only hints of a whole now lost.

These shards of memory have been embedded in the permanent exhibition of Ticho House, temporary guests finding shelter. Broken maps rest on display tables placed in archways that were once windows in the building's façade, now turned into non-functional openings, formed from memories of stone and plaster. Yet other maps inhabit Dr. Ticho's bookshelf, nestled among classics of European literature and philosophy—remnants of an Enlightenment swept away by time and war. Atzmony's porcelain maps do not seek to restore what was lost, but to bear witness to its absence, inviting contemplation on how the past is carried physically, emotionally, and materially. Through fractured porcelain, Atzmony makes a quiet yet persistent statement: that even in fragments, memory endures.