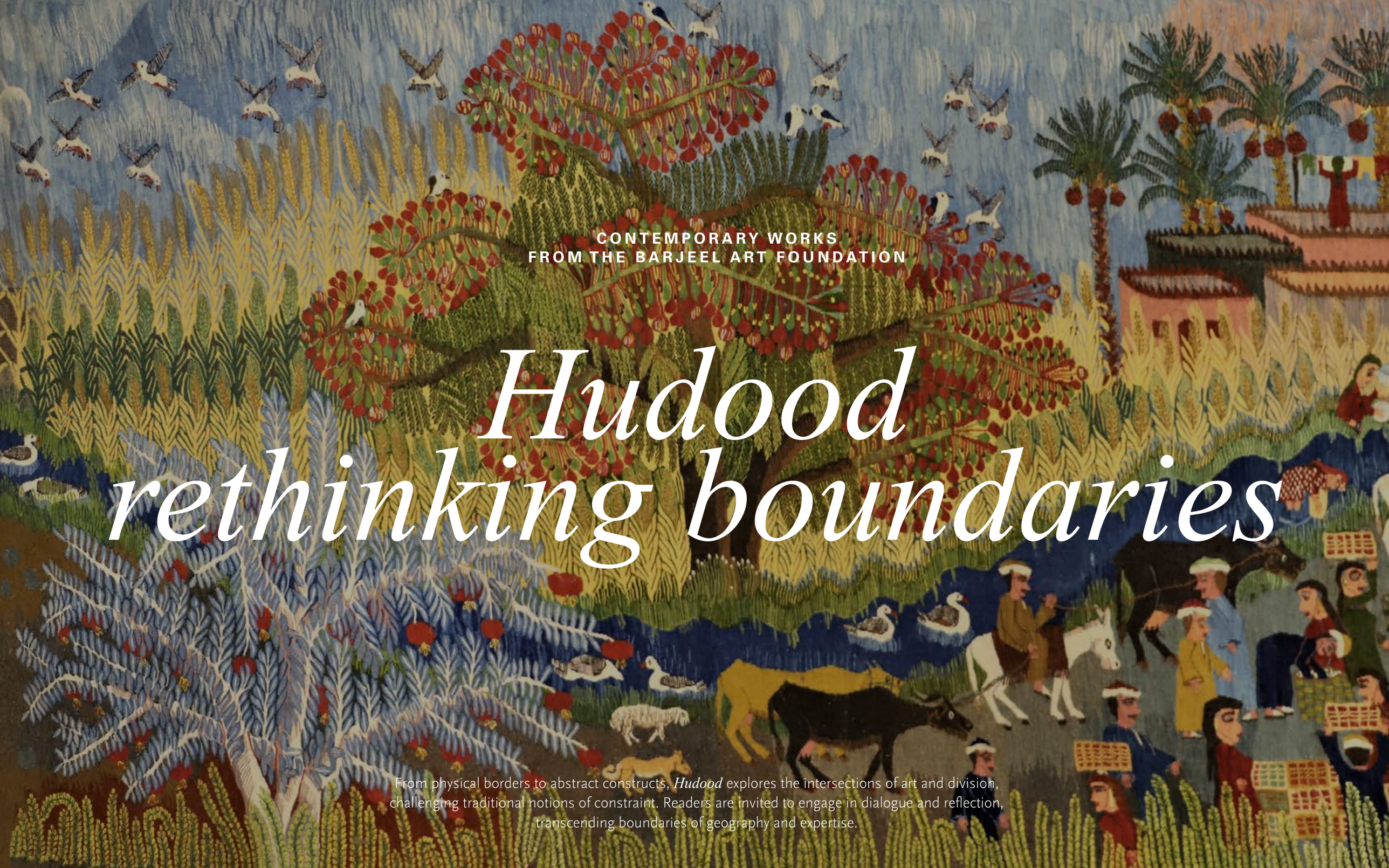

CONTEMPORARY WORKS
FROM THE BARJEEL ART FOUNDATION

Hudood rethinking boundaries

From physical borders to abstract constructs, ***Hudood*** explores the intersections of art and division, challenging traditional notions of constraint. Readers are invited to engage in dialogue and reflection, transcending boundaries of geography and expertise.

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Foreword

Lina Khatib

Contemporary art from the Arab world has always been about breaking boundaries. It was never confined to any one geographical space or artistic school. And it never resigned itself to the boundaries that people and societies in the region often found themselves facing. Pushing boundaries is part of human nature, and so is cultural production. Contemporary art is one manifestation of this duality.

This collection of essays is about the exhibition *Hudood*, a pioneer initiative at SOAS University of London in its being co-curated by SOAS students from diverse backgrounds. The cycle of the exhibition project—from the brilliant first session introducing the co-curators to the socio-political context of contemporary art from the Arab world, delivered by Barjeel Art Foundation founder Sultan Sooud al-Qassemi, and then to the students' research and selection of works from the Foundation's collection of Arab modern and contemporary art to show at the exhibition, and finally to the exhibition itself—has broken boundaries on multiple levels.

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As curators, the students are agenda setters engaged in active learning and self-expression, going beyond the boundary normally set between teacher and learner. As a group, they have had to break out of personal boundaries to come up with a common language for the exhibition. And as people from different countries, academic backgrounds, and professional experiences, they have overcome the boundaries of place, academic discipline, and career hierarchy to embark on a journey of discovery as a team while celebrating their own individualities.

This process of engagement, encounter, and expression goes hand in hand with the content of the works in the exhibition, which invite the visitor to be an active thinker, not a passive observer. One of the conversations the pieces have with one another is about artists' critique of the status quo. *Infinity* (2001) by Mona Hatoum casts bronze, toy-like soldiers in an infinite loop, evoking the notion of endless war. In this sculpture, the soldiers appear trapped, as if in a military merry-go-round, invoking a sense of pity and futility rather than might. The ceramic pigeons of Manal AlDowayan's *Suspended Together – Standing Doves* take on a newer meaning in 2024 than that when they were first made in 2012. At that time, the passport stamps on the fragile pigeons served as a metaphor for the limitations of life in Saudi Arabia, where individuals, especially women, had to navigate complex social and cultural expectations and laws, such as not being able to travel without a guardian. Today, many formal restrictions have been lifted, but the piece remains just as relevant in getting the audience to think about what other boundaries are yet to be transcended. In having such conversations, the artworks address universal themes of freedom, constraint, and resilience while remaining firmly grounded in the realities of the Arab world.

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The works also show how far contemporary art from the Arab world has come in the global art scene. Fibreglass pigeons from AlDowayan's *Suspended Together* were shown at the Venice Art Biennale in 2011 as part of what was then a pan-Arab exhibition alongside a handful of Arab country pavilions. Since then, the presence of art from the region at this landmark event has expanded into several pavilions for individual Arab countries. The Barjeel Art Foundation collection is one of the major initiatives supporting such international visibility for Arab contemporary art. With the works in the collection having been selected to document both the creativity of the region's artists and their commentary on socio-political developments across Arab countries, it is also an important archive of Arab cultural and historical production.

The collaboration between SOAS and Barjeel Art Foundation which produced the *Hudood* exhibition further illustrates the need to continue to find innovative ways to showcase the richness of talent from the region and the centrality of cultural and artistic production in the Arab world—past and present as well as in the region's future. *Hudood* may be titled after boundaries, but ultimately it is about presence, connection, and inclusion. It underlines the importance of the voices of Arab artists, who continue to play a vital role in shaping conversations about identity, politics, and the human experience.

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Introduction

Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi

Hudood: Rethinking Boundaries is an unconventional exhibition in that it was conceived and implemented by students at the outset of their career, and featuring works drawn entirely from a single art collection.

Dr Lina Khatib first reached out to me to teach a class at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, during my participation at the "Contentious Politics in the Middle East and North Africa" conference at Chatham House in London in March 2023. Dr Khatib was then the outgoing director of the Middle East and North Africa programme at Chatham House. I immediately welcomed the idea. I was at that time a Fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin and an instructor at Bard College Berlin.

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Although teaching my regular class Politics of Modern Middle Eastern Art which I taught at other universities in the US and Europe was an enticing opportunity, I realised that SOAS offers an advantage that no other London-based university can offer: its very own, purpose-built, modern art gallery. This led me to suggest a workshop that would allow SOAS students to curate an exhibition at the SOAS Gallery (previously known as Brunei Gallery) to Dr Khatib, who was by then officially appointed as director of the SOAS Middle East Institute. The workshop proposal was approved, and we immediately went about designing the programme which would take place both in person and online and would involve readings, classroom discussions, and guest lectures. Since the Barjeel Art Foundation had just staged an exhibition focusing on modern art titled *Kawkaba: Highlights from the Barjeel Art Foundation* at Christie's head office in London in summer 2023, we decided to focus on contemporary art in the collection made from 1990 to 2020.

The students benefited from the insights of a number of individuals including Dr Omar Kholeif, who first curated an exhibition of works from the Barjeel Art Foundation collection at the Whitechapel Gallery, London, that ran between September 2015 to January 2017 and was titled *Imperfect Chronology: Arab Art from the Modern to the Contemporary*. Other prominent guest lecturers included Suheyla Takesh, Barjeel Art Foundation curator who was behind numerous exhibitions in Europe, North America, and the Middle East; Dr Ridha Moumni, Chairman, Middle East & Africa at Christie's who curated the aforementioned Kawkaba exhibition; and researcher Nadine Nour el Din, whose work focuses on uncovering the lives of women artists from the Arab world.

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I am grateful to this publication's co-editor Dr Natasha Morris—of the SOAS Department of History of Art and Archaeology and a member of the SOAS Middle East Institute—for collaborating on this project and for helping to guide the students in the development of their essays. I am also grateful to Dr Venetia Porter, who was Senior Curator for Islamic and Contemporary Middle East art at the British Museum (where she is now Honorary Research Fellow), and to Dr Khatib for contributing their essays. Additional thanks go to Scott Redford, Simon O'Meara, Anna Contadini, and Charlotte Horlyck for welcoming Dr Khatib's proposal to have me at SOAS. I would like to thank, as well, John Hollingworth, Head of Galleries & Exhibitions at SOAS Gallery, and the very capable exhibition designer Brian Jia Qing Yue, himself a SOAS student. My thanks also go to each of the eight SOAS students whose names appear in the table of contents and who worked diligently over two semesters in order to bring this exhibition to fruition and to produce essays for this publication.

Finally, I am most grateful to Dr Khatib for offering me and the students this opportunity to learn and develop ideas around contemporary art from the Arab world. The students, I hope, were able to learn from the lecturers, the material, and the artworks; though, I also believe that perhaps the greatest learning experience the students had was exchanging with each other.

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Mona Hatoum: The First Contemporary Arab Artist?

Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi

Attempting to pinpoint a specific date when modern Arab art gave way to the contemporary is bound to raise more questions than answers. Yet it is an issue that historians, curators, gallerists, and collectors continuously face—and one that has not been definitively settled in art historical debates in any part of the world, whether we are speaking about the West or the Global South.

In a column for *The New York Times* back in 2000, art critic Deborah Solomon seems to have proposed the date of 1970 as a starting point of Western contemporary art. Her suggestion was ridiculed by Hilton Kramer, a fellow art critic who wrote, "To attempt to assign a specific date to such a fluid historical phenomenon would seem to be about as wise as assigning a birth date to air pollution or traffic congestion."[01] And while it is certainly not possible to assign a specific date for such matters, it may be possible to observe a general trend associated with the changes brought about by technological advances or political events.

Today, interest in art from the Arab region continues to grow along with a proliferation of exhibitions in institutions around the world. In 2010, Qatar inaugurated Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art whose collection exceeds 9,000 artworks. In 2017, Palestinian collector Dr Ramzi Dalloul (1935–2021) and his team made accessible to the public through online channels over 4,000 works by Arab artists that he amassed in a relatively short period of time. New York City's *Here and Elsewhere* (2014), *Tokyo's Arab Express* (2012), Madrid's *Looking at the World around You* (2016), Paris's *25 Years of Arab Creativity* (2013), London's *Imperfect Chronology* (2015–17), Singapore's *Terms and Conditions* (2013), and Toronto's *Home Ground* (2015)—these are some of the exhibitions that have presented modern and contemporary pan-Arab art in global cities over the past dozen years.[02] Moreover, many of these exhibitions have been accompanied by publications that carry essays by respected scholars such as Dr Nada Shabout, Dr Salah Hassan, Salwa Mikdadi, and Kamal Boullata amongst others, thereby enriching the scene with knowledge and research. Many of these scholars caution against measuring Western and Eastern art developments with the same yardstick. After all, each region's art movements coincided with varying influences—from colonialism and wars to emancipation movements, all of which affected the trajectories of culture.

01. Hilton Kramer, "Contemporary Began When? Times Sets Date at 1970," Observer, January 24, 2000, https://observer.com/2000/01/contemporary-began-when-times-sets-date-at-1970.
02. Disclosure: the latter three exhibitions centre around the author's art collection.

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Despite the proliferation of exhibitions and the increase in scholarship, one issue remains unresolved in the Arab art canon: when did modern art end and contemporary art begin? We are familiar with modern masters such as Egypt's Abdul Hadi el-Gazzar, Morocco's Ahmed Cherkaoui, Iraq's Jewad Selim, Syria's Leila Nseir, and Lebanon's Saloua Raouda Choucair. We may also recognise contemporary artists such as British-Iraqi Jananne al-Ani, French-Algerian Adel Abdessemed, and Saudi Arabia's Abdulnasser Gharem. There are, however, distinguishing elements between these two eras. The first was heavily influenced by drawing, painting, and sculpture while the latter embraced conceptual, video, and digital art. When did this shift occur? And was there a reason behind it? That said, how do we refer to artists whose practice extends from the 1960s, arguably the height of modernism in the Arab world, and who continue to produce works well into the 21st century such as Sudan's Ibrahim el-Salahi and Palestine's Samia Halaby?

Rather than assigning a specific date or year to the shift from modernism to contemporary art in the Arab World, I propose the following notion: that the periodisation of Arab contemporary art begins with artists who came of age in the decade between the early 1980s and the early 1990s, due to their general openness and readiness to adopt the latest technologies and concepts in their work. In my opinion, the artist that best embodies this definition is Beirut-born, British-Palestinian artist Mona Hatoum. There are of course other artists whose work fits into this category, but few have achieved the global recognition and critical acclaim that Hatoum has.

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Born in 1952, Hatoum embraced the spirit and form of contemporary art from the outset. Having studied graphic design at Beirut University College and trained at both the Byam Shaw School of Art and the Slade School of Fine Art in London, Hatoum began her career in the 1980s producing videos and performance work revolving around the body before she turned her focus to themes such as feminism, dislocation, and power structures. Her work is influenced as much by her Middle Eastern heritage and personal experience as it is by the decades that she spent in the West. She settled in London in 1975, when the civil war broke out in Lebanon, while she was on a short visit to Britain. In her groundbreaking 1988 video *Measures of Distance*, Hatoum uses images taken of her mother in the shower. The piece, one of the earliest examples of video by an Arab artist, is interlaced with letters from the artist's mother sharing intimate details about exile, sexuality, and identity.

In documenting the female body Hatoum follows in the footsteps of Amal Abdenour (1931-2020) a Palestinian artist who was born in Nablus and was exiled following the Nakba of 1948. Abdenour studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts of Helwan University in Zamalek, Cairo before moving to Paris in 1962 where she took evening drawing classes before joining the studio of Albert Le Normand (1915-2013). In 1970 she started utilising the photocopying machine to take images of various parts of her body and then moved to colour images in 1974 following the arrival of the first colour photocopying machine.

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In September 2015, London's Whitechapel Gallery opened a 16-month-long series of exhibitions from the collection of the Barjeel Art Foundation titled *Imperfect Chronology* and curated by Dr Omar Kholeif. The exhibitions presented works by artists from the Arab world, based on a progressing timescale beginning in the early 20th to the early 21st century. Through its display and catalogue, *Imperfect Chronology* also implied that 1990 marked a seismic shift as the first work in the contemporary display dates back to that period. Additionally, Hatoum's work *Witness* (2009), a miniaturised rendition in porcelain of the famous bullet-riddled monument in Beirut, appeared in the display titled "Mapping the Contemporary 1," which followed "Debating Modernism 2".

In the West, the artist Andy Warhol is regarded as one of the most successful contemporary artists. In 1964, American philosopher Arthur Danto paid a visit to a Warhol exhibition at a New York gallery. The exhibition was an eye opener for the philosopher as it presented a completely new answer to "the philosophical question of the nature of art".[03] *Hyperallergic* noted, "It wasn't Warhol's subject matter that shocked the philosopher, but its form".[04] Danto then wrote that Warhol's Brillo boxes "could not have been art fifty years ago. The world has to be ready for certain things".[05] Similarly, not only was the Arab world not ready for Hatoum, the Western world itself, where museums typically showed—and continue to show—far less work by female artists, was coming to grips with this strong woman who transcended boundaries and conventions. To borrow from Danto, Hatoum's 1982 performance *Under Siege* (in which she was naked, covered in clay, and trapped for seven hours inside a massive transparent container) simply "could not have been art fifty years ago". The world needed to wait for Hatoum to turn that into art. In some respects, it is almost as though art before Hatoum was modern and, after Hatoum, became contemporary.

03. As quoted in Llewellyn Negrin, "Art and Philosophy: Rivals or Partners?," Philosophy & Social Criticism 31, no. 7 (2005): 804. Here, Negrin cites Arthur Danto, After the End of Art (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 14.
04. Tiernan Morgan and Lauren Purje, "An Illustrated Guide to Arthur Danto's 'The End of Art,'" Hyperallergic, March 31, 2015, https://hyperallergic.com/191329/an-illustrated-guide-to-arthur-dantos-the-end-of-art.
05. As quoted in Morgan and Purje, "An Illustrated Guide." See original essay by Arthur Danto, "The Artworld," The Journal of Philosophy 16, no. 19 (1964): 571–84.

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Having said that, certain bodies of work by some masters who practised in the 1960s, I believe, can still be perceived as *modern* despite being painted in the 21st century. A telling example is Syrian artist Leila Nseir (1941–2023), who graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Cairo in 1963. Her oeuvre boasts stylised still lifes from the 1960s and political subjects like *The Martyr (The Nation)* from the 1970s, as well as sombre paintings like *La faim* (Hunger) from as late as the 2010s. Another illustrative example is Moroccan artist Malika Agueznay (b. 1938) who trained at the Casablanca School of Fine Arts in the 1960s and who continues to create paintings and bas-reliefs inspired by algae until the present day.

By the early 1990s, Mona Hatoum was finally getting the recognition she deserved. In 1994, she held a solo exhibition at Paris's Centre Pompidou and at Tate Britain in London in 2000. In 2015–16, she was the subject of a large survey exhibition at both institutions. In Hatoum's ascent to the status of global art phenomenon, she has transcended the constricting labels of her ethnic and gender identities. Through her audacious and creative artwork, she has helped usher in a new era of contemporary art and influenced a generation of artists in both the West and the East. She embodies the best of the Arab world where creativity and freedom of thought and expression are free to reign and where societal and cultural inhibitions are not permitted to restrict the mind and shackle the hands.

A version of this text was originally published in Medium on August 1, 2016.

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Hudood: On Artistic Trespass, Liberty, and the Bondage of Identity

Natasha Morris

It is a bitter irony that, as the seeds of the project which became Hudood were sown, the generative themes of boundaries and identity were thrown into sharp relief. In October 2023, the armed conflict between Israel and Palestine reached another fated milestone, preceded by the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. The world fell into an oxymoronic state of panicked apathy: galvanised into a sense of urgency yet fatigued by conflict. What was it about land—about ties we have to countries, nationalities, religions, and states—that means as much blood is shed *on* it as *for* it? The poppies on Flanders Fields, we are told, are red from the soldier-soaked soil that they grow from. It is metaphor well-suited to war poetry but also highlights the indelible connection of human bodies with the earth that they stand on and fight for.

Borders, in particular, became corridors of action, both in the sense of combat and restriction as much as resistance and opposition. It is no wonder, given the concurrent bleeps of news alerts and the restlessness of protest on campus, that initial meetings with the SOAS cohort brought together on this project immediately turned to the subject of 'the boundary', both as a physical entity and as a concept. The Arabic word *hudood* began to be uttered in search for an authenticity of expression which is often hampered by translation: there were deeper connotations of limitations, of stretching permissions, of mischief, parody, and rebellion as much as of law and doctrine. Each member of the curatorial team was a student on one of my courses. Over the past year of study, they had been particularly attentive to the internal divisions of the field itself: locating an ever porous boundary between 'tradition' and 'modernity', or indeed 'secular' and 'Islamic', as well as investigating the commonalities between shared stylistic conventions and concerns with regional identity. These may deliberately converge at the nexus between a thirteenth-century *maqamat* of al-Hariri and feminist, Iraqi contemporary art of the twenty-first, but they can also express entirely self-contained contexts a world away from insidious historical expectations of what a Middle Eastern artist is or should be.

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The essays within this volume expand on the thematic links that bring together a compelling batch of works collated from the Barjeel Art Foundation collection. Each views the concept of the boundary through the lens of its Arabic cognate: materiality, communication, archival processes, industrialisation, separation, cultural specificity, and even cuisine are drawn out of comparisons between artists and works. The exhibition itself follows a semantic pedigree: the generative 2006 MoMA exhibition *Without Boundary: Seventeen Ways of Looking* had been a case study on art history modules taken by the group, and any cursory search for 'boundary exhibition' will flag up a number of shows and galleries looking to synthesise seemingly disparate gatherings of works and artists. *Hudood* works almost in reverse: in being able to work with the Barjeel Art Foundation collection, the curatorial team could handpick material from what was a pre-existing assemblage of art, nurturing individual areas of interest within a collective umbrella of theme and patronage. It was as if the joints were already there, presenting instead an opportunity to uncover internal relationships between artists and works while bringing linkages of personal experience and formal cohesion to the fore.

Hudood's catalogue opens with an essay considering two case studies of selected works by Hayv Karahman (b. 1981, Baghdad) and Rachid Koraïchi (b. 1947, Aïn Beïda), who represent the two generations of artists featured in the collection. Antonis Kentonis introduces the topic of locating a specifically 'Arab' identity within their work. The essay, "Intersecting Histories: *Hudood* and the Porosity of Arab Identity", unpacks ideas of heritage, tradition, and artistic inheritance, demonstrating the historic malleability of the cultures in the SWANA (Southwestern Asia and North Africa) region.

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Suparna Shankaranand Natesan also explores boundaries in the context of artistic identities. The work of Mahrous Abdau (b. 1965, Harraneyah), Helen Zughaib (b. 1959, Harraneyah), Kamal Boullata (b. 1944, Jerusalem – d. 2019, Berlin) and Mona Hatoum (b. 1952, Beirut) are read as component parts of the 'hero's journey': a folkloric archetypal narrative, where a protagonist takes steps back toward home after a period of transformation. How they feel—about themselves, a sense of belonging, and the location of home—is negotiated across a diverse gathering of media, from landscape painting, abstraction, and sculpture.

Nour Al-Huda Zaynab Schroeter's essay follows, entitled "'Beyond Neocolonial Exercises': Art in Times of Crisis". The chapter speaks to an element of fallacy in our perceived reality: borders are institutionalised, but ultimately imagined, becoming real only when they are enacted at the behest of the powers that be. Subsequently, they are made material, manipulated, and obliterated by artists in the exhibition.

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Alongside an insightful interview with Palestinian artist Bashar AlHroub (b. 1978, Jerusalem), Safa Kamran builds on the discussion concerning the polemics of place, time, and citizenship, along with observations and personal stories in the essay "Alienation and Belonging within Physical Borders". Shamsa Alnahyan, in her essay "In Concrete We Trust: Boundaries as Control and Communication in the Barjeel Art Foundation Collection", considers borders as liminal spaces. Using case studies of Abdulnasser Gharem (b. 1973, Saudi Arabia) and Ganzeer (b. 1980, Egypt), she examines pieces by two artists working with concrete as a medium loaded with satire and significance, imbrued with politics, tragedy, and humour.

Pluralised identities, the implications of being a multidisciplinary artist working in diaspora, and the pervasive discourses of Oriental and Occidental are the inroads explored by Chloe-Kate Abel's essay "From Ghardaïa to the *Banlieues*: Kader Attia's Interrogation of Colonial Legacies, Constructing Contemporaneity, and Hybrid Identity Beyond Boundaries". From couscous to Bauhaus, Attia's (b. 1970, France) French-Algerian nationality is an internal hyphenate explored throughout his practice. Elika Blake's following chapter on "Spatiality and Selfhood in the Modern Gulf City" is medium rich. As oil impacts the social and political dynamics of the modern Gulf city, Blake considers the implications of economic surges on modernity and urbanism through the work of Ahmed Mater (b. 1979, Tabuk), Farah Al Qasimi (b. 1991, UAE), Ammar Al Attar (b. 1981, Dubai), and Zaha Hadid (b. 1950, Baghdad – d. 2016, Florida).

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Unpacking the critical exploration of 'the archive' is central to Clara Rose Virginia Ewert's closing chapter, "Distorting the Archive: Blurring the Boundary between the Artist and the Archivist through Works from the Barjeel Art Foundation Collection". The collection itself is, after all, a form of archive. Ewert considers how featured artists' 'Arabness' can be defined, negotiated, and displayed within contexts of production, editing, reproduction, and self-definition, focusing on the work of Maha Maamoun (b. 1972, California) and Mohammad Abla (b. 1953, Belqas).

Eight essays, each of which expand profoundly upon the theme of the 'boundary'— both physical and conceptual—provide a rich, overlapping web of threads. In examining works within the Barjeel Art Foundation collection, authors ask both enduring and refreshing questions about how artistic expression, identity, and heritage oscillate in contemporary Arab art production. *Hudood* offers new perspectives on the complexities of boundaries in a globalised world, underscoring the interconnectedness of cultural and historical narratives. This catalogue speaks to the enduring power of art to question, challenge, and redefine the limits imposed by governments and guardians: no man is an Island, and nor is any artist.

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Hudood of the Mind

Venetia Porter

Revisiting the history of Morocco, for me, this was a way to make proper sense of our history, to take it out of parochialism while retaining the traces of what has been witnessed.[01]

It was in 2011 that Mohssin Harraki first exhibited *Pierre dans la marre*, or Stone in the Pond, an installation featured in the exhibition *Hudood* that this volume accompanies. A work consisting of 40 books made of concrete, the series of tomes represents the standard textbooks produced by the Moroccan Ministry of Education between the 1980s and 1990s for schoolchildren up to the age of 16. The project grew out of a residency at the Cinémathèque de Tanger following an invitation by Yto Barrada and was later shown at L'appartement 22, an art space in Rabat created by Abdellah Karroum in 2002.[02] Stacked in piles or on shelves, each book—dipped in cement—covers a different subject. These were Harraki's own books: *Tarikh* (History), *al-Riyadiyyat* (Mathematics), *al-Fikr al-Islami wa-l-Falsafa* (Islamic Thought and Philosophy), and *al-'Ulum al-Tabi'iyya* (Natural Sciences) among others passed between neighbours and friends over the years. Rendering them in concrete, as he has observed, "is a way for me, on a formal level, to keep the shape of a book while purposely not being able to access any of its content".[03] "Fossilised education" is how Sultan Al Qassemi refers to this act of creating a book rendered inaccessible, which raises the question: does this contribute to the fossilisation of our minds?[04]

01. Karima Boudou, "Family Ties: Mohssin Harraki in conversation with Karima Boudou," Ibraaz, September 26, 2016, https://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/202. I would like to thank Sultan Al Qassemi for the invitation to contribute this essay as well as Natasha Morris and Abdellah Karroum for their help in its preparation. It is based on a conversation with Mohssin Harraki on 18 April 2024. I thank him for offering me such insights into his extraordinary and important work.
02. Boudou, "Family Ties."
03. Boudou, "Family Ties."
04. "Mohssin Harraki: Fossilised Education," hosted by Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, AJ+ Arabic, posted February 24, 2017, https://sultanalqassemi.com/videos/mohsin-harraki-fossilised-education. For an explanation of the historical contexts of production of the Moroccan textbooks and their Arabisation, see Emma Chubb, "Graft, Trellis, Tame (Greffer, Espalier, Dresser)," published June 2014, accessed June 17, 2024, https://www.mohssinharraki.com/copie-de-011-mati%C3%Agre-grise-une-math%C3%A9-1.

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Harraki describes how the exhibition was received: "visitors identified with [the books], everyone had an anecdote to tell that reminded them of that time". "That time", as Harraki recalls, was a violent period known as 'The Years of Lead' (1970–99). You only have to read Leïla Slimani's *Au pays des autres* (In the Country of Others) to get a real sense of the build up to this moment of Morocco's postcolonial history.[05] 2011 was of course the year that is often referred to as 'The Arab Spring'—which began in Tunisia where they call it *thawrat al-karama*, or the revolution of dignity—with repercussions throughout the Middle East and North Africa. In Morocco, as Harraki says: "people could at that point, at last, talk freely"—the *hudood* of that difficult earlier period had passed.

FIGURE 1

One of the meanings of *Pierre dans la marre* is that it can allude to a moment or an act that sets in motion unforseen or unconnected events. These are the moments that can break the *hudood*, a word that goes much beyond the basic meaning of boundary or borders. For Harraki's books represent the hudood of the mind. As Harraki has described to Tina Barouti, "These textbooks have, for me, the shape of usual books of knowledge, but they have failed in their initial mission to educate because often they dealt with propaganda and falsified information about culture, history, and other topics related to society. It [the project] was also a little self-reminder of the total hatred I had toward these textbooks when I was at school".[06] In their monumentality and breadth of vision, Harraki's *Pierre dans la marre* recalls the lead books of German artist Anselm Kiefer, in which he alludes to collective memory, history, and myth making.[07]

05. Leïla Slimani, Le pays des autres : roman 2, Regardez-nous danser (Paris: Gallimard, 2022).
6. Boudou, "Family Ties."
7. For the books of Anselm Kiefer, see Charles W. Haxthausen, "The World, the Book, and Anselm Kiefer," accessed April 29, 2024, http://www.neugraphic.com/kiefer/kiefer-text7.html. See also Anselm Kiefer and Götz Adriani, The Books of Anselm Kiefer 1969–1990 (London: Thames and Hudson 1991).

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FIGURE 1 Mohssin Harraki, born in 1981, Asilah, Morocco, *Pierre dans la Mare*, 2010, 40 books in concrete.

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Harraki, similarly preoccupied by these subjects, has been fascinated by books from an early age: "I remember the first book I found, called *al-Maraya* [Mirrors] (1971) by Naguib Mahfouz… reading became like a ritual", he told Barouti. Increasingly, his books have taken on ever more thought-provoking forms and meanings, and they often take historical or literary texts as the initial inspiration. For instance, in the *Aquarium* series (2014), books are placed in tanks of water and in glass in both *Histoire* (2013) and *Rubayat Omar Khayyam* (2015). Another piece, his *Description de l'Afrique – Rhizome*, takes as its starting point the book of the traveller Hassan al-Wazzan also known as Leo Africanus (1485–c.1554); it is an installation comprising drawings and books encased in cables.

Another work, *La faiblesse forte, et la force faible* (2012) (Weakness Is Strong, and Strength Weak), features the Arabic rendition of the title—*al-da'if qawi, al-qawi da'if*—printed on loaves of bread.[08] In *Greffer, Espalier, Dresser*, also exhibited prior at L'appartement 22, it is the founders of Moroccan political parties since 1937 that inspire the drawings and a metal book. The title comes from a botanical technique by which trees are trained to grow flat against a wall or a trellis. This, for Harraki, provides a parallel for the patriarchial history of Morocco that has been transmitted over decades.[09]

8. See Mohssin Harraki's website: https://www.mohssinharraki.com.
9. Mohssin Harraki, Greffer, Espalier, Dresser, texts by Abdellah Karroum and Emma Chubb (digital edition, Editions Hors'Champs, 2020); and http://appartement22.com/spip.php?article375, accessed 30 April 2024.

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The so-called 'Generation 00', the generation of Harraki, formed the third part of *Moroccan Trilogy, 1950–2020*, the important exhibition of Moroccan art shown at the Reina Sofia museum in Madrid in 2021 curated by Manuel Borja-Villel and Abdellah Karroum. As described by the curators: this is "a generation of young artists who broke off from the past on the formal, technical, symbolic, and political planes of art."[10] The Madrid exhibition took a broad view of the rich history of the modern and contemporary art of Morocco now increasingly known through the work of Morad Montazami and others with the exhibitions of the Casablanca School at Tate St Ives and in Sharjah in particular.[11]

And that rich history has particular resonnance for Harraki. He was born in Assilah, a city he did not leave until he was 20 years old. Often described as an open-air museum, Assilah saw in 1978 the first edition of the Cultural Moussem of Assilah. Artists from around the world came to lead print workshops, while the city itself was transformed by glorious murals painted by schoolchildren and leading Moroccan artists. Harraki describes how people would await the Moussem with anticipation, to see what it would bring next. Among the initiators of the Moussem was Mohamed Melehi (1936–2020), himself born in Assilah,[12] and Mohamed Chabâa, born in Tangier (1935–2013), both of whom trained at L'école des beaux arts in Tetouan where, decades later, Harraki was to study. It took him four tries to get into the school, so he studied mathematics in the meantime.

10. "Moroccan Trilogy: 1950–2020," Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, accessed April 30, 2024, https://www.museoreinasofia.es/en/exhibitions/moroccan-trilogy.
11. Information regarding these exhibitions is available online: "The Casablanca Art School," Tate St Ives, May 27, 2023–January 14, 2024, https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-st-ives/casablanca-art-school; and "The Casablanca Art School: Platforms and Patterns for a Postcolonial Avant-Garde (1962–1987)," February 24–June 16, 2024, https://sharjahart.org/sharjah-art-foundation/exhibitions/the-casablanca-art-school-platforms-and-patterns-for-a-postcolonial-avant-g. See also the Institut du monde arabe exhibition catalogue by Françoise Cohen, ed., Maroc, une identité modern (Lille: Invenit, 2020); and Morad Montazami, ed., Volumes fugitifs (Rabat: Kulte Editions, 2016).
12. Cohen, Maroc, une identité, 36.

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Assilah and Tetouan were under Spanish colonial domination until 1956, the same year that French occupation of the southern region of Morocco came to an end. With regard to the teaching of art, unlike Casablanca where French academic painting was taught until the arrival of Farid Belkahia (1934–2014) in 1962, the National Institute of Fine Arts in Tetouan was started by the Spanish painter Mariano Bertuchi and therefore oriented toward Spanish art. Considered a pioneer of art education in Morocco, Mohamed Chabâa was director of the school between 1994 and 1998 where he had an enduring influence, and it was from this same school that Harraki graduated in 2007. Subsequently pursuing his studies in Toulon and Dijon, today Harraki is based in Paris, his work collected and shown by institutions internationally. His most recent work, *Quand la géographie devient abstraite* (2022)[13] (When Geography Becomes Abstract) is an imaginary dialogue between two thinkers and geographers Girard Desargues, French mathematician and engineer (1591–1661), and the Moroccan geographer and map maker Muhammad al-Idrissi (1100–65). Imagining between them a dialogue that transcends time, space, and geography, the piece seems to contain an echo of a much earlier work by Harraki, *Passport* (2009). Here, he brought together the covers of passports from around the world, where he asks the question: is it the passport that gives a person their identity, or is it the person who gives the identity to the passport?[14]

FIGURE 2

While the *passport* continues as a powerful symbol of identity and freedom highlighted by another artist in this exhibition Walid Al Wawi, we return to the notion of those pervasive, often arbitrary *hudood*—physical and of the mind—that both exemplify Harraki's magnificent *Pierre dans la marre* and inform the choices of works from the Barjeel Art Foundation collection that have been brought together by the student curators for this exhibition. There is no single narrative in *Hudood* but rather a world of individual, thought-provoking stories.

13. Mohssin Harraki, "Quand la géographie devient abstraite-2, 2022," accessed June 17, 2024, https://www.mohssinharraki.com/copie-de-045-ombre-des-racines-s-3.
14. Mohssin Harraki, "World Passport, 2009," accessed April 30, 2024, https://www.mohssinharraki.com/002-world-passport-2009.

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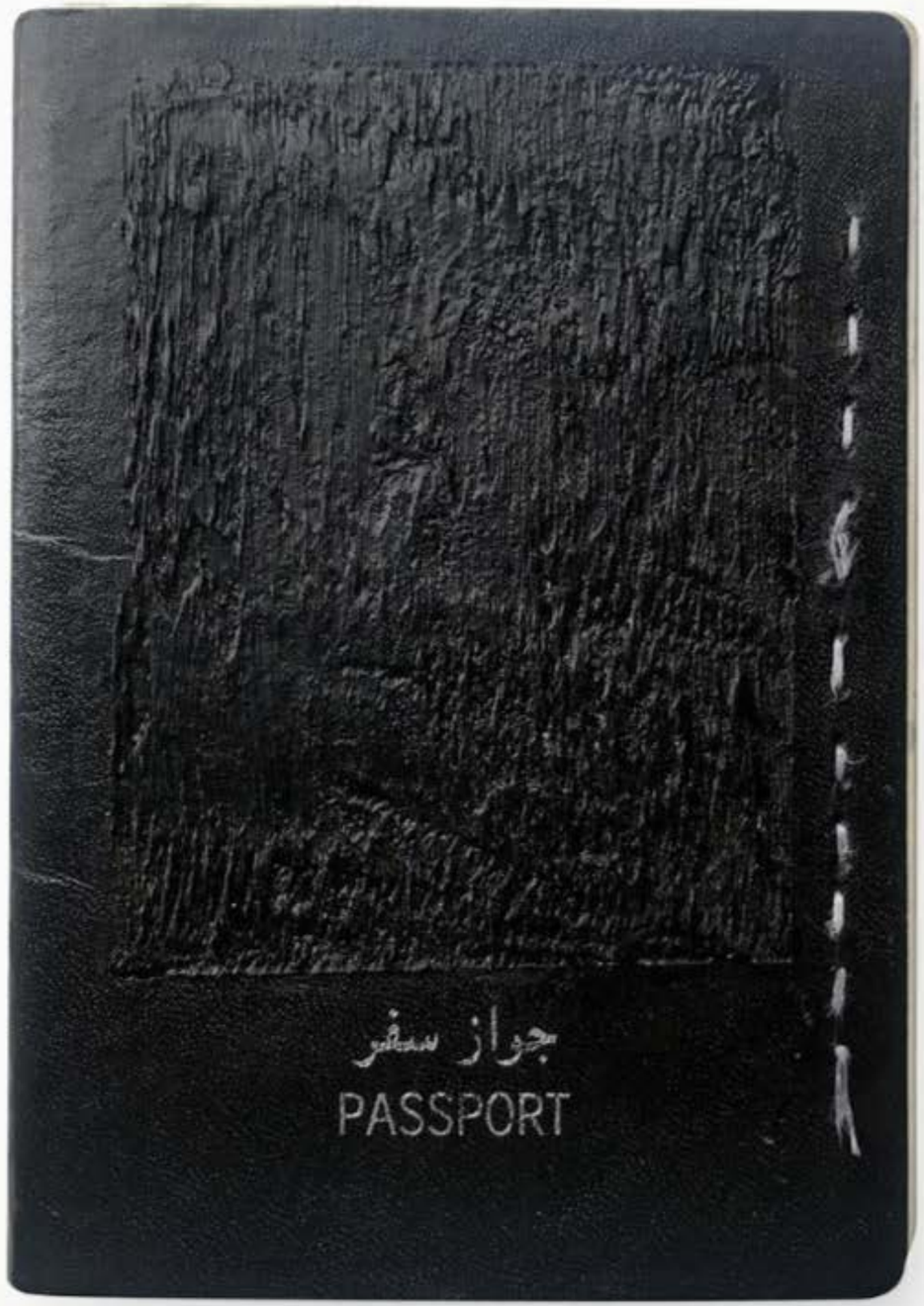

FIGURE 2 Walid Al Wawi, born 1988, Amman, Jordan, *Passport*, 2017, Passport, Wax, 12.5 x 8.8 cm

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LINA KHATIB

Lina Khatib is an interdisciplinary expert on the Middle East. Her work spans the worlds of policy, academia, and arts and culture. She has published extensively on visual culture in the region, including the books *Image Politics in the Middle East: The Role of the Visual in Political Struggle; Lebanese Cinema: Imagining the Civil War and Beyond; and Filming the Modern Middle East: Politics in the Cinemas of Hollywood and the Arab World*.

She has been Director of the SOAS Middle East Institute at SOAS University of London; Director of the Middle East and North Africa Programme at Chatham House; Director of the Carnegie Middle East Center at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; and before that co-founded and led the Program on Arab Reform and Democracy at Stanford University's Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law.

She is also a music impresario; since 2019 she has been a co-founder and co-lead of the World Metal Congress. She occasionally creates and exhibits visual art.

SULTAN SOOUD AL QASSEMI

Sultan Sooud Al-Qassemi is a columnist and researcher on social, political and cultural affairs in the Arab Gulf states. He is also the Founder of the Barjeel Art Foundation in Sharjah, UAE.

Sultan was an MIT Media Lab Director's Fellow from 2014 to 2016, a practitioner-in- residence at the Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies at New York University in Spring 2017 and a Yale Greenberg World Fellow in 2018. He was a visiting instructor at the Council of Middle East Studies at Yale University, the Center of Contemporary Arab Studies at Georgetown University, the American University of Paris, the Islamic Civilization and Societies program at Boston College, the School of Public Affairs at SciencesPo Paris, the Middle East Initiative at the Harvard Kennedy School, the School of Arts and Sciences at Brandeis University, the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, New York, and most recently at Bard College Berlin.

NATASHA MORRIS

Dr Natasha Morris BA, MA, PhD (Courtauld, University of London) is Lecturer in Islamic Arts and a convenor of the Islamic Art module of the Postgraduate Diploma in Asian Art at SOAS.

She is also an associate lecturer in the arts of Iran and Islam at the Courtauld Institute. She was previously Myojin-Nadar Project Curator Middle East Art at the British Museum, and co-authored Reflections: art of the Middle East and North Africa (British Museum, 2020) and Honar: The Afkhami Collection of Modern and Contemporary Iranian Art (Phaidon, 2017).

She has written extensively on the art of the Middle East for publications including The Oxford Art Journal, The Art Bulletin, Time Out, and The Guardian as well as authoring several exhibition catalogues.

VENETIA PORTER

Venetia Porter was Senior Curator for Islamic and Contemporary Middle East art at the British Museum (1989-2022) where she is now Honorary Research Fellow. She studied Arabic and Persian and Islamic Art at the University of Oxford, and her PhD from the University of Durham is on the history and architecture of Medieval Yemen.

She was the lead curator for the Albukhary Foundation Gallery of the Islamic World, opened 2018. Her research and publications range from Islamic tiles, Yemeni history, Arabic inscriptions and amulets to contemporary art, and include her mother's autobiography Thea Porter's scrapbook which she edited (Unicorn Press 2019).

Her exhibitions with accompanying publications include Word into Art: Artists of the Modern Middle East (London 2006, Dubai 2008), Hajj: journey to the heart of Islam (2012), Reflections: contemporary art of the Middle East and North Africa (2021) and Amakin, 21,39 Jeddah Arts, 9th edition, (Jeddah and Dhahran 2022). Artists making books: poetry to politics, was published by British Museum Press in 2023.

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Intersecting Histories
Hudood and the Porosity of Arab Identity

Antonis Kentonis

The *Hudood: Rethinking Boundaries* exhibition features contemporary artworks from the Barjeel Art Foundation, focusing on the theme of boundaries as a means to explore a diverse range of art from the Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA) region. As a Sharjah-based initiative, the goal of the Barjeel Art Foundation is to delve into the nuanced entanglements of Arab histories: notions of shared histories, geographies, and ethnic distinctions which transcend cultural and geographical borders.[01] Despite categorising their collection as encompassing eminent works of artists associated with the label of 'contemporary Arab art', the Barjeel Art Foundation collection also houses many works by non-Arab artists from various religious backgrounds who have lived and worked within historically Arab lands.

Whilst planning *Hudood*, the curatorial team was tasked with negotiating the inherent porosity of Arab identity, a category indelibly shaped by regional and personal histories. Within this essay, I therefore want to explore this tension, exemplified by the intersectionality and multicultural inspiration found within select artworks from the collection at hand. Through case studies of pieces by Hayv Kahraman (b. 1981, Baghdad) and Rachid Koraïchi (b. 1947, Aïn Beïda), who represent two generations of Arab artists featured in the collection, I aim to uncover the blurred lines which both separate and unite 'Arab identity'. Given the title and theme of *Hudood* (an Arabic word connoting imposition and parameters), this essay aligns with the prerogative of the exhibition: a project dedicated to questioning boundaries and their deceptive rigidity.

01. "Contact and About," Barjeel Art Foundation accessed May 9, 2024, https://www.barjeelartfoundation.org/contact-us.

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Defining a specifically Arab identity entails unravelling a complex history of political, cultural, theological, and aesthetic overlap. The initial consolidation of the Arabian Peninsula's clans and peoples under Islam in the seventh century CE resulted in the Arab conquest of the Levant and beyond. These conquests made way for the formation of a vast empire which encompassed distinct regional identities.[02] Suddenly, a new Arab superpower was expected not only to govern diverse peoples that already had their own rich and firmly established cultures but also to establish Islam's visual identity.

The Umayyad Caliphate (661–750 CE), facing a diverse and civilised populace as the initial dynastic leaders of the young religion, strategically assimilated local pre-Islamic visual elements and practices into their own.[03] This cultural assimilation is evident in early Islamic monuments such as the Dome of the Rock (built 685–91 CE) and the Great Mosque in Damascus (built 705–15 CE), which inherited features such as layout and imagery from Byzantine and Sassanian architectural as well as graphic traditions. As the Umayyad dynasty's legitimacy balanced on the acceptance of the conquered populace, its adoption of localised symbols of power and grandeur aimed to project a new religious and political dominance without estranging the indigenous communities.

02. Anna Ballian and Benaki Museum, eds., Benaki Museum: A Guide to the Museum of Islamic Art (Benaki Museum, 2006), 52.
03. Ballian and Benaki Musuem, Benaki Museum, 59.

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This assimilation of local cultures in the period following the emergence of Islamic dominions evinces the porous nature characterising Arab art throughout history. From the early presence of Arab rule in SWANA, the patronage of skilled craftspeople and the adoption of aesthetics from diverse cultures became one of the defining features of a nebulous sense of Arabness. The region's role as a crossroads for trade throughout history meant that this assimilation was not only confined to the pre-Islamic cultures of the SWANA region but also extended far beyond it, with the incorporation of East Asian and European artistic traditions and elements. Of note is the transfer of papermaking, which was introduced from China into the region around the eighth century and.[04] Similarly, the region's strategic position made it desirable for colonial powers throughout the nineteenth to twentieth centuries, leading to the projection of European models for both politics and the cultural landscape through architecture, literature[05] and painting.[06]

The Barjeel Art Foundation's dedicated efforts to unravelling the entanglements of Arab histories, which transcend conventional cultural and geographical boundaries, underscore the inherent richness and complexity within this artistic landscape.[07] This commitment invites individuals to engage in contemplation and introspection, promoting questions about the defining factors within the diverse realm of Arab art: how is it to be categorised, shown, and written about? These are all questions we sought to respond to when working with the collection.

04. Maya Shatzmiller, "The Adoption of Paper in the Middle East, 700–1300 ad," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 61, no. 3 (2018): 461–90.
05. Arthur Debsi, "Art Education in the Arab World," Dalloul Art Foundation, last updated September 20, 2022,https://dafbeirut.org/en/articles/Art-Education-in-the-Arab-World.
06. Arthur Debsi, "Art Education in the Arab World," Dalloul Art Foundation, last updated September 20, 2022, https://dafbeirut.org/en/articles/Art-Education-in-the-Arab-World.
07. "Contact and About," Barjeel Art Foundation.

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In today's art world, where global connections are stronger and colonialism's effects linger, more artists from Arabic-speaking countries are training abroad and expanding their reach across borders. Their practice, in this context, stands as a powerful testament to the dynamic and ever-adapting nature of inspiration and identity. *Hudood* navigates expressions of Arab identity in the arts as part of its analysis of physical and social borders: external and internal definitions of artists and their works are malleable and open to exploration. The subsequent analysis of works by Kahraman and Koraïchi exhibited in *Hudood* will illuminate how they capture this mercurial aspect of personal and artistic identity, challenging rigid boundaries and cultural isolationism within the SWANA region.

To better illustrate this, we can look at the Kurdish-Iraqi artist, Hayv Kahraman, whose works serve as a pivotal lens through which to examine the interplay between her diasporic identity as an Arab woman and her use of cross-cultural amalgamation as a form of criticism. Forcibly displaced at the age of 11 during the Iran-Iraq War and Gulf War, the artist took a month-long journey passing through many countries like Jordan, Ethiopia, and Yemen before arriving in Sweden.[08] One can recognize similar journeys throughout her work, as traces from distinct visual traditions which Kahraman synthesises in her compositions. In her insightful exploration of Kahraman's oeuvre, Ana Honig delves into the intricate web of classical iconography that permeates the Iraqi artist's work, citing her myriad inspirations as originating from Japanese Ukiyo-e prints, Art Nouveau, Persian[09] and Arabic book arts, and European Renaissance oil paintings. Kahraman's synthesis of these artistic borrowings becomes apparent when looking at her poignant oil painting *Flayed Lamb* (2008).

08. Siobhan Forshaw, "Hayv Kahraman's Politics of Painting," *Elephant*, July 25, 2018.
09. Ana Honig, "Pins and Needles | Hayv Kahraman," last updated 2010, https://hay-vkahramacom/2017/01/22/pins-and-needles-ana-finel-honig-2010.

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The artwork itself features two elegantly posed and richly adorned women interacting with the hanging carcass of a lamb. Following the Japanese visual tradition referred to as *fūryū* (elegant/stylish) or *mitate-e* (to liken one thing to another picture), Kahraman uses this imagery to depict the scriptural narrative of the binding of Isaac.[10] In this narrative, Abraham is called upon to sacrifice his son, only to be interrupted by the intervention of an angel who provides a lamb as a substitute. In *Flayed Lamb*, the kneeling woman assumes the role of Isaac, examining the sacrificed animal's remains, perhaps reflecting on her own mortality in the face of what her fate would have been if the angel had not intervened. The standing woman, representing the patriarchal figure of Abraham, holds a meat hook with one hand while she raises her other pointing upwards, alluding to the divine drama unfolding.

The series from which this painting comes from was inspired by her memories of witnessing the Eid al-Adha ritual, an Islamic custom honouring the above narrative. Kahraman uses the imagery of this scriptural narrative and the aggressive act to equate the refugee experience with that of flaying. In an interview, the artist said, regarding her experience of growing up in Sweden, "As you flee to the West, you are obliged to assimilate. If you want to survive... I tried to become a Swede. I bleached my hair; I mastered their tongue and allowed myself to be colonised". Like the skinned lamb in her painting, Kahraman had to shed her Arabness to assimilate in the West.

10. Timothy Clark, "'Transformational Pictures': Mitate-e and Yatsushi-e," in *Painting the Floating World: Ukiyo-e Masterpieces from the Weston Collection*, eds. Janice Katz and Mami Hatayama, trans. Mami Hatayama (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2018): 190.

With this realisation, Kahraman, who previously was taught to perceive European art history as the epitome of 'beauty', began to reassess her perspective. [11] Hence, her iconic elegant figures emerged. Modelled after Kahraman's own body, the fair-skinned figures depicted in her works mirror the white Renaissance bodies she encountered during her fine art studies in Florence.[12] This choice aimed to facilitate a connection between her predominantly white audience and the subjects portrayed in her artwork and to encourage them to delve in deeper interpretation.[13]

These dissonances — such as those between East and West or between beauty and violence — serve as a potent vehicle for revealing the visceral reality of body politics, gender, and geopolitics intertwined with the artist's diasporic consciousness.[14] Forced to depart from her country of birth, Kahraman endeavours to reconstruct her own perception of Iraq. Consequently, in her need to archive and solidify her own history, the artist recreates her own idea of Iraq through her semi-autobiographical works. Her utopian vision of Iraq stems not only from her own encounters but also from the narratives passed down by her mother and the older generation. As a part of this retelling of Iraq, the artist also paints her own army of women: she gives agency to her women subjects by employing the feminisation of masculine image subjects in her work.[15]

11. Parkes, "Painting Memories."
12. Parkes, "Painting Memories."
13. Forshaw, "Politics of Painting."
14. Natasha Morris, "How Iraqi Are you? | Hayv Kahraman," last updated 2016, https://hayvkahraman.com/2017/01/27/how-iraqi-are-you-natasha-morris-2016.
15. Forshaw, "Politics of Painting."

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Her identity as a woman, foreigner, and refugee marks her as 'Other', compelling her to navigate and renegotiate her place in both Europe and Iraq. By strategically amalgamating visual sources from around the globe, she forges her own sense of belonging whilst disrupting superficial hierarchies of superior and inferior art forms. The realism of European Renaissance painting is merged with the stylisation of Arab manuscripts and Japanese art. White bodies fuse with Arab bodies, empathising with the suffering and anxieties of the Other. Like a polished mirror, *Flayed Lamb* reflects the images and experiences that Kahraman has absorbed through her diasporic journey of assimilation and rediscovery, which inadvertently shaped both her artistic practice and personal truth.

FIGURE 1

In contrast to the considerations of inherent hybridity raised by Kahraman's intentional fusion of influences in her artwork, Algerian-born artist Rachid Koraïchi presents a different perspective. Through his synthesis of foreign symbols and characters, his work culminates in a new, synchronistic aesthetic. Raised within a family of Sufi Quranic scholars, Koraïchi is known for his diverse body of work which blends painting, calligraphy, and installations. A notable follower of the modernist Hurufiyya art movement, which emphasises the utilisation of Arab-Islamic calligraphy and the written word in modern visual art, Koraïchi intricately weaves words and symbols into his creations. His artistic oeuvre delves into explorations of themes related to aesthetics, spirituality, and the human condition[16] Koraïchi's artistic practice is deeply rooted in his North African and Islamic heritage, which serves him as a rich source of inspiration. However, what distinguishes his work is an ability to transcend his regional boundaries by addressing universal themes from diverse cultural landscapes. The amalgamation of Chinese, Arabic, and pre-Islamic Amazigh scripts within his body of work underscores Koraïchi's confidence in navigating both a self-referential Islamic Arabness and a curiosity with 'Otherness' inherent in his artistic expression.

16. Yunzhi Pan, "Artwork Spotlight: Rachid Koraïchi's 'Sans toi, ni moi, ou l'hallucination nostalgique (Without You, or Me, or the Nostalgic Hallucination)' and 'Cet espace incrusté de nos destins (This Space Is Inlaid with Our Destinies)'," Grey Art Gallery, last updated April 15, 2020, https://greyartgallery.nyu.edu/2020/04/art-work-spotlight-rachid-koraichi.

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FIGURE 1 Hayv Kahraman, born 1981, Baghdad, Iraq, *Flayed Lamb*, 2008, Oil on Linen, 173 × 107cm

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FIGURE 2

One of Koraïchi's notable pieces included in the Barjeel Art Foundation collection, entitled *Without You or Me, or the Nostalgic Hallucination*, exemplifies his innovative approaches to the dual medium of painting and calligraphy. Departing from conventional materials like paper, Koraïchi.[17] In doing so, he introduced an additional layer to his artistic process, bridging the gap between historic media and contemporary contemplation. The artwork adopts a bold calligraphic style, featuring a structural central element reminiscent of a Chinese character. The negative space surrounding this invented character is filled with a complex field of patterns, formed by illegible and often mirrored Arabic calligraphy. This unique composition functions as a sort of talismanic tablet, inviting discussion on the historical foundations of both Islamic and Chinese mystic traditions. By interweaving these two cultural strands, Koraïchi's creation delves into the potent auspicious energies inherent in both the written word and the inscribed symbol.

Purposefully rendered indecipherable, the artwork intentionally blurs the lines between the seemingly incompatible traditions of the SWANA region and East Asia. This visual fusion serves as a compelling commentary on the conceptual similarities between spiritual and linguistic systems. Through his inventive reimagining of both local and foreign scripts, Koraïchi transforms his inscriptions into sacred texts and universal prayers, capturing a religious reverence within his compositions through the act of writing.

17. "Without You or Me or the Nostalgic Hallucination," Barjeel Art Foundation, accessed March 3, 2024, https://www.barjeelartfoundation.org/collection/without-you-or-me-or-the-nostalgic-hallucination.

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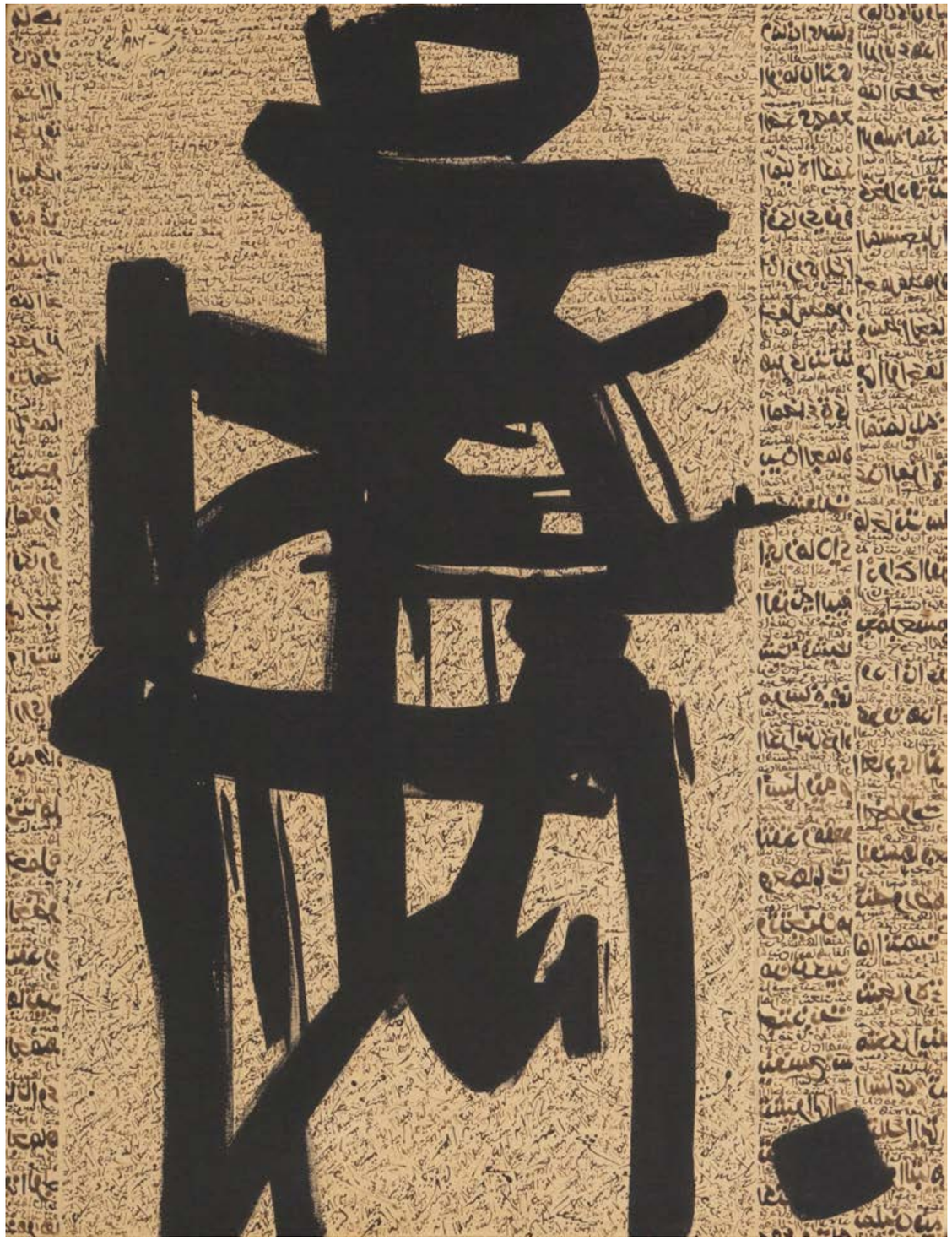

FIGURE 2 Rachid Koraïchi, born 1947, Aïn Beïda, Algeria, *Sans toi, ni moi ou l'hallucination nostalgique*, 1986, Ink on clay on panel, 64.5 × 49.5 cm

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In conclusion, *Hudood* reflects on the intricate entanglements and porosity which define Arab histories. As the show challenges the notion of rigid cultural boundaries within the SWANA region, it invites contemplation on the malleability of Arab identity. The showcased artworks transcend social and geographic confines and embody an expanded web of both local and distant interconnected histories. Whether through Hayv Kahraman's nuanced exploration of iconography or Rachid Koraïchi's synthesis of scripts and symbols, the exhibition unveils the dynamic and ever-adapting nature of global Arab art. When artists navigate the complexities of their personal experiences and cultural backgrounds, they offer compelling narratives that resonate beyond geographical confines.

They thusly invite viewers to engage with themes of displacement, assimilation, and reclamation of agency. As international connectivity continues to shape contemporary artistic expression, the Barjeel Art Foundation's dedication to unravelling the complexities of Arab histories underscores the richness, diversity, and enduring relevance of this multifaceted artistic landscape.

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ANTONIS KENTONIS

Antonis Kentonis is a transdisciplinary visual artist, art historian and collector, born and raised on the island of Cyprus. From a young age, Kentonis developed a deep fascination with history and culture, which fueled his passion for collecting objects that hold both material and narrative significance. This led him to establish the Kentoni Collection in collaboration with Gabriel Roberto Greer, making their research and the collected artefacts publicly accessible via a website. His research interests and inspiration for his creative work explore themes of historic trade, intersectionality, cultural erasure and cultural exchange. With focus on Byzantine, Islamic, and Japanese art. After his studies in Fine Art Painting from University of the Arts London, Camberwell, he is completing a masters in Art History and Archeology at School of Oriental and African Studies.

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Hudood: Exploring Boundaries in the Context of Artistic Identities

Suparna Shankaranand Natesan

As university students forging our paths to meaningful careers and exposing ourselves to various possibilities, we often come across the quote "It's not about the destination, it is about the journey". This prompts you to take a moment to pause, recognize, and reflect upon the borders we cross in the course of our journeys, the challenges we face, the impact we make, and the people we encounter before we overcome barriers. It is through this prism that this essay examines the works of a few artists that are part of the Barjeel Art Foundation's collection and presented in our exhibition "*Hudood: Rethinking Boundaries*".

This viewpoint is inspired by the narrative structure seen in the popular Arab fables *Kalila wa Dimna* (Tales of Bidpai c.13th Century) and Attar's poem *Conference of the Birds* (1177 CE). Both these gems of literature contain a primary narrative. At different parts of the story, the protagonist is posed with a question or a challenge. The narrative is redirected into an anecdote that concludes with a learning which enables the protagonist to continue in their journey. A millennial may associate this with the popular Nintendo Gameboy version of Pokémon, where the player needs to acquire a skill and win a battle before they advance in their journey. Similarly, this essay explores how an artist evolves and expand their work's boundaries as they experience new circumstances, meet new people, and overcome various challenges, using them to explore new styles and modes of expression.

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MAHROUS ABDAU

Fields by the Canal by Mahrous Abdau (b.1965) is a vibrant piece. Woollen threads in bright hues are woven on a loom, bringing to life a lively scene on the banks of a canal. The viewer takes the place of a child seated on higher ground, possibly a hill or rock, peering into a clearing amidst the fields. Birds flutter around fruit-laden trees; ducks swim in the stream, plunging their heads into the water; and dogs faithfully follow their masters as they lead their buffalos and donkeys into a market. Women and men carry their wares in boxes upon their heads while others perform domestic tasks on the bank of the river and on the terraces of cuboidal homes that lie beyond the fields. There is a sense of childish nostalgia that guides the viewer to the memories of the artist Abdau, who works at the Ramses Wissa Wassef Art Center in al-Haraneyah, Giza, Egypt.[01]

FIGURE 1

Adbau was born in al- Haraneyah village in 1965 to a family of farmers. At the age of eleven, he was introduced to traditional weaving techniques at the local art centre. While this exposure opened doors to his career as an artist, he faced resistance from his father who was not happy to see his son spending time at the art centre instead of working on the family fields. The intervention of Suzanne Wissa Wassef, the director of the Ramses Wissa Wassef Art Center, allowed for a compromise and enabled Abdau to progress on his journey as an artist.[02] As an ode to preserving the ancient Egyptian craft of tapestry weaving, the Center trained young artists to weave on a loom while giving them the creative freedom to craft their unique artistic identity. As a result of these exposures and interventions, Mehrous Abdau's tapestries took on the form we now experience, one that speaks of the tales of his lands and childhood while preserving a craft and imparting it to the next generation.

01. Ramses Wissa Wassef Art Centre(wiss.wassef.artcentre), "The lanscape tapenstry",Instagram, photo, December 6, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CogX7J1tM6Z/?igsh=MTJ4YTQzaDcwb3lzag%3D%3D.
02. "Tree&Birds,2013", Gulf Pacific Press(website),accessed on April 29, 2024, https://www.gulfpacificpress.com/tapestries/tree-amp-birds-2013.

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FIGURE 1 Mahrous Abdau, *Fields by the Canal*, 2021, INV# 1948, tapestry, 37 x 246cm, Courtesy of the Barjeel Art Foundation.

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HELEN ZUGHAIB

Syrian Migration is a series of paintings by Helen Zughaib (b. 1959). Two works from this series are part of the collection of the Barjeel Art Foundation. As intended by the artist, the colourful and vibrant works attract the viewer to take a closer look.[03] A detailed inspection reveals the story behind the painting, one that makes the viewer empathize with the migration of women and children amidst war. *Syrian Migration #3* depicts women and children standing in queues punctuated by counters. This hints at widows waiting in immigration queues as they pick up pieces of their shattered lives and cross physical boundaries to a place of safety. *Syrian Migration #21* depicts a group of women stitching blankets on sewing machines. Their seating arrangement indicates that they are now employed. Most of these women have lost their husbands and are forced to venture into an industrial setting for the first time as there are no men to take care of them anymore. Through their perseverance and strength, they extend their own boundaries of identity by venturing into unfamiliar territory to provide for their children.

FIGURE 2

FIGURE 3

Helen Zughaib is an Arab-American artist born in Beirut, Lebanon, who has lived in the Middle East and Europe before moving to the United States. Her earlier works draw upon her own journey while leaving her home country. They often feature children's shoes drawing attention to the impact of war on younger generations. The motif also draws on her memory of her sister losing a shoe while they were escaping from their home as children. Her last visit to her roots was 35 years after she had first left. Two years later, the Syrian war broke out, causing a mass exodus of people to the West.[04] As an artist, she uses her voice visually to "encourage dialogue and bring understanding and acceptance between the people of the Arab world and the West".[05] The Syrian migration series was created with this intention. As a means to do this, Zughaib drew inspiration from Jacob Lawrence's *The Migration Series*, created in 1941[06] which chronicles the mass exodus of over a million African-Americans from the rural South to the industrial North between the 1910s and '20s. While migrants moved in search of job opportunities, they were also fleeing the racial discrimination and violence propagated by oppressive Jim Crow laws.[07] In the Syrian Migration series, Zughaib reinterprets this seminal work to attract empathy from American audiences to the concern of the Syrian exodus in a visual language familiar to them.

03. "Meet The Artist: Helen Zughaib", Art on a Posrcard (website),accessed April 29, 2024, https://artonapostcard.com/blogs/artist-interviews/meet-the-artist-helen-zhugaib.
04. Library of Congress, "Art in Action: A Conversation with Helen Zughaib," June 25, 2019, video,4:12-6:35, https://www.loc.gov/item/webcast-9002.
05. Helen Zughaib, "About the Artist: Helen Zughaib",accessed April 29,2024, https://www.hzughaib.com/
06. "Helen Zughaib: Migrations", President Wilson House, 2019, https://woodrowwilsonhouse.org/helen-zughaib-migrations.
07. Julia Fiore, "A Closer Look at Jacob Lawrence's "Migration Series," the Masterpiece He Made at 23,"Artsy, October 20, 2018 https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-closer-jacob-lawrences-migration-series-masterpiece-made-23.

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FIGURE 2 Helen Zughaib, *Syrian Migration #3*, 2016, INV# 2000, gouache on board, 30.48 x 45.72 cm, Courtesy of the Barjeel Art Foundation.

FIGURE 3 Helen Zughaib, *Syrian Migration #21*, 2016, INV# 2001, gouache on board, 30.48 x 45.72 cm, Courtesy of the Barjeel Art Foundation

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KAMAL BOULLATA

It is at a point of familiarity that one often begins their journey. Kamal Boullata (1942–2019) began his under the tutelage of the artist Khalil Halabi(1889–1964) in Palestine who taught him to paint traditional icons.[08] While this exposure opened the doors to his long and illustrious career, his passions led him to paint scenes from his surroundings in the Christian Quarter of the Old City in Jerusalem. His fascination with the Dome of Rock, its architecture, geometric patterns, and calligraphy permanently played into his visual language. The proceeds from the sale of his paintings enabled him to extend the boundaries of professional training to the Accademia di Belle Arti in Rome in 1961. His contribution to the Hurufiyya movement can be seen in *The Alif and the Ya*. This piece created in 1983 was rendered on silk and features a palette of four gradations of yellow. The composition features a square in lighter tones set within a rhombus of darker shades giving an impression of light being focused on the centre. *Sizian* created in 2002 saw Baollata experimenting with embossing techniques on paper. Six square panels are symmetrically arranged into a rectangle giving the viewer an impression of window panes. The usage of a monotone captures the viewer's curiosity and invites a closer inspection. This reveals that each panel features a different geometric repeat pattern embossed onto the surface. *Bilqis 5* saw Boullata working with acrylic on canvas. His work from 2014 features clairvoyant colour panels which capture the viewer's attention by creating an impression of light rays dancing through the panels.

FIGURE 4

FIGURE 5

FIGURE 6

Kamal Boullata lived a life built from one artistic highlight to the next. The three examples discussed here elucidate the evolution of his work. A commonality that ties his work together is the element of light. He once said that the light of Jerusalem is perhaps what he had always been attempting to capture.[09] He believed that Palestine was always ahead of him. Throughout his life, he defined and redefined the boundaries of his work resulting in ever-evolving representations of the light rays emanating from his destination.

08. Myrna Ayad, "Remembering Palestinian Artist Kamal Boullata: 'The Most Forward-Thinking Person I Knew'", The National, August 20, 2021, accessed March 14, 2024 https://www.thenationalnews.com/arts-culture/art/2021/08/20/remembering-palestinian-artist-kamal-boullata-the-most-forward-thinking-person-i-knew.
09. Ayad, "Remembering"

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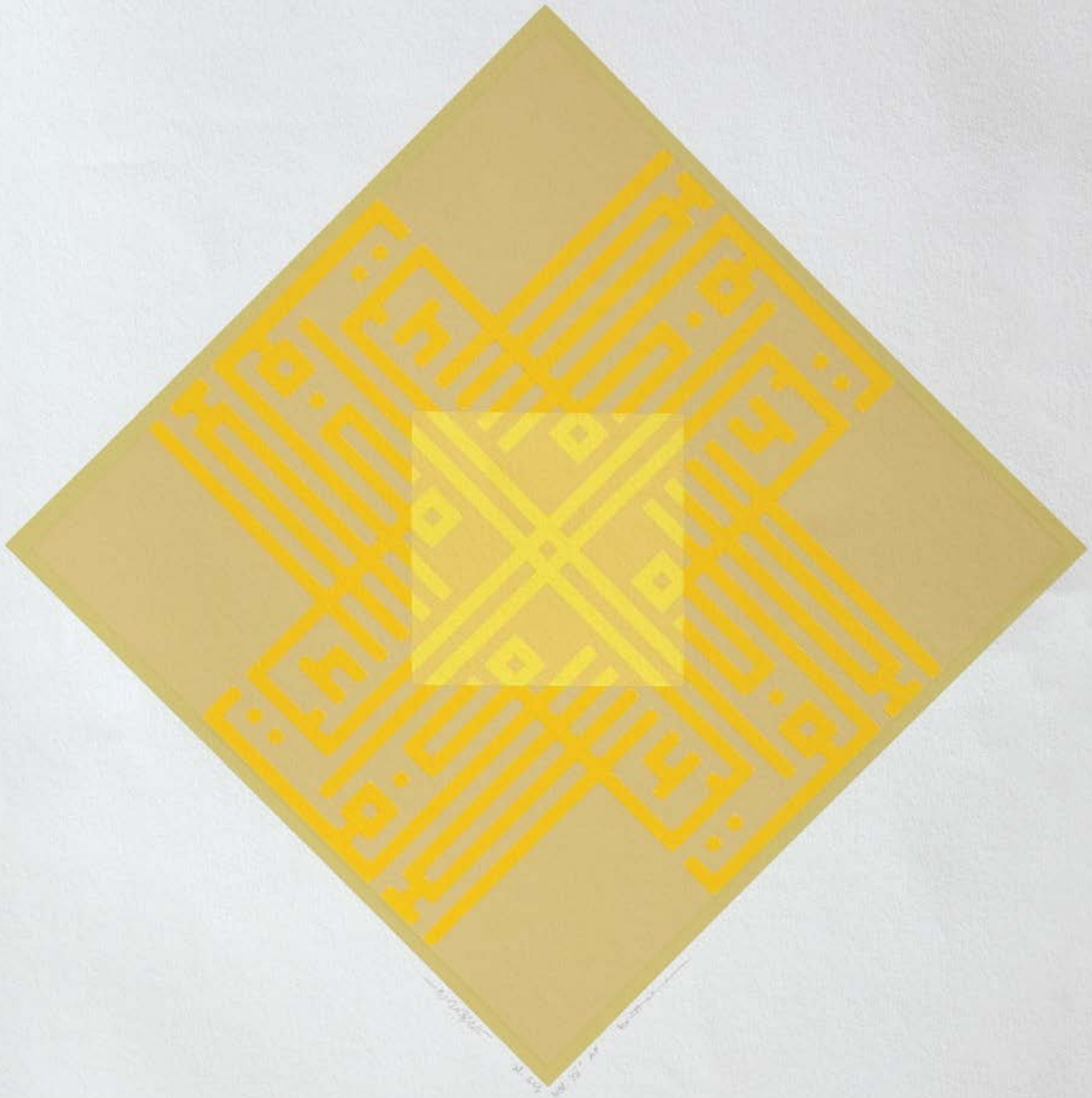

FIGURE 4 Kamal Boullata,
The Alif and the Ya, 1983, silk screen, 52x52 cm,
Courtesy of the Barjeel Art Foundation.

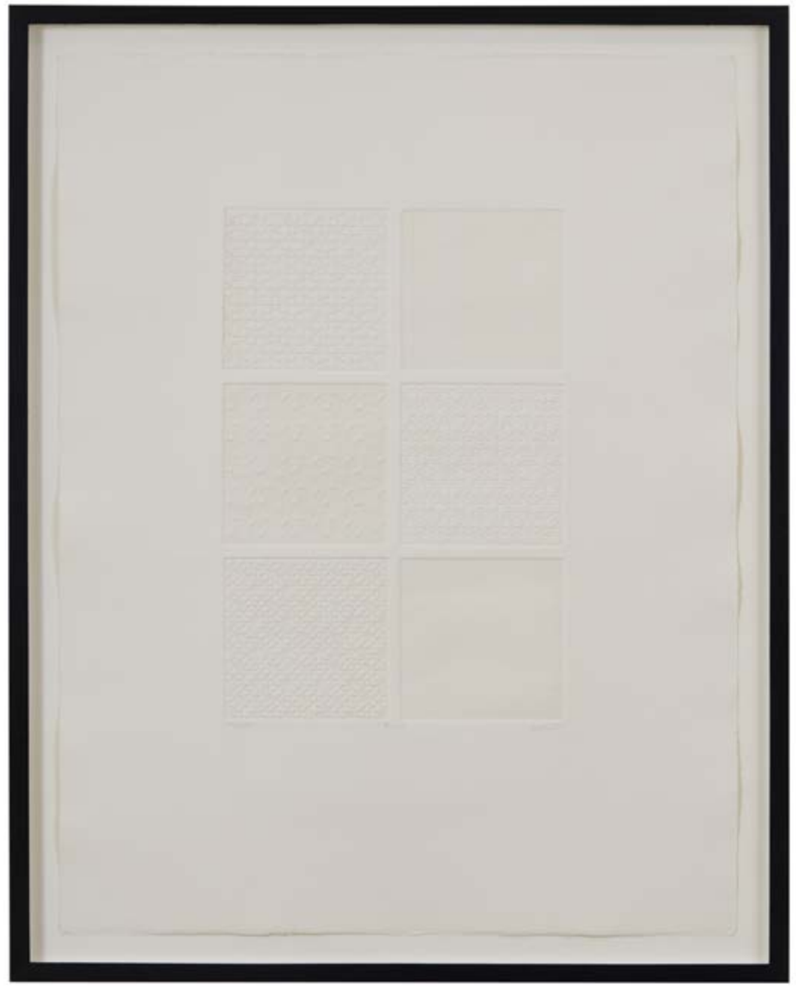

FIGURE 5 Kamal Boullata, *Sizian*, 2002,
blind embossing on Arches paper, 65x50 cm,
Courtesy of the Barjeel Art Foundation.

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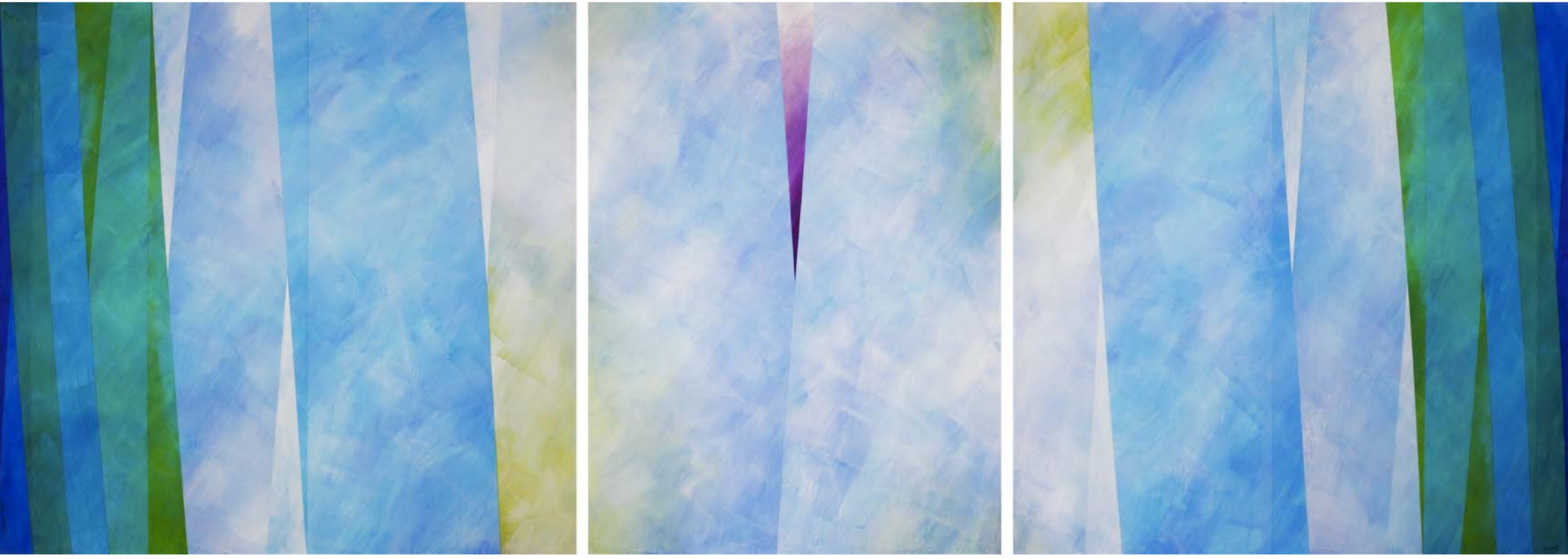

FIGURE 6 Kamal Boullata, *Bilqis 5*, 2014,
acrylic on canvas, 120 x 328 cm,
Courtesy of the Barjeel Art Foundation.

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From the works of these artists, we can see that change is constant, as is the evolution of an artist's work through their lives. The various experiences and encounters they face define the boundaries of their work. These boundaries are constantly rewritten. Mona Hatum's (b.1952, Lebanon) bronze sculpture *Infinity* embodies endless war; the soldiers, purposely designed like toys symbolise the disposability of soldiers' lives during war.[10] As a conclusion to this essay, I invite the viewer to dwell upon the many instances and exposures (the soldiers) that we experience in our journey and the process of constant, infinite change. As we fight our internal wars that enable us to define our personal boundaries and shape our identities.

FIGURE 7

10. Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, "Mona Hatoum: Infinity," January 27, 2017, https://sultanalqassemi.com/videos/mona-hatoum-infinity.

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FIGURE 7 Mona Hatoum, *Infinity*, 1991– 2001, bronze, 61 x 34.5 x 34.5, Courtesy of the Barjeel Foundation

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SUPARNA SHANKARANAND NATESAN

Suparna Shankaranand Natesan is pursuing a Master's in Curating Cultures at SOAS, broadening her expertise from the Indian subcontinent to the wider context of Asia.

As a specialist in antiquity from the Indian sub-continent at Natesans Antiqarts Pvt Ltd, she has played a pivotal role in building Indian art collections and has consulted for private museums in India over the past seven years. Her entrepreneurial venture, Taksh by Natesans, is a testament to her appreciation for indigenous craftsmanship and her dedication to empowering artisans.

Suparna's research interests delve into the interplay of cross-cultural exchanges, exploring how artistic styles evolve and how an artist's identity is shaped by diverse influences. Her academic journey at SOAS has shaped her curating practice as one that merges ancient traditions and contemporary expressions across Asian cultures.

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"Beyond Neocolonial Exercises": Art in Times of Crisis

Nour Al-Huda Zaynab Schroeter

"In a time of crisis, art must abandon any notion of passive roles and become an activated force for change."

WALID AL WAWI

At the time of writing this essay, 30,000 Gazans have been killed in what the International Court of Justice discusses as a genocide. Civilians are starving and being bombed, their plight ongoing, streamlined on social media with the world watching.

Against the backdrop of this crisis, we students at SOAS are curating the exhibition *Hudood: Rethinking Boundaries*. What started off as an enthusiastic engagement with the historic, social, religious, and political particularities of contemporary art from the SWANA region was drastically shaped by the events since 7 October 2023. This pivotal moment in history has been described as a *Zeitenwende*, a period characterized by profound changes. Shifts in global discourses, issues of occupation, exploitation, imperialism, and the post-colonial realities of our world are finding their way in public awareness. It is in this environment that an often muted question is rising back to the surface: what, really, is the place of art in times of crisis? In this particular context, what are the consequences, impact, realities, and potentialities of exhibiting contemporary art from the SWANA region in the gallery space?

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In an Instagram post published on 11 May 2024, in the midst of the Gaza crisis, Palestinian artist and academic Wahid Al Wawi offered some piercing demands and imagery on exactly the issue of "art in times of crisis". To him, art in times of crisis bears the danger of commodification of suffering for the sake of artistic production in service of a privileged bourgeoisie. In order to counter such danger, he poignantly demands art in times of crisis to relate and adhere to the following three points: art as preservative, art as solace, and art as inspiration.

Trying to connect his demands to existing art, I bring two pieces by fellow Palestinian artists Larissa Sansour and Khaled Jarrar, represented in the *Hudood* exhibition, in conversation with Al Wawi's views. This is to understand the pieces not merely as a "romantization of resistance"[01] but rather as productive and proactive responses to the many forms of oppression and destruction of Palestinian identity.

01. Ruba Salih and Sophie Richter-Devroe, "Cultures of Resistance in Palestine and Beyond: On the Politics of Art, Aesthetics, and Affect," The Arab Studies Journal 22, no. 1 (2014): 8–27.

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The act of documenting and preserving a culture should ideally occur alongside its flourishing, not amidst its destruction.

WALID AL WAWI

LARISSA SANSOUR'S NATION ESTATE

A towering skyscraper encapsulating the entire Palestinian population: Larissa Sansour's *Nation Estate* is a satirical yet deeply troubling work. The multimedia project delves into the complexities of Palestinian identity and raises questions about statehood and belonging. It is in a futuristic skyscraper that Palestinians are offered space for their population and historical sites. A lift, finally allowing Palestinians the 'high life', allows access to different floors of the building. Each floor represents, on the one hand, a different city such as Jerusalem, Bethlehem, or Gaza City but also, on the other hand, administrative and cultural institutions that make a nation state such as schools, NGOs, and a heritage museum. The hyper-sterile and futuristic atmosphere created in Sansour's photography and short film highlights the artificiality of her solution to the issues of displacement and territorial fragmentation faced by Palestinians. It further serves as a disruption of the visual code by which Palestinians are generally represented. Sansour consciously wants to move away from a representation of Palestinian identity via the genre of documentary, that often turns the eye to the past, in order to move *toward* an imagination of the future.[02]

Such imagination takes place in the confinement of the skyscraper, in total isolation of the outside world. The tower entrance is highly monitored; it is only possible to enter under the watch of highly developed surveillance technology and security check-points. The fragmentation of Palestinian territories is overcome by an easy lift ride, a utopia far away from the current realities on the ground, with movement of Palestinians highly restricted. It is also within this restricted confinement that it becomes possible to preserve Palestinian heritage: the women in the video carefully water an olive tree. The otherwise sterile environment raises the question of how else to fill the space—what really makes Palestinian identity?

02. Robert Duggan, "Larissa Sansour and the Palestinian Ruins of the Future," Journal for Cultural Research 24, no. 1 (2020): 69–83.

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In engaging in this conversation, Sansour is also using art as a way to unveil and to counter cultural memoricide, the extinction of whole families and their stories. Deployed by Ilan Pappé in the context of his history of the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, the term is used to highlight the erasure of collective memory and cultural identity by, for example, renaming cities and de-Arabizing Palestinian territory.[03] The artistic construction of *Nation Estate* serves as a creative and crucial exercise in countering the continuous attempt at flattening Palestinian identity and depleting it of history and heritage. It is, in its directionality to an imagined future, that *Nation Estate* becomes a preservative, an unexpected way to document and protect.

Artists must immerse themselves in the lives of the people to create art that is accessible, relevant, and mobilizing.

WALID AL WAWI

KHALED JARRAR'S VOLLEYBALL

The lightness of a volleyball juxtaposed with the heaviness of concrete—Khaled Jarrar's *Volleyball* (2013) is a playful yet heavyweight piece. The material for his sculpture is obtained by the artist from the apartheid wall. Avoiding detection by cameras or Israeli guards, Jarrar removed pieces in an act of physically demolishing the wall. Mixed into a cement paste, he then poured the wall pieces into deflated balls.

03. Ilan Pappé, "The 1948 Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine." Journal of Palestine Studies 36, no. 1 (2006): 6–20.

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According to the artist, it was during visits to the wall that he encountered children complaining about the shrinking of their playground. Their site of joy and play turned into a dangerous site of surveillance and restriction of movement. It was such encounters that led Jarrar to produce this series.[04] While the concrete balls have a strong symbolic imagery and visual force, their production has to be understood as part of a two-fold performative act of resistance. Firstly, there is the act of physical removal of the wall by the artist. In light of the exhibition title *Hudood: Rethinking Boundaries*, the wall represents the most radical, material, and violent of all boundaries. It is means not only of limiting movement but also of surveying people and thus functions beyond its materiality in a deeply psychological way.

It is the ongoing struggle against this limiting force in the form of continued play by children that can be viewed as another layer of performative action. One can be led to realize that, really, the lightness of children's play is poured into cement. On a rather hopeful note, however, their continued play can be viewed as a deliberate choice of resistance in their very existence. Despite the inherent political nature of his material, Jarrar insists that his artworks are not political; rather, they are factual reflections of the daily environment in which he and many other Palestinians live.[05] It is this engagement and immersion in the lives of people that Al Wawi demands of art in times of crisis. The power of the volleyball is in allowing a hermeneutic movement from the concrete realities on the ground to abstract consideration and reflection on their consequences. In that, it speaks to children playing as well as to the activist and the scholar engaging in a conversation about the present and future of Palestinian identity.

04. "Khaled Jarrar," *Mongoos Magazine*, November 18, 2013, http://mongoosmagazine.com/artists/khaled-jarrar.
05. "Jarrar," *Mongoos*.

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"BEYOND NEOCOLONIAL EXERCISES"

It becomes a pacifier, distracting from grief and anger, and lulls people into comfort, preventing engagement and dulling the impulse for change.

WALID AL WAWI

The double-sided sword of art—in its power to transform but also to pacify—becomes especially relevant in the context of the gallery space. The pieces discussed above do not exist in a vacuum but are presented, seen, and made accessible through institutions as well as exhibitions. Given their purpose and the demand for them, it becomes apparent that their curation holds the power to either make space for or undermine their message. Especially in the context of resistance art and more specifically Palestinian art, curators and institutions thus hold the responsibility to create gallery spaces that allow for the pieces and the artists to speak for themselves. This is especially of relevance in their display in the Global North. Too high is the risk of the commodification of suffering for shallow consumption or, worse, entertainment. What is thus needed are sensitive and critical ways of curation that break habits of seeing and engaging with art. In doing so, the curator finds herself in constant contradictions and ambiguities, deeply shaped by the very power structures she tries to rebel against. Omar Kholeif offers a helpful approach to this widely shared dilemma in conducting "art shows as sites of resistance rather than neocolonial exercises".[06] This rings especially pertinent in the given crisis of this very moment. The practical particularities of such approaches are yet to be tested and explored. Our exhibition *Hudood* contributes to an ongoing conversation to be had among engaged curators, artists, and experts as well as others interested in such matters.

In the context of *Hudood*, the hope is that this exhibition can provide a space to imagine possible futures, to be inspired to become active, to build intra-Arab and international alliances, and to reflect collectively on modes of change. Furthermore, it is meant as a space to voice the constant ambiguities and contradictions in which we find ourselves and to find ways of creatively moving forward. Most importantly, however, it can serve as a meeting point for those in grief and anger to move beyond individual suffering and find solace and inspiration in the Other, be they a fellow visitor or a piece of art.

06. Omar Kholeif, "Tracing Routes: Debating Modernism, Mapping the Contemporary," in *Imperfect Chronology: Arab Art from the Modern to the Contemporary Works from the Barjeel Art Foundation* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2015), 16–25.

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NOUR AL-HUDA ZAYNAB SCHROETER

Nour al-Huda Zaynab Schröter is an MA student of Curating Cultures at SOAS where she is focusing on Islamic Art History. She mainly explores innovative ways of engaging with Islamic visual culture and reflecting on the decolonisation of academia and the museum. Currently, she is researching the visuality of Dalail Khayrat manuscripts from the Maghreb region. Her academic journey includes a Bachelor's in Liberal Arts and Sciences from the University College Freiburg, Germany, with studies in Malaysia, Türkiye, and Spain.

Nour al-Huda's practical experience includes working with the Education Department of documenta fifteen in Kassel and advising dialogue perspectives, an initiative for discussing religion and worldviews by the German federal foreign office. Her academic performance and social engagement are recognised with scholarships from Avicenna Studienwerk e.V. and the DAAD. Nour al-Huda's curatorial practice is shaped by her intercultural background and deep interest in creative engagement with the pressing issues of our time.

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Alienation and Belonging within Physical Borders

Safa Kamran

"I am from there, I am from here, but I am neither there
nor here. I have two names, which meet and part...
I have two languages. I have long forgotten
which is the language of my dreams

MAHMOUD DARWISH[01]

BELONGING...

This quote taken from the work of Mahmoud Darwish so adequately puts into words the essence of what displacement and belonging mean. Belonging: the human urge to belong is imminent in every single one of us, yet it is a luxury not everyone gets to experience. What is belonging to someone who was never given the comfort of belonging? What are we when we are removed from what feels like home, when we are stripped from an identity which was pinned to us our entire lives? Finding one's identity is often intricately linked to navigating borders, both literal and metaphorical, which define our existence. For many individuals, the journey of self-discovery involves traversing these borders, grappling with questions of belonging, and negotiating the tensions between various aspects of identity. Borders: they are often viewed as physical obstructions, yet there are borders which we cannot see in our everyday lives. Borders that affect us on the daily, that make us feel out of place, or at home.

01. Mahmoud Darwish, trans. Mona Anis, "Edward Said: A Contrapuntal Reading," *Cultural Critique* no. 67 (autumn 2007): 175.

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In the Palestinian experience, we find a tribute to the resilience of the human soul. Occupation casts its shadow, drawing lines on the map and carving out territories hemmed in by barriers, checkpoints, and walls. These borders—both physical and psychological—partition communities, separate families, and confine dreams within narrow boundaries. Yet, within the borders of occupation, Palestinians have forged a collective identity: one woven from the fabric of resistance, resilience, and unwavering determination to reclaim what was taken. All these aspects become a part of *you*: an identity you cannot escape.

Belonging as a Palestinian encompasses a shared history of struggle and resistance against oppression and injustice. From the Nakba of 1948 to the ongoing genocide since 7 October 2023, Palestinians have confronted adversity with a spirit of resilience and solidarity, forging bonds of kinship and camaraderie that transcend borders and barriers. In the face of adversity, Palestinians have drawn strength from their collective struggle, finding a sense of belonging in their shared commitment to justice and freedom.

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I was drawn to the question of identity in the Palestinian context: to what extent do external factors such as war affect one's identity and self-perception? The questions of identity and belonging are what make us human. We all crave the feeling to belong, whether it is finding our place in society, daily surroundings, or lives. Yet the borders that enclose us within familiar territories can quickly turn to prisons at the same time. To understand this topic more, I turned to the first-hand experience of an artist working within the constraints of the war. I had the honour of speaking to the renowned artist Bashar Alhroub (b. 1978, Jerusalem), a Palestinian artist currently working from Ramallah. We had a deep conversation regarding what belonging and identity meant to him, and the following dialogue provided me with a new perspective on the subject. In the series *Here and Now 2* (2013), the questions of identity and belonging are constructed as Alhroub creates a scene in which the audience is connected to the visual aspects of the piece and encouraged to engage with it.

FIGURE 1

Here and Now 2 offers an opportunity to engage in a conversation regarding identity and belonging. It invites the viewer to slow down and reconstruct the concept of what identity means to them. Set against the backdrop of the artist's personal encounters with estrangement under occupation, the work delves into different layers of alienation. It probes the nuances of feeling both seen and unseen, both present and absent, as the mirrored cube reflects and refracts the surrounding environment, blurring the boundaries between the self and the world.

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Using his body as part of the artwork, Alhroub attempts to represent a sacrifice: that both his internal self and external body are a part of the land he is lying on. Following this, he made the point of the importance of national identity. While his work previously did not express his identity as a Palestinian, since the events of 7 October 2023, the need to "live his context"[02] has risen to the surface and is one he cannot avoid. One of the most challenging tasks for a Palestinian artist is bringing justice to their roots: the feeling of having your home ripped away from you corrodes your soul with every news article and post on the internet. While you cannot completely stop a situation like this, the need to belong and find a concrete identity has been found. Being Palestinian and working from a 'border' is Alhroubs mission.

Speaking up about it and using it as a centrepiece for conversation and his artwork were steps he had to take in his career even though these topics were not a particular focus of his previously. Alhroub did not centre the topic of national identity in his prior work—it was not a theme he was drawn to. He focused instead on the idea of humanity and humans. But with the current situation, he has taken on what it means to be Palestinian and to be a part of the situation there. Alhroub's work has taken on the concept of being part of a border, of being a Palestinian in the middle of a war with stride. For instance, his recent series *Resurrection* is a perfect example of the transformation in his art style and the attempt to take on the Palestinian predicament and national identity with pride.

02. Bashar Hroub, interview with the author, January 24, 2024.

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FIGURE 1 Bashar Hroub, *Here and Now 2* (2013), courtesy of the Barjeel Art Foundation.

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Through the process of reflecting on our conversation, I began considering my own position. Growing up as an expatriate in a foreign land, I found myself in constant unease with the concept of belonging on a personal level. Although I was immersed in a new culture, I never quite felt the sting of isolation that often accompanies exile. Still, living between the United Kingdom and Riyadh while proudly carrying my Pakistani heritage, I have encountered countless moments where I have had to confront the complexities of my identity. Questions like 'Where do I truly belong?' have echoed through my mind, leaving me grappling for answers. While my circumstances are no match for someone in exile, the yearning for a place to call home remains a constant presence in my life. This longing goes beyond physical borders, rooted in the emotional connections I have made with various places and cultures. For me, home is not just a location on a map; it is a feeling of warmth and familiarity that envelops me wherever I go. It is the laughter-filled family gatherings in Riyadh and the cherished memories of exploring London's vibrant streets during my childhood summers. While navigating multiple cultural identities has been challenging, I've learned that my sense of belonging is not limited by geographical boundaries. Instead, it is nurtured by the rich tapestry of experiences and relationships I have cultivated along the way. Each interaction, every shared moment, weaves another thread into the complex fabric of my identity, underscoring the idea that belonging is a deeply personal journey that surpasses borders, uniting us in our shared humanity.

Exiles look at non-exiles with resentment. They belong in their surroundings, you feel, whereas an exile is always out of place. What is it like to be born in a place, to stay and live there, to know that you are of it, more or less forever?[03]

Hudood: Rethinking Boundaries is an exhibition which aims to bring into dialogue the concept of belonging and to challenge us to think beyond the borders of what we know. Displacement and occupation fracture the traditional bonds of belonging, uprooting individuals from their homes, communities, and cultural landscapes. Palestinians facing displacement and represented within this exhibition find themselves grappling with timely questions of identity, struggling to reconcile their sense of self with the harsh realities of displacement and occupation.

03. Edward Said, *Reflections On Exile: And Other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granta Books, 2001), 180.

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Here and Now
Transcript of Interview with Bashar Alhroub

Safa Kamran

*SAFA KAMRAN So, I wanted to speak about how the **Here and Now** series focuses on identity and alienation, and I wanted to get some more insight into these pieces and why you decided to make them, and what they mean to you.*

BASHAR ALHROUB So yea, *Here and Now* is about that. When I made this work, it was back when I was a student in England studying my MA in Winchester School of Art, and I always had this question, as a Palestinian, the question that is always in our minds is, we feel we are belonging, but physically, with what is going on in Palestine—not just from the last month but the past 75 years you know—we always think of collective identity as a Palestinian. We grow up in Palestine with these issues, but when I found myself in England, I started to think about myself as Bashar, my identity, who am I? If I am not connected to being Palestinian, to these issues, then who am I? So I tried to understand the new community.

As a Palestinian, we don't have this idea of being a citizen, belonging to a state, having borders and whatever. We don't have this idea. This idea does not exist with us… There are borders and checkpoints, everything is controlling me. So when I found myself in England, I feel that I am free, I want to engage and to be a part of this, and I try, but there are borders, invisible borders… everywhere there are borders.

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SAFA KAMRAN Like prejudice, racism, etc.

BASHAR ALHROUB Exactly. So I started doing this project *Here and Now*, and it was important for me because I feel like I started from there as an artist… I have done a lot before, but ya'ni this project, it just felt like I started from there. I started asking my question about who I am. So when I started this project in England, I tried to do it between where I used to live in Palestine, especially the place where I grew up as a child, the places where I grew up in a village near Hebron, which was not far from Jerusalem. I was born in Jerusalem, but I cannot live in Jerusalem… but imagine I couldn't live there. The Israelis did not allow my family to live in Jerusalem because I am Palestinian… I need papers for that, but since Jerusalem is part of Palestine, why can't I? So we went back to live in the village not far from Jerusalem till I was maybe 16, and after that, I left to start discovering myself as Bashar, who I am, as a teenager. But in England, when I go out, I go to many places, but in England as a student, you are part of research, there is a hard question you have to ask yourself. About your career, yourself… many, many things.

When I started, I used a mirror box on my head to reflect nature, actually the place more than nature and the place around me. Mirroring and mirrors are important to me when questioning who I am. Who is real, me or the reflection? So I look at the places in the same way, as a way to see myself. I used photographs, but I couldn't take my shoes off in England in these photographs. I felt there was something, there was a border, a lack of freedom to do that. But I went back to my village in Palestine, and I took my shoes off and was walking in the land, and I felt there was an energy that came to me. Even if I didn't have the privilege to live there, I could still feel that connection.

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SAFA KAMRAN يعني هو جزء منك
You can't really let go of it. You feel forever attached to it.

BASHAR ALHROUB Exactly, so that is why I did the project *Here and Now*. And this time I began a new project related to this concept, with another artwork called *Out of the Frame*. There is a lot to be said about this artwork. At that time, I started to use my body in the artwork, and I was asked a lot as to why, and I would ask myself why I started to use it in my art? From 2000 to around 2014, many of my artworks feature my body. It was, for me, a kind of sacrifice, using my body as a material for my concepts and artwork.

SAFA KAMRAN Yes, I noticed that was a recurring feature in your earlier works. Even the use of mirrors deepens the meaning.

BASHAR ALHROUB One of my professors wrote a text about this work when it was displayed in the Mosaic Rooms in London. He wrote the text and took the project to Sufism, which was a very interesting point of view for me. And he asked me if there was anyone in my family who was Sufi, I said yes my roots come from there. But when I did this work, I was not thinking about that, and he took it from a perspective that when your body becomes part of the land. And I loved how he saw it.

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SAFA KAMRAN *Yes, that's such an interesting perspective to view it from.*

BASHAR ALHROUB Yes, it's a different aspect, and it depends on where you are coming from with it. My professor was Buddhist, so he made the connection to the land and nature. And what he wrote, I really felt as it was what I was trying to describe, but without the Sufi perspective. I just felt I was a part of my land.

SAFA KAMRAN *Wow, okay, that's really interesting. So building upon this connection, what made you choose to do this piece in the United Kingdom rather than in Palestine?*

BASHAR ALHROUB Of course, it was important for me as I was a student there, but of course that is not the main thing, there is history between the two places. The British Mandate in Palestine, they gave Palestine the Balfour Declaration and gave Israel the rights to make Palestine for the Jews. I tried to play on the theme. You gave my land to the stranger, so okay I'm a stranger now, can you give me your land? Just to explore whether I feel like I belong or not? I don't… I love England, but I don't feel like I belong. So, my experience over the last 15 years is happiness. I feel happy to belong to the Third World, it is where I can find my humanity, where I can see myself as a human you know. This has been my statement over the last two-to-three years: I belong to the Third World, and I feel I am more human here, even with the corruption and all the bad you can think about, but I love the Third World.

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SAFA KAMRAN How is it being there now and working from there as an artist? Especially now, especially with the current climate, do you have your freedom to work and create?

BASHAR ALHROUB As an artist, I can do it. But with this war and with what is going on, it has been hard for me to do artwork, especially with the last two months. The first day of this year (2024), I started work, and I came back to my studio, and I feel that's it, that's enough, I have to say and do something. First, I started to do art as a therapy for myself, to let myself know that I am okay. I dove in deep. During the last 10–15 years, I have been doing art and trying to universalise it visually. If you look back at my artworks, you cannot tell I am Palestinian.

SAFA KAMRAN Yes, I noticed that.

BASHAR ALHROUB I am always very critical of the concept of national identity and these things. I hate the ideas of borders and states, when I look at myself as a human and focus on humanity. But with Palestine and the situation here, they are a part of me, and I cannot avoid myself. It's my context and where I am living—there is always a Palestine, but you have to find it. But there are no symbols regarding Palestine in my work generally. But with this last war and what is happening, I said no, I have to speak about it. I have to speak. I have to use Palestine, I have to talk about Palestine. I am here to serve Palestine at this moment, and it is my mission, and I have to do it. Before this, I never accepted to do anything like this, but now what I am seeing in this world, all the scars, what is going on, the genocide. Any artist—I'm talking about Palestinians—their mission is their feeling about their humanity to talk as a Palestinian. So I have to talk about this. This is my first time to talk and make this decision.

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SAFA KAMRAN It is a bit unnerving to just completely change trajectories and method of working?

BASHAR ALHROUB Imagine, I feel myself, I'm still Bashar, and what is going on is about humanity, it's not about Palestine. Imagine I am part of this genocide also? Maybe I will be? So how can I raise up our voice? There are many things that have come to my mind within these last three months. It's a very hard time, it's hard just as the question about art is hard as a Palestinian artist, me or any others, what can we do? All artists and my friends that I made, we always talk about this, what can we do?

SAFA KAMRAN So, ***hudood*** *as a concept. How do you feel limited by the hudood of being in a certain place. Because our theme is hudood, and I'm attempting to focus on transcending the concept of hudood in relation to identity, and the question of whether we should let borders control us, or should we not let that be a determining factor?*

BASHAR ALHROUB For me, my identity is hudood. When I did that artwork, I tried to destroy the hudood, the borders, but where I am living now, there are hudood, more than the normal hudood, physical things that you can see in the land around you, something controlling your body, your movements. And you can see it and feel it… Hudood in England are invisible, but here there is no time to think about invisible borders in Palestine because they are there in front of you. But this concept does not exist with them. They look at Palestine as Israel, they don't see anything apart from that. How can we transfer this to the world? I always talk about how I'm a stranger in Palestine. My artwork somewhat depicts that, but the last three months, I've been following what is going on in the art world, politics, etc. Despite this, the last three months have made me love Palestine even more and feel like yes… I am a part of this place, and it is mine. In my artwork, there are a lot of works about borders and mapping. It's a recurring theme in my work. One with the village in my mind, one with the soldiers in my mind. The mirror box is filled with different things to signify what I am thinking about. Each one symbolises a different thing.

SAFA KAMRAN Okay, thank you so much for taking the time out to speak to meand allow me to understand you and your works better.

BASHAR ALHROUB Thank you to you and to Sultan for having an interest in my works as well.

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SAFA KAMRAN

Safa Kamran is currently pursuing a Masters Degree in History at SOAS University of London, where she previously completed her undergraduate degree in LLB Law.

Throughout Kamran's academic journey at SOAS University of London, her research interests have been focused on the study of Islamic and Classical Arab history, as well as Islamic Art and culture. Having lived in Riyadh for the majority of her life, she has curated a particular interest and passion for Arab culture and identity through lived experiences and an affiliation to the Arts of the SWANA region.

Kamran's current postgraduate research interests include the study of Classical Arabic and Islamic manuscripts, Islamic History and Architecture. For her dissertation, Kamran hopes to conduct a comparative study between the rise and fall of the Ottoman empire in juxtaposition with the decline of the Andalusian era during the Reconquista.

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In Concrete We Trust: Boundaries as Control and Communication in the Barjeel Art Foundation Collection

Shamsa Alnahyan

There is a concrete idea that boundaries are created to separate: flows of people, places, ideologies, and so on and so forth. Perhaps these tools of separation are spaces within themselves. A wall/fence/border/firewall is not a line but a corridor — one that expands into liminality, neither here nor there, not on any side of separated space. It is within this area of the liminal that effervescent conversation boils over, questioning and informing the spaces that surround it. Why was this boundary constructed? Who is inside and outside of the boundary, and who chooses that? A boundary takes no sides, or does it? Concrete is a boundary constructing medium, hard to dissect literally and figuratively. Made to be one of man's innovative materials, concrete has shifted the paradigm of the natural world, constructing our urban spheres of existence. Concrete and the SWANA (South West Asia and North Africa) region have a history far preceding today's urban cityscapes. Construction with concrete can be dated back to 4,500 years ago in the southeastern region of Mesopotamia (modern day Syria and Iraq); it was later adopted by ancient Egyptians.[01] Via large building blocks, vernacular typologies as well as monumental ones like the Tower of Babel were able to take shape and form the landscape of the city.[02]

Today, in the SWANA region, the uses for concrete aren't any different. Wielded by governments and institutions, concrete is poured into roads, airports, embassies, and more, making it intrinsically instilled in people's way of life and supporting them in their existence. In the same ways, concrete can be a supportive feature to the authoritative restrictions that governments and institutions create, in turn limiting human expression. Foucault describes the interplay of three vital relationships between the governing and the governed for power to be exercised: one of them is communication of information "by means of language, a system of signs, or any other symbolic medium".[03] In this case, the abundance of concrete controls our everyday activities and movements in the urban environment, thus disciplining our visibility, sprawl, and how populations are congregated and separated. All these urban structures are approved by governments and institutions by way of contracts and building agreements.

01. Per Jahren and Tongbo Sui, *History of Concrete: A Very Old and Modern Material* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishers, 2017), 7.
02. Jahren and Sui, *History of Concrete*, 7.
03. Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry 8*, no. 4 (1982): 777–95, as quoted in Annette Beresford, "Foucault's Theory of Governance and the Deterrence of Internet Fraud," Administration & Society 35, no. 1 (2003): 82–103.

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Artists whose work is featured in the Barjeel Art Foundation collection channel this concrete conundrum into their artistic practice, actively critiquing the boundaries that they have surpassed or the ones that continue to obstruct them. Grappling with the idea of the boundary, especially concrete ones, artists delve into connotations of control and communication, an interesting binary that is found in many of these works. Two artists that embody this theme through their works are Abdulnasser Gharem (b. Saudi Arabia, 1973) and Ganzeer (b. Egypt, 1980). Between Saudi Arabia and Egypt, there is an echo, a reflection in the region where two artists are limited in their human expression caused by concrete boundaries, in turn transforming this into artist expression.

Through different filters and materials, like concrete, artists' criticisms about their respective governing bodies are placed into abstract and skewed forms. Via Gharem's *Concrete Block II* (2010) and Ganzeer's *Die Wahrheit Ist Konkret* (2012), audiences can gain insight into how concrete has been both a controlling and limiting feature in their lives yet vital as a tool to communicate their artistic expression to wider audiences.

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FIGURE 1

Gharem's work *Concrete Block II* (2010) points to how institutions use physical, concrete boundaries to fortify the intangible ones, which precede physicality and are more powerful than the strong concrete in its place. Upon closer inspection, the skin of the "concrete" block is covered in rubber stamps, an ode to Gharem's time as a major in the Saudi army circa 2008.[04] As he sat on his desk for hours on end, the stamp became his weapon, a gavel of sorts, stamping countless official documents in a binary manner: 'stamp' or 'no-stamp'.[05] Through this action, there is no in-between. It is this practice that enforces the binding codes that institutions construct. These codes create the boundary between the public domain and people with state appointed power, a binary just like the stamps denote—constructing an idea of the 'right path'.[06] The binding codes, like concrete, are presumably there for the betterment of people, in order to protect them, which is why many blindly trust the appearance and officialdom of concrete. Concrete is naturalized in the way we see our cities and the landscapes around us. It is an indelible part of our perceived urban nature, solidifying concrete as state truth.

This artwork is inspired by the increased frequency of concrete blocks in Saudi Arabia that emerged in the period after 2003–5, implemented after the country passed through a wave of terrorist attacks, changing the concrete nature of the cities affected.[07] Gharem noticed how these concrete blocks increased in visibility and were used to rearrange roads "creating detours and diversions".[08] Gharem questions this concrete, in the form of highly recognizable, transportable chunks refined into a statewide icon of control, small but mighty as they guide those who pass by into the supposed 'right path'. By removing these objects from their original context, Gharem places them under a microscope questioning state truth and efficacy of these blocks in ensuring a safer environment. After a mosaic of Arabic and English letters and numbers across the sculpture's surface, the occasional statement—"Don't put your trust in concrete"—appears in capitalized stamp letters. This cement block is made of rubber and wood, masquerading as the real thing: an illusion of concrete is cast, an illusion of trust is established. This concrete block is not as stable and strong as it is modelled to be, proven by the fallible wood used in its place. These materials suggest the idea that these boundaries are not as strong as the metaphysical binding codes that precede them.

04. Henry Hemming, Abdulnasser Gharem: Art of Survival (London: Booth-Clibborn, 2011), 118.
05. Hemming, Abdulnasser Gharem, 118.
06. Hemming, 118.
07. Hemming, 131.
08. Hemming, 133.

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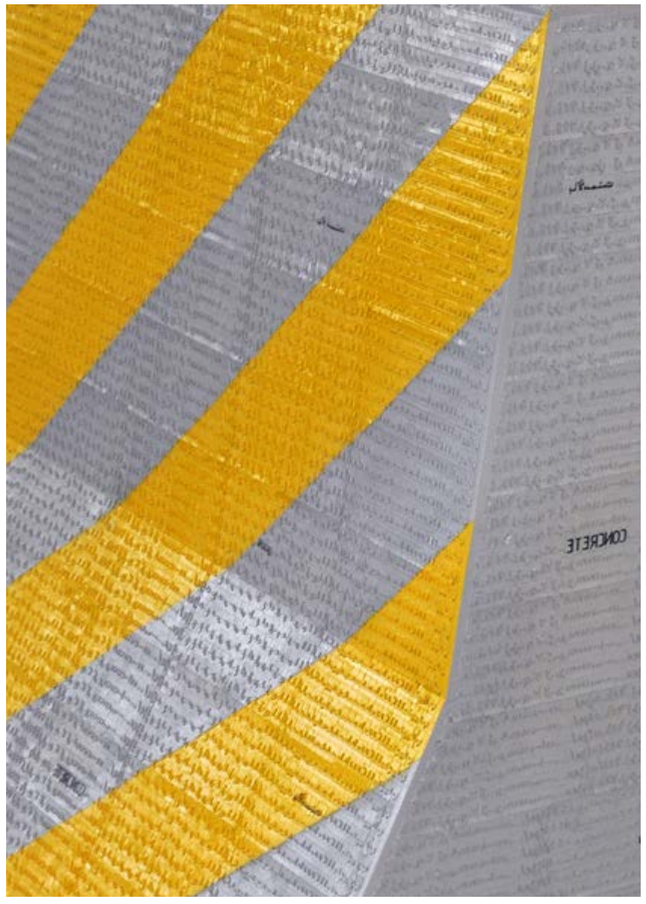

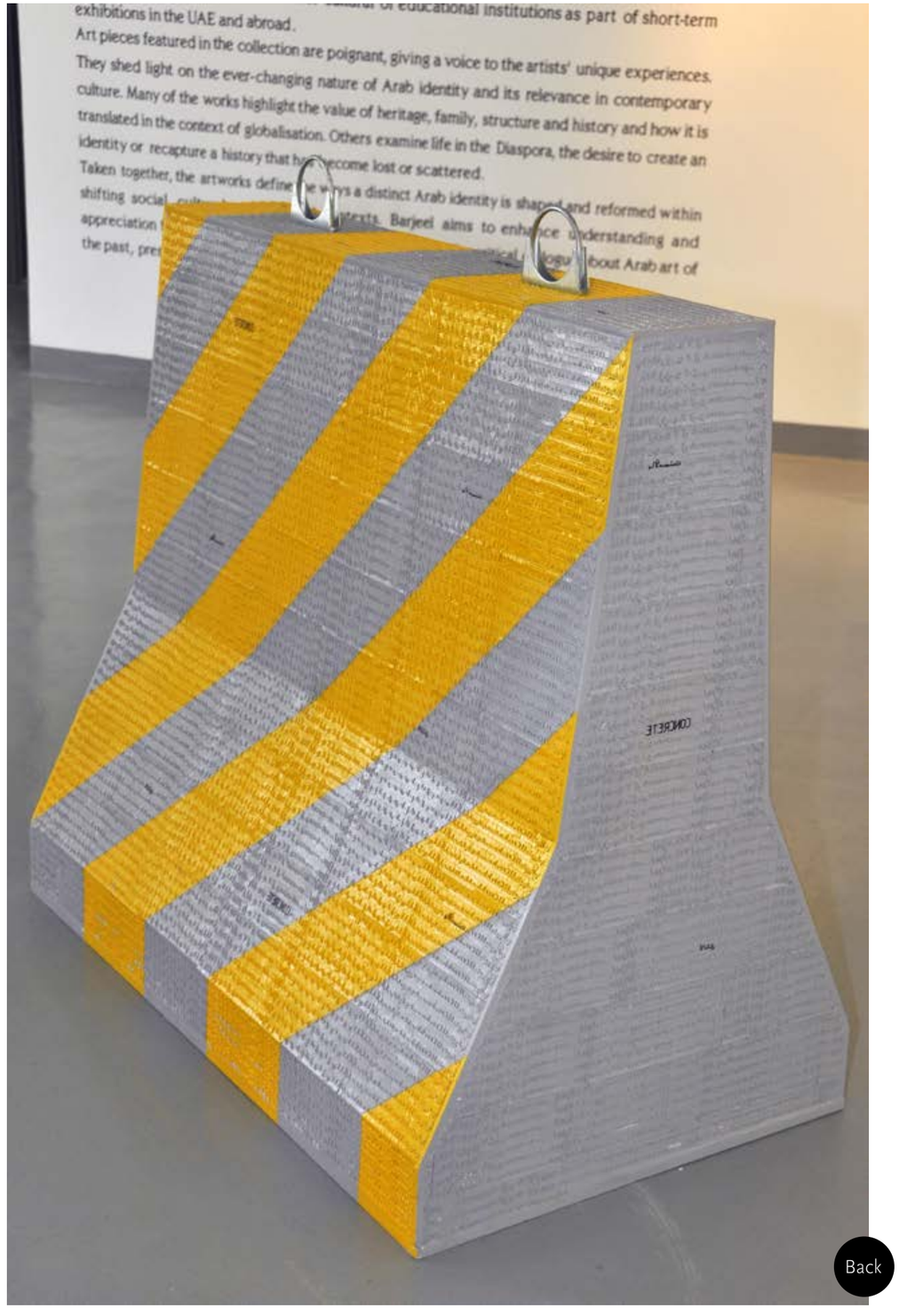

FIGURE 1 Abdulnasser Gharem, *Concrete Block II*, rubber stamps and wood sculpture, 107 x 123 x 69 cm, 2010.

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When this concrete block crumbles, when this wooden sculpture burns, nothing is left but the binding codes that placed them there in the first place. This is the tertiary space within concrete that is exploited by governments and institutions to create control. The association of concrete with stability, guidance, and safety is created through just the idea of concrete due to its wielded connection to the state and bureaucracy. This creates an omnipresent sense of control, given the visibility of concrete that surrounds the artist, Saudi Arabia, and the rest of the SWANA region.

FIGURE 2

Concrete, or lack thereof, is alluded to in the artist's earlier work *Siraat (The Path)* (2007). The work reflects a forgotten tragedy in a village nestled between mountains around Khamis Mushait, the artist's locality, in southwestern Saudi Arabia. A bridge held up by concrete columns collapsed after heavy rains, killing local villagers who had found shelter underneath it.[09] The tragedy was forgotten, but the remains of the bridge were fossilized by Gharem, twenty years after the event, with the Arabic word for 'the path' *(al-siraat)* sprayed with white paint on what was left of it.[10] This bridge —this path— is a boundary, a liminal space connecting two binaries together: inside and outside. People find comfort in the idea of concrete, backed by institutions and promising safety and convenience finding shelter underneath it, which is why they hid underneath it. The flimsy concrete which came crashing down is, in reality, the product of poor decision making and infrastructure, yielded by institutions legitimised by stamps of the same kind Gharem used throughout his practice, protecting but harming its citizens simultaneously. Within this criticism of governments and institutions, especially his own of Saudi Arabia, Gharem stands with those who have been negatively impacted by concrete, the mouthpiece of governments and institutions.

09. Hemming, 53.
10. Hemming, 55.

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FIGURE 2 Abdulnasser Gharem, *Siraat (The Path)*, silkscreen in colours on 410gsm Somerset Tub paper, 129.6 x 180 cm, 2007.

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With the concrete cosmopolis that connects Saudi Arabia and Egypt, artists face different encounters with the ubiquitous material. On most occasions, Gharem brings the 'concrete' to his studio in Khamis Mushait, criticizing it in seclusion and displaying it to a willing audience. In other cases, like in the work *Siraat (The Path)*, Gharem uses concrete in its raw form, always open to the view of the public. Making this work graffiti, an inherently political form of art and expression, actively exploits the material that lays underneath it, shaping "public opinion and social consciousness".[11]

FIGURE 3

One of the most notable cases of concrete as a venue for communication is through the artistic responses to events that make up the Arab Spring of 2010–11. Images of the Arab Spring, for myself and others, bring to mind the Egyptian revolution at Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt, 2011. The crowds tantalize as they move in unison, each particle representing an individual in a liminality "when everything is possible, but nothing yet is replaced".[12] The Arab Spring was a visual revolution as much as it was a political one, played out on the concrete canvas of the city for those who watched in a bird's eye view through a screen and to the ones present. Ganzeer is a multidisciplinary artist from Cairo who realized this as he heard "applauding and cheering" when he sprayed the words "Down with Mubarak" on a billboard in the middle of Tahrir Square.[13] From then on, concrete became his canvas, confiding in the vast and highly visible material across Cairo's cityscape to communicate messages in times of political upheaval. Within the Barjeel Art Foundation collection, *Ganzeer's Die Wahrheit Ist Konkret* (2012) stands as an imposing one-by-two-meter graffiti and Euro coin work on wood. A figure is standing to the right with an amputated bleeding hand and a gun in the other; next to this is the German sentence "Die Wahrheit ist konkret", translating to 'The truth is concrete' in black spray-paint. Through this statement, Ganzeer fleshes out the polysemic nature of concrete: this still and sound material is also a fluid thing that changes its symbolic meaning and use depending on the specificities of human encounter. Whilst concrete is a highly weaponized material, artists like Ganzeer reposition it as a weapon to shoot the perpetrator. Seeing this never changing concrete as a testament of the stagnant and corrupt institutional practices of the government, Ganzeer reclaims the concrete as public domain, satirising the boundaries put in place and taking change into his own hands.

11. Hayley Tubbs, "Resistance Graffiti: The Role of Political Art in the 2011 Egyptian Revolution" (BA thesis, Haverford College, 2021), 16.
12. Ieva Zakareviciute, "Reading Revolution on the Walls: Cairo Graffiti as an Emerging Public Sphere," *Hemispheres. Studies on Cultures and Societies* 29, no. 2 (2014): 109–27.
13. Ganzeer, "Street Discourse," in *Truth Is Concrete*, eds. Steirischer Herbst and Florian Malzacher (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2015), 238.

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FIGURE 3 Ganzeer, *Die Wahrheit Ist Konkret*, spray paint, acrylic, Euro coins on wood, 206 x 160 cm, 2012.

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Whilst in Gharem's piece we see the statement "Don't Trust the Concrete", in Ganzeer's piece we are led to put our faith in the concrete, especially on what is on the skin of the concrete. Through graffiti, especially during the Arab Spring, concrete was transformed from a material of control and censorship to a material carrying ephemeral communication supporting the interest of the public. Whilst *Die Wahrheit Ist Konkret* is not a work on concrete and not ephemeral like its Cairo street counterpart, it aims to memorialize what is otherwise bound to be covered up or withered away. Graffiti, unlike the materiality of concrete, is 'vulnerable' and 'transient'. By turning the juxtaposed physicality on its head, Ganzeer makes the graffiti permanent and the concrete, which is replaced by wood, fallible. The interesting case between both *Die Wahrheit Ist Konkret and Concrete Block II* is their illusions of concrete: they are instead made in part of wood. Whilst of course this could be a practical choice, it's almost indicative of concrete as a material. Whilst Gharem tackles the puppeteer behind concrete, Ganzeer values what lays on top of it, proving this was never about the concrete in the first place. In the same way that concrete is the mouthpiece of institutions and governments to control and censor, concrete is the mouthpiece of artists to criticize and make sense of the concrete cosmopolis that surrounds them.

Growing up in Dubai, my relationship to concrete is one of comfort: concrete is my home, my school, it is my hospital. Concrete is the foundation of my life, bearing no containing or restricting features. Concrete has allowed me to progress in my education, landing me here at SOAS with my fellow curators. I have put my trust in concrete. One of the issues of concrete is that its use is in the hands of the beholder: roads are made with concrete, so are checkpoints, apartheid walls, and concrete blocks. As us eight students are curating this exhibition, we confide in the concrete boundaries of the Brunei Gallery—hanging paintings, projecting videos, and placing plinths. A space is so much more than the walls that surround it, and a boundary is more than just the concrete that occupies it. Gharem, Ganzeer, and other artists in the Barjeel Art Foundation collection confide in the concrete of their studios, streets, and now the Brunei Gallery to surpass the concrete that once limited them. The question here today and now is, Whose concrete can we trust?

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SHAMSA ALNAHYAN

Shamsa Alnahyan is a passionate curator and a second-year student at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), where she is pursuing a BA in Creative Arts and Cultural Industries. Prior to attending SOAS, Shamsa spent her formative years in Dubai surrounded by creative and cultural institutions that have shaped her ways of thinking and passion for the arts. While at SOAS University of London, Shamsa's research interests have focused on curation, art history, culture, and exploring innovative ways to engage audiences and foster learning through the arts. At SOAS, Shamsa is a digital ambassador and has been involved in various projects that highlight her keen eye for detail and her ability to bring cultural narratives to life. Through her volunteer work at Art Dubai and London Palestine Film Festival, Shamsa has demonstrated her dedication to making cultural knowledge accessible and engaging for diverse audiences. Outside of her studies and curatorial projects, Shamsa enjoys exploring art galleries and museums, reading about cultural history, travelling to historical sites and constantly seeking new inspirations to fuel her professional and personal growth.

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From Ghardaïa to the Banlieues: Kader Attia's Interrogation of Colonial Legacies, Constructing Contemporaneity, and Hybrid Identity beyond Boundaries

Chloe-Kate Abel

For Kader Attia (b. 1970, France), an Algerian-French diasporic artist now working between Berlin and Paris, art has become a refuge to interrogate the complexities of his multi-hyphenate identity that encapsulates colonial legacies and lies beyond boundaries somewhere "between the Occidental and the non-Occidental worlds."[01] Working across mediums such as sculpture, photography, and film, Attia seeks to answer questions regarding socio-political matters that shape and structure our contemporary reality,[02] especially, the ranging repercussions of Western domination and colonialism on non-Western cultures.[03] The idea of cultural reappropriation as a form of repair has come to epitomize the artist's practice as he explores these various topics. Not only does Attia use this reappropriation as a means to trace history and transform it into a contemporary art practice, but he also deploys it as a healing measure to reclaim cultural signs that have been lost through dispossession.[04]

01. Sussan Babaie, "Voices of Authority: Locating the 'Modern' in 'Islamic' Arts," *Getty Research Journal*, no. 3 (2008): 133.
02. Amanda Crawley Jackson, "(Re-)Appropriations: Architecture and Modernity in the Work of Kader Attia," *Modern & Contemporary France* 19, no. 2 (May 2011): 164.
03. "Kader Attia: *Untitled (Ghardaïa)*," The Guggenheim Museums and Foundation, accessed April 29, 2024, https://www.guggenheim.org/teaching-materials/but-a-storm-is-blowing-from-paradise-contemporary-art-of-the-middle-east-and-north-africa/kader-attia.
04. Kader Attia, "Open Your Eyes," *Third Text* 32, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 16.
05. Crawley Jackson, "(Re-)Appropriations," 164.
06. Kader Attia, "Biography," accessed April 29, 2024, http://kaderattia.de/biography.

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Born to Algerian parents in Dugny, France, Attia's upbringing spanned Garges-lès-Gonesse, a commune in the northern Paris suburb of Sarcelles, and Algeria.[05] His dual identity, shaped by these distinct cultures with rich histories, serves as a foundational theme in his work. Additionally, Attia's experiences in the Congo and South America in the '90s—marked by exposure to diverse traditions, multi-ethnic societies, and colonial legacies—influenced the development of his central concept: *la réparation* (repair).[06] Rooted in the universal need for regeneration and healing at the core of all human and non-human life, Attia uses this principle to explore the reverberations of the French colonial project. His complex identity as a contemporary African, European, and Arab artist invites reflection on where diasporic artists fit within conventional categorizations of the art market and its changing demands.

Particularly poignant examples of this reappropriation in practice are the artist's architectural works that examine the power of the built environment as a tool that helps craft and form identity, archives historical narratives, and determines a litmus of belonging. Across Attia's diverse and striking body of works is the repeated motif of the *banlieues*, modernist brutalist social housing projects found across the outskirts of French cities that typify the place where the artist grew up.[07] The banlieues, and more importantly the story around their inception and their sustained use today, act as an interesting site for the artist to interrogate the boundaries of his own identity and question the borders of directional influence in contemporary and modern art. Through his works *Untitled (Ghardaïa)* (2009) and *ZENE 4* (2006), Kader Attia uses architecture to interrogate the notion of contemporaneity in art as a complex patchwork of reappropriated symbols that, like his own identity, link the Occidental and non-Occidental worlds and transcends boundaries.

07. Gregory Volk, "Kader Attia," *ARTnews.com*, February 23, 2010, https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/aia-reviews/kader-attia-2-60531.

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THE DIFFICULTIES OF LOCATING CONTEMPORANEITY: QUESTIONING THE HIERARCHIES OF DIRECTIONAL 'INFLUENCE'

"In Sussan Babaie's article "Voices of Authority: Locating the 'Modern' in 'Islamic' Arts", she asserts that interest in contemporary Middle Eastern art in the West is largely due to diasporic artists. She goes on to ponder whether there has ever been a "modern" Middle Eastern art movement to anchor the contemporary movements we see today.[08] "

This push and pull between modernity and contemporaneity has come to dominate discussions about art coming from the SWANA region, largely centering the debate around whether the region has an authentic contemporary movement—one untainted by Western vision. On a local rather than regional level, scholars Letort and Cherel (2012, 193) point to Algerian art critic and curator Nadira Laggoune-Aklouche, who they say noted that "the existence of an Algerian contemporary art scene is characterized by various contradictions fueled by cultural and artistic hybridity stemming from artists' travel to and from France, but also promoting the adoption of Eurocentric criteria when assessing Algerian artworks". Perhaps, as often underscored through Kader Attia's works, the concern should not be to pinpoint a local, "authentic" contemporaneity but rather to question the ways colonialism works in "policing the boundaries of cultural intelligibility"[09] by governing the direction of 'influence' and which of said influences are remembered within collective memory and the art historical cannon. Kader Attia's practice ultimately seems to build upon Michael Baxandall's premise that "influence is a curse of art criticism"[10] that insists on an active and passive relation rather than recognizing the hierarchical imbalance embedded in the way the direction of 'influence' is understood.

08. Babaie, "Voices," 133.
09. Diana Fuss, "Interior Colonies: Frantz Fanon and the Politics of Identification," Diacritics 24, no. 2/3 (1994): 21.
10. Michael Baxandall, "Excursus Against Influence," in *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 58–59.

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FIGURE 1

Attia's 2009 artwork *Untitled (Ghardaïa)* is an apt example of the way the artist espouses his principle of repair and reappropriation through the study of important architectural sites. *Untitled (Ghardaïa)* is a large-scale installation piece, sculpting a scaled model of the Algerian city of Ghardaïa out of 760 pounds of couscous. The sculpture is framed by two, black-and-white, inkjet prints of Le Corbusier and Fernand Pouillon, French architects and designers considered to be 'pioneers' of modern architecture from the early twentieth century. Alongside the portraits is a copy of a UNESCO certificate that officially designates the ksour (fortified city) of Ghardaïa a World Heritage Site—an official seal of Ghardaïa's importance to Algeria and the world. The city of Ghardaïa, which is located in the Algerian Sahara, is typified by Mozabite architecture, an architectural style created in the tenth century by the Ibadites in the M'Zab valley.[11] Attia's re-creation of the city and its iconic architectural style are a critique of dominant Western historiographies of modernity and contemporaneity by drawing attention to the cross-cultural exchange that happened between Algeria and Europe in the 1930s and '40s.[12]

FIGURE 2

Both Le Corbusier and Pouillon famously visited Algeria and drew much of their inspiration for their later groundbreaking modernist works from the ksours and clay cities, such as Ghardaïa, that they encountered on their visit. The legacy of this 'influence' lives on today in the banlieues of Paris and Marseille (as evidenced by the modernist housing blocks designed by Le Corbusier), where the artist grew up and where Maghrebi immigrants in France are often relegated to live.[13]

11. UNESCO World Heritage Centre, "M'Zab Valley," accessed April 29, 2024, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/188.
12. Crawley Jackson, "(Re-)Appropriations," 163.
13. Open Society Foundations (OSF), "Experiences of Muslim Communities: Housing," in *Muslims in Marseille*, 153–75 (New York: OSF, 2011).

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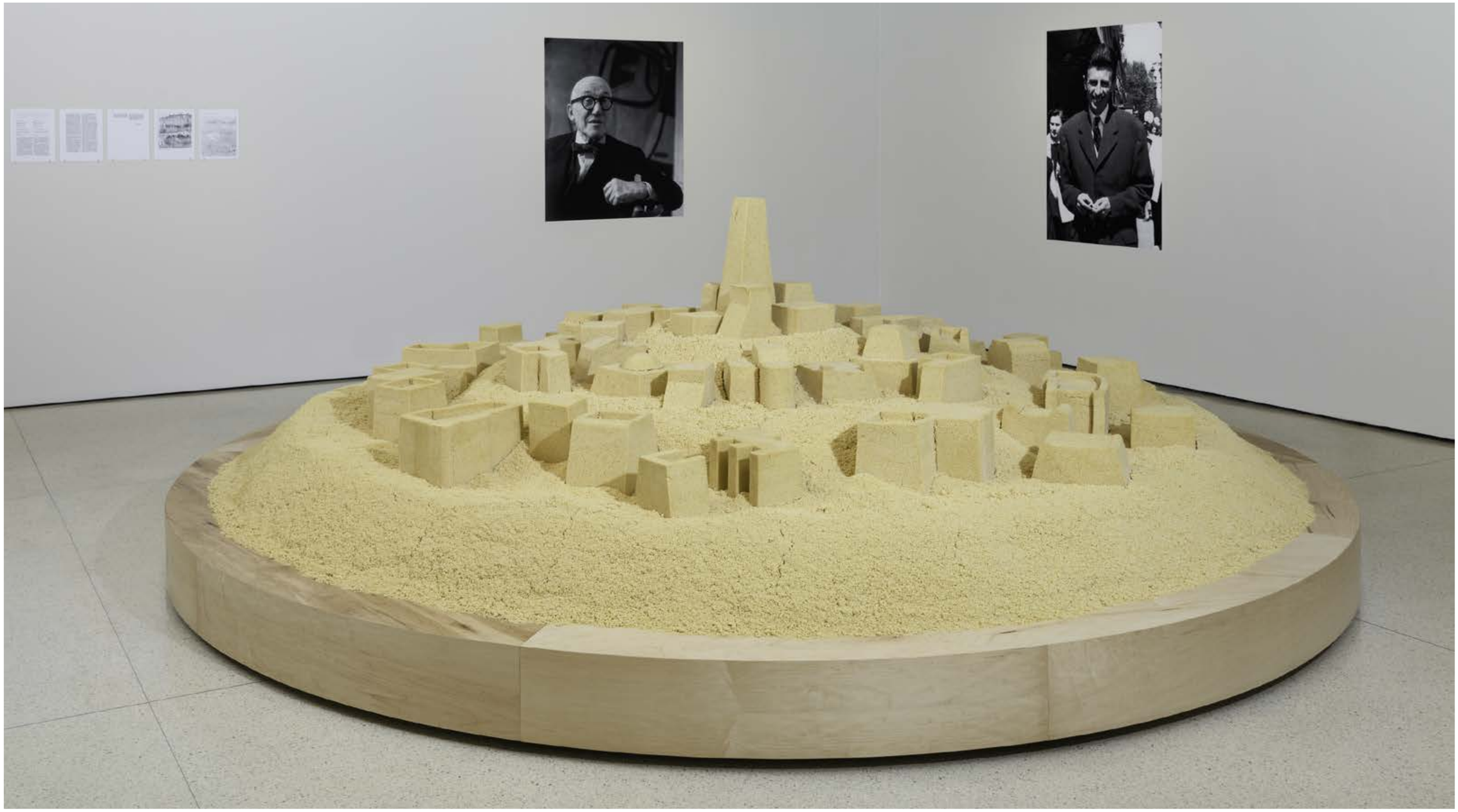

FIGURE 1 Kader Attia. *Untitled (Ghardaïa)*, 2009, Couscous, two inkjet prints, and five photocopy prints couscous diameter: 16 feet 4 7/8 inches (500 cm); inkjet prints: 70 7/8 x 39 3/8 inches (180 x 100 cm) and 59 1/16 x 39 3/8 inches (150 x 100 cm); photocopy prints: 59 1/16 x 39 3/8 inches (150 x 100 cm). Installation view: But a Storm Is Blowing from Paradise: Contemporary Art of the Middle East and North Africa, April 29 - October 5, 2016. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York Guggenheim, UBS MAP Purchase Fund, 2015. 2015.84. © Kader Attia. Photograph by David Heald © Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York.

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FIGURE 2 Aïcha Haddad (b. 1937), *Ghardaïa*, c.1980s. Oil on canvas: 50 x 62 cm. Photo by Barjeel Art Foundation, n.d.

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Attia's choice of materiality adds to the subliminal messaging of the artwork. Since the thirteenth century, couscous has been a food staple in North Africa that originated with the Amazigh (Berber) people and has since found its way into cuisines around the world.[14] Consisting of small, steamed granules of rolled semolina, the dish is an important aspect of the socio-cultural heritage of North Africa. It is distinctly Maghrebi (North African) and not found across the African continent or even the Arabic-speaking world, subsequently rooting the artwork in a specific locality and identity. The couscous as a building material also emulates the clay used to construct the city of Ghardaïa in that it is malleable, natural, and subsequently in need of repairs over time. While the clay foundations of the building structures crack, so too do the couscous walls of Attia's Ghardaïa as it deteriorates and decomposes.

As a result, Attia ensures that the installation will change over the course of the exhibition and is in a constant state of repair and regeneration as the artist transfers ownership of the work by providing the recipe, molds, and instructions for constructing the sculpture.[15] The ephemeral and ever-changing structure of the couscous reflect the ways in which Ghardaïa was not just a historical artifact "frozen in time and consumed by the modernist gaze" but a living and practiced material environment.[16] *Untitled (Ghardaïa)* serves as a powerful testament to Attia's commitment to repair, reappropriation, and cultural critique as the basis of his artistic practice. By reconstructing the Mozabite city out of couscous, a material rooted in Maghrebi heritage, Attia challenges dominant, Western, historical narratives of modernity and prompts reflection on the enduring impact of colonialism.

14. Fabiana Senkpiel, "Food as an Art Material. Matters of Affordances and Material Images," *Art Style, Art & Culture International Magazine* 7, no. 7 (March 11, 2021): 96.
15. "Kader Attia: Untitled (Ghardaïa)."
16. Crawley Jackson, "(Re-)Appropriations: Architecture and Modernity in the Work of Kader Attia," 171.

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The re-examining of this moment in time and its legacy into the contemporary is a way for Attia to highlight the cultural impact of the colonized on the colonizer and calls into question the direction of influence.[17] The work then becomes an act of repair that seeks to heal the wounds of the French colonial project in Algeria. It is widely recognized that, from 1830 onwards, the occupying French troops attempted to physically imprint their authority in Algiers by radically altering its physical structure and imposing French architecture. This trend persists today into the country's contemporary history, marked by an endless influx of French architects projecting foreign architectural forms onto the city.[18] Unlike France's other colonial territories, Algeria's contact with the colonizer was longer, more complex, and more violent.[19] Following its official re-designation in 1848 as an extension of France, Algeria held a unique and unusual status within the French colonial empire (perhaps due to its proximity across the Mediterranean). This status was reinforced by the significant numbers of Europeans who permanently resettled there.[20] Alongside brutal measures to pacify the population, architecture became an important tool for power, control, and asserting French identity. Since Algerian independence in 1962, the Franco-Algerian relationship has been punctuated by tension and complexity, as the government sought a clean break with its Algerian past. This was evident in legal and administrative procedures during Algerian independence, including defining citizenship lines and determining who could identify as French.[21]

Akin to the colonial era, this is once again reflected in architecture, as postcolonial France now amasses the descendants of people from its former colonies in the "open-sky jails" of the banlieues separate from the rest of the French population.[22] The banlieues are an important, iconographic motif throughout Attia's artistic practice that employs his concept of repair, interrogates his identity, and questions the praxis of directional influence. For Attia, the banlieues are more than just the buildings where he grew up; rather, they are unique structures that seem to capture the exact, complex hybridity that Attia embodies—one that is simultaneously Algerian and French. Additionally, the area where the banlieues are constructed, known as *la zone*,[23] acts as a liminal space that is both part of the city but also a border demarcating alienation. In essence, Attia's 2006 work *ZENE 4* encapsulates not only physical structures but also profound, societal narratives, serving as a poignant reminder of the intricate interplay between identity, space, and belonging.

17. "Kader Attia," Guggenheim.
18. Sheila Crane, "Architecture at the Ends of Empire: Urban Reflections between Algiers and Marseille," in *The Spaces of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics, and Everyday Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 100.
19. Marie-Christine Press, "North African Modernities: Myth Stripped Bare," *Matatu: Journal for African Culture and Society* 36, no. 1 (2009): 248.
20. Crane, "Architecture," 99.
21. Edward Welch and Joseph McGonagle, eds., introduction to *Contesting Views: The Visual Economy of France and Algeria* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 2–3.
22. Jane Ure-Smith, "How Kader Attia Demonstrates the Radical Healing Power of Art," *Frieze*, February 22, 2019, https://www.frieze.com/article/how-kader-attia-demonstrates-radical-healing-power-art.
23. Tania Mancheno, "Behind the Walls of Paris: The Inhabited History of the Space in the Parisian Banlieues," in *Doing Tolerance: Urban Interventions and Forms of Participation*, eds. Maria do Mar Castro Varela and Barış Ülker (Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2020), 126.

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FIGURE 3

In ZENE 4, Attia recreates the uniform modernist concrete towers of his childhood using mixed-media collage. These structures, like today's banlieues in France, inhibit an unidentifiable buffer zone lacking identifiable geographical features. Initially constructed after World War II to contend with a housing crisis, the banlieues were home to primarily white, middle-class, French citizens in an area just beyond the city's medieval walls called *la zone*.[24] However, as France experienced more economic growth in the 1950s and '60s, the middle class relocated and the banlieues ultimately became a place for immigrants from France's former colonies to live in. In popular culture today, the banlieues have come to mark a territory of 'lawlessness' and violence due to limited economic, educational, and social opportunities afforded to residents.[25]

Like the structures reflected in *ZENE 4* that seem to float within an undefinable white space, the banlieues mark "inclusion by exclusion", where residents are within the city's network yet marginalized on its periphery.[26] This evokes parallels with the French colonial project and its ambition to both broaden and restrict the concepts of 'French identity'. In Algiers, for instance, the French policy was a process of investment in the pre-colonial town as a place to sequester the local Muslim population from the French settlers who populated the enlarged agglomeration.[27] Occupying this liminal space, residents of the banlieue are simultaneously part of the country while also relegated to a neglected, peripheral zone with minimal societal connections. Ultimately, *ZENE 4* becomes a poignant reference to Attia's own reconciliation with his identity, demonstrating how he challenges the constraints of categorization and identity politics prevalent in both the contemporary art scene and the nation where he grew up through architectural symbolism in his art.

24. Kenny Cupers, "The Power of Association: Le Corbusier and the Banlieues," in *Terms of Appropriation: Global Architecture and Modern Exchange*, eds. Ana Miljački and Amanda Reeser Lawrence (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 68.
25. Jennifer Fredette, "Housing: The Banlieues as a Geographic and Socially Constructed Place," in *Constructing Muslims in France* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 141–2.
26. Mancheno, "Behind the Walls," 125.
27. Jean-Louis Cohen, "Architectural History and the Colonial Question: Casablanca, Algiers, and Beyond," *Architectural History* 49 (2006): 357.

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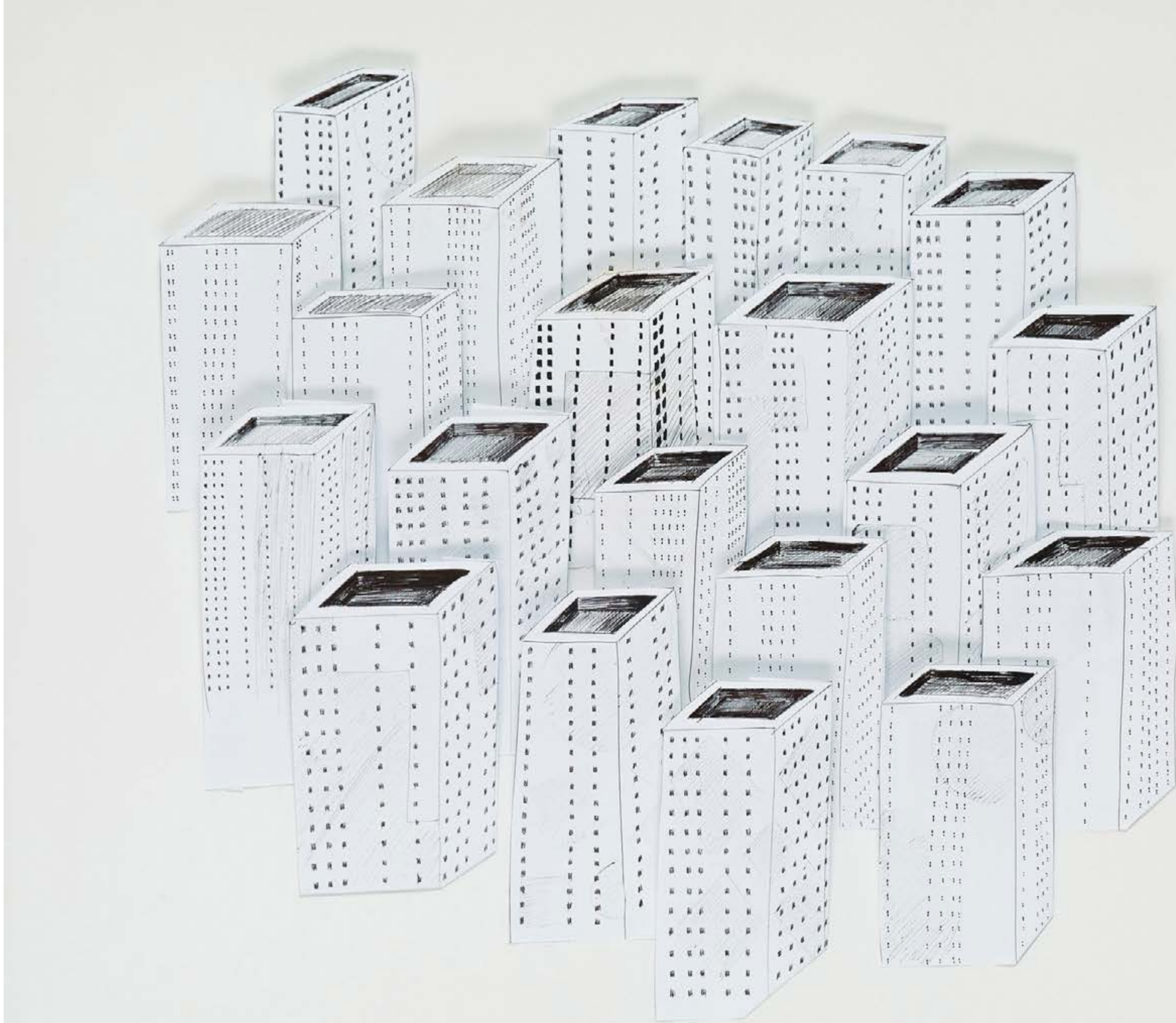

FIGURE 3 Kader Attia, *ZENE 4*, 2006. Mixed media and collage: 50 x 65 cm. Photo by Barjeel Art Foundation, n.d.

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Beyond the work's striking appraisal of persistent neocolonial policies and the complexity of identity, *ZENE 4* like *Untitled (Ghardaia)* unravels the borders and hierarchies of directional influence that seem to uphold distinctly 'Western' and 'non-Western' spheres of existence. Le Corbusier, the Swiss-French architect associated with the urban planning of post-War France, is also considered the 'father' of modern architecture. While the artworld and world more generally become consumed with delineating modernity and contemporaneity as something inherently Western, an interrogation of Le Corbusier's corpus of works reveals the ways in which locating modernity and contemporaneity are inherently difficult if not unnecessary.

Le Corbusier's enduring fascination with Islamic architecture and urbanism was first sparked during his 1911 travels in the 'Orient', encompassing regions of the Middle East and North Africa. This fascination profoundly 'influenced' his practice throughout his lengthy career, evident in references spanning publications from 1915 in works such as *L'art décoratif d'aujourd'hui* (1925), *La ville radieuse* (1933), *Quand les cathédrales étaient blanches* (1937), and *Le modulor* (1949).[28] Namely, Le Corbusier felt that good urbanism was represented through formal unity, something he was struck by when observing the cellular organization of M'Zab ksours such as Ben-Isghem and Ghardaïa.[29] He felt that the cellular structure provided an architectural formula for happiness, which he applied to his other projects like Le Ville Radiuse, Colline Notre Dame du Haut,[30] and the banlieues, whose simple, concrete structures built within grid-like, modular mini-cities resemble the layout of a North African medina.[31]

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While the banlieues and Le Corbusier's other projects are touted across architectural schools as examples of cubist, modernist architecture of Europe, *ZENE 4* seeks to unearth the facade that modernism is inherently European and Western by exposing its connections to Algeria and the greater 'Orient', the artist's other home. Ultimately, *ZENE 4* serves as an apt reflection of Attia's own journey reconciling his hybrid identity. Additionally, through its architectural symbolism, the artwork unravels the borders and hierarchies of directional influence by interrogating the dichotomies embedded within modernism when contextualized within a broader cultural framework.

CONCLUSION

Kader Attia, a diasporic artist of Algerian-French origin, explores the complexities of his identity, the reverberations of colonial legacies, and the neocolonial paradigms of the contemporary artworld through his multi-media artistic practice. Driving this practice is the concept of *repair* through cultural reappropriation—as a way to trace and transform history into contemporary art and as a healing measure to reclaim lost cultural symbols due to dispossession. His architectural works, exemplified by pieces like *Untitled (Ghardaïa)* (2009) and *ZENE 4* (2006), critically examine the role of architecture as a political tool in shaping identity and preserving historical narratives while echoing his own complex identity bridging 'Occidental and non-Occidental' realms.

28. Zeynep Çelik, "Le Corbusier, Orientalism, Colonialism," *Assemblage*, no. 17 (April 1992): 59.
29. Çelik, "Le Corbusier," 62.
30. Cohen, "Architectural History," 366.
31Cupers, "Power of Association," 62.

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CHLOE-KATE ABEL

Chloe-Kate Abel is finishing her postgraduate degree in Curating Cultures at SOAS University, where she focuses on contemporary Middle Eastern and African art. She holds certifications in Advanced Arabic through the US Department of Education's CASA fellowship in Jordan, Arts Leadership and Culture Management from the University of Connecticut, and a BA in Arabic and Persian from the University of St. Andrews.

Her interest in the arts and languages was first sparked during high school as a NSLI-Y scholar in Morocco. Chloe-Kate has gained valuable experience working with various arts and education institutions, including an internship at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts and a fellowship at Al Akhawayn University.

Having lived in Morocco on-and-off since 2014, she is particularly interested in contemporary North African art and themes of urban space, architecture, and identity. Chloe-Kate is currently pursuing a dissertation on Moroccan Modernist Mohamed Melehi and the Cultural Moussem of Asilah 1978.

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Spatiality and Selfhood in the Modern Gulf City

Elika Blake

As space shifts continuously around us, familiar sites recede to the periphery of land and public conscience whilst new builds spring up incessantly from fertile soil. Notwithstanding these spatial volatilities, art remains a living repository for local memory and a channel for contemplating futurity. Against this dynamism that accelerates around the city dweller, art constitutes a static means of visually recounting and preserving one's culture and history in addition to the urban fabric that cements it. An entity in its own right, the modern city as a monumental space informs fundamental ideas about the individual, society, and the external world with which it ultimately interacts. Nelida Fuccaro's geographical definition of the 'Gulf City' is employed here to denote the modern settlements located across the coastal regions of the Gulf and including the urban networks of Saudi Arabia, with a particular focus on Dubai as the paradigm of industrial urbanism.[01]

Though urbanisation is by no means an unfamiliar phenomenon to the Gulf, the rapidity of this drastic process has for some resulted in the physical and cultural displacement of traditional societies as well as a discontinuity with sociohistorical precedent. Across subjects and mediums, works in the Barjeel Art Foundation's contemporary collection participate in a regional conversation that contemplates and queries the boundaries between the synchronous individual and collective, local and global, and traditional and modern dynamics of the Gulf City.

01. Nelida Fuccaro, "Visions of the City: Urban Studies on the Gulf," *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 35, no. 2 (2001): 176.

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Urbanism in the modern Gulf City can be broadly categorised into two strata: as a bi-product of modernity and as central to the conservation of Arab-Islamic identity. Shumon Basar, Antonia Carver, and Markus Miessen identify this duality within the example of Dubai, attesting to its implicit, binary quality while elucidating that it is not necessarily a matter of reconciliation but rather of coexistence:

> *"Dubai's ambition is to become a truly global locus, liberated from any trenchant localism. In doing so, it has also come to represent an alternative twenty-first-century Middle Eastern reality that simultaneously ushers in radical capitalism while sustaining Islamic state identity. It's a 'slash' condition, as in '/'. Not either/or, but both/and.*[02]"

Not simply a site, the Gulf City (henceforth, simply City) has become a condition which is instrumental to the social imagination. Everywhere and nowhere, the City persuades and resists the conscience of its inhabitants. Georg Simmel's seminal essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903) asserts that the problem of modernity arises from one's attempt to maintain the individuality of their existence "against the external culture and technique of life", that sensorial experience within the metropolis affects the psychological condition.[03] Architecture, the historicising vehicle for such condition, is an incubator of collective memory. Architect Rem Koolhaas's theory of the "Generic City" (1995) argues that, if identity is derived from physical substance, it is difficult to imagine that anything contemporary—that is, made by us in the modern age—can contribute meaningfully to it.[04] Koolhaas claims that identity, "like a lighthouse—fixed, over determined," can shift only at the expense of destabilisation.[05] By these notions, we question whether there can be room for authentic reidentification within the City and where the boundary lies between the individual as subject or object of its inexorable condition.

02. Shumon Basar, Antonia Carver, and Markus Miessen, eds., introduction to *With/Without: Spatial Productions, Practises, and Politics in the Middle East* (Dubai: Bidoun and Moutamarat, 2007), 9.
03. Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903), in *The Blackwell City Reader*, eds. Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 11–12.
04. Rem Koolhaas, *The Generic City* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1998), 1248.
05. Koolhaas, 1248.

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The Arab Gulf bore witness to profound transformations in the physical and psychological structures of societies in the modern age. The emergence of independent nation-states across the region coupled with urbanisation has led to the territorial expansion of capital cities and their conflation with the modern state. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman, the sale of oil became the source for a significant proportion of governmental revenues. The unification of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932 and the discovery of oil in its deserts in 1938 resulted in production at full capacity within ten years, transfiguring its pastoral society into an industrial one, and in its path upheaving existent social realities. Oil urbanisation began to take shape in the landscapes of historical settlements that hold significant religious and political functions, namely Mecca, Medina, Riyadh, and Jeddah. HRH Princess Jawaher bint Majed bin Abdulaziz al-Saud explains that, with the changing face of the nation, individuals became preoccupied with the shifting environments in which they found themselves and the ramifications for "what it meant to be Saudi".[06] In the United Arab Emirates, oil production in Dubai was underway by the end of 1969, and by the late 1990s, the city began to take on its striking postmodernist form.[07]

Building an "unprecedented realm of newness", Dubai manifests a city fully formed, born from the open desert to embody a new authenticity largely absolved from vernacular architectural precedent.[08] George Katodrytis explains its urban condition as such: "Dubai thrives on newness and bigness, in an act of ongoing self-stylisation and fantasy… Addicted to the promise of the new, [it] gives rise to an ephemeral quality, a culture of the 'instantaneous'".[09] This ephemerality and mutability of the metropolis have the potential to displace collective memory by waning the thread of architectural continuity. Whilst the new Gulf City is a source of immense pride for some, for others it brings with it an uncanniness and disorientation.

06. HRH Princess Jawaher bint Majed bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, foreword to *Contemporary Kingdom: The Saudi Art Scene Now*, eds. Myrna Ayad and Virginia Blackburn (Dubai: Canvas Central, 2014), 7.
07. Brian Ackley, "Permanent Vacation: Dubai, Circa 2005," in Basar, Carver, and Miessen, *With/Without*, 35.
08. Basar, Carver, and Miessen, introduction to *With/Without*, 9.
09. George Katodrytis, "Metropolitan Dubai and the Rise of Architectural Fantasy," in Basar, Carver, and Miessen, *With/Without*, 247–8.

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ARTWORKS

"I am a country man and, at the same time, the son of this strange, scary oil civilisation. In ten years our lives changed completely. For me, it is a drastic change that I experience every day.[10] *"*

AHMED MATER

Ahmed Mater (b. 1979, Tabuk) recalls how his traditional upbringing was first challenged upon his family's relocation from Rijal Alma to Abha: "The new, globalised culture made me question the values established by my conservative upbringing. I had assimilated all these ideas in my childhood; then I tried to destroy them". [11] Practising during an era which he describes as defined by "great conflict and seismic ideological change", Mater's interrogative oeuvre stands at the centre of three main axes as identified by Stephen Stapleton: the disparity between village and city life; the extinction of human relations; and the age of consumerism.[12] Embodying perhaps most saliently the latter two concepts, *Evolution of Man* can be interpreted as a narrative about the economic cycle and its associated greed, an otherwise easy path to self-destruction.[13]

FIGURE 1

10. Stephen Stapleton, "A Capacity for Wonder: In a Time of Turmoil and Transformation," in *Ahmed Mater*, ed. Edward Booth-Clibborn (London: Booth-Clibborn Editions, 2010), 31.
11. Stephen Stapleton, "Ibn Aseer: Son of Aseer," in *Ahmed Mater*, ed. Booth-Clibborn, 19.
12. Stapleton, "Ibn Aseer," 27, 32.
13. Ahmed al-Omran, "Evolution of Man," in *Ahmed Mater*, ed. Booth-Clibborn, 108–9.

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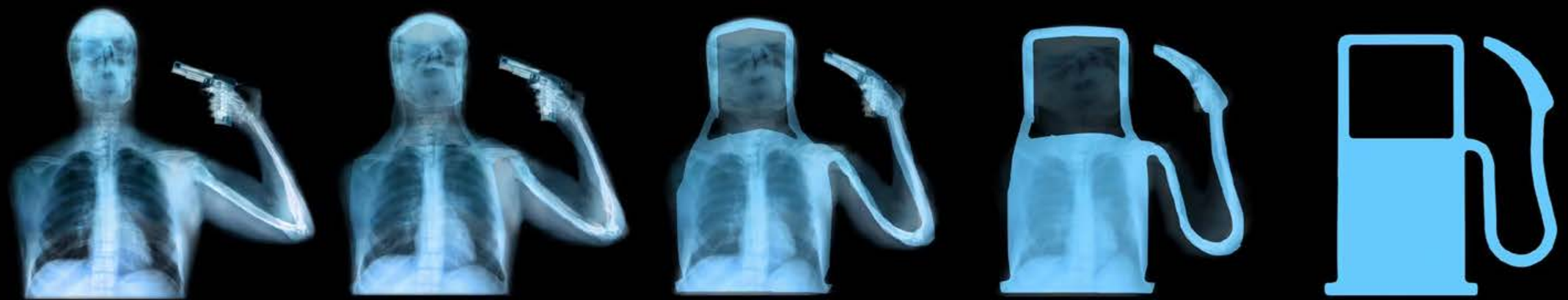

FIGURE 1 Ahmed Mater, *Evolution of Man*,
silkscreen prints (set of 5),
80 x 60 cm. each, 2010.

Derived from ancient fossils, the production of oil is related to evolution, but for Mater—a doctor by training—evolution does not always mean survival of the fittest: humanity's overconsumption can precipitate its own demise.[14] Experimenting with the duality of the 'slash' condition, the work evokes themes that are irreconcilable with traditional Islamic culture. Firstly, Darwin's theory of evolution is at odds with the belief of mankind as a perfect divine creation, and secondly, suicide is strongly prohibited in Islam.

FIGURE 2

Conversely, Farah Al Qasimi's (b. 1991, UAE) *Landfill Flowers* can be read as a contemplation on the promise of prosperity and regeneration. Exhibited as part of a solo exhibition at The Third Line, Dubai, titled *The World Is Sinking* (2014), the photograph depicts an emptied oil barrel branded with the Gulf Oil logo (one of the 'seven sisters' of the twentieth-century petroleum industry) from which ferns sprout optimistically. Foregrounding a desolate landscape, the landfill flower stands in solitude, at once sanguine and indicative of a bygone time. With Gulf Oil defunct since 1985 and the image captured almost thirty years later, the barrel and its new life are a marker of gradual neglect and, like the cyclical narrative of *Evolution of Man*, transition.

14. Al-Omran, "Evolution of Man," 108.

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FIGURE 2 Farah Al Qasimi, *Landfill Flowers*, archival inkjet print, 69 x 54 cm, 2014.

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Miessen formulates broadly the following equation based on the binary of the 'slash' condition: "Islam + radical capitalism = Dubai".[15] Here, the boundary of either/or is dismantled, enabling both to coexist, though not necessarily uncritically. Likening the City to Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), Brian Ackley characterises its nature as distracting from the world of genuine experience with the spectacle of staged experience, which is ultimately inauthentic.[16] Systematised architecture such as the shopping mall is built to service consumption and, removed from local context and the social mission that it purports as a public space, becomes a non-place, a "delineated zone defined by capital".[17] Though this condition is not specific to the Gulf City and is a symptom of shopping malls also in the West, it is accentuated by Dubai's spatial reality, at the nucleus of its urban sprawl, and by the dichotomy of its postmodern consumerist symbolism as well as its simultaneous centrality within a largely traditional society. Ammar Al Attar's (b. 1981, Dubai) *Dubai Shopping Mall Level 2 Fashion Avenue* and *DIFC The Gate, Dubai* capture the quietude of prayer spaces within the Dubai Mall and The Gate, a retail district of the Dubai International Financial Centre. Al Attar documents within these loci of material culture and global commerce the elusive yet necessary presence of devotional space, revealing a paradox between the fabric of the City and its religious culture.

FIGURE 3

FIGURE 4

Zaha Hadid (b. 1950, Baghdad, d. 2016, Florida) was trained under the tutelage of Rem Koolhaas and, following her graduation, joined Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis's architectural firm The Office for Metropolitan Architecture. Inspired by the diversified skyline of Baghdad, Hadid's oeuvre was marked by a "spatial and cultural reflexivity", making no differentiation between design, architecture, and urban planning in her creative response to sociocultural progressions.[18] Hadid contributed to several major architectural projects across the United Arab Emirates, with Dubai's completed Opus materialising in 2020.

15. Markus Miessen, "Bringing the Mall Back to the Centre," in Basar, Carver, and Miessen, With/Without, 106.
16. Ackley, "Permanent Vacation," 36.
17. Miessen, "Bringing the Mall Back to the Centre," 136.
18. Kathryn Bloom Hiesinger and Kathryn Higgins, "Zaha Hadid: Form in Motion," *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin*, no. 4 (2011), 16, 58.

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FIGURE 3 Ammar Al Attar, *Dubai Shopping Mall Level 2 Fashion Avenue*, Lambda C-Print matte, 42 x 60 cm, 2012.

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FIGURE 4 Ammar Al Attar, *DIFC The Gate, Dubai*, Lambda C-Print matte, 42 x 60 cm, 2012

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A master of interrelated disciplines, Hadid's *Tea and Coffee Set* combines her architectural training with her skills in mathematics and design to produce a set of sculptures that mimic the essentialised structure of a cluster of modernist buildings. Gleaming and prismatic, the forms encapsulate her innovative space-age constructions whilst at once addressing themes of gendered domestic space and the familiar, enduring site of the coffeehouse, a cultural symbol of socialisation.

FIGURE 5

The allure of newly planned cities across the Gulf region has resulted in the loss of populations in smaller urban settlements.[19] With spatial discontinuity catalysed by rural-urban migration as well as taking hold of rapidly developing major cities, artists such as Reem Al Ghaith (b. 1985, Dubai) turn to the past in order to confront the present. *Frame 4* forms part of Al Ghaith's *Held Back* series, which documents the drastic development of Dubai's landscape. Bisected into alternate worlds, Al Ghaith places herself within the frame, her solitary figure standing at the door of the old city, now a portal that tethers it to the new. Transporting herself back in time, she stands a passive spectator to the changing face of her homeland. *Held Back* is a witness to dislocation, the city a monolith looming in the distance, unattainable, ostracising. At the doorway, it shuts her out or otherwise awaits its startling discovery by her.

FIGURE 6

19. Salih el-Arifi, "The Nature of Urbanization in the Gulf Countries," *GeoJournal* 3, no. 3 (1986): 227.

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FIGURE 5 Zaha Hadid, *Tea and Coffee Set*, sterling silver, highest element 26.4 cm, 2004.

Back

FIGURE 5 Zaha Hadid, *Tea and Coffee Set*, sterling silver, highest element 26.4 cm, 2004.

Back

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Back

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FIGURE 5 Zaha Hadid, *Tea and Coffee Set*, sterling silver, highest element 26.4 cm, 2004.

Back

FIGURE 5 Zaha Hadid, *Tea and Coffee Set*, sterling silver, highest element 26.4 cm, 2004.

Back

"I the figure, I held time captive. In a depopulated background. In a preserved moment, a past, a memory, my comfort. I dislocated myself from a landscape, a land reconstructing itself in time, to gaze upon the change and question. What is becoming? Echoes reverberate, a juxtaposition of times, in a constructed barrier of my own. I stand nostalgic and held back.[20] "

REEM AL GHAITH

Turning to the modern city as a stimulus for addressing regional concerns, these works by artists from around the Arab Gulf traverse histories and topographies to challenge perspectives and enable dialogue across nations. Subject to the 'slash' condition, "not either/or, but both/and," they query and unsettle the boundary between the individual and the City as well as between continuity of tradition and the ever-shifting landscape.[21]

20. Reem Al Ghaith, "Held Back: A Conversation with Reem Al Ghaith," interview by Joanne Savio, NYU Abu Dhabi Institute, November 15, 2012, video, 27:55, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzY8Sdl84TA.
21. Basar, Carver, and Miessen, introduction to *With/Without,* 9.

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FIGURE 6 Reem Al Ghaith, *Frame 4* from the Held Back series, photograph, 200 x 300 cm, 2006.

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FIGURE 7 Lateefa Bint Maktoum, *Oral Tradition*, mixed media, 100 x 62 cm, 2014.

ELIKA BLAKE

Elika Blake is an MA Middle Eastern Studies student at SOAS University of London with a professional background in the arts of the MENA region. Elika joined the Modern & Contemporary Middle East department at Sotheby's auction house in 2022. In her role as Cataloguer, she supports the biannual sales and is currently project managing a series of exhibitions spanning the arts of Islam to the contemporary visual culture of the Arab Gulf.

Elika received her BA in History of Art from the University of Manchester, during which time her British-Persian heritage served as a great source of inspiration for her independent research. She was awarded for her dissertation which formed a chronological study of the relation between art and identity in twentieth-century Iran.

Elika's postgraduate research interests include the art market, global curatorial practices and art institutions in the Arab Gulf states. She is currently completing her Master's dissertation on a comparative study of biennials through the lens of Arab art.

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Distorting the Archive: Blurring the Boundary between the Artist and the Archivist through Works from the Barjeel Art Foundation Collection

Clara Ewert

Art and archives are entangled: art is housed within archives, and archives—conceptually and materially—are used by artists to produce artwork. By interrogating this entanglement, it is possible to consider the roles that both art and archives play in the documentation of the past. The work and artistic practices of Maha Maamoun (b. 1972, Oakland, USA) and Mohamed Abla (b. 1953, Belqas, Egypt) convey a compelling ambiguity between the boundaries between art and archive. In embodying the roles of both artist *and* archivist, they produce, preserve, and disseminate collective knowledge, or history, through their work. By blurring the conventional boundaries between artist and archivist, their practice contributes to the production of a "history of the present", and indeed a more authentic representation of Arab art history.[01]

01. Amin Alsaden, "Countering Erasure: Producing Knowledge on Arab Art Today," in *Knowledge Production: Examining Arab Art Today*, eds. Alsaden and Eline Van Der Vlist (Amman: The Khalid Shoman Foundation, 2020), 2:15.

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In part, this essay is a response to a piece written by Fares Chalabi in *Knowledge Production: Examining Arab Art Today*. Chalabi argues that, in order to push back against the Euro-American modalities of conceptualising and creating art history, "theories must be distorted, modified, submitted to forces that will bend them, sometimes to the point of non-recognition"[02] ; he posits that, through this distortion, knowledge resistant to dominant, largely Eurocentric narratives can be produced. Working with these ideas, if the concept of the archive is distorted, its boundaries can be broadened to include art and to consider artists themselves as archivists. Artists interacting with archives and critiquing historical narratives are a known trend in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region; however, there remains a boundary between what is 'art', with its subjectivity and creativity, and what is 'history', with its apparent veracity and authenticity. This is the boundary I wish to "distort" through discussing *Domestic Tourism II* by Maha Maamoun and *My People* by Mohamed Abla.

I will consider the archive, as defined by Harriet Bradley in "The Seductions of the Archive: Voices Lost and Found", as a "repository of memories" from which "we strive, however ineffectively and partially, to reconstruct, restore, recover the past, to present and represent stories of the past within our narratives".[03] In the context of this essay, I will use the term 'knowledge production' to refer to the writing and documenting of history. I am borrowing this understanding of the term from a 2018 public colloquium and eponymous publication held at Darat al Funun, a notable art foundation in Amman, Jordan, titled *Knowledge Production: Examining Arab Art Today*.[04] As per the notion of 'authenticity', Michel-Rolph Trouillot in *Silencing the Past: Power and Production of History* suggests that it constitutes an approach to history that "engages us both as actors and narrators".[05] The historian has an active (and subjective) role as an actor in the production of history as well as simultaneously embodying the passive (and objective) role of the narrator.[06] Historical authenticity occurs when the representation of the narrative is contextualised in the present versus being an event that occurred in the fixed past.[07]

02. Fares Chalabi, "The Sectarian Image: Crypto-Troglodism," in *Knowledge Production: Examining Arab Art Today*, eds. Amin Alsaden and Eline Van Der Vlist (Amman: The Khalid Shoman Foundation, 2020), 2:41.
03. Harriet Bradley, "The Seductions of the Archive: Voices Lost and Found," *History of the Human Sciences* 12, no. 2 (1999): 108–9.
04. Alsaden, "Countering Erasure," 15.
05. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015).
06. Trouillot, 24.
07. Trouillot, 148.

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FIGURE 1

The video work *Domestic Tourism II* was created in 2009 by Maha Maamoun. It runs for 60 minutes and is a compilation of clips of varying length from Egyptian films, all of which feature the famous pyramids of Giza. Maha Maamoun is an Egyptian visual artist who was born in the United States but moved back to Cairo where she lives and works today.[08] On a material level, *Domestic Tourism II* is created from archival film footage taken from VHS tapes, VCDs, DVDs, and the internet; therefore, as an artwork, it disseminates visual and recorded knowledge about Egyptian cinema.[09] For Maamoun, this project was not conceived because of a "fascination with archival material" but from an interest in "how others have constructed particular images, for example how the pyramids and what they signify have been choreographed in Egyptian cinema across time".[10] In each of the clips, the iconic pyramids appear, sometimes as a backdrop and sometimes as a stage for the scene. Not only does this piece preserve and (re)present clips of Egyptian cinema for a new audience, but the collapse of time in *Domestic Tourism II* establishes a "history of the present". In other words, the past is seamlessly brought into the present through timeless yet vintage-looking snippets of what is archetypally Egyptian. The films and their various formats are from the past—and now outdated—but viewers of the piece see them within the context of the moment they are situated in, or their present. Therefore, the slippage between the past and present becomes visible, revealing how the films engage with the pyramids, as well as with their cultural and historical significance, through the short and highly dramatic clips.[11] In an interview about the piece, Maamoun stated that the pyramids' "assigned role was very often to stand as the 'repository of collective memory'".[12] *Domestic Tourism II* can be considered as an archival work. The selection and collection of these films, edited and spliced together, produces a form of collective, remembered knowledge.

Moreover, the slippages created within Maamoun's interrogation of the significance of the pyramids as a backdrop in Egyptian cinema complicate a sense of historical 'authenticity'. These slippages distort the boundaries of the archive. Through its complicated and complex sense of historical authenticity, such artwork can produce knowledge which resists the dominant narrative of Arab art history.

08. Joan Grandjean, "Maha Maamoun," trans. Flora Hibberd, AWARE Women artists/Femmes artistes, accessed February 23, 2024, https://awarewomenartists.com/en/artiste/maha-maamoun.
09. Rasha Salti, "Archive Fever: A Conversation between Naeem Mohaiemen, Maha Maamoun, and Rania Stephan," *Manifesta Journal*, no. 14 (January 2012): 29–40.
10. Maha Maamoun, "Lingering in Vicinity," interview by Aleya Hamza, November 6, 2013, https://www.ibraaz.org/interviews/104.
11. Alsaden, "Countering Erasure," 15; Grandjean, "Maha Maamoun."
12. Salti, "Archive Fever."

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FIGURE 1 *Domestic Tourism II* by Maha Maamoun, 2008. Video/multi media. Courtesy of the Barjeel Art Foundation

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FIGURE 1 *Domestic Tourism II* by Maha Maamoun, 2008. Video/multi media. Courtesy of the Barjeel Art Foundation

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Mohamed Abla is a mixed media artist who has lived and worked in Egypt all his life. *My People*, 2006, is representative of Abla's documentation of everyday life in Cairo and its citizens. The piece is a synthesis: it consists of a documentary photograph printed on canvas of a new building development in the Egyptian capital, and the photograph is overlaid by four painted figures, representing local societal powers in Cairo.[13] Within the piece, a tension exists between the real and the unreal; that is, the artwork juxtaposes the documentary nature of the photograph and the imagined representations of the painted figures. When I was able to speak to Abla about this piece, he described it as "having to do with Egyptian societal ideas" and, as with all his work, as being motivated by social and political issues in Egypt.[14] The photograph in the background is of a new building which displaced a previously green and cultivated area, which, as he described, is a visible result of corruption in Egypt.[15] Drawn over the photographic canvas backdrop are two religious figures—a Coptic priest and a Sheikh—who sit equidistant from an army man. Slightly off to the side is a woman who, Abla says, represents Egypt, and all of the figures seem to be sitting on air, suggesting instability.[16] *My People* is therefore an artwork which visually documents a particular moment in Egyptian social history. It can be considered "a repository of memories" which can be used to reconstruct the past.[17] My People does not exist only in the moment of its material invention; rather, it asks to be considered as a "history of the present". It is both subjective and objective, simultaneously disrupting the binary of subjectivity/objectivity and embodying Trouillot's definition of authenticity.

FIGURE 2

Art historian Jessica Winegar describes Abla as a character full of "ruminations on people's relationships with Cairo and with one another in the city".[19] An integral figure in the Cairo art scene, Abla has spent decades capturing such banal moments. His paintings capture the city from all sides, and his role as a mentor for other artists is well known among historians of modern and contemporary Egyptian art. ***My People*** is, in itself, a social document which disrupts the boundaries of the archive and is made by an artist, or archivist, who is devoted to the documentation of the city and its people.

13. Mohamed Abla, phone interview with the author, February 26, 2024.
14. Abla, interview.
15. Abla, interview.
16. Abla, interview.
17. Bradley, "Seductions," 108.
18. Alsaden, "Countering Erasure," 15; Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 148.
19. Jessica Winegar, "Nile Sparrows," in *Creative Reckonings: The Politics of Art and Culture in Contemporary Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 133.

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FIGURE 2 *My People* by Mohamed Abla, 2006. Acrylic on photo canvas. 200 x 150 cm. Courtesy of the Barjeel Art Foundation.

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There is a tendency in writing about the boundary between art and archive to consider the archive only as a site of theory without taking into consideration the materiality of what comprises archival material and the role and identity of the archivists themselves.[20] In discussing how the works of Abla and Maamoun can be considered as archival objects, and the artists themselves as archivists, I distort the boundaries of the archive without distorting the "actually existing archives".[21] An archivist can be considered as a 'keeper of context' in so much as they control what knowledge is preserved through the organisational systems they create and manage.[22] Both archivists and archives, therefore, also have the power to silence and obscure aspects of the past through the establishment and editing of archival systems. One way to counter dominant historical narratives, which stem from the taxonomies and categorisations inherent in the Eurocentric archive, is, as Fares Chalabi suggested, to distort the boundary between artists and archivist.[23]

When I interviewed him, Abla said, "An artist has to be active in his society and use his art to send a message or point to problems".[24] Not only does Abla use his artwork to point to political and social issues, but he actively engages in Egyptian politics; for example, in 2013, he was among a group of fifty people who wrote the new Egyptian constitution.[25] His art is an archival endeavour: Abla consciously documents socio-political issues in Egypt through his artistic practice, actively contributing to the production of knowledge about Egyptian social history. Meanwhile, *Domestic Tourism II* is a film collage that shows how the pyramids have been represented in Egyptian cinema 'across time'. Or, in the artists own words, this collage evinces "fissures in a closed system of representation" in order to "make them more visible, make them wider, linger in their vicinity".[26]

20. Sara Callahan, "Archive Theory," in *Art + Archive: Understanding the Archival Turn in Contemporary Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022), 72.
21. Callahan, 72.
22. Callahan, 68.
23. Chalabi, "The Sectarian Image," 41.
24. Abla, interview.
25. Abla.
26. Maamoun, "Lingering."

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It is only through these representations of the past, shown through Egyptian cinema's focus on the pyramids as backdrop or stage for action, that the viewer is able to contemplate what the "fissures" are that appear in Maamoun's compilations of vintage film clips.[27] Like an archivist, Maamoun has selected, organised, and represented a series of clips that, in relation to each other, reveal "fissures in a closed system of representation".[28] She intervenes in collective memory and, by extension, the history of Egyptian art and visual culture, which through her artwork is then presented to the viewer to (re)consider.

A recent encounter with an artist brought the ambiguity between art and archive into high relief. In the summer of 2023, I visited the photography lab Darkroom Amman in the Jordanian capital. There, I met Baha Suleiman (b. Amman, 2003), a Palestinian-Jordanian photographer documenting and therefore archiving the existence of diasporic Palestinian culture and life in Jordan. He views his work as "creating an alternative, a more realistic view of someone who grew up here".[29] Part of his aim with his archive is to "document the fact that these people [Palestinians] were here, and they existed" by photographing, and therefore preserving, Palestinian culture, traditions, and daily life in Jordan.[30] His ability to archive has been questioned by other photographers and artists who question if he, as a photographer with no qualified certification, is able to be an archivist.[31]

27. Maamoun.
28. Maamoun.
29. Baha Suleiman, phone interview with the author, February 22, 2024.
30. Suleiman, interview.
31. Suleiman, interview.

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However, if an artist can be an archivist, Suleiman's self-made archive can be recognised and legitimised as an authentic contribution to the "history of the present", and therefore knowledge production.[32] This distortion allows for plurality in archiving as a practice and for artists (as well as researchers, academics, and anthropologists) to archive their environment as Maamoun, Abla, and Suleiman have done.

The work presented in *Hudood: Rethinking Boundaries* is not just a curation of artistic pieces from the Barjeel Art Foundation collection but also an exhibition of pieces by artists who have contributed to the production of Arab art history. This also allows us to register and appreciate the significant impact of how the Barjeel Art Foundation collection, along with other institutions, is contributing to the task of writing a "history of the present" of Arab art history.

32. Alsaden, "Countering Erasure," 15.

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CLARA EWERT

Clara Ewert is completing her Postgraduate degree in the History of Art and Architecture of the Islamic Middle East with an Arabic Intensive this Autumn. Ewert attended St. Edwards University in Austin, Texas and completed a BA degree in Photography.

She has worked as a consultant with the Council for British Research in the Levant on two different archive digitisation projects in the past year. Prior to beginning her Masters, Ewert worked at the Imogen Cunningham Trust for four years as the Lead Archivist and managed a multi-year project to rehouse and catalogue the photographic collection of Rondal Partridge, Cunningham's son.

While at SOAS University of London, Ewert's research interests have been focused on archival practices and how they can shape knowledge production in the MENASA region. Currently, she is completing her dissertation on how vernacular photographic archives might be used to reconstruct obscured histographies, specifically focusing on a photographic archive from Alexandria, Egypt that operated from 1930-1970.

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Artworks from the Barjeel Art Foundation Collection

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ADEL ABIDIN
Born 1973, Baghdad, Iraq
Memorial, 2009
Three channel video installation, duration 2'56 min

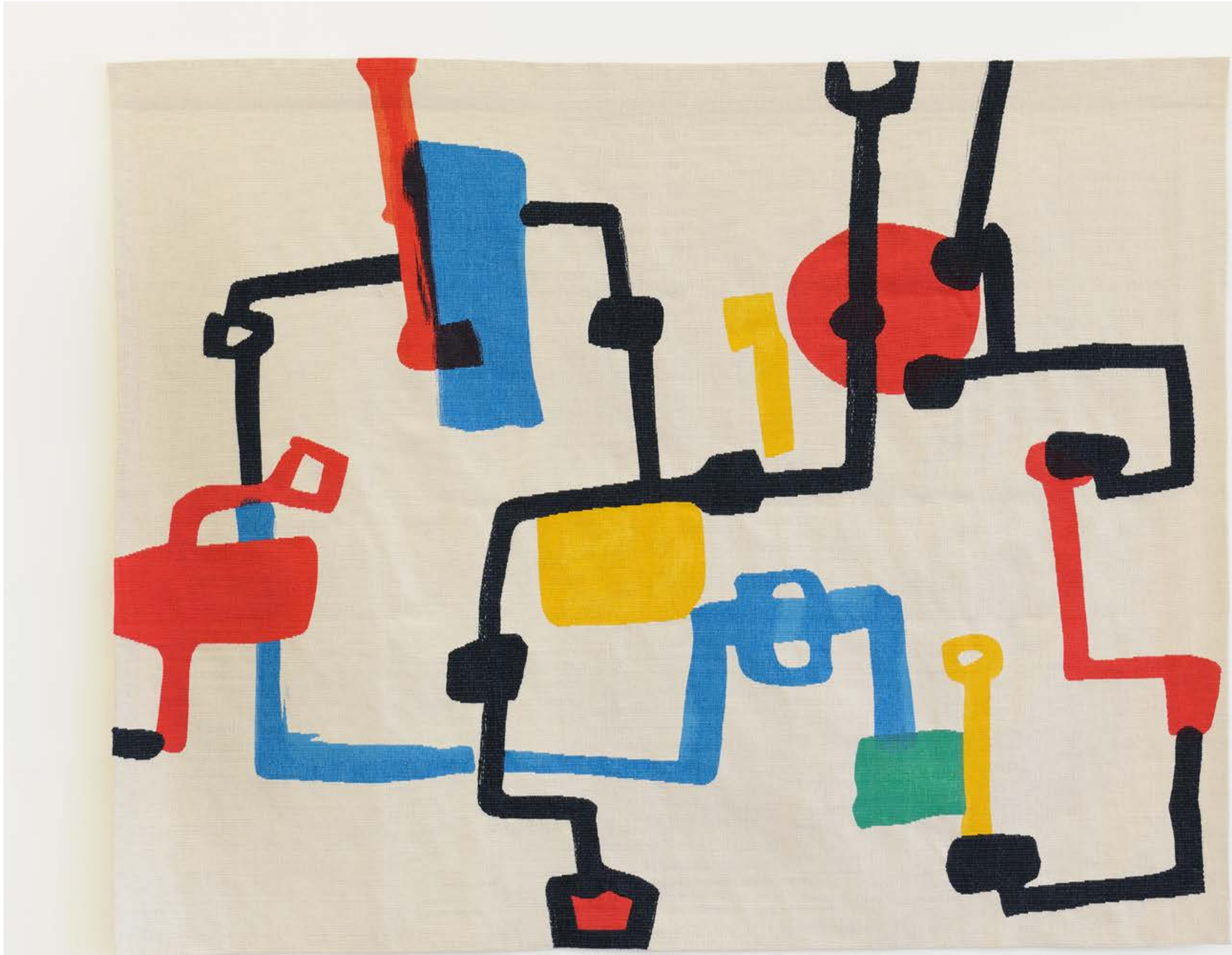
AMINA SAOUDI
Born 1965, Casablanca, Morocco
A l'Est de Talim, 2009
Tapestry, 205 × 122 cm

ANUAR KHALIFI
Born 1977, Lloret de Mar, Spain
Suluk's Shore, 2022
Acrylic on canvas, 185 × 246 cm

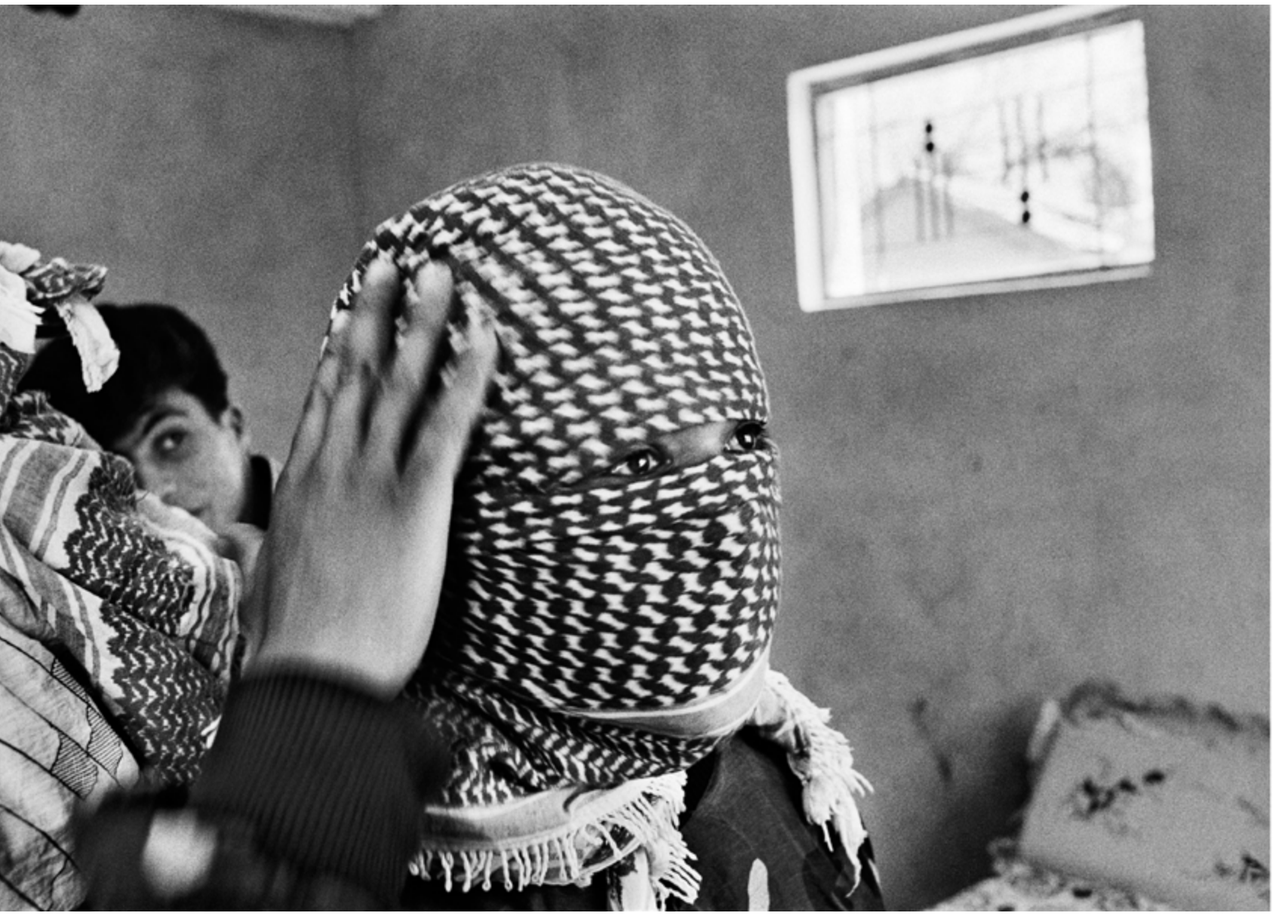
BATOUL S'HIMI
Born 1974, Asilah, Morocco
Monde Arab Sous Pression, 2013
Aluminum pressure cooker, 30 × 30 cm

2m3 of water will be taken from the pond.
Those 2m3 will be transported to an industrial cold room
and transformed into a box of ice.
This box of ice will be transported again and positioned just on the edge of the bank,
very close to the place where the water was initially extracted.
The 2m3 ice box will start to melt,
water will infiltrate the earth
and will go back slowly to its original place,
to where it belongs.
The 2m3 of ice will take some days to melt,
water will be calling for water,
water will drink water,
water will go back to water,
as if nothing has changed,
or something has slightly changed.

CHARBEL-JOSEPH H. BOUTROS
Born 1981, Bikfaya, Lebanon
From Water to Water, 2013
Ink-jet on Hahnemuhle paper, 54.5 × 85 cm



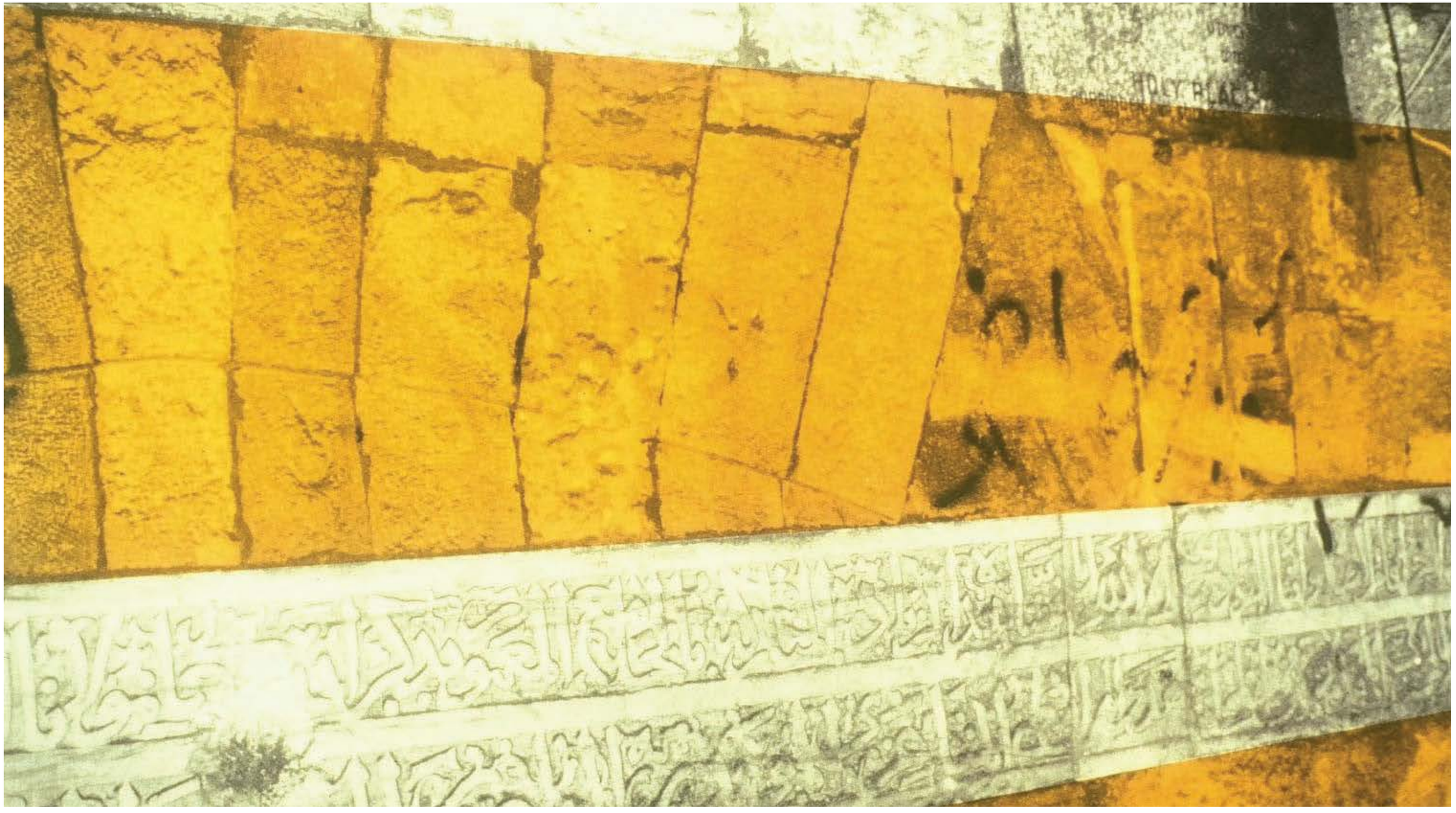
ETEL ADNAN
Born 1925, Beirut, Lebanon
Died 2021, Paris, France
Champs de Petrol, 2013
Hand-woven wool tapestry, 159 × 200 cm



هوَ فتى مِنْ غزة ،
تَعَلّم اللّغة الإنكليزيّة وَحدَه ،
تقدّم بطَلب الحصُول عَلى منحة فولبرايت ،
كتبَ في طلبهِ أنَّ السَّبيل الوَحيد لِتحقيق
حرّية فلسْطين وَسيادتها لا يمكن في العنف ،
وَلا في المفاوضات ،
بل في تحصيل المَعرفة .
حَصَل عَلى المنحَة
رَفَضَت إسرائيل منحة تأشيرة الخرُوج .

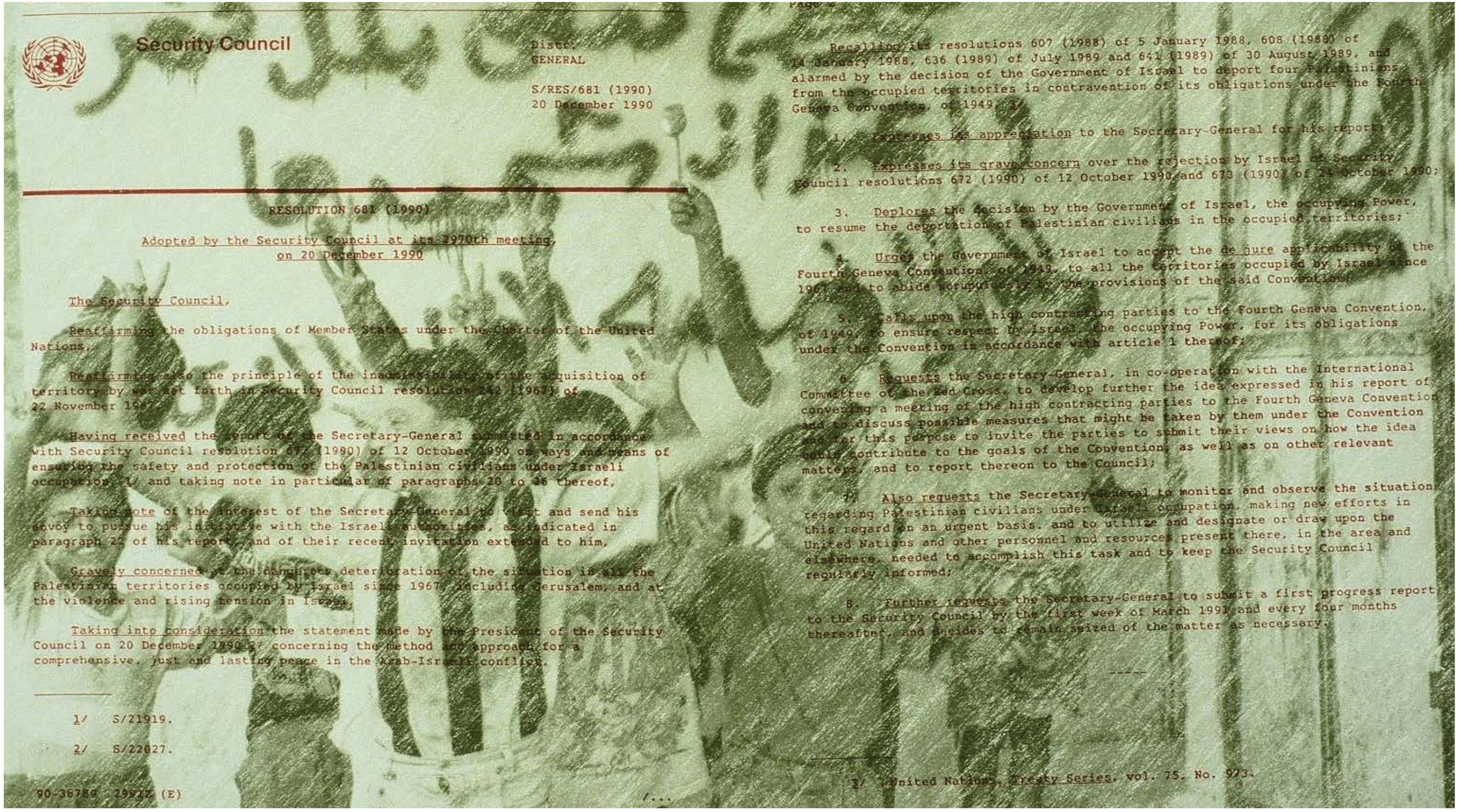
FOUAD ELKOURY
Born 1952, Paris, France
Born Loser, 2009
Inkjet print mounted on aluminium, 40 × 60 cm

KHALED JARRAR
Born 1976, Jenin, Palestine
Volleyball, 2013
Concrete, 20 cm diameter, 8kg



LAILA SHAWA
Born 1940, Gaza, Palestine
Died 2022, London, United Kingdom
Walls of Gaza, 1994
Lithographs on paper, 12 prints of 60 × 44 cm each

LAILA SHAWA
Born 1940, Gaza, Palestine
Died 2022, London, United Kingdom
Walls of Gaza, 1994
Lithographs on paper, 12 prints of 60 × 44 cm each



Security Council

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20 December 1990

RESOLUTION 681 (1990)

Adopted by the Security Council at its 2970th meeting,
on 20 December 1990

The Security Council,

Reaffirming the obligations of Member States under the Charter of the United Nations,

Reaffirming also the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war set forth in Security Council resolution 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967,

Having received the report of the Secretary-General submitted in accordance with Security Council resolution 672 (1990) of 12 October 1990 on ways and means of ensuring the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation, 1/ and taking note in particular of paragraphs 20 to 26 thereof,

Taking note of the interest of the Secretary-General to visit and send his envoy to pursue his initiative with the Israeli authorities, as indicated in paragraph 22 of his report, and of their recent invitation extended to him,

Gravely concerned at the dangerous deterioration of the situation in all the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem, and at the violence and rising tension in Israel,

Taking into consideration the statement made by the President of the Security Council on 20 December 1990 2/ concerning the method and approach for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict,

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1/ S/21919.

2/ S/22027.

90-36789 29912 (E)

/...

Page 2

Recalling its resolutions 607 (1988) of 5 January 1988, 608 (1988) of 14 January 1988, 636 (1989) of July 1989 and 641 (1989) of 30 August 1989, and alarmed by the decision of the Government of Israel to deport four Palestinians from the occupied territories in contravention of its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention, of 1949, 3/

1. Expresses its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report;

2. Expresses its grave concern over the rejection by Israel of Security Council resolutions 672 (1990) of 12 October 1990 and 673 (1990) of 24 October 1990;

3. Deplores the decision by the Government of Israel, the occupying Power, to resume the deportation of Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories;

4. Urges the Government of Israel to accept the de jure applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention, of 1949, to all the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, and to abide scrupulously by the provisions of the said Convention;

5. Calls upon the high contracting parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, of 1949, to ensure respect by Israel, the occupying Power, for its obligations under the Convention in accordance with article 1 thereof;

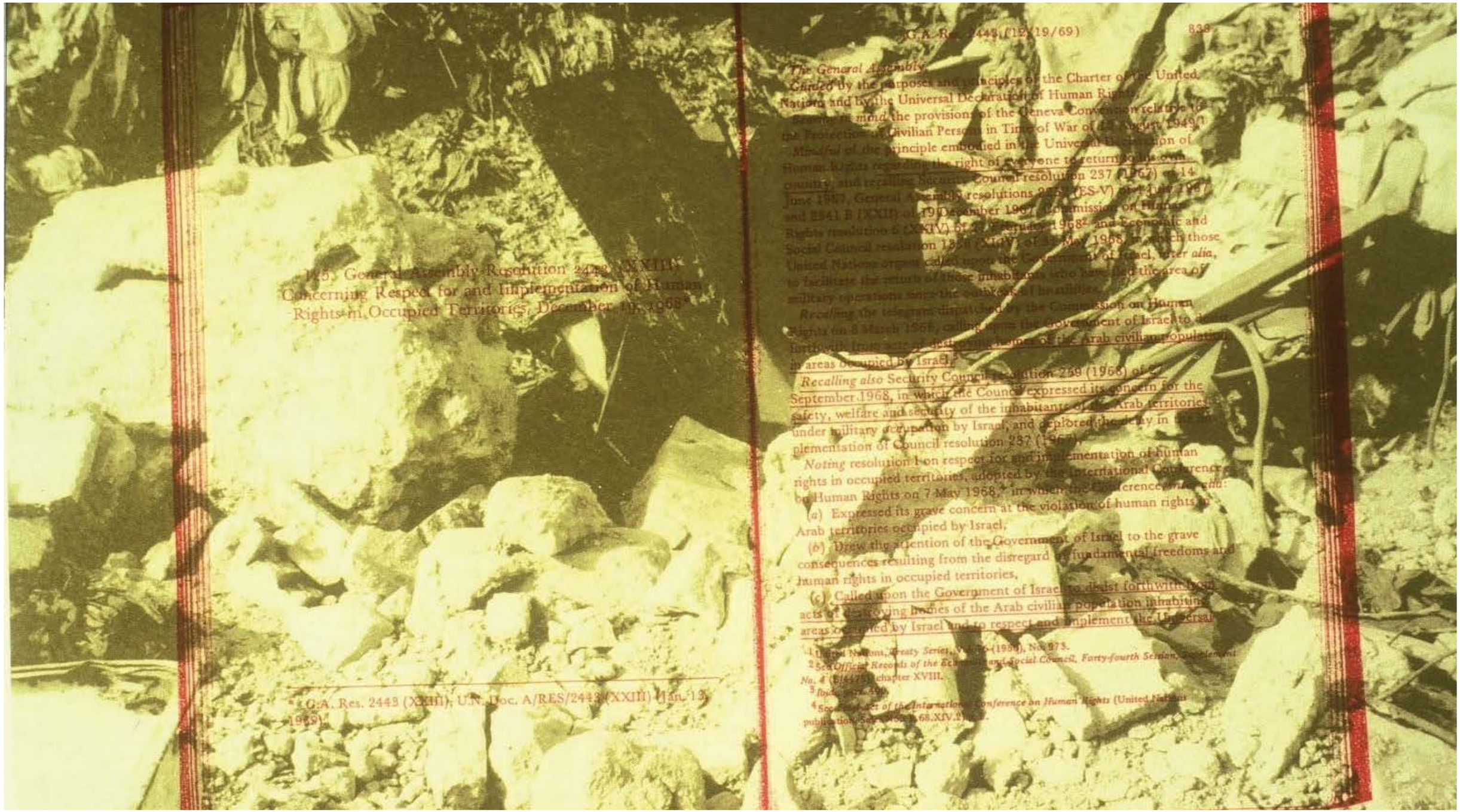
6. Requests the Secretary-General, in co-operation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, to develop further the idea expressed in his report of convening a meeting of the high contracting parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention and to discuss possible measures that might be taken by them under the Convention and to this purpose to invite the parties to submit their views on how the idea could contribute to the goals of the Convention, as well as on other relevant matters, and to report thereon to the Council;

7. Also requests the Secretary-General to monitor and observe the situation regarding Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation, making new efforts in this regard on an urgent basis, and to utilize and designate or draw upon the United Nations and other personnel and resources present there, in the area and elsewhere, needed to accomplish this task and to keep the Security Council regularly informed;

8. Further requests the Secretary-General to submit a first progress report to the Security Council by the first week of March 1991 and every four months thereafter, and decides to remain seized of the matter as necessary.

3/ United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 75, No. 973.

LAILA SHAWA
Born 1940, Gaza, Palestine
Died 2022, London, United Kingdom
Walls of Gaza, 1994
Lithographs on paper, 12 prints of 60 × 44 cm each



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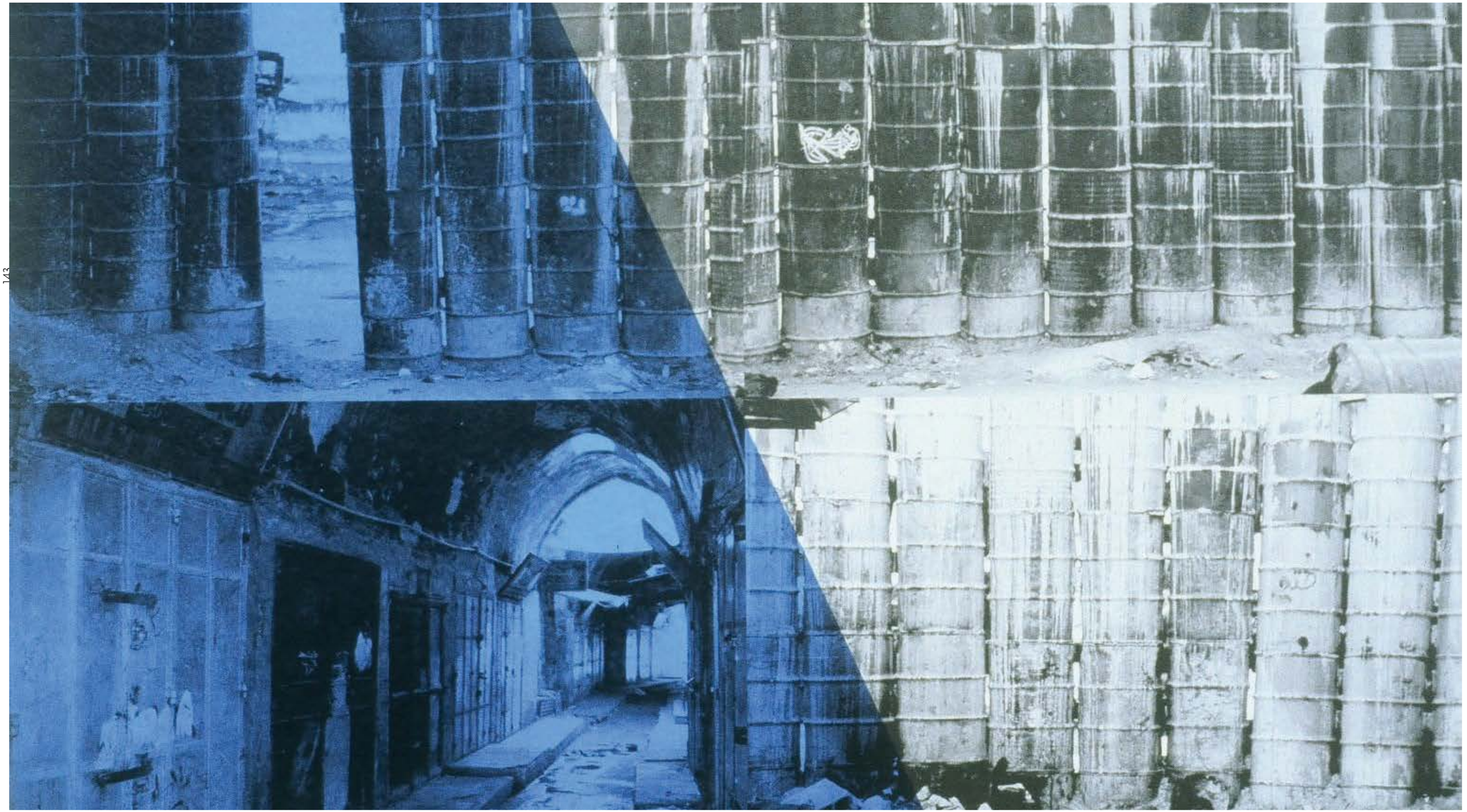

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Lithographs on paper, 12 prints of 60 × 44 cm each

LAMYA GARGASH
Born 1982, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Red Television (Majlis series), 2009
C-Print on paper, 60 × 60 cm

LARISSA SANSOUR
Born 1973, Jerusalem, Palestine
Nation Estate (Living the High Life), 2012
Digital print, 150 × 100 cm

LATIF AL ANI
Born 1932, Baghdad, Iraq
Died 2021, Baghdad, Iraq
Shorja Street, Baghdad 1960, 2019
Inkjet print on Hahnemuhle Fine Art Photo Rag Paper, 320gsm, 100 × 100 cm

MANAL AL DOWAYAN
Born 1973, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia
Suspended Together (Standing Doves), 2012
Porcelain, 20 × 10 × 23 cm

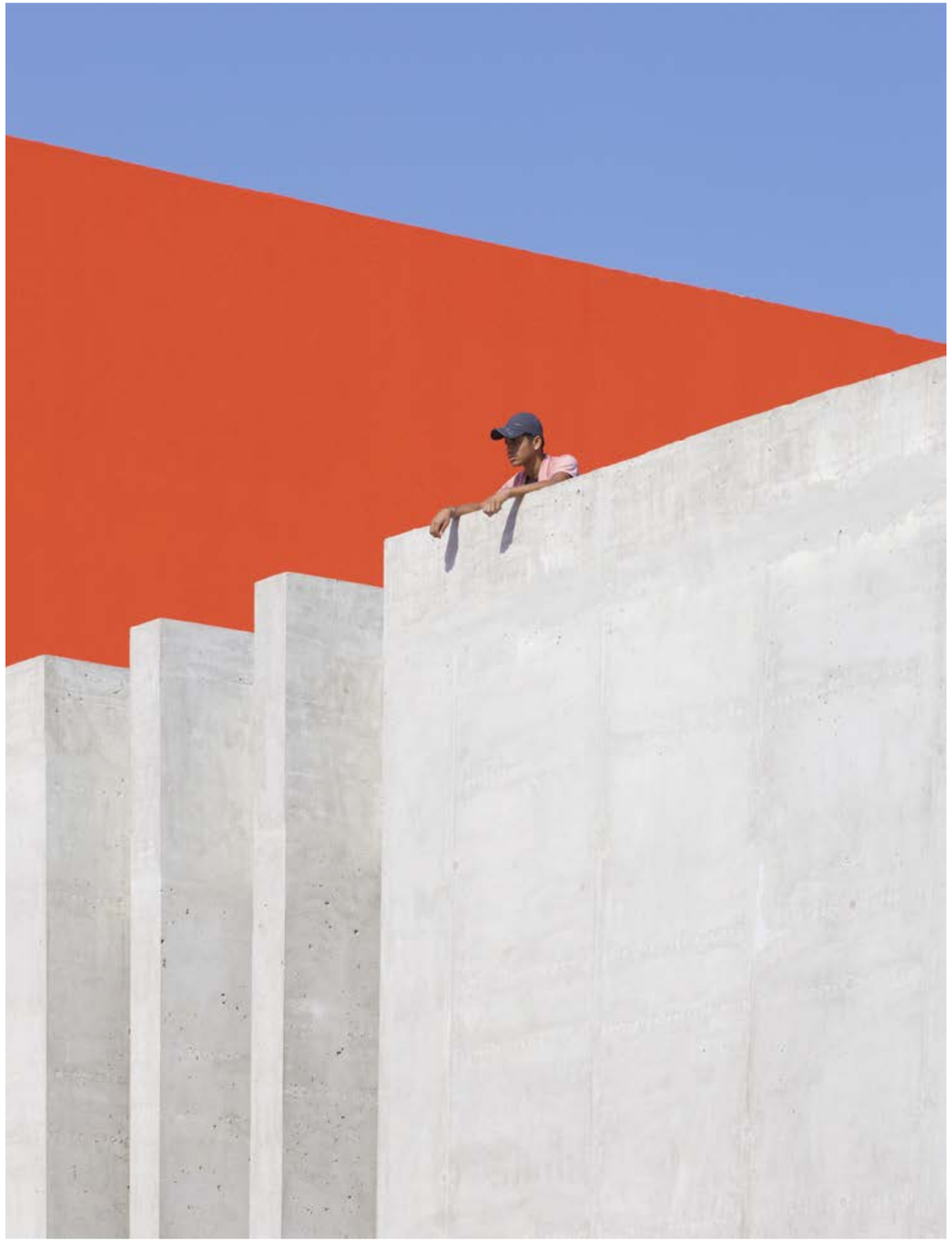
MOHAMED AHMED IBRAHIM
Born 1962, Khorfakkan, United Arab Emirates
Khorfakkan 4, 2008
Paper and glue, 71 × 76 × 43 cm

MONA HATOUM
Born 1952, Beirut, Lebanon
You Are Still Here, 2013
Sandblasted mirrored glass, metal fixtures, 38 × 29.2 cm

MONA SAUDI
Born 1945, Amman, Jordan
Died 2022, Beirut, Lebanon
The Petra Tablets Adonis Collection (set of 12), 1997
Silkscreen lithographs, 90 × 60 cm each

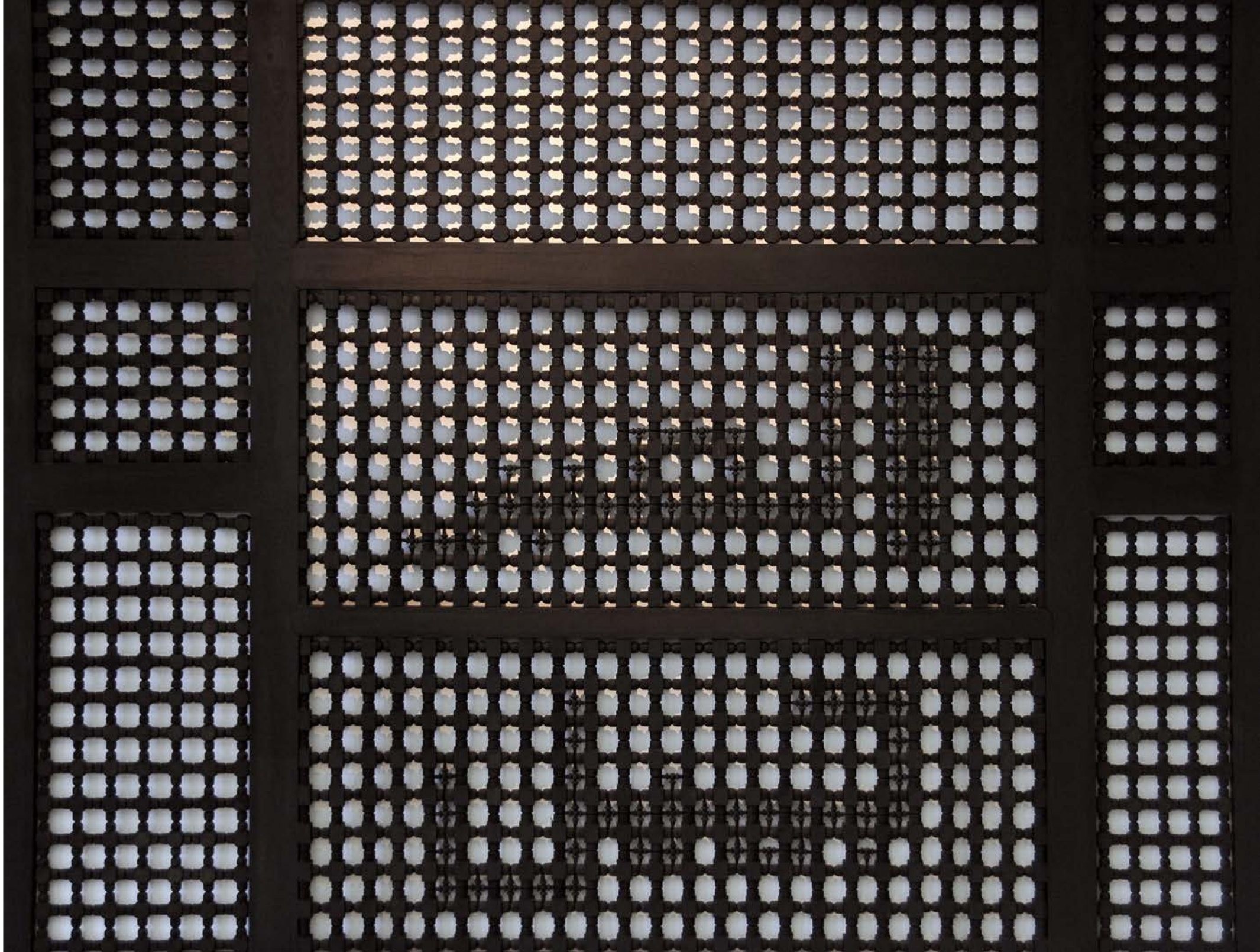
NADIA AYARI
Born 1981, Tunis, Tunisia
The Fence, 2007
Oil on canvas, 152.5 × 142.3 cm

NEDIM KUFI
Born 1962, Baghdad, Iraq
Absence, 2010
Digital print on canvas (diptych), 120 × 88 cm

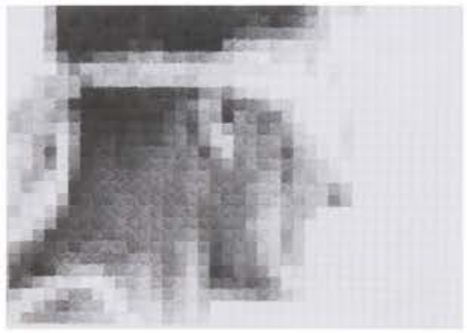


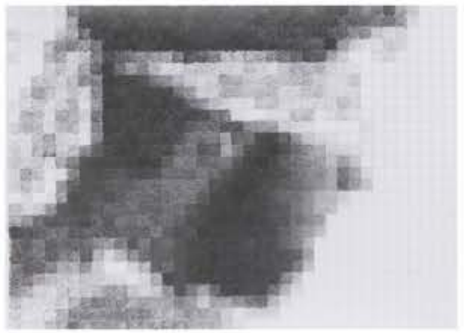
SERGE NAJJAR
Born 1973, Beirut, Lebanon
Bliss, 2019
Photograph, 90.5 × 74.5 × cm

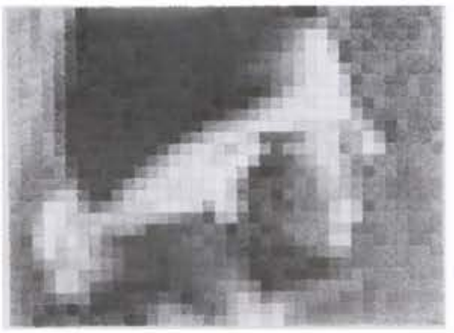
STEPHANIE SAADE
Born 1983, Beirut, Lebanon
The Encounter of the First and Last Particles of Dust, 2020
Curtains with embroidery, 322.5 × 294 cm

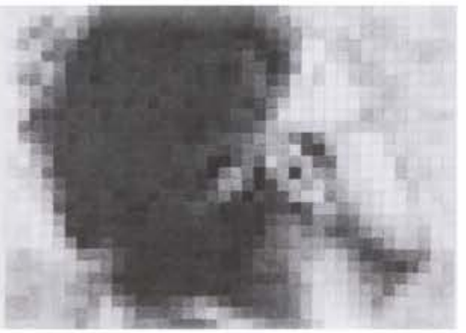


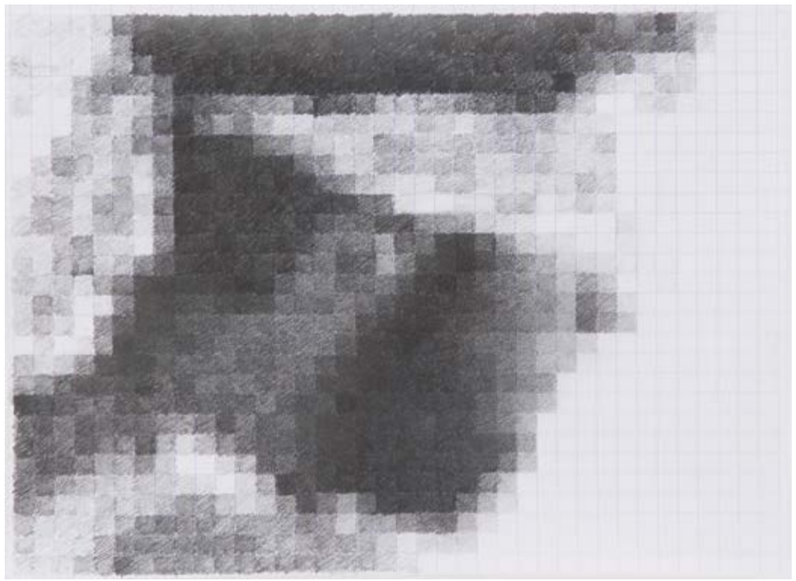
SUSAN HEFUNA
Born 1962, Berlin, Germany
Patience is Beautiful, 2007
Installation wood, 140 × 170 cm

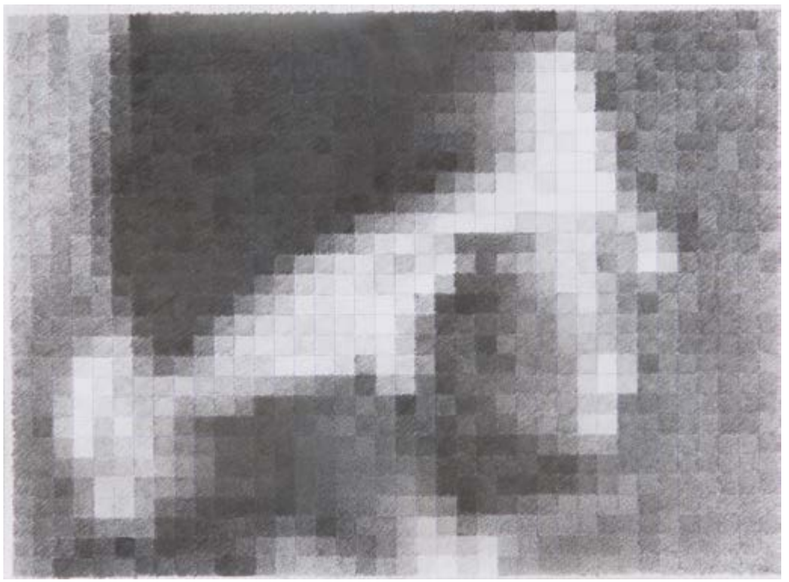












TAYSIR BATNIJI
Born 1966, Gaza, Palestine
Pixels (set of 5), 2011
Pencil on paper, 19.5 × 14.5 cm each

WALEAD BESHTY
Born 1976, London, United Kingdom
FEDEX Tube, 2005
Laminated glass, FedEx shipping box, metal, silicon tape, 96.5 × 15.9 × 14 cm

Colophon

This book is published on the occasion of Hudood, a collaborative exhibition led by SOAS students and held at the SOAS Gallery, is set to take place from July 11 to September 21, 2024. The exhibition introduces contemporary art drawn from the Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah with a focus on the overarching theme of "Boundaries" as both a subject and a tool for meaningfully accessing a diverse array of art from the SWANA region.

SOAS
Middle East
Institute

Barjeel Art Foundation is an independent, Sharjah-based initiative established by Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi in 2010 to manage, preserve and exhibit an extensive collection of over 1,800 pieces of Modern and Contemporary Art from North Africa and West Asia. The foundation's guiding principle is to foster critical dialogue around modern and contemporary art practices, with a focus on artists with Arab heritage internationally. The foundation strives to create an open-ended inquiry that responds to and conveys the nuances inherent to Arab histories beyond the borders of culture and geography. Since its inception, the Foundation has held 40 art exhibitions both locally in the United Arab Emirates, and internationally in cities like Singapore, Paris, London, Berlin, Toronto, New York, Boston, Tampa, New Haven, Amman, Kuwait, Alexandria, Baku and Tehran—allowing global audiences to gain first-hand access to Arab art. Notable collaborations include projects like 'The Sea Suspended' at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMoCA) in 2016, and 'Taking Shape: Abstraction From the Arab World, 1950s-1980' at the Grey Art Gallery, New York University in 2020, which went on to tour four additional venues in the US. The Foundation has also loaned artworks to over 110 institutions globally, including museums like Tate Liverpool and Tate St. Ives, MoMA PS1, The Art Institute of Chicago, Mori Museum, and others.

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مؤسسة للفنون
BARJEEL
ART FOUNDATION

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COPY-EDITING
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First edition, 2024

KAPH
ART BOOKS FROM THE ARAB WORLD

TOC