

FUSE

Palestine – Palestine

SHORT FUSE

- 5 alQAWS FOR
SEXUAL & GENDER
DIVERSITY IN
PALESTINIAN
SOCIETY
- 7 INDIGENOUS
YOUTH DELEGATION
TO PALESTINE
- 9 BOYCOTT, DIVEST-
MENT, SANCTIONS
- 15 ZAINAB AMADAHY
- 17 LADY GAZA

COLUMNS

- 44 CLOSE READINGS
- 47 MAKING IT WORK

FEATURES

- 10 ACTUAL SIZE
- 18 BASIL ALZERI
- 26 SHATER HASSAN
- 28 KAMAL ALJAFARI
- 36 INSIDE
DECOLONIZING
ARCHITECTURE

REVIEWS

- 50 SECTOR ZERO
- 51 VICKY
MOUFAWAD-PAUL
- 53 EYAL WEIZMAN
- 54 FÉMINISMES
ÉLECTRIQUES



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EDITORIAL

Palestine – Palestine

The struggle for the liberation of Palestine is rooted in the struggle against its settler colonial context [1], and is part of a wider network of anti-colonial resistance. [2] In this issue of *FUSE*, guest-edited by Nasrin Himada and Reena Katz, we highlight the shared structures and contemporary effects of settler colonialism brought to bear on communities in Palestine and on Turtle Island. As the Idle No More movement continues to thrive, it is clear that its goals are to undermine the numerous colonial policies and procedures that are crucial to the current operation of the Canadian state. [3] Similarly, Palestinians, in their struggle against the Israeli state since its inception in 1948, take aim at a colonial history that is not past but perniciously in the present. The Nakba persists in every second that passes. [4]

Palestine – Palestine is the fourth in the *FUSE* series States of Postcoloniality. Launched in the fall of 2011, the series has taken a distinctly artlike approach to cataloguing present symptoms of colonialism and the challenges mounted against them. The regionally themed issues (Egypt, Inuit Nunangat and Lithuania thus far) have mainly featured knowledge produced in and around the industry of contemporary art. But the thing that most squarely places the series within the universe of an artist's magazine is the editorial insistence on telling the truth but telling it slant. [5] Designed as a critical intervention into the contemporary art discourse in southern Canada, where most of our readers are located, the series has not addressed colonial realities in our immediate communities but looked elsewhere, hoping to be a part of collectively breaking the public fiction that Canada is not a settler state. In the process, we have also had the opportunity to articulate solidarity across disparate geographies and histories. With *Palestine – Palestine*, we affirm the necessity of understanding the commonalities and differences between the settler colonialism of Israel and Canada. As we worked on this issue, we began toying with the series name; post become post while coloniality stayed put. We are not in a post-colonial world, and we are not complicit with a history that forgets the ways in which colonial violence has shaped and formed our present. As Patrick Wolfe puts it, settler colonialism is a structure not an event. [6]

[1] Colonialism and settler colonialism operate under different structures, processes and procedures but are driven by two principles—increased labour production and to eliminate the native. However, settler colonialism is marked by its permanence, in the sense that it seeks its own future demise—to be permanently settled. See Lorenzo Veracini, "Introducing Settler Colonial Studies," in *Settler Colonial Studies* 1.1 (2011), 1-12.

[2] Omar Jabary Salamanca, Mezna Qato, Kareem Rabie and Sobhi Samour write in "Past is Present: Settler Colonialism in Palestine: "As for other settler colonial movements, for Zionism, the control of land is a zero-sum contest fought against the indigenous population. The drive to control the maximum amount of land is at its centre." in *Settler Colonial Studies* 2.1 (2012), 1-8.

[3] Idle No More is a grassroots movement that began with four women, Nina Wilson, Sheelah Mclean, Sylvia McAdam and Jessica Gordon in December 2012. The movement asserts Indigenous sovereignty and aims to protect the lands and waters that are under threat with the passing of eight federal bills such as omnibus C-45. A bill proposed by the Canadian conservative government led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper. C-45 aims to dissolve the

sovereign powers First Nations have over their reserve land. This paves the way for the Canadian government to gain control over territory for resource extraction and exploitation.

[4] 15 May 1948 marks the Nakba for Palestinians, the Arabic term for catastrophe, the day the Israeli state was established. During the production of this issue Gaza was brutally attacked and bombed by what Israel termed, Operation

Pillar of Defense in November 2012. See Eyal Weizman, "Short Cuts," *London Review of Books* (6 December 2012; online).

[5] Emily Dickinson, "Tell All the Truth," *Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1955).

[6] See Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Studies*, 8,4 (2006): 387-409.

This issue of *FUSE* takes a precise position: that decolonization and autonomy are at the heart of the struggle for Palestine. We have avoided rehearsing redundant polemics, or outlining ready-made histories. With this collection of work, we offer up fresh forms of expression in the face of what's already been said about Palestine, its position in multiple imaginaries, its history/ies, its current state of affairs and the infinite possibilities for standing in solidarity with global uprisings. We do not propose "solutions to the conflict" but present projects that challenge the insidious structure of colonization from within cultural forms such as film, architecture, food and art.

Our title, *Palestine – Palestine* refuses the liberal discourse of equating Palestine and Israel as two equally functioning entities. It also refuses to frame Palestine as the counter to Israel, as its eternal Other. *Palestine – Palestine* liberates فلسطين from its colonial perpetrator, releasing it from the false dichotomy that masks the violence of settler colonialism with the language of "conflict" or "war." In thinking through *Palestine – Palestine* in conversation with anti-colonial movements across the world, we position it as an homage to the revolutionary struggles that began in the 1960s, in the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon. Palestinian revolutionaries, the Fidae'en, called for anti-imperial forms of struggle alongside the Third World International movements across continents in Africa, Asia and Latin America. There is no room within *Palestine – Palestine* for state-sanctioned forms of "peace-making" that are encapsulated by neoliberal ethics of position placing. There is no room for the referent war. This is occupation. And the struggle continues.

In this issue, we showcase the physical and literal formations of occupation that are compounded by material forces. Kamal AlJafari, Nishat Awan and Cressida Kocienski, and Kandis Friesen illustrate "politics in matter"[7] through the fields of cinema, architecture and visual mapping. Aljafari gives a poignant demonstration of cinema's role in the destruction of Jaffa, referencing the history of what he terms "cinematic occupation." Awan and Kocienski describe their recent experience working with the art and architecture collective and residency program, Decolonizing Architecture, on their *Common Assembly* project in the Abu Dis neighbourhood of Jerusalem. They engage the complicated terrain of art systems and cultural production within the context of occupation. Friesen offers up a precisely-wrought documentation of the many corporations involved in producing and maintaining the apartheid wall, fostering awareness of the global networked capital of the Israeli military industrial complex.

Palestine – Palestine circulates and unpacks perspectives critical of settler colonialism, proposing instead strategies for mobilizing against structures of occupation. Zainab Amadahy discusses her involvement in Palestine solidarity work in Toronto, the limits she faced in terms of Indigenous inclusion, and the

continuity of shared struggle. Jodi Voice, the co-founder of Dallas-based 7th Generation Indigenous Visionaries, reflects on the group's 2009 visit to Palestine as part of the Indigenous Youth Delegation to Palestine. Haneen Maikey examines her work with Jerusalem-based alQaws, a group mobilized around sexual and gender diversity in Palestinian society.

This issue highlights the relationship between modes of cultural production and direct dissent, self-determination, and autonomy. Haitham Ennasr's analog proposal for a participatory video game hails readers as activators in a fractured, half-forgotten Palestinian folk tale. Mike Hoolboom's discussion of Nadim Mishlawi's haunting documentary, *Sector Zero* (2011) highlights how film can activate spectators, producing desire not just to receive, but to dynamically shift oppressive structures. Basil AlZeri discusses his use of food and performance as an investigation of power and resistance associated with gendered labour, cultural preservation and the pleasures of eating.

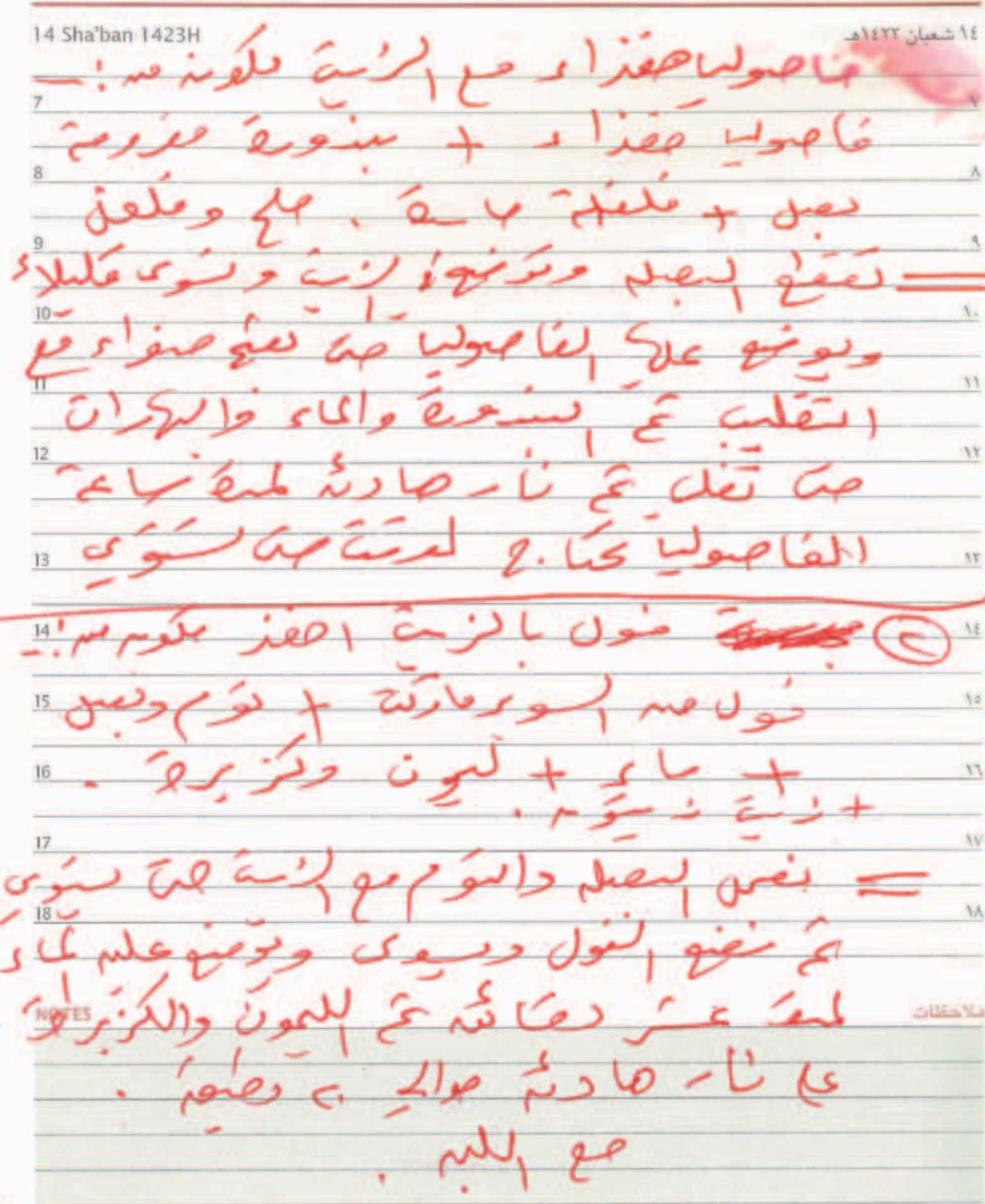
Over the months of production on this issue, we found ourselves putting many of the words and images we were working with in conversation with current events and movements. In November 2012, Palestine was voted in as non-member observer state in the UN and this year's World Social Forum focused on Palestine. We will be launching this issue into the 9th anniversary year of Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW), now in over 215 cities across the world. Rwayda (Rod) Al-Kamisi addresses the impulse behind IAW with an outline of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement and its recent achievements. Etienne Turpin writes a timely review of Israeli architect Eyal Weizman's recent book, *The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza* (2011), which outlines the violence implicit in humanitarian interventions. The review addresses the significance of what Weizman terms, the "humanitarian paradox," "wherein humanitarian relief can simultaneously increase political oppression." [8]

We are pleased to announce a number of exciting events, partnerships and developments alongside the release of *Palestine – Palestine*. *FUSE* staff and board of directors are proud to announce that we have officially endorsed the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign against the Israeli occupation of Palestine. We're launching *Palestine – Palestine* during Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) Toronto, 1–8 March, with a presentation at their opening event on 1 March, and we'll be tabling at each event throughout the week. On 15 March, *FUSE* and IAW Toronto will co-present AlZeri's performance, *The Mobile Kitchen Lab: beit Suad*, as part of FADO's Emerging Artists Series, *.sight.specific.*, curated by Francisco-Fernando Granados. The performance will take place at Xpace Cultural Centre. Finally, with this issue, we're pleased to announce two brand-new columns. From Richard William Hill, you can expect critical close readings of contemporary Indigenous art. Maiko

[7] See Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London; New York: Verso, 2007).

[8] This issue of *FUSE*., 53.

→
Green Fava Beans in
Olive Oil (Foul Bi Zeit).
Courtesy of Basil AlZeri and
Suad ElHaj Hassan.



Tanaka’s column will consist of attentive assessments of the political economies of contemporary art as revealed and reproduced through specific discursive programming and events.

As we go to print, Israeli occupation forces are removing Palestinian and international solidarity protestors at the Canaan village camp, near Yatta in the West Bank. This symbolic village, erected to protest Israel’s plans to expand nearby illegal settlements has now been razed twice in a week. Over 150 activists were attacked with wastewater, stun and tear gas grenades, then arrested. The Canaan village actions are aimed at illustrating local farmers’ direct relationship to the land and its history, and the increasing dispossession they face by expanded settlement construction. Indigenous custodial rights form their demands, and the language with which they describe their struggle: “We declare that it is our natural right to develop, reclaim, improve, use, and live on all our lands free and without threats from occupiers/colonizers.” [9]

Nasrin Himada, Reena Katz and Gina Badger

This issue is dedicated to Mustafa Abu Ali (1940–2009), prolific Palestinian documentary filmmaker, and co-founder of the Palestine Film Unit.

Nasrin Himada is a writer, independent film curator and teacher residing in Montreal. Her writing appears in venues such as *Montreal Serai*, *West Coast Line*, *Inflections*, and *FUSE*. She teaches in Geography, Urban Planning and Environment, and is currently completing a PhD in the Interdisciplinary Program in Society and Culture at Concordia University. Himada’s research focuses on the militarization of urban space through prison infrastructure and police surveillance. She sits on the editorial board of the journal *Scapegoat: Architecture/Landscape/Political Economy*.

Reena Katz uses live and recorded sound to consider bodies as sites of knowledge, and communication as social practice. Her sound work spans the fields of aesthetics, cultural production and movement building. She has won many awards for her audio work, including the 2012 Social Justice Fellowship from Eugene Lang College and the Third Coast Audio Festival’s Emerging Artist award for can you say haa?, a radioplay about the Hebrew re-naming of Arabic Palestine. Katz is co-founder of Just Peace Radio Feminist, Students for Justice in Palestine, and Dykes and Trans People for Palestine.

SIGNPOSTS FROM aIQAWS

A Decade of Building a Queer Palestinian Discourse [1]

Haneen Maikey

The Palestinian organization aIQaws for Sexual & Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society is a group of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and queer (LGBTQ) activists who work collaboratively to break down gendered and hetero-normative barriers. Based in Jerusalem, aIQaws seeks to create an open space for all our members so that they may be engaged and energized in the struggle of transforming Palestinian society in regards to broad sexual and gender justice. This report focuses on key signposts of the changes that aIQaws has experienced over the last decade in developing a large grassroots foundation. aIQaws is connected to our Palestinian reality and context, and it is a group that has played an influential political role in the queer scene on a local and even international level. Recently, unlike in the early years, we have been able to measure and observe this political role through various discernible

changes. But before demonstrating these major signposts, I would like to share with you three criteria that aIQaws has used in the last ten years as a compass for our work, for our success, and most importantly for dealing with the many challenges we face.

The first criterion is that we measure success in our ability, as a LGBTQ movement, to change the political and social discourse around sexuality. The aim is not only to change this discourse, but also continuously develop it in order to ensure that we remain connected to our reality and our general context. This includes challenging both the external discourse (how representations of sexuality and sexual diversity play out in mainstream society) and our own internal discourse (how we as LGBTQ groups discuss our roles, our homophobia and prejudices). The presence of such a gap between discourses points to the need to reconsider our goals and practices.

The second criterion is practice. At aIQaws, we do not believe there is any need or usefulness for a radical discourse if we do not practice what it represents. The values and strategies of aIQaws, whose successes we continue to explore (and change when necessary), are inspired by a continuous self-reflexive analysis of our field of experience. The existence of the gap between discourse and practice has always motivated us to revisit our work. One of the lessons we found useful was the importance of creating a constructive and ongoing debate as a necessary strategy for organizing within the group, which is just as significant as practical strategies.

The third criterion has to do with our position that our capability for social change starts with our capability for internal change. In that sense, being open to inevitable changes that we will be facing, whether we like it or not, is important for us as an LGBTQ movement connected to both members of LGBTQ communities and society in general. The illusion that we can get through a month or a year or a decade of activism without having to take risks and make changes is a dangerous obstacle in our path. Being flexible in this area guarantees that we remain influential and ensures a precise assessment of the opportunities and challenges, and of the strengths and weaknesses, in our group.

The main signposts that I mention below all centre primarily on the journey of change aIQaws experienced on individual, collective, social and political levels. These are usually marginalized at the expense of showcasing more practical achievements, which I will not be going through here. When we think of the progress of aIQaws’ discourse over the last decade, we can see it as a story with two main parts.

The first has to do with how aIQaws is dedicated to ongoing transformation, which is what defines our group. The source of our self-definition is the field of our work; determining our strategies stems from translating and analyzing this experience. In 2001, aIQaws was a group embedded within an apolitical Israeli organization. Splitting off in 2007, we became the first official organization for Palestinian LGBTQs. Two years after becoming a formal NGO, we redefined ourselves as a grassroots activist group, whose main mission is to work on changing lived reality, altering and

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[1]Based on Maikey’s 17 May 2012 presentation at the Active Voices conference, organized by Aswat – Palestinian Gay Women. Translated to English by

Claudine and Deems of Bekhsoos feminist and queer Arab magazine. Read the original online, in English at Bekhsoos and in Arabic at Qadita.

←
Cover image by Reena Katz. Layering of magnified details from multiple drawings and photographs in *Palestine–Palestine*.

breaking the existing gender and sexual hierarchy in society. AIQaws saw the immense importance of defining our role as a group with large ambitions and political goals, but consciously chose that “representing LGBTQs” would not be one of them.

In addition, alQaws saw a need to establish our work as an organization, but we always believed that our main contribution lies in building and contributing to the larger Palestinian movement connected to promoting a new sexual discourse. During this time, alQaws led a big campaign challenging the stereotypical images of the “gay” Palestinian – an image representing decades of sexual taboo, repeatedly exploited for political ends that serve the imperialist interests of the Israeli state. The primary change in the image was from that of a victim – of society, family and institutions – to an individual and activist with agency with respect to themselves, their peers and their society.

This is an important issue for alQaws: we have no demands from society, and we do not place ourselves outside of or opposed to society – we don’t want to reproduce destructive divisions and binaries. Thus, over the years, we have taken many terms out of our discourse, such as “acceptance” (we are not working so “you” can accept us), and “equality” (we don’t want “your” privileges), replacing them with other words that better communicate our vision as people working to create society.

The second part of the story highlights how our discourse and our work has allowed us to see our reality from a new perspective and has given us the opportunity to define our goals and our struggle with new terms. Many LGBTQ groups (Arab ones included) fall in the trap of promoting LGBTQ oppression and struggle as special and unique. However, our struggle lies in opposing patriarchal institutions and systems that regulate our sexuality, as well as challenging gender and sexual standards and norms that have always been depicted as fact (such as heterosexuality). This framework has affected how we view alQaws’ relationship with our own society, and how we determine our strategies for social change and transformation. These strategies can be summarized in three major points.

First, as mentioned above, alQaws rejects the inorganic division between “inside” and “outside.” If we want to strengthen our position and legitimacy in this community, it’s important that we begin to dismantle the polarization between the outside and the inside, and stop thinking of ourselves as separate from the rest of society. We’re not interested in building bridges between the LGBTQ community and society: we want to swim in the same river in order to change its course altogether. If we can’t promote our struggle as an expansive social struggle, we will fail at having a sustainable impact.

Second, we focus on unique experience and the local context in order to understand the structure of sexuality and the attitudes around it in Palestinian society. We are cautious about importing strategies that are irrelevant to our reality. Adopting Western concepts and notions linked to homophobia [2] (such as coming out, visibility and pride) brings up a binary, which reinforces other affects associated with shame, repression and fear. A focus on homophobia limits goals and strategies, which then defines the ultimate purpose (i.e. coming out of the closet) and suggests that

visibility and pride is what is often at stake. AIQaws’ position on this extends to a critique that highlights the perception of these concepts and Western LGBTQ hegemony as a new reflection of cultural colonialism. [3]

Third, alQaws considers that struggle cannot be separated from political action against occupation and colonization. The Palestinian LGBTQ movement is part of the political cause, even if it doesn’t actively participate in the fight against the symbols of colonialism and occupation, which do not distinguish between gay and straight. It’s also important to remember that the LGBTQ Palestinian movements have become hostage to political games. For example, the Israeli government uses its gay rights rhetoric to tarnish Palestinian LGBTQs’ image, [4] and to pinkwash [5] its crimes against the Palestinian people. Indeed, campaigns against pinkwashing have become important elements in our struggle against the occupation.

Thus far, I have outlined some major milestones of alQaws’ journey in the past decade by discussing the importance of transforming LGBTQ discourse, and developing a different strategic framework of struggle. Based on these pivotal aspects of alQaws’ organizing, we are aware of a few significant and urgent challenges we faced. We responded to them with a thorough study of different initiatives in a new strategic plan outlined briefly below.

The first challenge revolves around the individual’s position and role in this journey. After focusing on building a wide leadership, strengthening social and political activism inside alQaws, and committing to social change, we had to take several steps back and wonder how we could link these concepts, and our perception of the struggle, to the individual, psychological and social needs of the LGBTQ community. AIQaws has been making huge efforts in recent months to build new and appropriate frameworks that place the individual at the centre, with the aim of continuing to build a proactive Palestinian LGBTQ community that doesn’t marginalize the personal.

The second challenge we face is in relation to the discourse of those who supposedly accept homosexuality only if it is restricted to the private or social sphere. When our work takes place in public and political spheres (and not behind closed doors), we often encounter certain liberal discourses critical of LGBTQ groups. They consider, with direct or indirect accusation, that our attempt to group ourselves is fragmenting society and disrupting change toward unification and equality. Our struggle reads as incoherent with the liberal mandate that is tolerant of difference (to an extent). Such a sentiment is dangerous because it works to devalue the LGBTQ struggle, both historically and presently, under the pretext of acceptance. In response to this position, alQaws is committed to working directly with politically and socially active youth to co-create a new discourse that does not reduce our challenges to assimilationist strategies that induce fear or shame. [6]

The following questions sum up the third challenge: Do we want to change society, or do we want society to change us? Can we resist the temptation of imitating heteronormativity? Do we really need to confine ourselves to the family establishment and

construct, and adopt sexual norms and patterns so that we are more tolerated and accepted? AIQaws has set itself the goal of destabilizing the foundations of existing powers and breaking society’s moulds. But that won’t be possible unless we can propose a comprehensive discourse that sheds light on how every individual’s sexuality, gender and desires are controlled by patriarchy’s institutions, how heteronormativity limits our choices, and imposes what is acceptable and unacceptable. The struggle for sexual difference must not be reduced to human rights and sexual freedom, but should fundamentally revolve around resisting, dismantling, and continuously criticizing patriarchal and heteronormative institutions, while also working on raising awareness about the images and behaviours through which these constructs are embodied in our daily lives.

AIQaws believes that the Western definition of an “exclusive heterosexuality” – and consequently of an opposing homosexuality as an abnormal reflection of heterosexuality – is a successful bourgeois attempt to impose a structural division between straight and gay. The effect is social control over gays through acceptance, but only under the condition of segregation in the sense that “we are here and you are there.” This is somewhat analogous to the Zionist Left position, which originally established the principle of segregation in Palestine. We at alQaws challenge this discourse and seek to be an organic part of an extensive LGBTQ movement that is against all forms of social and political hegemony. We have adopted discourse that places queers at the centre, not as emotional or proactive cases, but as individuals re-formulating social and political relations from a queer perspective, from the perspective of the “formerly oppressed”

Haneen Maikey is a Palestinian queer community organizer based in Jerusalem, and is the co-founder and director of alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society. In addition, Maikey co-founded the independent activist group Palestinian Queers for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (PQ BDS), which works to promote BDS within queer groups around the world, exposing Israel’s pinkwashing campaign.

FROM TURTLE ISLAND TO PALESTINE

Reflections On the Indigenous Youth Delegation To Palestine

Jodi Voice

“We’re Indian... we’re political by default,” stated Ryan Red Corn at a panel where he and a fellow member of the often “politically driven” comedy group the 1491s were discussing their formation, work and what drives them at a Native American Heritage Month event held at the University of Texas at Arlington this past November. I heard this line, agreed, chuckled a bit, then took a look around me at the capacity-filled room and noticed the excitement on all the listeners’ faces, thinking of all the possibilities. I circled my focus back to the front of the room but could not shake the thought “Political? We’re not political, we just need help surviving this occupation against us.”

Months earlier, while corresponding with my friend Ahmed, whom I’d met in the summer of 2009 during The Indigenous Youth Delegation to Palestine, a similar conviction caught my attention: as Native Americans and as Palestinians, we are not necessarily political, nor all of us activists. We are inheritors of history trying to survive ongoing colonization.

While attending Haskell Indian Nations University in 2008, I met two fellow students, Melissa Franklin and Marei Spaola, who quickly became lifelong friends and fellow founding members of 7th Generation Indigenous Visionaries (7th GIV). The group helps

[2] See Haneen Maikey and Sami Shamali’s article, “International Day Against Homophobia: Between the Western Experience and the Reality of Gay Communities,” *Bekhsoos: A Feminist and Queer Arab Magazine* (23 May 2011; online).

[3] For further reading on this specific topic, see Lynn Darwich and Haneen Maikey’s “From the Belly of Arab Queer Activism: Challenges and Opportunities,” *Bekhsoos: A Feminist and Queer Arab Magazine* (12 October 2011; online).

[4] The image of Israeli society is built on the colonial logic that promotes Israel as progressive and Palestinian society as backwards. Palestinian LGBTQs in Israel are often deemed victims of their own society. This logic ignores Palestinian LGBTQs’ work by enforcing an image of

victimhood that predominates representations of Palestinian LGBTQs, and also ignores, for instance, the radical work of Palestinian queer groups present in Palestinian society.

[5] For further reading on pinkwashing, see Sarah Schulman, “Israel and Pinkwashing,” *New York Times* (22 November 2011; online): “‘pinkwashing’: a deliberate strategy to conceal the continuing violations of Palestinians’ human rights behind an image of modernity signified by Israeli gay life.”

[6] AIQaws’ youth work is based on the understanding that the way of change doesn’t have to pass through mainstream institutions like family, school or NGOs. There are multiple ways to engage with young people through creative and direct means outside institutional environments.

build and strengthen solidarity among Indigenous peoples everywhere, with an emphasis on youth education. In March 2009, we began organizing a one-month delegation to Palestine to take place that summer.

I had never left the US before and had no idea what to expect. Upon arriving at Tel Aviv airport in July 2009, I was detained. “What are you?” I was repeatedly asked, to which I answered “Native American.” “NO, no, no... where did your father immigrate from?” to which I answered “Nowhere!” After being released from the security office, I found my fellow delegates, we gathered our thoughts and made our way to the Dheisheh Refugee Camp in the West Bank, where we would stay at the Ibdaa Cultural Center.

During The Indigenous Youth Delegation, we held many events and workshops. We showed our Palestinian friends what our round dances and two-step dances looked like, and they in turn shared their debkeh dance with us. A beat-making and lyricism workshop resulted in a song being recorded and included in the following issue of *SNAG* (Seventh Native American Generation) magazine. We held silk-screening and mural-making workshops, which allowed us to express ways to combat the issues associated with the Israeli apartheid wall. Both parties taught history lessons on each occupation, and then discussed the eerie similarities between the historical contexts. “Teach the youth media!” was something exclaimed by the delegation constantly, in hope that stories would be shared within, around and outside the camps. The delegation also facilitated workshops on writing, magazine-layout and setting up wordpress blogs.

We spent time in several places inside and outside the West Bank, from Dheisheh to Al Khalil (or Hebron) where Shufat Camp is located, which is entirely surrounded by the apartheid wall. We also spent time in Bethlehem, Ramallah, Balata Camp, Nablus, Beit Ummar, Jenin Camp, Aida Camp, Qalqiliya, Qalandia, Lyd, Akka, and everywhere we could stop in between. At times we strongly felt our own privilege of holding passports when we were allowed to enter places our Palestinian friends could not, traveling through or outside the West Bank.

We had a very memorable and emotionally taxing day when we took a trip to Lifta. Our friend took us to a mosque that Israeli settlers had turned into a trash dump, and which was also vandalized with awful ethnic slurs. Our youngest US delegate was brought to tears as he began to scrape the racist graffiti off as best as he could with a rock, and then a young Palestinian man he befriended on the trip began to help him.

There were times when we were frightened as well. IDF (Israeli Defence Forces) soldiers armed with machine guns would step on our bus to check passports and cameras. One incident that sealed our love and care for one another, and emboldened our strength to combat the occupation, occurred as an Israeli soldier in a watch/sniper tower shot the tire of a bus we were on. We continued our trek to the ominous wall on foot, as we learned about the environmental issues people in that particular camp, Qalqilya, were facing. Apparently, the shot was a result of us being too close to the Wall.

We grew on so many levels through how we related to each other. We shared our many affinities for hip-hop, dance, the necessity of humour, graffiti, and silk screening. But we were also aware of the effects of violence caused by a perpetual military occupation, and learned to share our feelings about it as well. We wrote together, and I still read and share these writings with others. Back home in Dallas, I was asked constantly by my peers, “Why not help your own people?” I always replied with “I do!” and then proceeded to share how it is important to keep connected to other situations affected by settler colonialism. Solidarity across borders will always matter.

Idle No More has taken hold in my particular urban community of Dallas, Texas – a site for the “relocation” of Native Americans by the government in the 1950s – and with the knowledge I gained as a part of the Indigenous Youth Delegation to Palestine I am helping this extremely important movement grow and thrive. Because of the delegation I learned important skills, such as conference calling, keeping note of times and places (not just recording your feelings), planning trips, fundraising, as well as the harder skills of organizing, such as being able to speak about occupation without crying. 7th GIV is not afraid to stand in solidarity with all Indigenous people. That is what being Indigenous is about, that is what our delegation to Palestine was about, and that is what the Idle No More movement is about: protecting each other and standing up for one another.

Jodi Voice, born and raised in Dallas, Texas, is Muscogee Creek, Oglala Lakota, and Cherokee. She is a founding member of 7th GIV (7th Generation Indigenous Visionaries) and met fellow founding members as a student at Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas. Voice currently lives in Dallas, where she organizes educational and cultural events with a local Native American Parent Association. She also plans events to connect her Indigenous community to the Idle No More movement.

BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT AND SANCTIONS

Rwayda (Rod) Al-Kamisi

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) is a global campaign applying moral and economic pressure on Israel to end apartheid and its occupation of Palestine. The call for BDS was first made in 2005 by over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations, unions, movements and political parties representing the West Bank, Gaza, Palestinian citizens of Israel and Palestinians in the diaspora. Inspired by the struggle of South Africans against the racist system of apartheid, they called upon international civil organizations and people of conscience around the globe to impose broad boycott, divestment and sanction initiatives against Israel, similar to those applied to South Africa during the apartheid era.

The BDS campaign demands that Israel recognize the Palestinian people’s inalienable right to self-determination and fully comply with the precepts of international law by:

1. Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands occupied in June 1967 and dismantling the Wall;
2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and
3. Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194. [1]

Forty-six years into Israel’s occupation of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), Gaza and the Syrian Golan Heights, Israel continues to illegally expand its colonies into Palestinian territory. Sixty-five years after the state of Israel was built mainly on land ethnically cleansed of its Indigenous Palestinian population, forcing a majority of Palestinians to become stateless refugees, Israel’s entrenched system of racial discrimination remains intact. The recent Israeli military aggression against Gaza [2] is the latest act in the decades-long oppression of the Palestinian people. Thus, the BDS campaign calls upon global civil society to boycott Israeli and international products and companies profiting from the violation of Palestinian rights, including Israeli sporting, cultural and academic institutions; divest from corporations complicit in the violation of Palestinian rights and ensure that university investment portfolios and pension funds are not used to finance these companies; and impose sanctions to demonstrate disapproval and educate society about violations of international law and to end the complicity of other nations in these violations. [3]

In an effort to educate people and promote BDS, Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) was established in 2005. The first IAW event was organized by the Arab Students’ Collective at the University of Toronto and has since spread all over the world. IAW raises awareness about Israel’s apartheid policies, practices and institutions that affect all Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and the diaspora, as well as Palestinians inside Israel. In 2012, the BDS Global Day of Action took place in 23 countries, and the eighth annual IAW was organized on campuses in over 200 cities around the world.

Israeli Apartheid Week has also become a solidarity network, which links a wide range of groups and issues relating to international justice. IAW uses a variety of formats for popular education, including film screenings, lectures, cultural events and protests. Speakers who have presented at IAW include Tyendignaga Mohawk activist Shawn Brant, philosopher/theorist Judith Butler and author/activist Naomi Klein.

Popular consumer boycotts of Israeli companies complicit with occupation have not only raised awareness across the world, but have had a significant economic impact on specific corporations. For instance, Agrexco, Israel’s former largest exporter of agricultural produce, entered liquidation towards the end of 2011 following a campaign of blockades, demonstrations, popular boycotts and legal action in more than thirteen countries across Europe. Other successful boycott campaigns include the UK-based Co-operative Group (the largest co-op in Europe), which, following a determined campaign by its members, introduced a policy to end trade with companies that source products from Israel’s illegal settlements. [4] Thanks to a sustained campaign against Ahava, an Israeli cosmetics company situated in the illegal West Bank settler colonies of Mitzpe Shalem and Kaliya, the company was forced to close its stores in the UK, Norway, Japan and Canada. [5] As a result of Palestinian civil society’s call for action against G4S (a private security company complicit in the detention of Palestinian political prisoners), the European Parliament elected not to renew their contract with the company. [6] Furthermore, scores of artists, writers, musicians and

Continued on page 15 →

[1] “Introducing the BDS Movement” *BDS Movement* (online).

[2] For background on the eight-day assault that began 10 November 2012, see Sharif Abdel Kouddous, “Gaza’s ‘Severe Damage’

and Why Truce Won’t Stop the Violence of Occupation,” *Democracy Now!* (26 November 2012; online).

[3] Nora Barrows-Friedman, “BDS Roundup: The BDS Movement, Seven Years On, ‘Stronger,

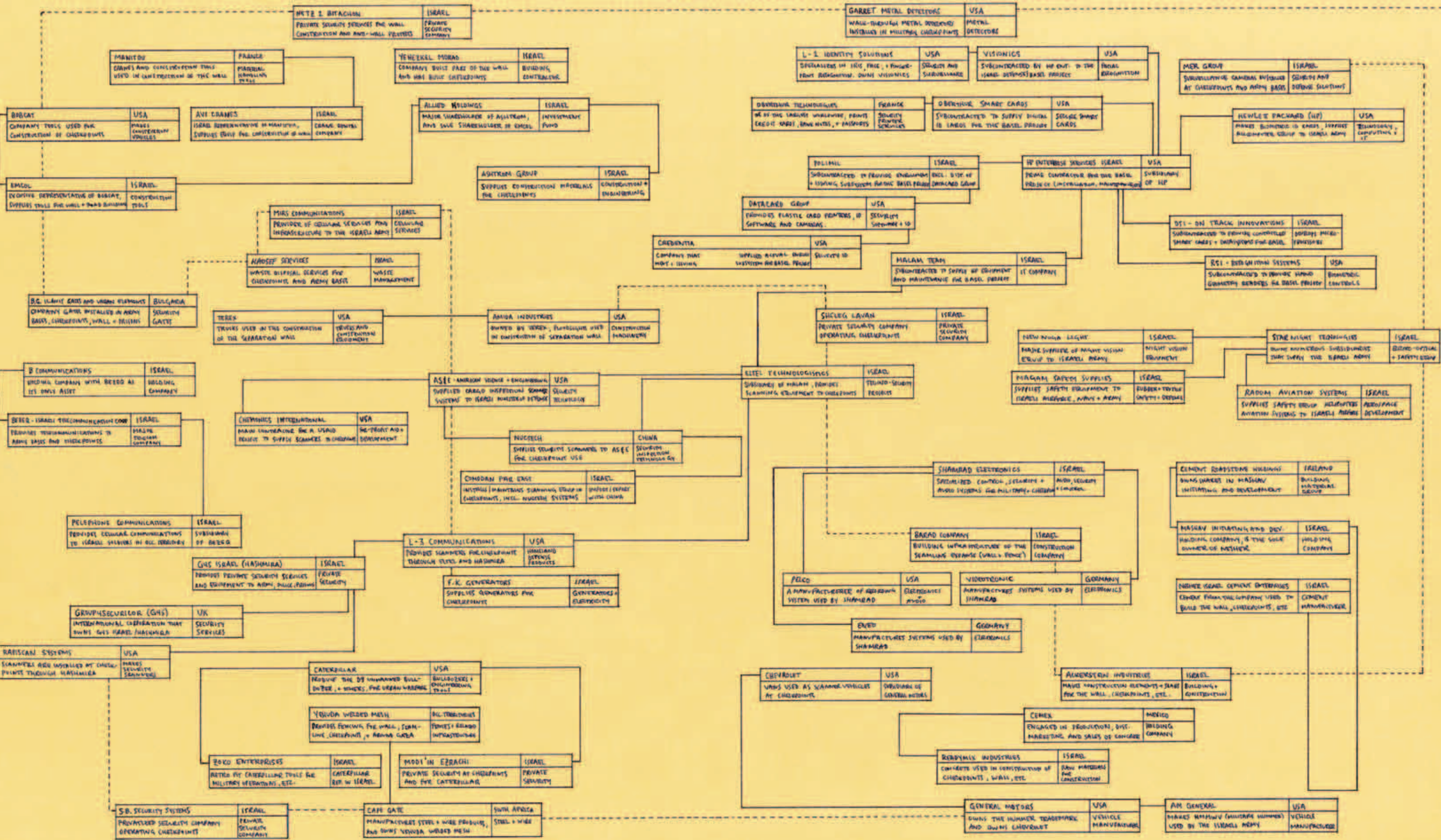
More Effective and More Diverse Than Ever,’” *The Electronic Intifada* (11 July 2012; online).

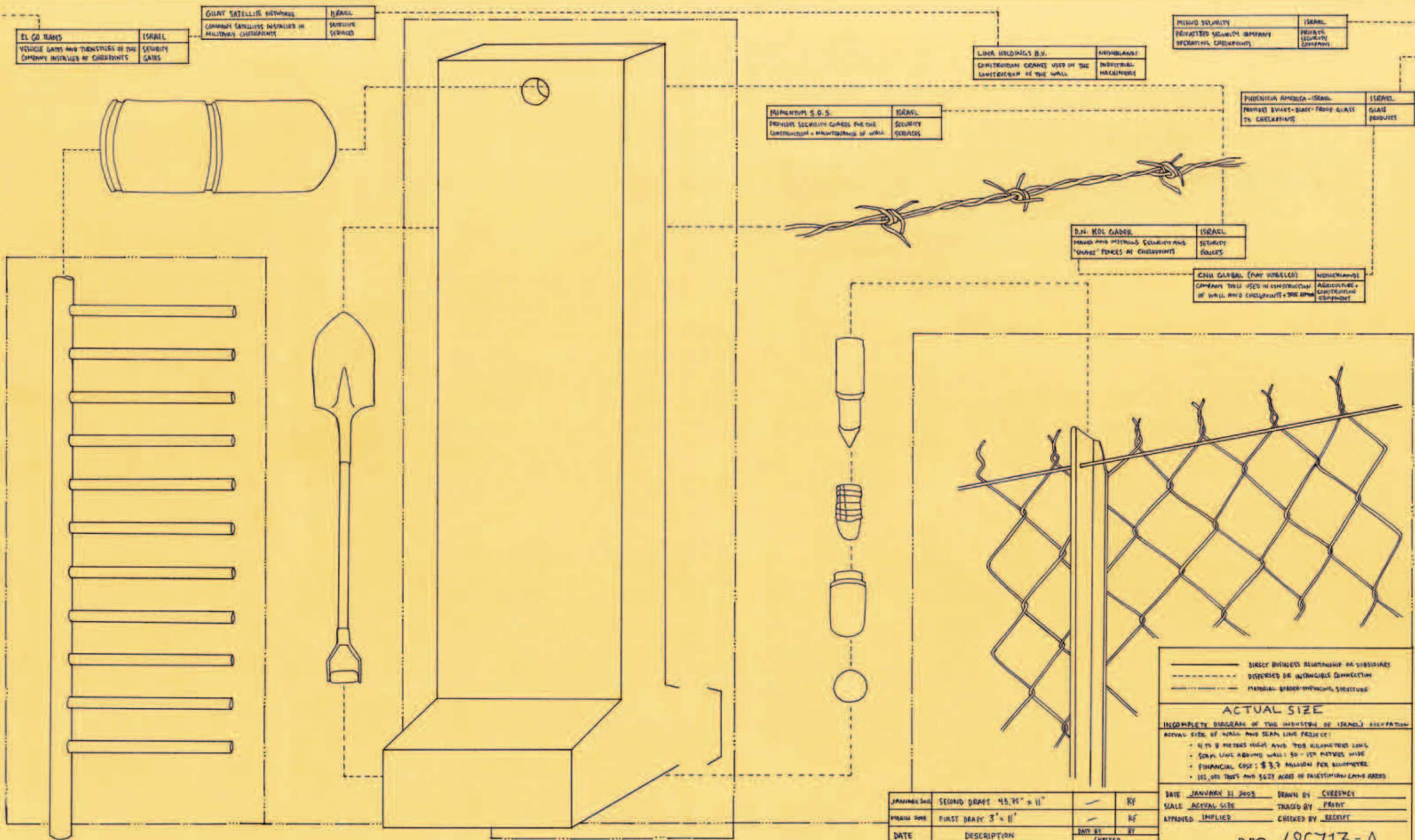
[4] Tracy McVeigh and Harriet Sherwood, “Co-op Boycotts Exports from Israel’s West Bank

Settlements,” *The Guardian* (29 April 2012; online).

[5] Palestinian BDS National Committee, “BDS Campaigners Force London Ahava Shop to Move,” *BDS Movement* (31 March 2011; online).

[6] The European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine, “G4S Loses Its Contract with the European Parliament,” *BDS Movement* (17 April 2012; online).





JANINER 2003	SECOND DRAFT 45.75" x 11"	RF	RF
MARIN 2003	FIRST DRAFT 3" x 11"	RF	RF
DATE	DESCRIPTION	DRAWN BY	CHECKED BY
	REVISIONS		

——— DIRECT BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP OR SUBSIDIARY
 - - - - - DISPERSED OR INTANGIBLE CONNECTION
 MATERIAL SPECIFICATION STRUCTURE

ACTUAL SIZE
 INCOMPLETE DIAGRAM OF THE INDUSTRY OF ISRAEL'S OCCUPATION
 ACTUAL SIZE OF WALL AND SEAM LINE PROJECT:
 • 41 TO 8 METRES HIGH AND 708 KILOMETRES LONG
 • SEAM LINE AROUND WALL: 50 - 150 METRES WIDE
 • FINANCIAL COST: \$ 3.7 MILLION PER KILOMETRE
 • 101,000 TREES AND 3622 ACRES OF PALESTINIAN LANDS ADDED

DATE: JANUARY 21 2003 DRAWN BY: CURENEY
 SCALE: ACTUAL SIZE TRACED BY: PRONT
 APPROVED: IMPLIED CHECKED BY: REESET

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RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS CORNFIELDS AND OLIVE GROVES

filmmakers have refused to perform or publish in Israel following pressure from the BDS movement including, in 2012, musicians Cat Power, Mashrou' Leila and Zakir Hussain, and scholars Jacques Rancière and Katherine Franke. Also in 2012, Egyptian media collective Mosireen, Iraqi-Canadian MC The Narcycyst and American hip hop duo Rebel Diaz refused to participate in Creative Time Summit events, citing the annual New York-based forum's partnership with the state-funded Israeli Center for Digital Art. [7]

Despite the apparent success of BDS actions, critics have asked why Israel is singled out and not other countries that commit human rights violations, arguing that this is because of an inherent anti-Semitism. [8] In 2009, Naomi Klein addressed this question:

The best strategy to end the increasingly bloody occupation is for Israel to become the target of the kind of global movement that put an end to apartheid in South Africa... Economic sanctions are the most effective tools in the nonviolent arsenal. Surrendering them verges on active complicity... Boycott is not a dogma; it is a tactic. The reason the BDS strategy should be tried against Israel is practical: in a country so small and trade-dependent, it could actually work. [9]

Veterans of the South African anti-apartheid campaign who led successful boycotts have also echoed these sentiments. Desmond Tutu, winner of the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize and archbishop-emeritus of Cape Town, South Africa, wrote:

[The] harsh reality endured by millions of Palestinians requires people and organizations of conscience to divest from those companies [profiting] from the occupation and subjugation of Palestinians. Such action made an enormous difference in apartheid South Africa. It can make an enormous difference in creating a future of justice and equality for Palestinians and Jews in the Holy Land. [10]

In December 2012, South Africa's ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), made BDS part of its official policy. The University of Toronto's Graduate Student Union (GSU) also endorsed BDS recently, joining other Canadian universities, including York University, the University of Regina, and Carleton University.

Toronto's ninth annual Israeli Apartheid Week is set to take place from 1 – 10 March 2013. This year's IAW campaigns stand in solidarity with the Idle No More Indigenous movement. Confirmed speakers include Crystal Lameman, Beaver Lake Cree First Nation activist and the Peace River tar sands campaigner for the Indigenous Environmental Network in Alberta, and Razan Ghazzawi, frontline Syrian blogger and activist. There will also be a special screening of *Roadmap to Apartheid* with Cinema Politica at the Bloor Cinema. Cities across Canada and the world are also set to host IAW events.

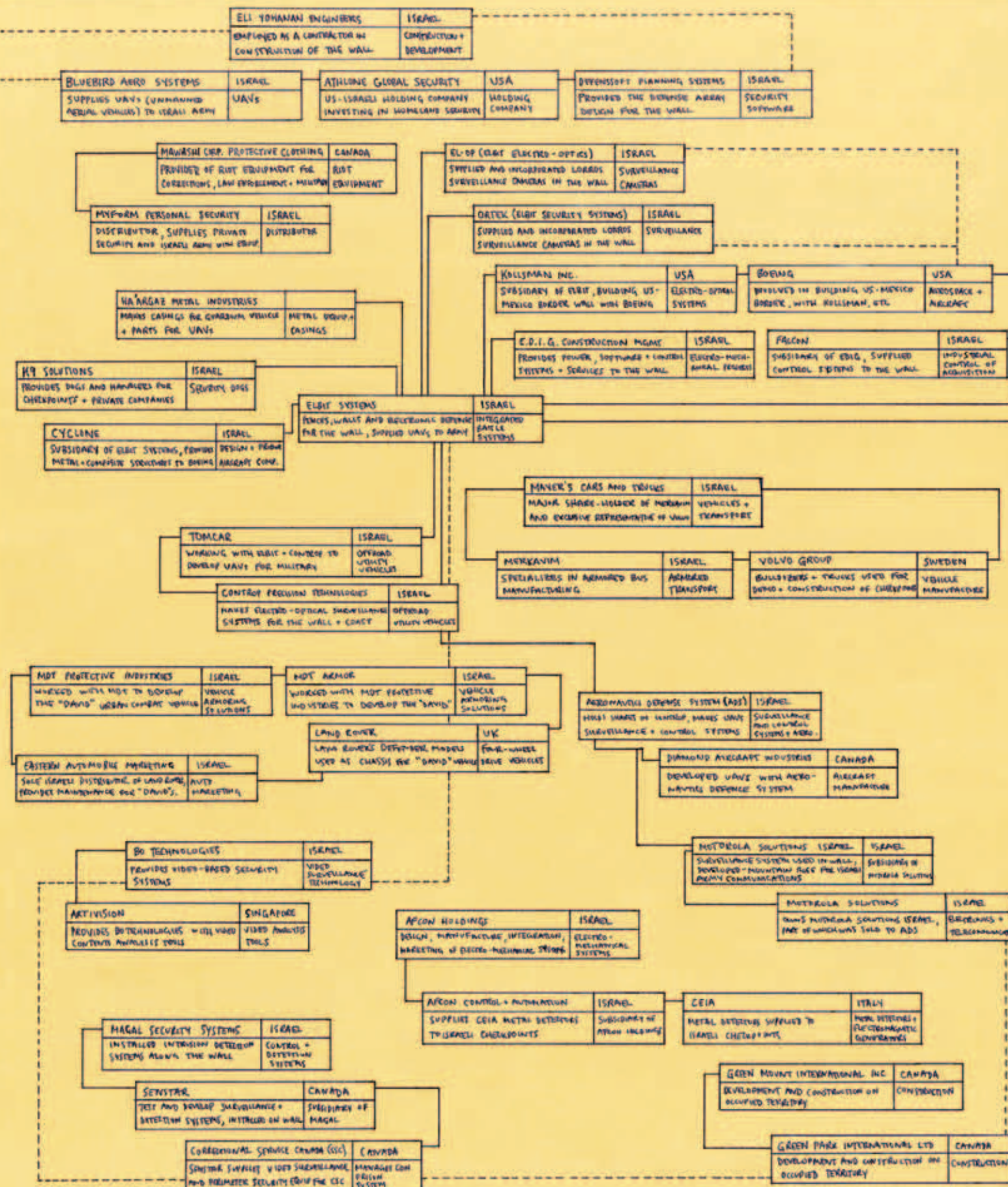
Rwayda (Rod) Al-Kamisi is an undergraduate at the University of Toronto, currently in her last year. Her specialization is women and gender studies, with a minor in history, and she is currently completing her thesis on the Palestine-Israeli conflict. Al-Kamisi is part of Students Against Israeli Apartheid and a writer for the U of T newspaper, *The Varsity*. She also volunteers and writes a blog for the Centre for Women and Trans People at U of T.

[7] Nora Barrows-Friedman, "BDS Roundup: The Victories of 2012," *The Electronic Intifada* (2 January 2013; online).

[8] See Sami Hermez, "Answering Critics of the Boycott Movement," *The Electronic Intifada* (1 October 2009; online).

[9] Naomi Klein, "Israel: Boycott, Divest, Sanction," *The Nation* (8 January 2009; online).

[10] Desmond Tutu, "Justice Requires Action to Stop Subjugation of Palestinians," *Tampa Bay Times* (1 May 2012; online).



Zainab Amadahy

Years ago, on my way to work, I ran into my friend Barb [1] who was trembling with rage. She'd just been told that her cash settlement as a residential school survivor not only made her ineligible for social assistance, but that she'd have to pay back months of benefits she'd already received. Barb successfully fought that decision, even though it shouldn't have been necessary, and in any case, no amount of money could compensate her for past and current traumas. That day, I arrived at work shaking with rage myself.

Then I got a call from my co-worker Tarek, a Lebanese-born Palestinian solidarity activist. During the 2006 Israeli incursion into Lebanon, I'd commiserated with him when he lost touch with family members who were living in areas the Israeli Defense Forces had bombed and invaded. I felt moved by his plight, frustrated in my helplessness, and gratified to eventually learn his family was okay. This experience solidified my resolve as a Palestinian solidarity

activist. Similarly, since the day I'd met him, Tarek expressed and acted on his solidarity with First Nations peoples in a variety of ways. This time, however, he was calling to share some good news: his father had just bought him and his partner a house. I expressed happiness for him, but underneath I was angry at the injustice. Tarek, born in another land, was now a homeowner in mine. Barb, then in her 50s, had lived all her life on Turtle Island, a descendant of its original caretakers, yet she was always falling in and out of crisis, trying to survive. I struggled to articulate the relationship between the very different lives my friends were living.

Seeing Barb after that incident, speaking and singing in solidarity with Palestinians at community events, filled me with respect and admiration for her. Yet, I still grapple with my contradictory feelings. I question how they impact my activism. While I understand the history of settler colonialisms, here and in the Middle East, as well as complex issues of privilege and solidarity, I remain emotionally unsettled by this and many other similar stories.

Some of my Indigenous friends believe the Palestinian solidarity movement seems unwilling or unable to interrogate the complexities of settler colonialism on Turtle Island. There are legitimate concerns. Palestinian solidarity activists fly the Two Row Wampum [2] or Hiawatha [3] flags, even when their meanings aren't clearly understood. Such activities betray a lack of awareness of the specifics of settler colonialism here, as well as other nations' relationships to the land on which Toronto is built, such as the Anishinaabe, Wyandot and many others.

Years ago, some Palestinian solidarity activists I was working with in Toronto approached me about their experiences within the movement. They expressed frustration that their organization was insincere in its support for Indigenous struggles on Turtle Island. They feared my involvement in the movement was being tokenized. They had seen First Nations spirituality being ridiculed and denigrated behind my back, in some cases by central organizers. They were concerned that I was invited to co-organize, speak and sing at events only to lend credibility, to appear as if they were doing something meaningful about settler colonialism in Canada. While I had sometimes felt tokenized, I trusted that the work I was doing would eventually heighten awareness of Indigenous struggles for some, if not all. The awareness of these activists was actually proof of my impact. In fact, their assumption that I was unaware of being tokenized hurt me as much as confirmation of the fact itself. Though I'm not proud to admit it, I enjoyed the celebrity that accompanied my continued activism.

In any case, these young folks insisted that any and every settler activist had a responsibility to centralize and prioritize Indigenous struggles. Furthermore, they themselves felt ostracized by their organizations because they were practicing Muslims. While they continued to engage with their own faith communities in speaking out strongly and publicly against oppressive interpretations of Islam, their activist communities failed to respect their spiritual practice. Consequently, their questions left me wondering if solidarity organizations so grounded in secularism and hostile to spirituality could be genuine and effective allies with First Nations peoples. I still wonder. [4]

[2] The flag is based on a wampum belt that signifies one of the early treaties between the Haundenosaunee and at first Dutch then British settlers, enshrining the principle of noninterference in each other's affairs while sharing the land.

[3] The Hiawatha Flag is also a depiction of a pre-colonial wampum belt that represents the agreement by the original five nations of the Haundenosaunee who agreed to form a confederacy informed by the Great Law of Peace.

[4] For a more thorough discussion of this issue, see my article "Why Indigenous and Racialized Struggles Will Always be Appendixed by the Left," *Rabble* (19 July 2011; online).

[5] Elder, activist and retired Co-Chief of the Ardoch

Indigenous activists, artists and academics like Robert Lovelace [5] (who sailed on the *Tahrir* [6] to Gaza in 2010) continue their activism, not allowing criticisms of the solidarity movement to deter their unflagging support for justice in the Middle East. Likewise, Palestinian solidarity activists have created educational websites around Idle No More and round dance with the rest of us in sub-zero temperatures.

Generally, discussion of relationships across our movements raises issues of integrity, honour and respect in struggle. While I see many activists whose organizing is consistent with the values they espouse, I also see too many who role-model insincerity, tokenism, dishonesty, manipulation, as well as other oppressive and abusive behaviours that are inconsistent with how activists need to conduct themselves in order to be effective. I've had my own issues in this regard and these days hold my activism to a high standard. This includes learning humility and ensuring that it's my love for people and hope for a better world, rather than anger, that drives my activism.

In any case, our movements have evolved. It's possible now to discuss issues that we couldn't ten years ago because we didn't know each other's stories very well – as communities or individuals. Today, I'm optimistic about the potential for closer relationships and more effective mutual solidarity. Toward this end, I pose this question to Palestinian solidarity activists on Turtle Island: "If you were a settler living in Palestine right now, what would you consider to be your responsibilities?" The query hardly begs a one-size-fits-all response.

Were I living in Palestine, I would follow the lead of Palestinian communities and organizations in recovering their lands and sovereignty: to understand the many ways in which I was complicit in genocide there, and to do everything I could to minimize that complicity. That might mean leaving the country, hopefully for a safer place. Even if I were living in Palestine, I would still feel a sense of responsibility to Turtle Island and the communities that sustained my physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development here – particularly when those communities experience crisis.

In this interconnected world, struggling against settler colonialism anywhere is struggling against it everywhere. Any settler living on Turtle Island owes their ability to do so to ongoing genocide and colonialism here. I include myself as a settler. Even if I invoke my Tsalagi ancestry as lending me the right to identify as an Indigenous person, I'm still living on the ancestral lands of others. Furthermore, those of us who have agency in Canada, limited though it may be, cannot escape our complicity in the actions of this nation-state in Palestine, Afghanistan, Haiti and any number of places around the globe.

The answer to my question will shift across individuals and contexts. I trust that an awareness of the contradictions of our social locations, a willingness to dialogue about allyship, as well as efforts to honourably role-model honesty, sincerity and integrity in our relationships, will take us to the compassionate, cooperative and socially just world we all aspire to create.

Algonquin First Nation.

[6] The *Tahrir* was a Canadian-led boat, part of the larger Freedom Flotilla movement, protesting the Israeli blockade and the Canadian government's complicity in military violence against Palestinians.

Of African-American, Cherokee and European descent, **Zainab Amadahy** is a mother, singer/songwriter, activist and author. Her publications include the feminist science fiction novel *Moons of Palmares* (1997) and *Wielding the Force: The Science of Effective Activism* (2012).



LADY GAZA

She may have traded her microphone for a megaphone, but you would be hard-pressed not to recognize that signature hairpiece above the crowd. Lady Gaza has recently emerged as her latest reinvention, this time from international superstar to – if you can believe it – Palestine activist.

"I just really felt that, as an artist, it was my time to give back. Everyone talks about Darfur and the Congo, but what about the West Bank?" she says, pictured at Montreal Pride in a custom Thierry Mugler.

Her latest transition hasn't pleased all the fans however, and despite how nonchalantly she plays it off, the subject can still stir her famously well-documented temper. "I've been blessed with some amazing fans," she tells us from her Ramallah home, "but at the end of the day you have to be true to yourself. These Disneyfied faggots, they love queens as long as you're decorative, don't say anything political, but open your mouth and they cry that you're highjacking their parade, that you're not a 'real gay' concerned with 'real gay' issues. I'm Lady m*****n Gaza! I am realness!"

BASIL ALZERI—

The Archivist in the Kitchen

Cuisine is a vivacious and mutable cultural practice that has history and politics folded right into it. The privileged eaters who make up North American foodie culture may often miss the specific histories of conquest and migration built into their eclectically global palettes, but they are present in each bite. Israeli appropriations of Palestinian ingredients and dishes are illustrative; for instance, the rebranding of tabouleh as “Israeli salad,” and maftoul (a small, round pasta made from wheat and bulgur) as “Israeli couscous.” The complex etymology of the word *sabra*, commonly known as the name of an Israeli-produced hummus, reveals a complex history of linguistic colonialism. In Arabic and in Hebrew, *sabra* is a generic word for cactus, plantings of which were used pre-1948 to delineate borders between Palestinian villages. More recently, in Modern Hebrew *sabra* has become the descriptor for Israeli-born Jews — metaphorically and literally, the beneficiaries of the clearing of the Palestinian cacti. In 1982, residents of the Sabra Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut, Lebanon were massacred by a Lebanese Christian Phalangist militia, in collusion with Israel, one of the most brutal events in the history of the occupation. The name of the hummus, so cunningly appropriated, can't be separated from this settler-colonial history.

Palestinian cuisine — in Gaza and the West Bank, in camps and in cities worldwide — reflects a history of occupation and displacement. But more than that, it reflects the skills, proclivities and ingredients required to survive those conditions. Basil AlZeri has captured hours of Skype video of his mother teaching him how to cook from her impressive oeuvre of Palestinian dishes. This archive of cultural knowledge is the private counterpart to a series of public food-based performances he has presented since 2011. The first performances were mezze-style dinners in which AlZeri presented his guests with an array of Palestinian recipes in tiny dishes resting on his body. Lying face-down on the table, the uncomfortably shifting body of the cook became an antidote against the commodity fetishism of foodie culture. These early performances established the labour politics of AlZeri's work by highlighting two kinds of unrecognized and often unpaid labour: gendered domestic work and artist's labour. Next, AlZeri began cooking live as a performance with his mother, Suad, instructing him from Dubai, over Skype. Most recently, AlZeri has been working on *The Mobile Kitchen Lab*, which he will use as an itinerant stage for future cooking performances. AlZeri performs simple and generous gestures, inviting his guests to identify the Palestinian stories of land, resources and labour that are built into his recipes.



Mezze

I wanted to learn more about Palestinian food so I could share with her.

FUSE – Eventually, you began to incorporate food into your artistic practice. How did you come to that?

BA – Cooking became an entry-point for me to introduce myself, as a human being who is also a Palestinian, to my peers in Canada. Cuisine became a way for me to express myself, my history, my cultural identity, with a lot of specificity but without being over-determined by certain politics.

FUSE – Mezze is a form of cuisine you’ve drawn on in your recent work. In Arab cuisine, is mezze an appetizer course within a larger meal, or more its own style of eating?

BA – People don’t necessarily eat mezze and then a main course and then dessert. Mezze can be the whole meal. The meal is made of many different little dishes, and that’s all you eat. For lighter meals, or lunch, or even a lighter dinner. It’s usually the type of meal for when you have a little time to sit around and talk. It has a social aspect to it. Where people sit around and eat for longer, and the plates keep coming.

FUSE – How many times have you done the mezze-style dinner party performances?

BA – The first time I experimented with that gesture was very informal, in a private space, in 2010. It was Mother’s Day, and I dedicated the first dinner party performance to my mom. I kept working with the idea of the body and cooking and food preparation. I did a short residency at Don Blanche in August 2012, where my role as an artist was as a cook’s assistant. I realized that I’d like to present something there towards the end of my residency, and it seemed like a really great chance to re-enact certain elements of the food gestures, but in a different context.

FUSE – Like the first mezze dinner, for the performance at Don Blanche your body was used as a surface for serving food. While you are serving, do you interact with the eaters at all, or do you just lie there?

BA – No, I don’t interact with the eaters – I like to call them the guests. My gesture is a bit strenuous, but at base it’s a friendly gesture. I don’t try to achieve a complete stillness or anything. I shift or stretch a bit. And if someone insists on

talking to me and I can respond, I will, but because I’m head down, I can’t really talk to them.

I’m interested in the passive presence of the body, barely recognized for its labour. I’ve noticed that once people get involved in eating the food they can actually forget that there’s a body on the table. They start having conversations, they’re laughing, and there are moments where I am pretty sure that they completely forget where the food comes from, who produced it, who prepared it...

FUSE – Is it important that the body on the table is also the body of the cook?

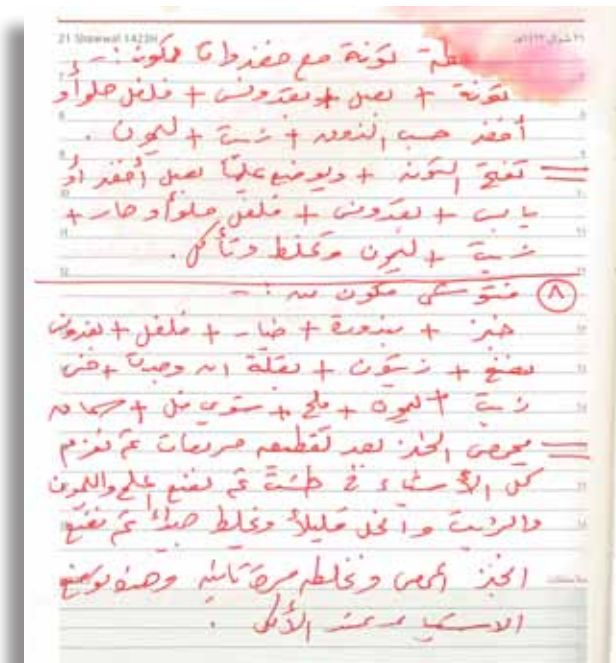
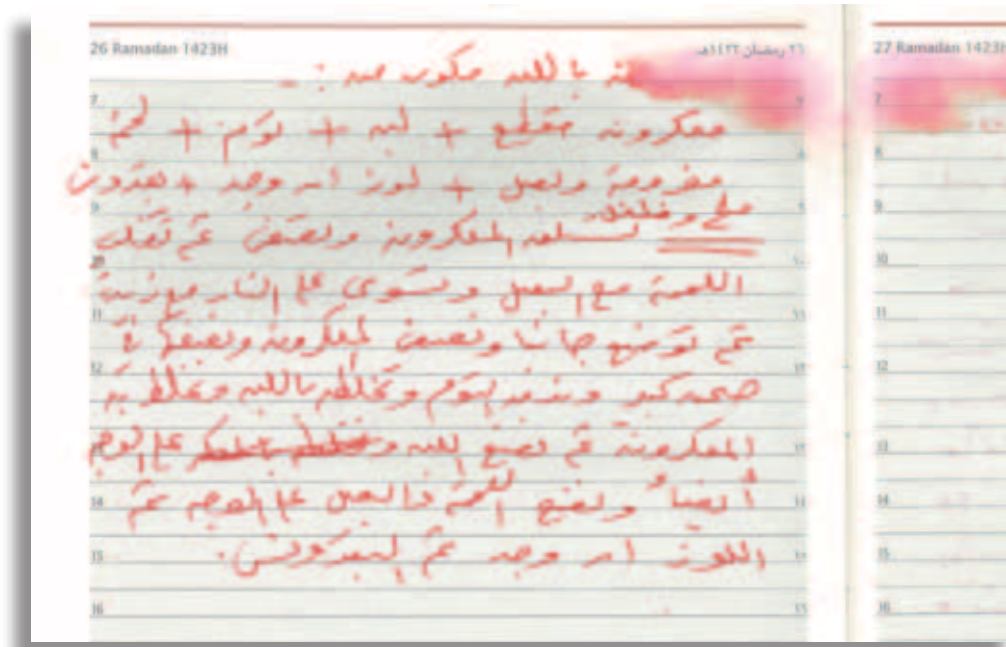
BA – Yes, for a couple of reasons. I think a lot about how artists’ labour is often forgotten, just as it is in many other fields, including food preparation. At Don Blanche, my residency consisted of working in the kitchen; myself and another artist, Deirdre Fraser, cooked for basically the whole duration. People were very grateful and acknowledged our cooking, but we worked the whole time to feed the mass of people – from 20 up to nearly 100 towards the end of the residency period. My body on the serving table became a reminder of that labour.

The other aspect that’s important is that I’m serving all these Palestinian mezze that I cooked carefully and with a lot of love. In order to get the dips or the spreads onto a cracker or a piece of pita bread, the guests actually had to apply some pressure on my body. It’s unintentional pain that they cause; they didn’t even know they were causing it. And little bits of olive oil or sauce would spill, and it would drip down my skin, and they didn’t mean to do that. I heard from some of the guests that they were a little worried about me. They were trying to eat quickly so that I could get up.

FUSE – This little aggressive gesture of sacrifice underlines your labour. It makes the use of your body more explicit.

BA – But there’s another dimension: the gesture isn’t only about me specifically. I think of my mom in her domestic role, making sure that we eat well, and cooking every single day. I think of her labour, and that of other mothers, people who cook as professionals, unrecognized labour in general – but especially people whose cooking is daily, unpaid labour.

FUSE – You also morph into something of an archetype because you’re face-down – you’re not Basil, so who are you? Are you an anonymous



Macaroni/Pasta with Yogurt

- Elbow macaroni (either Stortini or Cavatappi – if you cannot find elbow macaroni, cut the pasta into smaller pieces)
- Plain yogurt
- Garlic
- Ground beef
- Onions
- Almond (if available), blanched and toasted
- Parsley
- Salt and pepper

Fry the ground beef in olive oil and onions, then put aside to cool. Cook the pasta in a big pot of salted boiling water and strain. Crush garlic and mix with the yogurt, then pour over macaroni and mix. On top of the macaroni mix, layer more yogurt; the cooked, cooled ground beef and onions; the almonds, and the parsley.

Fatoosh

- | Salad | Dressing |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Pita bread | Olive oil |
| Tomatoes | Lemon |
| Cucumber | Salt |
| Green pepper | Balsamic or cider vinegar |
| Parsley | Sumac |
| Mint | Pomegranate molasses |
| Green olives | |
| Watercress (if available) | |
| Romaine Lettuce | |

Cut the pita bread into little squares and toast it in olive oil. Chop all vegetables and add to a large mixing bowl. Add the dressing and toss well, then add the toasted bread and toss again. Make sure to add the toasted bread and dressing just before eating.

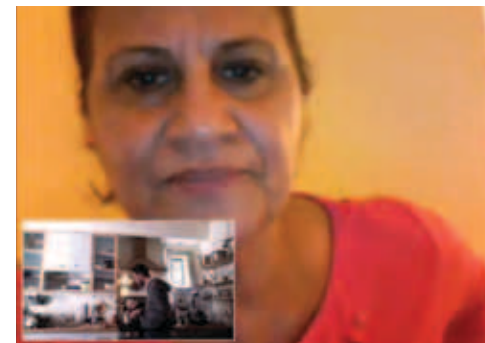
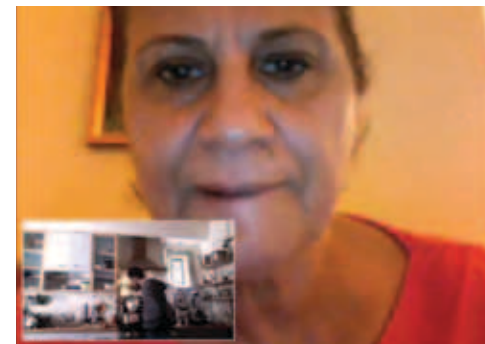
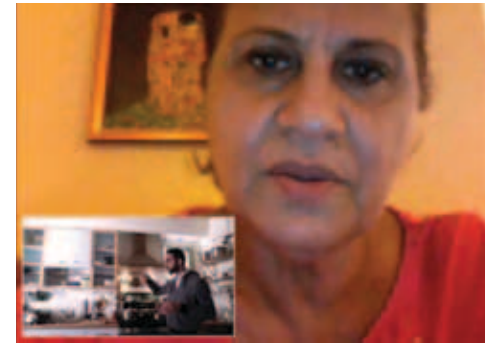
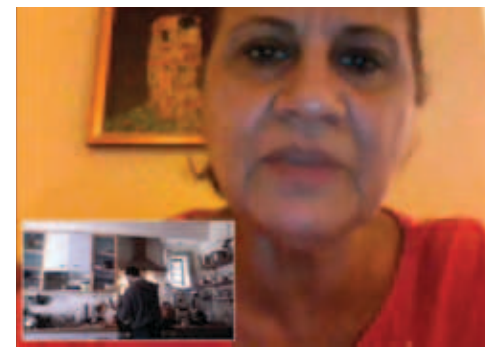
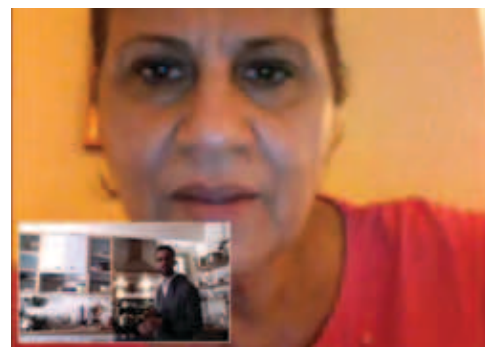
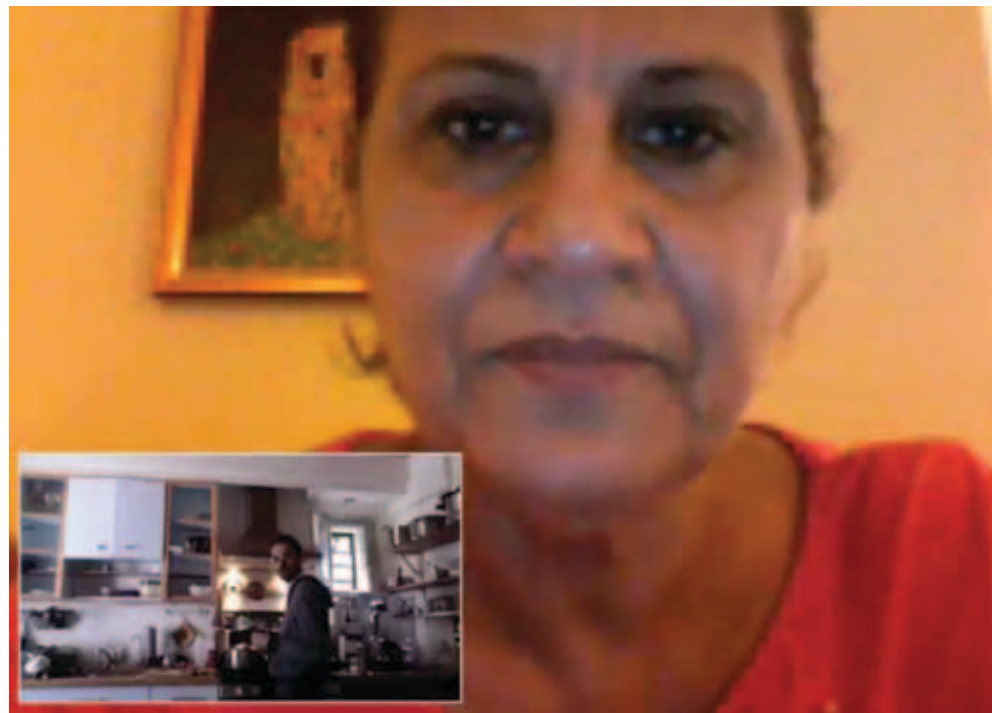
Brown body? Are you a Palestinian body? And how are these details related to the bodily sacrifice you're describing?

BA – I touch on that through the Palestinian food I'm serving. The gesture is subtle. The Palestinian people, as a nation and a culture, are actually a very important part of this. The best way to describe this is through the relation of occupation to Palestinian land and resources – literally, eating off people's backs.

FUSE – That's a level of meaning that your guests can only get at if they know certain things. If they realize that the mezze is specifically Palestinian and not Turkish or Lebanese, for example. The identity markers they'd have from your body – the colour of your skin, your hair – aren't necessarily going to be read as Palestinian. Depending on how much access

people have to that information, their reading will get more nuanced and more complex. Even without these details, your performance ideally would evoke the interrelation of labour, exploitation and histories of migration, and specifically the racialization of menial labour. But I'm still not entirely convinced that the complexity of the work would come out for the guests. How do you insert the uncomfortable and uncanny moments with enough force to shake them up?

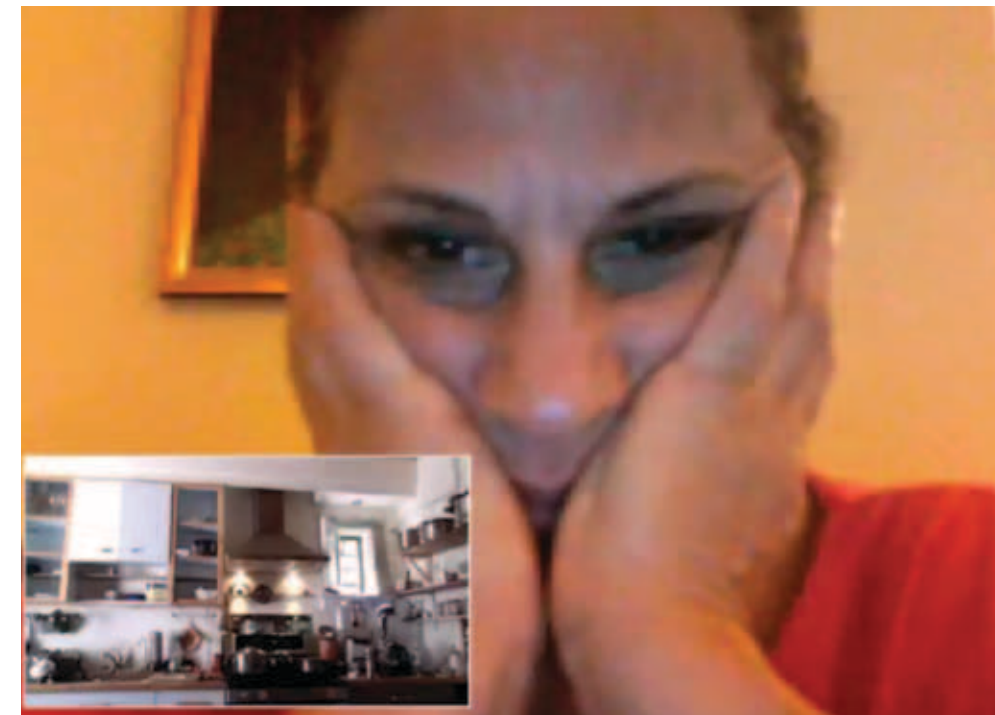
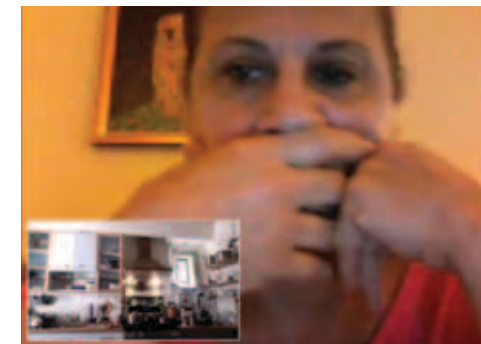
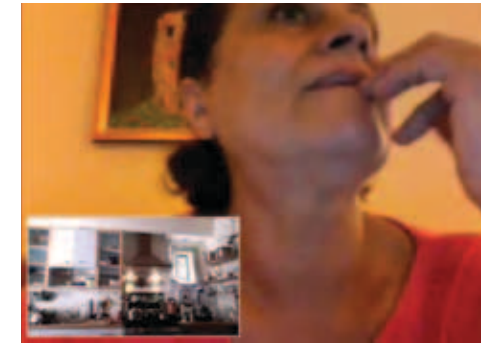
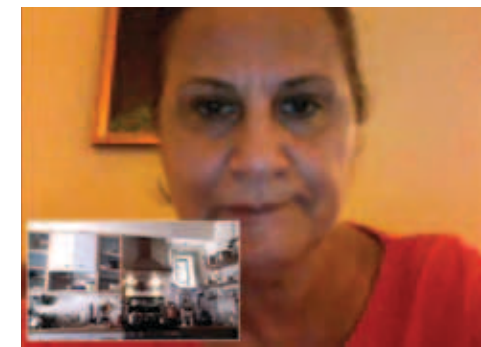
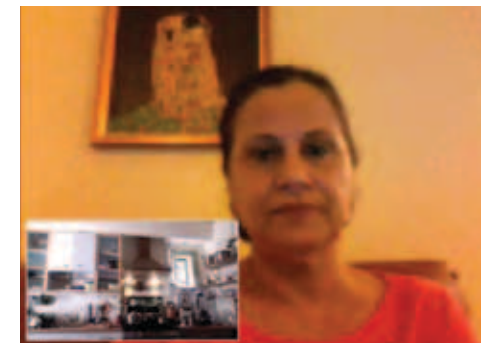
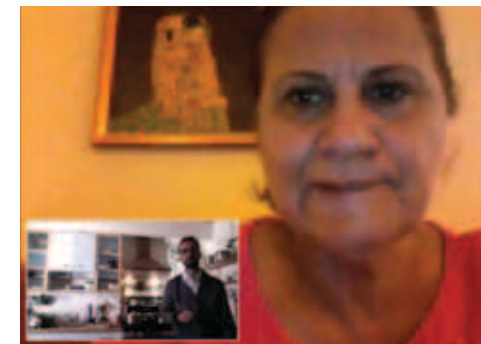
BA – When I performed this gesture at Don Blanche, I said, "You are about to eat dinner off the artist's body, of Palestinian origin. You eat at your own risk." I still feel conflicted about this wording, but I felt that I had to tell them this. I didn't know most of the people there, so I felt that they had to know this little piece of information. I think it had a huge impact.



The Main Course

FUSE – In contrast to the mezze-style dinner performances, your Skype cooking performances with your mother involve lots of dialogue and information for your audience to consume. Describe the set-up you used for your performance in Mexico City.

BA – It was part of the Transmuted International Performance Art Festival, the theme of which was "Non-Canadian Canadians." The performance was at a small contemporary art museum in the centre



of the city called Ex Teresa Arte Actual, an ex-convent and chapel. It's a historical building, built in 1616, with huge thick walls, beautiful façades, and glass domes on top. The space the performances took place in was emptied out entirely – there were no artifacts or art.

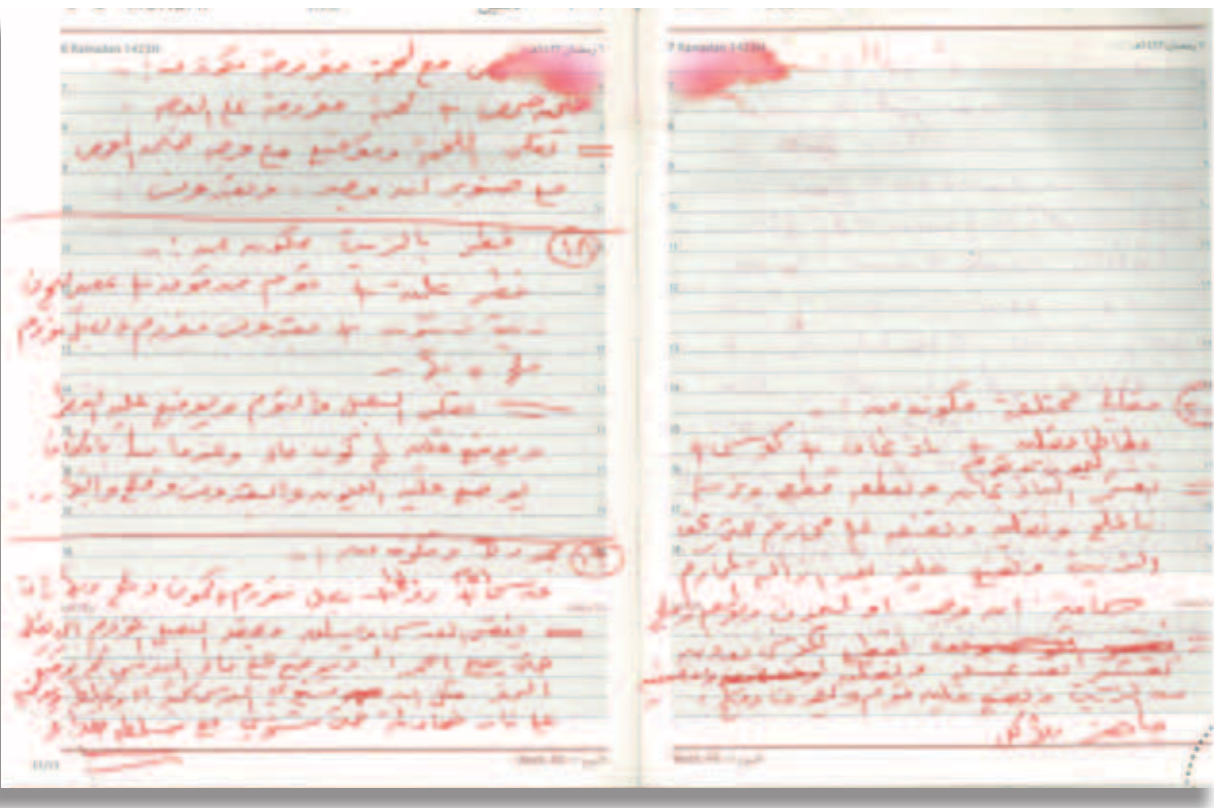
The performance started with me transporting the whole kitchen out into the performance space, running from one end of the museum to the other. I always start a performance with what happens behind the scenes. I wanted everything to be perfect for my mom. The cooking itself was kind of a disaster actually. The festival couldn't get a standing stove so they ended up getting a portable gas stove. The pot basically took over both elements, not quite being heated by both. I was worried that part of it would be cooked and the other not. But it worked out.

FUSE – Where was your mother at the time of the performance?

BA – She was in Dubai, where she lives now. She was on Skype, and her image was projected onto a wall. It was almost 10 p.m. in Mexico City, and 6 a.m. her time.

FUSE – Did you come up with the menu together?

BA – I told her what I was doing and she asked a lot of great questions: "What's the context? What's the space? What is the festival about?" Because the space was a chapel, this became a key factor.



↑
Mujdarah

FUSE – What was the meal?

BA – My mother suggested that we make mujdarah, a very simple dish. It's a very popular dish, and an affordable one, which people have been making for hundreds of years. It's made of lentils, rice, onions and spices. It is served with a yoghurt and cucumber salad and a green salad. We picked this dish because of its origins in the city of Nazareth, which is famous for being the city of Jesus's exile from Bethlehem – it's called the Nazareth mujdarah, the mujdarah Nasraouyeh. We thought that because of the religious context of the museum, this specific dish would fit perfectly, and make a link to Catholic culture in Mexico City.

Mujdarah is traditional to the Christian Palestinian community, as a meal for lent. When I talked to my grandma about it, she said it was very important in Palestinian

cuisine because it's a very accessible dish. The lentils and the onions come from Palestinian land, and rice is always readily available. These things have become even more important with the occupation, because many other ingredients can be scarce. Mujdarah is also important because you can feed a lot of people. I mean, people used to have huge families. My mom's family has eleven people, my dad's family has thirteen, and those are average-sized families. So mujdarah is very resourceful and practical. How much you eat mujdarah is also an indication of the class system. There's a saying, "they eat mujdarah every day." It's a common and loved dish, but if your family eats it every day, that's because you can't afford anything else.

FUSE – Can you describe how you make mujdarah?

BA – It's flavoured very simply. You cut a lot of onions, preferably red, for the colour, and you sauté them in olive oil, and then you add a big spoonful of cumin, two spoonfuls of sumac, salt and pepper, and some people add a little bit of coriander. The cumin and sumac are key. Once you season and sauté the onions, you add them to the half-cooked rice, which is in another pot, so that the spices and onion infuse the rice, and then you add the cooked lentils. There is a saying: kol habeh be-habetha, which means every grain is an individual grain. When it's mushy, that's when the dish fails. So you cook the lentils al dente, about three-quarters through. You mix it before everything gets too soft, and you let it finish cooking together, so once it's done it's a unified dish, one mujdarah. And you serve it with crispy caramelized onions. It's really tasty. And it's a bit of a picnic dish as well. People make a big pot of it, and bring the onions separately, and salad.

Coffee

FUSE – How has Palestinian cuisine been affected by the occupation?

BA – Fish dishes are an obvious example. My family doesn't come from a city near the shore, which might explain why I only know of one Palestinian fish dish. But I have asked my family why there isn't much fish in Palestinian dishes in general, and as far as my mother remembers, it was because they didn't have access to fish because it was either restricted or prohibited. When Palestinian fishermen take a chance and go fishing in occupied areas, they risk being shot at. So there's a lot of risk involved in eating fish. There's only one dish I can think of that has fish, and it's called sayadeyeh. It calls for whatever fish is available at the market.

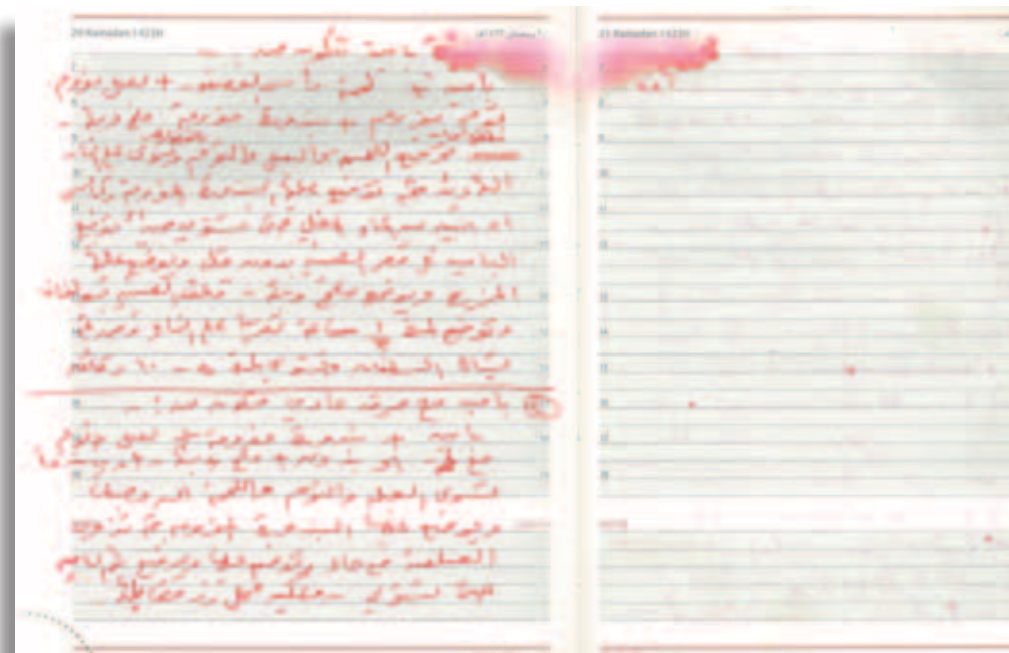
Communities in Palestine, or outside, in the camps in Jordan or Syria, hold onto their culinary tradition because it's one of the few things left in the culture that is still lively. They're also quite rigid about it. In my interpretation, the character of Palestinian cuisine is connected historically to the preservation of food. Preserved foods are extremely prominent in many recipes, even more since the occupation started. The techniques are ancient; there were all kinds of ways to make food last before refrigeration was invented. You know: labneh (pressed yoghurt in olive oil); big jars with tons of green and black olives; maktous (eggplant in olive oil and stuffed with walnuts or chilies, depending on what resources are available); different kinds of pickles;

preserved lemons; pickled tomatoes; all kinds of preserves.

And when you say "Palestinian preserves," you're not talking about little mason jars, you're talking about 10-litre jars. This reflects generosity and abundance and the way people like to eat and offer food to their guests, but now also because of the nature of their life conditions under Israeli occupation. Sometimes they're under siege or lockdown, and can't leave their houses for days and days, they can't even go to the corner store. And that has profoundly affected the way that people eat. In any other culture, you wouldn't care to keep that much in your pantry. But people stockpile and keep even more. Every house has a good-sized pantry, a little room that is full of jars of preserves: kilos of goat cheese in water and salt, olives and pickles, and big quantities of sugar and flour to make bread and dessert for days to come. It's carried on, though a little bit less so, in the diaspora. My parents don't live in Palestine, but they have a good-sized pantry full of labneh and maktous and zeitoun.

One of the most valuable things in people's houses is their pantry. It's so important for survival. When Israeli soldiers raid people's houses, they go straight for the pantry. I have not witnessed this myself, but Israeli soldiers will go and mix things up in the pantry, to starve the family. They will mix things together: the sugar with the labneh, and the zeitoun with the flour.

FUSE – As opposed to just breaking the jar, they'd actually mix them?



BA – Yes, if they break the jar maybe a bit can be salvaged, but if they mix oil into the flour, everything is ruined. This is the occupier's mind, anything to torture people.

My basic motive for these projects is to archive, and that's a form of preservation too. So much effort goes into demolishing Palestinian culture. For me, working with food is very reflexive, and a way of recognizing labour of mothers, specifically in Palestinian culture. It's also a form of cultural diplomacy. Getting to people through everyday activities. Preservation is a specific technique for cuisine and also for resistance. Both things come together: pleasure in the colours and flavors and the social history of food, and resistance to occupation. Together they make the character of Palestinian cuisine.

Thanks to Dennis Hale and Mike Sharpe, visual artists and woodworkers, for co-designing and fabricating The Mobile Kitchen Lab.

Introduction and interview by Gina Badger for FUSE.

Basil AlZeri is a Toronto-based Palestinian artist working in performance, video, installation, food and public art interventions. His artwork is grounded in his practice as an art educator and community worker, and engages with the intersection of everyday actions and life necessities. AlZeri's performance work has been exhibited in Toronto (FADO, Nuit Blanche, Whipper Snapper Gallery), Quebec (Fait Maison 14), Winnipeg (Central Canadian Centre for Performance) and Mexico City (Transmuted International Performance Art Festival, Performancecar O Morir). Upcoming projects include a public performance project with the Ottawa Art Gallery/Creative Cities Conference and performances in Chile and Argentina in 2013. On 15 March, FUSE and Israeli Apartheid Week Toronto will co-present AlZeri's performance at Xspace Cultural Centre as part of the FADO Emerging Artists Series, .sightspecific.

Okra Casserole (Seneyet Bamyeh)

- Okra
- Beef, in chunks the size of a little bird's head
- Onions, finely chopped
- Crushed garlic
- Tomatoes, finely chopped
- Salt and pepper
- Hot pepper

In a skillet over low heat, cook the beef, garlic, onions, and hot pepper in olive oil. Add the tomatoes and one to two cups of boiling water. Let simmer until tender and cooked. Place the uncooked okra in a casserole, add the beef mix and season with salt and pepper. Cover the casserole with tin foil and cook for about twenty minutes on the stovetop. Remove the tin foil and broil it in the oven for about ten minutes.

A GAME OF SHATER HASSAN

Haitham Ennasr

1

I honestly can't quite remember, but I want to say my first recollection of Shater Hassan is from age seven or eight. One thing that Teta's many grandchildren demanded of her was stories, and stories she gave.

- Teta (1) or (2)
- Shater Hassan (10)

→ Start with (1)
 → The missing numbers (3) (4) (6) (7) (8) are for you to write
 → The game rules are in (11)
 → (12) and (13) are supplementary reading



2

My grandmother's name was Ghanimah, her grandchildren called her Teta or Sitti (colloquial for grandmother), and her children always referred to her as Hajjeh. A Hajj or Hajjeh is what you would call someone who has been on pilgrimage to the Haj. For Teta's children it was as endearing as mother, but it also carried a heavy dimension of respect and appreciation. The refugee mother of nine, widowed at 27 and storyteller extraordinaire didn't really care how she was addressed. But for us she was a force of nature, above and beyond respect, love, or any other emotion you're supposed to have for a parent or grandparent, so we needed every term we could get to address her.

- Teta's stories (9)

5

"But is it really a game?" is a question that many of us might have while looking at this project. We probably ask this because the people who make up the game industry—the most visible people creating and consuming games—have preferences as to what they believe are good games. This circle of people creating and consuming games is not only relatively homogenous, it is also privileged, which means that these preferences turn into definitions, and anything that doesn't conform to these preferences has to be defended as to why it is a game. So instead of answering that question, I request you don't ask it.

- This game (11)
- Indie games (12)

1

Googling Shater Hassan was a bit disappointing. I wasn't expecting Teta to unveil herself from the after-life as a series of search results, and she didn't, not immediately anyway. First search lead to a bunch of restaurants, a few searches in I realized that the results for Shater Hassan with two "t"s are different than those with one t. Then came my searches for Shater Hassan in Arabic: an Egyptian folk tale; that didn't ring a single bell. Finally, an entry in a blog titled "A story from Palestinian folklore: Shater Hassan."

- Teta (1) or (2)
- Blog entry (2)

2

While searching for my grandmother's Shater Hassan on the internet, I eventually found one story with a section that I remember my grandmother telling. Shater Hassan came to a great ghoul and greeted him. The ghoul said something that can be loosely translated to: if your greeting didn't precede your speaking, the mountains would now be hearing your bones break. Shater Hassan asked him for something, the ghoul said that his sister would know. He also told Shater Hassan the following: if you see her grinding salt and her eyes are fire, don't go near her. If you find her grinding sugar, and her breasts are flipped behind her shoulders, nurse from her right breast, then nurse from her left breast, and ask her your question. Beyond that paragraph, I can't tell for certain if the online account bares any other resemblance to my grandmother's story. Or if Teta ever told the whole story from beginning to end.

- Grinding salt (3)
- Grinding sugar (4)
- Teta's stories (9)

9

In most evenings, while my grandmother was telling her story, she would fall asleep before we did. The next evening, she would either continue telling the story or start over, adding details that were not there the night before, letting go of other details, and telling events in a different order each night.

- Continue (10)



13

10

Shater Hassan, being mostly an oral tradition, has been told by countless grandmothers in countless variations. My current realization of Shater Hassan comes from recollecting and linking bedtime stories by my grandmother. These recollections are accompanied by an online script that vaguely sounded like those bedtime stories. This game will be yet another variation of the greater Shater Hassan story.

- Game (11) or (5)
- Online bedtime stories (6)

11

After reading all of the text blocks in the game (including those you have already written, (3) (4) (6) (7) and (8)), adopt the perspective of a woman who spent her childhood in Yaffa during the 1930s in order to write a detailed account of Shater Hassan as either:

- a) a cup of coffee
- b) a cigarette
- c) an orange

12

When I first started making games, both digital and analog, I was in love with the medium and its affordances, and frustrated with the industry's tendency toward orientalist, misogynistic, and heteronormative culture. It didn't take me long to realize that I shared that love and frustration with an entire community of game designers and developers. Anna Anthropy's *Rise of the Videogame Zinesters* (Seven Stories Press, 2012) explains that love-frustration relationship a bit further. She explains how the videogame industry is a self-feeding engine; the game designers create games for very specific target audiences, who in turn grow up and become the next generation of game designers, continuing the cycle. Anthropy also points out that in parallel to the industry, there are numerous tools and technologies allowing designers to self-publish. This opening-up means that videogames are no longer controlled by a select few. Instead, videogames are being made by a thriving community of people who are pushing the medium into exciting politically and creatively charged frontiers.

- Systems (13)
- This retelling (11)

3

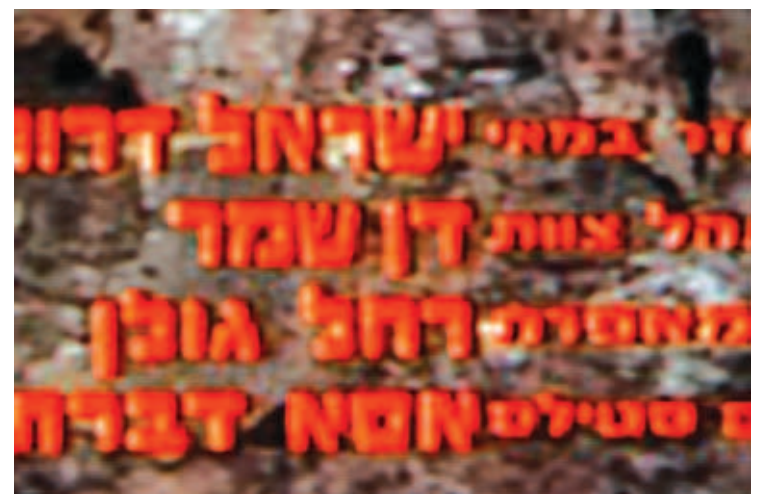
4

7

8

6

- Game (5) or (11)
- Colonialism (7)
- Yaffa (8)









The Credits of My Next Movie
Kamal Aljafari

The snapshots you are looking at were taken from an Israeli film musical from the 1970s, which I projected in a dark room one cold winter night in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I wanted to revisit the streets of my childhood in Jaffa. The film opens with the names of the actors and those involved in making the film – here was nothing unusual about it. These credits will become the credits of my next film, being created now. They include the names of the actors, the director, the producer and the names of those who worked in each film unit, who took part in the cinematic occupation of Jaffa. These shots are from one of the closing scenes in the same film. The actors are performing a song about democracy, which in my film I call the “Massacre of the City.”

After the 1948 occupation, the Tel Aviv municipality gradually tore down the Arab city of Jaffa; thousands of houses and entire neighbourhoods disappeared. In the 1950s, the military curfew was lifted, but within another decade another invasion, a fictional one, began. Streets were blocked off, the shooting started again. In 1963, Israeli filmmaker Menahem Golan produced the first post-1948 film in Jaffa, entitled *Eldorado*. In 1973, he returned to direct the most successful Israeli musical of all time, *Kazablan*, which was also a hit in the United States. Chuck Norris began his attack on Jaffa in Golan’s 1986 film *The Delta Force*, and later returned in *Delta Force 3*. *The Delta Force* helped Golan become a B-movie Hollywood mogul, and he headed up the production house Cannon Films.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Golan shot a dozen films in Jaffa, turning it into his private film set. Pitting Western heroes against Middle-Eastern terrorists, his films are low budget, made on the cheap, and Jaffa is their free prop: a ruined, Oriental anyplace that he had a free hand in ruining further. For the finale of *The Delta Force*, the Tel Aviv municipality let Golan explode a grand Palestinian schoolhouse overlooking the ocean – the Nakba as special effect.

Other Israeli and American directors would follow in Golan’s footsteps, and *Appointment With Death* (1988), *Rambo III* (1988), *Not Without My Daughter* (1991) and *The Order* (2001) were all shot there. These are among the titles of Jaffa’s cinematic occupation. Over the years its cast comes to include Peter Ustinov, George Sanders, Sally Field, Audie Murphy, Sylvester Stallone and Jean-Claude Van Damme. At their mercy, Jaffa is re-imagined not only as Israeli Yafo but as Beirut, Tehran, Cairo and Jerusalem; it’s the battleground for every conceivable Middle-Eastern conflict, every Western projection of fear.

In all those films, Jaffa is a city where Arabs no longer exist. Preserved in this footage is also a city, alive again in moving image, its gradual destruction over the decades chronicled film by film. I find myself watching them over and over again to revisit the places of my childhood. I watch frame by frame to stop by at the shop on the corner where I once sat with my grandfather. I wander around the old city, and catch a view of the grand seaside neighbourhood of Manshiye that has since been entirely bulldozed and replaced by a grassy seaside promenade. These films compose an album of mementoes for me. I watch them to return to Jaffa. I watch them as their heroes are killing Jaffa. The time has come to intervene!

Kamal Aljafari is a graduate of the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne, where he received the visual arts award of the city of Cologne in 2004. His films include *The Roof* (2006), which won the Best International Video Award at the 2008 Images Festival in Toronto, and *Port of Memory* (2009), which received the Prix Louis Marcorelles from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was a featured artist at the 2009 Robert Flaherty Film Seminar, and in 2009-2010 he was the Benjamin White Whitney fellow at Harvard University. He is currently the head of the directing program at the German Film and Television Academy in Berlin.

INSIDE DECOLONIZING ARCHITECTURE

The Politics of Visibility in
Common Assembly

Nishat Awan and Cressida Kocienski

The Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency (DAAR) [1] is part of a long-term project that deals with the spatial complexities of decolonization through an interrogation of the relationships between law, spatial production and colonial practices in Palestine and Israel. A significant body of DAAR's work attempts to reveal how the operation of Israeli spatial and legal regimes within the Occupied Territories can produce extra-territorial spaces and grey zones wherein legal jurisdictions fade. For DAAR, these spaces of ambiguity are significant for their role in revealing the workings of power – they are places where such colonial and territorial power can be understood, challenged and perhaps undermined. Their work experiments with narrations of the landscape under occupation, and strives to be both intellectually and architecturally propositional.

[1] DAAR is described as a platform for collective production. It is based in Beit Sahour, a small suburb of Bethlehem in the West Bank, within the Occupied Palestinian Territories. It was founded in 2007 as Decolonizing Architecture, by Beit Sahour-based architects Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti, and London-based architect Eyal Weizman.

In this article, we will consider the rhetoric of DAAR in relationship to their work *Common Assembly*, which was produced during a summer 2011 residency in which we participated. The work was conceived in response to the unfinished Palestinian parliament building in the West Bank, the prospective Palestinian bid for recognition at the United Nations [2] and the unfolding backdrop of the Arab Spring. Considering the recent expansions and contractions in the possibility for a viable two-state solution within this contested territory, [3] we feel it is an important time to examine the ways in which this work renders visible vital questions about the constitution and agency of the Palestinian body politic, and its viability in terms of its own claims of decolonization, both within and outside the West Bank.

Standing as a disused and incomplete structure, the Palestinian Legislative Council building (its official title, but known to DAAR as the Palestinian parliament) was designed by noted Palestinian architect Jafar Tukan. It is located in Abu Dis, an outlying Jerusalem neighbourhood that used to be a separate village, but has now been subsumed into the expanding city. Much of Abu Dis falls outside the Jerusalem line, Israel's unilaterally declared 1967 border of the city. Close to the parliament building, severing it completely from Jerusalem, passes the wall that separates the West Bank and Israel. Significantly for the project, the positioning of the building is entirely ambiguous: it sits on the Jerusalem line, partly in and partly out of the city, yet entirely physically cut off from it. The exact reason for this placement is unknown, and its potential political fallout is also in disagreement. Rumours, theories and conspiracies abound—in the tug of war between Israel and Palestine, and between the various Palestinian factions, how did the building land so fortuitously, so awkwardly? Nevertheless, it is certain that the building's positioning was the result of political manoeuvring.

The Palestinian parliament site was the starting point for the research, design, and film production work that the DAAR residents helped to produce, which also sat within a previously established framework of discourse and exhibited work. The planned outcome of the residency was the touring exhibition *Common Assembly*, to be shown in Switzerland, the UK and the US. [4] As the title of the exhibition suggests, the nucleus of the work was intended to be an exploration of the commons, informed by Hardt and Negri's definition of this concept as "the incarnation, the production, and the liberation of the multitude." [5]

Several months into the Arab Spring, there was a tangible sense of political elasticity in the region brought about by the collective uprisings, and it seemed pertinent to raise the question of the Palestinian struggle from within this wider context. The DAAR participants were keen to transpose this idea of collectivity

onto the site of the parliament building, taken to represent a form of politics under threat in the region. A principal reference was the February 2011 cleaning of Cairo's Tahrir Square by volunteer members of the public, in the wake of mass protests demanding the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak. This was seen as a manifestation of the triumph of the political power of the commons, and the claiming of common ownership of civic space.

One of DAAR's primary strategies is to work with and inside the lines that slice up the landscape. [6] In *Common Assembly*, the physical space taken up by the Jerusalem line as it cuts through the parliament was cleaned to create an ephemeral and symbolic strip of common space. This was a staged performance-for-the-camera that, because of the inaccessibility of the space to the Palestinian population, was performed symbolically for them in absentia by the DAAR residents.

The exhibited work was the installation of a 1:5-scale sculptural cross-section of the parliament as it appears inside the Jerusalem line, transporting this fragment to the site of each gallery



as a lacquered black object that bisected the space. Presented in various configurations alongside this intrusive element were projections of both the six-minute film of the cleaning performance, and grainy black and white images of crowd scenes from historical meetings of the various Palestinian parliaments-in-exile. [7] These images produced a spectral assembly of dispersed discussions, removed from their specific context, and with the key figureheads supplanted by images of the audience (although still members of a political elite) to create an image of a de-localized collective assembly. There were also four brief extracts of interviews with political figures [8] displayed on monitors with headphones. The lines

[2] In September 2011, there was a formal request by the Chairman of the PLO, Mahmoud Abbas, for Palestine to be recognized as the 194th full member state of the United Nations, by the General Assembly, based on the pre-1967 borders, as part of a campaign called *Palestine 194*. At press time, this has not yet been voted on, and at the prospect of a veto from the US, the request was scaled back to an upgrade to non-member observer state.

[3] In November 2012, Palestine was granted status as a non-member observer state in the United Nations, which then "express[ed] the urgent need for

the resumption of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians leading to a permanent two-State solution." (See "General Assembly Grants Palestine Non-member Observer State Status at UN," *UN News Centre*, 29 November 2012, online.) This unprecedented rise in support for the political legitimacy of the Palestinian diaspora, however marginal it may be in concrete terms, immediately provoked plans for a retaliatory measure of architectural occupation from Israel—the building of 3,000 new settlement homes in the E1 area, to the East of Jerusalem, previously kept clear under international pressure (see Peter

Beaumont, "Israel approves another 1,200 settlement units around Jerusalem," *The Guardian*, 25 December 2012, online). The insertion of this territorial expansion into the remaining fragments of the West Bank, if it materializes in the months ahead and remains unrevoked, will effectively sever the territory completely in half, and obliterate the chances for establishing a contiguous neighbour state for Israel.

[4] Centre d'Art Neuchâtel, Switzerland; Nottingham Contemporary, UK; The James Gallery at The City University of New York (CUNY), US.

[5] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 303.

[6] Previously, DAAR has worked with the Green Line, which was drawn following the 1949 Armistice Agreement, and the lines of the 1994 Oslo Accords. In each case, they have interpreted their ambiguous physical and legal definition as bestowing these geopolitical borders with a spatial thickness.

[7] These videos were from publicly accessible video archives available online, and ranged from depictions of the first parliament

appointed by the PLO in 1964 to the first popularly elected parliament established in 1996.

[8] Ahmed Qurei, PLO Member and Former President of the Palestinian Legislative Council; Basem al-Masri, First Director General of the Palestinian Parliament; Fajr Harb, an activist; and Khalil Tafakji, a cartographer (a highly politicized occupation in the region). The fifth video of Oxford academic and former PLO Representative Karma Nabulsi was from a lecture held in Ramallah organized by Fajr Harb.



← ↓ →
Decolonizing Architecture
Common Assembly (2011).
Production stills.
Image courtesy of
Cressida Kocienski.



↑
Decolonizing Architecture
Common Assembly (2011).
Installation shot at CAN
(Centre d'art Neuchâtel), 17/09 to 28/10/2011.
Image courtesy of
Sully Balmassière and CAN.



↑
Decolonizing Architecture
Common Assembly (2011).
Installation shot at
CAN (Centre d'art Neuchâtel),
17/09 to 28/10/2011.
Image courtesy of
Sully Balmassière and CAN.

of their narratives, set against the figures of the multitudes and the parliament, often cut across one another, producing a microcosmic view of the terrain in all its complexity.

The Palestinian parliament building was commissioned following the Oslo Accords [9] (1993–1995), and construction began in 1996. It was a time when many believed that the reality of a Palestinian nation-state was tangible, and the parliament was imagined as the seat of government in East Jerusalem. Basem al-Masri, who was the first Director General of the Palestinian parliament, noted in an interview that in order to be able to set up an interim parliament in Ramallah, [10] there had to be tangible plans in place to create its permanent successor in Jerusalem. He also spoke in detail about the formation of the building in parallel with the drafting of the constitution, which required the definition of the capital, the physical seat of the government, and the drafting and implementation of systems of governance. In 1996, al-Masri contributed to the decision to place the building in East Jerusalem, despite allegedly being under pressure from Israel to give up East Jerusalem in favour of Abu Dis. To remain in Ramallah would have signified both the ideological and likely territorial surrender of East Jerusalem.

The Oslo Accords and the resulting efforts to create an administrative infrastructure of governance did not, of course, result in the establishment of a Palestinian state, and the spectacular failure of this process is an on-going matter of recent history. The building itself also remains unfinished. Today it stands as a blank-faced ziggurat, minus windows and doors, but full of trailing pipes, wires, and feral animals whose traces are archived in the dust that has settled on the floors of the interior. It is a sublime and cinematic ruin that metonymically echoes the curtailed nature of the Palestinian dream of nationhood.

The building is hounded by its manifold lack of political agency, whether in relation to the refugee diaspora or the residents of Gaza, neither of whom can physically access it. Even if it were complete, the difficulties of organizing participation and travel would certainly act to narrow the field of regional representation. Its crippling proximity to the separation wall only adds to the complexity of the smoke and mirrors surrounding the truth of its establishment. In the *Common Assembly* exhibition, this is gently revealed by contradictions that emerge in some of the interviews, and reinforced by a number of labyrinthine political rumours that circulate within the general populace, related to us as anecdotes. For now, the building has been placed under the guardianship of Al-Quds University to prevent it from being damaged or interfered with by Israel, and so it is locked anonymously behind a high gate with an occasional security guard patrol. The structure does not seem to factor into conversations regarding future political situations, and so it appears to have been ignored as an icon in favour of the prolonged symbolic relationship with the Dome of the Rock, which even non-Muslim residents also appear to regard as the symbolic *idée fixe* for the unattainable Palestine nation.

The unfinished nature of the building also mirrors the unfinished nature of the political administrative apparatus of Palestinian governance, raising important questions about who

exactly *can be* represented within the democratic processes it could offer. This particular problem continues to haunt the Palestinians, and was one of the more sympathetic criticisms voiced during the 2011 push for acknowledged political sovereignty at the UN. It flagged the resultant loss of the right of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) to be the sole representative of the scattered Palestinian polity, meaning that the premature crystallization of Palestine through a so-called back door would exclude the future participation of all who live outside its borders, restricting or removing their right of return (in whatever context this could be negotiated). In a sense, the failure of the frozen architecture, bifurcated by the mysterious, unilateral border, at least allows for the discussions to remain pluralistic. It also attests to the problems of transposing standard parliamentary forms into this difficult context.

These difficulties are also revealed in the workings of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) and the PLO, which, despite being large organizations, were only capable of dealing with the specifically political needs of Palestinians. There were no established systems for producing and managing civic infrastructures – neither access to drinking water or health care, nor the protections of an official military. While this is clearly a difficult challenge still to be fully resolved, it can also be imagined as an opportunity for thinking civic infrastructures as *common* infrastructures, governed and cared for by the collective. Fajr Harb, a Palestinian activist involved in the recent youth movement, made the point in one of the *Common Assembly* interviews that there is a very pressing desire for taking control, if not of the top layers of policy-making, then certainly of the bolstering of civic administration and of those aspects of governance that affect everyday life. While the resistance to and pressures of Israeli occupation certainly bring about a form of collectivity, how not only to be reactive to the occupation, but also to propose civic initiatives that can work within the very limited self-governance that Palestinians have, remains an open question.

During the DAAR residency, the commons were to be explored in the relationship *between* the building and the Jerusalem line as a potential method of “deterritorializing the Palestinian parliament,” [11] as the tagline of the exhibition title states. [12] Because the parliament building sits on top of the Jerusalem line, it was this particular detail that triggered the format of the investigation. But the Jerusalem line is itself a slippery concept – in order to maintain spatial fluidity, its positioning was never consolidated on a map, and so it exists only as a series of coordinates stored in a hidden archive, from which the line may be summoned by the District Surveyor of Jerusalem. Inaccessible to those who live on the land it might occupy, it becomes a soft weapon for land grabs, or a tool for keeping at bay the expanding Palestinian population, bisecting buildings and stranding citizens on the wrong side. This behaviour of the line means that it is a continual source of legal challenges.

DAAR worked in consultation with a lawyer, Ghiath Nasser, who highlighted one particular case that perfectly demonstrates the ambiguous nature of the line, as well as its legal consequences. The case centres around a house in Kafr 'Aqab, a neighbourhood situated on the Jerusalem periphery. A family had applied for disability pension payments for their daughter but were informed that

[9] In 1993, Israel initiated secret negotiations with PLO representatives in Oslo, their first face-to-face meeting. These produced the Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles, which was signed in Washington in September, and contained mutual recognition of both parties, promises that Israel

would withdraw from certain areas of Gaza and the West Bank, and provided for the creation of a Palestinian interim self-government, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

[10] The largest Palestinian city in central West Bank, to the north of

Jerusalem, currently serving as the de facto administrative capital.

[11] In *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), Deleuze and Guattari defined the concept of deterritorialization as the disruption of order and decontextualization of a set of relations in a space or territory.

Within the architecture of the parliament this was enacted as the weakening of its designed spatial programs, which were then reterritorialized as a container for the commons inside the space of the line.

[12] The title of the exhibition in Neuchâtel was *Common Assembly: Deterritorializing the Palestinian Parliament*. This was shortened to *Common Assembly* in subsequent exhibitions.

since the Jerusalem line bisects their house, they could not claim social security. According to the ruling, “54.20% of the property is outside of the Jerusalem jurisdiction area. 45.80% of the property is inside the Jerusalem jurisdiction area.” [13] Yet, the accuracy of the figures revealed nothing about the nature of the problem and led only to increasingly bizarre arguments over whether the front door of the house opened inside Jerusalem or not, or whether the more intensely occupied parts of the house were in the percentage located within Jerusalem. Dividing the time spent in the house according to everyday activities was, in the end, a futile course of action. What the case reveals is that despite its official status as vector, the Jerusalem line adopts a certain thickness in the practices of the District Surveyor, or in the practices of those who challenge his decrees. Rather than revealing the official co-ordinates of the line, the surveyor describes it in relation to an existing feature, such as a road. This move introduces a measure of ambiguity, transforming the vector into a slightly indeterminate zone. In other cases, the practices of everyday life give the line a thickness, as was attempted in the zoning of the house into sleeping and living areas. The elusive and highly interpreted quality of the line gives it an ambiguity that can become a space in which to work.

DAAR’s focus on the lines that separate Palestine began with another, more concrete, line: the Green Line. Established as part of the Rhodes Armistice Agreement of 1949, it split historical Palestine in two. As the story goes, it was marked out on the hood of a military jeep by the two commanders who agreed on its positioning, Moshe Dayan and Abdallah al-Tall. The line was drawn in a green grease pencil on a large scale map of the region, so when the map is reproduced at a 1:1 scale, the line’s spatial referent can be anywhere between 15 and 50 metres wide. For DAAR, the area captured by the thickness of the line is crucial; it exists in a legal limbo and can be claimed by neither the Palestinians nor the Israelis.

A similar thinking was to be applied to the line that cut across the parliament building, which was considered an anomic space, [14] that is, a space without law, or, as Nicola Perugini states, a space in which the law can be questioned. [15] In DAAR’s work, therefore, there was an attempt to define a common space in Palestine that is necessarily anomic. This point is especially important in the context of the pernicious methods that Israel uses for annexing land; many areas are designated as belonging to the state because the land registry is either absent or antiquated, a legacy of the old British and Ottoman systems of apportioning land. Or, they are designated state land when areas have been left uncultivated for a period of time (even when landowners have been deliberately denied access). There are many ways state land can be inexplicably absorbed wholesale into projected Israeli infrastructure, even if defined as a nature reserve, which cannot be built upon. [16]

Thus, the notion of the common as anomic space stands in opposition to the concept of public land as state land. This manoeuvre allows DAAR to think the anomic space of the line’s thickness as a place from which to imagine new modes of political assembly. Yet, as everyone was also aware, these lines are not all equal: the Green Line transfers from the representational space of the map onto physical space quite perceptibly, as a regular swathe

formed by the pencil lead, whereas the Jerusalem line is a more topologically fluid entity. Despite the line officially having no consistent thickness, the width demarcated by the cleaning performance was sufficient to give it a symbolic physicality both within the moving image work and the sculpture in *Common Assembly*.

Perhaps the attempt to use this as a space from which to think new modes of political participation was problematic, but it was this impulse, together with the desire to link to the cleaning of Tahrir Square, that drove the ambition to create an ephemeral and symbolic strip of common space into which may be imagined a mode of dialogue and participation. Furthermore, and quite significantly, the Jerusalem line represents an illegal border, unilaterally declared by Israel in contravention of international treaties.

Yet, to think the common as both a space for, and a mode of, political participation requires both a deterritorializing re-appropriation (which our gesture could be construed as) and also a reinvention. This reinvention was necessarily missing, since the people best placed to do it, the Palestinian population, were absent. As Hardt and Negri have commented in relation to their articulation of the common, this reinvention should consist of new forms of governance, new institutions and new modes of acting. [17] In the moment of our cleaning *on behalf of*, rather than cleaning *with* (as was the case in Tahrir Square), the political imaginary was restricted to a discursive space.

Perhaps the inchoate, ruined nature of the space of the parliament forms too perfect an image of the false starts and frustrations that have saturated the history of the Palestinian journey towards sovereignty. The incompleteness of the building, its abandonment, and the claims and counter-claims surrounding its location, can all be read as microcosms for the wider Palestinian political situation. Reading the building thus, as an archaeology of the conflict, may narrate a complex history, but does it offer any new insights? Nuance emerges in the narrative of the exhibition from the contradictory anecdotes of its inception within the interview videos – yet the building itself can only point to its own failure.

The troubling paradox of this work is that it necessarily accepts the Jerusalem line as a presence in the landscape, however unilaterally declared, and perhaps even serves to fetishize it. But the line *is* traced by occupational infrastructures, with their employment of the technologies that enforce the presence of its cheese-wire topology, and therefore attests to its inescapable there-ness. Working with the line as a legally negotiable or unclaimed space within which to make visible forms of colonization may lead to the Pyrrhic victory of the land inside the lines being made *too* visible, and thus have its ambiguity forcibly erased.

For us, this concern was echoed within the *Common Assembly* installation, where the film of our performative cleaning of the Jerusalem line was foregrounded. It raised interesting questions, in light of ourselves both as participants and in the subsequent dissemination of the work. There is a strongly performative aspect to the act, which, since it only circulates in its complete form within the reified space of contemporary art galleries outside of Palestine, could appear to undermine its claims. There is no public access to this building, and there was no public forum or participa-

tion in the project within Palestine. [18] DAAR did organize a series of public events to accompany the exhibitions in an attempt to link the work with concurrent and transnational political movements and discourses such as Occupy and the Arab Spring. Linking a specific discussion about the Palestinian question to these broader movements was a welcome move, but one that remained curtailed through the residency’s lack of direct engagement within the Palestinian territories, or with the Palestinian diaspora. Without such participation, the work shifts from an open-ended line of inquiry to a site-specific diagrammatization built for a gallery space.

Yet, within the fragments of the project there did emerge a desire to engage a commons built upon new notions of governance. Arguably, as the most participatory parts of the project, the interviews did establish a context for this to happen. If the project had provided a forum for the interviewees to engage with a wider audience, away from the structures and failings of the fledgling state apparatus, the commons as a site for informal and collective polities may well have been prompted. Due to the participatory limits of the project, the interviews with activist Fajr Harb and other members of the Palestinian political landscape only served to highlight this need. All approached *the common* in their rhetoric, but it seemed impossible to evoke a strong sense of this outside the *things in common* that Palestinians share, like semantic erasure, frequent struggles and interrupted access to water. In engaging in this process, we were left to wonder what could have been.

The wider rhetoric of DAAR’s work is based on their definition of decolonization. They write: “Decolonization is a counter apparatus that seeks to restore to common use, to fantasy and play, what the colonial order had separated and divided. The goal of decolonization is the construction of counter apparatuses that find new uses for the abandoned structures of domination.” [19] Did our intervention restore the parliament building to common use? The parliament is a Palestinian building, and many of its failings are certainly underpinned by the occupation and Western complicity. But the building itself does not require decolonization as such; rather, it is *the line* that has been deployed solely by the occupier that must be profaned. [20]

Was a counter apparatus created? Perhaps these ambitions are too lofty. The installation is ultimately pedagogical (for contemporary art audiences outside Palestine), but it is not a prospective model for participation or decolonization as described above. It is a spatial graft of the idea of a European commons enacted by Western actors with the necessary citizenships to grant us almost unparalleled civilian access across all the shifting boundary lines, and out into a West-facing exhibition infrastructure. There is a marked difference in the ways in which this work operates and activates in the sites of production (West Bank) and reception (white cube galleries). If making colonization visible to those who otherwise have the luxury of ignoring it is part and parcel of decolonization, then, in this more modest description and scope, the project could be considered a success. The tension in DAAR’s work between making things visible while also trying to be propositional, is often observed in the work of architects employing artistic forms and modes of production. While making things visible may be

enough in certain contexts, the necessary embedding of architecture within the spaces of our everyday lives, and the propositional nature of the work means that for architects, the move of making visible is always followed by a “what next?” DAAR is careful not to describe this work as architecture, but as an operation performed upon existing architecture. The question remains as to what it has achieved in the context of the parliament building. Perhaps it is therefore a matter of viewing this work as an art project rather than an architectural one, a pedagogical project rather than an activist one, a project probably still in the making – a piece of research upon which DAAR will surely build.

To borrow a method of thinking about the parliament from Ernesto Laclau’s essay “What do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics?” [21] there needs to be an “empty” space into which geopolitical history-making can pour. The empty building acts as a signifier for such a space, able to draw in the conflict-ridden and chaotic alliances built in opposition to the frameworks of the external oppressor state. At the same time, through its failure, it is also able to represent those aspects that cannot be homogenized into a functioning official political system because of the Gordian knot of obstructions. The discourse around this work is thus incredibly valuable in making visible the spatial conditions of the occupation in the mostly Western cities of UN veto-ers and abstainers.

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[13] The Jerusalem Regional Labour Court Ruling, Bardan vs. The National Insurance Institute, Israel.

and Avoiding the Nomic Reason,” 2011, online.

re-classify an olive tree as a bush. They wanted to claim that the land was not being actively cultivated as “olive bushes just grow there.”

[18] There was a university course for Palestinian students taught at Al-Quds University, but conversations across the two sites were not facilitated.

[16] There were several accounts of the increasingly bizarre tactics being used to designate land as being uncultivated. One anecdote relates to an Israeli-initiated legal procedure that attempted to

[17] Antonio Negri, quoted in R-Urban Commons Files/Atelier d’Architecture Autogérée, 2012.

[19] Sandi Hilal et al., “The Morning After: Profaning Colonial Architecture,” in *Sensible Politics*, eds. Meg McLagan and Yates McKee (New York: Zone Books, 2012), 434.

[20] Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations* (New York: Zone Books, 2007).

[21] Ernesto Laclau, “What Do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics?” in *Emancipation(s)* (London & New York: Verso, 1996).

CLOSE READINGS

Richard William Hill

Alex Janvier

Art Gallery of Alberta
(Edmonton)
18/05 to 19/08 2012

I proposed this column to *FUSE* because I was concerned about the poverty of critical response to recent exhibitions of contemporary Indigenous art. For a number of good reasons, our best and brightest art writers – with a few notable exceptions – have invested their energies in curating rather than criticism. A healthy art discourse is predicated on a balance between exhibitions and their critical assessment; we have a lively art scene and it merits sincere consideration.

Alex Janvier's retrospective at the Art Gallery of Alberta could easily be divided into two distinct exhibitions: one a brilliant tour de force of energetic, lyrical abstraction, the other a dreadful series of experiments with figuration bordering on the stereotypical. As a senior Indigenous artist (Janvier is of Dene Suline and Sauteaux descent) and one of the first to declare himself a modernist, Janvier is due a serious retrospective. This exhibition, with its apparent desire to represent all aspects of the artist's long career with equal emphasis, winds up making a strong case for the abstract side of his practice and, sadly, an equally convincing demonstration of the weakness of his figurative efforts.

The seeds of both tendencies are evident in some of the artist's earliest work on display. In *Subconscious* #3, a small pencil drawing from 1960 when Janvier was still in art school, the elements of his finest work can be seen in embryonic form. Sinuous lines radiate out from a central point, snaking across the drawing's surface with a graceful, lively energy that is immediately contagious. However, the exhibition opens with a pair of very early figurative works – *Our Lady of the Teepee* (1950) and *Sacred Heart* (1952) – which make a less auspicious

This column is my modest effort to address this imbalance by providing frank reviews of recent exhibitions of contemporary Indigenous art, assessing both the work and its presentation. The commitment I have made is to write only when I feel I can be entirely honest. That's not always easy, but I don't see the point otherwise. We'll see how it goes. There's no fool like an honest fool.

beginning. Granted, these works, painted when the artist was at the Blue Quills Residential School, are juvenilia presented primarily for their biographical significance. My intention then is not to assess their quality, but rather to note how they anticipate the artist's later, troubled relationship to figuration. Both works are painted in the Catholic votive tradition with the usual pre-Renaissance approach to scale and reliance on familiar, well-codified symbolism, although in this case with an Indigenous twist. *Our Lady of the Teepee*, for example, features a Madonna and Child with Indigenous features standing over a tipi and dressed in clothing decorated with abstract Plains motifs. It pleased the Catholics and won an honourable mention for Canada at the International Vatican Exhibition in Rome. [1] Such early achievements (however conservative the venues) paved the way for Janvier's entrance into art school, where he appears to have received a first rate introduction to modernist abstraction. Unfortunately, neither of his formative artistic experiences provided the artist with the formal or conceptual tools that he would need when he returned to figuration later in his career.

In all, the exhibition lingers longer on Janvier's early work than is strictly necessary to demonstrate the route he followed to reach his mature style(s). And given the understandably uneven quality of his early efforts, this is ultimately not to the artist's credit. Assuming we accept, for example, the career significance of a series of relatively weak line-drawing portraits from 1962, do we really need to see all three? Wanting to focus primarily on Janvier's considerable strengths, however, I was especially interested to see his early experiments with automatisme, such as *Automatiste Ink Caterpillars* (1962). This ink drawing is composed of clusters of line-forms scattered across the centre of the work. Most are organized around a single vertical line, with whimsical dots, lines and dashes projecting or radiating out from the original mark with tremendous variety. The influence of this sort of spontaneous mark-making is evident throughout Janvier's abstract work to the extent that it becomes clear that it is a driving engine of his creative process. Many of his most successful abstractions are structured around bold, sweeping lines or brushstrokes that arc out to occupy or divide the canvas and then are elaborated with a dense variety of lines, shapes and colours.

His enthusiastic engagement with automatisme and other movements in modernist abstraction are what place Janvier in such an unusual position as an Indigenous artist of his generation. That said, his path was nearly blocked at the outset by the paternalism of the federal government. After a successful first two years at the institution that would later become the Alberta College of Art and Design, Janvier decided to major in fine arts. Without his consent, the Department of Indian Affairs chose instead to enrol him in the commercial art program. Supportive faculty members Illingworth Kerr and Marion Nicoll advocated on his behalf and Janvier was eventually allowed to major in fine arts (albeit with reduced financial support), graduating with honours in 1960. The fact that he was able to go on to forge a compelling personal style within the modernist movement, in a milieu that was dismissive of or openly hostile to signs of cultural difference, is a tribute to Janvier's persistence and ability. This is why he is



↑
Alex Janvier, *Lubicon* (1988).
Acrylic on canvas.
Art Gallery of Alberta collection.
Courtesy of the AGA.

something of a legend within the Indigenous art community, despite being less known outside these circles and neglected in the major histories of abstract painting in Canada.

Familiar with the intense racism and assimilative pressures that Janvier experienced – he once described the situation he grew up in as “Rhodesian” [2] – I feel compelled to respond to the swirling space of his abstract canvases as an arena of defiant freedom. Each canvas becomes an opportunity to perform this freedom on the most personal terms, giving spontaneous life to dynamic combinations of line, shape and colour that the artist quickly made his own. But the liberation of abstraction was a double-sided gift for an Indigenous artist in the 1960s. One could be free to the extent that one remained non-objective; if subject matter was to enter one's practice, it often

had to do so under the cover of a pseudo-universality that was in reality, as is now obvious, the projection of the dominant ideas in Western thought at the time. Think, for example, of the iconic American critic Clement Greenberg criticizing the Toronto abstract painter Kazuo Nakamura for being “too captured by Oriental ‘taste.’” [3] Janvier himself insisted at one point that, “I am an artist who happens to be an Indian. I am an Indian self that is identified with the Great Spirit and not with the art.” [4] This disavowal gives a sense of the conundrum Indigenous artists faced at the time: it was impossible to be both Indigenous *and* modern.

In trying to recover the Indigenous influences on Janvier's modernist works, art historians, and the artist himself, have noted the inspiration of northern Plains traditions of abstraction. [5] Yet his core stylistic elements – the spontaneous, asymmetrical

[1] Unless otherwise noted, the biographical information in this review comes from Lee-Ann Martin, *The Art of Alex Janvier: His First Thirty Years, 1960-1990* (Thunder Bay: Thunder Bay Art Gallery, 1993). Martin is currently at work on a highly anticipated monograph on Janvier.

[2] Quoted in *ibid.*, 7.

[3] Quoted in Joan Murray, *Painters Eleven in Retrospect* (Oshawa: Robert McLaughlin Gallery, 1979), 76.

[4] Quoted in Jacqueline Fry, *Treaty Numbers 23, 287 and 1171: Three Indian Painters of the Prairies*

(Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1972), unpaginated.

[5] Martin, *Alex Janvier*, 7-8, and Janvier's biography as posted on his website.

compositions, the swirling, undulating lines, the arcing, tapering shapes – all seem to be his own. Questions of his Indigenous identity do erupt from time to time in his early abstractions in less predictable ways, most notably in his choice of titles. The relationship between abstract paintings and titles is often a vexed one. In the absence of explicit subject matter, a title can easily overdetermine a viewer’s experience of the work, and many painters simply numbered their canvases to avoid this. Janvier’s abstractions do tend to have subjects though, however oblique, and in his case the significance of titles becomes complicated. At times they relate directly to the subject and inspiration of a work in a way that is immediately graspable, while at others they seem more cryptic or personal.

Fly, Fly, Fly (1979), for example, was inspired by watching swarms of cluster flies moving across the window of his studio in northern Alberta. The work sets thin radiating spokes of black, dark blue, turquoise, purple, orange and red against a tan linen surface. Other colours appear as well, particularly in the central grouping of marks and shapes. Several pale yellow globes also stand out at various points across the surface. The lines are thin and elegant, but spiky and barbed with hooks. The painting becomes at once a stylized record of the flies’ swarming movement and an evocation of their dark bodies and bristly limbs. For the artist to have been able to so effectively bring forth the unlikely beauty of this experience is a gift of insight to the viewer.

By the mid-1980s many of Janvier’s titles related directly to Indigenous politics. *Lubicon* (1988), one of the finest works in the exhibition, is a lively riot of shapes, lines and colours set against an intense, red background. The core of the composition appears to grow out from a densely patterned centre and then tapers in elegant arcs and curves out toward the edge of the canvas. How this image relates to the political battles of the Lubicon Lake Nation is not at all explicit in the work. Janvier has reportedly claimed that the use of red in the painting was symbolic of his political anger about the degradation of the environment on which the Lubicon depend, but I don’t see how one might deduce that meaning from the work itself; the red appears to me as a beautiful field upon which the astonishing activity of the painting plays out.

[6] Before learning of Janvier’s own characterization of the work, I read it more as an homage to the spirit of the Lubicon struggle. It seems to be a lively and affirmative show of political solidarity: less defeated than Robert Motherwell’s elegies to the Spanish Republic, but functioning in a similar modernist tradition.

Janvier’s Indigenous identity was also referenced through his oft-noted act of signing his pre-1977 artworks with his treaty number. This may seem at first like a modest form of protest, but I suspect one shouldn’t underestimate the anger condensed into that small series of marks at the edge of the canvas. They become little black holes that affect the gravitational field of the entire canvas, threatening, maybe, to swallow all that affirmative, lively energy. But perhaps that’s what it means to be a successful Indigenous modernist: productively trapped between hope and negation. The artist claims both Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee as influences, [7] and in Janvier’s art one can see the former’s joy in lively movement and life-energy tempered to a harder edge at times by a dose of the latter’s sardonic wit. The constant tension between the freedom of pure rhythmic energy and the small eruptions of political anger that occur in their margins and titles make the liberty he takes for himself in the abstractions that much more exhilarating.

Although Janvier included representational elements from time to time in his early paintings, in the late 1980s he took up figuration and figure in the landscape scenes as a primary concern. The move made a certain sense in the context of the period. Modernist abstraction had lost its avant-garde status under the postmodern assault. It was, among other things, representative of the old establishment. At the same time, it was suddenly possible, at least in some corners of the art world, to address questions of ethnicity outside the limited parameters of the modern and the primitive, without being dismissed as parochial. Janvier courageously took up the challenge, creating a series of large figurative paintings in which he addressed his political hopes, fears and anger directly and explicitly in large-scale works for the first time. The project was ambitious enough to fail spectacularly.

The exhibition features one of these mural-sized works, *Nehobetthe (Land before they arrived)* (1992). Janvier divided

the canvas with his familiar sweeping arcs, but now these shapes describe what are, in effect, a series of imaginary windows through which to view scenes of life before European contact. In each scene Indigenous figures and animals occupy a colourful cartoon paradise, a fiction so Romantic and sentimental that it would gag Walt Disney. The figures themselves verge on the stereotypical, and one is reminded of the criticism of some Harlem Renaissance painters who, it was said, could not look beyond internalized stereotypes to imagine a liberated vision of the African-American body. [8] This is a pity given the rich figurative Plains tradition. But there is more convincing freedom, liberation and celebration of life in any of Janvier’s abstractions than in this work, and for that reason a more convincing political expression as well.

Many artists, including those of tremendous ability, have uneven oeuvres, and I am happy to work my way through Janvier’s lesser works if the reward is *Fly, Fly, Fly* and *Lubicon*. But to make the best case for his art in an exhibition, a more judicious selection of works is necessary. I don’t know why this didn’t happen – whether the artist insisted or the curator was genuinely impressed by all the work – but the result under-serves the artist, and therefore the institution and its publics as well. This is most evident in a centre gallery that exemplifies the divided heart of the exhibition, where *Nehobetthe* and *Lubicon* face off on opposite walls. Together they produce a cacophony. Looking one way I find myself thinking of murals I’ve seen on high school walls. Looking the other I can imagine how terrific this exhibition could have been if it had included only the good stuff.

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MAKING IT WORK

Maiko Tanaka

→
Linda Duvall and Peter Kingstone, *Living in 10 Easy Lessons* (2012). Installation shot. Image courtesy of Gallery 44.

Through this column, I will document the particular economies of contemporary art that emerge through the discursive events that accompany and supplement exhibitions, curatorial projects and other mainstage productions. For many public art institutions, the presentation of workshops, roundtables, artists’ talks and the like is a mandated activity, one that is also crucial in terms of securing public funding. Despite the predominance of these activities, they are unevenly documented and hardly ever assessed critically. With this

column, my task is to engage critically with the economies of attention, care and reproduction that are manifested through public programming. Discursive events are often expected to perform a buffering or recuperative action – to educate, create dialogue or mediate conflict. Through responses to specific programmed events, I will endeavor to activate useful concepts, images and actions that can lead towards creating a new vocabulary of solidarity between actors who are entangled in these economies.



The event at Toronto’s Buddies in Bad Times theatre was initially publicized as a panel discussion. However, from the beginning, it was clear that it had been modified into something less formal. There was no panel of experts on the stage but rather a circle of chairs implying that the invited speakers would be mingling with the audience. Another change was the addition of a third-party facilitator, who opened up the event with a request for the audience to participate from a place of respect. She also had us all take a minute to speak to the person on our left and right about our

own expectations and hopes for the event – a moment that turned out very useful for me as I began to understand why there was so much tension in the room. Despite these efforts to open up a horizontal scenario for participation, the event seemed destined from the start to turn into a highly polarized discussion. Clearly there were participants who arrived with their minds set on condemning the socially engaged artwork in question, which had apparently crossed some ethical lines.

The concerns arose from a controversial exhibition featuring new work by artists Linda Duvall and Peter Kingstone,

[1] Email exchange with Lise Beaudry, January 2013.

[6] Ibid., 40.

[7] From Janvier’s official website.

[8] This question has often been raised and debated in relation to the work of Palmer Hayden. For a recent exploration of the question,

see John Ott, “Labeled Stereotypes: Palmer Hayden’s The Janitor Who Paints,” *American Art* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 102-115.



↑
Linda Duvall
and Peter Kingstone,
Living in 10 Easy Lessons (2012).
Installation shot at Gallery 44.
Image courtesy of Gallery 44.

Living in 10 Easy Lessons, exhibited at Gallery 44 (26 October–1 December 2012). A series of videos, posters and educational booklets depict the artists being instructed on everyday life by ten “street-involved” workers, on skills such as doing good business as a freelance drug dealer, faking sex with a client and panhandling etiquette. The controversy centred on the capability of the workers to give informed consent. The artists, along with the programmers of Gallery 44, and even the representatives from Ryerson University’s Masters of Social Work who co-presented the programme, were all targets of critique, and the condemnations came from various members of the social work community, as well as the press and general public. The debate around the exhibition featured critical questions that will be familiar to anyone who has followed the recent history of socially engaged art practice: Had the artists taken advantage of the workers’ vulnerable material and legal realities? Was the knowledge produced from the work gained at the expense of the safety of the workers? The panel discussion had been planned in order to draw out the debate, and perhaps dispel some of the tensions around the work. Unfortunately, the instruc-

tors from the videos were not present to give their position on the matter, as they had earlier that day opted out of participating.

The motivation behind outreach programming in the context of publically funded artist-run culture in Canada is to enhance accessibility to exhibitions and other core productions by educating publics and reaching new audiences. This trend is reflected in the aspects of Gallery 44’s mandate, which emphasizes maintaining an accessible, open space of exchange and dialogue. In relation to the programme for *Living in 10 Easy Lessons*, Gallery 44 director Lise Beaudry shared that the aim was to provide a space for concerned communities to address “what the exhibition proposed: to critically disrupt social assumptions and challenge us to question.” [1] Asking questions and disrupting assumptions is standard fare and a commonly accepted and reproduced ambition in the public sector of contemporary art. There is value in these practices of outreach in themselves, but when taken for granted as a standard, we risk missing out on the need to respond differently to other, more urgent, matters.

Does focusing on the questions proposed by this exhibition mean overlooking

its claims? Embedded in Kingstone and Duvall’s work are the strong claims that the instructors featured in the videos do in fact have the ability to give consent, that they can consent to sharing their knowledge, and that the very fact of this sharing affirms the value of this knowledge. These claims and affirmations are evident through the materials and process of the artwork, and are supported by the Adelaide Resource Centre for Women, the community centre that mediated the artists’ interactions with the instructors. Despite their clarity, these claims were undermined in the programming of an event that failed to acknowledge them, thus losing out on an opportunity to develop a critique consistent with the strength of the artwork’s most challenging claims. What can we make of those claims put forth and retracted? Of the consent given, refused and still shifting?

In reading the exhibition text (a critical response from independent curator and writer cheyanne turions) and talking to the artists, one quickly learns about the efforts made to foster dialogue and consent during the making of the work. These included the very pivotal support of the Adelaide Resource Centre for Women. The artists worked with the centre to frame the instructors’ participation in the project so that each of them could each make a decision based on full, prior and informed consent.

During the public programming, it was revealed that although the instructors signed consent forms for the use of their images in exhibition material, objections arose as the poster series, which distilled scenes and quotes from the lessons, hit the streets in the neighbourhoods of the instructors. One of them objected to the specific image used, and despite the signed consent form, she managed to renegotiate the image with the artists, and was able to change the text into something they all felt more comfortable with. In this sense, consent was negotiated in varying degrees at different moments in the project. Not only was informed consent possible for the workers, but this case also demonstrated a position of agency by being able to contribute to critical matters of politics—the framing of their representation and making a difference in the artwork’s outcome.

The exhibition work itself represents scenes or expresses moments when the agency of the instructors themselves is quite evident, as can be seen, for instance, in the non-hierarchical videos featuring conversational Q&A sessions with

the instructors. Consistent throughout all ten videos is a shot of either Duvall or Kingstone sitting side by side with one of the instructors, the seating arrangement signifying reciprocity or equity between parties. There are clues in the performative execution of the works as well. It becomes obvious in the videos that the questions were prepared beforehand, but the instructors are also clearly speaking from their own experiences, in their own words, sometimes even ignoring the format of the question and answering on their own terms.

Furthermore, the artists’ responses to each lesson are measured and calm, as demonstrated by their facial expressions and the genuine curiosity in their voices. The tone is consistent throughout all the videos, just as one would expect from a reaction to everyday living skills, no more special or shocking than other, less socially stigmatized skills. Rather than affirming outright the value of their knowledge, this consistent response helps destabilize the notion that the artists are providing some kind of service to the instructors via a legitimization of the knowledge they offer.

While these aspects of the work and process may support the agency of the instructors and redeem the artwork in some way, there are nonetheless certain flaws that should be acknowledged. Perhaps these can be best framed through the questions: Who is asking the questions, who is controlling the means of presentation, and who benefits in the end? For example, although set up to play off the archetypal student/teacher dynamic where the artist asks the worker to impart their knowledge for their own benefit, the former in fact has all the power in the presentation of this knowledge.

Also, by critically asking who asks the questions, we confront a hierarchy of knowledge, with serious implications for those giving the answers. When the instructors impart knowledge required for their street-work, they are simultaneously revealing the impact of the gendered, material and economic conditions of their work on a day-to-day basis, which are always attached to social stigma. A reciprocal revealing of the conditions of the “students” or artists does not take place.

These flaws were brought out during the public programming, particularly from the social work community. However, the potential constructiveness of these critiques was thwarted because the artists and the gallery staff were unable or unwilling

to reinforce the artwork’s claims on the notion of consent. In fact, the programming actually worked to contradict and undo the strong positions that the work takes.

This resulted in creating further discrepancies between those whose knowledge was meant to be valorized and those whose knowledge was actually valorized. For example, at the beginning of the event, when asked by the facilitator what the goal of the evening was for them, Duvall said she wanted to learn, while Kingstone’s wish was to include more diversity in his community. What gets unravelled from these two statements is that learning from diversity is not an innocent endeavour, nor does it carry an automatic value. It reveals that this position is one that emphasizes questioning and learning more than providing answers—and this is made possible through the privilege that the artist affords, which is opposed not only to the street workers’ daily existence, but to social workers’ outcome-based roles. This says a lot about the differences between the material and working conditions and professional ambitions of the various workers involved. For instance, as one commentator observed during the discussion, the project may reap benefits for Ryerson’s Faculty of Social Work in terms of re-examining the nature of quantitative and qualitative research and challenging the foundations of neoliberal outcome-based education. But when it comes to the instructors themselves, as one social worker astutely pointed out, their material conditions remain intact despite the benefits their knowledge produces for other fields.

During the public programming, the reluctance of the artists to defend the claims of their artwork also paved the way for the opposing social workers to make assumptions and patronizing statements about both the artists and the instructors during the event. It was clear that an explicit recounting of all the measures the artists took to build consent would not have made a difference. In the discussion of the controversial poster campaign, the chastising of the artists went on well after Duvall’s explanation of the direct action they took to resolve the dispute with the instructors. One speaker pleaded for humility in working with such vulnerable people. “There is a lot of literature on this,” someone else added in a condescending tone. The disciplinary chauvinism these arguments engendered spoke much louder than any nuanced critique

they encompassed, adding fuel to the shaming fire. Even when someone from the audience asked what the practical danger for the women being represented in the posters actually was, no one provided a thoroughly convincing response, and instead continued to resort to hearsay, scandal and moralizing to maintain their position and discredit the artistic work.

In response to an online thread on NetTime regarding the consent practices of sex work, Alessandra Renzi asks how consent informs our own lives: “Ideally, consent is not just about a yes or no, but about degrees of freedom to negotiate something, to ask questions that shape informed choices, to understand one’s own boundaries, to say ‘stop’ or ‘I changed my mind’ if necessary and, especially, to create safe spaces within which consent can be given and respected. How does consent inform our unpaid daily sex lives? And our labour lives?” [2] Could this rich and politicized notion of consent ground a new position from which to counter the neutralizing and recuperative aspects of open-ended outreach mandates for artist-run centres? If anything, the definition of consent here suggests that what the instructors have been negotiating through their withdrawal and renegotiations for participation is founded less on whether they or their knowledge should be made visible or not, but rather on the degrees of consent in the framing and distribution of their knowledge and skills in various contexts. As such, their withdrawal from the public programming may have been the sharpest and most revealing intervention of all.

Maiko Tanaka collaborates on curatorial projects at the intersection of art, pedagogy, cultural politics and collective action. Since 2010 she has co-curated the ongoing research, exhibition and touring project “The Grand Domestic Revolution (GDR),” with Casco in Utrecht. Prior to that, Tanaka organized the international conference exhibition, “Extra-curricular: Between Art & Pedagogy,” which presented alternative structures for mobilizing radical pedagogical art practices, as part of her curatorial residency at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery. She is currently an active member of the Read-in collective, participates in the Unlearning project group and serves on the Programming Committee and Board of Gendai Gallery. Tanaka is a candidate in the Masters in Visual Studies at the University of Toronto.

[1] Email exchange with Lise Beaudry, January 2013.

[2] Alessandra Renzi, “Re: <nettime> Sex Work and Consent @transmediale” (16 February 2012; online).

Sector Zero – On the Brink of Beirut

Film (70 min), 2011.

Directed by Nadim Mishlawi.
Premiered at the 2011 Dubai International
Film Festival (Dubai 08/12/2011)

Review by Mike Hoolboom

When I slip Nadim Mishlawi's *Sector Zero* DVD from its sleeve, my heart is already in my throat. I am expecting to be hurt by these pictures from Lebanon, and the cruel accident of this country's geography, but from the very opening images I am assured that beauty will be a regular accompaniment. The camera seeks out the light, it caresses the broken walls of the hospital in which much of the film is shot, the touch is tender and sensitive. The word "camera" has its roots in the Latin for "room," which cinematographer Talal Khoury seems aware of in his lyric exploration of spaces in a factory, a slaughterhouse and a tannery. People are secondary here, the figures have become the ground, while the walls and floors are carefully and slowly observed. Slow, the looking is so slow, as if there were time enough to gather all the lives that lived between these walls, that touched this table and looked out these windows. The worn surfaces shimmer with

a flickering, hopeful light, as the camera draws its focal planes in and out of focus, breathing with the architecture. Not unusually, this formal, nearly studied beauty is both cover story and uncovering. It offers the qualities of touch.

Where are we? Mishlawi's architectural explorations are perched at the edge of Beirut in what one commentator names "a city of outsiders... a reflection of Lebanon." [1] As architect and urbanist Sandra Frem notes, "Beirut's earliest experience with globalization dates back to 1888, when it was proclaimed the capital of the Ottoman province." [2] A growing population in the new port required that its quarantine facility (*karantina* in Ottoman Turkish) be moved from the city centre to its outskirts, and a hospital was built around it. Though the facility didn't last, the name stuck, as the region's outcasts came to find a home in this outlying area. In the 1920s there were Armenians fleeing the Turkish genocide, and in 1948 Palestinians came rushing

from their former homes at gunpoint as the new nation of Israel expelled its native sons and daughters. Kurds flowed in from what had been Kurdistan as boundaries shifted, traders came from Jordan and Iraq. Eventually, the sprawl extended to encircle Beirut in what came to be known as the "misery belt," and city officials decided to build a wall to hide its unwanted residents.

How do you make a portrait of a neighbourhood? Three men, ghosts of light and shadow, appear in succession, often in voice-over. First, political historian Hazem Saghieh details the waves of immigrant outcasts that gathered to form "Beirut's only ghetto." He recounts that during Lebanon's civil war (1975-1990), many in the densely populated Palestinian refugee camps were massacred by Christian militias. In one stand-alone sequence, historical footage is introduced. It is shot from the streets, and shows mostly teenagers, some of them dressed like soldiers, crouched in the rubble of what used to be home, staring through rifle sights, or else rushing out to save a wounded friend, only to be gunned down.

The second ghost voice belongs to Beirut architect Bernard Khoury – designer of the renowned nightclub B018, built eight years after "the end" of the civil war and whose office is nestled squarely in the Karantina – weighs in with personal recollections:

I came back to Beirut in 1993 and obviously did not find any work... I thought I was going to be a great architectural warrior that was going to take part in the reconstruction of his country... Not only rebuilding buildings, but the reconstruction of a nation, only to realize a few years later that the reconstruction never really happened. In order for such a project to be politically feasible, you have to have some kind of political consensus, you have to go through a scarring process. This never really happened in Beirut. After 1990, we went through a long denial period which we're still in. [3]

According to the director, the film was once going to be named *In the Freudian Slip*. [4] Little wonder then, that the third voice of *Sector Zero* belongs to psychoanalyst Chawki Azouri, who at one point states, "Histor-



↑
Nadim Mishlawi, *Sector Zero* (2011).
Film still.
Courtesy of MC Distribution.

[1] Dr. Chawki Azouri in *Future of the Arab City* (lecture, American University of Beirut, Beirut, 2 October 2009).
[2] Sandra Frem, "Reclaiming the Infrastructural Landscape: the Case of Nahr Beirut," *Transnational Tides* and the
[3] Bernard Khoury, "New Wars in Progress," (lecture, University of Michigan Art
and Design, Ann Arbor, 8 October 2009).
[4] Leah Caldwell, "Nadim Mishlawi: Behind the Walls of *Sector Zero*," *Al-Akhbar English* (7 April 2012; online)

ically, primitive tribes arrived at the idea of monotheism and of government simultaneously. Once government had been formed on the ground, God was formed in the sky." [5] Does a nation have an unconscious? How many can fit on that couch? Azouri argues that the creation of group identity requires an enemy that must be found within and then cast out. He goes on to conjure a national Oedipal narrative, arguing that the beginnings of democracy arrive in a collective killing of the father. "In Freud's view, we become what we cannot have, and desire (and punish) what we are compelled to disown." – Adam Phillips [6]

Azouri argues that the Karantina is at the heart of Lebanon's national life, precisely because it is home to so much that is unwanted. The outskirts of Beirut are thus figured as a national, even international, dumping ground, a refuse container for all that cannot be contained within the city's globalized crossroads. It is home to a slaughterhouse, a garbage dump, a metal factory. Can we perhaps look to the Karantina's bloodied streets for the necessary glue, the binding agent, that will re-imagine Lebanon's national project?

"It is the individual who remembers, while groups forget because it is in their interest to forget." [7]

Mike Hoolboom is a Canadian media artist whose work can be found at fringeonline.ca and mikehoolboom.com. His most recent movie is *Lacan Palestine* (2012), a feature length, found-footage essay.

[5] Quoted in *Sector Zero*.

[6] Adam Phillips, *Terrors and Experts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 76.

[7] Azouri, quoted in *Sector Zero*.

Game Over – Reframing Combat in Diaspora Space

Traveling exhibition
curated by Vicky Moufawad-Paul,
at MAI
17/11 to 15/12/2012

Review by Marty Fink

In *Blown Up: Gaming and War*, video games inspire new possibilities for the representational role of militarization, occupation, and racial violence within emerging interactive media. Toronto-based curator Vicky Moufawad-Paul brings together installations by Wafaa Bilal, Harun Farocki and Mohammed Mohsen. Displayed at MAI (Montréal, arts interculturels) from 17 November to 15 December 2012, *Blown Up* raises challenging questions about mediated representations of violence and their position within gallery and gaming space. The exhibit showcases video games within the art world, asking how the representational violence characteristic of gaming culture might be viewed not merely as a catalyst for off-screen violence, but as resisting the normalized spectacle of warfare and racial violence within dominant media. Gallery visitors with no prior knowledge of video games are invited to engage

with a stark sensory environment that makes military violence visible in ways oppositional to the objectives of mainstream news reporting. The video games in the exhibit cast the violence of war not as a necessary or inevitable threat but as an outcome of displacement and occupation. In shifting the position of the viewer from a passive recipient of such representations to the active roles of gamer and witness, *Blown Up* creates new spaces through which to build diasporic disidentifications and migrant self-representations that reframe militaristic violence within mediated space.

Moufawad-Paul's curation surrounds viewers in darkness. [1] A single illuminated bench in an otherwise shadowy room positions gallery visitors in front of two adjacent screens to watch Farocki's two-channel film loop, *Serious Games I-IV* (2009-10), in which spotlighted viewers witness the documentation of American soldiers playing

a video game that will train them for their upcoming attack on Afghanistan. [2] The dramatic overhead illumination of MAI's viewing bench adds significant emphasis to this spectacle of watching. Farocki's viewers – as well as those viewing them from amidst the gallery's surrounding darkness – are urged to question not only the links between video games and institutional violence but also the significance of collective witnessing as a form of resistance to occupation and war.

Confronted with their intended position of identification with the violent progression of the game, visitors are compelled, both as a viewing public and on a personal level, to confront disturbing affects of passivity in the face of widespread technologies of militarization. This piece uses viewers' collective discomfort as a catalyst to move them out of a helpless individual position as spectator and into a more public one that breaks down the seamless alliance between technological advancement and war.

Across the gallery from *Serious Games*, the exhibit's only remaining overhead light beams down onto a podium facing a large-screen projection of Bilal's *The Night of Bush Capturing: A Virtual Jihadi* (2008). [3] The lit viewer's avatar in the game is the artist himself, who casts his own virtual body as a suicide-bomber to avenge the real-life death of his brother. [4] Moufawad-Paul's staging of the artworks draws further attention to the spotlighted viewer, who not propels the game forward but also becomes part of the gallery's primary spectacle. Through the embodied participation of its illuminated player, the effects of Bilal's fabricated shoot-to-kill scenario become not merely representational but also

[1] Though the three installations' video screens are individually illuminated, the sparse use of overhead lighting creates a focus not only on the games, but also on gallery visitors as they participate. Only a total of

four lights shine down from above, three of which illuminate a bench upon which viewers are offered headsets to watch Farocki's *Serious Games*.

[2] While one screen displays the digital game in action, the other features uniformed cadets playing it in a training facility.

[3] Illuminated by the overhead light, the viewer

at the podium is offered a keyboard, headset, and mouse through which to navigate the installation.

[4] Bilal's autobiographical positioning within the game references his own brother's



↑
Harun Farocki,
Serious Games 1: Watson is Down
2 channel video, 2010

physical, prompting gallery visitors to consider strategies for disrupting the game’s enticing progression. And indeed, the installation succeeds in framing participation in violence as an act that collectively rescripts and critiques the military and racial representations that saturate Western media.

Located between these two illuminated areas within the exhibit stands an upright arcade-style console featuring Mohsen’s *Weak* (2010), [5] an 1980s-era platform encasing an intricate pastiche of *Pac-Man*-style graphics, 1970s Egyptian pop music, and even fragments of poetry. Its architecture impels viewers to not only move through the manual labyrinth of the game but also through the affects of loss and displacement it triggers. The nostalgia of *Weak*’s retro gaming aesthetic also lends value to the fragmented sensory

memories of Mohsen’s childhood within the Palestinian diaspora.

Just as Farocki and Bilal’s installations urge viewers to consider their role as witness, perpetrator, or even resistor of violence, *Weak*’s nostalgia prompts viewer identifications with migration, exile and racialization. The piece urges viewers to stitch together the fragments of Moshen’s experience of war, racial violence and displacement through their engagement with the game. In navigating the console, viewers are faced with the futility of attempting to apprehend logics of both gaming technology and of war.

Weak therefore links the public experience of playing video games within gallery space to prior incarnations of gaming space, from the arcade to the cell phone, which have transformed alongside developments in new media. [6] As Moufawad-Paul

identifies in her curatorial essay, when public space within occupied territories becomes a zone not of play but of militarization, then the simulation of war within the domestic sphere of video gaming can become a transformative site of resistance. [7] Bringing these transformative spaces out of the home and into the gallery’s inquisitive lighting, *Blown Up* offers the opportunity for disidentification from white heteronormative avatars while urging viewers to question their spatial alignments within mediated acts of representational violence.

Blown Up offers a wide range of gaming aesthetics, from the early arcade culture of Mohsen’s childhood memories to Nintendo 64 *James Bond*-esque templates, from the now-obsolete MS Windows interfaces of Bilal’s work to the early-2000s laptop culture

of Farocki’s documentation of military training. In doing so, these works connect an archive of digital invention with a corresponding history of Islamophobic media representation. In bringing these three installations together within a single gaming/artistic space, *Blown Up* conjures a linked history of diasporic cultural interventions into both gaming technology and racial representation. It therefore succeeds in presenting violence as necessarily interconnected with technological advancements in both military combat and media industries. Importantly, by recognizing the capacity of technology to not merely perpetuate violence but also to document and offset it, the archive *Blown Up* builds urges viewers to reclaim gaming narratives in order to challenge the power mechanisms of occupation and war.

Marty Fink works with archives, zines and new media to investigate Trans* representation and homo diasporas. Fink’s writing has appeared in venues including *Science Fiction Studies* and *The Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*. Fink’s current research traces the circulation of HIV prevention materials in prisons to understand shifts in technology from print to digital formats. Fink recently received a PhD in English from the City University of New York (CUNY). Fink currently works with the Prisoner Correspondence Project in Montreal and teaches English and Women’s Studies at Concordia University.

death at the hands of American soldiers. By placing himself into the action, he draws attention to both the vulnerability of Iraqi civilians within war, as well as the effects of racist representations in cultural outlets like *Quest for Saddam*, a video game released by Petrilla Entertainment in 2003, which Bilal’s console

emulates. It also references an adaptation of this original release that features a new skin that transforms the popular Islamophobic game into a corresponding hunt for President Bush, and places the viewer at the seat of the action. Bilal’s home screen features camp reproductions of so-called terrorists, talking heads, and WMDs (Weapons of Mass

Destruction), using Halloween fonts, gothic hillsides, and spider webs to accentuate the sensationalism of the endeavour.

[5] Unlike the other two installations that are experienced through headphones, Mohsen’s console—though not illuminated by overhead lighting—loudly calls

attention to the user perched at its interface. The call of its booming, 8-bit-inspired soundtrack entices gallery visitors to approach and play the game.

[6] While arcade settings eventually gave way to individual consoles to enjoy in private, domestic space, current developments in

handheld technology have reintegrated gaming experiences into the public sphere. Similar adaptations in film—from the glory of the pre-war cinema experience to home entertainment centres to current YouTube and handheld culture—raise associated questions regarding collective consumption, mass

indoctrination and the spectator’s potential for resistance.

[7] Vicky Moufawad-Paul, “Blown Up: Gaming and War” (Montreal: *MAI*, 2012).

Eyal Weizman's *The Least of All Possible Evils*

Eyal Weizman,
*The Least of All Possible Evils:
Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza*
(London and New York: Verso, 2011).

Review by Etienne Turpin

“O Pangloss!” exclaimed Candide, “*this is a strange genealogy! Wasn’t the devil at the root of it?*”

“*Not at all,*” replied the great man. “*It was something indispensable in this best of worlds, a necessary ingredient.*”

Beginning with an agile reading of the sequence of disasters that constitute the narrative of Voltaire’s *Candide* (1759), the Israeli architect Eyal Weizman has, in his latest monograph, *The Least of All Possible Evils* (*LPE*), initiated another productive foray into our optimized “humanitarian present.” [1] In his previous book, *Hollow Land: Israel’s Architecture of Occupation* (2007), Weizman delivered a compelling and comprehensive stratigraphic reading of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, moving through

the bio-social-technical assemblages that constitute the conflict, from the polluted aquifers under the West Bank to the airspace regularly patrolled by drones above the Gaza Strip. [2] A key problem created by the Israeli occupation, in Weizman’s designation, was the UN Relief and Works Agency’s (UNRWA) responsibility for the construction and maintenance of housing in the Jenin refugee camp in the north of the West Bank, following an attack by the Israeli military in 2002. The reconstruction of destroyed buildings in the camp by the UNRWA signalled, for Weizman, the “humanitarian paradox” wherein humanitarian relief can simultaneously increase political oppression. The radical architecture research project of *Hollow Land* clearly anticipates *The Least of All Possible Evils*, but the new book expands the context for thinking

humanitarian interventions among multinational institutions, juridical formations, and spatial configurations, thus positioning the Israeli occupation as an exemplary case within a broader trajectory of pervasive contemporary violence. [3]

It is within this general context that readers of *LPE* will encounter new conceptual categories to help order the understanding of militarized conflict: “The diffuse body of customs and conventions that make up *jus in bello*, the laws of war otherwise known as international humanitarian law (IHL), have since the end of the Cold War increasingly become the frame within which the calculation and application of military violence takes place.” [4] Weizman adds, “The juridical categories of ‘necessity’ and ‘proportionality’ seem to be among the most popular terms employed in designing and monitoring state violence.” [5]

Precisely because of the ubiquitous vernacular reference to “disproportionate” violence in media and cultural discourse, Weizman goes on to explain that IHL is not designed to prevent or end wars, but to manage the ways in which militaries wage them; from this perspective, the Panglossian principle of lesser evil operates most effectively as the principle of *proportionality*. In Weizman’s words: “Different versions of it have been used to describe different types of balancing acts, most often in situations where some rights contradict others, or when individual rights are weighed against public interests, or against administrative or economic policies. Within the context

of IHL, however, proportionality is a moderating principle that seeks to constrain the use of force.” [6] As it is codified in Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions of 1977, we are reminded that, “Proportionality thus demands the establishment of a proper relation between unavoidable means and necessary ends. Which, considering the choice of military means, the principle calls for a balance to be established between military objectives and anticipated damage to civilian life and property. Proportionality is thus not about clear lines of prohibition but rather about calculating and determining balances and degrees.” [7] It is this proportion of optimized conflict and military aggression—to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way, as Aristotle once suggested in the *Nicomachean Ethics*—that is considered in the subsequent case studies. [8]

In the remainder of the book, Weizman moves through three key cases, first analyzing the difficulties facing *Médecins Sans Frontières* President Rony Brauman as he navigated the politics of affinity and anonymity during the relief effort for the Ethiopian famine of the mid-1980s (“Arendt in Ethiopia”); then, explicating the complex visual economy of courtroom models in an Israeli High Court of Justice case, argued by the Jerusalem-based Palestinian human rights lawyer Muhammad Dahla, regarding the legality of the separation wall in the Palestinian village of Beit Sourik (“The Best of All Possible Walls”); and, finally, considering the strange case of Marc Garlasco’s

[1] An earlier version of the book was published in Italian as *Il male minore* (Rome: Edizioni Nottetempo, 2009).

[2] Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel’s Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007). For a discussion of evidence within a practice of forensic architecture addressing environmental pollution, see Paulo Tavares, “Murky

Evidence: Environmental Forensics in the Age of the Anthropocene,” *Cabinet* 43 (Fall 2011): 101-105.

[3] Weizman, *Hollow Land*, 205. For a detailed explanation of the transition from *Hollow Land* to *The Least of All Possible Evils*, see Eyal Weizman, “Political Plastic,” *Collapse* 6 (July 2010): 257-303.

[4] Weizman *LPE* (2011), 10.

[5] *Ibid.*, 10.

[6] *Ibid.*, 11.

[7] *Ibid.*, 11.

[8] For a discussion of the aesthetics of forensic architecture in relation to the economy of visual evidence, see Thomas Keenan and Eyal Weizman, *Mengle’s Skull: The Advent of Forensic Aesthetics* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012).

role in Human Rights Watch's investigations following his role as an analyst in the US Defense Intelligence Agency, where he selected bombing targets and attendant munitions, and conducted "proportionality assessments" in anticipation of military attacks ("Forensic Architecture: Only the Criminal Can Solve the Crime"). These chapters – each provocative enough on its own to demand much greater consideration – provide sufficient material, in Weizman's estimation, for a more schematic analysis of the shifting role that evidence plays in the prosecution of war crimes; that is, we are asked to track the move from the predominance of witness testimony to an increasing reliance on the expert witness, or more specifically, from the narrative provided by the subject of a given crime, to the objective material evidence of a criminal act. Of course, much is at stake in this transformation of the juridical apparatus, and despite the brevity of Weizman's conclusions, it is clear that the implications of the shift beckon the attention of political activists and scholars alike.

In the epoch of the European enlightenment,

Voltaire was willing to ridicule Leibniz's theological optimism, wherein the best of all possible worlds was guaranteed by a divine calculus that permitted forms of destructive evil in order to optimize the invisible and mysterious good occurring elsewhere. Currently less subject to ridicule, but certainly no less pernicious, is the condition wherein the optimal forms of destruction called for by new standards of international humanitarian law shield criminal perpetrators whose precise violence increases alongside the suffering of the oppressed who struggle against the paradoxes of our humanitarian present.

Etienne Turpin is, itinerantly, a teacher, writer, editor, and curator. Currently, he is a Research Fellow at the University of Michigan's Center for Southeast Asian Studies and a lecturer in architecture at the Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning. He is principal investigator, with Meredith Miller, of *Architecture + Adaptation: Design for Hyper-complexity*, and a contributing editor of *Scapegoat: Architecture | Landscape | Political Economy*. Through these and other projects, Turpin works with colleagues, contributors, collaborators, and students to learn about and through modes of inquiry such as making, building, philosophy, aesthetic confusion and design research. These collaborative efforts work to assemble worlds that can sustain passion, pleasure and conviction.



FÉMINISMES ÉLECTRIQUES

Leila Pourtavaf, ed.,
Féminismes Électriques
(Montreal: La Centrale
Galerie Powerhouse, 2012).

Review by Sara Rozenberg

This past fall, Montréal's La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse released its latest publication, a collection reflecting on the last ten years of activity at the feminist artist-run centre. I had a lot of big questions when I picked up this book. I wondered what a coherent publication around the topic of feminist art would look like at this moment, and what it would mean for it to come out of an artist-run centre. I was also excited to read about the type of work that was taking place at La Centrale. As I learned, the centre was founded in 1973 and is considered one of the first women's galleries in North America.

At the time of writing, just two months after the Toronto launch of *Féminismes Électriques* on 28 September 2012, the Toronto Women's Bookstore, an institution with a similar history of emergence in the 1970s, announced its closure. The loss of this space raised issues of sustainability and direction, over generations and through permutations of the ideas of feminism and politics, as well as the current possibilities and challenges of maintaining feminist resources, all of which resonates clearly with the themes and concerns developed in

La Centrale's book.

The introduction to *Féminismes Électriques* opens with a consideration of La Centrale's inception, written by the editor of the collection, Leila Pourtavaf, who locates the gallery's emergence within the context of a growing number of both women-run initiatives and artist-run centres in North America. It's a context that highlights the historic relationship between the realization of a feminist politics and the organizational model of the artist-run centre (decentralized, not-for-profit, participatory and non-hierarchical) as a critical site for the promotion of experimental and politicized art.

While *Féminismes Électriques* is on the one hand an archive of a decade in La Centrale's history, the focus of the collection is the pivotal shift in official mandate that took place in 2007, to better reflect the commitments of its members. Most notably, the new mandate seeks to prioritize solidarity, trans-inclusion and inter-generational dialogue, focusing on local and global struggles and relationships of power, while continually engaging with, and critiquing, feminist discourses and debates.

The collection is made up of essays, conversations, programming notes and photographs that document the works, interventions and practices of featured artists, as well as the centre itself – its recent move positions the gallery's storefront as a public intervention site, strategically located to interact with the direct surroundings of the centre at a given time. The contributors, variously involved with the centre, offer insights and descriptions of material practices and art processes amidst dense theoretical discussions, organizational criticisms, self-reflections and historical documentation. This attention to creative practice is refreshing, totally engrossing and highlights these works as interventions that reach well beyond this publication.

Many readers will likely encounter a challenge when presented with such a multifaceted text based around a particular organization's history. Namely, it's a challenge of entry points – to understand what issues, discourses and institutional histories are being addressed by La Centrale's members, what the centre's community is concerned with in terms of local struggles and practices, and how these fit within broader concerns, both globally and within feminist art. I keep returning to Trish Salah's statement in "An-Identity Poetics and Feminist Artist-Run Centres," a brilliant, two-part essay on trans-inclusion and identity politics in the context of queer feminist utopias: "It makes a difference when and where we think about these questions of identity" (86). Based on talks given at La Centrale during the self-reflection process that led to the 2007 mandate change, the piece offers clearly situated points of criticism and insists on definitions that break down terms like "post-feminism" into their practical meanings. It also features great attention to language and the logic of rhetoric, extending to specific examples where utopian visions

have failed.

In "GENDER ALARM! Queer Feminist Exhibitions in the 'Year of Feminist Art,'" Helena Reckitt considers a group exhibition put on by La Centrale to mark their new direction, and does so in relation to other exhibitions that took place around the same time: small queer feminist art shows that influenced the centre's inaugural event, and two large-scale museum exhibits (*WACK!* and *Global Feminisms*) that received institutional recognition in the US. It's a thorough consideration of contemporary queer feminist art practices, their pleasures and limitations, and their historical and generational influences.

Thérèse St-Gelais also takes up the subject of generational continuity by comparing works by contemporary Quebec performance artists to those from the 1970s, at the level of aesthetics: performing acts of cleaning, recasting kitchen appliances, &c. The essay brings attention to parallels in imagery and actions used in performance works across generational lines. This framework ultimately leads to a consideration of how incessant, disturbing and continuous actions might perform a contemporary feminist subject.

The second half of *Féminismes Électriques* is made up of conversations offering organic discussions about art production and issues that come out of this type of work. The first piece in the section offers a detailed look at aesthetic approaches and influences in works by Stéphanie Chabot and Dominique Pétrin, who reflect on the impact of colour saturation, how visual fictions disrupt logic, the use of clichéd motifs and the figure of the witch.

Reena Katz opens her conversation with Jumana Manna with the words: "Let me begin by saying that your work gives me chills..." (147). I have the same visceral response to her work just reading descriptions of Manna's material and aesthetic practices, not to mention the images of the pieces included

with the text. The conversation moves on to the question of love as political act and to a profound description of existential loss stripped of politics and geography in the video work *Familiar* (2007). It's a brilliant conversation around knowledge production in art and strategies in presenting directly and indirectly political art; the text addresses the questions of urgency as well as commodification of the Palestinian cause, knowledge sources in cultural production in relation to Palestine, and how aesthetics communicates affect and relates to the political imagination.

I'll end with a bold suggestion made by Chris Kraus in a conversation about Semiotext(e) that frames publishing as a curatorial practice. In the context of music, literary and experimental film markets that marginalize so many artists and practices,

Kraus suggests that "the art world has become the last real cultural venue" (174). In the context of La Centrale, I think it's worth considering this statement in relation to the gallery's transdisciplinary programming, its focus on critical art practices, its formal re-evaluation of its commitments to social justice, and its history as a feminist artist-run centre.

Sara Rozenberg is a writer, editor and administrator living in Toronto. She holds an MA from the Women and Gender Studies Institute at the University of Toronto, and is currently developing a collaborative project that addresses labour issues amongst Toronto-based artists. She is also a member of the FUSE Board of Directors.



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PROJECT STATEMENTS

Kandis Friesen
Actual Size (2013)
(pages 10 to 14)

Architectural and engineering plans articulate the form and function of intended constructions—the flow of substances, entry and exit points, joints, connections and foundations—and reveal the dispersion of power that sustains these structures. The flow of capital surrounding Israel's occupation has been monitored and tracked through the work of activists in Palestine, Israel and around the world. Actual Size diagrams these grassroots efforts to follow the trails of profit and document the industry of occupation, while also visualizing the materials (and materiality) of the tools of surveillance, occupation and control. From the high-tech biometrics of the Basel Project, which tracks Palestinian movement into and out of Israel, to the razing of over 100,000 trees on Palestinian land, to a towering concrete wall complex spanning seven hundred kilometres, it can be difficult to understand the sheer mass and intricate violence of such endeavours. It becomes a bit clearer when the lines of connection are drawn, between car manufacturing and armoured military vehicles, creative video software and surveillance tracking systems, aircraft production and armed Unmanned Aerial Vehicles—the actual size just keeps on growing.

←
My Beloved Omar,
I wrote you a list of dishes that I hope
you will use, and remember me
every time you open this Agenda.
Please try to use these recipes.
Mama

Courtesy of Basil AlZeri and
Suad ElHaj Hassan.

Born in Winnipeg, Manitoba in 1978, **Kandis Friesen** is a Montreal-based artist working in video, sound, performance, drawing and installation. Her interests lie in contexts of labour and production, sites of national and cultural identity, and the role of documents and archives in constructions of collective memory. Her work has been shown at galleries and festivals across Canada and internationally, and among many projects, she is currently working on the Mennonite Video Archive Project, a collaborative collection of work activating the archive as public space.

Sarah Pupo
in collaboration
with Josh Pavan
Lady Gaza
(page 17)

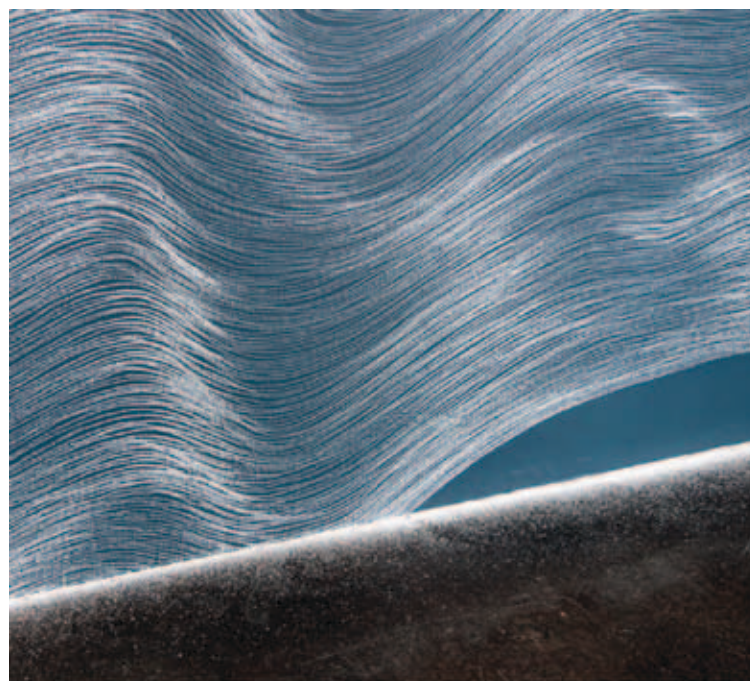
Sarah Pupo was born in Toronto, Ontario and lives in Montreal, Quebec. Through painting, drawing and animation she works with methods of making that place value on intuition, ritual, associative thinking and the flux of chance and control. Her practice is rooted in a desire to undermine hierarchies privileging rational, linear experience over that which lies beyond traditional means of perception and understanding. Recent projects include a solo show at La Centrale in Montreal, Quebec, group shows in Vancouver and Berlin and a collaborative animation with the Norwegian recording artist, Nina Nielsen.

Joshua Pavan is an Alberta-bred queen relocated to Montreal where he works as a trade unionist and community organizer. In the summer of 2007, he was one of the co-founders of Pervers/Cité, Montreal's radical queer summer festival. When not figuring out political drag as the Lady Gaza, he can be found defending the honour of misunderstood popstars.

Haitham Ennasr
A Game of Shater Hassan
(pages 26–27)

A Game of Shater Hassan is a nonlinear, semi-autobiographical project that explores notions of memory, oral history and the diaspora. The project is described as a retelling the story of Shater Hassan when in fact it actively denies you most of the story itself, and takes you somewhere else instead.

Haitham is a New York based new media artist and game designer. His work ranges from digital and analog games to fake organizations, and has been featured on Mondoweiss and Indiecade. Haitham completed his MFA in Design and Technology at Parsons (New York NY), and his bachelors from the Arab American University in Jenin, Palestine. He is a decent bellydancer, but there is room for improvement in that department.



Wendy Hough

April May 2013



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July 2 - July 21, 2013

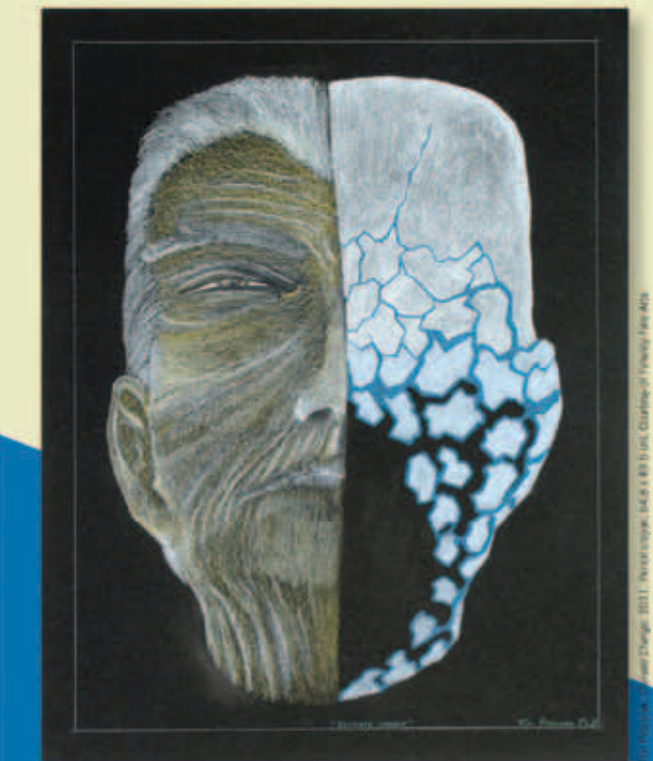
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& Alma Louise Visscher
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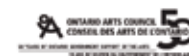
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Susan Gold - The Bear and the Wolf, 2003 oil on linen, 127 x 200 cm, photograph: C. MacDonell

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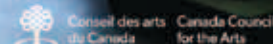
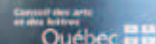
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