



**A** PRIOR

PICASSO IN PALESTINE



# #22

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## Picasso in Palestine

In 1948, three months after the declaration of the state of Israel, Pablo Picasso attended the Intellectual Congress in Wroclaw, Poland. It was a congress organised soon after the Second World War at a time in which Wroclaw was still recovering from being German. After the Second World War, Wroclaw became Polish as if for the first time, and the Communist Party organised the congress in celebration of the triumph over the Nazis and the establishment of a new kind of Polishness. At this conference, which was the first one in a series of many, Picasso drew his peace dove. At every other conference after this, they would claim that the dove was drawn there, but in fact Picasso had used it already for some time as a symbol that he promoted within the Communist Party, reinterpreting it from the Christian divine understanding of saving an individual soul, into saving a community in the best of the communist tradition. Today, we identify the peace dove specifically promoted by Picasso as a universal symbol for peace.

But an artistic symbol does not just *become* a symbol, or even an icon, overnight. It's not only talent or the 'right' moment in the market that will guarantee success. Something else has to happen, something that may be translated as an authenticity of spirit or a real desire for change.

*Picasso in Palestine* possesses this desire for change but also articulates questions: are we only celebrating the 'unique' here in a way that somehow tries to normalise an extraordinary situation? Are we discussing a project that is obsessed with proving its own success, or could it be a genuine attempt to do something positive, something that could possibly fail at any time?

Slavoj Žižek, who visited *Picasso in Palestine*, spoke in Ramallah about the danger of stressing the big events, the bombings, the terror and the military incursions as it might detour us from what is really at stake. According to him, it is precisely not the big events that serve as shock effects for the media that should hold our attention. Rather we should look at the procedures and bureaucracy that fill the everyday lives of people in the region. How do they effect and control what happens here, "what happens in Palestine when nothing is happening?"

Perhaps the same applies to the collection of the Van Abbemuseum, of which Picasso's *Buste de Femme* is a part. What happens with a collection when nothing is happening? Is it simply a dull moment or can it show us something more authentic?

It seems that in these moments of dullness, there is actually an amazing potential for revealing the reason and purpose of an organisation, and for showing the networks that form the foundation of life. This potential applies whether we are talking about the West Bank as a whole, *Picasso in Palestine* as a project, the museum and the academy as institutions or the motivations of everyone involved.

It took two years of preparation and discussions to get from Khaled Hourani's wonderful idea of bringing a painting of Picasso to Ramallah, to the final transport operation that took less than a few days. Lots of time was spent waiting. We can wait a bit more until one or two states become a reality, not speculating if this or that solution is good of course. We can wait until the Arab Spring becomes a Summer, Autumn and Winter and blows to the West—a place that desperately needs some seasons too. After this project we are not so concerned about time, as the dust needs to settle to know what it has achieved or neglected.

In bringing the texts and projects together for this issue it was important for *A Prior* to work in close collaboration with a team in Ramallah. Only together with them could we try to grasp all the sensibilities, full meanings and implications of the project and the discourse around it.

The first part of this publication focuses on how the context of occupation marks Picasso's painting and how its journey invested *Buste de Femme* with a new 'history'. *Picasso in Palestine* introduces new questions on the art history of objects, rethinks the role of museums and reconsiders fragments of European art history in a progressive and non-linear way (Andrew Conio).

In a conversation between artist Khaled Hourani and curator and art critic Rasha Salti, the project is described at length and analysed in its multiplicity of meanings. Lynda Morris argues how Picasso's expressionist painting relates to the Spanish Civil War and as such is a significant conduit to question the context of Ramallah.

But there are also pitfalls to projects like these; in a conversation with Renzo Martens, Eyal Weizman elaborates on the margins and possibilities of the journey, questioning the potentiality of art activism and the responsibility of the audience. Architect Yazid Anani informs us on how the Picasso project was received by the people living in Ramallah and curator Galit Eilat discusses at length, in a conversation with Artur Żmijewski (artist, and curator of the 7th Berlin Biennial), the socio-political and cultural climate in Israel, Palestine and Europe, giving us an insight into the margins of possible activism given the current political situation.

In the second part of the magazine, Khaled Hourani's project is embedded into a broader artistic context. With his camera, Sander Buyck chaperons Picasso's journey. The online publishing platform ArtTerritories (Ursula Biemann and Shuruq Harb) in collaboration with Nahed Awad, Ruanne Abou-Rahme, Basel Abbas and Yasin Inass, inspired by the energy of hope and anticipation in the Arab world, create a project that reflects back on moments in the 1960s and 1980s when Palestinians experienced a sense of departure, mobility and connectedness. Toleen Touq and Eric Gottesman report on their trip from southern Jordan to Istanbul along the historical Hejaz and other railways of the former Ottoman Empire. Along the way, they gathered personal stories and historical research about the railways, and, equally importantly, they

followed the news; their trip began the day Zine al-Abedin left Tunisia for Saudi Arabia and ended the day before Hosni Mubarak fled Cairo. Author Stephen Wright researches the origins of conceptual art in the Mediterranean and artist Unni Gjertsen tells us in a most personal diary how she experienced her first visit to Jerusalem.

Finally, there is one last art project included in this publication: Palestinian artist Khaled Jarrar stamped all the copies of this publication with an original State of Palestine stamp. Jarrar's stamp not only makes each copy of *A Prior* a unique piece of art, in giving people the possibility of also having their passport stamped, he gives the reader a way to take their engagement to its full consequence.

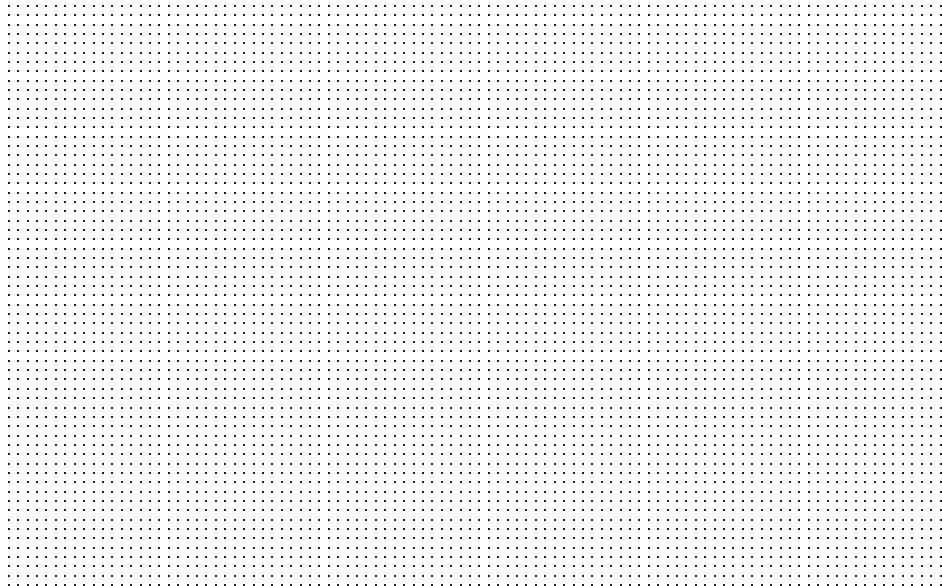
Remco de Blaaij and Els Roelandt



(area 01)

# The Battle for Picasso’s Mind

(area 02)



(area 03)

Lynda Morris

In 1982 I organised an exhibition of the Artists International Association (AIA) from 1933 to 1953 at Modern Art Oxford.<sup>1</sup> It was a history of left-wing activity amongst British artists during the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War and the Cold War. From interviews with members of the AIA I learnt that the importance of Picasso was not his paintings but “What he stood for”.

The exhibition opened the day women protesters encircled the United States Air Force base at Greenham Common to protest against cruise missiles. Greenham is only five kilometres from Aldermasten, the venue of Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament marches, and twenty kilometres from Oxford. My father was a member of the Civil Defence in the 1950s, and he went on weekend exercise where ten miles of motorway had been converted into a field hospital. A ten-mile hospital corridor for the walking wounded from a nuclear bomb dropped on Central London.<sup>2</sup>

I started my work on Picasso when I moved to Norwich in 1980. Churchill called East Anglia, “the bulls eye of any future nuclear confrontation”. Norwich was surrounded by US Nuclear bases pointing at Eastern Europe. I came across references to Picasso’s visits to World Peace Congresses in Wroclaw, Paris, Sheffield and Rome in the AIA archive now held at Tate. I started to work on an article on Picasso and the Sheffield Congress in November 1950, which was published by *The Guardian* in 1980.<sup>3</sup> Picasso remains the most important artist in contemporary art history to represent the political distortions caused by the Cold War. He was not a sophisticated politician but he was willing to let political causes use his reputation as an artist.

The Berlin Wall came down in November 1989, but there are still four historical and geographic ideologies dividing us between Russia, Eastern Europe, Western Europe and the USA. Most of my research came from archives and newspapers of the time. The most important historic accounts were Donald Drew Egbert’s *Social Radicalism in the Arts in Western Europe from the French Revolution to 1968*<sup>4</sup> and the Quaker, Roland Penrose’s, biography of his friend *Picasso*.<sup>5</sup>

There were thirty-five boxes of political correspondence in the Picasso Archive at the Musee Picasso in Paris. They contained documents and letters sent to Picasso by political organisations. It was considered an unimportant part of the archive. There was correspondence that lasted many years, and showed Picasso’s involvement with radical organisations world wide. He would mark letters and envelopes with his multi-coloured pencils. There were notebooks listing his donations to Spanish Republican charities after 1944, including hospitals and orphanages along the border with Spain.<sup>6</sup> There is a one million franc receipt from *Humanite* for the funds Picasso sent to striking miners in the Pays de Calais.<sup>7</sup> Picasso’s archives revealed that his political geography was more advanced than the simple Cold War divisions I mentioned above. He was working with Mexico, the Hispanic countries of South America, Algeria, French West Africa, East Africa and South Africa. I followed the research to the archives at Karl

Marx House in London, the Abraham Lincoln Brigade archives at the Tamiment Library at New York University, to Alfred Barr's papers on Picasso at MoMA, New York, and the American artists archives at the Smithsonian.

Picasso teaches us that the twentieth century was 100 years of savage war waged against women, children and the elderly. His great image of World War II is the bronze *Skull* (1943), the image of a bloated, decaying head. Picasso's experience of war began with the Spanish-American War over Cuba (1897 to 1898). The defeated Spanish Army returned destitute to the streets of Barcelona. Their suffering led Picasso to anarchism and his blue period. In *Re-Ordering the Universe: Picasso and Anarchism 1897-1914*, Patricia Leighton shows that sixty percent of Picasso's Cubist newspaper collages are about anarchist events.<sup>8</sup> Picasso experienced the 1914-1918 war from Paris. His first wife Olga was a ballerina in Diaghilev's Ballet Russes. Her family in Moscow wrote letters about their deprivation during the Russian Revolution.<sup>9</sup>

In 1930 the elected Spanish Republican Government deposed the Habsburg Bourbon Monarchy. In 1936 Franco launched an invasion of Spain from Morocco. The Spanish Civil War lasted until Madrid fell to Franco's forces in early 1939. World War II started in September 1939. The German occupation of Paris began in 1940. Estimates are that seven million Communists, anarchists, pacifists, trade unionists, homosexuals, disabled people and Jews died in Nazi concentration camps. Soviet deaths in World War II are estimated as between fifteen and twenty-seven million. The atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 8 August 1945. The UN Partition Plan for Palestine in 1947 and the Israeli Declaration of Independence in 1948 led to the Arab-Israeli Wars in 1948, 1956, 1967 to 1979 and 1973.

The Communists defeated the Nationalists and Mao proclaimed the People's Republic of China on 1 October 1949. The Korean War started in June 1950 and continued until 1953. The French war in Indochina (Vietnam) lasted until the French Army was defeated by Ho Chi Minh in 1954. It was evacuated to Algeria and the Algerian uprising against French colonialism began within a few months and lasted until 1962. The Hungarian Revolution and the British and French invasion of Suez took place in 1956. The Cuban Revolution took place in 1960. The Cuba Missile Crisis in November 1962 brought the USA and the Soviet Union to the brink of nuclear war. The Vietnam War lasted from 1964 until the US was defeated by the North Vietnamese in 1973, the year Picasso died. But the wars continued: in Africa, the Congo, Biafra, Ethiopia and the Sudan. The fight against apartheid in South Africa and for independence in Angola and Zimbabwe. There was civil war in Lebanon between 1975 and 1990 and the Iranian Revolution in 1979. The Soviet war in Afghanistan was 1979 to 1988. The Falklands War in 1982. The Arab-Israeli intifadas 1987 to 1993 and 2000 and the Israeli-Lebanon Conflict in 2006. The West has fought wars in the Gulf 1990 to 1991, and in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya since 2003.

Half a million Spanish Republican refugees fled over the Pyrenees into France after the fall of Madrid to Franco's Nationalist Army in early 1939. The Spanish refugees were put in internment camps by the French Government in 1939, where they joined three quarters of a million mainly Jewish refugees from Germany and Eastern Europe. The Spanish refugees included two nephews of Picasso. 50,000 Spanish refugees were given entry visas for Mexico.<sup>10</sup> A number were assimilated in jobs and homes around the French Pyrenees, North Africa and the Mediterranean coast. At least half remained in French internment camps when the Nazis invaded France in 1940. They were handed over to the Germans by the Vichy Government in the south of France.

*Guernica* arrived in New York on May Day, 1939. It was considered too political to be shown at MoMA until the USA finally undertook active service with the Allies, Britain and the USSR in 1943. This was the period of the 'Four Freedoms' of the Atlantic Charter. *Guernica* came to personify and represent the freedom of artists. The Works Progress Administration of the 1930s meant many US artists were influenced by Marxist and Trotskyist sympathies. Penrose tells us:

"Invitations came from the United States and Mexico offering [Picasso] an escape from the uncertainty of life in occupied France. He refused them all [...]. Throughout the Nazi occupation Picasso was unmolested by the invaders. His reputation as a revolutionary could alone have been enough to condemn him. He was the renowned master of all that Hitler hated and feared most in modern art, [...] the invaders took no action against him. Possibly from fear of criticism from America or from French intellectuals, whom the Nazis at that time believed they must make some attempt to woo [...] offers of [...] extra food and coal were steadfastly refused by Picasso [...]. He told them, 'a Spaniard is never cold'."<sup>11</sup>

In 1944, two of Picasso's Jewish friends, Robert Desnos and Max Jacob, were sent to concentration camps. Jacob died within days. Desnos died in 1945. Picasso, however, "did not hesitate to appear in public at the memorial service for Max Jacob in the spring of 1944."<sup>12</sup> Picasso made a lithograph in 1944 to illustrate a book by Desnos, *Contree*. The French Communists were active in the Resistance. One of the most important was Laurent Casanova. His wife, Danielle Casanova, died from typhoid in Auschwitz. Casanova made three attempts to escape from German prison camps but was recaptured each time. On the fourth attempt he reached Paris and, through Paul Eluard, he lived in hiding with Michel Leiris, just around the corner from Picasso in Quai des Grands-Augustins.<sup>13</sup>

The Liberation of Paris took place on 24 August 1944. On 5 October 1944, Picasso announced on the front page of *l'Humanite*, the newspaper of the French Communist Party (FCP), that he had joined the Party. Francois Gilot tells us:

“During the month Casanova stayed in the apartment he had much influence on all that group. For the first time Pablo had the occasion to talk to a Communist Party figure [...]. As a result of these contacts with Casanova, a number of intellectuals entered the Communist Party, Pablo among them [...] the Party hierarchy realised how useful his name and image would be to their cause [...] two of his closest friends, the poets Louis Aragon and Paul Eluard, had played a part in his conversion. But when I asked him what, exactly, had made him join the Party [...] he said, ‘I came into the Party as one goes to the fountain’ [...]. All of a sudden Picasso was the Man of the Hour. For weeks after the Liberation you couldn’t walk ten feet inside his atelier without falling over the recumbent body of some young G.I. [...]. From that moment on, Picasso stopped being a private citizen and became public property”.<sup>14</sup>

In his first letter to Penrose after the Liberation, Paul Eluard wrote about Picasso: “He has been one of the rare painters who have behaved well [...] Picasso had always been willing to help the resistance movement by sheltering anyone sent to him by his friends, whether he knew them or not.”<sup>15</sup>

Wishing to make his motives clear to the world at large, Picasso made a statement to Pol Gaillard which was published in New York and Paris almost simultaneously in late October 1944 saying:

“My adhesion to the Communist Party is the logical outcome of my whole life [...]. I have never considered painting simply as pleasure [...] a distraction; I have wanted, by drawing and by colour since those were my weapons, to penetrate always further forward into the consciousness of the world and of men [...] I have always been an exile, now I am one no longer; until Spain can at last welcome me back, the French Communist Party has opened its arms to me, I have found there all those whom I esteem the most, the greatest scientists, the greatest poets and all those whose faces, so beautiful, of the Parisians in arms which I saw during those days in August, I am once more among my brothers”.<sup>16</sup>

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*The Charnel House* (1945), now in the collection of MoMA, New York, was shown in *Art et Resistance* at the Musee National d'Art Moderne in Paris in 1945. The painting was based on a short piece of film footage of a Spanish Republican family massacred near the border between France and Spain. The composition was based on one of Goya's *Disaster's of War*.<sup>17</sup> Both the *Charnel House* and *Guernica* are grisaille, black and white paintings. They were *History Paintings* that drew on the black and white documentary newspaper photographs and newsreel footage, which held the look of the period in the minds of the masses. In these paintings Picasso forged a new link between paintings and the movies, what I have called “pictures of pictures”.<sup>18</sup>

In 1946 Alfred Barr wrote that *The Charnel House* was about the Holocaust.<sup>19</sup> Picasso had almost completed the painting before the first concentration camps were liberated and the photographs of the horrors appeared in the press and on newsreels, although rumours of the concentration camps had circulated throughout the war. Picasso was thinking of his own people in Spain. For Picasso World War II had not ended in 1945 because Franco and the Fascists were still in power in Spain. When Barr made this claim, he was thinking about the feelings of his audience in New York around MoMA, many of who came from East European Jewish families.

There was a large file of correspondence in Picasso's archives from Dr Edward Barsky, a surgeon in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in Spain whose father was a founder of the Beth Israel Hospital in New York.<sup>20</sup> He was already under surveillance from the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1946 and was sentenced to prison in 1947 along with all twelve members of his committee of Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. Picasso sent messages of support to Barsky and ceramics to be sold to aid the group's appeals. Until I studied Barsky's papers I had not understood that anti-communism in the USA was also anti-Semitic and targeted intellectuals of East European Jewish origins. Nor had I understood that the House Un-American Activities Committee was already hard at work in 1946, so soon after World War II.

The trauma of the Occupation and the role of the Communists in the Resistance, led many French intellectuals to join the FCP, including Picasso's dealer Kahnweiler. In the elections in 1945 the FCP was the largest party in the National Assembly of the Fourth Republic, but without a majority, with 140 seats to the Gaullist twenty seats.

Picasso held exhibitions in New York at Buchholz from February to March 1945, and again in 1949. Picasso tried to get Kahnweiler to raise the selling price of his work. Kahnweiler refused. According to Gilot, “many American collectors were still being put off by Pablo's having joined the Communist Party”. The Greenburg scholar, John O'Brien, has suggested that there is evidence that the reputation of Matisse was deliberately elevated above that of Picasso in the USA at this time.

Picasso made a number of versions of the *Memorial for the Spaniards who gave their lives for France* (1947), now in the collection of the Reine Sophia in Madrid. This

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painting commemorated the role of Republican Spaniards in the French Resistance. Having lost not only their own country but also their country of refuge, they played a significant sacrificial role in the French Resistance. Picasso continued to paint human and goat skulls from the end of the war through the early 1950s including the *Goat's Skull Bottle and Candle* (1952) acquired by the Tate in 1957. These paintings continued the classical Spanish and Dutch theme of *vanitas*, images of the symbols of death present during life.

As a child Picasso had painted the legs of pigeons for his father. Picasso's *Boy with a Dove* (1902), on loan to the National Gallery London, reminds us of his lifelong idea of the dove as a symbol of peace. The USA dropped the first, and so far only, atomic bombs ever to be used on civilian populations on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. It was justified as having brought the war to an end. The tension between the USA and the USSR over atomic bombs caused the start of the so-called Cold War. There is no doubt that the international peace movement was inspired by the Soviet Union. As the Soviet Union was behind the USA in atomic expertise, it was therefore in their political interests to appeal to human wishes for peace.

Ilya Ehrenburg, the Soviet-Jewish novelist who later coined the term "The Thaw", had known Picasso and Diego Rivera in Paris before World War I and he remained friends with them. Ehrenberg had written *The Black Book*, stories of the persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe and the western USSR by the Nazis. Although the book was not allowed to be published by Stalin on the eve of the Red Army's counter assault on German occupied territories, he recognised Ehrenberg's value as the leading figure of the Soviet inspired post-war international peace movement.

The first World Peace Congress was held in Wroclaw (Breslau) in Poland in 1948. Picasso overcame his fear of flying to attend the congress.<sup>23</sup> Picasso was first invited to Poland in a letter dated 15 Oct 1947, signed by Victor Mencil.<sup>24</sup> He stayed for over two weeks, visiting Auschwitz and the Warsaw Ghetto. Picasso drew Ehrenberg's portrait in Warsaw, and also two portraits of a Polish woman with a headscarf tied under her chin.<sup>25</sup> She represented a symbol of the strength of women in rebuilding their societies after the war. Later, he made a Spanish version in the late 1950s for the amnesty campaign for Spanish Civil War prisoners. Picasso gave a collection of his ceramics to the Warsaw Museum and brought home Polish embroideries that inspired paintings and drawings of Francoise Gilot and their son Claude. In Wroclaw Picasso met Amie Cesaire, the Martinique poet, who was a leader of the Negritude Movement, and whose work Picasso illustrated.

Francoise Gillot tells the story of Matisse's gift to Picasso of a pair of white fantail pigeons. Picasso made several lithographs of them. As all art historians copy facts from other art historians—without checking historical or scientific expertise—the type of pigeon has never been challenged. However, a mature student in Norwich who

is a pigeon fancier, recently told me that because of the plume on its head it was a not a fantail pigeon but actually a frillback pigeon. The most realistic image of a dove was chosen by Louis Aragon, the surrealist poet and editor of *Les Lettres francaises*, for the poster image of the World Peace Congress held in Paris in 1949.

The Stockholm Appeal was launched in late 1949 and it collected fifty million signatures worldwide. As a member of the Partisans of Peace movement, Picasso was nominated to present the appeal to the US Senate in early 1950. He was refused an entry visa to the USA because he was a known Communist. So the man who painted *Guernica*, the painting that more than anything else symbolised the freedom of artists in the West, was refused entry to the land of the free.<sup>26</sup>

Amongst Alfred Barr's papers in MoMA was a press cutting from the *New York Times* detailing an anti-Communist speech made by Senator Joe McCarthy to 6,000 New York policemen at a communion breakfast at St Patrick's Cathedral. St Patrick's Cathedral is just around the corner from MoMA.<sup>27</sup> Barr's archive also contained his prepared answers to the House Un-American Activities Committee should MoMA be called to defend accusations of being a Communist front organisation with close links to Eastern Europe and the USSR.<sup>28</sup> These papers helped me to understand why MoMA had done nothing in 1950 to help Picasso get a visa for the USA, and why they had held two major exhibitions of Picasso's work during the artists' lifetime in 1957 and 1962–1963 but had not invited Picasso to either opening. In both MoMA exhibitions there was also a noticeable absence of any of Picasso's political work after 1944. This also partly explains the absence of knowledge of Picasso's post-war politics in the vast majority of studies by US scholars. In balance, I should add that Picasso never travelled to the USSR and when he was finally invited in the 1960s, he simply wondered why they had never invited him before.

A central theme of the *Picasso: Peace and Freedom* exhibition I organised for Tate Liverpool was to show Picasso's posters, prints, postcards and drawings for newspapers that were such an important part of his work from 1944 until his death in 1973. The use of these media was Picasso's idea of mass communication with a working class audience. It seems as though Picasso could pre-date Warhol.

A second dove appeared on the French posters announcing the London Peace Congress in November 1950. By this time the Korean War had broken out. There was a public London meeting held in September 1950, and a photograph has survived of Ilya Ehrenburg addressing the crowds in Trafalgar Square.<sup>29</sup> But the November 1950 Peace Congress did not take place in London, it took place in Sheffield. It was the height of the Korean War and hundreds of delegates from around the world were refused entry to England. Picasso was held for twelve hours at Victoria Station and Roland Penrose had to intervene, through his government contacts, to secure Picasso's release.<sup>30</sup> Why did the Congress move from London to Sheffield? An issue of the



*Yorkshire Post* with Picasso on the front page showed a group of US airmen sitting down in their mess hall to their first cup of tea in Yorkshire. The move of the Peace Congress from London to Sheffield had been planned to coincide with the arrival of US airmen in England. Washington had announced that the use of the atom bomb in Korea was “under active consideration”, and the US airmen had no doubt brought their atomic bombs with them. The Peace Congress was cancelled after one evening meeting. It re-opened the following week in Warsaw.

*Massacre in Korea* (1951) was originally a commission from the French Communist Party for a mural. It proved to be controversial because it was not realistic enough for their official policy of Soviet inspired Socialist Realism. Picasso placed the work in the nineteenth-century tradition of history painting. It was based on Manet’s *Execution of Maximillian* and on a drawing Manet had made of a firing squad during the Paris Commune of 1871. The figures come from Poussin’s *Oath of the Horatii* and David’s *Rape of the Sabine Women*. The subject of *Massacre in Korea* was possibly inspired by a famous war photograph of naked Korean prisoners guarded by clothed and armed US soldiers. After the rejection of *Massacre in Korea*, Picasso commissioned himself in 1951 to paint the series of murals, *War and Peace*, for a small, deconsecrated chapel in the Communist village of Vallauris, where he also worked with craftsmen on his ceramics. While working on the *Picasso: Peace and Freedom* exhibition, I came to think of Picasso as a socialist in the nineteenth-century tradition of William Morris, Ruskin and Tolstoy. The title of the mural series, *War and Peace*, was a reference to Tolstoy’s novel.<sup>31</sup>

In Picasso’s archive was the dossier prepared by Dr Endicott on the allegation of the use of germ warfare by the UN and US forces in Korea.<sup>32</sup> In Picasso’s *War and Peace*, bacteria are shown emanating from the shield of the figure of war in his classical horse-drawn chariot. The preparatory drawings for the murals show a tank breathing fire, with no sign of bacteria. The change shows the way in which Picasso was influenced by the political information he received and kept in his archive. In 1951 the chapel was not allowed to open to the public due to a perceived a safety risk. In 1958 Andre Malraux, de Gaulle’s Minister of Culture, opened it to the public. Picasso refused to attend the opening ceremony.

A letter was sent from the Congress of Japanese Intellectuals, dated 27 October 1952, protesting against atomic tests on atolls near Japan that were effecting Japanese fishermen. It begins beautifully: “It is our solemn gladness to send you a copy of the special edition, ‘atomic bomb’”.<sup>33</sup> When the peace talks finally started in Korea, Communist North Korea built a hall for the talks at Panmunjom on the line between North and South. The US negotiators refused to enter the building until the four Picasso inspired peace doves had been removed from the exterior. Picasso never tired of making peace posters. *L’Humanite* employed a man to work almost exclusively on the poster editions that made Picasso the largest single funder of the French Commu-

nist Party. Most of the collection of posters etc. for the *Picasso: Peace and Freedom* exhibition were lent by the French Communist painter and collector Gerard Gosslin.

Picasso played a central role in the campaign to save Ethel and Julius Rosenberg from the electric chair in 1954, chairing meetings at his own house and drawing their portraits for *l’Humanite*.<sup>34</sup> The Rosenberg’s were accused of supplying atomic information to the USSR. They claimed that they supplied minor information during World War II, when the USSR and the USA were allies. Picasso kept in his archive photographs and booklets of the Rosenberg’s two young sons who were orphaned by the electrocution of their parents. *L’Humanite* linked the death of the Rosenbergs with the anti-Semitism of anti-communism in the USA.

Picasso’s portrait of Stalin was commissioned by Louis Aragon to commemorate the death of Stalin and published on the front page of his weekly newspaper *Les Lettres francaises*. It caused great controversy. Gilot tells us Picasso took it philosophically and shrugged, saying “You’ve got the same situation in the Party as in any big family; there’s always some damn fool ready to stir up trouble, but you have to put up with him.”<sup>35</sup>

In 1956 Ilya Ehrenburg organised the first exhibitions of Picasso’s work in Moscow and Leningrad. The exhibition coincided with both the British and French invasion of Suez and the USSR invasion of Hungary. A photograph of Picasso’s *Massacre in Korea* was shown on the streets of Warsaw during the Hungarian uprising. In November 1956 Picasso was one of nine artists and intellectuals, including Edouard Pignon and Helene Parmelin, who signed a letter to the Central Committee of the French Communist Party expressing profound anxiety about the suppression of the Hungarian Worker’s Revolt by Russian tanks and denouncing the veil of silence.<sup>36</sup> The letter was also published in the right-wing newspaper *Le Monde*.

The first German Democratic Republic (DDR) train in Berlin after the Berlin Blockade and the period of the NATO airlift arrived with Picasso’s *Dove of Peace* on the front. In 1951 Picasso surrounded the *Dove of Peace* with profiles of four people in colours to represent the four races of the world: black, yellow, white and red. After World War II Picasso became increasingly involved with campaigns for equality between the races. He used the theme of the four colours of humanity in at least five posters made in the 1950s. There is correspondence in Picasso’s archive with the French cultural and political journal *Presence Africaine* dating back to 1948. Picasso made the poster for *Presence Africaine*’s First Congress of Black Intellectuals (1956), held at the Sorbonne.<sup>37</sup> The poster image came from Picasso’s 1945 collaboration with the Black Martinique poet, Aime Cesaire, who Picasso probably met through his friend, the Black Cuban painter Alfredo Lam. Lam fought for the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War. Cesaire wrote *Discourse on Colonialism* (1955) and was the Deputy for Martinique at the French National Assembly. He was a leading figure in the Negritude movement



that focused attention on the intellectual role of the Black Diaspora in the future of world culture. The drawing for the end wall of the *War and Peace* murals in Vallauris, that depicts standing figures in the four colour of humanity, was also used by Picasso for the Second African Congress of Black Intellectuals held in Rome (1958). *Presence Africaine* continues to publish a quarterly magazine in Paris and in Dakar Senegal.<sup>38</sup> Photographs of Picasso's homes after World War II show him and Jacqueline surrounded by African objects. Jacqueline had lived in Africa for six years with her first husband, in Upper Volta, before she met Picasso in Vallauris.

The Negritude movement also influenced Frank McEwan who lived in Paris in the 1930s. The Negritude theory offered an important alternative to the British anthropological approach to African culture. McEwan ran the British Council Visual Arts Programme from a boat anchored in the Seine. In 1956 he weighed anchor and sailed to South Africa to become the first director of the Rhodes National Gallery of Art in Southern Rhodesia. In Salisbury he organised two exhibitions of Picasso's work with loans from Picasso in 1956 and 1962. He also organised the First International Congress of African Art in 1962.<sup>39</sup> Delegates included Roland Penrose, Lee Miller, Alfred Barr, Tristan Tzara and John Russell together with African writers, historians and architects. Picasso was a key topic of the Congress. The poet Leopold Seghor, who became the first President of an Independent Senegal, introduced the study of Picasso to the school curriculum. At this time Picasso was an important symbol for modernity in the newly independent African states.<sup>40</sup> He started the Shona Sculpture Movement in Zimbabwe. Ian Smith's Universal Declaration of Independence (1964) postponed independence in Southern Rhodesia for two decades and led directly to Mugabe's tormented Zimbabwe. There is also correspondence in Picasso's archive from the African National Congress (ANC) about the Sharpsville Massacres in South Africa, Asian followers of Ghandi and British radical politicians campaigning against apartheid. There was also correspondence from Black leaders in the USA, W.E.B. de Bois, Paul Robeson and others concerning the use of the death penalty in race-related court cases. A letter asking for Picasso's support is signed by Martin Luther King and Albert Lutuli.<sup>41</sup>

When the French army was defeated in Indochina (Vietnam) by Ho Chi Mhin in May 1954 it returned not to France, but to Algeria. The Algerian uprising against French colonialism began just a few months later on 13 November. Picasso began his series of paintings *The Women of Algiers* a month later and continued to work on the paintings until February 1955. The original 1834 Delacroix painting resulted from his visit on an official mission sent by Louis Phillipe to Algeria in 1832. The French colonies sent deputies to the Assembly National in Paris and Picasso was a close friend of Pierre Cot, a Communist Deputy for Algeria. This was quite an unusual policy as in the British parliament, for example, there was never any representation from the peoples of colonial countries. Picasso continued to be actively concerned about Algeria. In the post-

war years he often campaigned for Algerian women's organisations. The imprisonment of Djamila was taken up as a cause by Simone de Beauvoir, and she used this drawing by Picasso on the cover of her book.<sup>42</sup>

The film *Battle of Algiers* alleges that the uprising in Algeria was provoked deliberately to bring the Fourth Republic to an end.<sup>43</sup> Picasso's archives contain papers on the fear of a military coup in Paris being launched from Algeria. Articles in *l'Humanite* pointed out that this echoed with the fact that Franco launched his 1936 coup against Republican Spain from Morocco. De Gaulle returned to power as President of France unelected in 1958, as a compromise candidate of the Right, the so-called *pied noir* colonialists in North Africa and the military. This effectively ended the Fourth Republic and the role of the French Communist Party as the largest group in the National Assembly. De Gaulle confirmed Maurice Papon as head of the Paris police prefecture in 1958. He had previously served in Algeria and was known as a Vichy collaborationist during World War II.

The National Liberation Front (FLN) resumed bombings against the French police at the end of August 1961. Between August and October 1961, eleven police were killed and seventeen injured. On 5 October 1961, the police announced a curfew from 8.30 p.m. to 5.30 a.m. for all 150,000 Algerians living in Paris. Protest demonstrations led to the arrest of 11,000 Algerians and their supporters, who were transported to the Parc des Expositions and other internment centres used by Vichy collaborationists with the Nazis. Picasso's painting, *Rooster on a Chair Under a Lamp* (April 1962), echoes Picasso's 1947 painting *Still Life With Cock and Knife*, where a bird with bound legs, as in the central bodies in the *Charnel House*, is a symbol of torture.<sup>44</sup> The intense light, the bound legs and the electrode cables relate to the torture and death of Algerian terrorists. This painting followed the Charonne Massacres of 8 February 1962, when nine members of the French Communist Party, some Algerian, were found dead. A massacre took place in the courtyard of the police headquarters. Algerians were drowned in the Seine at points across the city. For several weeks, unidentified corpses with their arms and legs bound were discovered along the banks of the Seine. Maurice Papon was eventually tried in 1998, and it was concluded that there were an estimated 300 Algerian victims murdered (whether by police or others) between 1 September and 31 December 1961 in Paris. In 1967 Picasso declined membership of the French Legion of Honour.

Picasso's main concern remained his homeland of Spain. As long as Franco remained in power he felt Fascism had not been defeated. In 1948 the USA included Spain in the Marshall Plan for post-war economic reconstruction in Europe. The strategic importance of Spain, at the mouth of the Mediterranean, meant the USA chose to ignore Franco's Fascism. In October 1954, the daughter of the pretender to the Spanish throne, Maria Pilar, held a coming out party in Lisbon, which became a great festival

for Spanish monarchists. Around the same time, Franco held meetings with the pretender to discuss the education of his son Juan Carlos. Franco had been refused permission to make himself King of Spain, as it was considered too divisive a move in the country. He felt the next best thing was to arrange for his successor to be a member of the Bourbon Habsburg monarchy. In 1957 Don Juan informed Franco that Juan Carlos would start that autumn at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium. Franco personally took over the education of Don Juan and sent him instead to the Military Academy in Zaragoza. Franco was obsessed by the Bourbon Habsburg monarchy and he built his memorial tomb in the Valle de los Caídos between Madrid and the Escorial Palace, built by Philip II, the son of Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor and founder of the Bourbon Habsburg dynasty.<sup>45</sup>

This is the background to Picasso's decision to paint a version of Velazquez' *Las Meninas* in August 1957. The first large black and white painting was made exactly twenty years after the painting of *Guernica* was first exhibited in July 1937. Rather than simply representing Picasso's admiration for Velazquez, I have proposed that the painting is a political satire. In autumn 2008, while I was doing research at the Picasso archives in Paris during the week and going to see Picasso and the masters at the Grand Palais at the weekend, the idea seemed so obvious. The hooks on the ceiling represent the victims of torture in Spain. Franco had imprisoned Republicans for up to 130 years, and Picasso was a leading figure of the International Amnesty for Republican Political Prisoners in Spain. The priest and nun are in coffins, the painter is a figure from the Spanish Inquisition, the maid of honour even has a Franco moustache. The smaller coloured paintings in the series are dominated by the red and blue of the Spanish Falangist party, of which the Lebanese Falangists, who perpetrated the terrible massacre of Palestinian refugees at Shatilla, are an offshoot.<sup>46</sup> Two years before his death, Picasso gave the entire series of paintings to the Picasso Museum in Barcelona that was planned by his friend Sabartiers.

The seriousness of Picasso's political commitment is undermined as he is often portrayed as a womaniser and a clown. The Argentine photographer Roberto Otero photographed the visit of Douglas Cooper and his partner John Richardson to Picasso in 1963.<sup>47</sup> The reason for the visit was to bring the elderly photographer Edward Steichen and his new, young wife to visit Picasso. Cooper also brought with them, without warning Picasso, the US collector Joseph Hirschhorn and his wife. Otero photographed Picasso refusing to sell a sculpture to Hirschhorn. Picasso's clowning manages to keep the meeting happy and he poses with Steichen and Hirschhorn, smiling, while wearing Hirschhorn's jacket and bow tie and holding Hirschhorn's wallet and chequebook. The final image in Otero's series shows a smug Picasso making a rude gesture after Hirschhorn and the rest of Cooper's party had left empty-handed. Otero recounts in his book how Picasso had whispered to him that Hirschhorn was "the King

of Uranium". His wealth was based on the US Government's Uranium mining contract. Ehrenburg explains in his autobiography that the mineral wealth of the breakaway state of Katanga was uranium. Uranium was the reason for the wars in the Belgian Congo, where the great radical hope for Africa, Patrice Lumumba, was executed and where six months later Dag Hammarskjöld died in a plane crash.<sup>48</sup> Hirschhorn founded the Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington DC in 1961. John Richardson is now Picasso's biographer, but judging by his criticism of my research, he is involved in the de-historisation and de-politicisation of Picasso's late period.

Frances Stoner Saunders in her book *Who Paid the Piper*, quotes an interview she made in the mid 1990s with Tom Braden, who ran the CIA cultural programmes in Europe in the 1950s and 1960s. In response to her question about how he would sum up his activities in post-war Europe, Braden replied: "It was the battle for Picasso's Mind".<sup>49</sup> Saunders' book makes clear that a large part of the Cold War was fought by the USA and USSR in Western Europe as a cultural offensive to influence minds. It was not the guns and violence of a James Bond movie but the USSR fighting through articles and conferences under the banner of *peace* while the USA fought under the banner of *freedom*—the individual freedom of the artist that was personified by Picasso's *Guernica* then hanging at MoMA in New York. When my chosen title for the exhibition, *The Battle for Picasso's Mind*, was rejected by Tate, I asked for the title *Peace or Freedom?* to represent this opposition, this was also rejected. I had to accept the bland, hippy, all-encompassing, *Peace and Freedom*.

Picasso continued to publish drawings, some specially commissioned, in *l'Humanite* into his late 80s. He celebrated Uri Gagarin with a peace dove for the front page of *l'Humanite* in October 1962. The USSR had caught up with the USA in the weapon and space race in the late 1950s, and achieved the first manned space flight. In November 1962 the Cuban Missile Crisis broke out. The Soviet Union planned to install nuclear missiles in Cuba aimed at the USA in retaliation for their installation of missiles in Turkey aimed at the USSR. In Picasso's archives I found two telegrams from Fidel Castro dated 1961 and 1962 and another from a member of his government concerning Castro's plan to erect a peace column in Havana Harbour with Picasso's *Dove of Peace* on top.<sup>50</sup> The telegram was dated October 1962, but the plan was interrupted by the Missile Crisis. Picasso's several versions of *Rape of the Sabine Women* were all painted in the three weeks of the Crisis that brought the world to the verge of nuclear annihilation. They were based on paintings by Poussin and David held in the collection of the Louvre. Picasso teaches us from *Guernica* that the great crime of twentieth-century war is the bombing of civilians, women, children and the elderly. The painting of a woman trampled by a mounted soldier (after David) is in the Beyeler Foundation, which was established by his Zurich dealer Ernst Beyeler. *The Rape of the Sabine Women after David and Poussin* is in the Kahnweiler Collection at the Pompidou

Museum. It is interesting to note that the dealers were unable to sell these political paintings. The conclusion of the Cuban Missile Crisis led not only to the removal of the missiles from Cuba but also to a reduction of US missiles in Turkey pointing at the border of the USSR. Picasso received the Lenin Peace Prize in 1964, which was presented to him at his home in the south of France by Ilya Ehrenburg.

Picasso is seen as a playboy living a life of luxury in the south of France. Both Gilot and Parmelin tell the story of Picasso meeting Charlie Chaplin. Neither spoke the other's language and they spent the evening miming. Parmelin records that the next morning Picasso said: "He's a man who, like me, has suffered a great deal at the hands of women."<sup>51</sup> A third charismatic Communist was Paul Robeson, who had been a friend of Picasso since he visited Spain during the Civil War. He too was targeted as a womaniser and refused a US passport between 1949 and 1959, which effectively ruined his career. Picasso drew a mother and child (April 1963) and it was used on a postcard for an organisation of Hungarian mothers. This was one of the post-war women's movements in Eastern Europe, which began to help counteract the tragic loss of male lives during World War II. The Communists supported the women's movement as a means of rebuilding society. The missing link between the women's suffrage movement and the women's movement of the late 1960s has yet to be researched.

In Picasso's last paintings the subject is either the nude or the soldier: the musketeers, the soldiers of fortune of European expansion and culture in the seventeenth century. If, in painting, women represent procreation, then men represent war, aggression and colonialism. Otero's photographs of the period show Picasso and Jacqueline surrounded by their collection of African objects and a large television set. Picasso in his final years was, like the rest of us, watching the daily reports of the Vietnam War.

Picasso died in 1973. Franco died in 1976. In accordance with Picasso's will, MoMA finally returned *Guernica* to Spain in 1981.

## NOTES

1. Lynda Morris and Robert Radford, *AIA: The Story of the Artists International Association, 1933–1953*, Museum of Modern Art Oxford, 1983.
2. 1950s Civil Defence documents in the author's archive.
3. Lynda Morris, "Painting Picasso Red", *Guardian Weekend*, 12 September 1981.
4. Donald Drew Egbert, *Social Radicalism and the Arts: Western Europe: A Cultural History from the French Revolution to 1968* (London and New York, 1970).
5. Roland Penrose, *Picasso: His Life and Work* (London, 1958).
6. There is a blue notebook titled "Dons pour les Espagnol", listing the following donations that Picasso made to Spanish Republican causes: 30-11-1944, 4-04-1945, 24-10-1945, 31-12-1945, 25-01-1946, 6-11-1945, 25-03-1946, 28-05-1947, 26-06-1947, 18-07-1948, 22-12-1948, totals of 50,000 francs, 50,000 francs, 791 francs, 17,466 francs, 57,659 francs, 1000 francs, 17,092 francs, 30,880 francs, 100,000 francs, 100,000 francs, 10,000 francs. Toulouse continues until today to hold an annual international anarchist festival.
7. Illustrated in Lynda Morris and Christoph Grunenberg, *Picasso Peace and Freedom* (London: Tate 2010), 13.
8. Patricia Leighton, *Re-Ordering the Universe: Picasso and Anarchism, 1897–1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 22.
9. Bernard Ruiz Picasso, conversation with author, 2009.
10. Paul Preston, *Franco: A Biography* (London, 1993).
11. Penrose, *Picasso: His Life and Work*, op cit., 297.
12. Penrose, *Picasso: His Life and Work*, op cit.
13. Penrose, *Picasso: His Life and Work*, op cit.
14. Françoise Gilot and Carlton Lake, *Life with Picasso* (London, 1965), 55.
15. Penrose, *Picasso: His Life and Work*, op cit., 310-1.
16. Pol (Paul) Gaillard, *New Masses* (New York), 24 October 1944.
17. Robert Rosenblum, "The Spanishness of Picasso's Still Life", in *Picasso and the Spanish Tradition*, ed. Jonathan Brown (New Haven, CT and London, 1996), 87–93.
18. Lynda Morris, *Pictures of Pictures*, Norwich Gallery NSAD (NUCA) and Arnolfini, Bristol, 1999.
19. Alfred H. Barr, *Picasso: Fifty Years of his Art*, exh. cat. (The Museum of Modern Art: New York, 1946).
20. PA, boxes F1–2 (Lettres reçues d'organismes et associations politiques), folder: Guerre d'Espagne. There are also receipts for donations sent through the Unitarian Services Committee who Picasso dealt with through Dr. Barsky of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the USA. There is a further receipt for 30,000 francs from the Federación de Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas Espana dated 1947. A letter of 21 May 1947 from the Unitarian Services Committee representative (Mr. Paul Hollister Jr. from Doubleday and Co. Inc.) concerns the proceeds from a sale for the relief of Spanish Republicans in France. Picasso arranged for the money from sales in the USA to go directly to Spanish Republican causes in France.

21. Gilot and Lake, *Life with Picasso*, op cit., 168.
22. John O'Brien, e-mail to author, 2007.
23. Wroclaw Congress Book (Warsaw, 1948), n.p. Presented by the Bureau of the Secretary General, Varsovie in 1949. J.D. Bernal Archive at the Marx Memorial Library, Clerkenwell, London.
24. Picasso Archive at the Musée National Picasso Paris (PA), box B1, folder: Poland, Bureau d'Informations Polonaises.
25. Ilya Ehrenburg, *Post-War Years 1945–1954*, trans. Tatiana Shebunina and Yvonne Kapp, vol. 1 of *Men, Years-Life* (London, 1966), facing 129. See also Ilya Ehrenburg, *People and Life Memoirs of 1891–1917*, trans. Anna Bostock and Yvonne Kapp (London, 1961), 211–12.
26. Lael Wertenbaeker, *The World of Picasso* (New York, London, 1967), 149. It is well known that the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) held a substantial file on Picasso. Letters show that Alfred H. Barr, Jr., founding Director and then Advisory Director at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, decided that he should not invite Picasso to the major MoMA exhibitions of his work in 1957 or in 1963 as a request for a visa would be rejected by the US Government because of Picasso's membership to the Communist Party.
27. *The New York Herald Tribune*, 5 April 1954.
28. There is a dossier by Barr in the "Political Issue" folder in his archive at MoMA, New York where he prepared the defence.
29. Ehrenburg, *Post-War Years 1945–1954*, op cit., facing 129.
30. Penrose, *Picasso: His Life and Work*, op cit.
31. Hélène Parmelin, *Picasso Plain: An Intimate Portrait* (London, 1963), 17.
32. See *International Scientific Commission: The Dossier of Bacteriological Warfare* (World Council of Peace, 1952), AMNPP, box G4, folder: Korea. The Dossier also alleges secret bombing raids by the US Army in Korea. The findings of the dossier were upheld by the International Scientific Commission in 1952 and again in 1976 by Dr Joseph Needham.
33. The Japanese President Risaku Mutai wrote: "It is our solemn gladness to send you a copy of the special edition, Atomic Bomb 6 August 1952, of the Asahi Grapha weekly photo-magazine. We, the Japanese, as the first victims of the atomic bomb in human history [...] few Japanese that know well the atrocious features of the facts [...] it had been prohibited during all the occupation period to announce publicly any news or photograph which would tell people the cruel facts [...] to announce these solemn fact [...] is a sincere desire of all Japanese including the spirits of more than three hundred thousand victims." The USA went on to test more than twenty nuclear bombs on Bikini Atoll after 1954. In a classic example of meaning being manipulated, the name of the atoll became adopted as the name of the two-piece swimsuit that was synonymous with Brigitte Bardot and the image of Picasso as a playboy on the French Riviera.



34. PA, box G6, folder: Comites de defense et liberations divers affaires, sub-folder: Rosenberg.
35. Gilot and Lake, *Life with Picasso*, op cit.
36. PA, box G1 (French Communist Party): includes 380 items dating from 1944 to 1969. The folder Communist Press includes papers on the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Gaston Plissonnier from the French Communist Party replied to the open letter on 28 November 1956: "Dear Comrade, You signed a letter addressed to the Members of the Central Committee, at the 20-21 November sessions, at Ivry".
37. The First Congress of Black Intellectuals was held from 19 to 22 September 1956.
38. *Presence Africaine* has a shop in Paris on the Rue des Ecoles.
39. The published proceedings of the First International Congress of African Culture (Rhodes National Gallery of Modern Art Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, 1962), runs over two hundred pages, and it is an important document of African culture of the period. Proceedings of the First International Congress of African Culture: John Russell, "The Challenge of African Art: The Lessons of the Salisbury Congress", *Apollo*, vol.?, (November 1962): 697-701.
40. McEwen's archive is now in Centre for Anthropology at the British Museum, London. I was told that I was the first person to consult it since it had been catalogued in the 1980s. It contains a collection of thirty or more films of events at the Rhodes National Gallery in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia as well as catalogues and associated papers.
41. AMNPP Box G4 folder United States. Letter dated 21 August 1962.
42. Simone de Beauvoir, *Djamila Boupacha* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961).
43. *The Battle of Algiers* dir. Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966.
44. The essential clue that led to this research came from an internet search by one of the technical staff at Tate Liverpool who worked on the installation of the exhibition.
45. Preston, *Franco: A Biography*, op cit. Paul Preston is a prime example of the importance of historians to my research. We met at a conference on the Guernica tapestry at the Whitechapel Gallery in London in 2009. He approved my approach to Picasso but was critical of some factual "clangers". His new book *Franco's Holocausts* is eagerly awaited.
46. Jean Genet "Four Hours in Shatila" republished in 1983.
47. Roberto Otero, *Forever Picasso* (New York, 1975), 1-26. Roberto Otero, *Retrat de Picasso* (Barcelona, 1982).
48. New research is appearing on these issues: Sven Augustijnen's film and book *Spectres* about Patrice Lumumba, and Goran Bjorkdahl's work on the plane crash that killed Daj Hammarskjold. Although both emphasise the mineral wealth of Katanga, neither specifically mentions the existence or scale of the Uranium deposits.
49. Frances Stoner Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (London, 1999) 438, note 37.
50. AMNPP Box G7, folder: Cuba. October 1961, 3 May 1969 and 2 October 1962.
51. Parmelin, *Picasso Plain: An Intimate Portrait*, op cit.





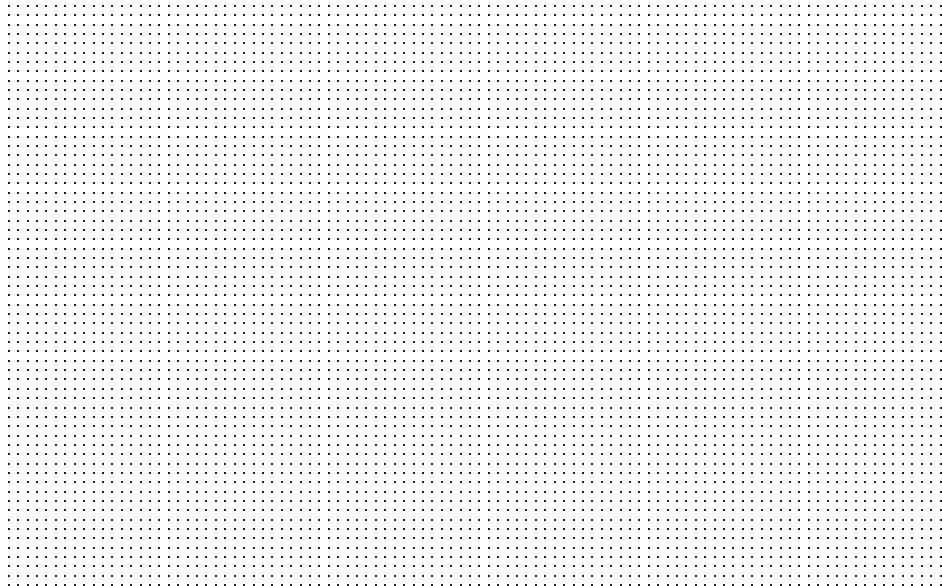




(area 01)

# Picasso in Palestine: A Diagram

(area 02)



(area 03)

Andrew Conio

(page 026)

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Not only does *Picasso in Palestine* sit comfortably with anti-representational, critical and transformative art practices that disrupt the distinctions between the judicial, legislative, curatorial, scholarly, artistic and activist, it also uniquely pushes these practices forward, into new and unexpected terrains. It takes a painting from a major European gallery and *gives back* a new way of thinking about art.

The artwork *Picasso in Palestine* is a composition. However, it is composed not of colours, abstractions or forms, but of problems. The problems of statehood, the nature of the art object, the role of art in society and the potential for art to be a transformative political act. This paper is written in three parts. It starts with an outline of the project and then positions *Picasso in Palestine* in relation to institutional critique, drawing out how it pushes these practices forward, particularly in relation to its transformative and affirmative potential. The text moves on to evaluate the extent to which the project answers the problems it poses, and concludes with a speculative discussion of the extent to which Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the diagram is useful for discerning how these component problems are held together in a non-representational, strategic-interventionist artwork.

At the time of writing, the USA is expected to enact its veto of the declaration of an independent Palestinian State at the United Nations, likely leaving the Palestinian people stateless. Despite their lack of sovereignty and self-determination, and the many insurmountable problems that were created by the 1993 Oslo Accords, the people of this occupied territory, aided by one of the world’s largest concentrations of NGO’s, have been putting into place political, judicial, legislative, economic, social and institutional structures that perform the functions of the state. *Picasso in Palestine* makes a significant contribution to these state-building initiatives in the creation of a viable art and museum culture that is an essential component of a community’s capacity to define itself, to represent its values to itself and to explore and question its own purposes and future. Indeed, the identity of a people is measured, to a significant extent, by the quality of their national culture: their museums, arts and national rituals.

### Institution Building

When a Western museum borrows a painting from a gallery or museum it is expected to activate a long established procedure in which policy documents and lending criteria are downloaded, the insurance company contacted and indemnity agreed. The borrower is most likely already integrated within the art scene and possesses the

requisite incorporations of governance. Typically, compliance with international and ethical standards, national and international law, photography, film and reproduction rights are procedural. Security and transportation entail little more than calling upon longstanding relationships with experienced fine art agents who arrange customs and security clearances. The agents, couriers, shippers and museums each have an exact idea of their responsibilities and liabilities. Indeed, any dispute, novelty or inconsistency is dealt with according to tried and tested procedures. This is all transportable to various locations and situations adding flexibility to this system that is secured by legally binding national and international agreements and, ultimately, in the final analysis, secured on the basis of the sovereign responsibility of a state. For *Picasso in Palestine*, all of these things have had to be created, a litany of problems resolved and questions answered.

Creativity and risk are the lodestones of artistic production. The risk in this case had to be shared and managed, and only extremely creative thinking could prevent, right up to the final days, the project from collapsing. *Picasso In Palestine* did not just entail the creation of a new infrastructure, it entailed the creation of new areas of responsibility and new capacity within a nascent state and political entity. The exact terms of the Oslo Accords had to be clarified, indeed the failure of the Oslo Accords to facilitate this project had to be overcome. The Palestinian Authority, army, police force and even the tax office were required to act in ways they were not accustomed to and art was given a value it had not previously been afforded. The limits, responsibilities and priorities of the security apparatus, legal system and political authority had to be tested.

*Picasso in Palestine* successfully answered the questions; how can a people guarantee their own institutions and provide the ultimate legal framework for events and property when the people have neither state, territory, nor international recognition of their existence? How can a people take responsibility for what happens within their own borders when those borders are controlled by a foreign military occupying power?

In terms of statehood, it asks further questions about the role of land and territory (the physical control of a jurisdiction) in the creation of a people. It is fashionable in post-colonial studies to cede the idea of a nation to that of a diasporic people, to the connections and transversal becomings beyond the Nation State. In a globalised world, material and virtual flows purportedly erase the relevance of borders and boundaries. Artist and cultural theorist Ursula Biemann is well known for her engagement with deterritorialised models of becoming within the framework of post-structuralist geography, she writes, “Places [...] are constituted not only by people who inhabit them, but also by connections and movements of all sorts that traverse them on a variety of scales, ranging from local, private and intimate processes to public, economic, transnational and systemic ones.”<sup>1</sup>

Seemingly counter to this, for the Palestinian people ‘becoming’ and ‘fluid transversal identities’ are absolutely dependent upon securing a land, Beshara Doumani writes, “The state/territory/peoplehood matrix still remains at the heart of the Palestinian political discourse at a time when the very concept of the nation-state as a form of political organisation is being increasingly questioned.”<sup>2</sup> This complexity is precisely where this project enters, as transnational bodies participate in the flow of materials and sociality to bring this painting to Palestine. Moreover, a nascent nation-state is potentially forged both by self-determination and its capacity to complete complex transnational collaborative projects.

### Institutional Critique

At Birzeit University, in one of the supporting events to the *Picasso in Palestine* initiative, Lynda Morris provided the measure of Picasso’s political commitment, the history of his involvement in communism and his lifelong support for a welter of various political causes.<sup>3</sup> In a meticulous, empirical analysis of his life and a detailed examination of his work, Morris dispatched a hugely important corrective to the formalist, aesthetic and canonical reading of Picasso, which has led to the marginalisation of his radical political commitment. Charged with Lynda’s reading, we can see the choice of Picasso, if not this particular artwork, as germane, but not, as been ascribed in some media commentary, as an attempt to bring modernism to the Palestinians as some kind beneficent gesture. This project was never intended to simply provide access to European modernism and hasten the spread of the enlightenment values of abstraction and formalism. As Charles Esche stated, for too long, at least outside the West, the values of the enlightenment have been associated with violence and conquest.

There is no contradiction in discerning the pertinence of the choice of Picasso and addressing how this work approaches the problems of institutional critique. Of the two main orientations of works styled as institutional critique, the first wave consisted of artworks critical of art institutions, their permissions and legitimations, the power of the art system as a whole and how it operated. Famously for John Berger these works came to encompass “the productive and distributive apparatus for the reception of the artwork”.<sup>4</sup> In the second wave, the more Foucauldian manifestation, Institutional Critique came to use the properties of art to critique the normalising and legitimising discourses which structure all aspects of social existence and everyday life. Both forms displace the meaning and value of the artwork away from its object, or its ‘significant form’, so that what was positioned as extrinsic to art comes to be seen as firstly intrinsic to the art work, and then the practice itself.

Indeed, the art world is awash with critical practices that seek to transform the world through the creation of radical social collectives, utopian imaginings, portray-

als of the dystopia of our age, giving voice to the marginal and oppressed, the authoring of manifestoes or, more recently, for creating social ruptures, the blocking or creation of flows, and so on and so forth.

The latter are works that, implicitly or explicitly, acknowledge what has come to be the standard challenge to institutional critique: ‘critique’ is a matter of dissent, and dissent only exists in something other than itself. The struggle for transformative art practices contends with the fact that the art world is now swamped with critique, and dissention is no guarantee that an artwork will be indistinguishable from the prevailing constellations of privilege and power that it seeks to expose.

The transformative potential of *Picasso in Palestine* marks a significant development in these debates. Not only has it created collaborations and temporary alliances between the hundreds of people that have been involved in this project, and the hundreds more who have unknowingly become complicit in this artwork, but it has also bent the machinery of governance to the service of art. It has made checkpoints, the army, insurance companies and political institutions, integral to this work of art. Even the Oslo Accords bend in its service.

The work, then, sits comfortably with one of the most important capacities Deleuze and Guattari afford to the character of art: affirmation. Simon O’Sullivan writes: “This does not mean a simple turning away from critique, for the production of something new will always also involve the turning away from, or simply refusal of, that which same before. It does, however, mean taking a more affirmative attitude towards contemporary art understood here as the production of new combinations in and of the world which suggests new ways and times of being and acting in the world.”<sup>5</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari, the importance of transformation is not only its *a posteriori* potential, but that transformation is immanent to life itself. Creativity is ontologically prior to its capture. However, there is a profound tension inherent to the Deleuze and Guattarian approach to art. On the one hand they point towards what appears to be otherworldly, the cosmological (Bacon wrestles with the forces of the cosmos), esoteric (ungrounded) and ulterior, as in “schizoanalysis” and “Bodies Without Organs”. However, they are also entirely pragmatic; if they are ‘transcendental’ they are ‘transcendental empiricists’. The otherworldly, the virtual, exists in the fabric of *this* world.

In line with this we should expect Deleuze’s writings on the arts to be precise, empirical studies of specific art forms working from the ‘bottom up’ to discern the inherent logic of the form. *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (2003), *Proust and Signs*, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1973), and indeed his cinema books, are not exercises in applying or exemplifying a philosophical system but are singular and specific.

Except, of course, he brings to bear his considerable conceptual armoury, and these art forms, in turn, modify that armoury (*Cinema 1* [1983] and *Cinema 2* [1985] are exemplary in this regard). One such concept is the virtual, and each art form releases

the virtual differently. Perhaps that is how they are best distinguished from each other. And this is the truly transformative affirmative dimension of art: the way in which each form conjures up an unrealised virtual potential in the world. What I am trying to question here is whether freedom, self-determination, dignity and self-respect might constitute the unrealised virtual potential that *Picasso in Palestine* conjures into a precise specific space and time. This work asks whether when Deleuze and especially Guattari speak of a “people yet to come” does this have to be an aesthetic “other worldly” idea or are we discussing here, now, us? Deleuze proposes that, “the ultimate aim of [art] is to set free the creation of a health or this invention of a people, that is, the possibility of life”.<sup>6</sup> *Picasso in Palestine* throws back a challenge to Deleuzian aesthetics; are transformative affirmative art practices in pursuance of “the people yet to come” or “making worlds” only skin deep?

When I say *Picasso in Palestine* composes out of problems, this is exactly what I mean. This is a problem, not only for Deleuzian aesthetics but also for all art that seeks to finally close the gap between art and life, art and politics, aesthetics and sociality, and representation and reality, yet retain for art a specific transformative potential. As the program notes says “*Picasso in Palestine* as a process can be viewed as an attempt to consider and reconstitute the reality in Palestine through alternative means”.<sup>7</sup> To which we might add: to bequeath to art its autonomy and power and to make the materialisation of the artwork coincide with human fantasies, desires, representations and impossible, imagined worlds. *Picasso in Palestine* may not fully answer the questions posed by these statements, but it successfully recasts the problems and challenges us to think again. As Atef Abu Seif from Gaza said in a live Skype broadcast to Birzeit University (25th June 2011), “art is not thinking about its people it is pushing them to think”.

Perhaps these questions can be, if not answered, further refined by the examination of another Deleuze and Guattarian concept, the diagram.

### The Diagram

There is good reason for the attention that the diagram or diagrammatics is attracting in the art world at the moment. There is a pressing need to find concepts capable of expressing the values of art that, in the first place, rupture the existing codes and formations (non-representational, non-signifying, non-‘aesthetic’ practices) and, in the second place, are politically and socially transformative, largely through the creation of encounters and new articulations of being. The diagram is emerging as a form that has the potential to capture the ‘precise’ moment where these artworks are not just ‘social practices’ or political acts but works of art of some significance.

To approach things diagrammatically is to figure the haptic yet indiscernible modulations, or series of contiguities, that exist between forces (forces that may be material, virtual, ideational or social) or indeed any morphology of processes that forge an identity out of existence. Whilst the diagram is neither a representation, nor a model or a topography and certainly not a manual, it is a ‘map’ that is consubstantial with the extant world. In this way, the concept of the diagram is not abstracted from the forces it describes, it is a significant tool with which to make sense of practices that are neither representational nor political but are events capable of challenging existing sedimentations and strata, “The diagrammatic or abstract machine does not function to represent, even something real, but rather constructs a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality.”<sup>8</sup>

Simon O’Sullivan and David Burrows, whose recent works and practices have contributed significantly to countering the widespread misappropriation and misinterpretation of Deleuze and Guattari, particularly in the art world, where the concepts of sensation, rhizomes and chaos are used to puff up meaningless and self-satisfying affectivity, have recently published important essays on the diagram, putting the concepts to work by testing their use.<sup>9</sup> Janell Watson’s *Guattari’s Diagrammatic Thought* (2009) is concerned not with art but how diagrammatics can essay modulating, non-causal effects of objective, affective, subjective and political forces as they are brought together in an auto-producing social production.<sup>10</sup>

In these works, there are considerable variances to the extent to which the diagram is an image at all. Guattari’s books are replete with drawings of processes, forces, flows and machines. In *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze presents his most comprehensive theory on the diagram in which the diagram is the modulator of the forces that compose the image. The concept emerges, of course, out of the general matrix of his conceptual armoury, but new dimensions of thought, shape, and use is found in a novel situation in which the concept itself achieves its merit. However, for Foucault the diagram has little relation to aesthetics and refers to the confluence of material practices to be found in the Panopticon. If Foucault’s Panopticon has come to be thought of as an image or architectural drawing, the diagrammatic function of the carceral logic certainly cannot be thought of as a representation; “it’s relations take place ‘not above’ but within the very tissue of the assemblages they produce”.<sup>11</sup> In another instance, Warren Neidich’s gallery-based drawing are multicolored abstract schema, composed of two dimensional points, spaces and lines, that capture indeterminate yet vital processes between the visual and the analytical. We also find, in Guattari in particular, diagrams of diagrams, building up and incorporating or shifting each other—expanding, entrenching or releasing in diagrammatic flows. Sven-Olav Wallenstein is another leading theorist of the diagram and he diagramatises, without two- or three-dimensional surfaces, the operations of capital and the current surge in

capitalist development in forging new structures in the brain. Of diagrammatics in general he surmises that, “From visual arts to architecture, from philosophy to theories of organization, the diagram has escaped the condition of something merely graphic, a representation of a set of relations established elsewhere, and has become more akin to an instrument of thinking, or even something that engenders thought itself.”<sup>12</sup> In his essay *An Art Scene as Big as the Ritz: The Logic of Senses*<sup>13</sup> David Burrows completes his diagrammatic analysis of the works of four contemporary artists without reference to a spatial plane. In his application, and testing, of the concepts’ limits and efficacy in relation to Leigh Bowery, Bughouse and artist groups !WOWOW! and BANK, he follows Deleuze’s lead, “importantly, the diagram is indiscernible and therefore never an optical effect; it is an unbridled manual power.”<sup>14</sup> An exercise I am repeating in this text but in relation to *Picasso in Palestine*.

In this text, I am also speculating, doing what must be done with all of Deleuze’s concepts, experimenting *with*, rather than refining, analyzing or proving the validity of concepts, and thereby retaining the mobility of thought. Here I am proposing a diagrammatic *praxis*, of its effects in relation to a specific social and political event that happened at a particular place and time. For Deleuze is clear that the diagram must be locatable in space and time.

## Francis Bacon

In order to do this, we return to Deleuze’s formulation of these ideas in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (1963) and *Foucault* (1986). His studies of Francis Bacon’s paintings lead him to identify three features that many of the works have in common. Forces of chaos and abandonment or pure energetic movement, and possibilities of collapse or abandonment. These are the universal forces of movement and change that suffuse our world, providing the background, which is contiguous with the foreground, of existence. You also have a Figure, liberated from the confines of representation and abstraction (carefully distinguished from figuration), clearly contorted by forces that act upon him, moulding him into an animalistic, barely-human subject riven by the world. And, thirdly, you have the diagram, which, on the surface may appear to refer to the visible geometrical or curving lines that create spatial dynamics and provide the visual frame that holds everything together. However, the diagram is richer and deeper than this, it is an imperceptible armature, which functions as a temporary system and alignment of forces. An alignment of the painterly, symbolic, perceptual and the dynamic flows, of bodies, meat, flesh and sensation.



## Two Sides

In *The Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze lays out most precisely the double-sided nature of the diagram. On the one hand, it faces towards order and coherence and, on the other, it faces the infinite outside, the infinite potential of moving beyond everything.

My question is, can *Picasso in Palestine* be seen as an iteration of the same process? On the one hand, it certainly faces towards the objective and the real. It is pragmatic material, objective. On the other hand, it is an open system, comprising the hopes of a people; the absurd, impossible idea that to a land occupied by foreign military power, without a museum or a judicial or logistical infrastructure, Eindhoven's Van Abbe-museum's most valuable painting might be brought. Moreover, this project will remain open long after the event. Lines of flight may shoot from it inspiring other projects, or when another group decides to extend the remit of a national museum, it may, to paraphrase Charles Esche, make it more difficult for other institutions to refuse.

Key is that the 'open' does not relate to the proximal but reaches to the infinite. Hence, forces in Bacon's painting are forces of "pressure, dilation, contraction, flattening, and elongation", which are "like the forces of the cosmos confronting an intergalactic traveller immobile in his capsule".<sup>15</sup> Instead, *Picasso in Palestine* sends lines of flight through the ongoing religious, colonial and economic conflicts that structure relations between Israel and Palestine. It reaches backwards and forwards in time to the Nakbha<sup>16</sup> and beyond to the earliest logics of capital accumulation that find their contemporary formulations in the neo-liberal agenda that dominates the World Order, which finds its apex in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Deleuze writes of the diagram modulating the forces of collapse. Here the forces are of exhaustion, tenacity and the hopes of generations engaged in an existential struggle for the right to exist. The loss of basic human rights, abandonment of dignity, of arbitrary imprisonment, poverty and despair are fundamental features to the landscape of this project.

The important thing about the diagram is that it allows the co-existence of these different processes and durations, and measures how they can stay in relation to each other. It helps us incorporate not only history and geopolitics but also specific, meaningful local events: in diagrammatic thinking everything counts. The visit to the exhibition by workers who are staging the first ever organised strike against the Dickensian conditions of labour in Israeli quarries in Palestine, the immensely touching postcard smuggled out of an Israeli jail depicting *De Buste de Protest*, the Skype broadcast by young Palestinian artist activist Atef Abu Seif (from Windows from Gaza for Contemporary Art) and the intense conversations amongst the regional art community.

The discursive materiality of *Picasso in Palestine* is neither the soft flesh of painterly practice nor the rigid lines of carceral architecture, but a series of material acts involving long paper trails, legal interpretations and logistical problems. It is also

intensive. Distinctions between subjectivities and their practices, or between ideals, expression and matter are impossible in diagrammatic thinking. As is well known in Deleuze-Guattarian terms, worlds and subjects are replete with folds. Here, the principles (Khalid Hourani, Fatima AbdulKarim, Charles Esche, Remco de Blaaij) are folded with checkpoints, apparatuses and power relations, and with duties and responsibility. These individuals prompt us to think of Guattari's idea of subjects as bearers of responsibility and locus of agency who possess powers to engender transformations. We may also think of the hundreds of individuals, with diverse agendas and responsibilities, formed into temporary alliances. This is a project of relations, conversations and flows; flows of energy from the populations, the hundreds who attended the opening and many more who followed events across the Middle East, the flows of ideals and meanings in the symposia and the dozens of debates locally and in the global media response to this project. This project also asks questions of the nature of beauty, if we recall that for Aristotle beauty finds its perfect expression in the idea of justice.

Of greatest interest in relation to art theory is perhaps the affirmative and transformative aspect of this project, which invites us to think beyond Foucault's use of the diagram to define the instruments and modes of the intervention of power.<sup>17</sup> Wallenstein certainly promotes this approach when he notes that the diagram is the "very condition of possibility of a stable physical order, but also that which envelops every order with a 'becoming' of forces, a dimension of the virtual that makes all stable forms susceptible to change and disruption".<sup>18</sup> This paper speculates that *Picasso in Palestine* is just that.

In summary, *Picasso in Palestine* is composed out of a peoples struggle to exist, national and international institutions as well as judicial, aesthetic and political problems. Its scope is international and local and it offers new potentials for affirmative strategic transformative art practices. It represents a further shift in the status, meaning, and function of artistic activity. It is fluid and temporary, its durations stretch backwards and forwards in time and its borders are wide, and extensive, yet it is also concrete, located in space and time. This text suggests that if understood diagrammatically, then its own logic of invention and creation can be appreciated as originally intended, as a work of art.



# MISSING مفقود

## NOTES

1. Ursula Biemann, ed., introduction to *Geography and the Politics of Mobility* (Wien: Generali Foundation, Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2003), 21.
2. See Ursula Biemann and Beshara Doumani, "A Post-Territorial Museum: Interview with Beshara Doumani" in this issue of *A Prior Magazine*.
3. Lynda Morris, "Picasso Territories" 25th June 2011 Birzeit University, Birzeit, West Bank, Palestine.
4. John Berger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (MIT 1984) 22.
5. Simon O'Sullivan, "From Aesthetics to the Abstract Machine", in *Deleuze and Contemporary Art*, eds. Simon O'Sullivan and Stephen Zepke (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 196.
6. Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 1997), 3.
7. Fatima AbdulKarim *Concept Note* 1st February 2011.
8. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 157.
9. Both published essays in *Deleuze and Contemporary Art*, eds. Simon O'Sullivan and Stephen Zepke (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010). In addition, see their collaboration as *Plastique Fantastique*.
10. Janell Watson, *Guattari's Diagrammatic Thought: Writing Between Lacan and Deleuze* (New York: Continuum, 2009).
11. Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (continuum London: New York, 1999), 32.
12. Sven-Olov Wallenstein, "Diagrams of the Mind" in *Lost Between the Extensivity / Intensity Exchange – Warren Neidich* (Eindhoven: Onomatopée, 2009), 8.
13. David Burrows, "An Art Scene as Big as the Ritz: The Logic of Senses" in *Deleuze and Contemporary Art*, eds. Simon O'Sullivan and Stephen Zepke (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp 157–175.
14. David Burrows, "An Art Scene as Big as the Ritz: The Logic of Senses" op cit, 160.
15. Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (Continuum London: New York, 2003), 58.
16. Al-Nakbah, meaning "day of the catastrophe", the day of Israel's Declaration of Independence.
17. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991), 205.
18. Wallenstein, "Diagrams of the Mind", op. cit. 9.



20 أغسطس/آب، قلعة "أكيرهوس" بأوسلو - النرويج

20 August 1978, the Akershus Fortress, Oslo, Norway

## هل تعرف أي شخص من بين هؤلاء

## الذين تظهر صورتهم أعلاه؟

جاءت مجموعة من الأطفال والشباب الفلسطينيين في زيارة ودية للنرويج، في عام 1978، بناء على مبادرة اتخذتها اللجنة النرويجية لفلسطين بالتعاون مع منظمة الفتح الفلسطينية (PLO). كانت تدعى مجموعة منظمة الفتح الفلسطينية للطفولة "الأشبال". وكان الهدف من الرحلة التعريف بحركة التحرير الفلسطينية في الغرب. جاء بعض المشاركين الفلسطينيين من مخيم تل زعتر للاجئين الفلسطينيين، والآخرين من مخيمات في بيروت - لبنان ومن ضواحيها. المعلومات التي توجد في أقلام المحفوظات العامة شحيحة، ولكن بعض أسماء وسن المعنيين قد نُشرا في مقالات صحفية؛ حسين (يبلغ من العمر الآن 46 عاما)، سناء (الآن 40 عاما)، جهاد (الآن 45 عاما) ورائدا، رئيس المجموعة والمترجم جلال يبلغا 53 عاما من العمر حاليا. قام "الأشبال" بزيارة أماكن مختلفة من القطر بما في ذلك مدينة أوسلو وترونهإيم وسينيا وترومسو. التقيت بهم في حفل الوداع الذي أقيم في أوسلو عدة أيام فقط قبل عودتهم إلى الوطن. أعرب عن تقديري البالغ للحصول على أية معلومات عن أي شخص تظهر صورته أعلاه. الرجاء إرسال بريد الكتروني إلى أو الاتصال بي شخصيا إن كانت لديكم أية معلومات حول هذه الرحلة التي جاءت إلى النرويج والتي قد تساعدني في إجراء مزيد من البحث والتحرر عن هؤلاء الأشخاص.

## Do you know anyone in this photograph?

**In 1978 a group of Palestinian children and youths visited Norway on a goodwill visit initiated by the Palestine Committee of Norway and held in collaboration with the PLO. The Palestinian group was called Ashbals and originated from the Tel al-za'atar refugee camp in Lebanon. The given names and current ages are known for five members of the group: Hussein (46), Sana (40), Gihad (45), and the group leader Randa and interpreter Jallal, both 53 years old.**

**Information about anyone in the photograph above will be highly appreciated and might lead the artist, Runa Carlsen, further in her investigation. Please send an email or call if you have specific information about this event or persons in this photograph. Contact person: Runa Carlsen, visual artist, based in Oslo, Norway Cellphone: +47 93 40 52 12 Email: ru-car@online.no**



(area 01)

# Occupational Hazards of Modern Art and Museums

(area 02)

## A Transcript of a Conversation with the Artist and its Afterthoughts

(area 03)

## Rasha Salti and Khaled Hourani

(page 040)

### The Anecdote at the Origin

The group of visitors was being given a painstakingly thorough insider tour of the Van Abbemuseum that included the restoration ateliers, storage facility and crate-making workshop; painstaking for Khaled Hourani, artist and director of the International Academy of Art Palestine in Ramallah, to whom museums are structures ultimately embodying state sovereignty and self-determination, a tirelessly postponed ambition of and promise by the Palestinian National Authority—but that’s a whole other story. It’s not that Hourani was disinterested, quite the contrary, but he is prone to allowing his mind to run astray, and has a strong proclivity for finding inspiration from what seems to the rest of the world as a mundane convention or basic principle for organising civilian life.

As the [tour] guide listed countries across the globe, destinations to which works from the Van Abbemuseum collection had travelled to, Hourani wondered whether there might ever be a time when Palestine would come up in a list of places far-flung from the Netherlands. The guide regaled visitors with incongruous anecdotes: a painting from the collection had once travelled to a museum in Greece in a military plane. At once mystified and bemused, Hourani tried to visualise the scene, the painting, crated with masterful craftsmanship, standing in the midst of the spartan interiors of an aircraft intended for the defence of a European democracy’s national security.

For the remaining days of his visit, the image/anecdote stayed with him. Until the unthinkable crossed his mind: could an acclaimed masterwork from the collection ever be allowed to cross the checkpoints that control access to the Occupied Territories? To Ramallah? A genially absurd, comically surreal thought. Such thoughts are often the seed of Hourani’s art practice.

In 2009, Khaled Hourani painted close-ups of a zebra horse, which he titled *Zebra*. That year, a Gazan was revealed to have painted live donkeys with black and white stripes, snuck them through the underground smuggling tunnels between Egypt and Gaza to showcase them as zebras in his zoo. When interviewed, he confessed that not only were real zebras too expensive, but also they could not fit in the tunnels. His zoo needed a new ‘sensation’ to attract visitors and considering Gaza was under siege, he had to come up with a novelty. Hourani’s painting paid tribute to the man’s creative genius, and interrogated, playfully, painting practice. In 2007, *Kadima* (Hebrew for “forward”), a ‘pragmatic’ coalition of centre-left and centre-right politicians was formed in Israel, led by former Foreign Affairs minister Tzipi Livni. The political party positioned itself as the more efficient bulwark to the rise of a radical right-wing. The new party published their manifest in Israeli newspapers. Hourani translated the text to Arabic and published it in one of the most widely read Palestinian newspapers... only replacing every occurrence of Palestine and Palestinian with Israel and Israeli, and

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vice versa... It was an art project. The newspaper received many a call that day from enthusiastic readers with queries about how to contact the Palestinian “Forward” party... Anecdotally, such is Hourani’s artistic practice.

The short and long of the story is that upon his return to Palestine he asked the IAAP students to select a painting from the Van Abbemuseum’s permanent collection. They picked Picasso’s *Buste de Femme* (1943). Hourani went back to the museum’s directors and proposed that *Buste de Femme* be exhibited at the IAAP in Ramallah. Hourani recalls distinctly how the first discussions of the proposal were punctuated with guffawing and chuckles: *Picasso in Ramallah!* He could not tell whether his interlocutors from the esteemed museum would take him seriously. And yet, the signifying power of exhibiting a Picasso painting in Palestine was at once so captivating and explicit that, almost immediately, all those summoned to participate in making the project a reality were whole-heartedly enlisted.

### The Making Of...

In the making of *Picasso in Palestine* the means are as interesting as the end. The means are, in fact, an end in themselves. The regime that governs the universe of museum practice, and the administration of collections and loans is brought into an unimaginable engagement with the regime that governs the universe of military occupation. At the crux of collection loans is insurance. “The first insurance company we contacted studied the Oslo Peace Agreements and articulations of Palestinian sovereignty and concluded they could not be part of the project”, said Hourani. “We were undeterred, and researched insurance companies that might be eccentric enough to partner with us.” Eventually they found one: “The company, described by its director as ‘adventurous’, insures tuna fish in Malta. The director and his deputy travelled to Ramallah to study the journey... and came on board”, Hourani paused then exploded in laughter.

A legal team was assembled next. While existentially, poetically and discursively, the question of the existence of Palestine and Palestinians is no longer a question, and neither is Palestinian political representation a question, Palestine is not—yet—an internationally recognised sovereign state. As such, it is neither a member of the World Trade Organization nor a signatory of the Global Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Under the aegis of Israeli occupation, movement in and out of the West Bank and customs regulations are the dominion of the occupying state. Moreover, Palestine is not officially a place, a destination. After numerous, endless meetings in Eindhoven, Ramallah and Haifa, it was agreed that regardless of the fact that the independent state of Palestine did not exist in the writ of international law, the International Academy of Art Palestine (IAAP) was, indisputably, an internationally

recognised institution as well as a physical site. Effectively, it was the ultimate destination for *Buste de Femme*, and that was what mattered, the shippers had an address for their label.

“Discussions of the painting’s itinerary produced a multitude of scenarios,” explained Hourani, “one scenario proposed to bring it to Haifa and from there to Ramallah, but I did not want the painting to be spared the journey travellers to Ramallah are forced to navigate.” So it landed by plane at Tel Aviv airport, travelled in a van to the Atarot checkpoint and from there to the Qalandia checkpoint before entering Ramallah. “From Tel Aviv to Atarot, a private Israeli security company accompanied the van and from Qalandia to Ramallah, Palestinian police. There was a three-kilometre section, a no-man’s-land, where only civilians are allowed passage, Israeli private security cannot tread, and neither can Palestinian national armed security. The van was unguarded by armed security, instead protection was provided by some twenty international media cameras that accompanied the van and broadcast its passage on that road live.” Hourani sighed. To resolve seemingly insurmountable obstacles many such felicitous accidents had come up unexpectedly. “Often, things fell into place like magic, just when we thought we hit a wall and we might have to give up. A week before the painting was due to travel, I thought we would have to cancel the entire project... and then, somehow, a resolution unravelled.”

The amount of paperwork Hourani amassed (documents, permissions, letters of support, evidence of this and that), the process of translating, stamping and certifying was nothing short of Kafkaesque. Adding to that, the volatility of the situation on the ground—whether a flare-up of violence in Gaza, or an Israeli crackdown anywhere in the West Bank. “Needless to say, the Arab Spring, which made everyone in Palestine dream of a radically new political horizon, had its impact too”, Hourani sighed again. This time, the tone of his voice betrayed the burdens he carried, the intense paradoxes he contended with. The euphoria at the prospect of the end of despotism in the Arab world and determining the fate of *Picasso in Palestine*, how could anyone predict any of the outcomes of the insurgencies in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Syria? And how would they translate in Palestine? “We considered the prospect of postponing the opening at several instances throughout the two years of working on the project. Timing was as significant as it was delicate. I realised, in discussions with the various counterparts, that *Picasso in Palestine* also brought regimes of time—and their political economy—into an uneasy confrontation: Europe’s post-capitalist globalised time, Israel’s military occupation time and Palestine’s contrived colonized time.”

Two years into the making, *Picasso in Palestine* had to happen. Figuring out the most appropriate date or apt time was not unlike reading tealeaves. Finally, a date was set.

## Picasso in Palestine

Over the decades of museum collection loan practices, the regime of environmental conditions for the transfer of works has become stringent. Paintings are not only crated according to detailed and specific instructions, the levels of temperature and humidity also have to be maintained within carefully controlled parameters. “Once it landed, the crated painting was transported in a van, it was essential that it not be opened until it reached its final destination”, Hourani explained. “We had to extract a commitment from the numerous Israeli security instances that they would not do it.” They promised to stick to their word if nothing ‘suspicious’ took place. “Anything could go wrong at any moment, if a child had thrown a stone at the van, if an Israeli settler had decided to pester a Palestinian, if any small, mundane incident had taken place as they do all the time on the road from Tel Aviv to the Qalandia gate, the Israelis would have an excuse to stop the painting’s journey and forced open the crate. *Picasso in Palestine* was in many ways a series of orchestrated small miracles.”

Hourani’s tone changes radically when he recalls the moment of the crate’s arrival to the IAAP space that had been specially constructed to house the painting. There too, controlled environmental conditions had been secured. The crate’s opening was an event in itself, attended by the various experts mandated to oversee the process, with every step documented. From that moment onwards, and for the span of the month that followed *Buste de Femme*’s visit to Ramallah, *Picasso in Palestine* became a celebratory event. The opening celebration was an unprecedented success. Hourani, jubilant, is still surprised at the number of people who turned up. “I was expecting to see the usual suspects, Ramallah’s art crowd, the faces I see at every opening or cultural event. The hundreds that flocked were faces I had not seen before, people, everyday people who were curious to see the painting and celebrate our feat. I stood in the courtyard receiving congratulations, like a groom at a wedding or some national hero who had achieved an exploit.”

For the span of that month, people came from all over the West Bank to look at *Buste de Femme*. In order to maintain the temperature of the room and the humidity level only seven people could be in the room at any moment, in addition to the two private security guards that were hired. A conference titled XX took place, and philosopher Slavoj Žižek was hosted to give a lecture.

Beyond luring a new audience to an artistic event, *Picasso in Palestine* mobilised unprecedented interest from the media, locally and internationally. It took a few days for Hourani to take stock of the level of engagement from civil society, however nothing prepared him for Amjad’s letter. A week into the exhibition’s opening, a courier from the International Red Cross (ICRC) delivered a letter for Hourani to the IAAP. He left it with the security guard on duty. It was from Amjad, a young Palestinian

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sequestered in the Jalbous prison. Amjad had read about *Picasso in Palestine* and its resounding success, he wanted to congratulate Hourani, and expressed his gratitude by tracing the drawing, after seeing a photographic reproduction in a newspaper. “My heart skipped a beat when I opened the letter, I was completely overwhelmed with an array of emotion—pride, humility, joy, awe. I could imagine Amjad in his cell, as almost all of us had been rounded up and jailed at some point in our—early or advanced—adulthood; that he was inspired to write to me was one of the most precious rewards of realising this project. Part of the letter was yellowed from coffee, he had even cared to apologise for its untoward presentation.” Hourani called the ICRC to find out how best to reply to Amjad and they recommended he publish whatever letter or message in a newspaper. Hourani did indeed, in the daily al-Ayyam.

A month after the exhibition opened, *Buste de Femme* was crated again and shipped back to Eindhoven. Its journey back home was different, it could not pass through Qalandia because the Israeli army mandates a thorough search of every vehicle, passenger or merchandise that leaves Ramallah and travels to Tel Aviv. Moreover, the search and examination process would have caused cumbersome delays and inconvenienced travellers. Instead, it went through Ofar, a checkpoint intended for the movement of goods. Hourani accompanied the van carrying the crate to Ofar, and so did the consul for the Netherlands. “The no man’s land in this case is only six hundred meters long.” Hourani laughed: “The next day the main page of the Israeli Defense Force’s website featured a report (just before the news item on the renewed shelling of Gaza), that boasted the excellent job the army had done in enabling the van’s smooth journey.” The Palestinian police report noted assiduously how there were no incidents on their end... except for a suspicious amount of empty beer bottles in the artists’ studios at the IAAP.

## Afterthoughts

The theoretical and analytical relevance or implications of *Picasso in Palestine* are rich, layered, complex, variegated and genial. In the most immediate and mundane levels, a new audience in the West Bank was motivated to engage with art. On the other hand, an established museum in Europe has expanded the realms and political geography of its practice. On a more abstract scale, *Buste de Femme* now has Palestine written in its biography, and Palestine has *Buste de Femme* written in its modern historical script of enduring occupation. There are, of course, many other deeper questions; in the guise of afterthoughts, two will be explored. The first is about Picasso and the prevailing identifications of his oeuvre. On the one hand, he is so widely known as a modern artist, his name is almost a brand for modernism in art, for the finest of its vanguard as well as the most high-priced paintings. In other words, it is no surprise

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that the students of the IAAP picked *Buste de Femme* amongst the Van Abbemuseum collection. Other works may have spoken to them but Picasso reigns supreme in the gallery of canons. Picasso is also known as a politically engaged artist, his *Guernica* emblematises one of the past century’s most epic works to denounce the horrors of war, to give a representation to the victims rather than the victors or warmongers. When I listened to Hourani’s early exposés of *Picasso in Palestine* in 2009, I could not help thinking about Picasso in Israel. While *Picasso in Palestine* brought to the fore all the discursive and legal paradoxes of Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, the international consensus that endorses it, as well as exposed the precariousness of the Oslo Accords, what would be the implications of Picasso in Israel? What would the set of identifications with his figure and oeuvre be?

**Picasso in Israel**

It is safe to assume that the various state and private museums dedicated to modern art in Israel have had a long and rich experience with loaning and lending masterworks of modernism from similar counterparts in Europe and North America, and that these transactions to have never come close to even prodding fundamental questions about the existence or legitimacy of the Israeli state, its constitutional writ, nor its military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. It might be presumptuous, but harmlessly so, to assume that Picasso’s works have travelled and exhibited in Israel’s museums. The Israeli literati and cultural élite—as the rest of society—has always regarded itself as thoroughly European, by no means Middle Eastern, in spite of the geographical location of the country. As such, Israeli modern art embeds itself with extreme ease within the western canon, and thus Picasso’s modernist proposals for visual representation and rendering have been in a ‘natural’ conversation with Israeli artists. There might be strains in Israeli society that perceive their country as essentially peace loving, or not vested in the glorification of war and military culture, but the reality is obviously otherwise. Israel was born from a war, it has predicated its security on military occupation, and in the past few years, built a massive reinforced concrete wall around its borders to protect itself from the nation it occupies. It is a country in a permanent state of war.

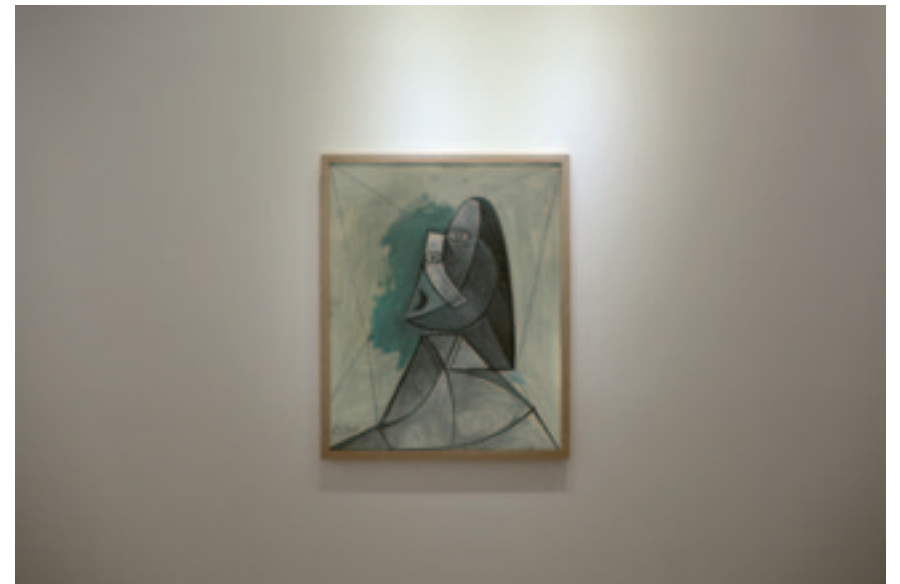
In the summer of 2008, the German government brokered an impressive trade-off between Hezbollah and the Israeli government, of Israeli-jailed Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners in exchange for the remains of Israeli soldiers fallen on Lebanese soil. The event, showcased as one of Hezbollah’s major victories was broadcast with superlative fanfare on television. Cameras followed the prisoners from the main administration office in Hadarim Prison where they signed their own official release forms, handed over to the ICRC and boarded on buses to Lebanon. The prisoners were lined

up against a wall, hands yet cuffed, to pose for a photograph. They stood, dressed in grey sweatshirts, against a reproduction of *Guernica*.<sup>\*</sup> In Israel, Picasso and his epic denunciation of war are appropriated to adorn the office of prison administrators. How will that chapter be written in the biography of *Guernica*, and how will *Guernica* be written in the history of the Hadarim prison?

A little known fact outside Israel, is that its declaration of independence was first officially proclaimed on May 14th, 1948, by the state’s first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, in the main hall of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. Photographs of the rally depict Ben Gurion standing against a wall with masterworks of Jewish art.

The site was not chosen for the ‘love of art’, or to seed the Zionist state with a special connection with artistic practice. Or at least not consciously. The nascent Zionist council did not want to proclaim the state of Israel in a building that had any association with the British Mandate that was to end officially the following day, on May 15th. The Tel Aviv Museum of Art was the Dizengoff House, an estate owned by a very affluent Jewish colonist who turned it into an art museum and donated it to the municipality after the death of his wife in 1930. In 1971, the museum was relocated to another site, and the building became a museum dedicated to the history of Tel Aviv-Jaffa that includes ‘Independence Hall’. The day following that ‘museum-declaration’, Israel became formally at war with Palestine and neighbouring Arab states. In the national chronology of Palestinians, that day is known as the first of their Nakba, or catastrophe.

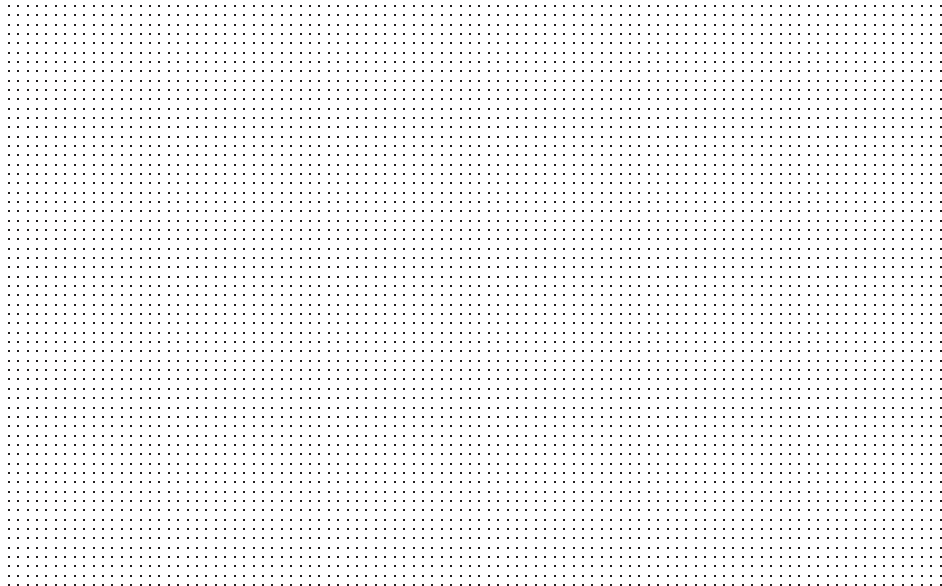
<sup>\*</sup> <http://www.zimbio.com/pictures/QUJDqeRbykS1/International+Red+Cross+Transfer+Hezbollah/b1qWBblgJWW/Samir+Kantar>



(area 01)

# An Ambitious Claim

(area 02)



(area 03)

## Charles Esche

The exhibition of Picasso’s 1943 painting, *Buste de Femme*, in Ramallah is an auspicious occasion. It confirms the development of an already long-standing relationship between the Van Abbemuseum and the International Academy of Art Palestine (IAAP) as well as between different colleagues in both institutions. More than that however, it represents a symbolic connection between European modernity and contemporary Palestinian culture; a connection that can serve, if understood well, as a way to imagine cultural globalism as mutuality rather than conformism to a single worldview. The story of modernity as told from Europe is aligned with colonialism and war, as much as it is represented by the liberating images of the artistic avant-garde. Palestine, like other non-European nations, was a bystander in the high modern world represented by Picasso and his comrades. Ramallah, Jerusalem, Hebron and many other cities in the region were, at that time, places to which things were done rather than agents of their own destiny. First the Ottomans then the British, French, North Americans and European Israelis all took turns in determining the region’s future, as many of them still try to do today. But change is afoot, modernity is over and the reactive Palestine of the past is becoming step by step a proactive community, taking on the burdens of national and cultural responsibility along the way. Fulfilling the request of the IAAP both momentarily normalises the situation in Ramallah and still depicts the nature of its state of exception. As V.I. Lenin pointed out at *The Second Congress of the Communist International* in 1920, “the imperialist war has drawn the dependent peoples into world history.” Now, a century later, world history is being shaped as much by the peoples of the then colonial countries as by the imperialist wars that still continue around and about them. How that future will unfold is, of course, as unclear as it was in 1920, but in its modest way, *Picasso in Palestine* is part of a welcome trajectory in the course of which people in Palestine and elsewhere in the changing Middle East become the subjects of world history, writing their own scripts for the multi-polar planet we need to share.

Making an ambitious claim about world history for an art project is naturally not without its dangers. This is, after all, only strictly concerned with the shipment of a small amount of wood, canvas and paint from one country to another. Yet the elaborate processes that have had to be engaged in order to achieve it—processes that took nearly two years to complete—demonstrate that something other than the simple presentation of a painting is at stake. This whole project began as a dual investigation. On the one hand, it was a seemingly simple loan request from one organisation (an art academy) to another (a museum). The direct nature of the request required the museum to deal with it in the way any other application for borrowing a work from our collection would be assessed. Asking questions about the condition of the space it was to be shown, the security of its transport, the regulations around insurance and all the other issues that emerged as we did so, unlocked the strange, ambiguous legal and



cultural status of this eastern part of the traditional Palestinian territory that still remains under external occupation. Even as I write this text in fact, the final approvals have yet to be received.

On the other hand, the project is equally an artistic work by the Palestinian artist and teacher, Khaled Hourani. It was his insight into the complex meanings that the movement of a Picasso to Palestine would create that, supported by his colleagues and the students in the academy, allowed the project to negotiate the incremental hurdles it encountered. To be clear about the peculiar circumstances of this loan, it is worth recalling that lending a work to the Israel Museum some 25 kilometres away from the academy would have elicited very different responses from insurers, transporters, the press and politicians. The simple act of contemplating a journey to Ramallah immediately created political and juridical questions on all sides, alongside the international media attention that was very welcome but well beyond the capacities of a provincial institution. Dealing with these events one by one took patience, skill and hard work on behalf of everyone involved, but it ultimately rested on the continued artistic drive that Khaled's initial insight injected into the request. Without his sustained commitment, we could never have completed the project.

In this way, the project clearly reveals far more about the given situation than might be expected from its simple premise. In these circumstances it does not seem quite so absurd to claim that, by exhibiting a painting by arguably the most famous artist of the twentieth century in a country that is arguably the most monitored territory on the face of the earth today, we do indeed place art in relation to history-in-the-making. Yet this project not only comments on or even creates a real effect on the situation in Palestine, it also has an influence on the future of the Picasso painting and on the museum collection of which it is part. The Van Abbemuseum has invested time and energy in building relationships across the Middle East for the last three to four years, though much of this has been invisible to the visiting public. Behind the scenes however, we have slowly built a genuine exchange between very different cultural conditions, establishing mutual understandings where none existed before. Together we began to speak of the idea of a dispersed museum, one that was present in the relations forged across cultural regions rather than in the art objects held in the collection. That this dispersed museum should manifest itself elsewhere than Eindhoven was a logical consequence of that thinking. That it should appear not as the museum itself but more in co-operation with (one could even in the guise of) the International Art Academy Palestine was also an obvious if less publicly explicable development.

In parallel to this process of encountering new insights and influences from the Middle East, the workers at the museum have been investigating a separate but connected question for ourselves; that is, what are the potential capacities of the European art museum of the twenty-first century? While Western modernist universalism

and European cultural hegemony are discredited concepts, the images of what may come to replace them are still barely discernable. One result is that in Europe we are forced to think about what we want to preserve or pass on to an emerging cosmopolitanism from this modern culture for which we were largely responsible. We can assume that the cultural values in formation will no longer be only 'Western' in origin, but we do not know which precise elements of former Western ethical and cultural inventions will be valid for the future. To make an attempt to discover what might be appropriate, we felt at the museum that we needed to redeploy the collection in different, public ways. We suspected that through the insights and actions of artists from very different cultural backgrounds, we might understand what would otherwise remain unimaginable to us. Particularly, we wanted to think about what we had in our archives and how this might be used in ways to which we were simply blind.

*Picasso in Palestine* emerged out of the confluence of these two long-term trajectories. For the Van Abbemuseum, the most pertinent questions are framed by the project. How a European art museum could become meaningful to a wider context than its own locale? How can the works of Picasso, which have long since lost their radical edge and become familiar classics, be reimagined or recontextualised in ways that would restore something of the old feelings of physical alienation and the sense of a strange, yet close, emotional distancing that they produced in their own time? We do not yet know what kind of Picasso we will welcome back once it has been shown in Ramallah. Materially it will be same, but will we address it in the same way as before knowing where it has been and what it has come to represent? By following this journey, we feel we are making a constructive response to the question of the twenty-first-century museum. In the process, we are satisfying a request from a group of colleagues that we would never have dreamed of doing ourselves. The element of hospitality here, or, in Derrida's words, "saying yes to who or what turns up" is crucial for understanding what we can learn from *Picasso in Palestine*, just as it will inform what we do in Eindhoven into the future.



Picasso

A Trivia with  
a Fortune-teller  
and an Architect

Yazid Anani

After a nice Ramadan meal of roast chicken with basil and lemon—a good recipe from Nigel Slater’s *Real Food*—we gathered in the living room of my dear friend, Hanan Yamin, an architect who has spent the last twelve years fighting her way through the matchoism of the architectural profession, managing at the end to have an office with exalted reputation and a big bite of the thriving building and construction sector in Ramallah. We grabbed our glasses of Casa Defra white wine and relaxed comfortably with full stomachs on the sofa. With us was a darling friend of ours, the ‘fortune-teller’ Randa Bibo—a high-spirited woman with a beautiful ornamented scarf wrapped around her bold head, replacing what used to be long, silky and stylish hair, which she has tragically lost due to her ongoing chemotherapy treatment for breast cancer.

“Randa, Hanan,” I said inquisitively, “What do you know of Picasso?”

“I have always heard about him but, to tell you the truth, I know nothing about his history,” Randa said in an affirming voice. “I might have even learnt about him at some point, but I also have no memory whatsoever about that.”

“Do you have any idea about his nationality?” I asked, teasingly.

“Is he German?” Randa looked at me hesitantly. “You are close,” I nodded. “Dutch? French maybe? Ah now I know, he’s Belgian? Oh come on Yazid, spare me the torture,” as I kept shaking my head in negation.

“He’s Spanish,” said Hanan, firmly cutting to the chase. Randa immediately replied, “I didn’t know that at all.”

“Do you know any of his famous work?” I prompted, to be faced by the truthful and honest answer that both of them knew none of Picasso’s famous paintings, although they have had cognition of his name since their childhood.

Abruptly, Hanan started piecing together the knowledge she had about Picasso, “Wasn’t he a Surrealist painter? I guess he was part of an art movement that dealt with tortured humanity. I remember studying about him in an art history class during my architectural education in Jordan. However, I can’t recall any of his paintings, but I think I would be capable of recognising his work the moment I have my eyes set on one of his paintings. Isn’t he the one who did something at some point on Salvador Dali?”

I tried to run away from a misinformed rhetoric about European art history by diverting the discussion in a different direction.

“Do you remember posters of harlequins from a circus that we used to encounter as children every now and then, when accompanying our parents to their friends’ houses? Or a bluish poster of an old man playing a guitar? These were Picasso paintings!”

“Really,” Randa answered with excitement, “I remember buying the bluish poster of the old guitarist in 1982 when I used to live in Iraq. I still have a photograph of my sisters posing around the poster, which I hung at that time on a wall in our house in Baghdad.” “Yazid,” she continued, “You made me realise that I already have history with a Picasso and a personal relation with him without knowing!”



“Why do you think Picasso was famous world wide?” I asked.

“Je ne sais pas,” Hanan answered in French with an intonation full of sarcasm. “Every art movement whether it was Surrealism or Impressionism has had a major influence on European culture, life and architecture. Unlike some of his peers at the time, who isolated themselves from handling what their society was going through, and, as a result, were immediately discarded and never renowned by society, Picasso managed to creatively and accurately reflect these dilemmas. This might be the reason why he is so famous and celebrated.”

“He’s an artist,” Randa interrupted Hanan’s argument. “Maybe he was pre-destined with great luck!”

Hanan and I felt at once the fortune-teller’s mystic senses at play. Finally, there was an interesting drift from the ongoing, dreary discussion of art history and the role of art in society.

“When exactly was Picasso born?” Randa requested in an authoritative voice, as she consciously knew that she was about to demonstrate the mastery of her fortune-telling numerological powers.

I immediately took out my iPhone from my pocket and browsed the net for Picasso’s birthday while the two women took a little pause to sip their wine. I read the date from the screen in an eager voice, “It’s the 25th of October 1881.”

Randa started calculating and whispering numbers, which we couldn’t understand until she finally shrieked, “I told you, he had a great deal of luck as a person!” She explained, “Apparently, Picasso was a very sensitive person. Art was his world whether as a theatre actor or a painter. This person suffered tremendously in his life due to his astrological connection with Saturn. He held a massive burden of responsibilities on his shoulders, more than he possibly could handle. His life was very exhausting. He had to work hard to get things done. However, he’s a person of tolerance and perseverance with a gift of foresight that led him through towards the light and allowed him to discard pain and agonising material. His intellect was inclined towards nature and the ethics and sublimity of the wilderness. This made him a hypersensitive individual, affecting his creativity, creation and social responsibilities. Picasso is obviously a character that is able to read what is between the lines but he seldom voiced his observations out loud.”

“Randa, have you deciphered all this only from his date of birth?” Hanan interfered with a smile on what looked like an amused face. “It’s obvious, Randa, that all artists suffer in their life and then become acknowledged and famous after their death. Beethoven was deaf! Gaudi too, and on top of that he was hit by a tram and died in a slummy hospital. He was always in courts filing lawsuits to get his commission fees. Salvador Dali, or was it Picasso who cut off his ear? I think it was Picasso. And that was only to prove his love to his lover.”

Randa got very excited about the account of self-amputation of the ear as an emblem of love and cried “Alah, Alah.”

The doorbell buzzed suddenly. Haifa, a friend of Hanan’s, had popped by for a visit. She’s somehow related to Hanan on her mother’s side. Another single mother working at the Palestinian Legislative Council (the Parliament), which to my knowledge came to a halt in 2002 when Israel arrested some of the elected parliament members and officially banned Palestinian Legislative Council meetings. Yet surprisingly, the institution is still bureaucratically functioning, and I heard lately that all the people working there are still receiving salaries from the Palestinian Authority. What are these people doing exactly?

Haifa helped herself to some wine and joined us on the sofa, reminding Hanan that they were both attending Shahrazad’s birthday party later that night at some new bar or restaurant that I didn’t catch the name of. I was again reminded of how I lost interest in tracking all the new leisure and entertainment businesses thriving in Ramallah. It’s becoming too much of an exaggerated situation!

Hanan continued her perplexing argument in a lecturing tone by saying, “Mahmoud Darwish, the Palestinian poet, was once commemorated by the Municipality of Ramallah while he was still alive. They named a roundabout and a square after him and invited him to the inauguration ceremony. I was there he said, ‘It’s a bad omen. I am still alive!’ He found it very awkward to be alive while attending his self-commemoration.”

I interrupted Hanan’s never-ending storytelling by saying, “Hanan we’re discussing Picasso here, not Mahmoud Darwish. What has this got to do with that?”

Suddenly, Randa intervened and asked, “Didn’t we have a Picasso painting brought to Palestine recently?”

Haifa shrugged and replied, “Yes, it was an event called ‘Picasso in Palestine’. I found out about it only one day before the exhibition was ending. My daughter Rima found something about it on Facebook by pure coincidence and asked me, ‘What does Picasso in Palestine mean?’ I really did not know. My daughters urged me to go with them to see the painting but I was very busy and we didn’t go! Truthfully, they didn’t have enough publicity for the event.”

“I was very sick. I didn’t manage to go either,” Randa elaborated. “It was at the time I discovered that I had breast cancer.”

We all went silent for a moment, trying to distract ourselves by sipping more wine and avoiding looking in Randa’s eyes directly. Each one of us was hoping to find a way to avoid entering the cancer territory and Randa’s medical situation. We didn’t want her to get depressed again. I attempted to break the critical moment by asking, “What about you Hanan, what prohibited you from seeing Picasso?”

“I would not have gone even if I had time,” Hanan declared in a very opinionated tone. “What attracts me to attend an art or cultural event is the degree to which it is

designed and conceptualised to relate to the average person on the street and the dilemmas of society, as I mentioned before.”

“But Hanan!” I answered, “So many people went to see ‘Buste de Femme’. Part of the project was aimed at unravelling the complexity of bringing a seven million dollar painting to the Art Academy in Ramallah, including the insurance policies, security measures, border politics, funding, institutional bureaucracies, etc.”

Haifa muttered, “What the hell is ‘BOOS DO FAM’? What does that mean? I though we were talking about Picasso’s painting!”

“Yazid!” Hanan cried. “What are you talking about? Institutional bureaucracy? Border politics? Security? You call this art? This is what we’re all dealing with on a daily basis. So, can I call myself an artist or what I experience on a daily basis artwork, only because I reveal what you’ve mentioned? I think Palestinian art is becoming distant from society. It is not talking to the people in their own language anymore. This might be something interesting for you or to contemporary artists such Khalil Rabah or Emily Jacir, but not to the masses on the street.”

Randa and Haifa lost interest in the conversation and started to chat about their teenage sons and daughters. Haifa was complaining about the loss of ethics and rudeness of the younger generation, while Randa was very proud of the upbringing of her son and daughter.

Nonetheless, Hanan continued the discussion, “I am a person who travels a lot. I have been to many museums and seen the paintings and works of many artists. I even got to see the Mona Lisa at the Louvre. On the other hand, I wasn’t that tempted to go and see the Picasso painting at the Art Academy. If it was an exhibition of Suleiman Mansour or Nabil Anani, I might have given it a thought.”

“Why?” I asked.

“Because I find it personally very interesting to follow their artistic practices nowadays and see the change in their contemporary work after their engagement with the resistance art of the 70s and 80s.”

“Hanan,” Randa suddenly stood up, alert, interrupting me from arguing with Hanan, “It’s 8:00 p.m., can you please switch the TV on?! My daughter’s show is about to start. Today she’ll be presenting a new Peugeot car!”

Haifa left for the bathroom to take a shower before heading to Shahrazad’s birthday party. Randa, Hanan and I were fixated on the TV screen, watching the strange Peugeot show on PBC. Her daughter looked stunningly beautiful and professional, though I couldn’t understand the point of the commercial programme.

The show was over and Haifa reappeared with a black spaghetti-strap top and nice makeup, ready to party. We poured another round of Casa Defra before they were due to leave for the party.

Haifa suddenly continued with a follow-up on the publicity of *Picasso in Palestine*

saying, “I was asking myself in the shower why I didn’t know personally about ‘Picasso in Palestine’ while I knew about other cultural events in town! My answer was simply because of my excessive dependence on Facebook. I’m always informed through the networks of my friends about ongoing cultural activities. As I said earlier, ‘Picasso in Palestine’ popped up by pure coincidence on the Facebook profile of one of my daughter’s friends.” Unsurprisingly, Hanan had something to say about this particular issue.

“Monday, 9:00 a.m. at Al-Manara Square, there was a solidarity demonstration with the Syrian people. I decided to go. I picked the invitation up from my friends on Facebook. All my friends considered it as an interesting public event, worth supporting and attending. Therefore, I received an invitation from almost every single one of my 126 friends. Comparatively, ‘Picasso in Palestine’ seemed not to rhyme with the expectations and interests of any of my 126 friends. I never bumped into neither an announcement nor an invitation. Here, we have to stop and ask why.”

“By the way!” Randa asked, “What is ‘Picasso in Palestine’ other than the painting and the documentation of the process of moving it to Palestine? Who actually attended the event?”

All of a sudden I was thrilled to talk about the opening of *Picasso in Palestine*, which I labelled sometime later as my attendance at the ‘Miniature Palestine’, “The opening was actually very interesting. Carole Sansour and I dressed up for the occasion. We were surprised to see the usually busy street in front of the academy wiped clean of cars! Regiments of soldiers in dark blue uniforms and machine guns were asking cars to park somewhere else, either to the side or on one of the back streets. So we parked our car near the Bank of Palestine and then walked up to the art academy.

The main gate to the academy parking lot was heavily secured with the dark blue soldiers in dark blue uniforms. One could see from there that a tensile, light structure had been constructed at the end of the parking lot especially for the occasion. Behind the concrete retaining walls of the parking lot lies the traditional AlBirah with orchards of almonds and prunes. After passing through the gate, we came across a big group of journalists and many foreigners, some of which were familiar faces from the international art scene. When we walked towards the stage area we glimpsed Khalid Hourani from a distance and went straight up to congratulate him. There was this feeling inside of me like I was at a wedding or graduation ceremony where Khalid had to be congratulated as part of the ceremonial rituals.

Sitting amongst different middle class people and intellectuals, we waited for the ritual to begin. Khalid, in a pair of very cool sunglasses, was joined by Charles Esche, director of the Van Abbemuseum, who officially launched the press conference. Charles’ introduction reflected on the meaning of art and outlined a detailed history of the ‘Picasso in Palestine’ project. He also promised that the Van Abbemuseum would help build a contemporary art museum in Palestine within the next five years.

Suddenly, members of the audience who were standing on the side near the gate started running towards the academy gates. Now we could hear Palestinian folk music, which rattled the air with specific intonation at the sound of the drums. We were all shocked when Prime Minister Salam Fayyad emerged from the gates. He was surrounded with local boys from a traditional ‘Dabkeh’ dance band who were dressed in folk costumes, holding musical instruments and something like metal swords lit with candles, and dancing and playing music in a haphazard choreography. People marched behind the procession led by Salam Fayyad and Khalid Hourani, clapping with the rhythm of the banging drums.

Salam Fayyad sat between Charles and Khalid, while two boys from the band stood behind them and the prime minister, holding two lit swords or torches crossed over Fayyad’s head. I noticed that some of the audience were complaining and grumbling about the hype interrupting the press conference while others had already left troubled by the scene. Behind the microphone, Salam Fayyad spoke of his pride that projects such as ‘Picasso in Palestine’ had proven to the whole world that Palestinian Security forces are capable of protecting a seven million dollar artwork, and therefore can successfully deliver the security required to establish an independent state. Some of the Fatah intellectuals sitting in the front row, who don’t like Salam Fayyad’s liberal policies, mumbled with protest.

Escorted by his personal security, Fayyad left immediately after his speech. The press conference, which had barely even started, had been put to an end! Sana Mousa, a talented young singer, proceeded with a performance of a traditional Palestinian song from the 80s, which was then followed by an unknown young pop singer’s rendition of John Lennon’s ‘Imagine’ on the electric organ. People started queuing in hundreds for a turn to see ‘Buste de Femme’ that was exhibited upstairs in the academy’s main building and protected by dozens of soldiers dressed in dark blue uniforms.”

Randa looked at me and said, “This was an intelligent move from Khalid. He knew that no matter how Salam Fayyad used this occasion it would bring Khalid’s work local and international publicity. Yazid, this, what you called a ‘Miniature Palestine’, with all its confusions and layers of contradictions, will drive both opponents and supporters of the project to gossip even more about it. A very intelligent move!”

“Why do you call it a ‘Miniature Palestine’ if I may ask?” Haifa solicited.

“Well, because all the components and dilemmas that we as ‘Palestinians’ suffer, whether internally or externally, can be manifested in the ‘Picasso in Palestine’ opening ceremony. Journalists and the media, security and redefinition of security zones, international acquisition, international experts in art and culture, donors, middle class audiences, a contention between folklore and modernity, the Palestinian Authority, Fatah, and the silent opposition, major declarations without public discussions etc. For me this is Palestine.”

Hanan laughed hysterically, “I swear to god, this is amazing! I love the way you describe the ceremony! It sums up everything that I deal with on a daily basis, from the moment I leave my house to go work, to the moment I lay my head on the pillow to sleep. Damn, I missed all of this. It sounds like the ceremony was the part that was really worth seeing from this ‘Picasso in Palestine’ project. Please tell me that Khaled intentionally thought of all this! If so, this proves that Khalid is much more in tune with the Palestinian street than any other contemporary Palestinian artist I know!”

“What’s up with the excessive security nowadays?” Haifa inquired. “I can’t believe that it reached the heart of an academic institution. Why didn’t the guards stay outside the perimeter of the property? Why did they have to be inside?”

“It’s the insurance policy and quite possibly also the lending policy of the Van Abbe-museum. Otherwise it would have been impossible to bring the painting to Palestine. Remember it’s a seven million dollar piece,” I answered.

“Listen to me,” Hanan took the lead, “security is only a matter of a 150 dollar surveillance camera with 24 hour live colour streaming! You connect it to something they call an ‘invisible security system’, which enables you to monitor the whole premises. This drastically reduces the need for excessive numbers of armed soldiers. If you want a cheaper deal, just buy the monochrome, fifty-dollar surveillance camera. It’s really affordable. Every shop in this godforsaken city has at least two or three of these babies hidden in a tree just around the corner.”

“Nothing is secret in this country,” Randa continued, “you can catch a thief before he even attempts to perpetrate a burglary or even thinks about stealing the Picasso painting. It’s a very small country! He’ll be sitting at one of these coffee shops, smoking an Argeeleh, boasting to his friends about his detailed plans and intentions.”

We all burst into laughter. I fell off the sofa onto the ground, rolling around from stomach pains, and tried to sober-up for a second.

“Ah!” Hanan shrieked, “Remember the story of the Musad [Israeli Intelligence] killing Hamas leader Mahmoud al-Mabhouh at a luxury hotel room in Dubai? It took them one week to identify the perpetrators and arrest them. What the heck?” Hanan said ironically, “In Ramallah, when Dukmak’s butcher shop was attacked, it took them only three hours to identify the attackers. In a matter of hours, President Abu Mazen was able to locate the perpetrators at Jenin Refugee camp and bring them to Ramallah. It turns out that Al Dakmuk had five surveillance cameras strategically camouflaged in the trees near by. So there is no real need to use armed guards to protect the Picasso painting.”

We continued to discuss recent incidents of theft and burglary. Picasso was no longer the hot topic. My mobile phone started ringing—I had to pick up a friend from a restaurant to visit a newly married couple we knew. I thanked my hosts and left them to prepare themselves to dance the night away.





(area 01)

# Aesthetic Autocritique

(area 02)

## A Conversation between Renzo Martens and Eyal Weizman

(area 03)

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**Renzo Martens** *You were talking about the way that Picasso in Palestine fits into a larger tradition of art making and exhibiting in Palestine.*

**Eyal Weizman** I think that *Buste de Femme* or the movement of *Buste de Femme* from Holland to Palestine is a kind of a seismograph. It registers all sorts of political, economic and military relations by its movement. In a sense, for me, the work operates in two ways: the symbolic value is what creates its status as a kind of instrument, as a sensor, as a seismograph of the relations that move through it. And, in that case, there is clearly something that is mobilising all sort of practices: the economy of insurance, the economy of art exchange and, obviously, the multiple separations and controls of Palestinians through the control of the movement of goods and people by Israel. It demonstrates the way in which Israeli sovereignty is exercised by the ability to block, filter and intervene within a general system of movement and flow. We can compare this work to three paradigmatic moments in the history of artistic, cultural intervention in Palestine. The first one is Pasolini’s *Sopralluoghi in Palestina* (Seeking Locations in Palestine) shot by Pasolini in 1963. He is looking for the biblical land to shoot certain scenes for his religious drama *The Gospel According to Matthew*. In fact, that kind of romantic, biblical Palestine Pasolini was looking for is not found. So that film is an indicator of the development of the displacement of Palestine from the landscape and its replacement by a sort of ‘modern’ economic Israeli landscape. It is a registration in the frustration of finding the Holy Land, a registration of its ethnic cleansing, of an absence in fact. You have another project, “Jean Genet” (2011) curated by Alex Farquharson at Nottingham Contemporary, that mobilises another kind of symbolic value in art. That is Jean Genet’s trips to refugee camps where in fact the aesthetics of resistance is somehow undertaken through the Palestinians, the desperados. They return to Palestine as *shahids*. And then we have this project, *Picasso in Palestine*. Three iconic artists/works of art through which we can see the transformation of Palestine and its politics, in which we are able to see Palestine refracted. Not so much through the work as such, but through attention as a symbolic presence of those artists. In that respect, Khaled’s work is also a critical project. I want to turn this question back to you, because your work is obviously committed not only to critique but to thinking the very meaning and essence of critique. I wonder in what way you see *Picasso in Palestine* sitting in a history of critical value produced by the art world.

**RM** *When you mentioned the two earlier instances, what strikes me is that people look for content in Palestine. They look for biblical landscapes, they look to associate with rebels. Whereas it seems that Picasso in Palestine is purely about structures and institutions. It uses institutions or the institutional frameworks of both the museum and an art academy, in relation to the Picasso painting (which is an institution in*

and of itself), to open up power relationships. There is another work I thought about, which could fit into the same line of thinking; Francis Alj's work, The Green Line,<sup>1</sup> which you commented on at some point (actually, your comment is part of the piece). What really struck me in your comment is that, in your understanding, the ease in which the green line was made by Alj's did not register the complexities of the conflict. It rang a bell because I thought it was not only registering the complexities of the project, it was also not registering the complexities or possibilities in the role of critical art. Not just in Palestine, for a local audience, not just also the political reality in which Alj's intervened, but also the complexities of the reception of the piece. What is the role of this poetic action? What is the potential role for an art audience and what is the role assigned to the art audience? It seems to me that an action like that merely—in my mind at least—exempts the art public from any implication in the violence. It is as if through the artist, who thinks he can be neutral by taking a politically neutral stand—by making the line in the middle, let's say—, the public also becomes neutral, and by association, are even part of the solution. I don't think art should change anything, that's not the issue here, but maybe the work doesn't communicate the costs of not changing anything. I think, that this poetic intervention really fails to register the fact that the art audience is on one side of the line. One sees it at David Zwirner in New York, for example, and you're part of the solution, you're part of this beautiful exception of sanity that the artist has created for you. It doesn't show that on one side of this green line there are probably five million Palestinians that want to cross and on the other side there are all kinds of institutions that don't want them to cross. There is war, but beautiful exceptions are offered to an audience that itself already lives the beautiful exception. The ninety percent that doesn't thrive so well on the global status quo, somehow pay a cost for art that is being merely inconsequential. And I think this is a common trade in many critical interventions in reality: they don't communicate so well that there is a cost to art being a primarily poetic, erratic, beautiful exceptions. In the film I made in 2008, Episode 3, I tried to represent this status quo and also make visible the inconsequentiality of my intervention. I think I tried to open up this power imbalance.

**EW** Generally people think that political forces, economical relations, institutional policies etc., are not simply latent, there to be observed and researched. I think this is a mistake. I think we operate in situations of high indeterminacy, in which even the institutions themselves, until they face a point of crisis, do not understand their full potential. What you need is to move action from potentiality to actualisation, to bring yourself perhaps to a point of crisis, of challenge. And if you look, for example, at contemporary colonial formation, like the Palestine frontier and, in a sense, contemporary colonialism or corporate colonialism in Africa, we can see what institutions do.

We can see what they do in a latent, day-to-day form. But until these institutions are confronted with a certain intervention that leads them to articulate their potential, we will not know their politics. The contemporary frontier in Palestine does not operate by law, we cannot just read the law books and understand it because it continuously creates multiple exceptions to the law. We do not know what the politics, specifically the planning politics, are around Jerusalem. Why did they destroy some houses and not others? In a sense we need to intervene in order to research. We need to allow an intervention, an epistemic intervention. Because today, no institution would actually expose its own internal working. So this, in its own term, is one of the ways in which artistic intervention in the world can operate. To learn about the multiple restrictions, in terms of separation, mobility and culture, you need to ask for Picasso to try to walk through these walls. And this is what I think was done.

This brings me to another dimension of your work Renzo. You create artistic interventions in which somehow the exception is created through the aesthetic manoeuvre. I think that one of the ways in which your work operates is that through this intervention it produces not only a critique on Western capitalism or contemporary European colonisation of Africa etc., but on the viewers own involvement in the action. This line of thinking seems to track or shadow conceptual development within humanitarianism itself. Could you speak a little about that? Or about your own critique and how you want to bring the viewer into crisis or create a situation that would reveal latent forces.

**RM** In Episode 3 I tried to be as good a representative of those institutions that control so much of this world as I could be. By institutions I do not mean the World Bank or Doctors Without Borders or World Photography or contemporary art, but the very world in which I was brought up, that educated me and that financed me. I tried to let the forces that run the status quo, run my film. Mostly, a documentary film would show a bad situation, and then somebody rings the bell. By the mere fact that the film was made, an exception to the status quo is created. The film, or the artwork is not representing the fact that, mostly, no one comes to ring a bell. So, in this case, the artwork serves as a redeemer, and, by extension, the spectator too is part of this better world. I tried in my work to not make this process of extension possible. Here you are not part of a project that makes the world a better place. You are only part of a project that problematizes the position of the viewer. The film is explicitly made for the viewer. And, of course, it doesn't please the viewer to realise that films like these are made to cater to them.

**EW** The reaction almost every time *Episode 3*—or *Enjoy Poverty* as it is also known—has been screened is protest from the audience. A protest against being drawn into



complicity. There is much to discuss about your film, but one thing is clear: that it places the viewer at the centre of a violent field of exploitation and socio-political economical relations.

**RM** *Well, when I teach the local photographers how to take pictures, when I put on the neon signs etc., it all plays, preemptively somehow, on the fact that the viewer will see it. Yet, in this film, merely consuming other people's misery doesn't make you part of the solution, instead, it makes you part of a status quo that perpetuates the violence over and over again. So you are made complicit as a viewer. Moreover, the film shows how the power relations that rule the exploitation of cocoa, gold or any other externally controlled industry, are pretty much the same those power relations as those that rule the production process of this film. And so it reveals from the outset that it will be without consequence. Both in cocoa and in filmmaking there are people who give something for free and don't get anything in return. On the plantation where I worked nothing really changed because of this film. And nobody ever asks me where these plantations are, or in what chocolate bars the cocoa they're producing ends up. That is what I think makes this film hard to swallow. It doesn't give you the joy of being part of the solution.*

**EW** Not being part of the solution and also not having the enjoyment of critique? Maybe this is where we can see a certain analogy with a recent shift in humanitarian discourse. At least as it is attempted to be framed by one of the most important practitioner philosophers of that field, Rony Brauman, who used to be the president of MSF-France in the 1980s.<sup>2</sup> Contemporary postmodern humanitarianism starts articulating itself exactly around the question of critique. The figure of this postmodern critique is the witness, with the humanitarian testimony as the vehicle. Understanding that they not only have to medically treat in zones of conflict but in fact reflect upon the very conditions that created conflict, poverty or famine, doctors started to do two things. On the one hand, doing emergency medicine, and, on the other, bringing testimonies for the suffering of the world. But this testimonial position, Brauman shows, has shifted rather quickly into very *plakkative*, almost theological description of victims. So the critique shifted inwards to understand humanitarians own complicity in the development of crisis.

**RM** *This probably affected the quality and scope of the witnessing; I saw, on MSF's publicity material, for example, that on eighty percent of their publicity, there is a white doctor administering aid to the African child. Even if eighty percent of their practicing medical personnel are locally hired and therefore African, it is white doctors who are pictured.*

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**EW** It's a missionary practice and in a sense they quite consciously call it 'on mission'.

**RM** *Yes, but in my view it does create a certain 'Afro-pessimism'. To create this idea... well, it doesn't create it, but it feeds into the existing idea that people aren't able to fend for themselves and that if it wasn't for our intervention, nothing would happen.*

**EW** It places African politics as a state of nature. I mean, the kind of thinking that says violence or famines happened because of natural causes, the wars are 'tribal wars' and than science and enlightenment came with the white men in white robes. But there are several attempts to break away from this, by MSF and others, understanding that they are part of the force field that also causes crisis and not neutral witness that can simply reflect upon the crimes of others. If aid can kill, humanitarians could potentially be murderers. There's a violent and dangerous pity that is at play here. The next stage in the critique of humanitarianism, very much promoted by Brauman, is shifting into the autocritique I mentioned. I know that the analogy has its limits but, in a sense, a certain kind of artistic intervention would not show us about the problems of contemporary Africa or the problems of the occupation (or whatever else Israelis do to Palestinians), but question its own involvement in the world. I think Khaled Hourani's work is continuously reflecting upon that and therefore is a good example. How do you bring in the very means of producing into play?

**RM** *When you talked before about Genet and Pasolini it was about content. Where as Hourani's Picasso project is about the institution itself. By implicating itself and understanding the terms and conditions on which it operates, it reveals outside forces. It creates insight in these fields of forces.*

**EW** ...but also on its own force?

**RM** *Well, it's by this autoanalysis: by understanding the terms and conditions on which the work can function that you also reveal the world around you. While we were walking outside, I mentioned a television series by Jean-Luc Godard, France/tour/detour<sup>3</sup>—the title is based on a French nineteenth-century textbook that was used to educate children about the way society was run. In an episode of the series about private ownership, Godard actively uses his own position as the metteur-en-scene, the one who organises everything, when he offers the whole production budget to his seven-year-old protagonist. Of course, the boy does not know how to handle that invitation. By using and disclosing his own position of power, I think Godard tells us much more about how class society at that time in France operated. Than anything he could have*

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*gone out and filmed in the outside world. So he uses his own institution, you could say, he reveals the inner workings of his own production process. He creates an analogy, or an in vitro setting for broader forces in France. I do think this form of autocritique can be extremely productive in showing something outside of itself. Of course, this has been a very common practice in art for one hundred years, probably longer. The artwork comes to terms with its own production process, with its own materiality, dealing first and foremost with itself rather than with any outside presence or subject. It creates autonomy, actually. Dealing with one's own terms and conditions creates autonomy.*

**EW** I think that here, one has to bring together two frames that exist within the history of art. Institutional critique and autonomy are not in fact antagonistic to each other or opposite to each other, but are implicated and fold into one another. So, I do not think it is simply about drawing a border around an artwork as an optical device of its own means of production, but that its own means of production registers external forces. We must break the border between these two rigid frames. I think, simultaneously, the piece of art, architecture, the art object, the forensic object to be analysed, all have their own inherent characteristics, but fold the world into themselves, like monads of sorts. They are implicated within a network of relations, within a circuit of trade, within bits of knowledge that are fossilized into form, into technology, within networks of use, etc. and the way to approach these objects is not to enter into their analysis in isolation, but to see how the world and its relations are refracted through them.

**RM** *I think autonomy—and you framed it well—is created by measuring the influences of the outside world on an art piece. Autonomy is created by understanding the terms and conditions of its own singularity. So I think institutional critique creates autonomy.*

**EW** Perhaps the term ‘aesthetic autocritique’ could be instituted as the constant implication of the means of production of the work on its own value. But never to say: “we should not reflect on the external conditions”, because the external is refracted in the work itself. This is where aesthetic autocritique would operate. Those that claim continuously that political art is not simply making accounts of political matters set out a certain antagonism between people that reflect upon politics as an external matter for their art and people that reflect upon the political ways of making art. But these are obviously not mutually exclusive propositions. If you can partner those two in an autocritical way, then you are able to understand the multiple means by which the materiality and process are combined, and the way that the political questions you think about are refracted in the political way you produce the piece.

NOTES

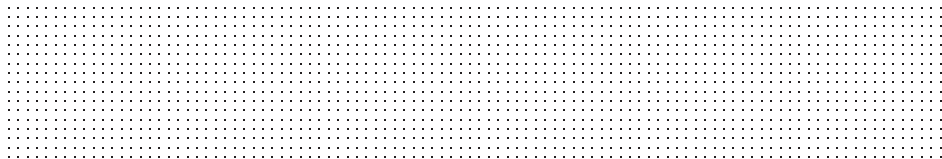
1. Francis Alijs, *The Green Line (Sometimes doing something poetic can become political and sometimes doing something political can become poetic)*, 2005.
2. Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders).
3. Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville, *France/tour/detour/deux/enfants*, 1977.





# A Good Drug Dealer

## Artur Żmijewski in conversation with Galit Eilat



**Artur Żmijewski** *I'm interested in defining the status quo in which we live. You worked as the director of the Digital Art Lab in Holon. Still, you decided to leave Israel because you felt fed up with the country's policy, occupation, cruelty, and the passive attitude of the Israelis. But Israel is not the only country which wages war. You said that there's also an ongoing war in Europe, though an invisible one. But first I'd like to ask about the activity of the left in Israel.*

**Galit Eilat** Not long ago, Gate 48, a group of Israelis living in the Netherlands, organized an open meeting in Amsterdam, trying to articulate the current situation in Israel and bring it to Europe's attention. Dov Khanin, a member of the Knesset from the Hadash communist party, said: "On the night of the attack on Gaza we were able to go out into the streets and protest against the attack"—which was to serve as a proof of the existence of democracy in Israel. I answered: "On the same night you went to demonstrate in Tel Aviv and Jaffa, your Arab friends from the same party went to demonstrate in Jerusalem Boulevard in Jaffa. You went back home, they went back home. You slept the whole night. But they didn't, because the border police came knocking at their door. They picked up some of them and put them into custody. There are some who have not been released since." Without noticing, Dov Khanin repeated the exclusive idea of democracy for Jews only. Such blindness is one of the major obstacles of the current left in Israel.

**AZ** *What kind of obstacles?*

**GA** The left and the right are terms which shouldn't be in use anymore because they are no longer valid. Sometimes the things those people do resemble fascism more than anything else. Take the Netherlands as an example: Geert Wilders speaks against immigration, but for the rights of homosexual marriages. He supports the idea of health-care for the elderly in its most socialist version: saying "no" to the privatization of hospitals, hospices, and medical care institutions. Which would certainly make him a leftist, or a socialist. But if you look at his fight against Islam and immigrants, he's on the right side of the spectrum. A few years ago, he published a video on YouTube cautioning against Islam. And that move didn't discredit him. At the time, his party had merely one seat in the Parliament. Now they have twenty-five, and the right-wing parties were able to form a government thanks to Wilders. He intends to visit Israel next week, to campaign for a new solution for the Middle East. A two-state concept which seeks to transform Jordan into a new Palestine. So the Palestinians could move to Jordan, because it would be their state. When the plan was announced publicly in the mid-seventies everyone thought it was crazy. But now, it's actually becoming serious. And for Wilders, the acceptance of the Israeli government is related to his

involvement in the fight against Islam. He calls Israel “a front for the West in the fight against Islam”. He’s a Dutch deputy, but there are many other politicians with similar views, who think of Israel as the European frontline where the fight against Islam goes on. That’s exactly the reason why Europe supports Israel. Many people naïvely think that if Israel is the occupying country and it violates human rights, it is bound to lose its political credibility eventually. Quite the contrary. Sympathy and support for Israel in Europe are on the rise. In the US, it was the Democrats who supported Israel in the past, but now the Republicans have taken their place. So the support for all the atrocities taking place in Israel and around comes from the US, and from European governments.

**AZ** *You mentioned an invisible war around us. But in fact, this looks like a peaceful landscape.*

**GA** When you don’t have the terms to describe a phenomenon, it doesn’t exist for the society. The war goes on, but doesn’t look like one. People accept more and more control over their lives and fear grows. In the airports, supermarkets, banks—you can’t leave your bag anywhere. Here, in Europe, this was not the case a few years ago. It may not look like much, but it’s a small element in a growing system of total control. You don’t notice the changes taking place in everyday life that invisibly transform whole societies. We’re transformed into passive observers of the results of this shift. The police are all over public places. Armed with machine guns and live ammunition.

**AZ** *Ok then, how to make this process visible?*

**GA** Instead of analyzing the current situation, or a possible future, the intellectuals are focused on the past. We still talk about “democracy”, even though we don’t know what it really is. We have no new terms for the new phenomena. As a result, these new phenomena are beyond our perception, beyond the discourse. Firstly, we should develop new concepts to expose the process. Then we should create a counter-situation. Did you notice how many new terms are developed around military operations: the peace intervention in Afghanistan, the state of emergency, security reasons. Their number is unparalleled by those introduced by politicians. Compared to the leftists, the right has developed many more terms to describe this reality. And they use them to make new activities, procedures and laws functional.

**AZ** *What did you notice in Europe when you left Israel? Are any signs of the invisible war visible?*

**GA** Having spent a few months in Europe, I’m focused on the relation between Israel and Europe and political changes in Western Europe today. And what I see here are many symptoms of situations that took place in Israel ten or twenty years ago. For example, everyone seems to acknowledge the growing importance of security. But it’s not a question of whether we actually need more security, because security has been already developed as an additional autonomous system in the society.

**AZ** *What makes the situation in Europe similar to the one in Israel?*

**GA** A whole range of things: populism, conservatism, xenophobia, governments that create fear and paranoia, brutal social behavior, a lack of autonomous thinking, massive investments in weaponry. There are also other symptoms, like the envelopes with explosives which were sent to a number of diplomats a week ago. I saw the same thing happening with the Israeli diplomats in my youth. Or the wave of suicide bombers in Spain and the UK. These are all long-standing techniques which haven’t been in use for decades. I was surprised to see their comeback in Europe.

**AZ** *Let’s go back to the associations with fascism. Would you describe the parties which send troops to Afghanistan as fascist?*

**GA** Fascism is when the citizens serve the state, as opposed to the state serving the citizen’s needs. Fascist ideology is about a total exclusion and making a distinction between the people who have the right to live and those who should die. The Taliban in Afghanistan have to die. We have gone back to the old colonial wars in Asia, or to the crusades. Once people were fighting for resources in the name of religion, now the fight is part of the ideology. But the key ideas are quite similar: both are means of structuring people’s lives and society. And once abused, they produce forms of fascism. As always, the hand of God remains invisible.

**AZ** *You said that Israel serves as a laboratory for the rest of the world.*

**GA** There are many examples of how the knowledge produced in Israel is used elsewhere. It applies to all sorts of political situations around the world. For example, Israel offers a manual on how to tackle acts of social resistance, like the riots in Paris. Or the kind of control system which should be implemented in London after the bomb attacks in the subway. The Israeli activists report about the development of new weapons, which the Israeli army tests on them. Take Bil’in for instance, which became a real battlefield for the protesters and an experimental field for the army. With every few clashes between the army and the protesters, the troops changed bullets. There

was a whole range of them from salt, pepper, plastic, to rubber-coated bullets and live ammo. They also used a new weapon called the stink. It penetrates deeply into your body cells making you smell like hell. The troops use it to punish and to mark the protesters. And after a series of successful tests, Israel sells such a weapon. The country also offers also a post-trauma therapy program. The Israeli clinicians and psychiatrists deliver lectures all around the world, advising on how to deal with post-traumatic disorder. They developed this knowledge working with Holocaust survivors and representatives of the second generation. And they also offer it to Palestinians, who suffer from the Israeli occupation. We also know very well how to make the desert bloom. If water is scarce, Israel knows how to deal with the problem. And Israel works with US companies, for example in Albania, on ways to make greenhouses. We also market this knowledge to Jordan.

**AZ** *Does it mean that the Middle East conflict cannot be resolved, because the business produces too much profit?*

**GA** Why is Gaza still under closure? Because, as politicians like Geert Wilders see it, it's a frontline between Islam and the Western World. It also brings enormous profit for many European companies. One of the largest Dutch construction companies received a warning from the International Court in The Hague, because they helped to build the wall. But the profits are probably unimaginable, so they continue their operations. Paradoxically, wartime is a prosperous period for the building industry. That's why the Middle East, Israel, and Palestine are being kept in this stalemate. Occupation keeps Israel alive.

**AZ** *During the last Passover, Haaretz published a call for the financial support of Israeli kids who live in poverty. 300,000 children in Israel don't have enough food. At the same time, new smart missiles were installed on the Gaza border as protection from the Qassam rockets which usually don't even reach their targets. Budget? 200 million dollars. What about the devastating effects on the Israeli society? People are paying a heavy price, and many would like to escape the country.*

**GA** Those who escape are mostly young people who suffer from shock after military service, or intellectuals who don't agree with the Israeli regime. At the same time, there are radical Jews from France, USA, or Russia who make the Aliyah—come to Israel, and are eager to serve the country. So I don't think that the Israeli society actually sees the loss, many are content to say: The leftists who criticize Israeli policy are crazy, so if they want to leave, they should. We don't need traitors among us.

**AZ** *Your act of leaving Israel was a political manifesto. Did you publish a statement about it?*

**GA** Yes. I said that Israel has become more and more violent and I don't agree with the way Israeli politicians speak. In the case of the cultural field, the rules of the game have been changed. In the past there was an unwritten agreement in that I was free to exhibit whatever I wanted, while the government would use it to confirm that Israel is still a democracy. They allowed me, and I allowed them, to create this democratic space. But it's over. Now I can't say a word against Israel without provoking an immediate slashing of the gallery budget, or without breaching this loyalty law. If someone in Israel disagrees with me, I'm instantly labeled as anti-Semitic. I decided to go abroad and be able to speak freely. And I followed the idea of boycotting Israel. As the director of the art center in Holon, I was convincing artists to boycott the country. They were usually puzzled: "She invites me over, and asks me to boycott her?"

**AZ** *In 2009, during operation Cast Lead,\* you also asked me: "Why won't you buy a ticket and go back to Europe?" But I decided to stay.*

**GA** You decided to stay, but you took a stand. You started to see things. Next time, you won't be invited to Israel for an exhibition. The question about the cultural boycott of Israel should be asked openly. This question is in the air. People can ignore it, but it's already there. And the boycott should create a discussion about the responsibility of intellectuals, including artists.

**AZ** *Do you have an idea of what we need instead of democracy? Is there an alternative?*

**GA** Yes, a transnational organism is such an alternative. Unfortunately, it still holds the notion of "nation" in it. We can talk about origins and places, tradition and culture, but why not about the state and the nation? Why is there a problem with settling down in another country? It's a really bizarre idea at a time when people are constantly on the move. Let's imagine a world without nation-states. Before the British came to the Middle East, Jordan did not exist, nor did Israel, and Lebanon had a different shape. People would travel to Damascus in Syria to study, go back to Jaffa, and visit Beirut for vacation. But then the British came changing the whole thing and creating nations with borders—anyone who crosses them without permission is to be killed or captured. The answer I'm trying to find lies not in the future, but in the past. We should go

\* Operation Cast Lead was the official name of a three-week bombing, rocket attack, and ground invasion of the Gaza Strip by Israel, starting on December 27, 2008 and continuing into late January 2009.



back to the roots of the problem and teach people how not to hate others just because they are new to the country.

**AZ** *But getting back to art—how can we use art for such a purpose?*

**GA** You can use it directly. Since art is considered autonomous, you can take even violent actions without being immediately labeled an enemy of the society. It still gives me a kind of gray zone to act in. This zone is never fully defined in political terms, that's why it can accommodate change and be used as a tool for transforming the society. Unfortunately, I can't say that I changed Israeli society even after nine years of working there as director of a public art center.

**AZ** *So what did you change using art?*

**GA** First, I changed myself and the people working with me. I learned a lot about the mechanisms of the state, and the mechanisms of art in the context of the state. As for working in a politically engaged public space, I had to deal with Shin Bet, the Israel Security Agency, about permits, law, and government representatives. I had to learn how to work with them and, at the same time, against them. Now I have the knowledge of how to deal with the state and society, how to recognize imminent dangers, how to activate and manipulate things. And I think I created some room for others, letting them act and speak their mind. I brought Israeli artists to Palestine for the first time. This was not about art, but about people. And I was able to show them things they can't see from Tel Aviv, things which are not talked about by journalists. And vice-versa, I brought students from Ramallah to Israel, where they've never been, and which they hate so much. It is not the kind of project in which people meet each other and become less angry. It was hard to compare an easy life in Tel Aviv to the situation in Palestine.

**AZ** *Don't you think that the left-wing organizations, communities, and artists are totally disempowered by so-called good will? That people are completely preoccupied and limited by goodness and nobility, which became the only thing at stake, making them forget about such notions as effectiveness?*

**GA** I saw how it happened, when both sides argued. For example the artists in Israel. You could say that they are patriots in the same way as the far right could say that they're patriots. Everybody thinks he is a patriot, working for the good of the state. But this patriotism is translated into different world views. The leftists think they are the only correct ones, and others shouldn't be listened to. They think that people from the right are stupid or retarded. That's the ignorance of the left, unwilling to listen to

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what people from the other side have to say. But you can't eliminate them. If you do, you won't change anything.

**AZ** *Do you still think that art is strong enough to rewrite reality?*

I don't think art alone is able to do that. But art is not alone, in the whole cultural field you can work with academics, lawyers, psychologists, sociologists and so on. You can't think that you'll win the war on your own. You need to find partners. We need to bring in the others who deal with linguistics, politics, history. We need to create structures and think tanks.

**AZ** *Would you like to work with politicians?*

**GA** The politicians of today are either populists, or they no longer write their own agenda. They have ghost writers who do the job. So I'd rather work with ghost writers, because they are the people who bring the ideas. Politicians are becoming like puppets. In many cases they are artificial personas, but there's someone behind who writes the script that they're speaking.

**AZ** *You also organized Liminal Spaces, which could be called an art project devoid of any art content. It was a series of meetings with the Palestinian leaders and fighters, in which people were exposed to all aspects of Palestinian daily life under the occupation. They touched it with their own bodies. What you created was not an art piece, not an exhibition, but a re-education camp.*

**GA** How can you work on an issue without being confronted with it? Without having knowledge about its image, without the smell, the sound, the color of it? How can you talk about Israel and Palestine, if you don't know Palestine at all? My hope was that people who experienced this reality would be infected by it. The whole project produced a kind of an invisible wave. Francis McKee, who was teaching in Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, started to teach at the Academy in Ramallah. It was also training for myself. Now I know how to organize travel permits for the Palestinians. The Digital Art Lab in Holon became a center for permits. One of the curators at the Israel Museum came to Ramallah especially for this project. Which is forbidden for the Israelis. She broke the law. She made an effort to be there, and to listen. There was also a student from the Academy who was a Palestinian militant before. And he was the only one for whom we couldn't get a permit to come to Tel Aviv. Finally, he was smuggled in, but we couldn't put him in any hotel. So we found him a private house. A year later he told me that at night he found himself sweating, frightened to death, thinking

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in panic: “I’m sleeping in a house of an Israeli, the enemy I was trained to kill. If the Palestinian or Israeli authorities hear what I did, they will kill me”. He really took the risk to come and to confront his fears with reality. This is education. And the purpose of education is to give you tools to think differently.

**AZ** *But would you call it art?*

**GA** Sure. What I do is create an army of my own soldiers. How? I’m like a drug dealer. I create a network on the streets. Once I get the first couple of soldiers addicted I send them into the streets, to other countries, around the world. They sell drugs to the others who also become addicted. I’m a good drug dealer. All those massive ideological mechanisms work in a similar way. Why not make it useful for us? The only problem is to develop a good drug.

**AZ** *Ok, but do those people know what they’re doing?*

**GA** I also create a choice. For example, we were publishing posters and leaflets in Hebrew and in Arabic. Now, how many visitors who read Arabic come to the art center in Holon? Very few. So it looked like an empty gesture, but nowadays the museums in Haifa, Beersheba, and so on, also print their stuff in Arabic. Instead of starting an argument and convincing them to do so, we created a new standard. And when we did, others followed into our footsteps.

**AZ** *Let’s talk about the Art Academy in Ramallah. The school was established to show to the people outside the West Bank, that the Palestinians share the same language and cultural values as the Israelis and other people from the Western world. That they are human beings, not insects. In fact, it’s a self-defense project for the Palestinian community, right?*

**GA** I’d rather call it normalization, they just want to create normal living conditions. There are also other people who want to create a current and future sense of normality in the West Bank. The architects Sandi Hilal and Alexandro Petti try to imagine what happens once the Israeli occupation is brought to an end. The questions they are working with are: what to do with the settlements, when we, the Israelis, are no longer there? Even if Israel demolishes all the houses, like they did in Gaza Strip, the urban structure will survive. So how to change it into something fitting for Palestinian society? That’s important, because when you live in such a situation, you don’t see the end. That’s why people from the West Bank accept the situation as it is, with no infrastructure, no roads, no water or sewage system. Nothing, just stagnation. If you don’t



The Digital Art Lab, Holon



have the idea of what normal life is, you accept the occupation as normal. The academy also exists for that reason. Plus, it's an institution, part of a social structure which people need to organize to have a normal collective life. Salam Fajad, the current prime minister of the Palestinian government on the West Bank, tries to support such structures. He invests money in Arab schools in East Jerusalem to provide people with good education. So these are not just architects and artists, it is also the government. They create normality, and it works, because students go to school and study. Part of the Israeli strategy was to destroy all signs of normality. There's no normality in Palestine which we could compare to that of our own, but people there act seriously as if it existed. Art must support such seriousness.

**AZ** *The Palestinians not only suffer from a lack of normality, but also a lack of generally accepted history.*

**GA** Two different things took place in the Middle East in 1948. But for the Israelis, there was only one: the establishing of the State of Israel. Still, there also was the Nakba, a catastrophe for the Palestinian nation. So nowadays there are efforts to introduce this word to people, highlighting the fact that two different stories happened at the same time. The Palestinians living in Israel not only have a double identity, but also a double history. Dor Guez made an interview with his grandfather who said: "The British occupiers came and left. Nowadays, the Israelis occupy Palestine, but they will also leave." His family lived under the occupation of the Ottomans, the occupation of the British, and the occupation of the Israelis.

**AZ** *What is politics?*

**GA** Politics starts with a dialogue, a discourse. But I don't see any kind of vision in politics and political parties today. This is also why we need artists to create political visions.

**AZ** *The politicians in Israel have ideas of how to continue the occupation, how to distract Palestinian society. Isn't that a vision?*

**GA** It is a vision I oppose to and I don't want artists to be involved in. If you go into politics, you need to think about votes, self-presentation, and about this fake persona which has to be constructed. It's better to stay out of politics, but to keep contact, and interfere with it. You need to make a double stand. The Digital Art Lab in Holon was supported by the government and by the city. So, to some extent, we worked in the political arena. But we offered something different than the other institutes on that

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level. It's very difficult, if politicians realize that our goal is purely political, then we need to be really smart. In the case of Israel we could end up in jail.

**AZ** *I think that there are two essential problems with art. The first one concerns its autonomy—artists want to keep their autonomy as a kind of fetish. They do not share their stakes with others, nor do they play the same political game as ordinary people. The second problem is about the seriousness of artistic claims. People treat art as entertainment and never seem to follow its demands or proposals.*

**GA** I don't think that autonomy of art and artists exists. But there's a kind of a silent agreement among artists and politicians which secures a relatively uncontrolled zone in society where art can operate. Israeli security stopped me once on the way to Ramallah. During the interrogation I showed a few catalogues and spoke about art projects. I did it to protect myself, and to protect the Art Center in Holon. With good results. Art still has a special legitimacy to do things. I don't want to lose that element by jumping into politics. So, whatever I do, I do it in the atmosphere of art. Even if it's working on an obviously political level.

**AZ** *Ok, but we still keep the illusion that there are two realities: that of art and that of life. Art has no consequences, because it's somehow separated from life. Art operates on the level of fantasy, which has no connection to any other reality.*

**GA** There's a difference between "reality" and the "real". We live in a "reality". But you can feel the "real" when your body is injured or sick. That's the moment when reality collapses. Social life, art, love—all these collapse when you are sick, along with everything else that constitutes reality. So art is connected to the real. I begin from that very point where reality collapses.

**AZ** *Do you expect something from the spectator?*

**GA** I expect the spectator to have time. That they stop running. People today are unable to stay for a long time in one place, unable to see. Present-day society easily falls into thoughtlessness. What is to be done is to make people think again and dream again. It's a simple chain, when they think, they start asking questions, and arguing. And the battle is immediately at the gates. We're living in over-obedient societies, where people are willing to accept just about anything. Art lets people understand that they can react. But look around—budget cuts in art, budget cuts in education. Oh yes, the reason is security, we all need to protect the state.

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**AZ** *But what if the majority accepts this reality, with the right-wing campaign for control, exclusion of minorities, and license for violence? Maybe these offers are seductive?*

**GA** If you control others, you can choose to take the position of the master or the slave. But in the end, it is the master rather than the slave who's more occupied by this master-and-slave game. That's how the occupation ends: to be a master you need a slave, but the slave doesn't need a master.

**AZ** *Is Israeli society aware of these circumstances?*

**GA** The occupation is getting more and more exposure nowadays. Most people, around seventy-eighty percent, want to bring it to an end. People don't want to control the life of the Palestinians. But at the same time, most of them are filled with fear, because nobody helped them to deal with it.

**AZ** *Should art institutions have a political program?*

**GA** Their program should be political itself, involving a concept, media strategy, artistic strategy, political goals, etc. All of these need to come together. My wish is that people working in art institutions would also have a political agenda. Let's imagine a place where people are not just coming to work, they're coming to change the world. Every morning.

**AZ** *Is this the model you developed at the Digital Art Lab?*

**GA** Yes. To bring together people who share certain ideas, not necessarily the same as mine. But we shared a vision of how we would like to see an art center, or our whole society. They were not just workers, they were believers. Our main aim was to terminate occupation.

**AZ** *You said that seventy up to eighty percent of the Israelis are fed up with the occupation. Why won't they show it openly?*

**GA** That's exactly the problem. Why aren't they active? The artists are mute, because they're afraid that galleries won't offer them space if they react to political oppression. So the disagreement to the occupation is practically invisible on the art scene. As citizens, they go to demonstrations, but as artists they are mute. I felt really lonely during the war in Lebanon, because almost ninety percent of Israelis supported it. Including

people with whom I used to work against the occupation, against the Israeli militarism. We shared common goals, but it all vanished with the coming of the war. And this happened again during the attack on Gaza in January 2009. From the day the war started people lost all doubt. "Don't judge the country leaders, stand together with the state, accept the killing!" I couldn't even say what I think to people very close because I'd become a traitor. "It's war time! We're not allowed to be critical, let's support our nation, our soldiers, our army!" But later came the questions: "Why are we there so long? Why is there so much killing?" You could observe this change in the writer David Grossman. First, he was supporting the second Lebanon war like everybody else. But then his son died there. And by the time the attacks on Gaza had started, he was already against.

**AZ** *You come from Israel and your way of thinking is structured by the social situation there, the occupation, acts of violence, and the life in an over-obedient society. Still you try to understand the reality in Europe through this experience. Don't you think it's an illusion?*

**GA** Maybe, but I don't find Israel so different from Europe. The essence that constitutes the reality is the same, the only difference is appearances. Israeli society and European societies exclude and cynically exploit others. Israel continues the occupation. While Europe has witnessed the same wave of populism as in Israel, with far-right parties getting stronger—one country after another, one election after another. Europe deploys the same techniques of control, interrogation, and surveillance. The European and US support for Israeli policy and politicians is very strong. Israel still enjoys strong support from Holland, Germany, and Poland. This comes with the idea that we're facing the threat of Islam, and we're fighting against a common enemy. It's the same strategy that Israel has been using for decades. So why work on the frontline when Europe gives the possibility to work behind the lines? Israel is a symptom of sickness. But Europe is the sick body that sends its symptoms away in a very sophisticated way. It sends them to Iraq, Afghanistan, Middle East and so on. This sick body doesn't deal with the symptoms of the illness on the spot. It deals with symptoms appearing in those other places. Modernity and exclusion were not developed in Israel, they were developed here, and only then applied to the Middle East. Europe existed before Israel.

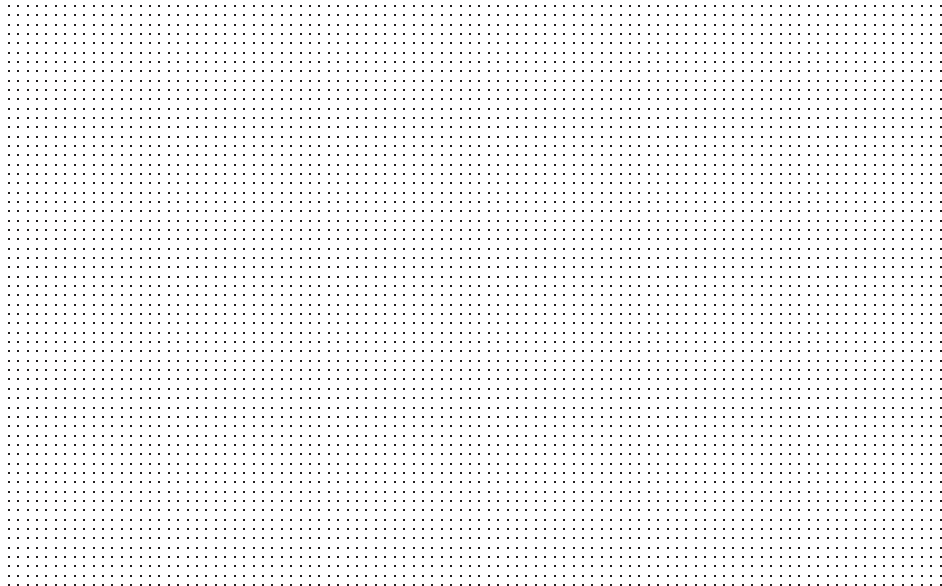
October 10, 2010, Berlin



(area 01)

# Doing Art Politically: What does it mean?

(area 02)



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Thomas Hirschhorn

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Today, the concepts, ‘political art’, ‘committed art’, ‘political artist’ and ‘committed artist’ are used very often. These simplifications and abbreviations have long since been superseded. They are cheap and cognitively lazy classifications. Not for a second do I think that I am more ‘committed’ than any other artist. As an artist, one must be totally committed to one’s art. There is no other possibility if one wants to achieve something with one’s art than to commit oneself totally. That holds for any art. Today there is great confusion about the question concerning what ‘Political’ and ‘political’ are. I am only interested in what is really political, the ‘Political’ with a capital P, the political that implicates: Where do I stand? Where does the other stand? What do I want? What does the other want? The ‘political’ with a small p, the opinions and forging of majorities, does not interest, and has never interested me. For I am concerned with *making my art politically*. I am not concerned with, and have never been concerned with making political art.

The statement, ‘making art politically—not making political art’ I learned from Jean-Luc Godard. He said, “It is a matter of making films politically; it is not a matter of making political films”. But what does it mean to make art politically?

**Doing Art Politically: This means deciding in favour of something**

I have decided to situate my work in the fields of form and force called love, politics, philosophy and aesthetics. I want my work to always touch all of these fields. All four fields are equally important to me. However, my work does not have to fill out all these fields evenly, although I always want all four fields to be touched. One, but only one, of the four fields of form and force is politics. The choice of the force- and form-field, politics, means that in my work I always want to pose the question: What do you want? Where do you stand? It also means that I always want to pose the question for myself: What do I want? Where do I stand? The force- and form-field, politics, just as the field, aesthetics, can also be interpreted negatively. I am aware of that. But it is never a matter of excluding or pushing away the negative; it is a matter of confronting also the negative; it is a matter of working also within the negative, involving oneself with it; and it is always a matter of not being negative oneself. Through my work, I want to create a new truth beyond negativity, beyond the current state of affairs, beyond the commentaries, beyond the opinions and beyond the weighing of considerations.

**Doing Art Politically: This means creating something**

I can only create something if I behave positively toward reality, even toward the hard core of reality. But it is a matter of never allowing the pleasure, the choice, the fun of work, the positive in creation, the fair, to be asphyxiated by critique. It is a matter of



not reacting; it is a matter of always being proactive. Art is always action; art is never reaction. Art is never merely a reaction or critique. It is not a matter of being uncritical or of not exercising any critique; it is a matter of being positive despite the sharpest of critique, despite uncompromising rejection and despite unconditional resistance. It is a matter of not allowing the passion, the hope and the dream to be denied to oneself. To create something means to risk oneself. I can only do that if I make a work without at the same time analyzing what I am making. To take the risk, to have joy in working, to be positive is a precondition for making art, for only in being positive can I create something from out of myself. I want to be positive, even in the midst of the negative. And because I want to be positive, I must gather the courage to touch also the negative. That is where I see the political in making art. It is a matter of creating an action, of risking an assertion, of making a postulation, a positing which goes beyond mere criticism. I want to be critical, but I do not want to allow myself to be neutralized by being critical. I want to try to proceed also beyond the critique I express, and I do not want to make it easy for myself through (narcissistic) self-critique. I never want to lament about myself as an artist, for there is no reason to do so—I can do my work.

**Doing Art Politically: This means loving the material with which one is working**

To love does not mean to be in love with one’s material or to lose oneself in it. Rather, loving one’s material means placing it above everything else, working with it with awareness, and it means insisting through it.

I love the material because I have decided in favour of it, and therefore I do not want to replace it. For, because I have decided in favour of it and love it, I cannot and do not want to change it. The decision in favour of the material is a prodigiously important one; that is the political. And because I have made this decision, I cannot give way to the wishes or demands for ‘something else’ and ‘something new’.

**Doing Art Politically: This means working for the other**

To work for the other means at first to work for the other in myself, and it also means working for a non-exclusive public. The other can be my neighbour, it can be a stranger, someone who scares me, whom I do not know and also do not understand. The other is someone about whom I have not thought and whom I have not expected. The non-exclusive public is not simply everybody or the mass or the majority; the non-exclusive public consists of the others, the sometimes more and sometimes less numerous others. Through and in my work I want to work for a non-exclusive public. I want to bank everything on never excluding the other from my work; I always want, unconditionally, to include the other. I want to include the other through the form of my work.

The other is also the reason why I do not make any distinction between works in public space, in a commercial gallery, at an art fair, in the museum, in the Kunsthalle, in the alternative art space. That is the political. To work for the other gives me the possibility of positioning myself as an artist outside the spectrum of weighing considerations.

**Doing Art Politically: This means giving a form**

Not making a form, but giving a form, a form which comes from me, which comes only from me, and which can only come from me because I see the form in this way, because I understand the form in this way and because I know the form only in this way. In contrast to making a form, giving form means to be one with it. I must be able to stand being alone with this form. It is a matter of holding up the form, of asserting the form and defending it—against everything and everyone. It is a matter of positing the question of form for oneself and of trying, by giving form, to give an answer. I want to try to confront myself with the great artistic challenge: How can I give a form which takes a position? And how can I give a form that resists the facts? I want to understand the question of form as the most important question for the artist.

**Doing Art Politically: This means constructing a stage or platform with the work**

The platform created in this way enables others to come into contact with the work. I want to understand all my works as a surface or a field. This field or surface is the surface that enables access to or contact with the art. On this surface the impact or friction takes place, and through the contact the other can be implicated. This surface—my work—must be a locus for dialogue or for confrontation. I think that art has the power and capability, because it is art, to create the conditions for a dialogue or a confrontation, directly, one-to-one, without communication, without mediation, without smoothing things over. As an artist I want to see my work as a platform, a platform which is an unambiguous opening to the other. I always want to ask myself, Does my work possess the dynamic for a breakthrough? And I ask myself, is there an opening in my work? Does my work resist the tendency toward the hermetic? My work must create an opening; it must be a door, a window or even only a hole, a hole beaten into today’s reality. I want to make my art with the will to create a breakthrough.

**Doing Art Politically: This does not mean working either for or against the market**

Rather it is a matter of understanding the market as a part of the artist’s reality and of working in this reality. Not wanting to work either for or against the market is not merely a declaration; it is the awareness that only through autonomy and independ-



ence can art manage to put itself beyond the laws of the market. Only the direct and affirmed confrontation with the reality of the market, despite errors and defects and despite injuries, makes it possible to resist the pressure of the market and to go beyond it. As an artist I must not become dependent. Always, and especially in the initial years, the artist needs support and assistance. I know that this support and assistance are important, but I must never make myself or my work dependent upon them.

#### Doing Art Politically: This means giving oneself the means to do so

It is a matter of inventing one's means for working oneself, or of appropriating them. My means are headlessness; energy = yes quality = no; weakening oneself but wanting to make a strong work; not being economical with oneself; expending oneself; panic is the solution!; being precise and simultaneously exaggerating; undermining oneself; being cruel vis-à-vis one's own work, being tenacious, less is less! more is more!; it is never won, but it is also never totally lost!; to have the ambition to coin a new concept with my work; to assume responsibility for everything concerning my work; to bear looking stupid in view of my own work; better is always less good!; refusing all hierarchies; believing in the friendship between art and philosophy; being prepared to pay the price for my work as the first to do so.

#### Doing Art Politically: This means using art as a tool or weapon

I understand art as a tool to get to know the world. I understand art as a tool to confront myself with reality. And I understand art as a tool to live in the times in which I am. I always ask myself, Does my work have the ability to generate an event? Can I encounter someone with my work? And with my work, do I manage to get to know something? Or, through my work, can someone get to know something?

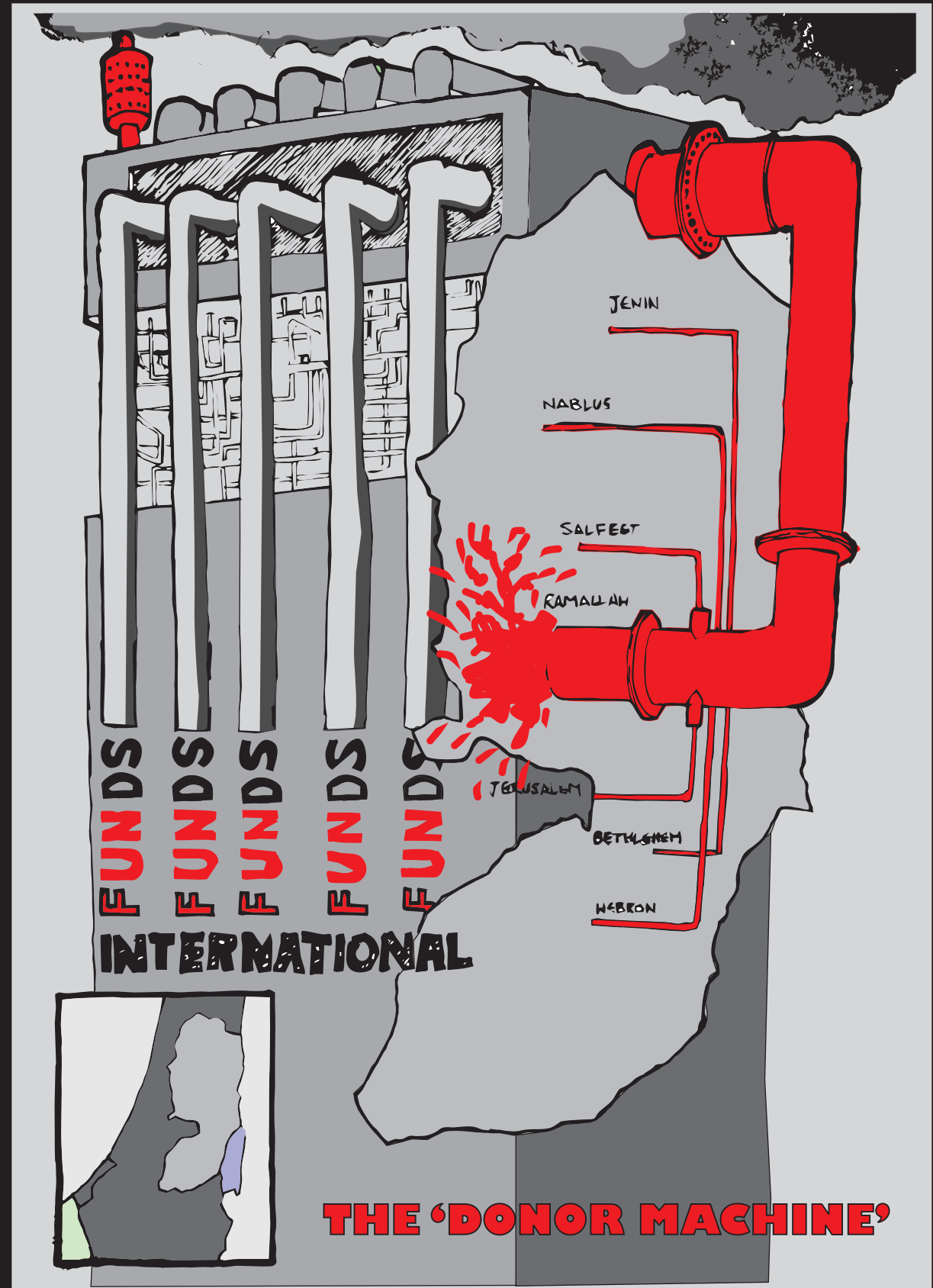
To make art politically means to understand the work which I am making today, in my milieu, in my history, as a work which wants to go beyond this, my milieu, beyond this, my history. I want to achieve in and through my life that I confront myself with universal problems. Therefore I must work with what surrounds me, with what I know and with what affects me, not in such a way as to succumb to the temptation of the particular, but rather, on the contrary, to touch universality. The particular, which always excludes, must be resisted. For me this means that I want to make my work which I make here and today a universal work. That is the political.

#### Doing Art politically: This means being a warrior

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"Bic" et l'Engagement politique  
Lors de mon exposition "Très grand Buffet" à Fribourg, quelqu'un a remarqué que ~~les~~ des travaux des séries "Virus", "Merci, Danke, Thank You" et "Les larmes" sont faits avec des stylos bille. Et cette personne a demandé est-ce que je le faisais avec des stylos bille de la marque "Bic" et elle a aussi fait remarquer que l'entreprise "Bic" est supporteur financier de Le Pen. C'est une information dans le journal officiel sur le financement des partis politiques qui annonce ce fait. C'est de la Merde de supporter Le Pen. Mais c'est de la Merde aussi de devoir s'occuper de tels questions. Moi, j'utilise les stylos bille de la marque "Bic" parce que ils sont pas chers partout trouvable, ils sont simples et tenent bien dans ma main. J'aime travailler avec les stylos bille car tout le monde les connaît et les utilise. C'est pour moi en plus un choix par rapport à sa universalité, sa non-couleur, sa non-distinction. Pour moi travailler avec des stylos bille est un choix artistique politique. C'est à dire justement j'essaye de faire politiquement mon travail d'artiste en utilisant cette matière par exemple. C'est quelque chose en quoi je crois très fermement en tant qu'artiste. Si je faisais un travail politique par contre, je devrais plus travailler avec des stylos bille de la marque "Bic" mais qu'est-ce que font les autres marques comme supporteurs politiques? Qu'est-ce que font les autres marques comme supporteurs politiques? Est-ce qu'il faut travailler avec des "Mont-Blanc" pour avoir la conscience tranquille et en même temps appartenir à l'élite qui se distingue par son outil d'écriture? Evidemment tous ces questions je ne me le pose pas, car je veux travailler, agir. Mais je ne veux pas me laisser prendre les énergies par les informations et informateurs consciencieux politisés et impuissants. Trop de conscience tue l'art et trop de conscience canalise tout les énergies vitales et ainsi la révolte ne peut plus exister. Le qu'oublie les personnes trop conscientes c'est que je mène une bataille je livre un combat dont l'issue ne paraît incertain mais que j'ai ne peux pas gagner en me réfugiant derrière un engagement politique formalisé vérifiable en somme conforme et sécurisant. Je veux lutter pour plus d'égalité et de Justice, l'égalité humaine, la Justice humaine. En faisant mon travail d'artiste politiquement en me posant des questions politiquement et ne pas en posant des questions politiques et faisant un travail politique <sup>donc avec du sens</sup>.





# Stamp my Passport Please!

Younes Bouadi



It was during the preparations in Ramallah for the *Picasso in Palestine* project that I first heard of the *State of Palestine stamp*, an art project by Palestinian artist Khaled Jarrar. The project immediately caught my attention because I have a long time fascination for the ritual of the border crossing. This fascination stems from the period in which I travelled for a year by car through Northern Africa and the Middle East. The entry stamp always marked the successful passage through this ritual. The stamp as the official seal of approval to enter a country after a Kafkaesque bureaucratic experience at forgotten border crossings.

So when I met Khaled Jarrar I told him I wanted a stamp. The whole procedure of getting a stamp is actually one of the most interesting art experiences I have ever participated in. When Jarrar got the stamp out, I got nervous, because I still had to leave Palestine and Israel and I had no clue how the border guards would react on this stamp. So there was quite some suspense when I saw the stamp hanging above my passport. The moment the stamp was placed on the passport however it really felt as a liberating act by accepting that there was no way back now. I was actually looking forward going through the border crossing with the stamp.

Arriving in Israel had taken me quite a long time, already in Amsterdam the security officials interrogated me for several hours and gave me a complete pat down. So I decided I had to be well prepared for my flight back with the *State of Palestine stamp*. I thought it would be good to arrive 4,5 hours earlier so I had enough time for this adventure without missing my flight.

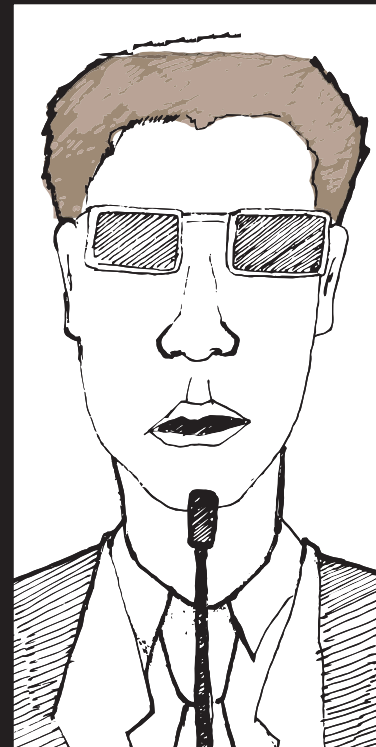
It already begun when my taxi and I got searched at the entry of the parking garage by the airport, but they didn't see the stamp. My anticipation was rising for what was to come.



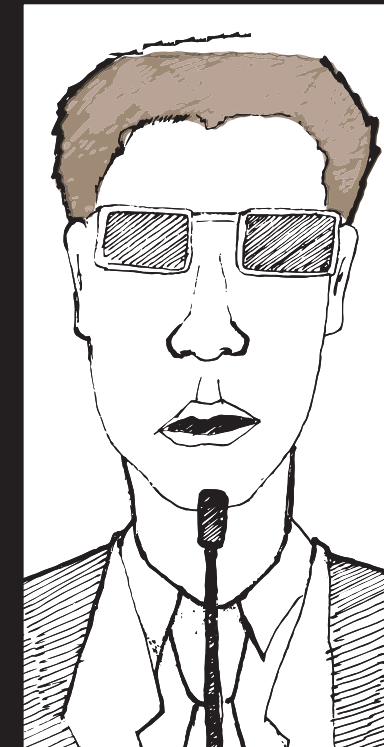
State of Palestine stamp

At the next control, I got through the whole ritual fairly easy and I thought I would get away with the stamp without any questions. But then of course I made things more complicated by not wanting an Israeli stamp. You can imagine how the border officials reacted when I had a *State of Palestine stamp*, but didn't want an Israeli one. I was taken to an interrogation area. As I had experienced this on my entry as well, I decided I would turn the bureaucratic system around: when they interrogate you the officials have to write everything down. So I took this opportunity to make my journey go officially in the record books. The border officials asked me why I didn't want an Israeli stamp. And then when I explained them I travel a lot, they wanted to know where I had been. I took the pleasure of naming all the countries I have been to in my whole life, and then I told them as you can see with several of those countries I could not have entered with an Israeli stamp.

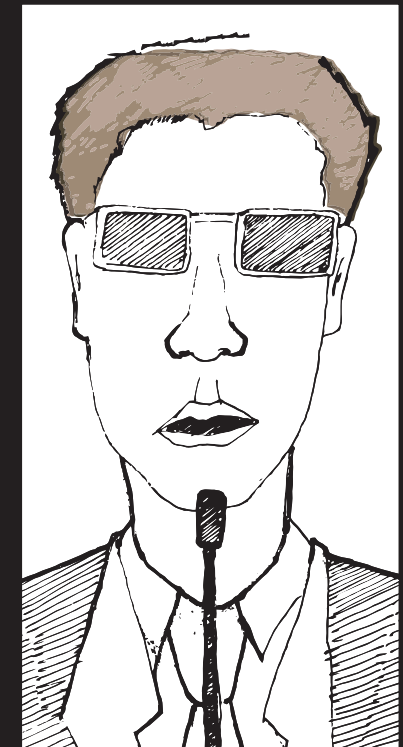
When they kept going on why I travelled so much, I took the most of my 4 hours and pretty much told them my life story. Then they asked me about the stamp and said this would give me trouble in other countries cause they would know I had been in Israel. I told them it is not a official stamp but an imaginary one, which confused them even more. "How is it not real, it is in your passport, right". Then I had to remind them that Palestine did not exist, so neither did the stamp, which had a bureaucratic short circuit as result. We went back and forth like this for a while and finally they agreed to let me go without an Israeli stamp, but with a *State of Palestine stamp* in my passport and a gigantic smirk on my face.



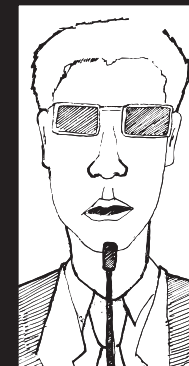
What is the role of the *Palestinian INTELLECTUALS?* ... Who are they representing?



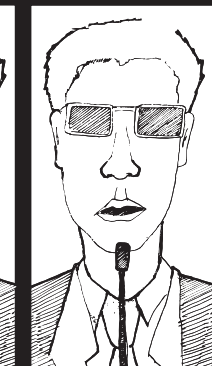
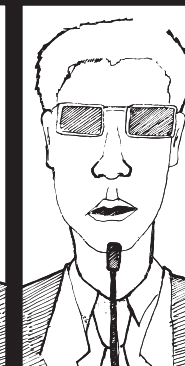
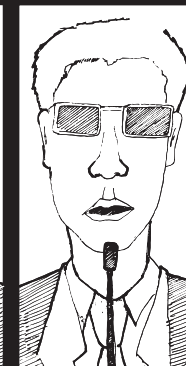
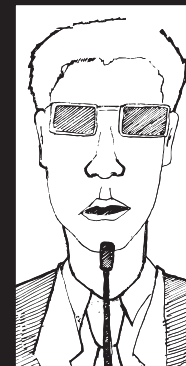
Is their role going to be constantly individual and separated from the political and social production?



Will their thoughts always be framed by the mechanism of the '*Donors Machine*'?



Will their thoughts, always, be framed by the mechanism of the '*Donors Machine*'? ...



Will the '*Donor Machine*' dominate their minds for too long ... ?



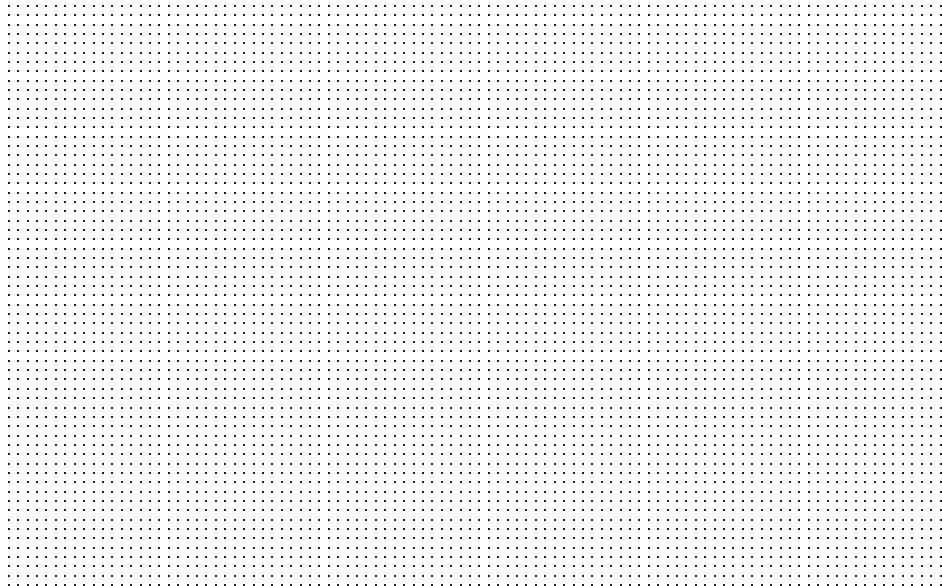
Rhetoric ... The same cycle day after day ... The same words ... The same person ... A copy of a copy ...  
Intellectuals ... Shrinking in their skin ... Trapped in the pipes of the '*Donor Machine*' ...



(area 01)

# Open Letter

(area 02)



(area 03)

## Katia Reich

“Traveling is a brutality. It forces you to trust strangers and to lose sight of all that family comfort of home and friends. You are constantly off balance. Nothing is yours except the essential things—air, sleep, dreams, the sun, the sky, [the wind a.a.]—all things tending toward the eternal or what we imagine of it.”  
— CESARE PAVESE

Dear Samir,

Travelling back to Berlin after a ten-day research trip around Israel-Palestine in late July 2011, the above quoted thoughts by Italian poet Cesare Pavese caught my eye. They summarised precisely the controversial situation and emotional condition I was thrown into during my travels in the region.

Already in April 2011, I was accompanying Artur Żmijewski, the curator of the upcoming 7th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, on a trip to Tel Aviv and Ramallah. According to his curatorial concept, the biennale aims to transform the exhibition format into an all-over political space, to challenge the role of contemporary art in society today and to truly effect reality. So we were approaching Palestine as one possible statement in this context with the goal of developing a co-operative project.

Coming back for a second extended research trip to Ramallah on July 20, I had the chance to see *Buste de Femme* on the last day of the greatly discussed project *Picasso in Palestine*. The following day, I was happy to join the conference *Designing Civic Encounter* organised by Shuruq Harb and Ursula Biemann. Throughout these three intensive days and by meeting you and Toleen, I received a profound introduction to the urban transformations in Palestine as well as an insight into the geopolitical, social, economic and cultural fragmentation that is the result of the 1993 Oslo Accords and the ongoing settlement policy of the Israeli government. Through travels to Al Rawabi, Beit Sahur, Aida- and Deieische Refugee Camp close to Bethlehem, East-Jerusalem, attending diverse conferences and the seminar *Devils Advocate – Collaboration and Resistance by the Law* organised by Sandi Halil, Alessandro Petti, Nicolás Perugini and Eyal Weizmann as well as during many more personal meetings with local producers and intellectuals, I quickly learned my ‘ABC’ of Palestine. I also brainstormed some basic ideas for a possible co-operative project with the International Academy of Art Palestine in Ramallah. I was impressed by the local activities of cultural and knowledge producers, the dimensions and numbers of international exchange programmes and the art practices, which differed greatly from the cultural national presentations that I had read about on the website of the General Delegation Palestine in the German Federal Republic prior to the trip.

We have been discussing the dangers of political influence through the aid programs of international NGOs, the so-called “NGO personality”, and the effects they have on local production and Palestinian self-consciousness. We described how the label “Palestine” is used by curators and institutions and reflected about the gap between contemporary production and thinking and its international appearance through the national instruments. In the last couple of years many cultural protagonists were flown in to Palestine and, according to the NGO missions, they were filtered through different realities. Numerous conferences and festivals were set up, so there may not be a strong interest in setting up another project, especially with an institution that carries such a big label as the Berlin Biennale does. But, assuming that art is a tool for self-knowledge and understanding and assuming that artistic activity can use, create and challenge political instruments, especially nowadays, an effort to set up an infrastructure should be made.

A pause beyond daily production and consumption is needed to formulate answers about cultural identity and policy, its rights and forms of appearances in a future State of Palestine. We have been discussing what makes culture and contemporary art worthy for the people and how can we reach them. How can cultural producers, artistic practitioners and cultural institutions work with politicians responsibly, in order to design a creative society in a future democratic state? And on the opposite side, I was discussing with Basel and Ruanne about how artistically expressed reflection and documentation of Palestinian realities in photography, videos or sound installations are failing in the Western model of the white-cube. We discovered that we share the same interest for the St. Petersburg-based artist-collective, the Voina Group, who invent radical forms in order to make people aware of politics through art.

It is time to develop formats and instruments, to set up self-organised committees who draw up an agreement with the national authorities on how to communicate the diversity of Palestinian culture through international channels.

Why not host a think tank to connect local experiences and transformations with neighbouring countries? That would put the local into different geopolitical, social and economic contexts, to then develop visions beyond territorial borders and apply them. The results may be relevant in other locations and contexts as well. Let’s collect statements based on this question. Or, let’s go one step further and formulate a pact for culture like the one the cultural producers and the Polish government just recently signed. In our discussions Khaled Hourani was considering tailor-made tours starting in Ramallah and reaching out to Nablus, Hebron, as well as the refugee camps that are a necessary part of the upcoming *co-operative* project. Sandi brought me to Aida Refugee Camp and showed me the biggest key in the world, which was produced to enter the Guinness Book of Records and now crowns the entrance gate of the camp as a

metaphorical symbol but also as a proof for self-empowerment of the people. But what next? Contextualisation and creation of an infrastructure is missing, I was told. And what about Gaza?

Back in Berlin in the heavy rain of the high summer season, my thoughts and emotions had to settle. My colleagues were already expecting my report impatiently and curiously. And I think, through Fatima’s lecture given in Berlin in August 2011, that the varied artistic and political aspects of *Picasso in Palestine* also transmitted the difficult living and working conditions, thereby changing to a certain extent the understanding of some aspects of the complicated Israeli-Palestine conflict, while also opening new questions.

I strongly feel it is time to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps: Time to fight for free, self-determined thinking in favour of national and international dialogue.

It was great to meet you all and I am sending my warm regards,

Katia

## WHAT ABOUT GAZA !!!

Today ... Can we consider Gaza and the West Bank a  
"ONE GEOGRAPHICAL UNIT"?

... Separated not only geopolitically,  
but also culturally ...

Will Gaza be able to have an equal  
opportunity to contribute to the  
cultural production in the oPt or will it  
be isolated from the cultural scene?

Will there be a cultural scene that blurs  
the borders and distances between  
Ramallah and Gaza?



Will Ramallah be the center of the  
cultural production ...

What is the Role of the society ... Are  
they able to Dismantle the Mechanisms  
of the 'Donor Machine'?

Are the Palestinian ready to Dismantle  
it and formulate their future territory?

**GAZA**

**A total cultural isolation**



# Rail Diary

ERIC GOTTESMAN

—

TOLEEN TOUQ

In January and February 2011, we traveled overland from Jordan to Turkey researching “We Have Woven The Motherlands With Nets Of Iron,” an exhibition that took the Hejaz railway as a platform for contemporary artists to reconsider regional cohesion and the legacy of imperialism in the lands of the former Ottoman Empire.

Sultan Abdul Hamid II began building the narrow-gauge Hejaz railway in 1900 as a pan-Islamic project to extend the existing Ottoman railway network outward from Istanbul. He received support from Muslims as far away as Morocco and India. The Hejaz line ran from Damascus through current-day Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia and was intended to reach Mecca, with a branch through Palestine to the sea. By connecting Istanbul to the holy city of Islam, the Sultan would facilitate the Hajj for pilgrims coming from the north, but construction stopped in 1908 and the train never reached beyond Medina. Now, removed from its divine and political aspirations, sections of the line are left to transport cargo. Along other parts of the railway, the iron rails sit in disrepair, abandoned in the sand, or have been removed for use as raw materials. “The train,” we wrote in our proposal for the show, “never recovered from its destruction but the tracks still remain. After the rise and fall of empires, what is left of the withered dream to transcend physical and metaphysical borders?”

When we proposed the show, our interest in the Hejaz railway derived from the tangible, if utopic, dream of a united region that the train symbolized. Our curatorial impulse was to travel the length of the rail line searching for artists and thinkers that would inspire us. The journey itself, and the time during which we decided to embark upon it, changed the show dramatically.



**Tuesday 18th January 2011 7 PM**

**AMMAN, JORDAN — Toleen:**

In the summer of 1971, my grandmother, great grandmother, and my great grandmother's sister took a trip from Nablus (Palestine) to Istanbul (Turkey). They took my then 17-year old mother with them because she spoke English and could help them communicate in Turkey. They traveled from Nablus to Amman by land and from there took a taxi to Aleppo in Syria where they boarded a train to Istanbul.

On that train, stifled by the presence of the elders, my mother walked away from her seat in the middle of the night until she found herself in a compartment where an Iraqi man was singing sad Iraqi songs. She listened to his beautiful voice in the silence of the train.

In Istanbul, where they spent one week, my mother remembers that they took a day trip to an island whose name she forgets. At the time, she had just finished high school and was anxious about the yet-unannounced results. She remembers my grandmother dipping her feet in spring water and being happy like a child again. My great Circassian grandmother could still speak some Turkish. My great grandmother's sister was grumpy and kept saying 'No' to whatever the group suggested.

I tried to visualize how they looked, what they were like when my mom was 17, on the train, at the border, in Istanbul. I couldn't, except for a made-up memory of a non-existent photograph.

Before departing on our own trip in the same direction, she recalled this trip to Eric and I over breakfast at our house. She seemed surprised that she even remembered it herself.

Now, as we are leaving Amman I think to myself: we will never reach Istanbul. It seemed as distant a thought as my mother's recollection of a trip 30 years ago. Something must happen to us on the way... an armed robbery, a failed visa at the border, something... to stop us, a Jordanian and an American, from completing these 2000 kilometers.



**Wednesday 19th January 2011, 3 AM**

**WADI RUM, JORDAN — Eric:**

On our way here we stopped in Ma'an and explored what used to be the biggest railway station between Damascus and Medina. We jumped the fence and reached the compound that was like a ghost village and contains several partially renovated buildings, including an observation tower that we climbed. From the top, Toleen pointed out spare trains, scrap metal, the village and, beyond, the horizon of the desert stretching toward Mecca.

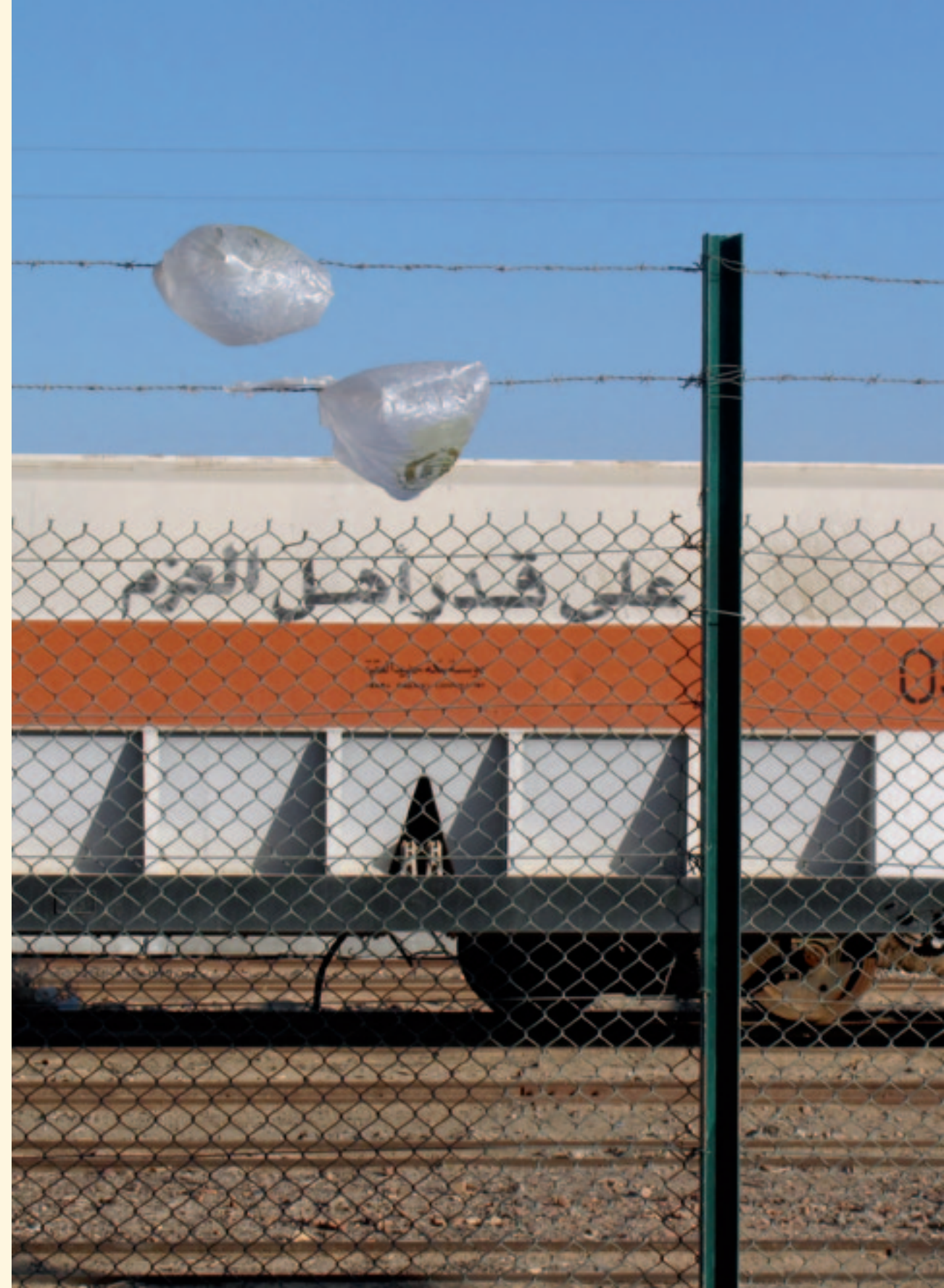
When we arrived here in Wadi Rum there were three Bedouin men sitting where we were going to camp, smoking a small *narghile*. The tallest, a striking man in a long gray robe, looked regal and we discovered he had just driven across the border from Saudi to visit his two cousins. Like us, they were marveling at their land. They finished smoking, packed up their gear and roared away in a rugged beige Land Rover.

We ate lunch and ventured out to a rock formation where David Lean shot part of *Lawrence of Arabia*. In the film, Peter O'Toole plays the hubristic British soldier that according to Lean and to Lawrence himself led the Arabs to fight off their Ottoman colonizers in the Arab Revolt. The Arab Revolt memorial in the center of Ma'an suggests a variation on that story: the Arabs, led by the sons of Sharif Hussein of Mecca, were already leading themselves toward independence. In the film, Lawrence blows up the Hejaz railway, sending the train toppling into the desert sands and symbolically foiling Ottoman ambitions. Some of those trains still lie in the desert by the side of the broken tracks.

The train scene was shot thousands of miles away, in Andalusia, but another of the most important moments of the film was shot here: Lawrence (O'Toole) leads the Arabs across the 'Nefud' desert to Aqaba to launch a surprise attack, traveling at night because the heat during the day would tire their camels. The movement across the desert is glacial and the journey impossibly epic. Just when they are about to lose hope, we see a close-up of O'Toole's face, his steel blue eyes brighten and he utters a word of dramatic victory: "Aqaba." Lean cuts to a scene of the Red Sea port of "Aqaba" (which is Andalusia again; Lean using cinema to weave together landscapes across thousands of miles).

We lingered on top of the rock, taking in the view as the warm afternoon air began to cool down. In the distance, I could see the Land Rover accelerating, trailing a

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long plume of sand behind it. They were driving as fast as they could, cranking the wheel to one side nearly flipping the truck, then recovering, accelerating again, splashing sand far to the outside of the turn, and eventually disappearing into the distance toward Aqaba as the suspension of the truck creaked and squealed.

**Friday 21st January 2011, 2 PM**  
**BETWEEN AMMAN, JORDAN AND DAMASCUS, SYRIA — Toleen:**

We are in the mini-van heading north to the Jordanian/Syrian border on our way to Damascus. Eric jumps in the back and I sit in the front seat. I am chatting with our driver, a chubby and tanned man, while ‘Al-Wakeel’, Jordan’s infamous radio host is blabbering on the airwaves. Amid the recent popular uprisings in the Arab world, his repeated patriotic slogans describing the valor of the Jordanian ‘people’ and the increasing need for the protection of the Jordanian ‘regime’ sound questionable. As we move through the urban landscapes, this border seems artificial, merely physical. I wonder if the driver realizes the absurdity of the situation, as I do.

He tells me of his constant trips between Amman and Damascus, sometimes making this journey six times a day. He is originally from Dera’a in the south of Syria. As Eric is snapping away, our conversation slowly moves to smuggling electronics, cigarettes, and food supplies amongst many other things. “There’s always, always a way to get things through the border.” he says. Then he jokes about drivers fooling custom officials on both sides by stashing items in hidden compartments in their cars.

We reach Damascus with the last rays of sun clinging to the sky, having tired of one another; we resort to staring through the windshield into the approaching chaos of the city.

**Sunday 23rd January 2011, 10 AM**  
**DAMASCUS, SYRIA — Eric:**

LONGING  
(Fragments of a poem by X., translated at 3 a.m. by Toleen)

*The sea left and when he came back  
He told me the salt had returned*

*And lemons taste blue  
And that the purple flower has thirty boats  
And that God walks on the sidewalks of Damascus*

Up late last night as smoke swirled around me in this cozy but damned Damascus apartment. The rain beat down hard so the two boys that inhabit the place, a poet (X) and an actor (Y), keep the windows closed. I know I left a few years of my life in this apartment.

*And that writing is the half of things  
And that lamps dampen the light of the world  
And that the deer love driving  
And that music is the other half of things*

The characters rotated: a film director from the Syrian coast and his Belgian friend sat with us for some time, then three musicians from Aleppo; a group of French volunteers; two writers and their girlfriends. Each had a drink, smoked a joint and left. The conversation was rich with politics and art, and everyone joined in boisterously, though I sensed some came through just for the hashish. These rooms up here constitute a twisted heavenly escape from the street four stories below: down there is the weight of tradition and history, citizens are conscious of what they say and do for fear that the mukhabbarat (intelligence) is watching. Up here it is sex, drugs and rock and roll. The dog shits all over the floor because his loving owners are too stoned to remember to take him out for a walk.

*And that wolves are of very innocent hearts  
And that blood flows away from the heart and doesn’t tire it  
And that the heart is a journey...*

There is a deep, vulgar beauty in what this flat represents, the revulsion from convention and the possibility of other ways of living in Syria. If I were to live here, this place would be a necessity. There is no hot water, nor milk in the refrigerator, and I sit now amidst the stench of hand-rolled cigarette butts and empty alcohol bottles but the sun is shining from over the hill and through the window, now open. Everyone is asleep. In a desert of cultural domination, these boys have somehow constructed an oasis from a romantic, naïve willingness to believe in the primacy of love.







**Monday 24th January, 2011, 3 PM**

AL-QADAM TRAIN STATION IN DAMASCUS — Toleen:

On the walls of the ticket office are two A4-sized announcement papers, one for the train service to Aleppo and the other to Tehran. Out of curiosity I ask the woman at the counter about the service to Tehran. It would take us thirty-six hours to reach, and on the way we would trace the complex lines of Turkey’s Eastern Anatolia and stop at Van, a large town very close to the Turkish/Iranian border, where the train cars are loaded onto a ferry that crosses the lake. We had read about this route before taking our trip but I didn’t believe it was real.

Here we are in the middle of a spider web, a hub of history and culture from which, in previous times, we could have packed our bags and trekked to virtually anywhere. Eastwards to Baghdad or to Tehran, westwards to Lebanon or Palestine and on to Egypt.

Today, we can only head north, further into Syria and on to Turkey.

To make the journey to Iraq or Iran we would have needed to arrange visas weeks before, and Eric’s American passport might have been a problem. To go to Palestine would be impossible, since the line here is not running. If it were, we could have connected to Haifa, Akre and Nablus passing through Afula. The train tracks here have been dismantled. There would still be a route to Palestine by land of course, but by taking that we would be confronted by the imposing State of Israel: first in the Occupied Golan Heights, where neither of us would be able to enter, and then in Israel ‘proper’, where my Palestinian Identity Card would not let me in.

For a moment, standing in the station, I forgot these restrictions exist.

“Ok,” I say, “We want to go to Aleppo.” We submit our passports, pay our fees, buy our snacks, smoke the last cigarettes on the platform, and hop on.

**Thursday 27th January 2011, 9 AM**

ALEPPO, SYRIA — Toleen:

We depart from our beautifully decorated old hotel in Aleppo, the city that has served us well in the last few days, heading towards Turkey. It especially fed us well: on the first night, we feasted over Aleppian food in an upper-middle class







business club filled with machismo. I was the *only* female and I have pictures to prove it. It was obviously a popular restaurant. We ate Kebab with pomegranate concentrate, shanklish with just the right mix of cheese and oil and spice, perfect kibbee neyyeh and much more. The next night, our friend Issa took us to an Armenian restaurant. A men's club again, but this time from the 1970s, with even better food and unintentionally mod decor in a shady residential building; liver soaked in lemon and olive oil and other strange dishes that only my taste buds remember.

We are at the taxi station, ready to cross into Turkey. I start to feel the excitement of the trip coming on. I had taken part of this route before, but now this was new territory. I had been to Damascus and Istanbul before but each on separate trips. This time it feels we are traversing the landscape between them by land as if tracing a part of history. I can feel it as we move. I wonder again how this landscape must have looked when my mother took this trip, and how it must have looked a hundred years before that. Today it is raining; a layer of fog lingers halfway between the mixture of coloured houses and large green fields, and the dreary sky. We spot 'The Syrian-Turkish Friendship Forest', tucked away in between a series of swaying hills.

#### Thursday 27th January 2011, 1 PM

SYRIAN/TURKISH BORDER — Toleen:

The road leading to the border control is choked with traffic. At the Turkish border control a woman and her son who had fled from Libya argue with the border officials. She frantically wails "You don't want to let me in, and the Syrians won't let me back in! Where am I supposed to go?" People gather around to calm her down. Like a modern day Sisyphus, she gets up once again to repeat her desperate pleas to the Syrian officials on the other side.

It is a distressing situation, a metaphor for the absurdity of these borders. These lands that were once unified, albeit through colonial Ottoman rule are now snapped apart by borders, check points, and men in uniform who obey the rules. The stateless, fleeing worse fates, are literally stuck in the middle. Even though travel by land is considerably difficult in this region for those of us with 'valid' passports, we are still granted some freedom of mobility.





**Thursday 27th January 2011, 11 PM**

**HATAY/ANTAKYA, TURKEY — Eric:**

Paraphrasing Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu:

“If we understand that there is a need to reconnect societies, communities, tribes, ethnicities, sects in our region, the abnormality of colonialism will lose the momentum of history. Instead, those who understand correctly will be the leading force of history...”

Nowhere are the varied connections more apparent than in the sleepy, schizophrenic border town of Hatay. The river lazily makes its way through the center of the village. The spice market meanders through the maze of stones downtown. It is comprised of Turkish Arabs and Allawites, religiously connected to Bashar al-Assad.

As the signs changed from Arabic script to Turkish, the first thing that caught Toleen’s eye coming into town was *kunefe*. She (and I) had thought of it as a Palestinian pastry or at least Arab. We snuck in a post-lunch sweet and were impressed; not too bad for Turks.

The artist collective A-77 gave us their manifesto in an amusing meeting that we had with them in English, Arabic and Turkish; no one spoke all three and few spoke two overlapping languages fluently. Often, Toleen and Mehmet would discuss in broken Arabic and translate to me in English or Emrah would talk to the group in Turkish and translate for Toleen and I into English. We chuckled through our frustration and sipped mint tea.

Tonight, at the hotel, we crashed a wedding that was happening in the courtyard of the renovated soap factory, right below our room. Exhausted from the travel and aware of our early morning departure, we retired early, listening to decipher whether the songs played below were in Turkish or Arabic.

**Friday 28th January 2011, 6 PM**

**ON THE TRAIN FROM ADANA, TURKEY TO ISTANBUL, TURKEY — Toleen:**

We escape our uncomfortable train seats, move to the restaurant compartment and station ourselves at the table closest to the bar. The train is passing through people’s backyards; that space between the railroad tracks and the backs of homes

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that is meant to be private void, a space to hide. A wave from the rebel teenager sneaking a cigarette with his friend. A glare from the old man sitting on his porch. Smiles from the workers on the lands we pass.

I stroll through the train carriages. There are several old ladies knitting; men in suits working their laptops; families taking out neatly prepared sandwiches from their bags. As day moves to night, people change places at the restaurant tables. We stay at ours. I trace the stations we stop at on the map of modern-day Turkey. We are moving north, curving west. We are still only about a third of our way through the trip. We each try to draw a map of the Middle East on a handkerchief, revealing very different sketches. Then we try Europe and the Americas. The other passengers have trickled away, retreating into their sleeping cabins or disembarking at villages in the night. We watch them enviously.

The night is long and interrupted by shifting, the never-ending quest to find that one position that will allow me to sleep. There are sounds of snoring from the back of the cabin, and unexpected trips to the bathroom. As the sun comes up and the view from the window appears like a painting in progress, sleep finally takes the better of me.

### Friday 28th January 2011, 7 AM

ON THE TRAIN FROM ADANA, TURKEY TO ISTANBUL, TURKEY — Eric:

I drifted off for a few minutes here and there, and saw Toleen in many uncomfortable-looking positions pursuing sleep. I had dreamt of looking out the window of my private compartment, like Eva Marie Saint in *North by Northwest*. Instead, I felt more like Cary Grant's character, shoved in the overhead bin by Saint, or the boys crammed happily in the train cars in *Slumdog Millionaire*.

I was not prepared for the awe of the Turkish landscape, from the jagged edges of cliffs on which the train rode just outside of Adana to the rolling hills further north and eventually to the sea. The view at dawn was astonishing. Orange light seeped through fog that covered the vineyards, olive groves and sleeping villages.

We arrive at Haydarpasa Station, the former western terminus of the Ottoman rail system. A distance of 1185 Km that took us 8 days using taxi van, train, taxi car, bus and train.







### **Saturday 29th January 2011, 6 PM**

ISTANBUL, TURKEY — Toleen:

Sitting in our apartment, we are glued to Al-Jazeera International. In Syria we did not have TV in our budget accommodations and the Internet was restricted. Only a few weeks back, we were taken by surprise when Ben Ali had fled Tunis. Now, against all expectations, Cairenes are taking to the streets. The same people who had forever been ridiculing their leader, but never confronting him, are now moving. I am nervous, anxious, excited. “Let’s go to Cairo! I want to be there.” I say to Eric. “We can take a plane, or perhaps a boat from Istanbul to Alexandria and then a train to Cairo.”

We start planning, but our bodies cannot move, our eyes are fixed to the TV screen, missing lunch and then dinner and arriving late to our appointments. In an odd twist of celebration, our night extends to day as we stroll around the city’s cobbled streets. We meet over-enthusiastic teenagers in a nightclub where we dance. We dance more to the tunes of outdoor speakers of an alley bar. We pick up a dose of rice and chicken from a street vendor and stumble back giggling.

### **Saturday 29th January 2011, 11 PM**

ISTANBUL, TURKEY — Eric:

Revolutionaries are always optimists, as are the visionary dictators they overthrow like Mubarak, or Ben Ali, or the Sultan (if he were a pessimist, he would never have tried to build a train across a desert). Optimists believe the impossible is possible, and whether they are proven right or wrong, what was once impossible eventually becomes obsolete. As we trekked across thousands of miles of landscape, it was our (and the world’s) optimism that propelled us here, to Istanbul.

### **Sunday 30th January 2011**

ISTANBUL, TURKEY — Toleen:

It seemed being in Istanbul was all about wishing to be somewhere else. Wanting to be back in Amman in solidarity with what was happening in the region. Wanting to be in Cairo and taking in the mass energy, or wanting to be in Athens with a friend on his deathbed (I had received the news through a dreaded phone call earlier in the day). Having traveled so far to get here, it was ironic to want to leave. Istanbul was a mirage, like the railway to Mecca was a mirage for the Sultan, a destination that was not to be.







Earlier, as Eric and I were walking back from meeting Orhan who had generously hosted us for dinner at his house, we were revisiting the conversation we had had; on the sudden change of alphabet as Turkey moved from the Ottoman Empire to a secular republic (ten days of bilingual newspapers only, to be exact); on the disconnect between modern day Turkish citizens and the Arab world; on the new policies of the Turkish government regarding their southerly neighbors.

This was our last night in Istanbul. We are chatting and Eric wonders whether Obama's speech in Cairo the year before was influential. I thought that was naïve. We go back and forth expressing our different perspectives and histories; he eventually agrees with me.

### **Monday 31st January 2011**

**IN THE AIR BETWEEN ISTANBUL AND AMMAN, JORDAN — Eric:**

On the plane, Toleen and I were reviewing our notes from the trip. In a folder on my laptop marked "train images," I came across a picture I had found months earlier from another train line in 1968.

Several black children stand on the wooden ties of a train track somewhere between New York City and Washington, DC. They shake the red, white and blue stars and stripes into a blur, waiting by the tracks for hours to mourn their beloved leader, their symbol of change, their beacon of hope. Three boys: one upright looking serious in his polyester slacks, another craning up toward the photographer (himself aboard a train), the third holding a hand-made sign saying RFK WLU ("Robert F. Kennedy, We Love You").

Three days earlier, someone put three bullets into the presidential candidate's body. The country knew what to expect; it was not the first time they had seen a leader fall. As he peers out the windows of the slow-moving train, the photographer sees crowds of people by the tracks, awaiting the moment Kennedy's body passes so they can pay their respects. After a tumultuous decade, only the falling of a leader could bring everyone together. We connect the events we have witnessed over the past few weeks to the events of the 1960s. Then (as now) there was hope and optimism tainted only slightly by the fear of what might follow. Still, Toleen asks, perhaps thinking of her mother and grandmother's journey decades before or perhaps thinking of the construction of the tracks a century ago, "What better time could there have been to have made this journey?"

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The inhabitants of the small, nearly abandoned train station in Giza, Jordan where we held our exhibition some months later, are squatters who live in the rooms upstairs and look after the building for the national train authority. The head of the family, Ahmed, helped us install the artworks we selected for the show, which were produced largely by artists we met on our journey through Jordan, Syria, Turkey and later Palestine. The station was on the Hejaz line, a perfect location for the show; Ahmed explained that he named his first son after the Sultan who built his house: Abdel Hamid. Behind the house are the tracks that lead north to Amman and south toward Mecca.

For the opening, we chartered a six-car train from Amman, resurrecting the mythical railroad about which we had imagined so much. After considering for many months the million or so passengers that rode the train, what surprised us most about the ride from Amman to Giza were not the over 200 people who wanted to ride with us, nor the diversity of the passengers who ranged from young Ammanis drinking arak and singing revolutionary songs to religious families with their children to a group of diplomats from the Japanese embassy, nor was it the stones thrown by children who did not know what to make of the train as it passed by, nor the couples walking along the tracks to find privacy in a moment alone. The most surprising was also the most elemental: the city appeared so different as we moved through it in this new vehicle. We both knew the crowded streets that run through Amman but, gliding smoothly above it, looking down from the windows and the moving platforms, this train, even when extracted from its history, was still a novel way to move through a landscape.



Sander  
Buyck















خلفتنا يهوش رالحباا لهيهش رالع





















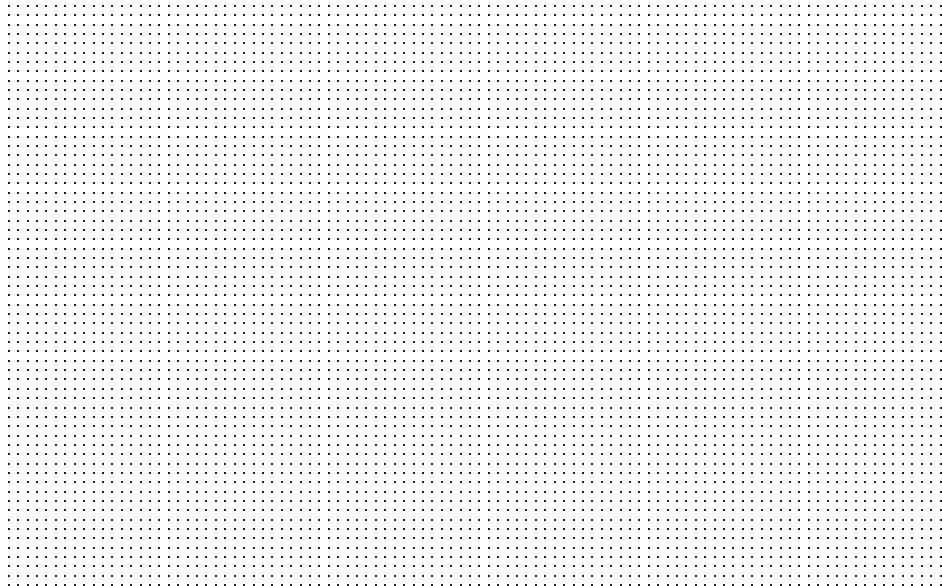




(area 01)

# Between Martyr and Individual

(area 02)



(area 03)

## Laurens Dhaenens

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Having come about during a long stay on the West Bank, the series *West Bank Walls* by photographer Sander Buyck investigates, on a specific micro-level, the presence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in day-to-day Palestinian reality. Focusing on posters of martyrs, Buyck’s photographs portray a fundamental facet of Palestinian society—the Palestinian writer Mahmoud Abu goes so far as to describe these posters as “an expression of Palestine itself.”<sup>1</sup> The photographer, however, does not provide a full view of the poster phenomenon; instead he explores the areas where this practice contradicts itself and gives rise to questions. He finds that perspective in the weathered appearance of the posters, capturing its poetry on one hand and presenting it as a reflection on the cult of martyrdom on the other.

Weathered, torn and thereby almost completely indecipherable, the martyr posters shown by Buyck seem part of a distant past; that distance is heightened in the series by distinguishing pale bluish hues and a bleached-out contrast of black-and-white. Attesting to the continuing struggle, these worn posters, juxtaposed with recent brightly colored versions, currently characterize the streets of Palestinian villages, cities and refugee camps. They dominate public space, not in terms of scale but numbers. For every martyr who has died in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a poster is produced and distributed. The public nature of death, generated by the ubiquitousness of these posters, supports the ideology of martyrdom which has both religious and secular meaning in Palestine. As expressed by the iconography of the posters, the willingness to die ‘in the way of Allah’ equally implies a sacrifice for the sake of the nation.

Generally speaking, posters of martyrs are uniform in terms of their design and message. Placing emphasis on the birth of a new martyr, the poster glorifies, in text and image, the death as an important and inevitable act rewarded with eternal life. As the text from the Koran, frequently quoted on the posters, says: “Do not regard those who have died for the sake of God as being deceased, for they live on and will receive their reward from God.”<sup>2</sup> The photographic representations of the martyrs manifest and confirm this verse by depicting the martyr alive, though without any pronounced emotion, as the eyes stare straight ahead and are free of a concrete context. As such the photograph gives the portrait subject a timeless, unassailable iconic status. In addition to this, national and military motifs, such as the Palestinian flag and weapons, bring a heroic narrative to the posters and upgrade the martyr to a national hero.<sup>3</sup>

The tale told by the posters is not that of an individual but of *the* martyr. The personal history of the deceased is played down in the posters and transformed for the purpose of a collective narrative to which every Palestinian can relate. As a result, the posters convey only fragmented information on the person concerned, such as the name, the date and the place of death.<sup>4</sup> That which remains absent in the depiction, however, lives on among the local population. In fact every poster, aside from those of major political figures, is linked to a neighborhood. Generally this involves the martyr’s



personal environment; those public surroundings as well as homes of relatives are filled with the posters.<sup>5</sup> Each neighborhood consequently has its own martyrs.

In search of a personal narrative on the martyrs, the photographer contradicts, with his *West Bank Walls*, the repetitive aspect inherent in the poster phenomenon and concentrates on the unique quality of certain posters. What has been distributed in large numbers has been distilled by him into one unique example, which is both a portrait of the poster and of the martyr as a person. The individual stories cannot be retrieved, however, by Buyck's portrayal; but the singularity of the posters can indeed be regained as an analogous compensation for the lost individuality of these people.

The promise of everlasting life, propagated in posters of martyrs, is negated by the weathered posters in the series *West Bank Walls*. Ephemeral by nature, the posters cannot withstand the fluctuations of the climate. Gradually they disappear, though not without being replaced by new posters of other heroes. With their emphatic registration of time in the form of transitoriness, Buyck's poster-portraits portray a conceptual/critical shift. Stripped of their symbolic ballast—only a few of the images still bear traces of Arabic text and religious/nationalist signs—the posters in Buyck's photographs show the vulnerability of those depicted. The theme of vulnerability is presented in a context where immortalization once appeared. By focusing on this vulnerability, the photographer seizes the moment at which the mechanism of the martyr posters begins to wane. The difference between martyr and individual, between ideological gain and human loss becomes visible. A complete subversion of the heroic status is not the result—the martyr remains a hero, but a forgotten one who slowly vanishes from the wall, from the street and thus from public memory.

Through the deterioration of the posters, we see the supporting wall—not the dividing wall, but simply an average 'West Bank Wall' on one of its streets. The damaged surface of these walls, cracked or marked by shrapnel and bullets, concretizes the presence of the conflict in day-to-day reality. Yet the photographs involve no explicit reference to the concrete context. We see only wall and poster. The wall dominates and its harsh, rough texture contrasts with the fragility of the posters. The faces of the martyrs are marked by the hard, stony background. As such *West Bank Walls* portrays a dialectic relationship between image and wall, which synthesizes the contradiction inherent in the poster practice. The posters transform Palestinian walls into spaces, by way of which ideals of martyrdom are communicated. They take away the reality of the wall, as a wall, by approaching it as a site of resistance and commemoration. But, as *West Bank Walls* demonstrates, the wall conquers the image.

#### NOTES

1. Mahmoud Abu Hashhash p. 399.
2. Lori A. Allen, *The Polyvalent Politics of Martyr Commemorations*, p. 117.
3. Mahmoud Abu Hashhash, pp. 391–392.
4. Mahmoud Abu Hashhash, p. 401.
5. Lori A. Allen, *The Polyvalent Politics of Martyr Commemorations*, p. 115.



(area 01)

# A Post-Territorial Museum

(area 02)

## Interview with Beshara Doumani

(area 03)

## Ursula Biemann

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**Ursula Biemann** *We have had an ongoing discussion about the possibility of designing and experiencing post-territorial forms of a Palestinian cultural and political life. Half of the Palestinian population, about five million people, live outside of their home territory as refugees, mostly in adjacent states, but also scattered across the world. And those in Palestine live under several different legal jurisdictions and are often forcibly isolated from each other. Given the importance of the interconnectivity among these separated pockets of Palestinian populations, it has been useful to look at the deterritorialised models of belonging which have emerged through the networked matrix of this widely dispersed community.*

*During an interview for the video X-Mission in summer 2008, you argued that the transnational condition of Palestinians should not be perceived only as a deficit.\* It could also be the most important resource they have to build a future for themselves. That is, the ways in which Palestinians negotiate their fragmented spaces can help them to build a nation. You have now been given the opportunity to materialise these ideas. In 2008 you were entrusted with developing a concept and producing a strategic plan for a new cultural institution that is to be built near Birzeit University. Given this context, how can one conceive a mission for such a museum?*

**Beshara Doumani** *The conceptualisation has been a challenging task due to the unique history and current conditions of the Palestinian people. The early iterations of the project conceived of it as a traditional national museum. That is, a major commemorative structure built around a single chronological narrative from ancient times to the present. I conceptualise it, instead, as a mobilising and interactive cultural project that can stitch together the fragmented Palestinian body politic by presenting a wide variety of narratives about the relationships of Palestinians to the land, to each other and to the wider world. How this is done, of course, is of the utmost importance.*

**UB** *You think of the nature of the museum as a process. Why is this so important in this case and how does it affect history writing per se?*

**BD** *Palestinians have a rich history and deep identification with their homeland. Since the late nineteenth century, they have suffered from the appropriation of their land, from control over their movement and from severe human rights abuses, including the trauma of ethnic cleansing. The instinctive reaction when discussing a museum*

\* *X-Mission* (Ursula Biemann, 2008) is a video essay exploring the logic of the refugee camp as a form of extraterritoriality ruled by International Law. Representing the exception within exception, the video takes the Palestinian refugee camp as a case in point to engage with a range of different discourses — legal, symbolic, urban, mythological, historical — which have contributed to a veritable culture of exception around the concept of camp. The narrative relies on a series of interviews made with experts, interspersed with multiple-layer video montage deriving from both downloaded and self-recorded sources.

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is to build an iconic structure with a set of fixed exhibitions that paint a romantic and defensive portrait of the past, that convey the trauma of dispossession and dispersal in 1948 and 1967 and that bear witness to the continuing tragedies of the present. I understand the temptation of victimhood and the urge to occupy the moral high ground, but going too far in these directions robs Palestinians both of agency and of the responsibility that comes with agency. The idea, therefore, is that the museum will view narratives as more open-ended and contingent so as to empower users. That is, the museum raises specific themes, presents information, asks questions and provides the resources for users to explore these and other questions they may have. Palestinians and other users can both benefit from and shape the museum as a cultural project.

Of course, it is still fundamentally important to present a coherent narrative about who the Palestinians are, how they came to be, and the nature of their current conditions. It is also critical to create a national space that affirms the existence of Palestinians and that recovers much of what has been and still is being silenced and erased by hegemonic discourses that are constructed by the victors in this asymmetrical conflict. It is my hope that the tension generated by asking questions critical of nationalist constructions of the past while, at the same time, presenting a narrative baseline that can bring Palestinians together, can be a productive one. The idea is to engage and transform users through active participation as they try to negotiate this tension.

**UB** *The museum project interests me in the context of this discussion on extraterritorial spaces, because it raises the question of how to conceive of a national museum in the absence of a sovereign state. Why is such a large-scale cultural project needed and what makes it possible now?*

**BD** A major cultural project is needed for several reasons. First, in order to bring all three major segments of the Palestinian population—Palestinian citizens of Israel; those living under foreign military occupation in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem; and the refugees—together in a way that the field of formal politics has not been able to do. There is a need for interconnectivity on the basis of a platform that is open, inclusive and alive. The idea is not to divorce politics but to stretch the meaning of the political to include strategies of everyday survival that Palestinians have proven to be masters of. It is these strategies that produce and transform what it means to be Palestinian. Given the absence of a coherent political vision since the first intifada in the late 1980s, and given the sheer diversity of circumstances under which Palestinians live, a cultural platform, in the broad sense of the word, is absolutely vital for survival, resistance and meaning under very difficult conditions.

**UB** *Are you saying that the museum, as the representative locus of history, is a cultural project that could stand in for a failed political one? Are you imagining a museum-state?*

**BD** Not a museum-state as much as a museum-nation. By this I mean that the emphasis is on agency and peoplehood, not on state power and state-building. The museum can attempt to be an embodiment of the Palestinian body-politic, but in a transnational not territorially fixed setting. It becomes, in a sense, an arena for the performance and reproduction of this peoplehood by Palestinians. Put differently, for Palestinians to achieve self-determination, they must take control of their narrative. If knowledge is power, then Palestinian institutions must play a leading role in shaping knowledge production about Palestinian history and society. Considering the absence of a state, I can't think of a better institution to achieving this goal than a narrative museum. Ironically, the very absence of strong national institutions, not to mention a sovereign state, means that there is no single power that can impose a fixed nationalist narrative from above. Multi-vocal and contingent narratives become possible. These, in turn, open new spaces for individual and collective imaginings of possible futures; hence, hope and change emerge instead of despair and powerlessness.

Besides presenting narratives that construct communities and shape opinions about the past, present and future, a narrative museum also generates new knowledge by providing facilities, resources and expertise for scholars, artists, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, and research centres sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. Most of the attention, therefore, has to be paid to what I call the “living organs” of the museum project. That is, the institutional and human resources. At this time, for example, Palestinians do not have a national archive or a national library, both of which are crucial to the production of knowledge. The museum would not be an alternative, but a key part of it will be a deep and user-friendly archival centre that can digitise locally produced sources and make them available for researchers. Other “living organs” of the museum would include a research centre, an exhibition and design team, educational and outreach programs and so on.

**UB** *If the museum is going to be located in the West Bank, access to these resources and facilities will be quite difficult. And given their importance, they will be under constant scrutiny.*

**BD** Establishing a museum while still under foreign military occupation is a difficult challenge to say the least. Obviously, the Museum has to deliver content in a variety of ways. It is important to have a unique and iconic physical structure in Palestine that can symbolise Palestinian hopes and aspirations. This structure can house narrative



exhibits as well as the various departments that would generate knowledge and provide interactive programs to communities. Of course, the overwhelming majority of Palestinians will not be able to physically experience a museum building in Palestine, regardless of its location. Gaza is under siege, Jerusalem is closed to all except those with permits, the West Bank is a collection of enclosed human warehouses surrounded by check points and so on. This is not to mention Palestinian citizens of Israel and all those living as refugees. In addition, any location inside of Palestine will be under effective Israeli control for the foreseeable future and can be subject to closures, looting, and destruction.

It is crucial, therefore, to consider other modes of delivery. One that immediately comes to mind is the virtual. A virtual platform has many advantages. It democratises the experience of participating in this cultural project, as anyone with access to the Internet should be able to become an active user. For this museum, the virtual connection is not so much about providing 3-D tours of the building as about bringing users into a world of discovery in which they, especially the young, have incentives for repeated engagement. Through the virtual connection, users should be able to find resources that can help them interrogate their past, ask critical questions about their present conditions, and participate in the making of their own future. Users will also be able to upload their own archives and experiences, establish connections with other users and so on.

Even established traditional museums are plugging into a trans-national cultural landscape as they transform themselves into essentially educational institutions and resources for the production of content. This is because only a rare number of them can hope to sustain themselves or have more than just a local impact if they depend solely on walk-in visitors.

Another significant mode of delivery would be satellite museums in areas with major concentrations of Palestinians and perhaps in key cosmopolitan centres. Those that directly service Palestinian communities—such as in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, United States, Latin America and so on—would be akin to community centres. That is, they would host local and travelling exhibits that target specific audiences; provide users with robust portals for accessing museum content and for connecting with other communities; and provide a space to show films, hold lecture series and install a variety of artistic and educational projects. Satellite museums are one way that Palestinians become not merely an audience, but participants who can shape this project through a network of transnational centres that, in a way, mirror the Palestinian condition.

**UB** *Let us now turn to your core problem of how to produce narratives that build a nation in a post-national spirit.*

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**BD** This is a delicate and difficult issue that can never be fully resolved. It is helpful here to try to think of narrative guidelines that shape the process of knowledge production and representation without pre-determining the content or homogenising the image. One has to accept a point of departure that assumes peoplehood—otherwise, why establish a Palestinian Museum to begin with? At the same time, however, it is important not to impose a single definition or story of that peoplehood. For example, the modern Palestinian story is fundamentally similar to those of other peoples who have been dispossessed and denied. Concurrently, it is also a singular story, if only because of the highly symbolic and spiritual significance of Palestine to Muslims, Christians and Jews. This is a unique feature of Palestinian history that requires outside-the-box thinking about what a narrative museum is and can be. Another unique feature is the geographical location. As the land bridge between Asia and Africa, Palestine has been a cultural highway throughout history. The dynamism and hybridity that infuse this history cannot be neatly packaged into the boundaries drawn by the British for their Mandate over Palestine in the early twentieth century.

A related guideline is that the narratives should be inclusive, not exclusive. The Palestinians are heirs to a rich and varied history, and the meaning of “Palestinian” includes many religions, ethnicities and ways of life. Just because Palestinians are erased or demonised in conventional Israeli narratives, does not mean that Palestinian narratives have to do the same. Instead of ignoring the Jewish presence in Palestine, for example, the museum can actively explore how to tell that story. The Mediterranean, Arab and Muslim dimensions of the Palestinian experience also ought to be acknowledged as well as the complexity of long-standing local and regional identities, all of which challenge the modern state system established after the World War One.

Yet another narrative guideline is that the museum project should aim to help Palestinians to rebuild and empower themselves, but in a pro-active not reactive way. The power of the Zionist project and its supporters is such that the story of the Palestinians has been colonised and selectively erased in much the same way as the land itself was taken and the native population ethnically cleansed. And it is important to add here that this process of material and discursive colonisation is still ongoing and with an urgent brutality. The question now becomes: how can Palestinians take control of and shape their own narratives, but not in a defensive mechanical way that simply responds to how they are represented by others? After all, a defensive posture only reinforces the conceptual frame and vocabulary of the very narrative that is being challenged.

One can think of other guidelines such as the importance of emphasising that the current conditions of the Palestinians are not an outcome of primordial religious or civilisational conflicts, but of modern circumstances, especially the colonial encounter. The idea here is to consciously step outside conventional nationalist narratives

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and critically interrogate them. Discussions and debates about these and other guidelines are needed and must, of course, involve not just intellectuals or professional cultural workers, but a wide range of stakeholders such as community organisers and solidarity organisations. Freedom, justice and dignity cannot be delivered to Palestinians nor can Palestinians achieve them on their own. The whole world is implicated and one of the most important ways to creatively mobilise behind these goals is through a major cultural project such as the Palestinian Museum.

**UB** *Since you mention solidarity networks and the global community, how do you see the trans-local Palestinian condition connect to a larger global project articulating the struggle of other disenfranchised communities? Now that the peak of post-colonial critique has passed, how does the Palestinian cause fit within the wider picture at present?*

**BD** The Palestinian cause, long shelved under decolonisation is now increasingly viewed under the anti-globalisation post-national rubric. In the anti-globalisation movement, the support for the Palestinian cause goes hand in hand with anti-war, anti-civilisational divides, anti-politics of fear and anti-imperialist struggles. It is quite striking that almost anywhere one goes, one is certain to come across grassroots initiatives in solidarity with Palestinians. Thus, although the Palestinian situation is singular in many important respects, their experience has become deeply symbolic of the dark side of modernity: Foreign invasion and colonisation, territorial partition, demographic displacement and extraterritoriality. It is important not to lose sight, however, of the fundamental importance of statehood for Palestinians. Global elites can afford a transnational existence, but most Palestinians are poor, powerless, and in need of strong protection and services that only the state can deliver. This is why the state/territory/peoplehood matrix still remains at the heart of the Palestinian political discourses at a time when the very concept of the nation-state as a form of political organisation is being increasingly questioned.

**UB** *Cultural production is perhaps the best term for what you are doing. It acknowledges the complexity involved in setting up this museum across the institutional web of financial and physical logistics, academic work and the possibilities of display space. As a historian, how does it feel to slip in the role of cultural producer?*

**BD** “Slip” is too smooth a word for what is already a rough and tumble process that I have learned to approach with a great deal of humility. It is one thing to research and write, and quite another to construct a vision, mobilise around it, and then transform it into a complex institution. It is one thing to produce stories in the form of a heavily

footnoted monograph that can only be consumed over days and weeks, and it is another to install, for instance, a multi-media narrative exhibit that imparts simple but powerful messages almost instantaneously. It is one thing to work alone in the archives, and quite another to manage teams of professionals in joint endeavours. It is one thing to own one’s voice (or at least the illusion of it) and quite another to have to calculate a path for institutional development through one of the most sensitive political minefields in the world.

**UB** *You describe a very interesting process here that makes me think of Walter Benjamin’s text “The Author as Producer” from 1934 where he argues that the role of the author and the artist is not just to respond to what is going on from a removed observational vantage point but, as a “producer”, to engage and actively change the course of social politics. This explains, perhaps, why in times of crisis, cultural producers turn to the collective model and engage in building institutional structures. As a scholar of cultural and social history you propose an institutional practice that presents authorship as a collective endeavour extending into other disciplines, notably contemporary cultural and art production. What do you see as the role of art in preserving and articulating cultural memory?*

**BD** Works of art bear witness to the historic and societal contexts in which they are created, regardless of whether or not they actually comment on them. Thanks to art’s capacity for self-reflection, it provides an essential interpretive framework for future possibilities for self-understanding and cultural identity within Palestinian or any other society.





Libraries and Archives

Audiovisual Documentation

Research Laboratories

Deep Mapping Project

Oral History

Virtual Museum

Publications

Collections

Permanent Galleries

Public Programmes

Documenting Contemporary Arts

Network Programmes

Outreach

Travelling exhibitions

# ArtTerritories

In collaboration with

Basel Abbas

Ruanne Abou-Rahme

Nahed Awwad

Inass Yassin



## Looking Back at Today

Since *A Prior* extended an invitation to ArtTerritories last October much has happened in the Arab World. The spirit of this new force rebelling against encrusted regimes largely directed the discussions leading up to this collaborative photographic work which grew out of a week-long artist workshop around family photographs. As a group of six we quickly agreed that the project should express instances in Palestinian family and social history that reflect the sense of hope and anticipation that currently blows through the collective imaginary in the region. Reading and interpreting close to a hundred photographs, it transpired that representations of mobility, connectivity and a curiosity toward diverse cultural experiences were particularly prominent in the sixties and eighties. That's when most of the photographs of family trips to other Arab cities and to overseas destinations were shot. And of course there are many stories of migration and exile crossing through the family albums offering a variety of outside views back onto a homeland that was in constant transformation. Depending on whether a family migrated to Medina in Saudi Arabia or to the American suburbs the photos and memories associated with them convey a radically different vision of Palestine. The diasporic perspectives which proved to be everything but homogenous gave cause for many lively and emotionally charged discussions during the workshop. The result of this process is an extract of the visual world produced by the previous generation and commented on from today's perspective.

When *A Prior* approached us about contributing to the issue on and around the Picasso transfer to the Art Academy Palestine, we were interested in designing a project that would respond to this particular setting while proposing a narrative in its own right. Since Khaled Kourani's intervention is first and foremost an institutional critique, we thought of critically engaging with this cover story on two fronts: on the focus of the oeuvre by one of the most emblematic modern artists, and on the notion of the Art Academy as the legitimate place where the modernist legacy was handed down. Both Pablo Picasso and the Art Academy refer to modernist institutions of art which held up the master narrative of the inspired autonomous artist. In an indirect critique of this model of the artist and the institution that reproduced them, we chose to work with the Ethnographic and Art Museum at Birzeit University (MBU) in the West Bank, which by its name and scope speaks of a different genealogy of Modern Art. The museum combines contemporary art with Ethnography, which in the context of modern surrealism played a constitutive role in defining museum practices in the early 20th century. The Musée de l'Homme in Paris for instance was co-founded by surrealist artists and anthropologists. Their unconventional way of collecting and storytelling hasn't lost any of its inspirational quality. At the time, the boundaries of art and human sciences were far more enmeshed and fluid. These were the soft

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moments before those creative and provocative practices began to solidify into the more regimented disciplines as practiced today. What attracted us about the scope of this small Palestinian museum as being both ethnographic and artistic is the systemic relationship between contemporary art and ethnography as two visual domains which share a number of assumptions: they both take culture (not high-art) as the expanded field of reference and they are contextual, interdisciplinary and self-critical. What distinguishes art is that it can introduce non-academic ways of producing knowledge, which includes a reflection on the desire and attitude behind this form of knowledge. It is this sort of reflection that ArtTerritories as a publishing project engages in.

So one critical decision was to choose this particular institutional reference. The other one was to invite into the project a small number of diverse visual practitioners operating outside the academy walls and to form a collaborative workshop setting. Besides the ArtTerritories team Shuruq Harb and Ursula Biemann, both visual artists and writers, the group includes Ramallah based Inass Yasin, artist and curator of the Birzeit University Museum, Ruanne Abou-Rahme & Basel Abass, an artist duo mainly working in video and sound installation, and film maker Nahed Awwad. We gathered that a collaborative mode of producing a photo-text stretch of twenty something pages would surely set a counterpoint to the modernist notion of the artist as creative and predictably male genius. Rather than creating new images we chose to elaborate on the meaning and circulation of already existing ones. The aim was to raise awareness for the cultural value of pictures which constitute the visual world of people in Palestine but are largely kept under closure, for private viewing only. We sensed a great potential in sharing this common cultural knowledge and made it our aim to work the family photographs into a loose narrative that would communicate their meaning in the personal as well as the wider social context of the Palestinian experience.

It has been tempting to think of starting a more formal archive with the wealth of these images before us. However, we can consider the family album as a kind of archive as well, but one that isn't categorized. We ended up not classifying the images in historical or geographic terms in view of storing them in some central place. They remain unclassified but rearranged memories. As a result, neither the workshop nor this photo project has a title. Instead we activated the archive temporarily by the very act of artists coming together and reflecting on the individual and collective dimension of Palestinian history through their parents' stories and visual traces. Indeed, the workshop turned into a rare opportunity to contemplate our understanding of Palestinian history.

Ursula Biemann and Shuruq Harb

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The sea, an open horizon,  
you have been waiting  
for this moment of rupture  
(Beirut, 1964–1980).



There is no turning back from here  
(Syria, 1967).



"We don't have to be afraid anymore,  
there is no more fear, we are free, we are liberated"  
(Habib Bourguiba Avenue, Tunis, 2011).







Looking straight at the camera  
it's almost as though you are anticipating  
what will happen here twenty-two years later  
(Habib Bourguiba Avenue, Tunis, 1989).



We can feel it now, the moment of change is on the horizon,  
it's only a matter of time (Basra, 1965).









It was not my decision to marry (Chicago, Illinois 1963).



It was my decision to stay (Bir Nabala, Jerusalem 2011).



After the divorce...





... I realised that I had lived my life through my children.



Class of 2000 (Birzeit University, Ramallah).







Jerusalem Airport, 1963.

By the time we landed, we would find the traditional Kaik still warm,  
brought straight from the old city of Jerusalem.  
We would sit on the stairs in front of the transit hall.  
After we finished someone would suggest to fly to Beirut  
and we just did. Oh God, these were the best days.



I flew from Beirut to Jerusalem twice a day and took many tourists, families and businessmen back and forth. Sometimes I made a stopover in Jerusalem. I even used to have a house there.



From inside the watchtower  
(Jerusalem Airport, 1964).



My brother is studying at the American University in Beirut. When he comes to visit, he gives us a call and informs us as to the day and hour of his arrival. Then we go up to our rooftop and watch the plane as it is landing on the runway. Before he even comes out of the plane, we run down the street to meet him.









Riding the donkeys, running after chickens and goats, these were the only ways to await freedom (El-Madina, El-Monawara, 1980).



No one ever explained to us why we went to Palestine in the summers, and why aunt Itaf and uncle Foud could not go to Lebanon and went to Austria instead.

"I warned you," she said smiling,  
when I fell off the bike on the bumpy road.



Asira, 1978.



Asira, 1986.

The moment we stepped on the plane  
we all felt relieved to leave  
our indoor life in Madina.



Unni  
Gjertsen

# DIARY

## “Seven Days in Jerusalem”

In December 2010 Unni Gjertsen took part in the nomadic art festival the Eternal Tour ([www.eternaltour.org](http://www.eternaltour.org)) in Jerusalem and Ramallah together with Liv Strand. Their contribution to the festival was a presentation of *The Armenia Project*, a work still in progress involving individual works of art based on their research trip to Armenia.

Saturday 4 December 2010

fourteenth-century architecture. Isolation. Icon paintings. Tiny things, laboriously crafted. The more recent glories of St. Petersburg seemed pompously kitsch—like Disneyland—by comparison. The topic of our upcoming presentation of the *Armenia Project* in Ramallah also surfaced. Armenia with its imagery of historic Orthodox Christianity, small churches in pastoral landscapes. Liv has been in Jerusalem for three days already, and has reported on her exploration of the Armenian quarters via Skype.

tion of the upcoming holidays. Spinach rolls interrupted the world of Toni Morrison on the next leg, and during the meal I engaged in conversation with a Swiss heart specialist on his way to a conference in Tel Aviv. He seemed very much in love with his wife, who sat on the opposite row of seats, and appeared a little guilty for losing himself in a three-hour conversation with a stranger.

//

Landing at Ben Gurion Airport was a relief. I had not been aware of the organisational burden of leaving winter and, in anticipation of arriving in the Eastern Mediterranean dry season, I had only half-heartedly tried to imagine the sartorial needs of this year's extended warm weather. Ten months without rain in the region. It had been Israel when I last visited my in-laws in Kfar Saba. This trip was to Palestine. Where would it begin?

//  
How did we come to talk about a small wooden church with onion domes standing alone on the snow-covered steppes of the Ukraine? It must have been the winter weather combined with the documentary I had just seen about Russian

//  
I rolled my suitcase to the bathroom to change into a T-shirt and sandals, then to the cash machine in the spacious,

empty terminal hall to withdraw *shekels*. Outside, in the mild afternoon sun, people were leaning on the railings by the Sherut stop, opening water bottles and smoking, while the drivers directed newcomers to the right queue, helping them with their luggage, and boiled the kettle on a primus in the back of the small bus, while waiting for the vehicle to fill up.

//  
I got inside and waited in my seat, overhearing a conversation taking place outside. A young man, boyish, pale with dark curls, and dressed in a leather jacket with a shabby shoulder bag hanging across his stomach, had just arrived from Berlin. He addressed an older gentleman in an earnest manner. *Oh Berlin, I have been in Berlin seven times*, the older man boasted.

//

We started to move. How weird and how exotic and exhilarating it felt to gaze out at this territory, so frequently televised. A war journalist must get so blasé; it is the effect of being in transit, being in the air, on the road.

//

The barbed wire fences encircling the vast airport area, which conjured the shameful new wall, excited the somewhat anxious disposition of the young man, who was now sharing his seat with the old man. He asked whether the old man felt unsafe living here. His companion did not understand the question and went on about his three-month journey to Brazil instead. The young man was curious about the older man's past. Apparently he had worked in the former Soviet Union Department for Education before emigrating. The young man was impressed.

//  
I studied the pines and the olive trees  
along the roadside. At least one fifth  
of them seemed dead, not only dry. We  
moved through the deserted hillsides,  
leaving the coastline behind, and soon

started climbing up the narrow pass to Jerusalem. It was pictured on the first printed *shekels*, symbolising expectation and promise.

//

The young man's ancestors came from Poland. The old man shared his expertise generously, even on this subject, before suggesting a plan for the night. Could they get together? No, the young man was going to meet some friends. Could he be so kind as to call on him after dinner? The old man started to insist. *Please!* But by now the disembarking had begun. The first passengers were dropped off on the western hillside of Jerusalem. The young man got off at one of the large hotels, and the old man turned to the couple behind him. *From the States? Oh, I have been in New York seven times.*

//

The driver was eager to get me off at the last stop. He attempted a short-cut up from Jaffa Road and accelerated, irrationally, towards a highly visible concrete roadblock, then, somehow, he patiently reversed the bus, to drive around the quarter and approach the entrance of the Jerusalem Inn.

//  
Liv shouted from the balcony above: *we have to hurry to an appointment with a woman from the Armenian community.*

//

We were originally supposed to stay with the other Eternal Tour participants at the Hebron Hostel in the heart of the Old City, but after Liv had spent two sleepless nights in the cold dormitory, we decided on an alternative plan. Olaf's story about his meeting with *unmentionable substances* as he was reaching for the bathroom towel after a miserable night, added to our suspicions. After two days at the Jerusalem Inn, Liv and I would join him at a new location, the Austrian Hospice, just inside the Damascus gate, apparently no more expensive than the hostel.



	<p>The others were stuck at the Hebron, as their funding was locked up in the collective Eternal Tour account. I realised that not supporting our Palestinian host put us in a bad light. We tried to act as if there were no sides in this.</p> <p>//</p> <p>The initial plan was to install Liv's kinetic artwork, <i>Quicksand frontier under-standing</i>, in the Spafford Centre, but it had been impossible to get a confirmation from the administrators that they had a reliable plan to get the work through customs. In the end she decided to bring a smaller work and leave <i>Quicksand frontier under-standing</i> safely behind in Stockholm. With less installing to do, Liv had time to wander in the touristy Old City. After two days of relative unemployment, she was restless. The other artists struggled to get basic assistance to display far less complicated works.</p> <p>The art historian specialising in Iranian mural painting had been held back at the airport and interrogated for hours; her subject alone was enough to cause paranoia among the security staff. She was now ill in bed at the hostel. Liv gave me snippets of stories. I wanted to sit down and hear them in full, and elaborate on the details of my own journey, but we were already heading for the taxi.</p> <p>//</p> <p>In the back seat I heard how members of the organising team were discussing ways in which Hannah Arendt might be filtered out of the programme to comply with the intellectual boycott.</p> <p>//</p> <p>Tanya Manougian was having dinner with her WHO colleagues. Jerusalem appears to be awash with organisations. Tanya spotted us right away and greeted us enthusiastically. Her eyes were sparkling as she confirmed that we had visited her beloved Armenia. Her enthusiasm was contagious, even if it bordered on nationalism. The fact that she recognised this herself made it bearable.</p>	<p>ognised this herself made it bearable. Talking to her, I could see in front of me the green mountainous landscape of Armenia, decorated with old churches. I was relieved by the position that engaging with Armenia gave us. Jerusalem is divided into the Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Armenian quarters. We are representing something that is not ours, a little off-centre, and it provides a distance.</p> <p>//</p> <p>We have a beer. Tanya leans over the table, eager to hear details of our project here. She has worked for the Armenian Patriarch in Jerusalem. I could easily picture her on the post. She is a powerhouse. We have to suppress the impulse to stand up and applaud when she exclaims: <i>an Armenian queen ruled Jerusalem for seven years in the twelfth century!</i></p> <p>//</p> <p>We leave the meeting refreshed and elevated by her energy, only needing to grab a bite to eat before retiring for the night. On Jaffa Road we bump into Denis. He is dressed in a tailored jacket, his smart attire topped off by a French accent. We go to a restaurant that turns out to be—what else—Armenian, and tuck into one starter after another. The night's topics of conversation include boycotts, Hannah Arendt, and speculations about the potentially controversial gay content in the film programme, which Denis has organised for the Eternal Tour. We laugh a lot, letting go of the stress emanating from <i>the headquarters</i> at Hebron Hostel, where I haven't even been yet.</p>	<p>depart from Hebron Hostel at 9am. Entering the Old City through the Damascus Gate, we join the crowd in the foyer on time. I force handshakes on the sleepy gang, not at all ready to go. The organising team is French-speaking and mostly based in Geneva. They cooperate with a local Palestinian team. The core of the group, friends, colleagues and participants, know each other already. They are probably kissers rather than shakers when it comes to greeting. I don't think they are ignoring our presence on purpose, just practicing a very informal approach to being together. Some Swedes are newcomers and Giorgos is Greek. Where else would we aim for other than the small, familiar Swedish table? The local coordination team, fronted by the charismatic Jalal and the sympathetic Olivia, joins us over the next hour.</p> <p>//</p> <p>Choosing between excursions to the occupied roofs in the Old City and exploring the Silwan Valley in East Jerusalem, Liv and I go for the latter and follow Jalal through the narrow streets towards Zion Gate. At the security check there is a small scene. They will not let Jalal pass. Refusing to go through without him, we start looking for an alternative route. Nevertheless, we soon lose Jalal and I can't help wondering if he is operating with a hidden, multi-purpose plan that just partly failed. Was he not aware from the outset that he would be stopped at Zion Gate? Had he perhaps other business to attend to elsewhere all along, expecting us to pass without him?</p> <p>//</p> <p>The village of Silwan is situated in East Jerusalem, just outside the walls of the Old City and is home to 50,000 Palestinians, as well as an increasing number of settlers. We arrive on foot, our nostrils full of dust from the excavations carried out by the Israeli authorities, and head for the Wahdi</p>	<p>Hilwe Information Centre. Their assignment is to tell the Palestinian version of the neighbourhood's history. This is an urgent matter, as the findings of the archaeological excavations seem to exclusively support the narrative of the City of David. Caterpillar diggers rest along the roadside, taking a break from removing the landmass under the main road. The road threatens to collapse as the ground under it disappears. For now, it is only the asphalt that glues it together. Waiting for the guide to show up, the whitest faces in the group gather around a tube of sunscreen that I threw in my bag at the last minute, hoping to avoid burning in the surprisingly strong December sun. We are left to wait in a tent where the centre has its gathering place. After a while, sweet coffee is served in small cups. When the guide finally turns up there is a loud confrontation in Arabic over some misunderstanding.</p> <p>//</p> <p>Things soon settle down and we are about to start the tour. The guide takes us to his childhood playground just down the street. There are some rocks, the grass is mostly withered and a few bushes cling to the dry ground of the hillside. A fence now frames the site, separating the Palestinian locals and the recently discovered Biblical heritage. We look over the railing and study Jewish visitors in headscarves and hats. The girls have long skirts. The boys wear <i>kippas</i>. Some tourists follow a less rigid dress code. They appear to be American. The armed soldiers patrolling the area are watching us closely. The guide explains how settlers have moved into Palestinian homes during the owners' temporary absence. Even though the owner may win a case against a settler in court, the police systematically fail to enforce the legal verdict. He points to the bottom of the valley where an increasing number of parking lots service the tourist site.</p>
		<p>Sunday 5 December</p> <p>We appear to have taken sides, in a strange way. Dark hats are everywhere on Jaffa street. We have breakfast in a light, bourgeois, family-friendly atmosphere before meeting up with the group to take part in an excursion that will</p>		

	<p>Palestinian homes have been appropriated for this purpose. The next part of the plan is to rebuild the garden where King David supposedly took his wife for a walk once.</p> <p>//</p> <p>We are behind schedule. On the way to Al-Quds University where the official opening of Eternal Tour will take place, we join some participants who have been to the occupied roofs in the Old City, and have falafels on a street corner. Al-Quds is just east of the city. Going by bus, we pass through the monstrous wall that we saw from a distance at Silwan. It is reminiscent of a dystopian Land Art project, grown way out of proportion.</p> <p>//</p> <p>The campus is situated on a hilltop. After some delay at the main entrance, we find our way to the south-western terrace where Fabiana has built an outdoor construction together with the students. The afternoon is beautiful, there is a pleasant breeze and the sun hangs low on the horizon. I take a seat by the fence, where some students are hanging out, and wait for the rest of the audience to settle on the chairs that have been set out. The next hour is deeply frustrating.</p> <p>//</p> <p>When presenting the Eternal Tour, the speakers annoyingly turn away from the audience, who mingle in groups, distracted and distanced. The translation seems random and without direction. The space disintegrates somehow. There is no centre, periphery, position, address. Nothing is public, everything is private. Where there should have been a person attracting attention, confirming the presence of others, Noémie stands alone, lighting a cigarette in solitude. At one point, a teacher asks about Fabiana's relational project: <i>what do you expect from the audience?</i> This might be a start. Nope.</p> <p>//</p>	<p>I turn into a saboteur and start chatting with the female students sitting beside me. Manosh and I are eager to overcome the limits of language. As the collective session goes from bad to worse, the two of us get to know each other. After another half an hour with no sign of preparation for drinks or a tour of the campus, I ask her to show me around the Arts Department. We hit it off. She wants to have what I have: opportunities to travel and work—freedom. I understand that she is not going to get any of these things, as very soon she will be facing a marriage she does not want.</p> <p>//</p> <p>I am dying to lie down on the hotel bed, to stare into the ceiling and process my frustration, but the day is not over yet. Further <i>discussions</i> at the university, the men speak, the women speak a little bit at the end about women who don't speak. On our return journey there are controls at the checkpoint, but we seem to be in the fast lane. I am used to seeing Kalashnikovs by now. Back in the city centre, unable to wait for the collective meal scheduled after the evening's artist presentations at the African Cultural Centre, Liv and I escape to have dinner.</p> <p>//</p> <p>In an attempt to adjust to the rhythm of the others, we arrive an hour and a half late for the gathering at the centre. Nevertheless, Mathias and Emmanuel, the presenters, are the only people there. We realise that we cannot go on endlessly complaining about unclear schedules, missing screws, tape and cables, but the occasion allows us to let off some steam. Our frustration is fuelled by the embarrassment of having nothing to offer the good-natured people that peep in, looking like question marks, expecting an event.</p> <p>//</p> <p>Finally, members of the Hebron Hostel gang start sauntering in to find their</p>	<p>seats in the dark stone hall. The screening of Emmanuel's film begins. Magic happens. We are in Gotland, an island in the Baltic Sea. It is summer. A group of people are left on a field with planks of wood, hammers, nails and saws. One week, one rule: no talking. Just the sound of saws, rhythmical, improvised hammer compositions. The builders point and draw in the air to communicate ideas, and participants touch to get the others' attention when requiring help to carry a beam up the homemade ladder-structure of the rising construction.</p> <p>//</p> <p>After the screening, Donatella talks about space, imagination and movement—real, fictional and in-between—, the areas of research that have shaped the Eternal Tour. The inspiration I felt from the beginning returns. Mathias introduces us to his work. Photographs of a withered, amateur theme-park version of Jerusalem, built in a remote North American state and almost overgrown with new vegetation.</p> <p>//</p> <p>Escaping the Old City that fades at night to become a labyrinth of stone, we take a moment to debrief and equalise at a café outside the gates. It faces the lively main street. We will pack and change hotels in the morning, but for now the two of us need to withdraw and reflect on the world, to see it from a distance. When I was in China, the absence of this kind of opportunity drove me crazy. In Beijing, the cafés are on top of department stores, if indeed they exist at all, missing the crucial point of providing a view on public life from a close but secluded position. Even in Armenia, with its extremely sexualised public theatre, with its tattooed musclemen and women posing in high heels and war paint, a woman can sit down at a table on the pavement and be a voyeur, if she wants to.</p> <p>//</p>	<p>Where we find ourselves now, every inch of the space is territorialised and politicised, subject to multiple claims. I am attracted to the Christian places here. Is it because they are open to me, or do they, in fact, harbour a notion of distance, which allows me to be a thinking observer? In China, I came to think of western cafés as connected to democracy, because of the reflexive space in between the private and the public that they offered. Contemporary Chinese society does not have a tradition of nurturing individual judgment, observation and critique. Naturally enough, since one used to risk death if one held an opinion that was not the party line. The Chinese do use the street and the outdoors, but as an extension of the private realm. Or rather, there is no distinction between the public and the private. Is it not the case that recognising a personal judgment as legitimate is a prerequisite for trusting a person by giving them the vote? The notion that everyone's view is valuable is affirmed by certain spatial organisations and practices, ways of addressing people. Why did relations break down at Al-Quds today? I know very little about the approach to space and the public in Muslim culture, or the Franco-Swiss for that matter, but it might be relevant.</p> <p>Monday 6 December</p> <p>The rain finally came during the night. The air has cleared. Our thin coats are not really doing the job of keeping the humidity out as we have breakfast next door before checking out.</p> <p>//</p> <p>The first encounter with the Austrian Hospice, our new home, is delightful. Built on a plateau where the Via Dolorosa meets El-Wadi it is one of the best locations in the Old City—a well-kept fortress. Some guards camp out on the stairs in front of the building. They</p>



	<p>sit down, leaning on their elbows, slowly //</p> <p>making way for us to pass. The door is the gate to a different universe. We enter a cellar-like staircase. On the first landing, the stairs split and lead on to one plateau after the other, where we can step out to admire the city and note how the commercial buzz gradually fades as we scale the stairs. The spacious hallways and rooms with floors of matt tiles and burgundy-coloured walls feel overwhelming when one is used to compact living.</p> <p>//</p> <p>The room has a calm, intimate feel, and a view over the rooftops. A large painting hangs opposite the bed. Simple, Abstract Expressionism with large parts of the canvas left exposed. A red line, which I would not tire of looking at, alternates between talking to different colours and points on the painting's surface. Wealth withheld from the market. Raised in the middle of nowhere above the Arctic Circle, I can only recognise this kind of aesthetic from a German detective series, which was televised on Friday nights when I was a teenager. The Austrian Hospice—wow! The aura is similar to that of Switzerland. It was peculiar how everyone seemed have an image of Switzerland in China. <i>Why is that?</i> I asked Dennis. They love mountains and <i>The Sound of Music</i>, which is set in Austria, it is true, but Switzerland is the destination for the Von Trapp family's planned escape. Then there is Heidi and Nestlé.</p> <p>//</p> <p>Why is it that, in the middle of the cleanliness and order of this place, perversion comes to mind so easily? The disturbing pictures of the Pope perhaps, hanging in the hallway. Why would they choose to show him in his absurd bulletproof glass bowl on wheels, posing with those doll-like women? Thomas Bernard might have been able to explain, as he seemed to have found the very Austrian landscape perverse.</p>	<p>I am on my way to the Spafford Centre in the Muslim Quarter where Liv has already gone to prepare a presentation of the small kinetic object she brought with her. I turn left down the commercial street. The side streets are wet and deserted at this hour. I get lost and cannot find anyone to ask for directions. It is like wandering around in Venice, on the stage set of <i>Don't Look Now</i>.</p> <p>//</p> <p>Liv's work is moving steadily. A little engine pushes around two cut-out silhouettes of the Armenian map. They are perforated with holes, overlapping to varying degrees, in a sequence that references population statistics over time. Liv talks about Benedict Anderson's studies of the construction of the imagined communities of the nation state. There are engaged questions. The Armenian Holocaust in 1915 provides a perspective, a different time and place, from which the dual categories of the present can be reflected upon. There is a nascent debate on the psychology of different collectives post-trauma. I hope we can continue the discussion, and I am looking forward to our presentation on Friday. We decide that I will introduce my individual part of the project later in Ramallah, and explain my planned floor design to be composed of rhyming names, collected from the map of the world. I am pleased with the humour in the work: Karabakh, Battambang, Chu Chang!</p> <p>//</p> <p>Walking with Jalal on the way back, we talk about the Arabic language. I have noticed how beautifully he speaks. It is perhaps also his voice, or that Arabic has become familiar to me, having listened to it in many countries and cities over the years. At one point, the recurring features create a pleasing sense of recognition. One becomes attentive to variations. When spoken softly and mildly, the colourings of</p>	<p>Arabic blossom. Or could it be that, for some reason, my guards were down and I was receptive? He is passionate and pedagogical about the poetic dimension of written and spoken Arabic. I become inspired to look for translated poetry. The uncle of one of the young associates of the organising team owns the Educational Bookshop, an international Palestinian bookstore, which we aim to visit.</p> <p>//</p> <p>We are heading in the direction of the Redeemer Church where three guys, constituting the artist collective KLAT, will hold their event. The extra time allows us to disperse into smaller constellations. We try to have lunch outdoors, but it is chilly. The tables and chairs are wet from the rain and a small portion of bean soup is not enough to warm us up.</p> <p>//</p> <p>KLAT has built a stone cairn in the intimate courtyard of the old cloister of the Redeemer Church. The trees in the courtyard have large leaves in a saturated dark green that seems to have deepened from the night's rain. The church is made of soft yellow bricks, like most buildings here. Seated on one of the stone benches framing the courtyard, I catch a glimpse of a lizard on the ground. We help to dismantle the cairn and carry it up to the roof, where they will rebuild it. The joint physical effort warms everyone up and makes us cheerful. Spirits are high as we collaborate on manoeuvring the stones up the narrow staircase, leading up to the large roof of the building. The skies are getting brighter as well, and a soft yellow light is beginning to warm the bluish tint in the air. We have a view of all the rooftops of Jerusalem from here.</p> <p>//</p> <p>The neighbouring roof has just been occupied and is secured with a new fence. Soldiers are patrolling it, and Orthodox Jews are coming over the rooftops</p>	<p>to attend to some sort of meeting in a recently established community space. The Lutheran priest of the Redeemer Church is nervous that they will expand onto his roof. The weight of new building mass would threaten the supporting construction below.</p> <p>//</p> <p>The three guys from KLAT are rebuilding the cairn on our side from the stones we have carried up. The crowd gathers around the three fit young men working on their construction, adding stones carefully until a small pyramid finally points ambitiously towards the sky like a sharp spire (!).</p> <p>//</p> <p>The priest—film star handsome in his tweed jacket and flushed pink cheeks—gives a small speech following a presentation in charming French-accented English by the KLAT spokesman. There is a spontaneous outbreak of collective laughter at the priest's joke about switching faiths, since the building of the cairn last night seems to have been more successful in bringing rain than his own prayers.</p> <p>//</p> <p>Obviously, they have become great friends and I imagine the group fosters relationships with lots of people as they travel around to carry out their constructions in remote places in the desert and elsewhere. Building things together. Fabiana constructed a kiosk at Al-Quds. I like building. Together. I just cannot make up my mind about what to build. Shelters perhaps? But where? That seems to be the question here. You cannot set foot anywhere without it being some kind of territorial statement, building low and wide would be the greatest insult of all.</p> <p>//</p> <p>There is a sudden cry from one of our group. It is aimed at preventing an adventurer among us wandering any further to the other side of the fenced area. A nervousness sweeps through</p>

	the crowd. It lands and finds nourishment amongst a few predisposed souls, but avoids most of us. On the way out, I catch up with Angela. We are in a joyful mood, laughing about the power of <i>gestalt</i> and how things can happen.	ticipant, has already discovered this escape and has installed himself at a table with his laptop. He needs space too, and suffers, like the others, from the lack of privacy at the hostel.	books and end up in the <i>beyond</i> section where I start to read Miroslav Volf's <i>The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World</i> . A Croatian living in Los Angeles, his questioning of the demands for an identity is a refreshing and constructive approach to conflict. His thoughts on interconnectedness are reminiscent of Thich Nath Hanh, whom I like reading. We photograph a dozen title pages in the library for future reference.
	// At night we gather at the Spafford Centre again, and, for the second time today, Arabic culture opens itself to me. Wissam Murad is extraordinary on his <i>oud</i> , alone on the stage. What is happening when your body simply merges with the tones of an instrument? The organising team have pulled themselves together and made an extra effort to do a proper introduction, compensating for the failure of yesterday. Only the dinner that evening ensures that constant mood swings remain the refrain of this journey. The French are by now far too exhausted to speak one more word in English, and perhaps so am I.	// Olaf is on his way to the workshop at Al-Quds. They are putting spokes in his wheels. I do not know exactly how to interpret his insinuations and gestures. I am so curious about what is going on in that institution, and elsewhere, but I have a growing sense that I am never going to find out. Things are kept out of the conversation, not by him—Emmanuel and Olaf argue constantly, Olaf, the established liberal against Emmanuel, the leftie in opposition—but the others will not speak, not publicly.	// Then we go to eat at an Arabic lunch bar. The pita bread is freshly baked. The crispiest green pepper I have ever tasted arrives with a plate of hummus soaked in olive oil and topped with roasted pine nuts. We drink mint tea.
	<b>Tuesday 7 December</b>	// Liv and I walk up the Via Dolorosa. The main streets are like bazaars, but when you get away from them, the stone quarters are surprisingly deserted. I bargain for sandals. I have discovered that I have it in me to play the part of the desired challenging customer. There is handmade Armenian porcelain, woven rugs in blue, red and green, jewellery, silk and cashmere. The most entertaining tourists are moving in large groups, dressed in yellows and greens, with turbans—what can they be, Coptic Ethiopians perhaps (descendants of the Queen of Saba)? We head towards the Jaffa Gate where the Swedish Christian Study Centre is situated. We ring the bell on the busy street just outside the City Wall and are let in to the ascetic, calm inside. Narrow stairs lead to the second floor where there is a spacious room with meter-thick walls and large, arched windows with window seats. The books are arranged according to subject. MIDDLE EASTERN HISTORY. PALESTINIAN HISTORY. JEWISH HISTORY. ISRAELI HISTORY. THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT. This is exactly what I need! I delve into the	// Al Hoash, where the evening's programme is due to take place, is situated outside the city gates on the north side. It is an exhibition composed of works by Palestinian artists. Passport photos by Omays Salman's flip over every time the fan blows in their direction, to flash their backsides, playing with the concept of a second identity, which was forced on many Palestinians after 1948. Majd Abdel Hamis has built a mosque from painkillers. In his film, Hassan Daraghmeah waits at a bus stop, following his plan to reach the sea.
	Breakfast is served in the cellar of the Hospice. A nun meets us in the doorway and leads us to a table that has our room number inscribed on a steel plate. We share it with an Italian couple. They are very smiley and positive, delighted to meet us—and we them. We do not know how best to organise ourselves around the small table-top. Then we queue for the coffee machine. A woman controls the button just like elevator attendants did in the old days. At my hotel in Cairo in 2006, a man had this job. You had to tip him, and get involved. <i>Is he happy with the sum? He looks moody today. Is it me?</i> The nun is beyond bribery. She just wants order.	// Liv and I walk up the Via Dolorosa. The main streets are like bazaars, but when you get away from them, the stone quarters are surprisingly deserted. I bargain for sandals. I have discovered that I have it in me to play the part of the desired challenging customer. There is handmade Armenian porcelain, woven rugs in blue, red and green, jewellery, silk and cashmere. The most entertaining tourists are moving in large groups, dressed in yellows and greens, with turbans—what can they be, Coptic Ethiopians perhaps (descendants of the Queen of Saba)? We head towards the Jaffa Gate where the Swedish Christian Study Centre is situated. We ring the bell on the busy street just outside the City Wall and are let in to the ascetic, calm inside. Narrow stairs lead to the second floor where there is a spacious room with meter-thick walls and large, arched windows with window seats. The books are arranged according to subject. MIDDLE EASTERN HISTORY. PALESTINIAN HISTORY. JEWISH HISTORY. ISRAELI HISTORY. THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT. This is exactly what I need! I delve into the	// We are supposed to give feedback to a camcorder, which will be played for the artists who live in Ramallah without permission to visit Jerusalem. Luckily, one of the KLAT guys reacts spontaneously to the absurd arrangement. <i>Why create a situation where someone who is unable to move is also denied the possibility to respond?</i> Olivia is the curator and her reaction is also swift as she suddenly realises the passivity this arrangement imposes on the Palestinian artists.
	// After breakfast, we work on our presentation. The café on the entrance floor has <i>apfelstrudel</i> , white wine and Wi-Fi, and a door that opens onto the terrace garden. Giorgos, the only Greek participant,	// Liv and I walk up the Via Dolorosa. The main streets are like bazaars, but when you get away from them, the stone quarters are surprisingly deserted. I bargain for sandals. I have discovered that I have it in me to play the part of the desired challenging customer. There is handmade Armenian porcelain, woven rugs in blue, red and green, jewellery, silk and cashmere. The most entertaining tourists are moving in large groups, dressed in yellows and greens, with turbans—what can they be, Coptic Ethiopians perhaps (descendants of the Queen of Saba)? We head towards the Jaffa Gate where the Swedish Christian Study Centre is situated. We ring the bell on the busy street just outside the City Wall and are let in to the ascetic, calm inside. Narrow stairs lead to the second floor where there is a spacious room with meter-thick walls and large, arched windows with window seats. The books are arranged according to subject. MIDDLE EASTERN HISTORY. PALESTINIAN HISTORY. JEWISH HISTORY. ISRAELI HISTORY. THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT. This is exactly what I need! I delve into the	// Instead of going deeper into a discussion, which would have been a possibility at this point, the group starts to disperse. On the way down the stairs, there are plans for adjustments to tomorrow's schedule. The only opportunity to find out what's going on, if you do not move with the group every hour of the day, is to eavesdrop on their conversations. I long for transparency and the independence that comes with it. It gets on my nerves not being able to decide my own movements according to accessible information. We do have a blog. Why don't we use it to distribute information? Isn't there an audience in addition to us! I make the suggestion, but I realise the structure is already set. The activities have been under-communicated for a while now out of fear of the Israeli authorities, I understand. But I doubt whether this has been debated or reflected upon. The approach seems partly unconscious with an element of guerrilla romanticism. Whether the threats are real or not, we are not going to find out, or even discuss. Discussion takes some elementary choreography of speaking and listening, which we are not performing.
			<b>Wednesday 8 December</b>
			Liv has left for Al-Quds where there is a presentation of Gabriele Oropallo's workshop. The students' work on stories about <i>This Place</i> sounds interesting. Aline Schlaepfer's lecture on Samir Naqqash, an Arab-Jewish writer, is



	censored by Al-Quds. She will, instead, speak as part of tonight's program at the Spafford Centre.	Each person is, actually, nice individually, but <i>the group dynamics</i> suck.	Thursday 9 December
	//	//	church keys sat, an arrangement that prevented disputes between the Christian sects over the <i>holiest site on earth</i> , the tomb of Christ, <i>although this is not quite certain</i> . Inside in the candlelit hall people are leaning down to touch the Stone of Unction that commemorates the place where Jesus' body was prepared for burial. Further inside, I circulate around the chapel containing the tomb, a tiny building placed under the enormous dome that's letting in sunlight at the top. In spite of its monstrous proportions, the space has some of the intimate ambience of the small onion domes on the steppes, owing to its sparse lighting and the incense vessels swaying in chains from the hands of the priests. It is a kind of secluded atmosphere that I think of as inspiring thoughts on the outside. That said, I reject the kind of spatial obsession with a point in the universe that is somehow nothing except its own singular fixation. The holiest place on Earth is a grave. Like the Western Wall, it is linked to grief, loss and identifying a victim. What a miserable faith.
	I stay put. Olaf and Liv laugh at my constant need to stop to stare and think in this environment; to me their speed is a mystery. Later, I go out to find the lunch place from yesterday, seeking the pleasure of repetition. It is the season for pomegranates and I want to try the fresh juice that I have seen people sipping on the street. A rotund Jewish boy has lost his group and stares, teary-eyed, up at the faces of grown-ups for help. Different parts of my brain work simultaneously on different responses. The rationalist looks cowardly into the future, thinking <i>what can I possibly do to lead him in the right direction?</i> The other part, also a coward, stands passively; creating a distance between myself and the heart-breaking innocence and helplessness that resonates in my heart. I walk away, moved and shaken.	After the film programme, Donatella and Nadia present their interesting research on the staging of a media event around the Eichmann trials, focussing on the role of the sound- and bulletproof glass cage, built for his appearance in court.	//
	//	//	I walk down El Wadi, glancing curiously through the dark alleys to the left to catch a glimpse of the Temple Mount and the Dome of the Rock. At the end of each side street, I can make out some low trees—a paradise garden bathed in sunshine. I am approached by a man and informed that non-Muslims are not allowed any further. I proceed southward instead, where, after major security routines, I am let in amongst the visitors—mostly Jewish—to the Western Wall. A fence divides the area and ensures that women and men do not mix. Confused at first, I misread the situation, but am firmly corrected. In the middle of the female crowd, women stand immersed in their holy books, rocking rhythmically while reading aloud. The dress code is dark and covered up, conservative. Some younger girls stand on chairs to spy on what is going on over on the men's side. There is a concerted movement of people approaching and backing away from the Wall. Literally reversing! One should not turn one's back to the Wall, I read. My oh my, what an object of worship to choose, the remains of a demolished temple, the wall as a symbol of separation, a dead end—and you can't even turn your back on it.
	In the hummus restaurant I spread out my map on the melamine tabletop to locate sites to see before we transfer to Ramallah on Friday. I have two glasses of freshly made pomegranate juice before the vegetable plate and hummus arrives. A young couple from Tel Aviv sits down with me. They have come specifically for the food and I discover that the simple lunch restaurant has in fact won a culinary award.	Am I mistaken, or did some Palestinians leave just now? Between the lectures, I gaze behind me to find that none of them are present. Aline's talk is about Samir Naqqash, a Jewish writer, who grew up in Iran, writing in Arabic. He had a troubled relationship with the Israeli authorities who forced the family back to Israel in the 1950s, but continued to deny him full rights of citizenship. His refusal to give up the Arabic language seems to have played a part in his fate, in addition to his insistence that the Jewish people also have an Arabic history. The Arabic Al-Quds University added to the absurdity this morning, when they refused to house the lecture on Naqqash, based on the Jewish part of his identity. What a loss they created for themselves. The famous Naguib Mahfouz described Naqqash as <i>one of the greatest authors writing in Arabic</i> .	//
	//	//	//
	By now my spirits are in balance again and I could go on by describing the brilliant lectures at Spafford, but in between there is another cold shower. Making my way up the stairs and entering the yard where the audience/participants are starting to gather, I have my most serious confrontation with backs so far. Everyone I turn to looks away and widens the space between us. What is the matter with these people?	Enrico Natale's lecture on botany and colonisation is hilarious, while Alice speaks in an academic, but engaging way on the subject of contemporary, political Iranian murals, which she compares to their counterparts in Ireland. The thinking behind this nomadic festival unfolds itself to me. The publication will be great, for sure. It is the spatial manifestation on the ground that creaks. We round up the evening at Mehbash Restaurant again, where the water pipes gurgle and one presentation supersedes another during the meal.	In the afternoon, Liv and I visit the Educational Bookshop. Run by the late Edward Saïd's family, it is an oasis with a friendly atmosphere, where the staff are devoted, but in a low-key way. I browse the tempting titles of glossy green and orange spines. I am curious about Arabic novelists. PL denotes Palestinian origin, EG an Egyptian one, LB stands for Lebanese and so on. I open one after the other. One book of poetry has a beautiful cover. I open it, curiously. The first line goes: <i>What is a man?</i> Hmm, what can a man possibly be except this and that wonderful thing, which a woman is not? I do stumble across one magnificent find, though: Tarik Ali's <i>Protocols of The Elders of Sodom and other essays</i> , which explore <i>the link between literature, history and politics</i> .

	//	take the next bus. It is not a long trip	it is not a good solution to let him
	At night there is a concert with con-	and we are soon halfway on the dusty	go first, we should have switched the
	temporary compositions. We get on a	mountain ride. Close to Ramallah, an	order, but it is too late now.
	local bus to Augusta Victoria Church,	elderly Palestinian woman gets on.	//
	on top of the Mount of Olives, over-	Walking between the rows of seats she	It is a schizophrenic experience. A
	looking the Gethsemane garden. Inside,	starts to lose her balance. Her face	kitsch organ intro sets the tone. A mix
	the chairs are arranged in lines and	is white. She grabs hold of the back	of war and sex imagery—newspaper
	clusters facing different directions.	of a seat to steady herself, but can-	style—is projected onto the back-
	The group spreads out, trying different	not stop swaying until she tumbles.	ground. Olaf starts to read from a
	seats. Where is the stage? It is unclear.	Before she hits the floor, a girl grabs	manuscript. The BBC journalist Chris-
	There are microphones here and there.	her by the arm and escorts her to the	tiane Amanpour is one of his charac-
	The space is generous and we start	back seat. A bottle travels between the	ters, preparing for a news report from
	adjusting to it, expanding our pri-	seats and, after a mouthful of water	Iraq, as well as a suicide bomber and
	ivate spheres. A violin, with its hollow	and bite to eat, she recovers. Slowly,	two horny gay soldiers. The bomber, on
	wooden body, starts making sounds that	we start to move again and the tension	the way to his last mission, is dis-
	resonate with an impressive power in	in the air gradually evaporates. Den-	tracted by the beautiful morning and
	the building. The singer begins to play	nis reveals how, at first, he thought	makes love to his wife instead. The
	with the space in a similar fashion.	that it was the sight of us that caused	soldiers get it on. Everything happens
	You can hear every detail of the whis-	her reaction. We all laugh with him at	simultaneously at sunrise and is de-
	pers from the instruments. Liv lies	the paranoid self-centeredness of his	scribed in intimate detail. The bomb
	down on a row of seats. People absorb	idea, thinking about what it does to	goes off. The lovers die in bed and
	the music, sitting bent over their knees	people who stay in these territories,	Amanpour reports on the explosion.
	or leaning backwards with their feet	even for a short visit.	The text is brilliantly written. I enjoy
	stretched out. For the next piece, the	//	the work immensely while, at the same
	musicians take up a new position in the	There is some kind of public holiday in	time, suffering embarrassment as the
	opposite corner. Before it is over, they	Ramallah, and the streets are almost	audience, polite people, but not famil-
	have cleared the space with sound—	deserted. We are struck by the build-	iar with contemporary art, continue to
	including our bodies. It is strangely	ing activities everywhere. Some of the	leave the room. Finally, Olaf stops read-
	unifying, in an abstract way.	participants have made excursions to	ing while there is still some pages left
	//	Hebron, which is a totally different	of the manuscript.
	It is easier to hang out together around	story of misery, poverty and disconnect-	//
	the four large tables in the Armenian	edness. Ramallah, on the other hand,	Under these circumstances, the air thick
	restaurant we go to that night. I learn	is small, but cosmopolitan—the mod-	with the desire to be elsewhere, our
	more about Enrico's subject of plants	est, Palestinian answer to the high-	task is to draw attention to our Arme-
	and colonisation and, later, in the bar,	rides of Tel Aviv.	nia project. On a scale from one to ten,
	the Armenian bartender helps to lift	//	with ten being the most successful, I
	our spirits further. We talk Olaf into	We have already rigged up the projector	would give us perhaps three points for
	going ahead as planned with his per-	and chairs at the Quattan Foundation,	a decent effort.
	formance in Ramallah tomorrow, in spite	but while the others are still having	//
	of his reluctance to do so.	lunch at a restaurant we go back again	As much as I would like to escape, I
		to prepare mentally in the space. It	move with the others to the Khalil
	Friday 10 December	is Olaf's turn first, then us. This time	Sakarini Cultural Centre, just down
		there is a larger audience and quite a	the street. There is a reception with
	We have packed and are ready to go to	few veiled women. People keep coming	drinks, an exhibition and lectures, in
	Ramallah. I have planned to take a late	in while we are still waiting for our	the three-floor building with terraces
	taxi to Tel Aviv after dinner and skip	group. Even before Olaf has started,	—a great space. There is really a
	tomorrow's unofficial closing event.	I begin to regret that we so thought-	crowd now. Ramallah feels like an exit-
	The bus departs from a station not far	lessly encouraged him to deliver his	ing place, at the same time as the rest-
	from the Damascus Gate. We are the	presentation without adjustments. I am	lessness of imminent departure makes
	first group to leave. The others will	nervous on his behalf. It is clear that	itself felt. A rainstorm is expected to-
			night, and a part of me is planning to
			flee. The brilliant scholar Rema Ham-
			mami delivers an elegant lecture advoc-
			ating the great role of Palestinian
			women in politics. It is just that every-
			thing you observe tells you other-
			wise. She reminds me of the Pales-
			tinian intellectuals I met in Egypt,
			cosmopolitan, moving in elite circles,
			incredibly competent but... I would like
			to read the work of journalist Amira
			Hass, who addresses the strong divi-
			sion of Palestinians into subgroups.
			Khaled Horani presents his crazy idea
			of bringing Picasso to Palestine. My
			favourite is Vera Tamari. She has worked
			with art students initiating studies of
			Palestinian arts and crafts, as she has
			observed that Palestinian youth know
			very little about their own culture and
			are confused about their cultural her-
			itage and identity. It is a good, hands-
			on solution.
			//
			The cool restaurant downtown where we
			gather for dinner is packed with what I
			imagine must be the cultural elite of
			Ramallah. Great food. The atmosphere
			reminds me of stories from cosmopoli-
			tan Beirut. The fun is over when Don-
			atella requests that we listen quietly
			to the twenty-minute tape in French
			that she recorded during the Eternal
			Bike Ride here from Geneva. Liv and
			Olaf have decided to join me in taking
			a taxi, and we hurry out in the rain to
			the waiting car. Goodbyes. It is emo-
			tional; Angela is practically ready to
			jump into the car with us.
			//
			We pass the checkpoint effectively with-
			out delay, and head for Tel Aviv on the
			highway. The car wheels splash in the
			heavy rain and the streetlights reflect
			in the asphalt like stars in a vast dark-
			ness. Half an hour later, we enter the
			city centre where we can sense the sea
			in turmoil. We drive between the typical
			Bauhaus-style buildings, where loose
			signs are swaying and tarpaulins are



threatening to take flight in the wind,  
and drop Olaf off at his hotel before  
continuing to the suburb Kfar Saba  
where we will stay with my in-laws.

Saturday 11 December

We chat with Suzi and Hugo over morning coffee. It is raining. Liv wants to go with us to the centre, then separate to find a bus back on her own. Hugo doubts whether there will be any buses on the Sabbath. When he leaves the room, we have a discussion about mobility and dependency. The car belongs to Hugo. Suzi is dependent on him to drive, and always tries to foresee his schedule and adjust her plans to his.

He, on the other hand, is reluctant to offer any insight into his moves (which gives him a sense of freedom, I guess). Her need to plan used to annoy me.

After this week, I understand her better. Whoever is in the know and makes the decisions has kept us on a tight leash, waiting. Watching the queue at the checkpoint made us reflect on the horror of being left to wait. *Power must be the power to make people wait.* It seemed to be contagious. Unconsciously, people slipped into wasting the time of the other. The other adjusted, so as to affirm the imbalance. If I have a car, I have your attention. You need me. I will, perhaps, let you know when we are going to leave. Later, of course, I can always change my mind.

11

The Internet means independence. We are able to find the local bus route and Liv can be mobile. Transparency is gold. Yesterday, money was the guarantee for our freedom. We could pay for a taxi and arrive late, to the surprise of our hosts in Kfar Saba, who were convinced we would be stuck in Ramallah (forever).

11

We take Suzi and Hugo to the CCA in Tel Aviv. It is their first encounter with contemporary art. The show *Building*

Memory presents Yael Bartana, Dor Geuz and Miroslav Balka amongst others, and deals with the problematic foundation of the state of Israel. It demonstrates complex and paradoxical aspects of identities and territories. Suzi has a moment of self-reflection watching Bartana's film. The film stages a fictional return of Jews to Poland. A *kibbutz* with walls and a tower is built in a park in Warsaw. Gradually, the construction becomes more and more reminiscent of a fortress for self-imprisonment. I come to think about Philip Roth who describes Israel as a ghetto, juxtaposing it with the free life in the Diaspora.

//

I dare not to ask how they vote, but I expect the worst. Statistics suggest Netanyahu. When they visited Oslo, we managed not to have a fight and I felt that this was a victory for peace. I know that if they find any excuse to put me in a category with the anti-Semites, it will make it so easy for them to dismiss anything I do or say. When they did not find any support from Daniel or me for their doubts about Obama's background, I wondered what would be the next attempt at testing the ground.

It came two days later. They wanted to visit the Holocaust Centre in Oslo. I was not happy about the timing. The Gaza attacks were still fresh in my memory, and I tried to ignore their suggestion. Then I checked the webpage and realised that the exhibition focused on mechanisms of stigmatisation. Interesting. I changed my mind and offered to drive them. They were not happy about the show, finding that *their Holocaust* was not presented exclusively, but compared with the situation of the Palestinians. I was satisfied with their confusion and left the question to mature.

//

I am not politically active, but as an artist I explore the field that politics

rests on: ideas, convictions, perceptions, questions of territory and identity. Some of my works also aim to produce action. I draw conclusions from what I discover, and it does affect my attitude and behaviour, but in this specific minefield the best I can do is to try to avoid pushing my relatives further into a defensive mode. This was also my reasoning when I stayed at home instead of marching against the bombing of Gaza.

//

During this week, I have been somehow remote and passive. The context that brought me here, the Eternal Tour, and my struggle with my role as a participant has become the filter I have looked through. I have been a little distant, I'm afraid, concerned also that engagement would produce counter-engagement, and add fuel to the fire, as I have experienced before. The cost has been a kind of numbness that will simply have to be a part of the story about this journey, and perhaps function as a metaphor. I have been looking to escape, I guess, looking for possibilities to take flight mentally and physically, like the people who live here, only on a different scale. I have been sensitive to restrictions on my freedom, which have perhaps been provocative, but also important for maintaining common sense or percipience.

Sunday 12 December

The rainstorm is even heavier today. The night's wind has caused damage to the sun-shelter installations that Hugo makes and sells. He has gone out to rescue clients in trouble, and we have to take a taxi to the airport. Because of the Egyptian stamp in my passport, I have the three-hour-security-check. Well inside the departure hall, the fountain in the centre looks more like a leak from the ceiling. At one point, the water turns brown and I think,

for a second, that the roof will collapse. Flights are getting cancelled, not because of what is now an intense thunderstorm, but due to aircrafts unable to depart from the snowstorms in central Europe. Liv's flight takes off, but not mine. I wait with Olaf and Matthias all day in different queues. When the flight is cancelled, we have to do the security check all over again. The risk level is upgraded. The number five stamp on my suitcase is exchanged with the number six.

//

An hour after midnight, we depart for Riga, where I can catch an early morning connection to Oslo. It is December 13.

(area 01)

# Biographies

(area 02)

(area 03)

**BASEL ABBAS** and **RUANNE ABOU-RAHME** (\*1983) work together across a range of sound, video, image and text practices. Their work often explores issues connected with spatial politics and subjectivity, place and narrative, and the relation between the actual, imagined and remembered. Usually taking on the form of multi-disciplinary installations and live audio-visual performances. Most recently they have founded the sound and video performance collective Tashweesh. Recent exhibitions include *The Zone* at the NAE Nottingham (2011), *Re:View Videonale Katowice* (2011), *Future Movements* at the Liverpool Biennale (2010), *Bluecoat* Art Centre Liverpool (2010) *Ny Lyd* Images Festival Copenhagen (2010) *HomeWorks 5* Ashkal Alwan, Beirut (2010), *Palestine co/venice* at 53rd Venice Biennale. Recent performances include *Club 50/50* Katowice (2011) *The South Bank* Centre London (2010), *Ny Lyd* Images Festival, Copenhagen (2010).

**YAZID ANANI** (\*1975, Ramallah) is an assistant professor at the Department of Architecture and the Master Program in Urban Planning and Landscape – Birzeit University, Palestine. His work and research interests are inclined toward issues in colonial and post-colonial spaces as well as in themes on culture, neoliberalism, architecture and power. Yazid Anani chairs currently the Academic Council of the International Art Academy Palestine. He is part of several collectives, and projects such as *Decolonizing Architecture & Ramallah Syndrome* and has curated and co-curated several projects such as *Palestinian Cities – Visual Contention* and *Ramallah – the fairest of them all?* and took part in several art projects.

**NAHED AWWAD**, director, researcher and editor, lives in Ramallah. She discovered the world of film and media in the first Intifada. Initially a self-taught editor, she has edited for most known Palestinian film-makers, local Palestinian TV stations and later international networks. She acquired knowledge and skills at film schools and training centers in Canada, Denmark, Qatar, and Belgium. So far she has finished eight documentary films and she's working now on her 9th. Awwad's films have been screened at various international film festivals, including Cannes Film Festival in 2008.

**URSULA BIEMANN** is a video essayist, curator and theorist based in Zurich, Switzerland. She curated various art and research projects on contemporary geographies of mobility including *The Maghreb Connection*, and published several book including *Mission Reports*, a recent monograph of her video works. Biemann's research is based at the Institute for Theory at ZHdK, she is co-editor of ArtTerritories and holds a honorary degree of the University of Sweden.

**YOUNES BOUADI** is a graduate student of Philosophy of Art History and was present at the opening of *Picasso in Palestine*. His research subject is on displaced art. By focusing on the institutions that the art work is traveling through Bouadi analyses which ideological forces are present in the displacement and how this process creates a new meaning to the art work. He is the author of the article *Picasso in Palestine: Displaced Art and the Borders of Community*.

**SANDER BUYCK** studied photography at KASK Ghent. With presentations in Kassel, Berlin and Turin he was selected for the *I see you*-project by ELIA-artschools (2008). His graduation-project *Things Fall Apart* was nomi-



nated for the prix Horlait-Dapsens (2009). In 2010 he took part in the artfestival of Watou. In 2011 Buyck showed his work at KASK Ghent and NETWERK Aalst. In 2012 there will be an exhibition in KVS, Brussels about his project on Palestine.

**ANDREW CONIO** is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Art and Design at the University of Wolverhampton and is a writer and artist. His writing concerns the interpretation and development of the ideas of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in a range of contexts from Philosophy to Aesthetics, from Architecture to Psychoanalysis. He is a film-maker and scriptwriter and this includes video installations and hypnotism CDs.

**REMCO DE BLAAIJ** is currently Programme Director at Outset Contemporary Art Fund. Prior to that he worked since 2007 at the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven where he, amongst others, curated *Picasso in Palestine* (2011) and *Double Infinity* in Shanghai (2010), both drawing attention to the entangled accessibility, history and complex mobile potential of a public institutional collection. As a member of the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths University he is conducting a spatial research on contemporary politics in Suriname, South America.

**LAURENS DHAENENS** is an art historian and art critic. He is working on a PhD at the KU Leuven that focuses on the historical Avant-Garde and the relation between Europe and Latin America. Currently he lives in Lima where he is working for the Museo de Arte de Lima. Dhaenens regularly writes about contemporary art.

**BESHARA DOUMANI** is one of the most celebrated social historians of Palestine, his interest lies in recovering the history of social groups, places, and time periods that have been silenced or erased by conventional scholarship on the Modern Middle East. His specialty is the social and cultural history of peasants, merchants, artisans, and women who live in the provincial regions of the Arab East during the late Ottoman period (18th and 19th centuries). Beshara Doumani has been appointed director of the Palestinian Museum and entrusted with developing and implementing a concept for this new cultural institution.

**GALIT EILAT** is a writer, curator and the founding director of The Israeli Center for Digital Art in Holon. She is co-founder of *Maarav*—an online arts and culture magazine, as well as research curator at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven. Her projects tackle issues such as the geopolitical situation in the Middle East, activism and political imagination in art.

**CHARLES ESCHÉ** is a curator and writer. Since 2004, he is director of the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, Netherlands. He is co-founder and co-editor of *Afterall Journal* and *Afterall Books* with Mark Lewis. He is a theoretical advisor at the Rijksakademie, Amsterdam. In 2009 and 2007 he was co-curator with Khalil Rabah of the 2nd RIWAQ Biennale, Ramallah, Palestine. In 2005 he was co-curator of the 9th International Istanbul Biennale with Vasif Kortun. A selection of his texts was published in 2005 under the title “Modest Proposals”.

**UNNI GJERTSEN** (\*1966) is a Norwegian artist based in Oslo. She graduated from The Academy of Fine Art in Trondheim. She has been an artist in residence at IASPIS in Stockholm and Platform China in Beijing. In 2009 she visited

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Bangalore by invitation from Colab Art & Architecture and OCA where she later, in 2011, made a solo exhibition at 1 Shanthi Road. Other presentations of her travel related works has been at 0047 (2011) and Henie-Onstad Art Centre (2008) in Oslo, and Baltic Art Centre in Gdansk (2007). She had a solo exhibition at Konsthall C in Stockholm (2005) and has been part of group exhibitions at M HKA in Antwerp (2007), Göteborgs Konsthall (2006), and Nordische Botschaften Berlin (2010). She is currently organizing a reading group at Kunstneres Hus in Oslo together with Runa Carlsen and she will be part of an event at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven in October 2011.

**ERIC GOTTESMAN** is an artist who explores the power dynamics of transnational image production through collective authorship, investigation of the colloquial and examination of processes that fall outside the contemporary canon. Gottesman’s awards include the apexart Franchise Award, an Aaron Siskind Foundation Fellowship, and a Fulbright Fellowship in Art. In 2012, he will be artist-in-residence at Amherst College and Umbrage Editions will publish his first collaborative monograph.

**SAMIR HARB** (\*1981, Palestine) Architect/Cartoonist, he has been working in the field of Architecture and Landscape in Planning Research in the West Bank since 2006. Harb attempts to mix between cartoons and his architecture research which explores and criticize the processes of territorial transformation in the oPt. Moreover he investigates the limits of architectural elements on the continuity of landscape in Palestine and translates the research into installations and drawings. Harb carried out several exhibitions in Rome, Ravenna, Oslo, Amman. His exhibitions represented a series of a strong graphic form that included maps, historical events, and main figures shaping the spatial order in the region. His main participations are *The Red Castle* and *The Lawless Line*, 0047 OSLO and *We Have Woven the Motherlands with Nets of Iron*, Giza Train Station, Amman.

**SHURUQ HARB** is an artist, curator and editor. She is the co-founder of ArtTerritories, a collaborative online publishing platform. She recently organized and co-curated *Designing Civic Encounter* a four day initiative by ArtTerritories engaging in existing and potential forms of urban development and public culture in Palestine. Her piece *A Book of Signatures* was featured in *Untitled* (12th Istanbul Biennial), 2011.

**THOMAS HIRSCHHORN** (\*1957, Bern) studied at the Schule für Gestaltung, Zürich from 1978 to 1983 and moved to Paris in 1984, where he has been living since. His work has been shown in numerous museums, galleries and group exhibitions among which the Venice Biennale (1999), Documenta 11 (2002), 27th Sao Paulo Biennale (2006), the 55th Carnegie International (2008) and the Swiss Pavillion at the 54th Venice Biennale (2011). In each exhibition—in museums, galleries, alternative spaces or with his specific works in public space—Thomas Hirschhorn asserts his commitment toward a non-exclusive public. Thomas Hirschhorn has received different awards and prizes, among which: Preis für Junge Schweizer Kunst (1999), Prix Marcel Duchamp (2000), Joseph Beuys-Preis (2004) and the Kurt Schwitters-Preis (2011).

**KHALED HOURANI** is a Palestinian artist, curator, and art critic. He attained a BA in History from Hebron University and was awarded the title of Cultural Management Trainer by Al Mawred Culture Resource and the European Cultural Foundation (Egypt). He has had several solo exhibitions locally and internationally and participates frequently

in-group exhibitions. Hourani has curated and organized several exhibitions locally such as the young Artist of the Year Award for the years 2000 and 2002 for the A.M. Qattan Foundation. He was the curator of the Palestinian pavilion for Sao Paolo Biennale, Brazil and the 21st Alexandria Biennale, Egypt. He writes critically in the field of art and is an active member and founder of artistic and administrative boards in a number of cultural and art institutions. Hourani is currently the Arts Director of the International Academy of Art Palestine.

**KHALED JARRAR** was born in Jenin. He completed his studies in Interior design at the Palestine Polytechnic University in 1996, and then entered the field of Photography in 2004. He started making films and videos in 2008. Jarrar graduated in 2011 from the International Academy of Art – Palestine as a visual artist. He recently showed work at FIAC international contemporary art fair in Paris and will be part of Berlin Biennale 2012.

**RENZO MARTENS'** (\*1973, the Netherlands) pieces *Episode 1* and *Episode 3* were exhibited at Centre Pompidou, Tate Modern, Berlin Biennial, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Van Abbemuseum and Kunsthaus Graz, as well as in numerous filmfestivals and on television. He is working on several new films, and is a researcher at Ghent University College.

**DANIEL MILLER** is a writer. You can write to him at daniel.shaffner@gmx.de

**LYNDA MORRIS** holds the Chair of Curation and Art History at Norwich University College of the Arts. She curated Picasso Peace and Freedom in 2010, shown at Tate Liverpool, Albertina Vienna and Louisiana Denmark. She curated *EASTinternational* in Norwich from 1991 to 2009, working with selectors including Konrad Fischer, Richard Long, Marian Goodman, Lawrence Weiner and Peter Doig. In 2009 she edited *Unconcealed: The International Network of Conceptual Artists 1967–77* for her Phd student, the late Sophie Richard.

**KATIA REICH** is an art historian based in Berlin. She has been the project manager of the Berlin Biennale and KW Institute for Contemporary Art since 2005. In 2003 and 2005 she managed the German Pavilion at the Venice Biennale and co-edited the book *Germany's Contributions to the Venice Biennale 1895–2007* (German edition 2007 / English edition 2009). From 1999 to 2004 she was co-curator at the Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst in Berlin.

**RASHA SALTÍ** is an independent film and visual arts curator and writer. From 2004 until 2010, she was the film programmer and creative director of the New York based non-profit ArteEast where she directed two editions of the biennial CinemaEast Film Festival (2005 and 2007). She also co-curated *The Road to Damascus*, with Richard Peña, a retrospective of Syrian cinema that toured worldwide (2006), and *Mapping Subjectivity: Experimentation in Arab Cinema from the 1960s until Now*, with Jytte Jensen (2010–2012) showcased at the MoMA in New York. Salti has collaborated with a number of organizations, including the Musée Jeu de Paume in Paris, SANFIC in Santiago de Chile, and The Tate Modern in London. In 2009 and 2010, Salti worked as a programmer for the Abu Dhabi Film Festival. In 2011, she joined the team of international programmers of the Toronto International Film Festival.

**TOLEEN TOUQ** is an independent cultural operator based in Amman, Jordan. Since 2009 she has directed and curated the yearly Hakaya storytelling festival and in 2010 was outreach and education manager at the first Karama

human rights film festival. She is also engaged in initiating projects and programs that expand the relationship between arts, culture and politics through audio interventions, public discussions and social activism. In 2011 she initiated the Complaints Choir project in Jordan, and was awarded the Apexart Franchise program grant to curate the exhibition *We Have Woven the Motherlands with Nets of Iron*.

**EYAL WEIZMAN** is an architect, Professor of Visual Cultures and Director of the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths, University of London. Since 2011 he also directs the European Research Council funded project Forensic Architecture – on the place of architecture in international humanitarian law. Since 2007 he is a founding member of the architectural collective DAAR in Beit Sahour/Palestine. He lectured, curated and organised conferences in many institutions worldwide. His books include *The Least of all Possible Evils*, *Hollow Land*, *A Civilian Occupation*, the series *Territories 1,2* and *3*, *Yellow Rhythms* and many articles in journals, magazines and edited books. He is currently on the advisory boards of the ICA in London, the Human Rights Project at Bard in NY, and of other academic and cultural institutions.

**INASS YASSIN** lives and works in Palestine. Yassin has produced a body of work that deals with the concept of transformation on a private and public scale. Spatial and social change and their manifestations are the fields of interest and research exploring different forms and mediums, paintings, video and public intervention. Examples of projects: *Projection*, *Free Entry* (2010), *Transformation* (2008), *The Sea is Black* (2007).

**ARTUR ŹMIJEWSKI** creates installations, objects, photographs that explore human behaviour and physicality as a form of social activism. His intellectually reflective approach became the springboard for Czereja, an arts periodical he published in the late 90s and he continues to be art critic. Źmijewski was part of the Polish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2005 and he has received several awards for his work. He was recently appointed curator for the 7th Berlin Biennale which will take place in early 2012.



فكرة متحف متفرق كان موجوداً في العلاقات المفروضة عبر مناطق ثقافية، وذلك بدل المتحف الفنية الموجودة في المجموعة. كانت النتيجة المنطقية لذلك التفكير وجوب أن يكون هذا المتحف في مكان آخر سوى مدينة إيندهوفن، وحصل أيضاً تطور واضح وإن أقل إمكانية لشرحه علناً، هو ضرورة ألا يظهر على أنه المتحف نفسه بل أن يكون من خلال تعاون أكبر مع الأكاديمية الدولية للفنون - فلسطين (ربما حتى تحت مظلتها).

في موازاة مواجهة تأثيرات جديدة خلال اجتماعات الشرق الأوسط هذه، كان العاملون في المتحف يحققون في سؤال منفصل لكنه مرتبط فينا: ما هي القدرات المحتملة لمتحف الفن الأوروبي في القرن الواحد والعشرين؟ في حين أن الكونية الحدائية الغربية والهيمنة الثقافية الأوروبية مفاهيم فاقدة المصداقية، لا تزال صورة ما قد يحل مكانهما بالكاد ظاهرة. إحدى النتائج هي أننا في أوروبا مرغمون على التفكير في ما نريد الحفاظ عليه أو تمريره للكونومبوليتية الناشئة من هذه الثقافة الحديثة التي كنا مسؤولين عنها بشكل كبير. يمكننا الافتراض أن القيم الثقافية للتكوين لن تبقى فقط «غريبة» الأصل، لكننا لا نعلم أي عناصر محددة من الابتكارات الثقافية والأخلاقية الغربية السابقة سوف يكون صالحاً للمستقبل. لمحاولة اكتشاف ما قد يكون مناسباً، شعرنا في المتحف أننا في حاجة إلى إعادة نشر المجموعة بطرق عامة مختلفة. ووجدنا أنه يمكننا فهم ما سيقى غير معقول بالنسبة إلينا من خلال رؤى وأعمال فنانين ينتمون إلى خلفيات ثقافية شديدة الاختلاف. أردنا التفكير تحديداً في ما نملكه في أرشيفنا وإمكان استعماله بطرق لم نعهدها سابقاً.

لقد جاء معرض «بيكاسو في فلسطين» نتيجة التقاء هذين المسارين الطويلي الأمد. بالنسبة إلى متحف Van Abbe، يُوَطر المشروع أكثر الأسئلة إلحاحاً: كيف يمكن لمتحف فني أوروبي أن يصبح مجدداً على نطاق أوسع من موطنه الخاص؟ كيف يمكن لأعمال بيكاسو، التي خسرت حديثها الراديكالية وأصبحت كلاسيكيات قديمة مألوفة، أن يعاد تخيلها ووضعتها في سياقات جديدة بطرق قد تعيد شيئاً من الشعور القديم بالعزلة المادية وحس النأي الغريب لكن العاطفي الذي أنتجته خلال وجودها؟ لا نعلم بعد ما سوف نستعيده بعد عرض لوحة بيكاسو في رام الله. مادياً، سوف تكون ذاتها، لكن هل ستتعامل معها كما كنا قبل معرفتنا أين كانت وما أصبحت تمثله؟ عبر هذه الرحلة، نشعر أننا نرد بشكل بناء على السؤال حول متحف القرن الواحد والعشرين. نشعر أننا نبني توارخ جديدة في الوقت ذاته الذي نحافظ فيه على تلك القديمة. ونليي خلال ذلك طلب مجموعة زملاء لم تكن لنحلم أن نقوم به بأنفسنا. إن عنصر الضيافة هنا، بكلمات [الفيلسوف الفرنسي] ديريدا «القبول بمن وبما يحضر»، جوهري لفهم ما يمكننا تعلمه من «بيكاسو في فلسطين»، تماماً مثلما سيملي ما نفعله في إيندهوفن من الآن فصاعداً.

# بيكاسو في رام الله

## تشارلز اشي

إن عرض لوحة بيكاسو [«تمثال نصفِي لامرأة»]، التي رسمها عام 1943، في رام الله مناسبة سعيدة. فهي تؤكد تطور العلاقة الطويلة الموجودة أصلاً بين متحف Van Abbe [الهولندي] والأكاديمية الدولية للفنون- فلسطين، وكذلك بين الزملاء في المؤسساتين. لكنها فوق ذلك تمثل رابطاً رمزياً بين الحداثة الأوروبية والثقافة الفلسطينية المعاصرة يمكنه، إذا أُدحِسن فهمه، أن يشكل طريقاً لرسم عولمة ثقافية تبادلية غير منساقدة إلى رؤية عالمية واحدة. يوازي الاستعمار والحرب قصة الحداثة، كما تُعرف في أوروبا، بقدر ما تمثلها الرؤى التحريرية للنخبة الفنية. وأسوة بغيرها من البلدان غير الأوروبية، كانت فلسطين تقف متفجرة في العالم الحديث الراقي ممثلاً ببيكاسو ورفاقه. في ذلك الوقت، كانت رام الله والقدس والخليل ومدن أخرى عدة في المنطقة مواقع للأحداث وغير مسؤولة عن مصيرها. وقد تناوب العثمانيون أولاً، تلاهم البريطانيون والفرنسيون ومن ثم الإسرائيليّين الأميركيين والأوروبيين، على تقرير مستقبل المنطقة، ولا يزال كثير منهم يحاول القيام بذلك اليوم. لكن التغيير جار على قدم وساق، فالحداثة انتهت، وشيئاً فشيئاً تتحول فلسطين التي كانت تفاعلية في الماضي نحو مجتمع استباقي يتحمل أعباء المسؤولية الوطنية والثقافية أثناء تقدمه. إن تلبية طلب الأكاديمية الدولية للفنون- فلسطين يطّبع موقناً الوضع في رام الله، ولا يزال يصور طبيعة وضعها الاستثنائي. وكما أشار فلاديمير إليتش لينين خلال المؤتمر الدولي الثاني عام 1920، فإن «الحرب الإمبريالية وضعت الشعوب الاتكالية في تاريخ العالم». الآن، بعد مرور قرن، تشكل شعوب البلدان المستعمرة حينذاك تاريخ العالم بقدر ما تشكل الحروب الإمبريالية التي تستمر حولهم وعنهم. طبعاً، ومثلاً كان الأمر عام 1920، من غير الواضح كيفية تجلّي ذلك المستقبل، لكن معرض «بيكاسو في فلسطين» يشكل ببساطته جزءاً من مسار ترحيبي في الطريق الذي يصبح فيه الناس في فلسطين وسواها في الشرق الأوسط المتغير مواضيع تاريخ العالم، ويتعلمون كتابة نصوصهم الخاصة للكون المتعدد الأقطاب الذي يجب أن تتشارك فيه. إن طموح مشروع فني بتاريخ العالم أمر لا يخلو من المخاطر بالطبع. فهو في نهاية المطاف معني حصراً بشحن كمية صغيرة من الخشب والقماش والطلاء من بلد إلى آخر. لكن العمليات التفصيلية اللازمة لتحقيق ذلك- وقد استغرق إتمامها نحو سنتين- تظهر أن شيئاً ما على المحك يتجاوز العرض البسيط للوحة. بدأ هذا المشروع كله كتحقيق مزدوج. من جهة، كان على ما يبدو طلب اقتراض منظمة (أكاديمية فنية) من أخرى (متحف). واستدعت الطبيعة المباشرة للطلب تعامل المتحف معه كأبي طلب آخر لاقتراض عمل من مجموعتنا. وسلط طرح أسئلة حول وضع المكان الذي ستعرض فيه وأمن عملية نقلها والقوانين المتعلقة بالتأمين وجميع المسائل الأخرى التي ظهرت خلال ذلك، الضوء على الحالة القانونية والثقافية الغربية والعامضة لهذا الجزء الشرقي من الأرض الفلسطينية التقليدية التي لا تزال تحت الاحتلال الخارجي. وفي الحقيقة لم تصدر الموافقات النهائية حتى كتابتي هذا النص.

من جهة أخرى، إن المشروع أيضاً عمل فني للفنان والأستاذ الفلسطيني خالد حوراني. بدعم من زملائه وطلابه في الأكاديمية، أتاحت رؤيته لحركة «بيكاسو إلى فلسطين» تخطي المشروع جميع العقبات التي وضعت في طريقه. ولكن واضحين حول الظروف الخاصة لهذا القرض، يجدر بالذكر أن إقراض عمل لمتحف إسرائيل على بعد نحو 25 كيلومتراً من الأكاديمية كان ليثير ردوداً مختلفة جداً من شركات التأمين والنقل والصحافة والسياسيين. لقد أثارَت بساطة التفكير في الذهاب إلى رام الله تساؤلات سياسية وقانونية فوراً لدى جميع الأطراف، بموازاة اهتمام الإعلام الدولي الذي كان مرتبّاً جداً لكنه فاق قدرات المؤسسات المحلية على التعامل معه. تطّلب التعامل مع هذه الأحداث كل على حدة صبراً ومهارة وعملاً شاقاً من قبل جميع المعنيين، لكنه وقع في نهاية المطاف على عاتق الحراك الفني المتواصل الذي أدخلته رؤية خالد المبدئية في الطلب منذ البداية. من دون التزامه، لما كان بإمكاننا إكمال مهماتنا.

بهذه الطريقة، يكشف المشروع بوضوح الوضع الراهن بشكل يفوق التوقعات من بساطته. في هذه الظروف وعبر عرض لوحة لمن يمكن اعتباره أشهر فناني القرن العشرين في بلد يمكن اعتباره المراقب الأكبر على وجه الأرض اليوم، لا يبدو منافياً للمنطق أن نربط الفن فعلاً مع التاريخ قيد الصنع. لكن هذا المشروع لا يعنى بالوضع في فلسطين، أو حتى يؤثر عليه بشكل حقيقي فقط. بل إنه يؤثّر أيضاً على مستقبل لوحة بيكاسو وعلى مجموعة المتحف الذي تشكل جزءاً منه. لقد استثمر متحف Van Abbe وقتاً وطاقة في بناء علاقات عبر الشرق الأوسط في الأعوام الثلاثة إلى الأربعة الماضية، لكن الكثير من ذلك لم يكن مرئياً لعامة الزوار. إلا أننا بنينا ببطء، وراء الكواليس، تبادلاً حقيقياً بين ظروف ثقافية شديدة الاختلاف، مؤسسين تفاهمات مشتركة حيث لم تكن موجودة من قبل. خلال مسار الاجتماعات، بدأنا الحديث عن



فتحتها حتى تصل وجهتها النهائية». وأضاف: «كان علينا أن نتزعز التزاماً من نقاط الأمن الإسرائيلية العديدة ألا تقوم بذلك». وقد وعدت أن تظل عند كلمتها إذا لم يحصل ما يدعو «للك». «ربما يسوء الأمر في أي لحظة. إذا رمى طفل حصي على الباص، أو إذا قرر مستوطن إسرائيلي أن يضايق فلسطينياً، أو إذا حصل أي حادث عادي صغير كما يحصل طوال الوقت على الطريق من تل أبيب إلى بوابة فلنديا، سوف يكون للإسرائيليين ذريعة لإيقاف رحلة اللوحة وفتح الصندوق عنوة. كان 'بيكاسو في فلسطين' بطرق عدة سلسلة معجزات صغيرة مدبرة».

تتغير نيرة حوراني جذرياً حين يتذكر لحظة وصول الصندوق إلى المكان الذي بني خصيصاً لاستضافة اللوحة في الأكاديمية الدولية للفنون. هناك أيضاً، تم توفير ظروف بيئية صارمة. كان فتح الصندوق حدثاً في حد ذاته، حضره خبراء مختلفون موكلون بالإشراف على العملية وتوثيق كل خطوة. منذ تلك اللحظة فصاعداً، وطيلة الشهر الذي تلا زيارة «تمثال نصفي لامرأة» إلى رام الله، بات «بيكاسو في فلسطين» حدثاً احتفالياً. تكلم حفل الافتتاح بنجاح غير مسبوق. ببهجة، لا يزال حوراني متفاجئاً من عدد الناس الذين توافدوا. «كنت أتوقع أن أرى الأشخاص المعتادين، حشد رام الله الفني، الوجوه التي أراها عند كل افتتاح أو حدث ثقافي. كان مئات المتوافدين وجوهاً لم أراها من قبل، وأشخاصاً عادين لديهم فضول لرؤية اللوحة والاحتفال بعملا. وقفت في الفناء أتقبل التهاني مثل عريس في عرس أو بطل وطني حقق مأثرة». خلال ذلك الشهر، جاء الناس من أنحاء الضفة الغربية للتفرج على «تمثال نصفي لامرأة». من أجل الحفاظ على حرارة الغرفة ومستوى الرطوبة، كان يسمح بدخول سبعة أشخاص فقط في اللحظة نفسها، إضافة إلى حارسي أمن خاص. وعقد مؤتمر بعنوان XX ، استضيف فيه الفيلسوف سلافوي جيبيك لإلقاء محاضرة.

علاوة على استقطاب جمهور جديد إلى حدث فني، أثار «بيكاسو في فلسطين» اهتماماً غير مسبوق من الإعلام المحلي والدولي. واستغرق الأمر بضعة أيام لكي يحتسب حوراني مستوى مشاركة المجتمع المدني، لكنه لم يكن مهياً لرسالة أمجد. بعد أسبوع على افتتاح المعرض، أوصل ساعي الصليب الأحمر الدولي رسالة إلى الأكاديمية الدولية للفنون موجهة إلى حوراني. تركها مع حارس الأمن. كانت من أمجد، شاب فلسطيني معتقل في سجن جلبوع. قرأ أمجد عن «بيكاسو في فلسطين» ونجاحه المدوي، فأراد تهئنة حوراني، وعبر عن امتنانه عبر تعقب اللوحة بعد رؤية طريقها المصوّر في صحيفة. «خفق قلبي حين فتحت الرسالة، سيطرت عليّ تماماً مجموعة عواطف- اعتزاز وتواضع وفرح ورهبة. كان يمكنني تخيل أمجد في زنتاته، مثلنا كلنا تقريباً حين اعتقلنا وشجنا في وقت ما- مبكر أو متأخر- من بلوغنا. أن يلهم أمجد ليكتب لي كان أحد أئمن جوائز تحقيق هذا المشروع. كان جزء من الرسالة مصغراً من القهوة، حتى أنه حرص على الاعتذار عن وضعها غير الملائم». اتصل حوراني بالصليب الأحمر الدولي لمعرفة أفضل طريقة للرد على أمجد وقد أوصاه أن ينشر رسالة في أي صحيفة. وفعل حوراني ذلك بالفعل في صحيفة الأيام اليومية.

بعد شهر من افتتاح المعرض، وُضعت «تمثال نصفي لامرأة» في صندوق مجدداً وشُحنت إلى ليندهوفن. كانت رحلة عودتها مختلفة، لم تتمكن من عبور قلنديا لأن الجيش الإسرائيلي يجري تفتيشاً دقيقاً لكل عربة أو مسافر أو بضائع تغادر رام الله إلى تل أبيب. علاوة على ذلك، كان يمكن أن تسبب عملية التفتيش والتدقيق تأخيراً مرهقاً وتضايق المسافرين. بدل ذلك، عبرت من خلال عوفر، وهي نقطة تفتيش مخصصة لنقل البضائع. رافق حوراني الباص الذي يقَلّ الصندوق إلى عوفر، وكذلك فعل قنصل هولندا. يبلغ طول الأرض المحظورة هناك ستمئة متر فقط». ضحك حوراني قائلاً: «في اليوم التالي، نشر تقرير على الصفحة الرئيسية لموقع قوة الدفاع الإسرائيلية الإلكتروني (مباشرة قبل خبر تجدد قصف غزة) تباهى بالعمل الممتاز للجيش لتسهيل رحلة الباص». وذكر تقرير الشرطة الفلسطينية باجتهاد كيف لم تسجل أي حوادث من جانبها... باستثناء كمية مثيرة للشبهات من قناني البيرة الفارغة في استوديوهات الفنانين في الأكاديمية الدولية للفنون.

### استنتاجات

إن العلاقة أو التأثيرات النظرية والتحليلية لـ«بيكاسو في فلسطين» غنية ومتعددة الأوجه ومركّبة ومتنوعة وودية. على المستويين الأكثر مباشرة ودينوية، تم تحفيز جمهور جديد في الضفة الغربية للانخراط في الفن. من جهة أخرى، وسّع متحف معروف في أوروبا آفاق ممارسته وجغرافيتها السياسية. على نطاق أكثر تجرداً، دُوّن الآن اسم فلسطين في

نُبذة «تمثال نصفي لامرأة»، وشُجِلَت اللوحة في النص التاريخي الحديث للاحتلال الدائم لفلسطين. طبعاً، ثمة أسئلة عديدة أخرى أكثر عمقاً. سيتم استكشاف اثنين منها على شكل استنتاجين. يدور الأول حول بيكاسو والتعريفات السائدة لأعماله. فمن جهة، إنه ذائع الصيت كفنان معاصر، واسمه تقريباً علامة الحداثة في الفن نظراً إلى ريادته إنجازاته وكذلك تفوّق ثمن معظم لوحاته على سواها. بتعبير آخر، ليس مفاجئاً أن يختار طلاب الأكاديمية الدولية للفنون «تمثال نصفي لامرأة» من ضمن مجموعة متحف Van Abbe . ربما خطرت لهم لوحات أخرى، لكن بيكاسو يتمتع بالريادة. وهو معروف أيضاً كفنان ناشط سياسياً، وتمثل «غريكا» إحدى أكثر الأعمال الملحمية في القرن الماضي التي تنبذ ويلات الحرب وتمثل الضحايا بدل الانتصارات أو دعاة الحرب. حين استمعت إلى كشف حوراني المبكر لمشروع «بيكاسو في فلسطين» عام 2009، عجزت عن وقف التفكير في بيكاسو في إسرائيل. ففي حين دفع «بيكاسو في فلسطين» إلى الواجهة جميع المفارقات المنطقية والقانونية لاحتلال إسرائيل للضفة الغربية والإجماع الدولي عليها، وكشف هشاشة اتفاقات أوسلو، ماذا ستكون تأثيرات «بيكاسو في إسرائيل»؟ كيف سيتم التعريف بشخصه وعمله؟



من هذا المشروع»، قال حوراني. «لم يكن ممكناً ردعنا، وبحثنا عن شركات تأمين قد تكون استثنائية بما فيه الكفاية لتعقد شراكة معنا». وقد وجدوا واحدة في نهاية المطاف: «الشركة، التي يصفها مديرها أنها 'مغامرة'، تؤمّن سمك التونة في مالطا. سافر المدير ونائبه إلى رام الله لدرس الرحلة... ووافقوا»، توقف حوراني عن الكلام وانفجر ضاحكاً.

بعد ذلك، شُكّل فريق قانوني. وبينما لم يعد التشكيك في وجود فلسطين والفلسطينيين مطروحاً وجودياً وشعرياً ومنطقياً، ولم يعد التمثيل الفلسطيني موضع تساؤل، لا تزال فلسطين- حتى الآن- دولة مستقلة غير معترف فيها دولياً. بذلك، هي ليست عضواً في منظمة التجارة العالمية ولم توقع الاتفاقية العامة للتجارة والتعرفات الجمركية (GATT). في ظل الاحتلال الإسرائيلي، يخضع التنقل من وإلى الضفة الغربية وقوانين الجمارك إلى سلطة الدولة المحتلة. علاوة على ذلك، فلسطين ليست رسمياً مكاناً أو وجهة. بعد اجتماعات طويلة عدة في إيندهوفن ورام الله وحيفا، تم التوافق على أنه بغض النظر عن حقيقة عدم وجود دولة فلسطين المستقلة في القانون الدولي، إلا أن الأكاديمية الدولية للفنون- فلسطين بلا شك مؤسسة معترف فيها دولياً ولها موقع مادي موجود. والمهم أنها كانت أبعد وجهة للوحة «تمثال نصفي لامرأة»، وكان ثمة عنوان لدى شركة الشحن.

شرح حوراني: «خلصت النقاشات حول تذكرة نقل اللوحة إلى مجموعة سيناريوهات، اقترح أحدها أن نُجلب إلى حيفا ومن هناك إلى رام الله، لكنني لم أرغب في تجنب اللوحة رحلة يضطر المسافرون إلى رام الله أن يقوموا بها». لذلك، حطت بالطائرة في مطار تل أبيب، وانتقلت في باص إلى نقطة تفتيش عتاروت ومن هناك إلى معبر قلنديا قبل الدخول إلى رام الله. «من تل أبيب إلى عتاروت، رافقت الباص شركة أمن إسرائيلية خاصة، ثم الشرطة الفلسطينية من قلنديا إلى رام الله. كان هناك جزء محظور طوله 3 كيلومترات، حيث يسمح فقط بعبور المدنيين ولا يمكن للأمن الإسرائيلي الخاص أن يتقدم خطوة، وكذلك الأمر بالنسبة للأمن الوطني الفلسطيني المسلح. لم يكن الباص محروساً من قبل أمن مسلح، بل عر نحو 20 كاميرا تابعة لوسائل إعلام دولية رافقته وبثت عبوره تلك الطريق على الهواء مباشرة». تتهدّد حوراني. كانت تحصل حوادث سعيدة عدة غير متوقعة لحل عقبات بدت غير قابلة للتذليل. «غالباً، كانت تتييس الأمور بسحر كلما اعتقدنا أننا وصلنا إلى حائط مسدود وقد نضطر إلى الاستسلام. قبل أسبوع من موعد نقل اللوحة، ظننت أننا قد نضطر إلى إلغاء المشروع بأسره... وبعدها ظهر حل بطريقة ما».

كانت كمية الأوراق التي كدّسها حوراني (وثائق، أذون، رسائل دعم، دليل على هذا وذاك) وعملية الترجمة والختم والتصديق بمثابة الدراما على طريقة كافكا، إضافة إلى هشاشة الوضع على الأرض- أكان اندلاع أعمال عنف في غزة أو حملة إسرائيلية في أي مكان في الضفة الغربية. «لا داعي للقول إن الربيع العربي، الذي جعل كل من في فلسطين يحلم بأفق سياسي جديد كلياً، كان له تأثيره أيضاً»، تهدد حوراني مجدداً. هذه المرة، خانت نبرة صوته الأثقال التي حملها والمفارقات المكثفة التي ناضل من أجلها: النشوة لاحتمال نهاية الطغيان في العالم العربي وتقرير مصير «بيكاسو في فلسطين»، كيف يمكن لأي شخص التكهن بأي من نتائج الثورات في تونس ومصر واليمن وسورية؟ وكيف ستترجم في فلسطين؟ «أخذنا في الاعتبار احتمال تأجيل الافتتاح مرات عدة خلال العامين اللذين عملنا فيهما على المشروع. كان التوقيت مهماً بقدر ما كان حساساً. وفي نقاشات مع أقرقاء مختلفين، أدركت أن 'بيكاسو في فلسطين' جر أيضاً الأنظمة- واقتصاداتها السياسية- إلى مواجهة غير سهلة: زمن أوروبا المعولم ما بعد الرأسمالية، وزمن الاحتلال العسكري الإسرائيلي، وزمن فلسطين المستعمرة عن سابق تصميم».

بعد عامين من التحضير، كان على «بيكاسو في فلسطين» أن يحصل. وكان تحديد الزمان والتوقيت الأنسب بمثابة تنبؤ. أخيراً، تم تحديد موعد.

### بيكاسو في فلسطين

عبر عقود من تطبيق قروض مجموعة المتحف، بات نظام الظروف البيئية لنقل القطع الفنية صارماً. لا يتعلق الأمر بوضع اللوحات في صناديق وفق تعليمات مفصلة ومحددة فقط، بل يجب أن تبقى الحرارة والرطوبة ضمن معدلات مضبوطة بعناية. شرح حوراني أنه «عندما وصلت اللوحة موضوعة في صندوق، تم نقلها في باص، وكان من الضروري عدم



# المخاطر المهنية للفن المعاصر والمتاحف

## بيكاسو في فلسطين: نص محادثة مع الفنان خالد حوراني

## رشا سلطي و خالد حوراني

### أصل القصة

كان الدليل يرشد الزوار بحماسة في جولة شاملة داخل متحف Van Abbe، تضمنت محترفات الترميم والمخزن وورشة تصنيع الصناديق. وكانت الجولة مضية للفنان والمدير الفني للأكاديمية الدولية للفنون- فلسطين في رام الله خالد حوراني، الذي تُمثل المتاحف بالنسبة إليه في نهاية المطاف سيادة الدولة وتقرير المصير، وهو طموح مؤجل بلا كلال ووعد من السلطة الوطنية الفلسطينية- لكن تلك قصة أخرى. لم يكن حوراني غير مبال، بل على العكس تماماً، لكنه يسمح لعقله أن يسرح بعيداً ولديه ميل قوي للإستلهام مما يبدو لياقي العالم تقليداً دنيوياً أو مبدأ أساسياً لتنظيم الحياة المدنية. في حين عدّد دليل الجولة بلداناً حول العالم ووجهات سافرت إليها أعمال فنية من مجموعة متحف Van Abbe، تساءل حوراني ما إذا سيأتي يوم توضع فيه فلسطين على لائحة تلك الأمكنة البعيدة عن هولندا. أمتع الدليل الزوار بحكايات متنافرة، بينها أن لوحة من المجموعة نُقلت يوماً إلى متحف في اليونان على متن طائرة عسكرية. على الفور ذُهِش حوراني وارْتَبَكَ محاولاً تصوّر المشهد: اللوحة المحفوظة داخل صندوقها ببراعة داخل طائرة مخصصة للدفاع عن الأمن القومي لديموقراطية أوروبية.

لازمته الصورة- الحكاية طيلة الأيام المتبقية من زيارته، حتى خطر على باله ما لا يمكن تصوّره: هل يمكن السماح لتحفة فنية مشهورة بعبور نقاط التفتيش التي تتحكم بحركة العبور إلى الأراضي المحتلة ؟ إلى رام الله ؟ فكرة سرّالية هزلية غير معقولة. أفكار كهذه غالباً ما تشكل بذور النشاط الفني لحوراني.

عام 2009، رسم خالد حوراني لقطات قريبة لحمار وحشي عنونها Zebra. في ذلك العام، كُشف أن غزواً رسم حميراً بخطوط سوداء وبيضاء، كان هزّتها عبر الأنفاق بين مصر وغزة لعرضها في حديقة الحيوانات التي يملكها. وأُقر في مقابلة معه أن الحمير الوحشية الحقيقية لم تكن باهظة الثمن فقط، إنما لم تسعها الأنفاق أيضاً. كانت حديقة الحيوانات في حاجة إلى «إحساس» جديد لجذب الزوار. وبما أن غزة محاصرة، كان عليه أن يخرج بفكرة جديدة. شكلت لوحة حوراني تحية إلى عبقرية الرجل الخلاق، واستنطقت بطريقة فكاهية الحس الفني. عام 2007، شُكل في إسرائيل حزب «كاديما» (كلمة عبرية تعني «التقدم»)، وهو ائتلاف «براغماتي» للسياسيين من وسط اليسار ووسط اليمين بقيادة وزيرة الشؤون الخارجية السابقة تسيبي ليفني. قدم الحزب السياسي نفسه على أنه الحصن الأكثر كفاءة أمام صعود الجناح اليميني المتشدد، ونشر وثيقته التأسيسية في الصحف الإسرائيلية. ترجم حوراني النص إلى العربية ونشره في إحدى أكثر الصحف الفلسطينية قراءة... مستبدلاً فقط كل ورود لاسم فلسطين والفلسطينيين بإسرائيل والإسرائيليين والعكس صحيح... كان مشروعا فنيا. تلَقّت الصحيفة اتصالات عديدة يومها من قراء متحمسين يستفسرون عن كيفية الاتصال بحزب «التقدم» الفلسطيني... وفق الروايات المتداولة، هكذا يمارس حوراني فنه.

كل ما في القصة أنه لدى عودته إلى فلسطين، طلب من طلاب للأكاديمية الدولية للفنون اختيار لوحة من مجموعة متحف Van Abbe الدائمة. فاختاروا لوحة بيكاسو «تمثال نصفي لامرأة» (1943). عاد حوراني إلى مدراء المتحف واقترح عرض اللوحة في الأكاديمية في رام الله. يستذكر حوراني جيداً كيف تخلل النقاشات الأولى للاقتراح قهقهات وضحك خافت: بيكاسو في رام الله! لم يتمكن من معرفة ما إذا كان محاوروه من المتحف المرموق يأخذونه على محمل الجد. ورغم ذلك، كانت القوة المميزة لفكرة عرض لوحة بيكاسو في فلسطين أسرة وجلية للغاية، حتى أن جميع المستدعين للمشاركة في تحقيق المشروع تطوعوا بإخلاص فوراً تقريباً.

### تحضير المشروع

في تحضير مشروع «بيكاسو في فلسطين»، كانت الوسائل مثيرة للاهتمام بقدر الهدف. في الحقيقة، الوسائل في حد ذاتها هي الهدف. فالنظام الذي يحكم عالم عمل المتاحف وإدارة المجموعات الفنية والقروض يوضع في ارتباط لا يمكن تخيله مع النظام الذي يحكم عالم الاحتلال العسكري. التأمين هو في طلب قروض المجموعات الفنية. «درست أول شركة تأمين اتصلنا بها اتفاقات أوسلو للسلام ومفاصل السيادة الفلسطينية واستنتجت أنه لا يمكنها أن تكون جزءاً

### بيكاسو في فلسطين

بعد ثلاثة أشهر من إعلان دولة إسرائيل عام 1948، حضر بابلو بيكاسو المؤتمر الثقافي في روكولو، بولندا. نُظم المؤتمر عقب الحرب العالمية الثانية، بينما كانت روكلو ما زالت تتعافى من ألمانيتها. وقد أصبحت بولندية بعد ذلك كألما لأول مرة، ونظم الحزب الشيوعي المؤتمر احتفالاً بالانتصار على النازية وتأسيس نوع جديد من البولندية. رسم بيكاسو حمامة السلام خلال هذا المؤتمر، الذي كان الأول في سلسلة مؤتمرات. وفي كل مؤتمر بعده، كانوا يتغنون برسمه الحمامة هناك، لكن بيكاسو في الحقيقة استعملها لبعض الوقت كرمز زوج له داخل الحزب الشيوعي وأعاد تفسيره من الفهم المسيحي الإلهي بخلاص الروح الفردية إلى خلاص المجتمع بأفضل التقاليد الشيوعية. اليوم نعرّف حمامة السلام، تحديداً التي روج لها بيكاسو، على أنها رمز عالمي للسلام.

لكن الرمز الفني لا يصبح رمزاً، أو حتى أيقونة، بين ليلة وضحاها. ولا تضمن النجاح الموهبة وحدها، أو اختيار التوقيت «الصحيح» في السوق. يجب أن يحصل شيء آخر شيء يمكن ترجمته على أنه أصالة الروح أو رغبة حقيقية في التغيير. يملك مشروع «بيكاسو في فلسطين» هذه الرغبة في التغيير، لكنه أيضاً يثير تساؤلات: هل نحتفي فقط بـ «الفردة» هنا بطريقة تحاول نوعاً ما تطبيع وضع استثنائي؟ هل نناقش مشروعاً مهووساً بإثبات نجاحه الخاص، أو هل يمكن أن تكون محاولة حقيقية للقيام بشيء إيجابي، شيء قد يفشل في أي وقت؟

تحدث سلافوي زيزيك الذي زار «بيكاسو في فلسطين» في رام الله عن خطر التركيز على الأحداث الكبيرة والتفجيرات والإرهاب والتوغلات العسكرية، لأنه قد يحرفنا عما هو فعلاً على المحك. وفقاً له، يجب ألا نحوز على اهتمامنا الأحداث الكبيرة، تحديداً تلك التي تصدم الإعلام. بل يجب أن ننظر إلى الإجراءات والبيروقراطية اللتين تملآن الحياة اليومية للناس في المنطقة. كيف تؤثر وتتحكم بما يجري هنا، «ماذا يحدث في فلسطين عندما لا يحدث شيء؟».

ربما الأمر ذاته ينطبق على مجموعة متحف Van Abbe، التي تشكل لوحة بيكاسو «تمثال نصفي لامرأة» جزءاً منها. ماذا يحصل لمجموعة فنية حين لا يحصل شيء؟ هل هي ببساطة لحظة ملل أو هل يمكنها أن تُرثنا شيئاً أكثر أصالة؟ يبدو أنه في لحظات الملل هذه، ثمة إمكانية مذهلة فعلاً لكشف سبب وجود منظمة ما وغايتها، وإظهار الشبكات التي تشكل قوام الحياة. تنطبق هذه الإمكانية على حديثنا عن الضفة الغربية ككل، أو «بيكاسو في فلسطين» كمشروع، أو المتحف والأكاديمية كمؤسسات، أو حوافز كل المشاركين.

استغرق الأمر عامين من التحضير والمناقشات للوصول من فكرة خالد حوراني الرائعة بجلب لوحة بيكاسو إلى رام الله، إلى عملية النقل النهائية التي أنجزت في أقل من بضعة أيام. مضى كثير من الوقت في الانتظار. يمكننا الانتظار أكثر قليلاً حتى تصبح الدولة أو الدولتين واقعاً، من دون التكهن إذا ما كان هذا الحل أو ذاك جيداً طبعاً. يمكننا الانتظار حتى يصبح الربيع العربي صيفاً وخريفاً وشتاءً ويهب على الغرب، الذي هو في أمس الحاجة إلى بعض الفصول أيضاً. بعد هذا المشروع لسنا قلقين جداً حيال الوقت، فالغبار يحتاج الاستقرار ليعرف ما حقق أو أهمل.

خلال جمع النصوص والمواضيع لهذا العدد، كان من المهم لمجلة A Prior أن تتعاون بشكل وثيق مع فريق في رام الله. سويّةً فقط يمكننا محاولة فهم جميع الحساسيات والمعاني الكاملة وتأثيرات المشروع والنقاش المحيط به. يركز الجزء الأول من العدد على كيفية ترك الاحتلال بصمة على لوحة بيكاسو «تمثال نصفي لامرأة» وتطعيمها بتاريخ جديد من خلال الرحلة: يثير «بيكاسو في فلسطين» تساؤلات جديدة حول تاريخ القطع الفنية، ويعيد التفكير في دور المتاحف والنظر إلى أجزاء من تاريخ الفن الأوروبي بطريقة تقدمية وغير منتظمة (أندرو كونيو).

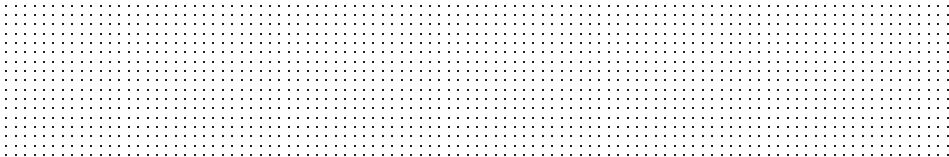
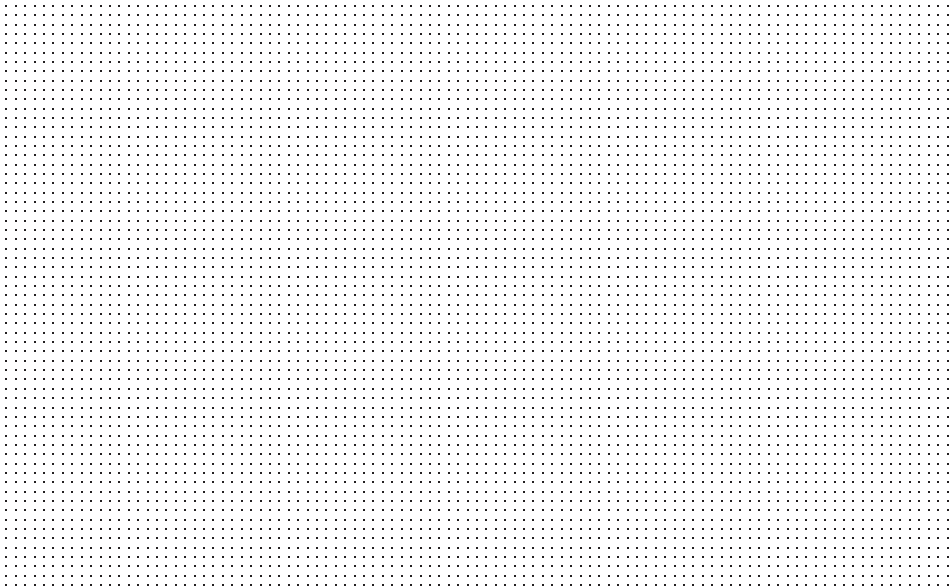
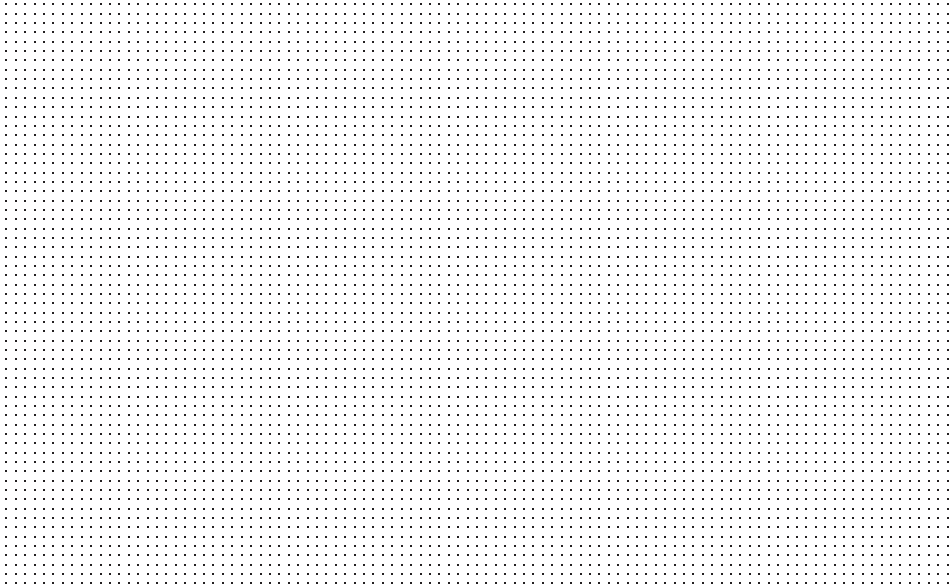
في محادثة بين الفنان خالد حوراني والناقدة الفنية رشا سلطي، يوصف المشروع بشكل مفصل ويحلل مختلف معانيه. وتناقش ليندا موريس كيفية ارتباط لوحات بيكاسو التعبيرية بالحرب الأهلية الإسبانية لتكون بذلك قناة هامة للتشكيك في حالة رام الله.

لكن هناك أيضاً انزلاقات لمشاريع كهذه. ففي محادثة مع رينز مارتينز، يوضح إيال وايزمان هوامش الرحلة واحتمالاتها، مشككاً في إمكانات النشاط الفني ومسؤولية الجمهور. ويشرح لنا المهندس يزيد عناني كيف تلقى سكان رام الله مشروع بيكاسو. وفي محادثة مع الفنان ومسؤول بيئالي برلين السابع آرثور زميجيفسكي، بغوص مسؤول المتحف

### ريمكو دو بلايج وإيلس رولاندت

غاليت إيلات في المناخ الاجتماعي- السياسي والثقافي في إسرائيل وفلسطين وأوروبا، موفراً لنا نظرة معمقة على هوامش النشاط المحتمل بناء على الوضع السياسي الراهن. في الجزء الثاني من المجلة، يوضع مشروع خالد حوراني في سياق فني أوسع. وترافق كاميرا ساندر بايك رحلة بيكاسو. ويشكل المنبر الإلكتروني ArtTerritories (أورسولا بينمان وشروق حرب)، بالتعاون مع ناهد عواد وروان أبو رحمة وباسل عباس وباسين إيناس وإلهام من طاقة الأمل والتكهن في العالم العربي، مشروعاً يعكس مراحل في الستينات والثمانينات خبر فيها الفلسطينيون إحساس المغادرة والتقل والترابط. ويكتب كل من تولين طوق وإريك غوتيسمان عن رحلتهما من جنوب الأردن إلى اسطنبول، على طول سكة حديد الحجاز التاريخية وسكك حديد أخرى تعود إلى الامبراطورية العثمانية السابقة. وقد جمعا في طريقهما قصصاً شخصية وبحثاً تاريخياً عن سكك الحديد، وبالأهمية ذاتها، تابعا الأخبار. حيث بدأت رحلتهما يوم غادر زين العابدين تونس إلى المملكة العربية السعودية، وانتهت قبل يوم من فرار حسني مبارك من القاهرة. ويبحث الكاتب ستيفن رايت في أصول الفن المفاهيمي في المتوسط، وتخبئنا الفنانة أونوي جيرتسين في مذكرة شخصية جداً عن تجربة زيارتها الأولى إلى القدس. أخيراً، تتضمن المجلة مشروعاً فنياً آخر: مهر الفنان الفلسطيني خالد جرار جميع نسخ هذا العدد بطابع «دولة فلسطين» الأصلي. ولا يجعل ذلك كل عدد من A Prior عملاً فنياً فريداً من نوعه فقط، بل يعطي القراء طريقة ليتحملوا تبعات مشاركتهم بشكل كامل من خلال إعطائهم فرصة ختم جوازات سفرهم أيضاً.





ترجمة

