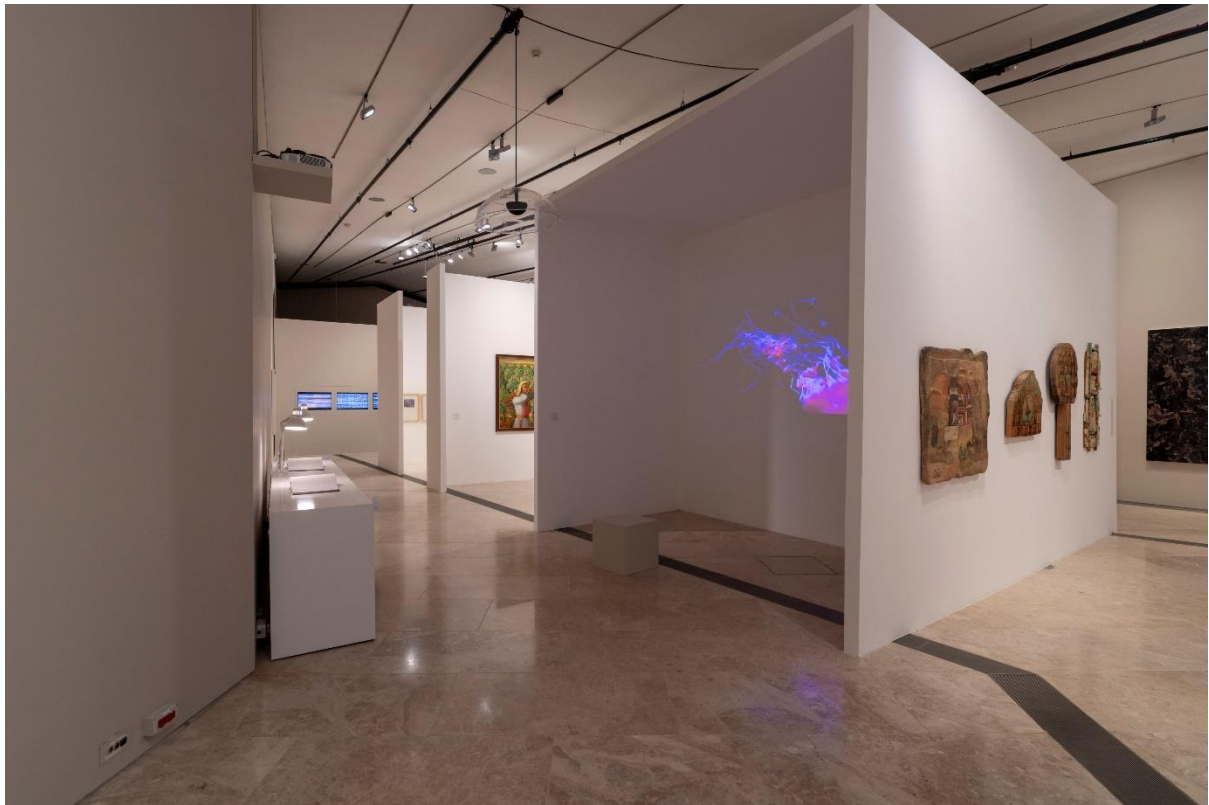


Intimate Terrains Exhibition

Representation of a Disappearing Landscape



Introduction



Intimate Terrains explores the changing representation of landscape by Palestinian artists, and our relationship to place and location through the themes of erasure, fragmentation, distance and belonging through a spectrum of artworks drawn from the 1930s to the present day. The depictions of landscape over the decades provide us with a prism onto the experience of loss and longing, a prominent subject matter for Palestinian artists, for its

topography holds a central place in the identities of Palestinians. Landscape is at once both a vast site of projection and a deeply layered terrain of interwoven remains, memories and histories. How do artists negotiate and articulate collective and personal memory in relation to representations of landscape? What keeps us in a place? What are our own ambivalences as to why we remain attached to places? What are the limits of nostalgia? How does the changing reality on the ground contour our images? How does exile and the different experiences of alienation shape the views of the landscape? With our diminishing view and access to the land, the segregation of communities and the fragmentation and isolation of the terrains, how do our intimate relationships to places manifest around a disappearing landscape as the ongoing violent expropriation and destruction of the land unfolds? Undeterred by this, what have been and what are our dreams and visions of landscapes of the past and future?

The exhibition includes works by the following artists:

Jumana Emil Abboud, Tarek Alghoussein, Jawad Almalhi, Basma Alsharif, Nabil Anani, Johnny Andonia, Rafat Asad,, Samira Badran, Tayseer Barakat, Taysir Batniji, , Benji Boyadgian, Hassan Daraghmeh, Aissa Deebi, Sophie Halaby, Rula Halawani, Hazem Harb, , Yazan Khalili, Manal Mahamid, Bashir Makhoul, Sliman Mansour, Jack Persekian, Khalil Rayan, Steve Sabella, Larissa Sansour, Walid Abu Shakra, and Nida Sinnokrot.



Background

The representation of landscape has a long history in Palestine and was an integral part of cultural practices. It could be found in wall paintings, textiles, ceramics, tilework pottery, stonework, popular folktales, place names, superstitions and sayings as nature and the landscape were part of the popular vernacular. Representations of landscape did not conform to dominant European conventions of perspective concerned with representing views and vistas, directed at a single individual in a surveying vantage point, but rather often evoked rhythms and patterns in nature such as in textile, embroidery, pottery and tilework. Palestinian women's attire for example, had intricate and elaborate references to nature in its patterns, with each village and region having its own distinctive evolving styles, while tilework and ceramics drew inspiration from flora and fauna. Popular culture was rich with folktales and superstitions related to spirits that inhabited the landscape and their powers. The landscape was not perceived as inanimate by Palestinians in particular villages, the natural environment was believed to be inhabited by good and evil spirits who dwelled in water, around trees and ruins, and who sometimes could be heard, or who appeared as animals or human beings. Palestinian villagers used the landscape as their main term of reference in many aspects of their practice of daily life.

Easel painting was another mode of representation. The nineteenth-century paintings of the landscape by Palestinian artists were strongly influenced by European traditions and in certain representations of the Holy Land. However, Palestinian artists whose works remain today from the nineteenth century and early 20th century reveal that they were imbued with local perspectives and their knowledge of place, unlike the foreign visitors whose representations were heavily influenced by their ideological and political predispositions.

Palestine has a long history of being the ambition of others who have desired to conquer and re-fashion it. This is evident in both the transformation of the physical landscape and its representation in painting, photography, literature, political and religious discourses. The image of Palestine as the Holy Land was therefore extensively cultivated in the collective imagination of Europe through various forms of cultural production. This ongoing cultural production was closely tied to political and colonial strategies and was an integral part of Zionist ambitions in Palestine. The question of land and the representation of landscape has been at the centre of the colonisation of Palestine for centuries. Since its creation, the Israeli state has been engaged in carving out the physical landscape, transforming it through massive settlement projects, expropriation of land, and the destruction of historical sites, all of which have been accompanied by a demographic war of depopulation and expulsion, and the segregation of the Palestinians from one another.

In 2001, Israel began the construction of the Separation Wall, which has been accompanied by hundreds of militarised checkpoints that separate Palestinian cities, towns, and villages and dissect the territories into a series of non-contiguous cantons. It is in this highly charged context that this exhibition takes its point of departure to explore how landscape has been represented by Palestinian artists across the decades.

Floor Plan

Detailed Design
 THE PALESTINIAN MUSEUM, Birzeit, Palestine - 2018/2019
 INTIMATE HORIZONS
 FLOOR PLAN - Artworks and Graphics Placement
 scale 1:200

ARTWORKS (20)
 Prints/ Paintings/ Drawings/ Photography:

- 1.1 > 1.3 Bashir Makhouf
- 18.11 Sliman Mansour
- 18.5 Sliman Mansour
- 18.4 Sliman Mansour
- 18.2 Sliman Mansour
- 20.1.C.a > 20.1.C.d Tarek Ghoussein
- 47.1 > 47.2 Nida Smolotrot
- 19.1 > 19.3 Steve Sabella
- 8.1 Jawad al Malhi
- 25.1 > 25.2 Samira Badran
- 52 Aissa Daebi
- 5.1 > 5.2 Hazem Harb
- 13.1 Nabli Anani
- 13.2 Nabli Anani
- 13.3 Nabli Anani
- 13.4 Nabli Anani
- 10.1 Khalil Royan
- 28.1 > 28.2 Samia Halaby
- 17.2.1 > 17.2.4 Rula Halawani
- 6.1 Jumana Aboud
- 8.2 Jawad al Malhi
- 44 Sophie Halaby
- 45.1 > 45.3 Tayefik Jawharjeh
- 27.1 > 27.4 Assad Adf
- 38.1a > 38.1b Manal Mhamid
- 57.1 > 57.2 Walid Abu Shakra
- 59 Amr Shomali
- 55 Rafat Assad
- 46 Laila Shave
- 61 Johnny Andonfe
- 62 Jack Persekian

VIDEOS

- 4 Hasan Daragmeh
- 6.2a > 6.2c Jumana Aboud
- 11.1 > 11.2 Larissa Samsour
- 16.1 Rosalind Nashashibi
- 22.1 > 22.2 Tayseer Batniji

INSTALLATION/ SCULPTURE

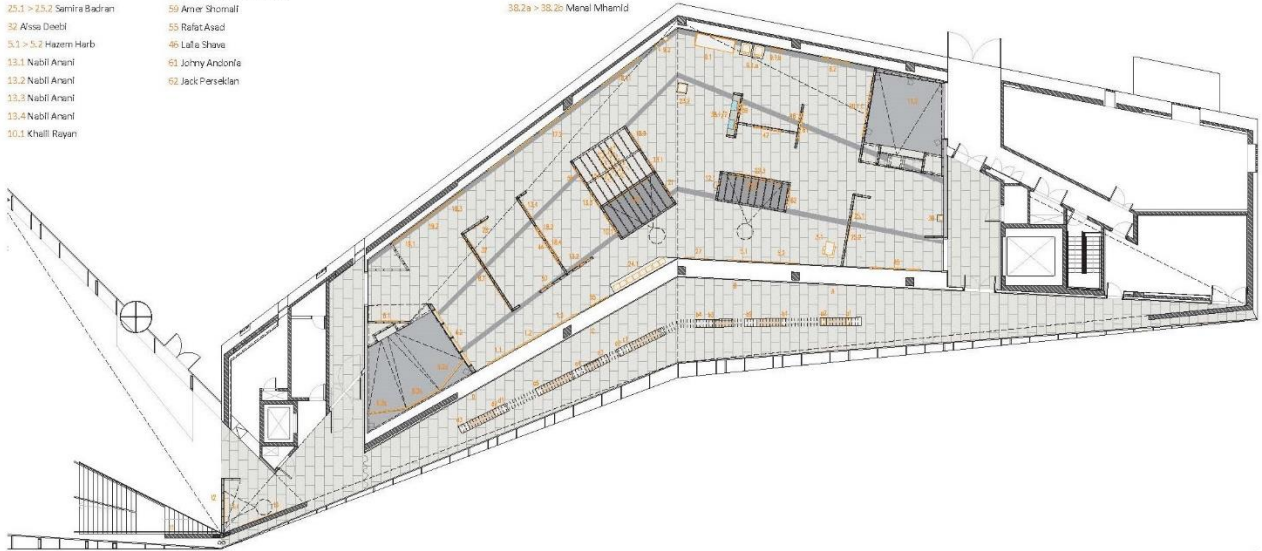
- 8.1 Benji Boyeghan
- 9.1 > 9.2 Khalil Rabiiah
- 15.1 Rana Bfshara
- 22.3 Tayseer Batniji
- 21 Tayseer Barakat
- 12 Nasser Soumf
- 24.1 Yazen Khamli
- 23 Vera Tamarif
- 39 Mona Hatouni
- 38.2a > 38.2c Manal Mhamid

MAIN TEXTS/GRAPHICS

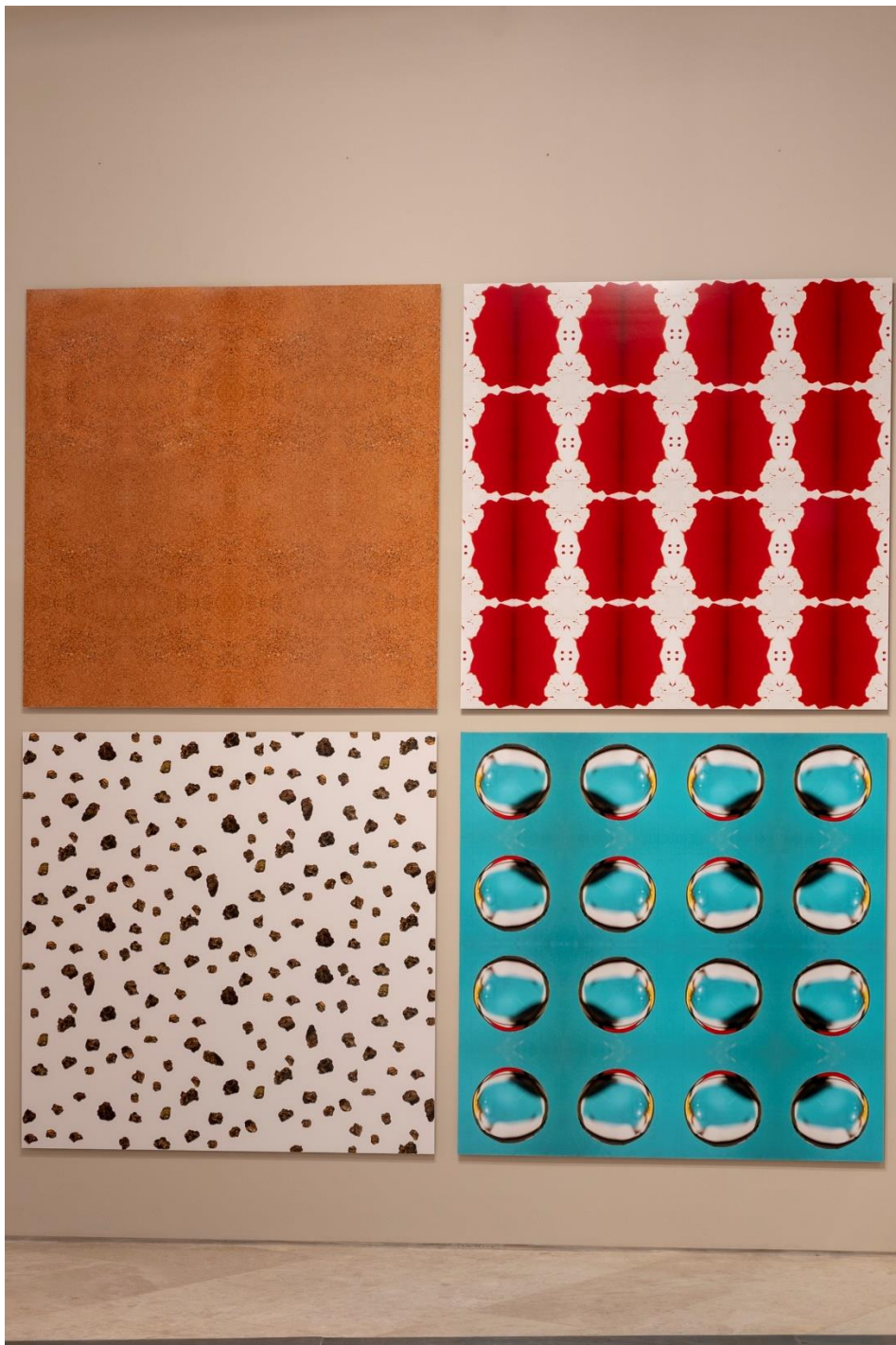
- 1.1 Title
- 1.2 Curator's Introduction
- 1.3 Colophon / Credits

GLASS GALLERY/GRAPHICS

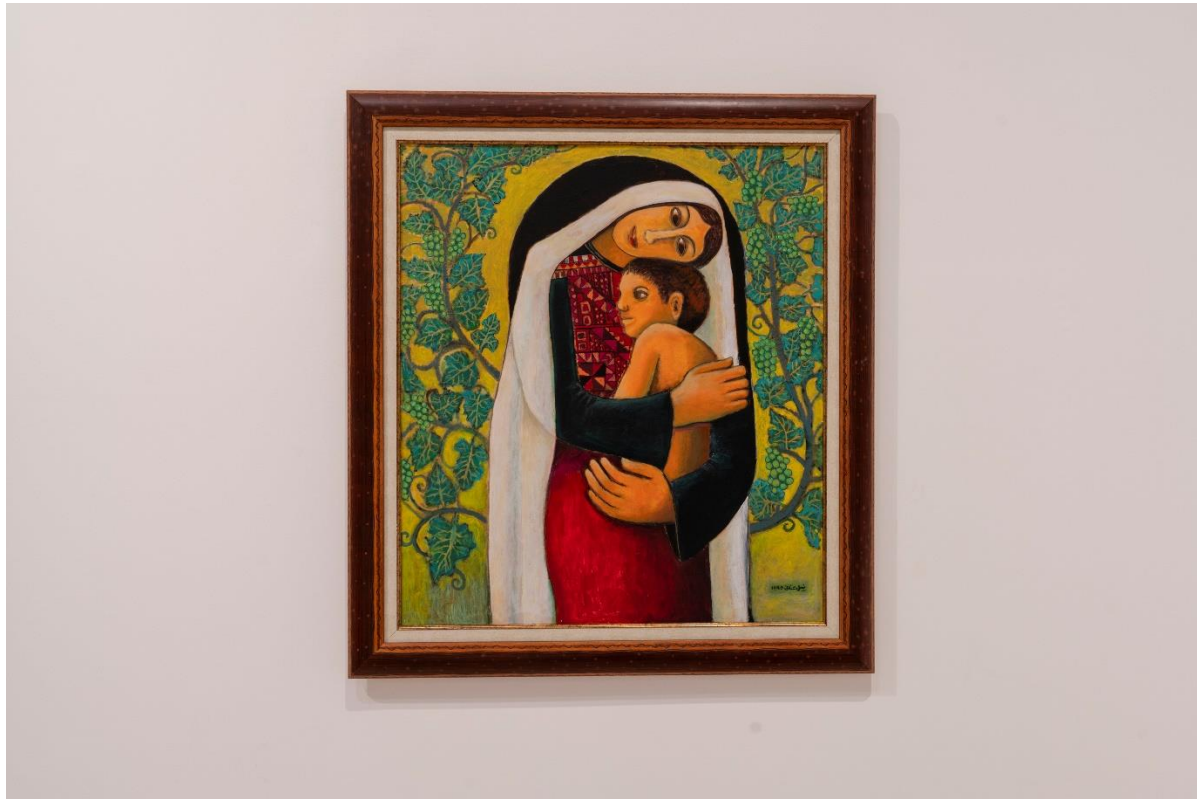
- A. LOSS
 - a1. Shrinking Land
 - a2. Injustice
- B. FRAGMENTATION
 - b1. Checkpoints
 - b2. The Wall
 - b3. Bypass roads
 - b4. Sea barrier
- C. ERASURE
 - c1. Settlements
 - c2. Villages and houses destruction
 - c3. Trees and plants erasure
 - c4. Population transfer from the land titlers related to the land
- D. ERASURE
 - d1. Land Day
 - d2. Activism related to Land
 - d3. Local Produce, plant life, local remedies, local traditions



THEMES



Motherlands and Dreamscapes



In relation to the above historical contexts, it is not surprising that the representation of the landscape has dominated the artistic expression of Palestinians. The cultural arenas of literature, theatre, cinema, dance, and art have played a significant role in shaping a vision of the landscape, one mobilised by Palestinian communities in the formation and articulation of their national identity. What has occurred over the decades however, are significant changes in the representations of the landscape by artists, as their relationship to the landscape and the landscape itself have been transformed.

Landscapes came to dominate Palestinian art in the mid-1970s and '80s, particularly by artists living in the Occupied Territories and in 1948-occupied Palestine. This was accompanied by calls to resistance through popular posters in which there was a plethora of folkloric symbols. The focus on images of Palestinian villages coincided with a revival of Palestinian heritage and folklore that began in the late 1970s. As more explicit forms of national expression were censored by the Israeli authorities, the village, with its pastoral image, served as a suitable metaphor for the nation. The representations were not of specific villages, but rather combined elements that together constituted an idyllic utopia. These included a landscape in full spring bloom, stone houses, and women wearing traditional Palestinian dress, surrounded by children, or engaged in domestic activities such as baking bread, grinding wheat, and harvesting crops, fruits and olives. These idyllic representations serve to elide the realities of the present, and in so doing cast an image of the future through a nostalgic utopian lens of the past. The focus on the Palestinian village and peasantry contours the representation of the Palestinian landscape as a distinctly domestic one. The presence of the female figure in

the landscape in traditional dress became the foremost signifier of Palestinian national identity.

The mother, who becomes the motherland, invested the image of Palestine with maternal symbolism, as in **Nabil Anani's** painting *Motherhood*. In this painting, the landscape is reduced to an arch of vines, and the peasant woman's embroidered dress has lost its regional specificity, which is replaced with the four colours of the Palestinian flag. **Yaffa, by Sliman Mansour** is one such example; a young woman in traditional Palestinian dress carries a basket of oranges, while in the background, the orange groves are full of women collecting fruit. She gazes into the distance as if lost in memories.



Be-Longing

During the first intifada (1987-1990s), numerous Palestinian artists moved away from working in oil painting and began experimentation with natural materials. Many artists were engaged in attempting to find new forms of expression outside the classical mediums of their training. This venture was also linked with the decision to depart from use of materials imported from Israel, as part of a wider popular movement of disengagement with the occupation, its economy and institutions. The former dreamscapes were not represented through the imaginary pictorial field of the painting, but through a sensory intoxication with the tactility and aroma of homeland, which artists created with the use of natural materials such as mud, earth, cactus, olive leaves, olive oil, clay, henna, herbs, olive oil soap, oranges and water — all of which permeated their art in paintings, mixed-media works and installations into the 1990s and beyond. Artists such as **Sliman Mansour**, **Tayseer Barakat**, **Nabil Anani**, and others all experimented with natural materials. For example,



Tayseer Barakat worked with wood and found objects. In *Untitled*, the surface of the wood has been engraved with abstract forms of people and animals, imparting the sense of an ancient relic, hieroglyph or tablet and referencing visual traditions of the region. **Nabil Anani's** work is made of dyed leather and depicts a village scene.

Jifna by **Sliman Mansour** is one example in which a utopic vision of the landscape is not represented through idyllic pastoral images as in previous works, but more acutely through its appeal to our senses. The rich tactility of the work, the encrusted surfaces, the areas of scintillating colours resemble the effect of the passage of sunlight and shadow on stone and soil. The feeling of warmth and heat that transpires through the work elicits nostalgia for the landscape.

In *Maskouneh (inhabited)*, by **Jumana Emil Abboud**, with **Issa Freij**, **Abboud** speaks of longing and belonging, and of a profound, continual wandering and searching in the landscape. This theme of rediscovering a relationship to the landscape resonates in her

videos, drawings and paintings. In her drawings, landscape and figures merge into one—female figures, ghouls, creatures. Her works impart to us what it feels like to move through the landscape—to pause to engage in intimacy and wonderment—yet they also seem to be imbued with a sense of longing.

In his book *On Love and Other Landscapes*, Yazan Khalili juxtaposes a series of photographs of the landscape, with an intimate love story. The photographs take us on journey across hills, valleys, vistas and everyday places while we read of separation and memories of a relationship, which unfolds with the turning of each page. As we move across the landscape, the personal details of a love story are revealed, conveying a pervading sense of separation and lost love.

Fragmentation

Bashir Makhoul's work explores the paradox of singularity and repetition in his series, *one cm of my blood, one cm of soil, one cm of my sand and one drop of my water*. The formal repetition of the pattern implies an infinity which contradicts the singularity of the object and the question of ownership that is implied by the title. In Makhoul's work, the cm of blood, the drop of water, the grain of soil could be of anyone and any place. However, the paradox of ownership highlights the anomalies of national identities, in which blood and land are recurring powerful symbols that tie us to homelands, nations and our landscapes.

In **Steve Sabella's** work *No Man's Land*, it is precisely the recurring elements of any landscape that are questioned, as we do not know where we are. The specificity of place has been lost, as the photographs are a sophisticated seamless collage of everyday elements from the landscape: rotting leaves, feathers, pollen and dust on the surface of a lake. We seem to float in an abyss, an infinity with no rootedness or grounding, in which fragments from the landscape create a cosmos.

Hasan Daraghmeh's *Flowers of Salt* consists of hours of video footage from his personal archive of everyday sites in Jericho, Ramallah and al-A'mari refugee camp. In this work, he reduces the frame size until the vastness of the landscape becomes a texture of colour, collapsing the landscape in which the personal intimate memories of place become a vibrating pixel on the screen.

Sliman Mansour's *Drought* consists of hundreds of fragments of dry mud, which make up an outline of a figure (possibly a self-portrait) accompanied by a pattern of olive trees. The work recalls a colourless mosaic of parched and dried earth, which appears to be in a process of disintegration that is held in delicate suspension.

The above works of Bashir Makhoul, Steve Sabella, Hasan Daraghmeh and Sliman Mansour all speak to a loss of ground, the disappearance of any specificity of location. Each work explores how pattern and repetition can probe the affiliations of identity with place, and the paradoxes of our relationship to landscapes and homelands.

Elusive Viewpoints

The classic panorama of The Old City of Jerusalem has been dominated by the view of its holy sites. **Jawad al-Malhi's *Tower of Babel Revisited*** offers an alternative panorama of Jerusalem. The photograph allows us a vantage point from which to view the refugee camp, settlements, Separation Wall and the unfinished Palace of King Hussein. Al-Malhi searched for a vantage point to photograph the refugee camp—impossible from within its confined alleyways—and to capture the encircling settlements. The panorama reveals the intensely accumulative topographies of the built environment of refugees, which have become a testimony of dispossession.

From another viewpoint, **Aissa Deebi** in *This is How I See Gaza*, explores the military assaults on the Gaza Strip via re-representations of TV news screens, as Gaza is a place which he is not permitted to enter. The series of prints offers a frightening and sombre grid of terrifying violence.

During her lifetime, **Sophie Halaby** (1906-1998) created tens of drawings and watercolours of Jerusalem, Jericho and the Palestinian landscape from different viewpoints. Halaby was one of the few female artists of her generation who studied arts in Italy and France between 1928 and 1933.ⁱ In particular, she continually and diligently studied the hills of Jerusalem, repeatedly sketching and painting them. Uncannily, her landscapes have a melancholic and foreboding quality which perhaps reflects the transformations of the political eras through which she lived.

Jack Persekian's series *Past Tense* is a detailed study of Jerusalem through archival photographs of the Matson Collection juxtaposed with present-day documentation of the same exact sites. The photographs reveal the detailed transformation of the city, and a lost landscape, highlighting detailed changes in each location.



Traces of Memories

Walid Abu Shakra's etchings are also characterized by careful studies of the landscape. His attention to detail reveals a deep relationship and familiarity with each location. His etchings can be seen as individual portraits of the olive trees, cacti and hand-built walls. The layered history of the landscape, its changing colours and hues, and the cycle of its seasons have been a major source of inspiration throughout.

Rula Halawani's *For My Father* series presents a poignant and ghostly portrait of loss and alienation. In this series, the artist revisited several sites inside historic Palestine, photographing the rolling hills, seashores and landscape of the artist's youth. Memories of place become incongruent with the scenes and vistas, intensifying the sense of insurmountable loss. **Rafat Asad's** *Marj Ibn Amer* series also explores the site of his childhood memories, where the landscapes become an amalgam of imagination and memory, as it is unreachable. **Khalil Rayan and Nabil Anani's** landscape paintings are also both taken from a series of works that are imbued with nostalgia towards the landscape. Both artists explore the landscape through a palette of colours. Through Rayan's emotive brushstrokes and colours, we get a strong sense of the rhythm of the hills, while in Anani's work, the terrain is stitched like a lovingly embroidered patterned textile, with repeated olive groves, and fields of the landscape.

Archaeology of Place

Taysir Batniji created **GH809#2** (Gaza houses 2008-2009) after the military assault on Gaza, which took place between 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009. The photographs of each home are displayed in the common form of real-estate ads, with neutral descriptions detailing the specifications of each house. The aim of the artist was to commit these sites to memory through this form of testimony which can also be read as a type of archaeological record of historic ruins.

Nida Sinnokrot's *Jonah's Whale* appears like a skeleton found in a natural history museum. The containers are a palimpsest as Sinnokrot describes, 'The one I have is inscribed with children's sketches, Russian, Hebrew, Arabic, English, showing the traces of its journey from a container to Israeli caravan to Palestinian construction site, all with resonant stories of promise, default and debt.'ⁱⁱ

The traces remain, and ruins of a disappearing landscape come to the fore in the work of **Benji Boyadgian**. The work is a detailed study of vanishing landscape, through the found objects of this valley, commonly known as the valley of garbage, but which is earmarked for construction in the Israeli occupation's so-called 'Greater Jerusalem Plan.' 'Artistically, I produce a situation to document this material and propose a story for each curiosity. I focus on the objects' anatomy, deterioration, and tonal etiolation, an attempt to "challenge their disappearance."ⁱⁱⁱ

Fragments and traces of the landscape are also the subject of **Johny Andonia's** painting, *Jerusalem Stone*, which is partly inspired by early childhood experiences in stone carving

workshops, now a dying craft as a result of the rapid commercialisation of this industry. The groups of stones that could have been quarried at different geographical locations were brought together and merged in compositions that could resemble mountain chains, agricultural terraces or landscapes.^{iv}

An Archaeology of Occupation is a series of collages by **Hazem Harb**, which combines archival photographs of Palestine prior to 1948 with ominous concrete structures that seem to float in space as though invading the landscape. The works present a strong sense of foreboding, while highlighting the alien forms of concrete and their formal properties which have filled the landscape of Palestine and which have become part of the physical infrastructure of occupation. Archaeology is an underlying theme that runs through many of the works discussed, and which is explored by artists, not as an academic discipline, but rather as a form of testimony.

Distances and All That Remains^v

Made in 2004, **Taysir Batniji's *Transit*** documents the journey from Gaza to Egypt. As Batniji describes: 'Transit is part of a reflection I have led since 1997 on notions of involuntary or voluntary displacements and travels. I am especially interested in the state of in-between: in-between identities, in-between cultures.'^{vi} **Basma Alsharif** takes these idiosyncracies of disturbed time, boredom, waiting and in-betweenness and reveals how they become a state of being. In the work ***We Began by Measuring Distance***, she explores the exilic condition of time in non-spaces. An anonymous group fill their time by measuring objects and distances, which speak to the emptiness of time, and highlights time spent in a continual state of temporariness.

In **Jawad al-Malhi's *Afterwards***, the landscape has been erased, all traces washed away from the surface. Figures crouch, suspended in thin air, not unlike the daily poses of many young men we find in public spaces. The permanent state of waiting, repeated humiliation and the weight of inherited dispossession are etched onto their facial features and bodily gestures. As the colours fade from them, they are at once familiar and unfamiliar to us.

In **Tarek al-Ghoussein's** work, we see a lone figure, which has been a subject of his work in several photographic series. Al-Ghoussein says, 'While the work has been concerned with barriers, land, longing and belonging, this most recent series departs from these defining/confining concepts and instead focuses on visualised ideas of transience.....while unexpected, the strong emphasis on longing led to consideration of changing landscapes and ephemeral moments that are fixed in time rather than located in a specific place.'^{vii}

In **Larissa Sansour's *Nation Estate***, Palestine is now a high-rise tower, where each floor is a city. Travel is by elevator or underground, where we no longer have access to the land, or to its sensory experience, its moisture, smells, and breezes. We are confined to an artificial capsule, where Jerusalem has become a representation of horizon, and has been recreated as a theme park. Sansour's work can be seen in the context of continual land expropriation, destruction and demolitions.

The Unrecognisable Landscape

The landscape appears to us now as unrecognisable. The works of **Samira Badran**, and **Larissa Sansour**, made in different eras, are juxtaposed to visually suggest an unrecognizable landscape. **Samira Badran's, *Jerusalem Nightmare*** was created in the 1970s after the occupation of East Jerusalem. In this painting, the city is unrecognisable, disintegrated into an array of haunting structures in which the ancient architecture and ruins have metamorphized into dysfunctional mechanical forms. Divorced from any surrounding landscape, the city appears as it might on doomsday. The second work by Badran, also from the same period, is a self-portrait in which the interior and exterior of the body seem to have grown into one, as the rib cage has become a garment—at once both decorative and reminiscent of contraptions of imprisonment and torture. The giant lone figure appears to wander alone along the coastline, in an unknown and indeterminate landscape.

Manal Mahamid's *Palestinian Gazelle* looks, at first glance, like an ordinary gazelle. However, it is on closer observation that we notice its amputated leg. The gazelle appears as a mutation, incomplete, domesticated, tamed and now an uncomfortable oddity contained in a fabricated enclosure. This question of the moulding, and construction of fictions of landscapes is one of the central themes in **Larissa Sansour's** film, ***In the Future They Ate from The Finest Porcelain***. The film places us in a future landscape in which the narrative unfolds between a resistance leader and a psychiatrist. In the film, a resistance group sets out to create a future history for a fictional civilisation by depositing fine porcelain in the landscape to support its claim as a people before being eradicated.



The Glass Gallery

The Glass Gallery is a display of a selection of facts and quotations to complement the exhibition, highlighting the historical and ongoing transformation of the Palestinian landscape under the themes of loss, erasure, fragmentation and resistance.



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 INTIMATE HORIZONS
 COMPONENTS: GLASS GALLERY
 furnishings and wall graphics' placement
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