INTRODUCTION

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Pieter ter Keurs (2011: 12) states, "In the end our interest in objects is about people." The relation between objects, material culture, and who we are and how we present ourselves is described by Chris Tilley (2006) in one word: "objectification." "The object world is central to an understanding of the identities of individual persons and societies" (Tilley 2006: 60). Daniel Miller (as cited in Thomas 1991: 25–26) argues, "There exists a one-to-one relationship between a material thing and the expression of belonging or difference." "Because the object may lend itself equally to the expression of difference … and to the expression of unity, therefore the subject-object process is central; hence we can speak of objectification of identity" (Miller as cited in Thomas 1991: 204).

My interest in objects is about Israel, both about the place and the people who live there. The specific setting of Israel is understood as a politicized piece of land, designed by man, where the concept of conviviality is not self-evident: and as a place where borders are in flux, as is the way people from outside and inside perceive it.[1]

Borders and Identity

To analyze the connections between people, objects, and their locations, in homes, museums, and (imaginary) homelands, the role of the particular location of Israel should be identified and understood. For that it is necessary to determine the factors that make the location the way it is, and to identify the differences and similarities between it and other locations, like Switzerland—the prototypical location of "neutrality," as indicated by Kashua—but more so, like the countries of origin of the different groups.

Specific settings are created by borders. The borders of Israel are, and have been even before its establishment in 1948, under debate and subject to change by force and negotiation. The same can be said concerning who is and who is not allowed to cross those borders. This topic, probably more than in most other countries, is always on the agenda and cannot be separated from the question of what kind of state Israel is or wants to be. The way people behave, linked to their identity, and the identity of the location are intertwined. Identity here is defined as the combination of the self-image and the externally attributed image, together with the interaction between the two (Dibbits et al. 2011: 64. See also Frijhoff 1992). Thus the core values of identity stay the same, but how they are expressed depends on where you are and when you are there. Much has been written on the connection between identity and territory. In the context of Israel it is worth quoting Chris Tilley (2006: 12); "Identity, when it becomes deterritorialized through migrations and diasporas, almost becomes located between places rather than bound to particular locations or homelands." I would like to add that homelands can be both real and "imaginary," like the way the homeland used to be, or the way you imagined it with tulips. With the establishment of the Israeli nation-state, identity acquired a new meaning, for example, involving the connections between immigrants to Israel and the societies they had left. Despite all the different waves of migration to Israel and the presence of Jews in the Diaspora, location acts to a significant degree as the definer of identities.[2] In Israel identity is not located between places; rather it is bound to both the homeland and the new country. I assume this is possibly the result of a lack of a clear main identity in the new country while at the same time the new country is seen as an imaginary homeland.

The same notion of location acting as a dynamic definer of identity is reflected in the belief that "the generation that founded the state imported the basic tenets of Zionism, involving the need of Jews for their own state in their historic land of Israel" (Shapira 2004: viii). According to the analysis of Shapira, while implementing this belief, "neither the question of incorporating the substantial Arab minority into the evolving Israeli identity, nor the absorption of the many newcomers after 1950, was thought through. The unity of customs and norms broke down, never to be regained" (2004: viii). As I mentioned before, Israel itself was imaginary and in a way it still is, as it has a different meaning for everyone. You could say that now "the most Israeli characteristic is the attempt to define what is Israeli" (Almog 2010b). The continuous process of shaping identity cannot be seen separately from discussions on location and borders. This entanglement could be found for example in the fighting of some of the groups over the land, whether literally, as with the National Religious evacuated from the Gaza Strip, or

figuratively, as with the Iraqi immigrant claim to a place in the collective memory of the nation-state. The study follows the general notion of Israel as a migration country.

Balibar (2003) sees migrants in European countries as nodes within a network society in which the network branches out towards countries outside Europe. To nuance Balibar's argument, I would like to mention that in the Israeli context, citizenship is pointed inwards, as chapters two through nine will show.

Clifford (1997: 7) stresses "movement itself as the source of cultural production, implying that it is people and things on the move that in themselves are agents of cultural creation, as against the received view that culture is constituted in localized populations or communities." This is strengthened by the movement of identity between locations.

Even once people and objects have settled/localized within a nation-state, their role as nodes within a global cultural network simultaneously makes them agents of cultural creation within that state. Consequently the direction, inwards or outwards, from which these agents operate, is essential as it influences the way they act within that society.

As previously stated, the borders of Israel are the topic of ongoing debate and subject to change. Many of its neighbors are hostile or oppose its very existence. Many people kept outside its borders claim the right to live there, while other outsiders have, under the Law of Return, the legal right to automatic citizenship. These external tensions, together with internal tensions from different groups fighting for their place literally and figuratively, are a source of insecurity.

"There is an interaction between uncertain political conditions, the increased amount of attention people pay to cultural heritage and local initiatives that are undertaken to emphasize the own identity" (Ter Keurs 2011: 9). How people interact with objects differs with the "cultural network" of which they are part, and from which their behavior stems. To have or not to have objects is significant for the identity, the feeling of belonging in a group. Ter Keurs (2011: 11) argues "a government that doesn't want to see this lacks attention for the interests of its citizens."

The Israeli government, rather than listening to the several narratives that at best coexist but more often conflict, promotes its own narrative. Zionism, always in the background, is brought to center stage by the government. This official agenda influences the relationship between objects, people, and location. This is visible for example in the government-created "heritage trails." In the process of hiking these trails the land becomes an object that people can have and that they claim by using it. By so doing, both culture and identity are linked to the land (see Tamar 2010).

Politics of Culture

The current Israeli population numbers over eight million. The majority, more than 75 percent, were born in Israel (CBS 2010, 2014). Although Israeli society comprises various distinct cultures, it is not multicultural, as there is a constant clash between the groups rather than mutual respect and coexistence.[3] One might even ask whether Israel is more like an "imagined community," as described by Benedict Anderson (1983, 1991). I suggest that Israel is an unstable, evolving structure consisting of a collection of imagined communities. All in all, there is no definite number of groups in Israel. Each specific group is conceived as that part of a migrant or indigenous culture that is retained in the process of continuous assimilation into the main culture (Brubaker as cited in Smooha 2008: 3). When applied to Israel, it can even be said that groups come into existence the moment they become part of the nation-state. Each group experiences this in a different period and under different circumstances. The term *group* is used here with reference to groups of people rather than to cultural practices, while acknowledging that they are linked to each other. Following from the notion of a lack of a clear main identity, the process of assimilation in Israel is focused more heavily on behavior than on identity (see also Gad 2011).

In the debate about whether cultures are coextensive with national borders, the distinction between a commonly perceived cultural heterogeneity and a relatively strong feeling of belonging becomes extremely relevant (Grimson 2010: 71). It could be said that within the historical context of a given society, a set of readily available classifications exists that offers a member an identity toolbox for categorizing him/herself and others (Grimson 2010: 72). Birgit Meyer (2008) regards the state as supplier of points of identification, or available classifications.

Contrary to these views, I take as starting points that Israel is distinguished from other countries by unstable borders, by the inward direction of the majority of the members of society, by the role of politics in collective memory, and by the state acting as a group. These assumptions lead me to expect that in Israel new groups, rather than looking to the state for points of identification, operate as contributors to the national cultural heritage as well as to the ongoing collection of contemporary material culture. All of this results in a notion of the state being considered "the other," both by the groups and by the state itself.

Recent debates about nationality and citizenship suggest that difference always shadows and doubles identity, always entails a relationship between self and other (Sherman 2008: 1). Robert Young elaborates on the role culture plays within the politics of difference, saying, "Culture never stands alone but always participates in a conflictual economy acting out the tension

between sameness and difference, comparison and differentiation, unity and diversity. Culture has inscribed within itself the complex and often contradictory differences through which European society has defined itself. Culture has always marked cultural difference by producing the other" (Young as cited in Sherman 2008: 1–2). Consequently it operates as an agent in the politics of belonging.

"Whether they like it or not, museums are key players in identity politics, a topic that requires us to rethink terms such as 'the Other' and 'cultural representation'" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2000b: 14). The conditions of social hierarchy and power structures of hegemony change over time. Within this process, "the ordering and reordering of objects and representations in national museums can serve to legitimate or 'naturalize' any given configuration of political authority" (Steiner 1995: 4). "Museums are, as public institutions, assigned both to safeguard and to define culture; sites meant for the negotiation of difference" (Sherman 2008: 3). In this study this will be reinforced, as "the Other" is mainly made visible by museums. In fact, "the Other" is commonly part of the museum narrative whereas it may be absent or imperceptible in the home.

Material Culture, Objects, and People

To link and compare cultural identifications in the public sphere and the private sphere, it is essential to start by recognizing that objects are classified differently in each: and in both spheres classifications are not unequivocal (see for example Miller 2008).

Many of the categories applied to objects in homes are not used for describing similar objects in museums. I believe museums, operating as discoverers or identifiers of objects, literally and figuratively, are part of the cultural landscape of a nation-state, creating their own classifications and borders.

In this section I will discuss the establishment of museum collections linked to the building of a nation-state. In particular I will look at the effect of Western museum developments, such as an increasing emphasis on art, on building museum collections in Israel.

Museums have become one of the institutions and practices associated with modernity, part of the checklist for being a nation, a means for disparate groups to present and claim their histories and values in the public sphere, and at the same time an arena and means for constituting community identities (Karp et al. 2006: 3). Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2006b: 7) states, "Objects become proxies for persons and museums do for objects what society has difficulty doing for the people associated with those objects." In this respect museums are attributed an almost magical role.[4]

Museums did not always have this role. Peter van Mensch (2005: 176) traces this phenomenon to the start of the so-called new museology, which changed the meaning of the terms *heritage* and *identity*. The discussion about museology has become a discussion about heritage, involving the deconstruction of "grand" narratives, and questioning who is in charge of whose heritage. In short, it is about the socialization of the museum and the museumizing of the world (Van Mensch 2005: 177). The answer to the question for whom and by whom is heritage kept, researched, and exhibited is to be found in the connection between objects, people, and locations. Processes of imparting knowledge and the meaning of citizenship continue to be of great relevance as today's museums seek new relations between people and objects (Legêne 2005: 25). Despite these new relations, "the division between the hidden space of the museum in which knowledge is produced and organized and the public space in which it is offered for passive consumption produces still a monologue discourse dominated by the authoritative cultural voice of the museum" (Bennett as cited in Legêne 2005: 30).[5]

Not only museums seek new relations between people and objects; people also seek new relations with museums. It is a dynamic relationship with heritage, where taking care of heritage is a means towards empowerment, not an aim in itself. The landscape, material culture, and intangible culture provide the connection with heritage. In the sum of these elements lies the identity of the target group of the museum (Van Mensch 2005: 187). Sharon MacDonald (2003: 1) states, "It requires a denaturalizing of the concept of identity to answer how and why museums are able to act as manifestations of identity or sites for the contestation of identities. We need to be able to see our notions of particular identities, including 'national identity,' not as universal but as historically and culturally specific." Therefore we can say that identity links to heritage by landscape, material culture, intangible culture, and time. Museums, however, are in themselves already historically and culturally specific and do not always connect with a specific group at a specific time or in a specific place (Steiner 1995: 3. See also Smooha 2002).

It seems that in order to connect with a specific group, it is not sufficient to exhibit heritage. "Politics of cultural representation have required a systematic conversion from ethnographic object to art in order to fulfill the museum's role in a program of cultural parity and equity" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2000a: 14). Still with this conversion heritage does not become art and art remains part of heritage. However, "Treating artifacts as art and aestheticizing display have become critical strategies in negotiating the relationship of showmanship, science, art and cultural citizenship" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006a: 375). "The increased emphasis," as described by Van Brakel and Legêne (2008: 37) "is on the stories behind objects and the search for connections with modern art and popular culture as a strategy to break

through the former ethnographic distinctions defined by essentializing notions of culture linked to anthropological themes or specific regions."

This study shows that this particular strategy does not have the same effect in Israel. The category of art is not unequivocal. Categories, in principle, are interrelated with collecting and collections.[6] For what are museums if not a collection of categorized objects and stories? Jean Baudrillard's (1968: 135) "system of objects" provides an initial framework for the deployment of objects in contemporary capitalist West. In his account it is axiomatic that all categories of meaningful objects—including those marked as scientific evidence and great art—function within a ramified system of symbols and values (Clifford 1988: 221). Depending on the discipline involved, the description both of categories and of objects may differ. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998: 17–18) notes, "Ethnographic artifacts are objects of ethnography. They are ethnographic by virtue of the manner in which they have been detached, for disciplines make their objects and in the process make themselves." But as soon as collected, though once multiple, many ethnographic objects become singular, and the more singular they become, the more readily are they reclassified and exhibited as art. The many become one by virtue of the collection process itself.

This journey from specific to generic consists on the one hand, of categorizing, classifying, making a series, and looking for general characteristics, while at the same time accentuating the object's uniqueness, adding value to it and making it autonomous (see also Pearce 1999).

Legêne (1998: 28) shows that objects are only autonomous when no meaning/significance is attributed to them, they do not serve a function in a community, whether their own or foreign. This is in contrast to what happens to objects belonging to families and museums.[7] The attribution of significance in a museum and in a home differs. The museum, according to Van Mensch (2010), is not interested in the utilitarian value of the objects, but in their representative and documentary value, also known as the "museological context." Quoting Kenneth Hudson's statement, "A tiger in a museum is a tiger in a museum and not a tiger," he states, "An object in a museum says more about the museum than about the object." Even though the same might be true for an object in a home, I believe that a museum exhibiting "a tiger in a museum" carries a responsibility towards other tigers outside the museum. Furthermore, because of the discrepancy between the way intangible aspects of an object are presented in a home and in a museum, one could speak of two entirely different objects. This makes it crucial to research objects in their natural habitat as well to understand the translation the museum makes when exhibiting the object in a different context—even though the category to which a thing belongs, the emotion and judgment it prompts, and the narrative it recalls, are all historically refigured (Thomas

1991: 125). Again I argue that simultaneously it is territorially and locally refigured.

Rivka Gonen (1991: 35) points out that even prior to the founding of the Israeli nation-state, the role of museums in defining and creating national identity was exemplified by national, communal, and private initiatives.

Many of the museums discussed in this study are in the process of, or have recently completed, renovation. The discussions, oral and written, that accompany the planned changes and the developing of new ideas serve as testimony to living material culture.

It seems that both then and today, Israeli museums look for reference to the European museum model as well as to European museological developments. This study points out that indiscriminately copying the analysis of the connection between the development of modern Western European states and the establishment of museums to the history of the Israeli nation-state and the establishment of Israeli museums and their collections may cause the unique character of Israel to be overlooked. Precisely because museums are part of the nation-building process, the specific types of museums will depend on the kind of nation in which they are established, even if the museum structures as such are influenced by the Western European museum field.

The importance of making the right analysis becomes apparent when considering the increasing emphasis on art in museum collections. Even though this is taking place in Western Europe too, the way art is used differs. The acquisition of art in museums in Western Europe is described in the beginning of this section as "a strategy to break through former ethnographic distinctions and to strengthen the existing collection profiles" (Van Brakel and Legêne 2008: 25, 37). However, in collections in Israel, art is used more and more to make neutral statements and as a tool to promote coexistence. An increased emphasis on art in Israel can be seen for example in the 2011 establishment of an art collection for the Israeli parliament building.

A planned Israeli Muslim Arab museum in the city of Umm el Fahem will be almost exclusively dedicated to contemporary art. Furthermore the Israel Museum, the national museum in Jerusalem, sought artists' intervention to (re)connect their collections to contemporary society after the museum's renewal project in 2011 (Snyder 2010: 172). The creation of a major art museum expresses the state's civic concern and national pride without entailing any real redistribution of power (Goldstein 2003: 6). However, I assume that art won't have an effect of creating more unity in Israel. Art is far from neutral, and who indeed decides what art is? Dalya Markovich (2008) points out that reclaiming Ethiopian crafts while totally rejecting Ethiopian art accords with a long Western tradition that characterizes the

local museums. Due to its Western character, the Israeli museum excludes Ethiopian art and artists that use and apply mediums and materials considered Western (see for example Sandell 1998). At the same time, the museum reclaims cultural products that are perceived as authentic (Markovich 2008). The fact that the Ethiopian Jewish Heritage and Cultural Center in Tel Aviv also shows Ethiopian crafts rather than art is not so surprising; rather, it is in line with one of the outcomes of this study that copying Western museum practices does not work when one has still to fight for a place in society.[8]

The adoption of the Western model by many museums in Israel gives the impression that Israeli society is like any other Western society in which museums (re)present different groups acting as an expression of a multicultural society (see Goldstein 2003 and Kark and Perry 2008). I reached the conclusion that this is too naïve and optimistic for Israel.

Michael Ashkenazi and Alex Weingrod (1984) describe Israel as a pluriform, multiethnic, nonegalitarian society where the construction of the society, the character of personal identity, and the cultural heritage are subjects of ongoing political debates. These encounters and contestations are reflected in museum policy regarding the acquisition of objects and the design of exhibitions, in the establishment of new museums, and in the transformation of objects into collections. As Israel is a centrally governed country, the establishment of each museum involves a new museum law.

From the outset, by allocating land, the government heavily influences the character of these museums. Where a museum is built is just as important as what is shown there. Could it be that existing museum theories, based on nations living in relative peace, cannot be applied in Israel, where museums seem to be part of the struggle over land?

In order for a museum institute to play a role in a dialogue, it should exist within a "convivial society" as Paul Gilroy (2004) describes it. This study shows that existing museum studies, by assuming a consensual and peaceful society with shared understanding of the role of the state and of private initiatives, risk missing the defining influence of this consensus and the dynamic character of a society on its own field of museology. The relatively large number of museums reinforces, or at least expresses, the distance that exists between the groups. Moreover, museums are diverse. It emerges that there are significant differences between specific groups regarding the types of museums that are linked to them. The way they are constructed brings into relief the fact that, unlike in the West, regional and thematic specializations are still business as usual in museums in Israel. This difference, as will be shown in this study, is inextricably linked with Israeli politics.

Tacheles[9]

I believe that, as Birgit Meyer (2008: 10) states, "immersion in the everyday of heritage producers and consumers is crucial because researchers will not only thus have access to the ongoing debates in their various levels of 'officiality' and discussions of heritage, but will also gradually become fine-tuned to the tacit knowledge underlying the appreciation of certain forms of cultural heritage." At the same time, the focus on personal stories shows the connection between material culture and citizenship. Adding the museum curator's side of the material culture story offers another, different level of officiality, a level that refers, through the presentation of collective memory, to national history.

I follow Selma Leydesdorff (1987: 40) when she states, "Starting with one person you are able to make more general statements based on a personal, non-fictive case with a real reality." Moreover, "Correctly identifying individual performers and the places they come from pays tribute to the quality of their performance and acknowledges their authorship" (Katriel 1997: 21).[10] Consequently I am glad that the people I interview agreed not to be anonymized as I believe that anonymizing provides a false suggestion of generalization.

The first step is a visit to the home. During conversations and interviews histories are made/formed in the setting of a conversation. Hilje van der Horst (2008: 13) states, "Objects link people to broader storytelling about life histories, social relationships and numerous other topics. Through interviews one can learn about the presence of things and the conditions in which they are present." The narrative and phenomenological aspects of the connection between objects and people can also be studied in an interview setting where both people and objects, thus both words and things and the concept of agency, are the subject.

One of the elements having influence on the interview process is the place where the interview takes place, particularly in Israel where every place is politically loaded. Or as Hanna Herzog (2005: 91) says, "Place is a constructed negotiated social arena within an ongoing landscape of powers. The meaning of location is never immanent but is produced and reproduced within contested social relations." To tell someone that, although you are willing to visit their place, you are too afraid to do so, is not a good way to start an interview. This happened the day I scheduled to visit the Umm el Fahem art gallery. When I was only five minutes' drive away from the town, the radio reported that, because of a right-wing Jewish demonstration, 1,500 policemen were stationed at the entrance to the town.[11] The director of the gallery, whom I called from the car, said he could guarantee my safety. At the same time a friend of mine called me to say that even on a

quiet day there are certain places you just do not visit, and Umm el Fahem is one of them. Needless to say, this beginning set the tone of the interview.

As significant as the place where the interview takes place is the language in which the interview is conducted. Language, just like location, is politically loaded. As I don't speak Arabic, Amharic, or Russian, for instance, most conversations took place in English and in Hebrew. Although language is important, it is equally important to "hear" someone talk in his own language, even if you do not understand it, as the expressions and body language tell a lot. Archaidi Chaichenco spoke to me in Russian knowing that I did not understand the language. His granddaughter was present to translate, though her grandmother would often tell her that the first half of the story was not worth translating.

During the visits I took photographs of the objects and the way they are presented in the home, sometimes during and sometimes following the conversation. Taking photographs involved a tour, often through all the rooms in the home with the interviewee who would literary and figuratively open doors. During the second visit these photographs seem to have turned into something more than just a representation of the objects. They changed into objects themselves—"new" objects that become a subject of discussion.

Objects in museums are chosen by people working in the institutions. I asked curators to talk about their ideas on collecting and exhibiting objects. The curators' backgrounds influence their choices, and therefore I describe briefly their histories as well. In doing so, some private aspects were brought into the public space.

This introduction has presented the five subjects of this study, objects, people, homes, museums, and Israel. To be able to place the homes and museums that will be discussed in the main part of the book, the first chapter, "Establishing Collections, Building a Nation," will provide an overview of the history of museums in Israel in relation to the role the Israeli government has in shaping the cultural landscape.

The first chapter will be followed by the main part of the book, consisting of eight chapters, each focusing on the objects present in homes and museums that are linked to one of eight groups. The information used in these eight chapters is, unless otherwise stated, based on interviews (see the primary sources section in the bibliography for dates and locations).

This study tells the story of a specific location. A characteristic of this location is the instability of its borders. To show a map of Israel is almost inevitably an expression of a political opinion: it serves as an illustration of how you want the borders to be, how they once were, how they are now, or how they will be tomorrow. Moreover one border would not be enough. I decided not to include a map, and instead will mention here borders that have a part in this study: the borders showing Morocco under the French

protectorate, as this was the situation in Morocco when Mrs Sapir-Bergstein moved with her family from Fez to Israel; the borders showing Palestine under the British Mandate, the time Mrs Kaduri emigrated with her family in 1934 from Baghdad; and lastly the borders showing the approximate borders of Israel upon its independence in 1948, the timeframe most of the families featuring in this study settled in Israel.

Notes

1. Alternately, *space, place,* and *location* are used as neutral descriptions. *Territory* is used when I want to emphasize the borders of the place. *Landscape* is used to emphasize the mark of man on the land.
2. Israel is not only a migration land, but also a state founded by diasporas. Diasporas rarely have founded nation-states, Israel, as stated by James Clifford (1997: 251) being the prime exception. Ernest Gellner ([1983] 2006: 103) describes Israel "as the most famous and dramatic case of a successful diaspora nationalism."
3. Kark and Perry (2008: 1–12) cite in this respect Michael Walzer, who finds Israeli society to be highly fragmented and polarized, and that the differences between cultural groups are deeper than those in any other society he is familiar with in Western civilization.
4. Even then governor Arnold Schwarzenegger of California said, in a speech at the dedication ceremony for the Museum of Tolerance in Jerusalem, "building this museum would do for tolerance what building gyms did for physical fitness" (Kroyanker 2008).
5. "Museums may have been set up in an atmosphere of enlightenment, but this does not mean that they were democratic in nature; exclusivity is in their DNA" (Fleming 2008).
6. Collecting is considered in this study as an independent social act. By broadening the art-historical approach, collecting can more easily apply to social studies (Pomian, as cited in Pearce 1994: 162). Thanks to Caroline Drieenhuizen who pointed me to Pomian.
7. Legêne disagrees in this respect with the anthropologist Marcel Mauss, who emphasized the autonomous meaning of objects as authentic sources to categorize different kinds of societies.
8. See Chapter 5.
9. *Tacheles,* Yiddish, means "after a lot of talk, we can start doing business."
10. Katriel talks here about the scholarly presentation associated with artistic performances (as in the field of folklore).
11. This is the annual right-wing demonstration commemorating the assassination of Rabbi Meir Kahane.