

Robert Kluijver

Borders

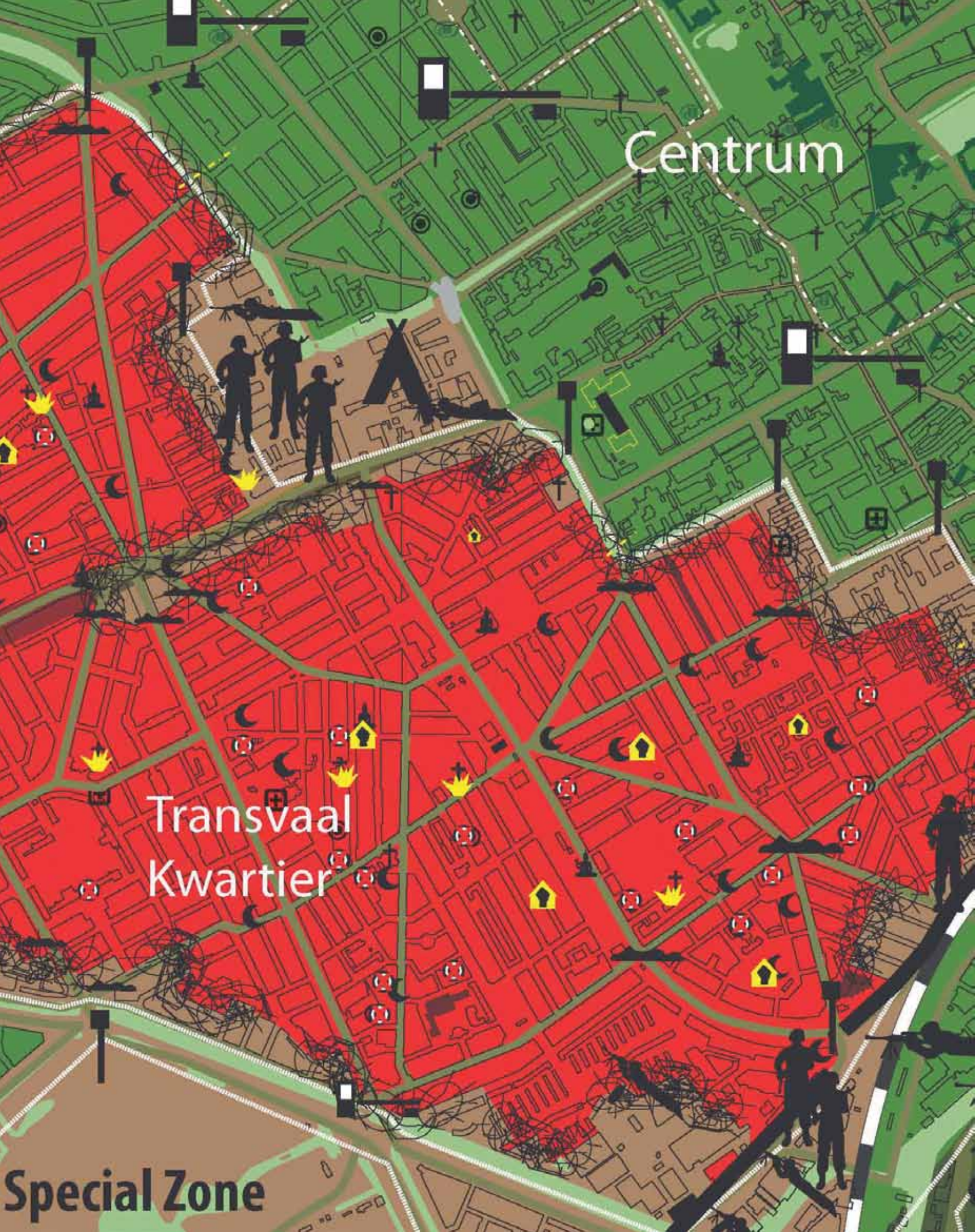
Contemporary **Middle Eastern Art and Discourse**



semak 

The Hague

October 2007 | January 2009



Centrum

Transvaal
Kwartier

Special Zone

Borders

Contemporary Middle Eastern Art and Discourse

Gemak, **The Hague**

October 2007 to January 2009

Borders

Contemporary Middle Eastern Art and Discourse

Gemak, **The Hague**

October 2007 to January 2009

**Self-published by the
Gemeentemuseum Den Haag**

Print run of 500 copies

January 2010

Acknowledgements

Most of the support for Gemak came from the municipality of The Hague through the Gemeentemuseum and the Vrije Academie, but essential financial support also came from the Hivos NCDO Cultuurfonds, the Mondriaan Foundation, Kosmopolis Den Haag and Cordaid. I would like to thank these organizations for their willingness to support Gemak in its initial steps.

My gratitude to the staff at the Gemeentemuseum (Director Benno Tempel, deputy director Hans Buurman, and Peter Couvee & Annemarie de Jong from the graphic department) who supported this publication. Thanks also to Alan Ingram, Ruchama Marton, Alessandro Petti, Roee Rosen, Tina Sherwell and Eyal Weizman for allowing me to reproduce their texts, either in full or abridged.

Credits

All texts are by Robert Kluijver except where indicated otherwise.

Design by Matthew Adeney.

The photographs have either been given by the artists or have been taken by the author, except where attributed otherwise. See photo credits at the back of the book.

The points of view expressed herein are the author's only, and do not reflect those of the Gemeentemuseum, the Vrije Academie or of the artists and writers discussed/quoted. The author takes full responsibility for any eventual mistakes.

Note

In the period covered by this book Gemak organized more exhibitions than the three that were part of the 'The Border' cycle. These were 'Future : Afghanistan' (also curated by Robert Kluijver, and treated in a separate booklet) and 'From Armenia With Love', 'Reporting from Reality' and 'Julia Winter', curated by Felix Villanueva of the Vrije Academie.

'Promised Land' was originally scheduled for November-December 2008. Due to funding shortfalls the exhibition was postponed until January 2009, however the program of discussions, debates and presentations that had been planned concurrent with the exhibition did take place during the months of November and December. In this book these events are therefore placed under the header Promised Land.

Nothing in this book may be reproduced in any form whatsoever without written permission from the author.



* Cover image by Cat Picton-Phillipps: *a young passer-by interacts with contemporary art in front of Gemak*

* Overleaf, exterior: *Malkit Shoshan & FAST: The Hague Green Zone / Red Zone, detail of p32; 2007. Unpublished*

* Inside front cover: *Pages of No Man's Land newspaper, published in September 2008 by Gemak (15,000 issues) in Dutch, Arabic and English. Design by Lust studio, The Hague.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 007 Foreword
On the Borders of Art and Politics

008 Borders

Contemporary Middle
Eastern Art and
Discourse

- 008 The Cycle Of 'Borders' In
Gemak



- 011 The Establishment Of
Gemak



Green Zone / Red Zone

Urban security
policies and the
withering of public
space from Baghdad
to Den Haag

- 012 Introduction



- 018 The Car Wrecks From
Mutanabi Street



- 020 Hana Mal Allah



- 022 Rashad Selim



- 024 Adel Abidin



- 026 Wafaa Bilal



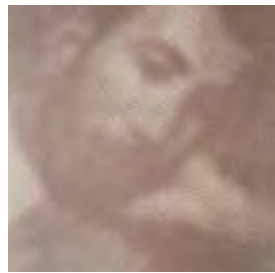
- 028 Paul Chan



- 030 Marc Bijl



- 032 Nedim Kufi



- 034 Mohamed Abdulla



- 036 Peter Kennard &
Cat Picton Phillipps



- 041 Art And The Geopolitical:
Re-Familiarizing The War
On Terror
by Dr. Alan Ingram



- 042 Independent Film
& Television College,
Baghdad



- 044 Open Shutters Project



- 050 Public Art Project By
Rashad Selim
A charm for Iraq



- 054 The Hague Green Zone /
Red Zone
Project for an Atlas



No Man's Land?

Contemporary Art
from Palestine

068 Rula Halawani



084 Raeda Saadeh



095 Yael Bartana



058 Introduction



072 Taysir Batniji



088 Shadi Al Zaqzouq



098 Pavel Wolberg



063 Multiplicity

The Road Map



076 Samira Badran



089 Tina Sherwell

Palestinian Art Today; Retracing the
Contexts



100 Ruchama Marton

The Psychological Impact of the Second
Intifada on Israeli Society



064 Alessandro Petti

Asymmetries in Globalized Space: the
Road Network in Palestine-Israel



078 Jawad Al Malhi



Promised Land

Contemporary Art
from Israel

105 Roei Rosen

The Law is Laughing



066 Sharif Waked



080 Decolonizing Architecture



092 Introduction



109 Eyal Weizman

Lethal Theory



APPENDIX

Activities, lectures
& presentations
organized during the
cycle of 'Borders'

114 The Making of a Terrorist

1: Know thy enemy: a reading exercise



122 Archipelagos and enclaves architecture of the contemporary spatial order

Lecture by Alessandro Petti



130 Living with Walls

Israeli film cycle in Gemak organized
by Gate 48



117 The Making of a Terrorist

2: Reporting the global war on terror:
a self-analysis



124 Building a Palestinian Consensus

Lecture by Dr. Khaled Hroub



132 The Atlantikwall

A lecture by Rose Tzalmona



119 The Making of a Terrorist

3: Bringing terror home: the green and
the red zones of The Hague



125 Resisting Urbicide Restoring Palestinian Heritage

Lecture by Dr. Nurhan Abujidi



133 One Land / Platform Paradise

Presentation of the project for the Arab
village of Ein Hawd in Israel



120 Lecture by Nadje Sadig al Ali



126 The Jerusalem Seminar



134 Interview With The Curator



120 Grand Café Oriental Shabandar



129 Opening of the exhibition Promised Land



136 Photocredits Index Of Names

Foreword: *On the Borders of Art and Politics*

Nat Muller (curator/critic)

Usually we think of a border in geopolitical terms: an end point where something stops, and draws to a termination, rather than a locus which holds the possibility for something other to begin. We think of borders as hard-line demarcations, regulating a society where containment and control have become prime. Possibly now more than ever, 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall - the quintessential cold war symbol of the division of East and West - borders are still the most defining mechanisms of inclusion or exclusion. These borders, we know, transcend the territory of the almost defunct nation state, and apply to class, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, ideological beliefs, and a myriad of other factors. While this publication literally invites us to cross borders and traverse the green and red zones of Iraq and The Hague, the walled-in and hollowed-out land of Palestine, or the confused psychology of a security-obsessed Israel, it equally asks of us to undo our preconceived borders of perception. In this respect I hope the reader will let this book, a document of the proceedings that have taken place at Gemak from October 2007 to January 2009, unlock rigid conceptions in the field of art and politics.

The past decade much has been written about the relation of art and politics, in particular in regard to matters of representation and symbolic transformation. Currently any biennial of name or large art manifestation will delve into this polemic to some extent or other. Yet more often than not the alliance of "arts and politics" will be approached from a clean and neat juxtaposition, rather than a messy entanglement, thus reinforcing boundaries rather than undoing them. Therefore it would be too easy to read the content of this book against a political

backdrop only, agreeing with the themes it lays before us, shake our heads in empathy, and close its covers. It would be too easy to cast the artistic practices in the exhibitions "Green Zone/Red Zone", "No Man's Land?", and "Promised Land" in the roles of mere messengers at the service of political narrative, or commentary. It takes an effort of the viewer - not least of the artist - to undo the lop-sidedness which often occurs when art and activism merge. Whether we agree with the curatorial choices made/positions taken or not, our engagement with the art works and ensuing debates should at least be one that allows for a plurality of discourses to interact. It should yield something which surpasses consensus of interpretation, and is an articulation which can enter the respective arenas of art and of politics proper, i.e. sites which are constituted and actively produced through difference and disagreement. It is this particular moment of entry that marks borders as porous, and lifts gazes burdened by the weight of moral righteousness or prejudice. During this instance of arrest, when multiple meanings come into being, a certain continuum of "how we see things" is broken, and a spectrum of possibilities opens up. These instances might be rare in an age in which we are bombarded with information, the semblance of choice, and "right" opinions. But when they do occur, the artistic gesture surfaces strongly, and situates itself stubbornly in the realm of the political - not beside it but part and parcel of it.

I see the pages that follow and specifically Robert Kluijver's curatorial efforts during the course of the "Borders" cycle at Gemak as an attempt to accommodate that very gesture.

November 2009

Borders

We often hear we are living through a unique period of human history: for the first time almost every individual on this planet has potential access to almost every other individual or piece of information abroad. The communication gaps between humans that were formed through differential historic and cultural development can suddenly be bridged. In this sense the borders and other barriers which separate groups of people are being rapidly erased.

The old geography of nation-states has however not only failed to disappear, as optimistic liberals predicted in the 1990s, but it has reasserted itself with a vengeance, especially since 2001. The external borders of rich countries, whether grouped together or not, are becoming impenetrable to people seeking to move there with the objective of self-improvement. The arguments for exclusion are the physical, economic and cultural security of Western communities; underlying these arguments is the need to protect the parameters of our identity by defining 'the other' as an alien and hostile being, despite the fact that he/she is much closer to us (and easier to become acquainted with) than ever before.

Since the feared 'others' are already inside our national borders physically and, when outside, can reach over them by infiltration or electronic means, the task of ensuring homeland security has become more complicated. Similarly, Western subjects and their bases of operation abroad need to be protected against hostile local forces to maintain a minimum of control in those areas deemed essential to Western interests.

Indeed, although we try to shield Western societies from the threatening economic and cultural aspects of globalization, the West has not become isolationist or abandoned its pretence to control developments in the rest of the world. The goal seems to be to ensure the hegemony of Western interests and the values underpinning them by affirming their universality. What is good for the West thus automatically becomes good for the rest of the world. The war on terror, trade regimes but also (regrettably) some of the efforts to impose human rights and environmental standards become instruments used to impose these interests and values on the rest of the world.

Moreover, the West needs the rest of the world for its natural resources, cheap labour and leisure resorts. To resolve the contradiction between the 'threatening other' and our need or desire for what that 'other' has to offer we have established platforms in their countries from which we can access those resources. These platforms – airports, central business districts, industrial export zones, military bases, gated communities, protected sunny beaches and the like – are protected by the West's virtual monopoly on violence against intrusion by that 'other' – usually with the compliance of local elites which have been assimilated into the Western-dominated global society and receive essential support from the West to remain in power in return.

The concept of the border is thus becoming more ambiguous. At one level the resurgence of the nation state means national borders are being reinforced, for example the walls that straddle the US-Mexican border, that surround the areas occupied by Israel

or the defence systems of Fortress Europe. At another level a fluid geography of privileged enclaves connected by physical or virtual communication channels is emerging, whose 'citizens' are protected from interference by 'the other' through a complex matrix of physical barriers, identity policies, high prices, language, access to knowledge and heavy policing.

The Middle East, focus of the 'war on terror' and of the most obvious attempts of the West to preserve its hegemony, is a laboratory for many of these processes. It is however simultaneously becoming a familiar site in global contemporary art networks. Local artistic practices are developing in manners that appeal to international art markets and the intellectual elite of the art world alike. International curators and artists, travelling to the Middle East for their work, and artists from the Middle East invited to show their work abroad, can all witness the dual nature of the region's connection to the rest of the world. On the one hand, as their professional practice proves, the Middle East is fully integrated into the global information society. On the other, as their experiences in consulates and airports prove, the region is being cordoned off by Western powers as if it were a Pandora's box that must be closed as soon as possible to secure the West's peace of mind.

This contradiction between the global information society which promises instant and universal understanding, and the increasingly violent 'clash of civilisations' which seems to throw us back to the dark middle ages, proves to be fertile material for artists. The fascinating transmutations of the 'Border' between 'us' and 'the other', where the artist (also some Western artists) identify with the role of 'the other', appear more and more often in their work.

The Cycle of 'Borders' in Gemak

With *'Borders'*, a cycle of exhibitions, presentations and debates in Gemak, the curator tried to give the 'others' a presence and a voice through the arts in the centre of The Hague, universally known as the capital of international law. Although there are sometimes exhibitions of Middle Eastern artists in the Netherlands, these usually seem to want to make a Western point about the Middle East. For example, show the suffering of the Palestinians; or how artists in the Middle East are still rooted in their ancient cultures (as opposed to being part of a globalized world), or how they deal with the conflict between their backward societies and progressive Western ideals... In Gemak we were interested in the contrary: what artists and intellectuals from those countries have to say about the world they live in, and as a consequence about us.

During the first exhibition an Iraqi artist was asked to perform a public art project in The Hague. An Israeli urban planner living in Amsterdam was asked to make an atlas of how the city of The Hague would be split up into zones if society were torn apart, as happened in Baghdad. When discussing the wall in Palestine, we invited a foreign architectural researcher who happened to be Jewish to give



▲ The building of the Vrije Academie on the Paviljoensgracht

▼ Gemak recently after the renovation





above: Wim van Krimpen, director of the Gemeentemuseum, and artist-in-residence Rashad Selim

/ Robert Kluijver, Curator of Gemak (foto: Martijn Beekman)

middle: Ingrid Rollema, director of the Vrije Academie

/ Stef van Es and Band at the opening of Gemak
below: Alderman Jetta Klijnsma giving a speech at the opening of Gemak 19-10-2007



a presentation on how the Nazi's 'Atlantik Wall' (that tore straight through the city) had a profound influence on the urban and social development of The Hague – also in positive ways!

The purpose was therefore to connect contemporary developments in the Middle East, as evidenced through the arts, to the local reality of Den Haag - as the city is known in Dutch.

The first exhibition, *'Green Zone / Red Zone'* dealt with the practice of creating divisions between groups of people by insisting on antagonistic traits between them. To most Baghdadis the distinctions between Sunni and Shiite, Arab and Kurd, religious and secular or nationalist and cosmopolitan were either not relevant, or not worth a fight. By designing a strategy for post-Saddam Iraq that was based on these distinctions, the USA greatly fanned the flames of inter-Iraqi conflict. The US policy makers themselves and their Iraqi protégés retreated into a safe Green Zone, connected to the rest of the world through an equally guarded airport and its own communication systems, while the increasingly fragmented 'Red Zone' outside became consumed by civil strife and was gradually cordoned off into ethnically and religiously defined neighbourhoods. These developments prompted Iraqi artists and thinkers to reflect about what was lost and why.

In *'No Man's Land?'* we analysed how Palestinians, that have long been subjected to similar divisive occupation policies, have eventually found ways to deal with them. Particularistic local or national narratives are rendered obsolete because the long struggle for nationhood has not resulted in the creation of collective structures (a State, an education system, etc.) that embody such narratives. As a result the only manner in which the individual Palestinian can affirm his/her belonging to a collective identity is in universal terms. In that sense being Palestinian requires one to go 'beyond the wall'. At least mentally, because physically most Palestinians are stuck in the no man's land that Palestine has become, deprived of citizen's rights and subjected to Israeli occupation strategies. The contradictions between that physical reality and the mental processes evolved to deal with it formed the core of the exhibition.

In the last exhibition, *'Promised Land'*, we travelled to the other side of the border to research what happens to a society that builds walls around itself. How does a modern Western democracy such as Israel justify unto itself its discriminatory policies towards minorities within its borders and its hostile actions, flaunting international law, towards its neighbours? What can we say about the mass psychology of nations which, while considering themselves victims, seem to an external observer to be the perpetrators and perpetrators of violence? This exhibition however was not about the specific case of Israel, which may be considered an outpost of the West in the Middle East, but about the West more generally, as the policies pioneered by Israel are being adopted throughout the 'developed' world.

The Establishment of Gemak

Gemak was conceived by two institutions: the Gemeentemuseum Den Haag and the Vrije Academie/Werkplaats voor de Beeldende Kunsten. The municipal museum of The Hague attracts large numbers of visitors to its buildings in the posh Statenkwartier area of the Dutch political capital, but it desired to reach out to other kinds of audiences, especially the Dutch non-white populations that do not traditionally visit museums. These can mostly be found in the inner city of Den Haag. The Vrije Academie, with its large building on the edge of the local Chinatown, seemed the ideal place. This 'Free Academy' has offered non-official art training to amateurs and professionals alike for over sixty years. In the current cultural and political climate it felt the need to rejuvenate and move upmarket, as it had gradually become too oriented towards an ageing population of neighbourhood artists. The city of The Hague, which funds both institutions, encouraged plans for collaboration.

Ideas for cooperation started moving forwards when the Gemeentemuseum hired a curator (the present author) in June 2007. The director of the Gemeentemuseum (Wim van Krimpen) and the director of the Vrije Academie (Ingrid Rollema) agreed, together with municipal officials, to establish Gemak as a centre for art and politics. The ground floor of the old carpet factory which houses the Vrije Academie was transformed into a versatile, multi-use exhibition space with a few video-corners. The pre-existing assembly room, hall and kitchen/bar were integrated into what was to become Gemak. The renovation was planned and overseen by Herman Postma, a veteran museum architect. Many walls, toilets etc. were stripped away and some of the workshops of the Vrije Academie (such as pottery) moved upstairs: the three floors above Gemak and part of the ground floor remained in use of the Vrije Academie. This resulted in nearly 800 square meters of exhibition space for Gemak.

The name Gemak comes from GEMEentemuseum and Vrije AKademie but it's also a pun, as in Dutch it means 'comfort' – although comfort is the last feeling the exhibits and discussions were to convey. The idea of 'comfort' rather resided in the free entrance, a planned café-bar and the fact that the space could be used for public events related to the themes explored at Gemak.

Instead of programming exhibitions, lectures, debates etc. on a one-by-one basis I decided to work on one theme - The Border - and focus on one region - the Middle East - in the first year. The plan was to develop a narrative from one exhibition to the next and illuminate the themes touched upon in the exhibitions from different angles, through a program of discussions, debates, lectures, presentations and other public events.

Gemak opened on 19 October 2007 with the exhibition *Green Zone / Red Zone*. The alderman for Culture of The Hague, Mrs. Jetta Klijnsma, performed the inauguration.



BAGHDAD CITY MAP

Green Zone/ Red Zone

*Urban security policies
and the withering of public
space from Baghdad to
The Hague*

Since the American invasion of Baghdad, the city has been divided into green zones (safe and secured areas) and red zones (unsafe areas).

The Green Zone is the common name of the International Zone of Iraq. It is a 6 km² area in central Baghdad that encompassed Saddam Hussein's presidential palaces, the green areas surrounding them and a number of important institutions. After the fall of the Iraqi President it became heavily fortified as the centre of the Coalition Provisional Authority. It remains the seat of government and the centre of the international presence in the city. Its official name beginning under the Iraqi Interim Government is the International Zone, though "Green Zone" remains the most commonly used term.

The Red Zone is a term designating unsafe areas in Iraq after the 2003 invasion by the United States, Britain, and other allies. It is contrasted with the high-security sector of Baghdad called the Green Zone. Since the Green Zone is a very small area, "Red Zone" is applied to most of the rest of Baghdad. The Red Zone is also loosely applied to all unsecured areas outside the off-site military posts. Both terms originated as military designations.

While Baghdad is an extreme case, it is often argued that the separation between secure areas and insecure areas is found in many ways and with different intensities in more and more places around the world."

(from Malkit Shoshan & FAST: *The Hague Green Zone/Red Zone*, p 54; 2007. Unpublished)

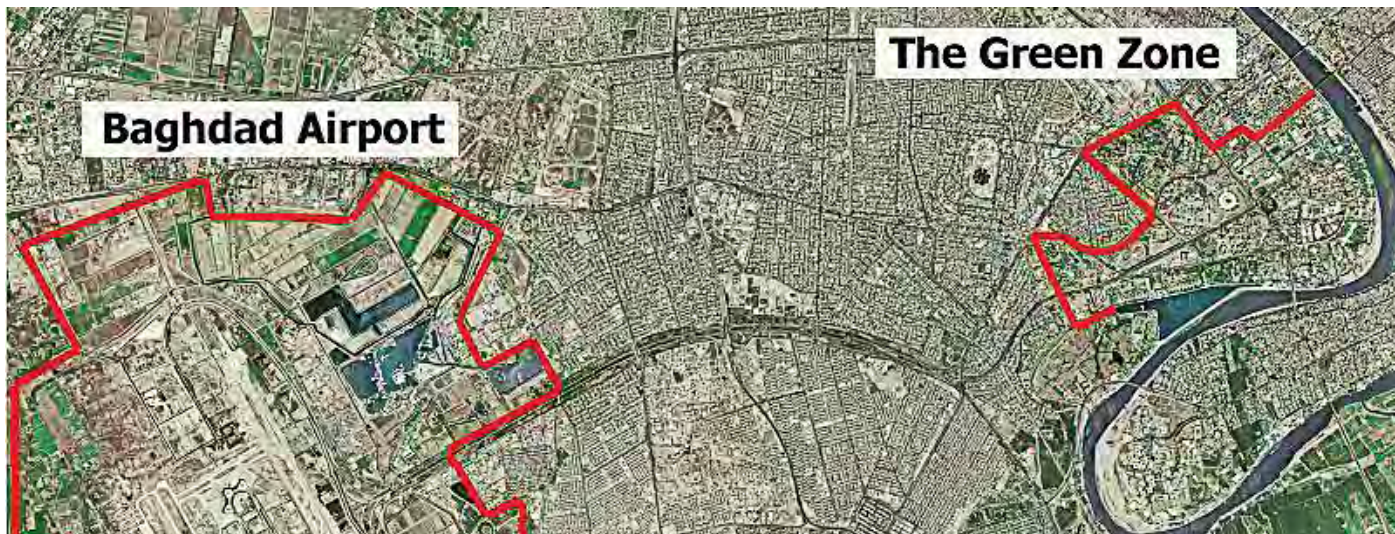
Malkit Shoshan & FAST: *Map Baghdad, Green Zone/Red Zone*, 2007. Unpublished



This exhibition was conceived while contemplating the two wrecks that I had brought from Baghdad to the Netherlands for a political-humanitarian event in Amsterdam. This logistical feat, and the research I had done into the significance of the Al Mutanabi Street book market where these cars were 'martyred', demanded a follow up. In our newspapers and on our radar screens, the car bomb that blew up Al Mutanabi Street and the famous Shabandar café located in it was just one among many. But, as each blast probably is unique because it hits a specific group of people, this one had devastated the cultural and artistic community of Baghdad, causing the last of them, those who had not yet left, to lose hope and to emigrate.

Iraq was the motor of the Middle Eastern contemporary art scene well into the seventies. The war that started with Iran in 1980 took away that leadership role, as most artists attempted to dodge the draft by escaping abroad. In addition the regime stifled dissident artists (more than before 1980) and demanded unswerving loyalty from the rest. But the love for art, the mindset needed to understand it, the famous families of poets and intellectuals: all these survived the long war (1980 - 88), the 1st Gulf war (1991-92) and the terrible sanctions (1990-2003), and Saddam Hussein's dictatorial reactions to these challenges. The arts community was therefore grateful that he was removed in 2003.

The period that followed the US invasion however was catastrophic for Iraqi artists and the middle class. The US occupier apparently did not believe in the existence of an Iraqi middle class, which was hardly allowed a voice in the reconstruction efforts of Iraq. Instead



satellite image of Baghdad indicating international zones

ethnic and religious divisions were used as a basis for the future Iraqi polity. The middle class soon became the main victim of this new division of power and the civil war that it generated. Members of the middle class were targets because of their wealth, the threat their social power (deriving from education and knowledge) posed to would-be rulers of Iraq, and because they wouldn't pledge loyalty to the ethnic and religious groups now in power. Writers, intellectuals and artists thus progressively left Iraq or were assassinated.

Iraqi cultural heritage - and to start with the beautiful city of Baghdad - were also the victims of the US invasion and subsequent war. The disregard of US soldiers for cultural heritage verges on the criminal¹. This has caused particular grief among artists, as becomes obvious in the exhibition. Hana Mal Allah, for example, expresses her rage at the destruction of the city she grew up in - and, of the artists presented here, was the last to leave - in all her works. Although her medium is painting, her works present themselves as maps or books, testimony to the urge to document what is being lost so fast. Rashad Selim, who comes from a prominent family of Iraqi artists, deplores the fact that the international community does not apply the standards of justice and respect for Iraqi culture that are agreed on in international treaties. He developed this theme in a public art project that he was invited to do for Gemak. Nedim Kufi, who lives in the Netherlands, expresses his nostalgia for a life forever bygone in silent litanies, commemorating Iraqi poets or recalling how Baghdad looked like from the sky at night when there was still electricity.

It is obviously difficult to deal with such a massive (and unexpected) destruction of your culture as an artist. One cannot forever lament or be enraged, but it is also extremely difficult to 'move on'. What makes it extra difficult, as an educated and liberal Iraqi, is that the existence of that culture seems to be denied in the West. The common portrayal of Iraqis is as religious fundamentalists, ethnic radicals, or corrupt moustachioed army men (as to Iraqi women, they are the victims of Islamic oppression) and the realization that there are artists in this 'blighted' country can come as a real surprise to

Western audiences. This leads some Iraqi artists to develop a different approach: an ironic over-identification with the West. Adel Abidin, who became famous with his 'Welcome to Baghdad' travel agency installation in the 2007 Venice Biennial (Nordic Pavilion), gives lessons in contemporary Iraqi lingo in the video 'Common Vocabularies'. The visitors are taught the Arabic expressions for 'mass grave', 'car bomb', 'there is no electricity' or 'Improvised Explosive Device'. They can take home a handout with the phrases in Arabic, phonetic Arabic and English. Wafaa Bilal, who became notorious with projects such as 'Shoot an Iraqi' (Domestic Tension) and the video game 'Virtual Jihad' - which received the ultimate honour of being censored - showed a video in which the fireworks effects of a typical 4th of July celebration in a public park in Chicago are replaced with the considerably stronger luminous effects of US air raids over Baghdad.

Several Western artists had been invited to participate in this exhibition. Most of Western artists' work about Iraq is about the deceitful behaviour of the politicians that ushered Western countries into the war, and the abyss between the high moral ground taken in Western discourses of 'freedom', 'liberation', 'war on terror' and 'regime change' and the actual experience of the war by Iraqis. The Dutch artist Marc Bijl's monumental 'Triumph: Proposal for an Iraqi Memorial' is a sardonic statement of the failure of the US to implement its stated goals. Deriving directly from punk culture, it simultaneously embodies its destructive violent impulse and its radical opposition to reigning ideologies. A similar radical statement against British official hypocrisy was made by the artist's duo Peter Kennard and Cat Picton Phillips, whose monumental collages incorporated endless amounts of news clippings, images of torture in Abu Ghraib and examples of British obsession with security and control. The works of these artists

Reference

1. According to the Geneva/The Hague Convention of 1954 and the UNESCO Convention of 1970, military powers occupying foreign territories must do their level best to protect and preserve cultural heritage. In fact, as recent conflicts underscore, the cultural heritage of the enemy is often a choice symbolic target for military action.

is in a sense self-referential: none of them has gone to Iraq and they are more concerned with the manner in which the media and the authorities try to propagate a version of events, than by the events themselves.

This could not be said of Paul Chan, whose video ‘Baghdad in no Particular Order’ was shot a few months before the US invasion of 2003. It is a last, desperate attempt to show audiences ‘back home’ in the US how normal the people are that have been defined as the enemy. His video is at once trivial and ominous. Trivial because it is the kind of perspective a foreign tourist may get of a society, showing whatever catches his (American) attention; and ominous because by then it was pretty sure to Chan and to the Iraqis he was filming that the US would invade Iraq, and the manner in which the US had carried out bombing raids throughout the 1990s did not forebode well for the civilian population.

The torrential flow of information that has reached the West from Iraq since the 2003 invasion has been a source of frustration in itself for many artists. Most reports are extremely brief and impersonal – a car bomb causes x number of deaths in place A, a suicide bomber kills y number of people in market B – or are ‘human interest stories’ by embedded journalists showing how Joe the Plumber’s son experiences his tour of duty in Iraq. Individual stories by Iraqis are drowned by this torrent, which makes the victims face- and voiceless (and thus easier to digest for voters in the countries supporting the occupation). This situation prompted the emergence of initiatives such as ‘Open Shutters Iraq’ and ‘The Independent Film and Television College in Baghdad’ to collect and present individual narratives of Iraqis. Open Shutters focuses on the stories of women whose lives have been shattered by the conflict in Iraq, while the IFTVC trains young Iraqis in the making of short documentary films.

Throughout the exhibition the theme of the destruction of the book market and the Café Shabandar on Mutanabi Street kept coming back. From the collage of painted and charred pieces of ripped canvas by Hana Mal Allah (Manuscript from Mutanabi Street), through the Open Shutters story by Raya about the blast in the book market, the last images of the street and the café before the invasion as captured by Paul Chan, to the IFTVC movie ‘A candle for Shabandar’. Therefore the presence of the rusting car-wreck in the exhibition was a contentious but necessary focal point.

The purpose of the exhibition was not to present a static ‘snapshot’, but to provoke serious debate and reactions from the audience. Peter Kennard & Cat Picton Phillipps and Rashad Selim gave workshops to local artists, and Rashad worked with these artists to produce new work based on the perspectives given in the exhibition. This was presented towards the end of Green Zone / Red Zone in a ‘version 2.0’ of the exhibition, where the works of the local artists were integrated into the exhibition.

Rashad Selim stayed until the end of Green Zone / Red Zone as an artist in residence, working on a public art project. The rationale

behind this was that the theme of the exhibition had to be carried outside, into the streets and public institutions of the Dutch capital. The activities of an Iraqi artist in the public realm would also make the theme of the exhibition seem less distant, and of direct relevance to the city.

In the same spirit the Foundation for Achieving Seamless Territory (FAST), an international collective of activist architects, urban planners and researchers based in Amsterdam, was requested to make an atlas of the green and red zones of The Hague, according to several different disaster scenarios. After all, the inhabitants of the peaceful city of Baghdad couldn’t have imagined, in the late 1990s, that their city and its social fabric would be completely torn apart a few years later. The social demographics of The Hague (a quickly growing Muslim underclass and a dwindling white population) are, to certain people, alarming. And hasn’t the US Congress adopted what was dubbed the ‘The Hague Invasion Act’ a few years before, as a reaction to the establishment of the International Criminal Court? According to this law the US could go to the extreme of using military means to free its citizens should they ever be put on trial in the ICC. The maps of FAST were presented during the inauguration of Green Zone / Red Zone version 2.0.

Finally a series of debates was organized researching how the image of the Islamic terrorist is constructed and used to force changes in the laws and urban infrastructure of the Netherlands. The demonizing of the other is a useful precondition for enclosing population groups in Red Zones and barring their entrance to the Green Zones. Other debates and discussions about the situation in Iraq provided additional depth to the exhibition.

Green Zone / Red Zone drew both admiring and puzzled reviews from the Dutch art establishment. The overtly political reading of contemporary art and the works exhibited – for example the car bomb wreck – were maybe a bit too novel for some. But fortunately the exhibition inspired a number of people also, especially artists, and drew reviews from as far away as Bidoun magazine. An example of how the exhibition could inspire people not normally interested in contemporary art is given on page 41, with excerpts of a 27-page text completely dedicated to the exhibition, by the British geographer Alan Ingram.

I would like to thank Maysaloun Faraj from the International Network of Contemporary Iraqi Artists (INCA, based in London) for her invaluable assistance in my research into Iraqi arts and for helping me to get in touch with a number of the artists in this exhibition.

► The car wrecks from Baghdad
Displayed on the central
Leidseplein square in Amsterdam



BAGHDAD

AL MU

Coalition forces went to war against Saddam Hussein. The in-
sults, Democracy, Freedom, Peace, Now, four years later, the
daily bombings. The image we have of Iraq has been turned

in the Netherlands, have become specialists in the Iraq spectacle. We do not want
Security Council, we do not have an interest in the war. The only thing that we are lo-
with the victims, responsibility for the acts of violence.

rescue of the 3 March 2007 attack on the Mutanabbi Book Market in Baghdad.
to Iraq. The book market was the meeting place for writers, artists and students
around Al Mutanabbi was the Leidseplein of Baghdad.

against indifference. A call for empathy and compassion. Where was and destitute
can return humanity? For one day, the Leidseplein will be Baghdad. Try to create

ARONERROR.NL

ZAAAR

WAR
on
ERROR



The car wrecks from Al Mutanabi Street



Al Mutanabi Street (top), Shabandar Café (far left) before and after car bomb attack



I-wrecks: the itinerary

5 March 2007:

Car bomb in the Book Market of Al Mutanabi Street, Baghdad. 38 dead, many more wounded; from buildings in the vicinity thousands of burning pages can be seen drifting through the sky. The blast completely destroys Shabandar, the oldest literary café in the city. As a stab in the heart of the intellectual life in Baghdad, this attack is particularly disheartening for writers, poets, academics, students and artists. The attack is never claimed. In the explosion 14 vehicles are badly damaged.



31 May 2007: wrecks leave Baghdad

March - May 2007:

Efforts to ship two wrecks from this book market blast to the Netherlands. The commission comes from the organizers of the Bazaar ("The War on Error"), a yearly event in Amsterdam dealing with conflicts in the Middle East. Partizan Publik conceives the event for the Bazaar partners IKV Pax Christi, Hivos (Dutch NGOs with programs in Iraq) and GroenLinks (Green political party). Fixers in Baghdad with good connections prove essential to secure the wrecks and then move them - with difficulty - through the city and through customs.



2 June 2007: arrival at Schiphol Amsterdam



3 June 2007:

Exhibition of both wrecks on the central Leidse Plein square in Amsterdam. Performance and declamation of poetry by Saleh Hassan Faris, theatre maker from Baghdad, and speeches by among others Femke Halsema (leader of the Green party). Large audiences and intensive media coverage.

7 to 9 September 2007:

Exhibition of both wrecks in the framework of the Wereld van Witte de With Festival in Rotterdam. They stand outside the Boymans van Beuningen Museum on small pedestals, as part of a conceptual work by the artists Jonas Staal and Jack Segbars. Long discourses about the relation of these wrecks to trends in the art world are read by artists and critics.





13 to 16 September 2007:
Exhibition of both wrecks at the Gogbot Festival in Enschede. This yearly festival is a feast of alternative culture, new media and technology. No statement is provided about the wrecks, and nobody expects they may come from Baghdad.



22 September 2007:
The wrecks make an appearance in front of the Dom cathedral in Utrecht, during the 'Planet Peace' event organized by Dutch humanitarian NGOs. A guest-book is provided for visitors (charity workers, young idealists or middle-aged private donors) to pen down their reactions.



The wreck in front of Marc Bijl's 'Memorial', adjacent to a cut-out made in a Peter Kennard workshop (right) and near Rashad Selim's 'Ministry of Justice' (far-right)



19 October 2007 to 31 January 2008:

One of the two wrecks is on display in the exhibition 'Green Zone / Red Zone' in Gemak, The Hague. This exhibition curated by Robert Kluijver focuses on the manner in which the US occupier has either strengthened or invented borders between communities in Baghdad. This new urban reality is shown through the eyes of Iraqi artists, photographers and filmmakers and their allies abroad. The destruction of the Mutanabi street book market and the Shabandar Café is a theme that constantly returns in the exhibition. Again, quite a lot of media attention is drawn by the wreck, the crucial question apparently being: is this art?



April 2008:
Hartog & Henneman, two jewelers, strip one of the wrecks in order to make jewelry. The objects, made of melted glass, pieces of rusted metal, calcified rubber and silver will be presented from January 2009 onwards in NP3, an art project space in Groningen. The stripped wreck is then sent to be recycled as scrap iron in the port of Rotterdam.



September-October 2008:
the remaining wreck is shipped to the Station Museum in Houston for an Iraqi art exhibition, and then donated to the New Museum in New York, where the artist Jeremy Deller will use it for debates in the museum and then tour it throughout the country on a trailer, sparking discussion about the war wherever it appears.





550140130X 130305



Hana Mal Allah

“My works appear as ‘ruins,’ the cycle of destruction visited upon my city”

The works exhibited in Gemak reflect the destruction of Baghdad. The artist tears, drowns, burns and reassembles the canvases in the same manner as, in her perception, the US occupier did with Baghdad. Maps and books constantly return, either as theme or as form, in her work.

Born in Thee Qar, Iraq, 1958. Diploma Graphics, Institute of Fine Arts, Baghdad, 1979, BA & MA Painting, Academy of Fine Arts, Baghdad, 1988 & 2000 and PhD Philosophy of Painting, 2001. Fled Baghdad due to security issues in 2007, now residing in London.

I approach the abstract plane through a “pile of forms;” shape, text, numbers and colours. A density is reached beyond figurative clarity, which is black with accumulation. My works, when made of wood, are uncoated, naked; when of paper, open to creasing and folding. I approach making art not by dominating, but rather by following and reacting with the material’s character. My works appear as “ruins,” the cycle of destruction visited upon my city Baghdad: its desecration and humiliation. I’m economic with colour. In nature a leaf may be green for whatever reason, but in painting, why?

(Artist statement by Hana Mal Allah, obtained through www.incia.co.uk)

◀ **Hana Mal Allah:**
Manuscript from Mufanabi Street,
mixed media on canvas,
150 x 120 cm, 2007



Rashad Selim

“Ideals must survive
the present climate
of fear and cynicism”



Born in Khartoum, Sudan, 1957. Diploma Graphics and Printmaking, IFA Baghdad, 1980, Postgraduate Diploma Audio Visuals, St Martins School of Art, London, 1983.

Left Iraq after the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war. Has lived and worked in the UK, North Africa and Yemen, where he helped establish a museum of contemporary art.

Ideals of due process, law, order and freedom deeply held on home ground in the West are denied “the other” in acts such as the invasion of Iraq, the war on terror and the Islamophobic campaign. These ideals must survive the present climate of fear and cynicism, the politics of might makes right. Undermined abroad these ideals erode at home into hard boned state security. Making art with this issue I aim for an essential naïveté through works directly involved in political and legal acts.

(Artist statement by Rashad Selim, provided by the artist)

◀ Rashad Selim:
Souvenir from the Ministry of Justice
installation of metal, wood,
rubber and plastic, approx.
200 x 200 x 50 cm, 2007



A bomb car

عبوة ناسفة

'ABWA NAASIFAH

I E D:

"Improvised Explosive Device"

خسارة بالحظ

KHARAH BIL HAD

FUCKING BAD LUCK

◀ Adel Abidin:
Common Vocabularies
single channel video
2006

Adel Abidin

Common Vocabularies shows a young Iraqi girl struggling to learn the most useful and common words current in Baghdad today. From 'mass grave' to 'there's no electricity', the girl, following the cue given by the invisible cameraman, tries to pronounce the words correctly in an endless and repetitive drone. It is clear the words mean nothing to her. The question is: what do they mean to the spectator that sees the work in a Western gallery? Ten stacks of cards accompany the installation, containing some of the words or phrases encountered in the video in Arabic, phonetic Arabic and English.

Born in Baghdad, 1973, lives and works in Helsinki, Finland. After completing a B.Sc in Industrial Management at Mansour University in Baghdad in 1994, Abidin did a BA at the Academy of Fine Arts of Baghdad, finishing in the year 2000. He left Iraq and moved to Finland, where he completed a MFA at the Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki (2003-2005).

In 2007 Abidin was selected as one of the artists to be shown in the Nordic Pavilion at the Venice Biennial.

My art practice is based on the premise that art produces arguments for the viewer. I started my art career as a painter, but two years ago, I abandoned painting to concentrate on media-based art. Nowadays, I do primarily videos, video installations and short films.

The main topics I deal with are of a political nature. This is sometimes attributed to the fact that I am of Iraqi origin, but I believe we truly live in political times, regardless of geographical position, and art cannot thrive outside its social context.

(Quoted on the website of Galleria Huuto, April 2006)

◀ Adel Abidin:
10 stacks of paper cards,
2006

**“I do not wish to
impose narrow
interpretations of my
work but struggle to
create complex and
multidimensional
images [...]”**





Wafaa Bilal

One sees an American public enjoying 4th of July fireworks in a park. Some of the firework effects, however, have been replaced by the artist with images of the night sky above Baghdad during Coalition bombing raids.

Born in Iraq on June 10, 1966. Wafaa attended college to major in geography in Baghdad. While in college, he was arrested and tortured for his political art work against Saddam Hussein. He fled to Kuwait and, after two years in a refugee camp there, was granted asylum in the USA in 1992. After art studies in the University of New Mexico, Bilal now teaches at the Chicago Institute of Art.

A constant negotiation must take place in order to embrace the aesthetic pleasure of the image's surface, which is so necessary to capture the imagination, and to convey the aesthetic pain of the content. The failure of this negotiation can easily result in the alienation of the viewer, while a successful negotiation may result in active engagement and an opening of the viewer's perspective. [...] I do not wish to impose narrow interpretations of my work but struggle to create complex and multi-dimensional images [...] As the viewer may be far removed from the conflict addressed within the work, it is important to communicate to the viewer through a recognizable visual language, and so I filter the subject through historical and psychological contexts of the subject's specific locale. The frame acts as a historical window to the past, while the moving image exemplifies a persistent-present, a current condition influenced by internal or external circumstances that inhibit change.

From the artist's website www.crudeoils.us

◀ **Wafaa Bilal:**
4th of July Celebration
single channel video,
25 min, 2007



**With blood and soul,
we sacrifice for you, Saddam.**



Britney Spears

“The wild dogs of Baghdad have more dignity and sense than you. You travel in packs and think the same way”.



Born in Hong Kong, 1973. Grew up in Nebraska. BFA in Video Digital Arts at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1996, MFA in Film, Video and New Media from Bard College in 2002. Chan's teaching activities included lecturing at the Graduate School of Fine Arts, the University of Pennsylvania and the School of the Arts Institute of Chicago. Chan lives and works in New York. Many international exhibitions including the Whitney Biennale 2006, Istanbul Biennial 2007, New Museum 2008 and Venice Biennial 2009.



◀ Paul Chan
Baghdad in No Particular Order
part 1: single channel video
on three displays,
51 min, 2003

▲ Paul Chan
Baghdad in No Particular Order
Part II, website, online at
www.nationalphilistine.com/baghdad

Paul Chan

BAGHDAD IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER is an ambient video essay of life in Baghdad before the invasion and occupation. Men dance, women draw and Sufis sing as they await the coming of another war. In seven languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Italian and Spanish). *Subtitled in English.*

I find myself here, today, in an impossible situation.

I must speak to you--the press--with you and through you, using your kind of sentences and leaps of reason, letting you sell me like a precious but marginal commodity, so I can say what everyone already knows but a few vaguely important people in this city are unwilling to admit: that no one wants a war; that an attack against Iraq is no attack against terrorism; that an attack will in fact make the United States less safe; that the Iraqi people do not want a war to liberate them because they will not live through the liberation; that as Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. said, "if we do not act we shall surely be dragged down the long dark and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight." I must convey all of this to you, sell it to you, all the while knowing that I find you despicable.

The wild dogs of Baghdad have more dignity and sense than you. You travel in packs and think the same way. You mistake quotes with facts and facts with meaning. You lack historical imagination and intellectual empathy. Your sentences are short and puritanical. In Baghdad you step over children and knock over speakers, reduce subtleties and ignore contexts. An American newspaper journalist in Baghdad told me with a gleeful sense of pride that journalists are lazy and under pressure to write, so issues and ideas have to be reduced into sound bites in order to function as media. Pathetic.

History rarely reads like a press release. And history is being made right now by those who have no time to issue statements. Get complex and get curious or get out of the way.

I think we are going to stop this one without you. Thank you.

Paul Chan: Statement for a Certain National Press Club in Washington DC (Draft V.2)



TO SERVE
AND
PROTECT

Red Zone



Marc Bijl

“Whether it’s
Politics, Religion,
(anti)Globalization,
Marc Bijl wants
to attack their
superficial image
or myth”

Born in Leerdam, Netherlands, 1970. Studied at the Royal Academy of Art & Design in 's Hertogenbosch and at the Rennie Macintosh School of Art in Glasgow. Marc Bijl lives and works between Rotterdam and New York.

The works and interventions of the Dutch artist Marc Bijl are based upon social issues and their use of symbols and rules. This can result in interventions in the public space, sculptures or installations that undermine or underline this perception of the world. Whether it's Politics, Religion, (anti)Globalization, or the art world itself, Marc Bijl wants to attack their superficial image or myth. He takes icons of (recent) art history and mixes it with sub cultural movements such as gothic, punk and anarchism.

Quoted on www.exposurerotterdam.nl/marcbijl/

◀ Marc Bijl:
Triumph: Proposal for a Memorial to the Iraq War
wood, cement, acrylic paint,
reproduction
440 x 390 x 110 cm, 2007



EXCERPT FROM "RAIN SONG"
by Al Sayyab, 1960

DO YOU KNOW HOW LOST A SOLITARY PERSON
FEELS IN THE RAIN?
ENDLESS, LIKE SPILT BLOOD, LIKE HUNGRY
PEOPLE, LIKE LOVE,
LIKE CHILDREN, LIKE THE DEAD, ENDLESS
THE RAIN.
YOUR TWO EYES TAKE ME WANDERING WITH
THE RAIN.

LIGHTNING FROM ACROSS THE GULF SWEEPS
THE SHORES OF IRAQ
WITH STARS AND SHELLS,
AS IF A DAWN WERE ABOUT TO BREAK FROM
THEM,
BUT NIGHT PULLS OVER THEM A COVERLET
OF BLOOD.

I CRY OUT TO THE GULF: "O GULF,
GIVER OF PEARLS, SHELLS AND DEATH!"
AND THE ECHO REPLIES, AS IF LAMENTING:
"O GULF, GIVER OF SHELLS AND DEATH".

I CAN ALMOST HEAR IRAQ HUSBANDING
THE THUNDER,
STORING LIGHTNING IN THE MOUNTAINS
AND PLAINS,
SO THAT IF THE SEAL WERE BROKEN BY MEN
THE WINDS WOULD LEAVE IN THE VALLEY
NOT A TRACE OF THAMUD.

I CAN ALMOST HEAR THE PALM TREES
DRINKING THE RAIN,
HEAR THE VILLAGES MOANING AND
EMIGRANTS
WITH OAR AND SAIL FIGHTING THE GULF
WINDS OF STORM AND THUNDER, SINGING

RAIN . . . RAIN . . .
DRIP, DROP, THE RAIN . . .

Nedim Kufi

"My artistic philosophy is a quest for truth and humanity"

In Green Zone / Red Zone Nedim exhibited fourteen silkscreen prints based on the poem 'Rain Song' by the Iraqi poet Al Sayyab, accompanied by the text in Arabic and English. Besides being one of Iraq's favourite poems, many Iraqis believe this poem prophesied the doom that would befall their country.

Born in Baghdad, 1962. Lives and works in the Netherlands since 1995. Graduated in etching and sculpture in Baghdad (Academy of Fine Arts) and in graphic design in Utrecht, the Netherlands. Nedim has participated in many exhibitions in the Middle East and Europe.

"When I try and unravel the darkness, and I find order in the Dutch sky, Baghdad's moon does not provide sense but rather it follows me through my journey and softens my estranged and desolate path. I give people an opportunity to see and discover things for themselves, and my artistic philosophy is a quest for truth and humanity."

Quoted from an interview in Bazaar Magazine, April 2009

Besides 'Song of the Rain' Nedim Kufi also presented a 3' looped single channel video 'Electrify Baghdad'. Through a digital reconstruction, the artist imagined what Baghdad would look like on a dark night if full electricity were restored.

◀ Nedim Kufi:
Portrait of Al Sayyab
one in a unique series of
28 silkscreen prints,
60 x 42 cm, 2007



Mohammed Abdullah

Unattended Item

in front of Gemak, for opening
of Green Zone / Red Zone, Oct.
2007, car-cover made from
keffiyeh headdress cloth.

Mohamed Abdulla

He appeared in Gemak a few days before the official inauguration with a plan for an intervention on the street, just outside Gemak.

It was interesting to notice how passers-by intuitively crossed the road to continue their path on the other sidewalk, rather than get too close to this 'unattended item'.

Mohammed Abdullah is an artist who could have been born in Amsterdam. His current whereabouts are unknown. He sometimes sends me cryptic postcards from shifting locations announcing vague public art projects that question the capacity of my intellect.

*It's 17 years since I left Baghdad
It's 2566 miles from where I am now
It's 17° higher
It's 07:00 pm here
It's 09:00 pm there
I do have memory traces of the city
but,
I do not have access to it
I do have an urge
but,
What role remains to perform?*

In September 2007 I went to Iran to meet my family after not seeing them for 16 years. My youngest brother brought me two car-cloths sewed of Keffiyeh/Arab headdress, which I had asked him to make; The intervention 'unattended item' took place in Tehran, then in The Hague in October 2007.

Since then I am having ongoing talk by phone / Skype with my brother about the situation in Iraq, his daily struggle to survive, my art practice, as well as questioning what sort of role should be performed in time of war in Iraq? Are there possibilities to collaborate in long-term project that could take place in Baghdad? How do we interpret our thoughts/obsessions into former cultural practice?





◀ Peter Kennard & Cat Picton Phillips:
Presidential Seal
 pigmenting, oil, acrylic, charcoal, emulsion and paper on newspaper, 700 x 270 cm, 2006.



Peter Kennard & Cat Picton Phillips

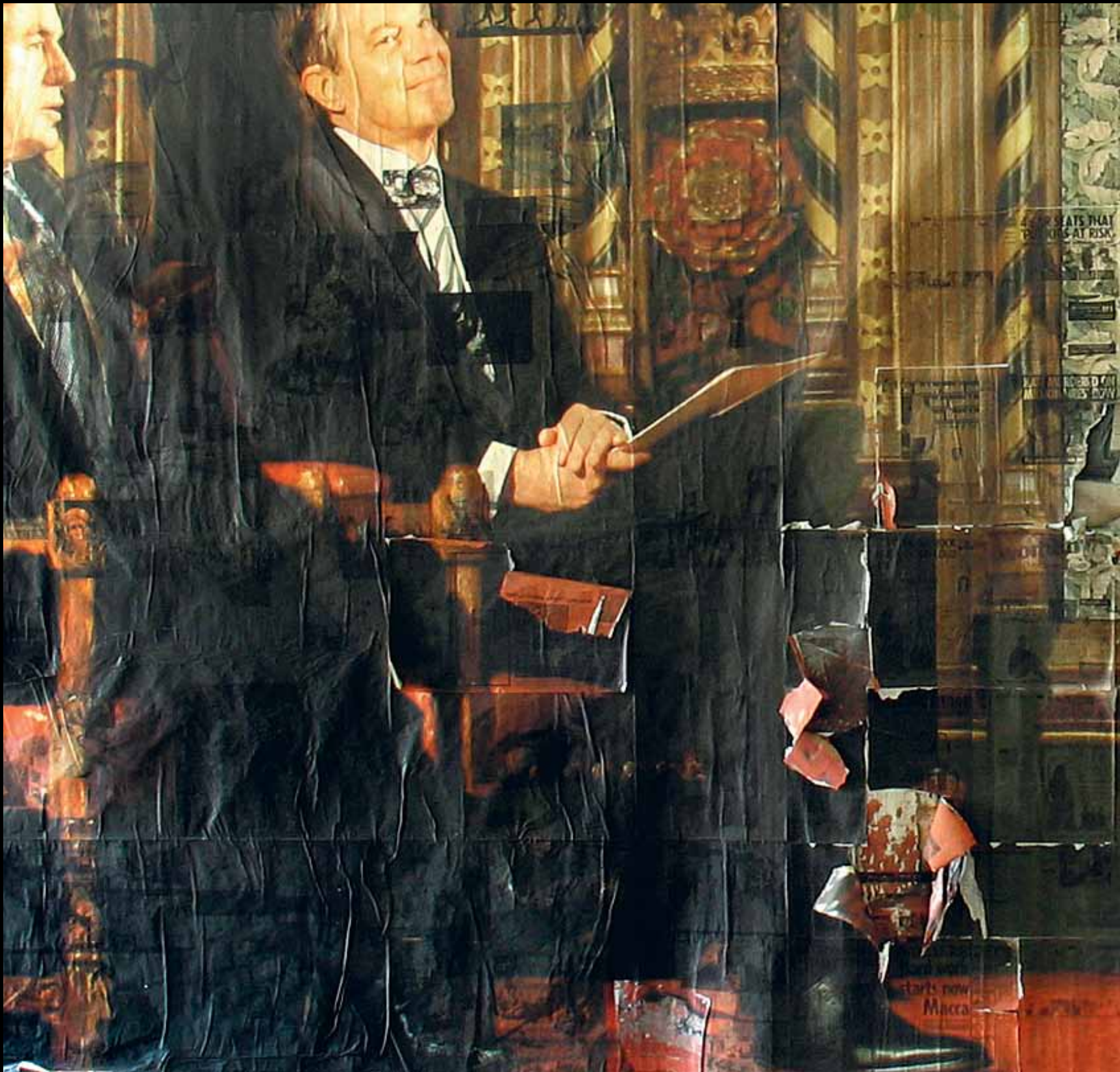
“Find ways to
get a physical
sense of the
chaos and
anarchy that’s
going on in
Iraq”

Peter Kennard: born in London, 1949. Teaches at the Royal College of Arts. Famous for his anti-war posters, made during the 1980s. Now he collaborates with Cat Picton Phillips, graphic artist and printer, on the huge collages made with mixed media on newsprint. They live and work in London.

“It’s all about trying to find ways to get a physical sense of the chaos and anarchy that’s going on in Iraq. The work becomes much more physically engaging and less intellectual ... It’s more about the gut feeling we have about the situation and what this country has done”.



◀ Peter Kennard & Cat Picton Phillips:
Details of: *Presidential Seal*
pigmenting, oil, acrylic,
charcoal, emulsion and paper on
newspaper, 700 x 270 cm, 2006.



◀ Peter Kennard & Cat Picton
Phillips:
Policy Papers
 pigment and ink on newspaper,
 700 x 270 cm, 2007



“Mainstream politicians and the media have conspired in creating the disaster in Iraq”

“We never conceived that our work would be part of persuading people to change their minds... Instead, we wanted to make art for the movement. We wanted people to be able to come and find their views echoed and validated by the work. To see in it the reasons why we marched and protested. Mainstream politicians and the media have conspired in creating the disaster in Iraq. We wanted to create something that makes people think that they are right to oppose the war, that everything we said about it was correct.”

(Quotes from Alan Ingram: Art and the geopolitical: re-familiarizing the war on terror, 2009. See page 122)



◀ Peter Kennard & Cat Picton Phillips:

Images from the *Workshop*
given by the artists on
18 October 2007 to the art
students at Gemak

ART AND THE GEOPOLITICAL: RE- FAMILIARIZING THE WAR ON TERROR

by DR. ALAN INGRAM

Green Zone / Red Zone was visited by Dr. Alan Ingram, an English geographer, who was inspired enough by the exhibition to base a whole paper on it, published in K. Dodds and A. Ingram (editors), *Spaces of Security and Insecurity: New Geographies of the War on Terror* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2009). The following is an abridged excerpt.

“What I am trying to conceptualize are the intersections between the spatializations of the war on terror and respatializations proposed in artistic interventions. (...)”

My entry point and main focus is the exhibition Green Zone/Red Zone that took place from 20 October 2007 to 31 January 2008 at Gemak, a new cultural institution located in The Hague, Netherlands. This is not because it has been representative in any particular sense (indeed it might be a good thing were it more so), but because of the ways that it can be considered as an intervention in contemporary geopolitics; because of the ways in which its design parallels certain epistemological concerns within geography and other fields; and because it represents an explicit and reflexive attempt to go beyond the discursive limits (particularly those of citizenship and aesthetics) that both enable and discipline artists, curators, critics, audiences and galleries (...)

Gemak and Green Zone/Red Zone

The rationale informing Gemak has been explained by its curator, Robert Kluijver in ways that parallel closely Drucker's formulation of current epistemological and cultural predicaments, the goals of artists like Bilal and ideas of situated knowledge:

The language of politics has been emptied of its meaning. This is a phenomenon that seems to intrigue, amuse or fire many artists. It also preoccupies me. Between the reality of our world and our rendering of it into language lies a gap that allows, almost demands individuals to come with their own interpretations. I can juxtapose or contrast these in various ways that accord more with my own experience of reality. I don't pretend this rendering is closer to the truth but I do hope that it is closer to the subjective reality experienced daily by so many non-Western people.

(...) Green Zone/Red Zone committed what Bourdieu terms the sin of vulgarity: many of its exhibits failed to meet prevailing standards for 'art'. It included works by participants in the Open Shutters: Iraq project, which gave eight Iraqi women and one child digital cameras with which to document their lives, and short documentary videos by students from the Independent Film and Television College in Baghdad. Another element was the installation of the remains of a car largely destroyed in the suicide bombing of the Mutanabi book market, a centre of intellectual life in Baghdad in March 2007, which killed 38 people

and injured more than 60. This exhibit elicited a wide variety of responses among visitors to the exhibition, including views from some critics that because it was not art, it did not belong in a gallery (...) The exhibition also showed a series of maps produced by the Foundation for Achieving Seamless Territory (FAST), an architectural collective that aims to highlight the divisive consequences of top down architecture and planning. The maps were produced by applying homeland security guidelines to different scenarios (revolt of the poor; ethnic revolt; flood; American invasion), but played out in The Hague itself rather than Baghdad or other non-Western cities. The respatializations envisaged by FAST connected with Gemak's concern with the idea of The Hague as a place that is already spatialized as a multi-faith, multicultural and economically unequal city.

(...) This exhibition represented an unusually rich opportunity to make points of connection, to affirm associations of reference and lines of accountability, and to reflect on responsibility and engagement in the war on terror and emerging landscapes of security and insecurity. It did this by putting in play a series of connections and circulations around those landscapes, across a wide variety of actors and affects, and prompting responses to collisions between everyday life and formal geopolitics. In this way Green Zone/Red Zone presented a radical remixing of the imaginative geographies that have structured and sustained the war on terror; a re-twisting and refolding of our space/their space into a space where a kind of simultaneity is possible that is otherwise foreclosed by material geography and hegemonic performances of space. If it is axiomatic that challenging simplistic formulations of space is 'a necessary part of resisting war as the dominant social relation of our times', then strategies such as those in evidence at Green Zone/Red Zone demand further engagement by geographers.

Reflections

My goal in this exploratory essay has not been to try to establish a dominant narrative for how people should view these works or think about Green Zone/Red Zone (an exhibition that has now closed). Rather, in offering a preliminary consideration of relations between art and the geopolitical, to try to develop existing conversations between geography, politics and art, to start new ones and to further blur the lines between these fields, while remaining aware of the geographies of power that structure (but do not necessarily determine) our engagements in them.

I therefore advocate a more situated and engaged approach that treats artworks not just as objects for critical reflection, but also sources of inspiration and provocation to further discussion, debate and intervention. This I would suggest aligns with the strategy of refamiliarization, which can also help to make explicit the fact that we are all, in some way, located within the battle space.

I have suggested that the ways in which many artists and curators are engaging with the war on terror represents both a challenge and an invitation to geographers and others to reflect upon and engage differently in the reimagination of the geopolitical present, at the same time as they also seek to address it by more conventional scholarly means. They provide a venue in which we can rethink and remake the nature of our own involvement, past, present and future, in the geographies of security and insecurity.”

Independent Film & Television College, Baghdad

The Independent Film & Television College was set up in Baghdad in 2004 and provides free-of-charge intensive short courses in film and television technique, theory and production. The college was founded by 2 experienced independent Iraqi filmmakers, who have been based in the UK for many years. Kasim Abid is a cameraman/director/producer and Maysoon Pachachi is an editor/director/producer. They are responsible for most of the teaching at the moment. The IFTVC trains Iraqi filmmakers and also supports their filmmaking by providing production facilities and information about funding, international presentations and further training.

For more information see www.iftvc.org



He should be p
suitable for



Still from 'A Stranger in His Own Country', below: Still from 'Dr Nabil'



The following five short documentaries were exhibited

- **A Candle for the Shabandar Cafe (25 mins), directed by Emad Ali, 2007**

Founded in 1917, the Shabandar Café in Mutanabi Street in the heart of the old centre of Baghdad was a cultural landmark, where generations of Iraqis came to discuss and debate literature and politics - a living repository of Iraqi intellectual history and one of the last places where people could gather to exchange ideas. Emad had shot most of his film by the end of 2006, but in March 2007, a massive car bomb destroyed the Shabandar Café, all the bookshops on Mutanabi Street and killed and wounded scores of people. Days later, Baghdad's poets and artists held a wake in the ruins of the street they loved so much and Emad took a small camera and went back to film. As he was leaving he was attacked, his camera stolen and he was shot in the legs and chest, and his own story is an epilogue to his film about the Shabandar Café and Mutanabi Street - before and after they were destroyed.
- **A Stranger In His Own Country (10 mins) (directed by Hassanain al Hani, 2007)**

Thousands of Iraqis have been displaced by sectarian violence and have had to seek refuge in other parts of the country. This is a portrait of Abu Ali, a refugee from Kirkuk living in a displaced person's camp on the outskirts of Kerbala. He is a peace-loving man with a keen sense of justice, trying to find a way to survive and provide for his family in the difficult circumstances in which they now find themselves.
- **Dr Nabil (15 mins) (directed by Ahmed Jabbar, 2007)**

A gentle and committed surgeon, with literary talents, works at a small understaffed Baghdad hospital, which suffers from lack of equipment and medicines. While many other doctors have been killed or have fled the country in fear of their lives, Dr Nabil has decided to stay. He worries, though, about the effect that the atmosphere of violence and brutality is having on his young son.
- **Leaving (25 mins) (directed by Bahram Al Zuhairi, 2007)**

Threatened with kidnap and facing escalating and horrific violence in their neighbourhood, a Mandaean family from Baghdad reaches the difficult decision to leave their home of more than 30 years and go to live in Damascus. The film documents the painful process of selling all their goods and dividing up their house so it can be rented out and finally it records their dangerous road trip to the Syrian border and their arrival to their new, temporary home.
- **Documentary Course March 2006 (15 mins) (directed by Ahmed Kamal, 2007)**

Ahmed Kamal documents the lives of his fellow students at the Independent Film & Television College in Baghdad as they try to get into classes, find the subjects for the films they want to make and deal with the difficulties of trying to film in Iraq at the moment. In the end the college has to close down when 2 people are abducted from the building and an explosion in the street below shatters all its windows.

Open Shutters Project

Open Shutters is an in-depth participatory photography program training women to share their stories using photographs and writing.



Open Shutters assists the creation of first-person narratives that use photography as a medium to share the subjective emotional experience of women in Iraq. Before thinking about what story they want to share the women prepare and present intimate life maps using writing, old photographs, documents and objects of meaning to them.

Six women journalists from a diversity of backgrounds were initially invited to participate in the program. The journalists, in turn, brought women from their communities who are normally outside of the public forum and partnered them for the duration of the project. Each project was themed by the participants themselves.

After the workshops were complete, Open Shutters continued working with the former participants, building a network of women who not only continued to produce stories and photographs but became a support group to each other, opening opportunities and a platform for communication.

‘Open Shutters’ priority is to show the work within the region it is produced.



Open Shutters, installation view

The photo-narrative series exhibited in Gemak

Raya, Baghdad: Loss. Mutanabi Street was Baghdad's cultural centre for hundreds of years. Raya went and photographed two days after it was destroyed by a huge car bomb.

Lu'lu'a, Kirkuk: Caged. Lu'lu'a was a woman veterinarian. One evening, on the way to a job, she was kidnapped. When she eventually returned home she found herself excluded from her family and husband who considered she had brought shame and dishonour to her family.

Um Mohammad, Basra: Bitter. Um Mohammad is from Basra. She watches her own identity being stripped from her as her city is destroyed and taken by religious parties and militias. Her photographs are beautiful portraits of Basra, resonating loss and time past.

Dima, Baghdad: Friendship. Dima is six years old. One day she announced she too had a story and wanted to learn photography. Her main subject was her best friends, who she said were the most important people in the world after her mum. By mid 2007 Dima's class had lost 60% of its students.

Mariam, Falluja: Sleepless. Mariam lectures at University in Falluja. One night her house was raided by American soldiers, who kept them at gunpoint for three days. Now, she suffers from insomnia. She took almost colourless photos of her house in the middle of the night.

Lujane, Baghdad: Deserted. Lujane works in a college. She is distraught at how empty her city is. It is not easy to take pictures on the streets of Baghdad; but determined to show what had become of her once bustling city, she took an eerie series of empty cityscapes.

The presentation in Gemak was designed and printed in Tehran by the well-known Iranian graphic artist **Iman Raad**.

Saturday, 10.10am, January 4, 2004. I was sitting in my clinic with Jamal, a trainee doctor. A client came to see us, saying he owned 800 head of sheep who needed treatment. Jamal and I got into a white pick up with the man, who was dressed in a traditional Arab dishdasha. Ten minutes later, we were stopped by another pick up. A man got out, came up to me and hit me on the head. The client shouted to me “I’ll deal with you later” I felt guilty – maybe he’d been kidnapped because of me.

They took us to a cave. They hit me on the head with a pistol butt and the walls started to swim. I felt the sting of water pipes on my skin and it was the client who was whipping me! They drove us around the hills for hours. No signs of life. They dumped us into a hole in the ground, poured petrol all around and threatened to set it alight. “So be it – burn us if you’re going to, but tell me why”...They took Jamal away ...“The phone rang and rang” he said when they brought him back. “Your husband screamed when I told him what had happened and I could hear that the whole house was in turmoil around him”. After that they took us into a mud room with no door. The creeping darkness scared me and Jamal was trembling with fear and cold. The whole time I just cried and recited the Koran.

They allowed me to use my phone to call my husband. For the next 3 days I didn’t sleep at all. They gave us dirty water to drink and I was never hungry. On the third day, they told me that my family had paid the ransom and they separated me from Jamal. He was crying “I’m afraid they’ll hurt you if they separate us”. In fact, the way they were looking at me scared me. I will never forget one man’s face – his green eyes watching me with a kind of wild hunger.

“If you shout or look back at us, you’ll die”. I got out of the car and walked towards my husband’s uncle who was waiting for me. A few blocks away, I saw my husband. He didn’t hug me and the look on his face terrified me. When I got home, my mother collapsed. “Did they rape you?” everyone asked – everyone but my husband. “No”. All that mattered was that the family’s honour had been preserved - that I hadn’t been raped.

My husband left me to go on the hajj and I stayed at my mother’s for months. All night, every night I cried bitterly. After a lot of effort, I managed to track down my kidnappers. One of them was arrested. But a representative from his tribe offered me money to drop the charges. I felt like I was suffocating, but my family had to borrowed a lot of money to free me and we had to pay it back. A few days later I signed the paper agreeing to drop charges, but I wept. “The moment I signed, I felt I’d swallowed poison” I told my mother.

I started training as a journalist a few months later in Turkey and then began to write for a few newspapers. I’m not allowed to go anywhere without my bodyguards. Every time we hear that a women has been abducted, my husband stops talking to me for days. He’s told me many times that I’ve destroyed his life...that I’ve shamed him.





Lu'lu'a: Caged

1. I used to go to the wild hills whenever I needed to breathe...I'd free myself of whatever I'd stored inside myself. That's where they drove me the day they abducted me. I remember everything I went through in that empty land...I feel I can't breathe. A few years have passed since I was kidnapped...My body and my life have healed, but they have left me with a fear I can get rid of...every time I pass through here, my wound is opened anew.

2. I sit among them...I love them and I know they love me. My husband distanced himself from me for a month after I was kidnapped and my mother still blames me for ruining the family...I'm tired of it...I just want to go away by myself...I miss them...they chose my isolation not me

3. I open my eyes in the morning...I see the gun by my bed. I toss and turn and then close my eyes so I don't see the gun...and I go to sleep at night. My husband and I go to sleep "decent" these days. We worry that someone will attack us, the distance between me and my husband has started to grow, we no longer talk before we sleep, nor do we laugh together in the morning...there is no space for anything but anxiety



4. Our street was always full of cars...people buying things... and children. I used to watch out of the window for hours, and feel alive. After I was kidnapped and after the threats that we've received...I hardly look out the window...I make sure that my face is completely hidden behind the curtain...I look with longing at the street which was vividly alive once upon a time

5. I cook...I watch TV...and from time to time I glance out the window to make sure that my personal bodyguards are still there, I haven't spent one day without them since the day I was released from the kidnappers. I see them there and I feel safe...except something about their constant presence disturbs me.

6. I go to the market, accompanied from shop to shop by my bodyguards. By chance I meet a friend...I stop to chat...I lower my voice so they won't hear. I get in the car...the phone rings...I talk to my neighbour in a somewhat formal, unrevealing way. There isn't one detail of my life that these two bodyguards don't know. And I'm afraid constantly "what will they think!?"...will they think badly of me?"...it's a pressure in my life



7. I'm tired of my obsessions and my fear, the neglect of my husband. I travel to forget...I pack my things and leave. I try to get to know about new places but my world follows me wherever I go. Weeks or months later I come back home...nothing new...I am fed up with all of this.

8. Fear has invaded my life and guns have conquered every detail of my house. How I have tried to keep my home attractive...beautiful...but my eyes are forced to look at guns everywhere. . .

© Open Shutters Project, 2007

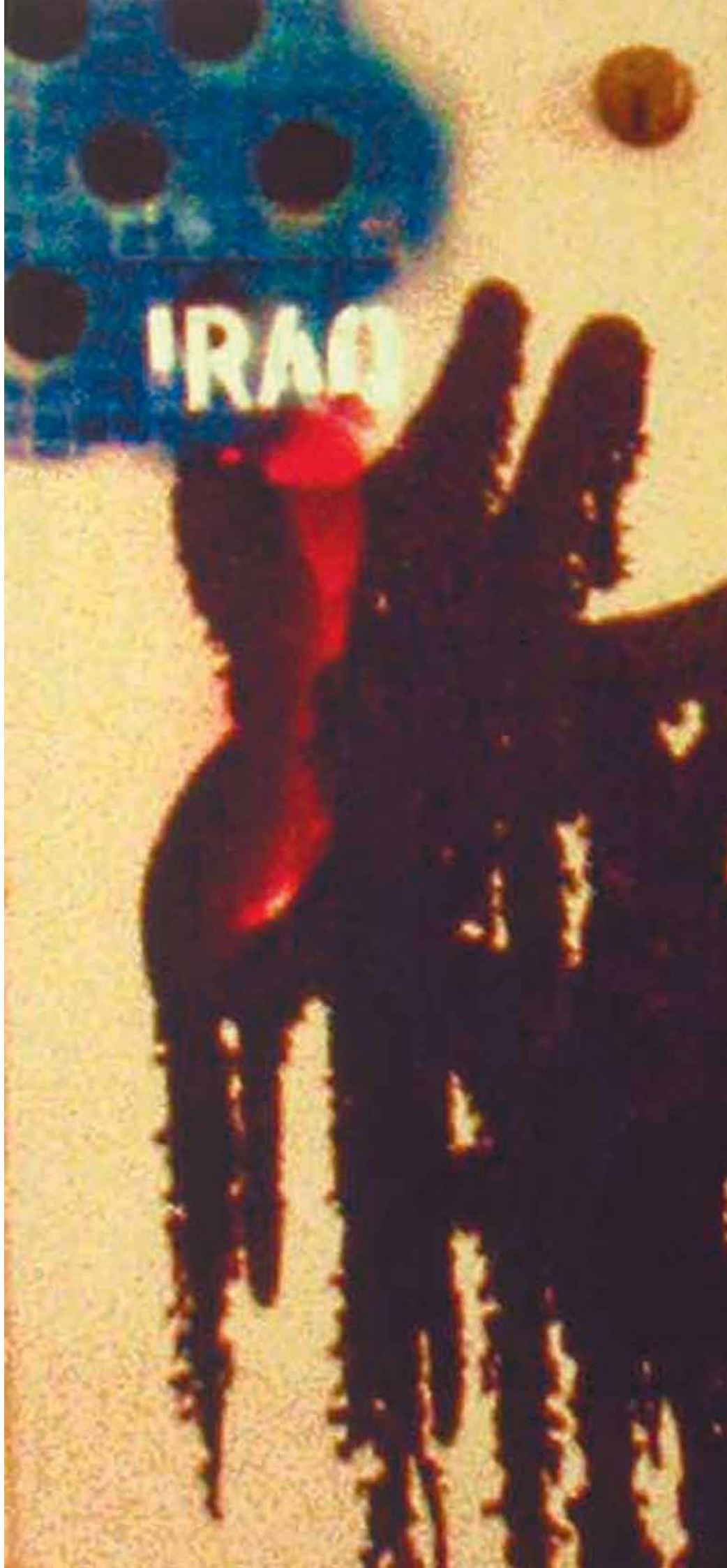
Public Art Project by

Rashad Selim: A Charm for Iraq

Can a political or legal act itself become the medium of art like a work of art can be called political? In this project I claim the police dossier and statement as a public art work and the handing in of one petition to parliament, another into a void found at the International Court of Justice as live performance. The judgement against my crime is a sketch drawing of justice sought and a traffic sign stands as a monument to absence.

(Artist's Statement)

► example of Rashad Selim's
symbol applied on top
of existing black tag





US soldier marking a rounded-up young man

One of Gemak's objectives was to involve foreign artists in the city of The Hague. Rather than offering a simple residency, the idea was to give the artist a public role in the city, and to give him/her the means to create a public artwork. The theme of the exhibition would thus be carried beyond the walls of the exhibition space and into the public realm. Rashad Selim was chosen as the artist to perform this task for Green Zone / Red Zone. See above, under artists, for a brief biography.



performing street research

Rashad started his residency with a workshop, where he gave a presentation of the various lines of his artistic research, ranging from ancient Mesopotamian traditions to contemporary headgear, and encouraged artists linked to the Vrije Academie to react to these ideas. Out of that and other early exchanges he had with the inhabitants of the city, grew his determina-

tion to develop a charm for Iraq based on the traditional amulet used to protect children, houses and other cherished defenceless entities: the saba ayoun, or seven eyes (against the evil eye). The Hague being the capital of international law in a world characterized by deep injustice, he decided to follow a double track in his public art project, which he divided into a 'Green Zone' and a 'Red Zone' activity.



Rashad during the workshop

The Red Zone version of 'A Charm for Iraq' consisted of saba ayoun symbols with the text 'Iraq' that were applied with spray paint on top of graffiti in the 'red zones' of The Hague. It was inspired by the American practice of marking people and houses in Iraq that they suspected, or had searched, with indelible paint or ink. After applying about six of them, out of a planned total of twelve, Rashad was arrested together with the photographer accompanying him.

He spent a night in jail and, refusing to pay the fine out of principle, was brought to court. He considered his defence statement and the act of submission to the law to be part of his public art project. He was given a light fine on probation.

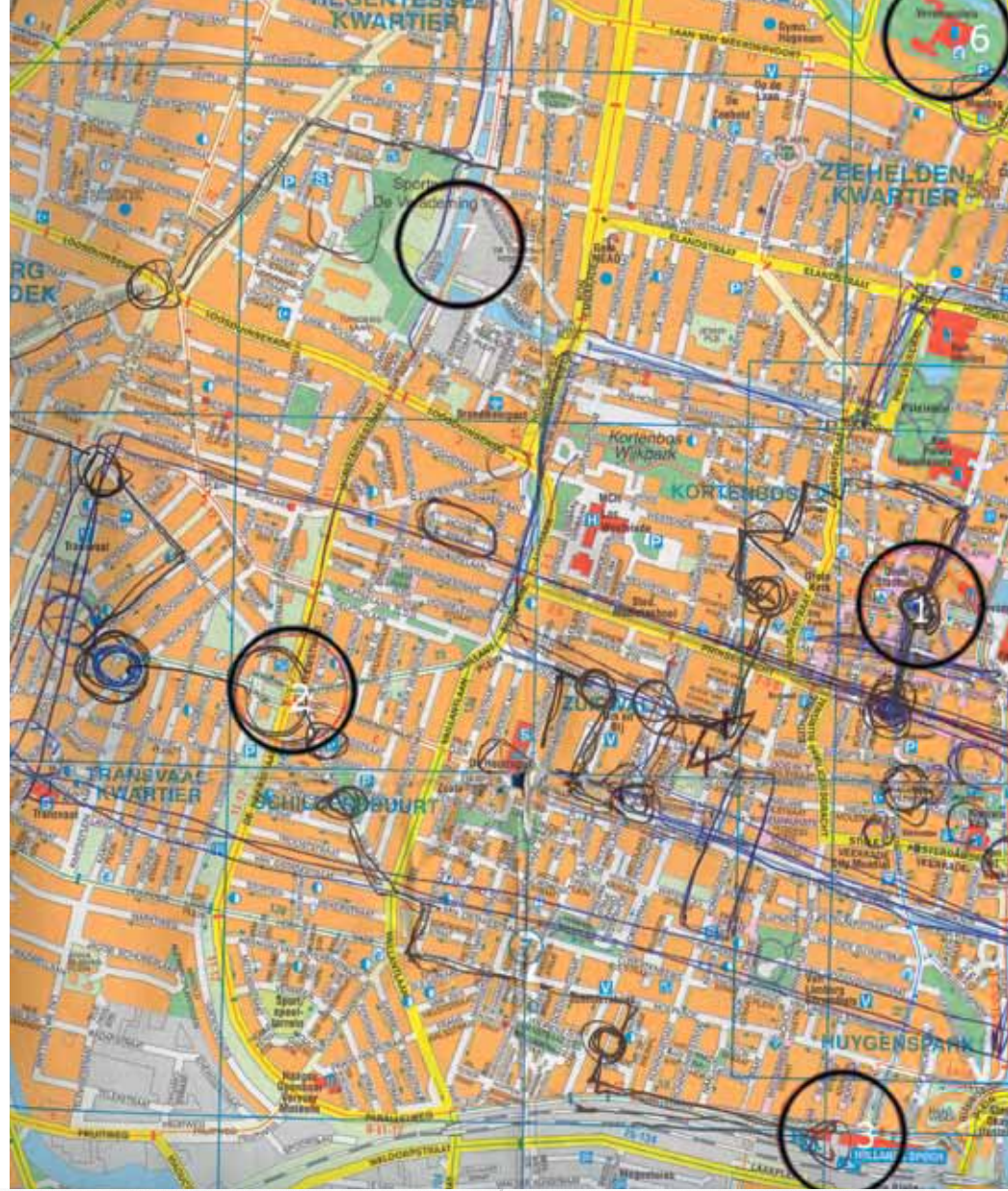


An article in the local press expressing surprise at the age of the two people picked up for applying graffiti.

The Green Zone version of Selim's project was more complex. To begin with, the amulet shape was placed on a traffic sign, professionally produced according to standard specifications (metal with reflective coating in the shape of a 'Stop' sign; board diameter 70 cm). Seven locations were then chosen to form a hexagonal pattern around a central point (the old town hall) that replicates the geometry of the saba ayoun amulet:



The Saba Ayoun in front of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs



1. Old Town Hall: to mark the original town centre of Den Haag, on the border between the enclosed royal court and the commons; straddling the stream that now runs underground through pipes; on the most public of all spaces: the daily food market.
2. Haagse Markt Food Market: in the centre of the 'red zone' or coloured area Schilderswijk/Transvaal; in front of the new market, which is also the biggest open-air market of the Netherlands; in the midst of urban renovation/dislocation projects; close to a main mosque.
3. Hollands Spoor Train Station: public transport hub; also red zone of Den Haag with zone of prostitution (violating the border of women's physical integrity) and poverty, petty criminality: public space where all society's discomforts express themselves.
4. Ministry of Foreign Affairs / Central Train Station: the other public transport hub of Den Haag, this one for the Ministries; the officialdom, public administration, high-rise government buildings: the State.
5. Shell Headquarters: in the woods opposite the main building of the headquarters of one of the world's largest multinational companies. Symbol of 21st century capitalism, involved in one of the businesses that causes and fuels many global conflicts, certainly the one in Iraq. Paradoxically it lies in a supremely clean and green area.
6. Peace Palace: in front of the original building symbolizing the rule of international law (League of Nations) in the 20th Century. Still the ceremonial seat of the International Court of Justice. Symbolizes the judiciary element of the governing trinity. Focus of hope for the prevention of future conflict.
7. City Heating Factory: one of the central nodes of Den Haag's infrastructure. Provides heating to most public buildings in Den Haag and many social housing projects. Symbol for the physical infrastructure of society (and civilization).



The basic geometry of the Saba Ayoun symbol and its application on the map of The Hague, centred on the old townhouse



Each point had a strategic significance, as if the city of The Hague had been planned with this secret (and ancient) geometry of the hexagonal amulet in mind. Each of these sites also indicated one of the dire needs in Iraq today, from public administration to a functioning market, reliable public transport to a functioning energy infrastructure, a solution to the 'resource curse' of oil and, above all, the need for justice, law and order.

Affairs Commission of the Dutch Parliament, also located in The Hague (they received the petition in a 15 min. ceremony) and to the local primary court during Rashad's trial for damage to public property.

A poster was made which incorporates the different elements of the public art project, and distributed to the target groups.

The Public Art project was supported by Kosmopolis Den Haag, and ended in March 2008.

Rashad Selim then wrote a petition, trying to mobilize public opinion calling for justice in Iraq. This was presented to the International Court of Justice (where nobody took note), to the Foreign

- ▲ Rashad delivering his petition by megaphone through the letterbox of the Peace Palace
- ◀ The Saba Ayoun in front of the Peace Palace
- ▼ Rashad Selim delivering his petition to the members of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Photo: Rick Vogels



Project for an Atlas

Foundation for Achieving Seamless Territory (FAST)

In August 2002 President Bush signed into US law the American Service members Protection Act, which authorizes the use of all necessary means (implying military force) to liberate citizens of the US or its allies being held by the International Criminal Court in The Hague, giving rise to its nickname as the 'Hague Invasion Act'. Though it might seem far removed from Guantánamo Bay, Diego Garcia or Bagram Airbase, the Hague has thus also become an exceptional space in the war on terror (in the legislative realm, at least, though the wider intimidating effects of such legislation are not to be underestimated).

Could the separation between red and green zones, as a result of a catastrophe, occur in The Hague, and, if it happened, what would be the consequences?

Whereas we cannot really say if it could happen, we have tried to explore in a number of scenarios how it could come about. In order to do this, we have chosen three cataclysmic events (Ethnic Revolt, Revolt of the Poor and Flood) and developed scenario's on how these events would influence the creation of green zones and red zones in The Hague. Using the 'Homeland National Security in Urban Areas' regulations, with its different alert levels, we envisioned how the urban structure of The Hague will be transformed under threat. We speculated about which areas would be secured and which areas would be fenced off, about the safe and the unsafe areas, the Green and the Red Zones of the city. Our scenarios are based on a quick snapshot of the city. Far from being exhaustive, they will hopefully help raising questions on issues of equality, freedom and prosperity of the different communities that inhabit the city.

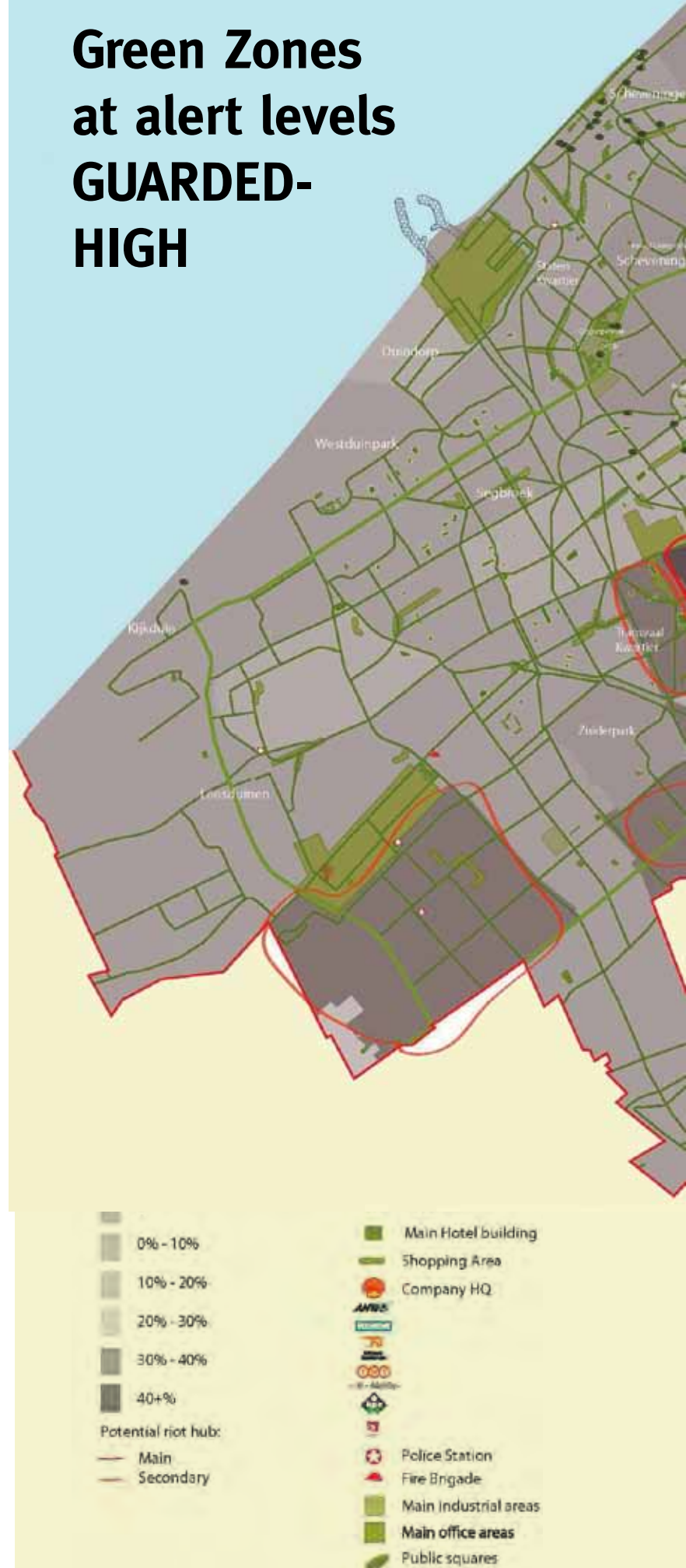
(from an introduction to the Atlas)

FAST is an architecture practice based in Amsterdam and is dedicated to exposing and countering situations of human rights violations caused by the uses and abuses of architecture and planning tools.

Authors, Research, maps, text and design by Malkit Shoshan and Camila Pinzón Cortes.

Following are some excerpts from the Draft Atlas;
All images © FAST, texts in *italics* by Robert Kluijver.

Green Zones at alert levels GUARDED- HIGH



Alert levels definition

The world has changed since September 11, 2001. We remain a Nation at risk to terrorist attacks and will remain at risk for the foreseeable future. At all Threat Conditions, we must remain vigilant, prepared, and ready to deter terrorist attacks. The following Threat Conditions each represent an increasing risk of terrorist attacks. Beneath each Threat Condition are some suggested Protective Measures, recognizing that the heads of Federal departments and agencies are responsible for developing and implementing appropriate agency-specific Protective Measures.

1. Low Condition (Green).

This condition is declared when there is a low risk of terrorist attacks. Federal departments and agencies should consider the following general measures in addition to the agency-specific Protective Measures they develop and implement:

1. Referring and exercising as appropriate preplanned Protective Measures;
2. Ensuring personnel receive proper training on the Homeland Security Advisory System and specific preplanned department or agency Protective Measures; and
3. Institutionalizing a process to assure that all facilities and regulated sectors are regularly assessed for vulnerabilities to terrorist attacks, and all reasonable measures are taken to mitigate these vulnerabilities.

2. Guarded Condition (Blue).

This condition is declared when there is a general risk of terrorist attacks. In addition to the Protective Measures taken in the previous Threat Condition, Federal departments and agencies should consider the following general measures in addition to the agency-specific Protective Measures that they will develop and implement:

1. Checking communications with designated emergency response or contracted locations;
2. Reviewing and updating emergency response procedures; and
3. Providing the public with any information that would strengthen its ability to act appropriately.

3. Elevated Condition (Yellow).

An Elevated Condition is declared when there is a significant risk of terrorist attacks. In addition to the Protective Measures taken in the previous Threat Conditions, Federal departments and agencies should consider the following general measures in addition to the Protective Measures that they will develop and implement:

1. Increasing surveillance of critical locations;
2. Coordinating emergency plans as appropriate with nearby jurisdictions;
3. Assessing whether the precise characteristics of the threat require the further refinement of preplanned Protective Measures; and
4. Implementing, as appropriate, contingency and emergency response plans.

4. High Condition (Orange).

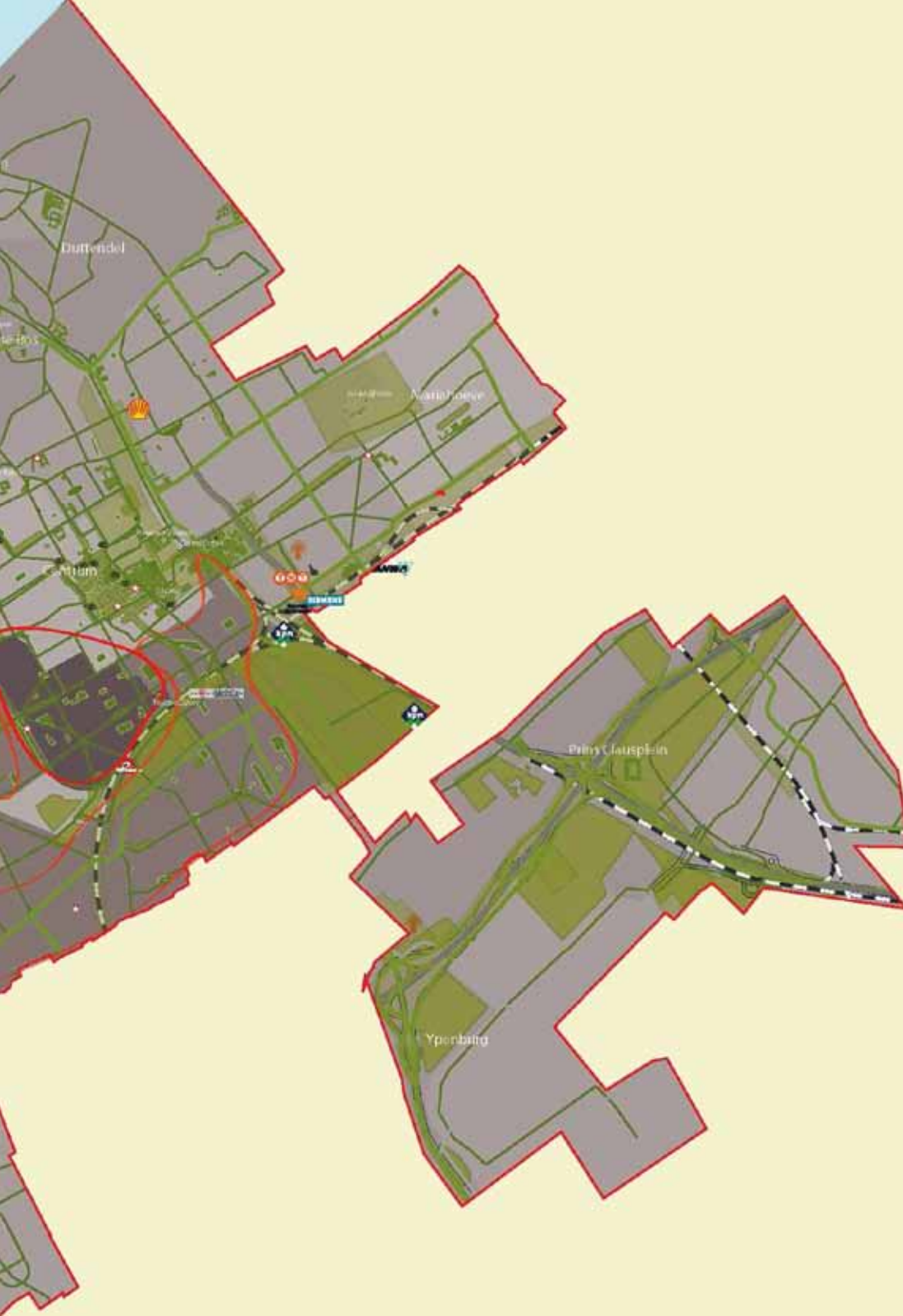
A High Condition is declared when there is a high risk of terrorist attacks. In addition to the Protective Measures taken in the previous Threat Conditions, Federal departments and agencies should consider the following general measures in addition to the agency-specific Protective Measures that they will develop and implement:

1. Coordinating necessary security efforts with Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies or any National Guard or other appropriate armed forces organizations;
2. Taking additional precautions at public events and possibly considering alternative venues or even cancellations;
3. Preparing to execute contingency procedures such as moving to an alternate site or dispersing their workforce; and
4. Restricting threatened facility access to essential personnel only.

5. Severe Condition (Red).

A Severe Condition reflects a severe risk of terrorist attacks. Under most circumstances, the Protective Measures for a Severe Condition are not intended to be sustained for substantial periods of time. In addition to the Protective Measures in the previous Threat Conditions, Federal departments and agencies also should consider the following general measures in addition to the agency-specific Protective Measures that they will develop and implement:

1. Increasing or redirecting personnel to address critical emergency needs;
2. Assigning emergency response personnel and pre-positioning and mobilizing specially trained teams or resources;
3. Monitoring, redirecting, or constraining transportation systems; and
4. Closing public and government facilities.



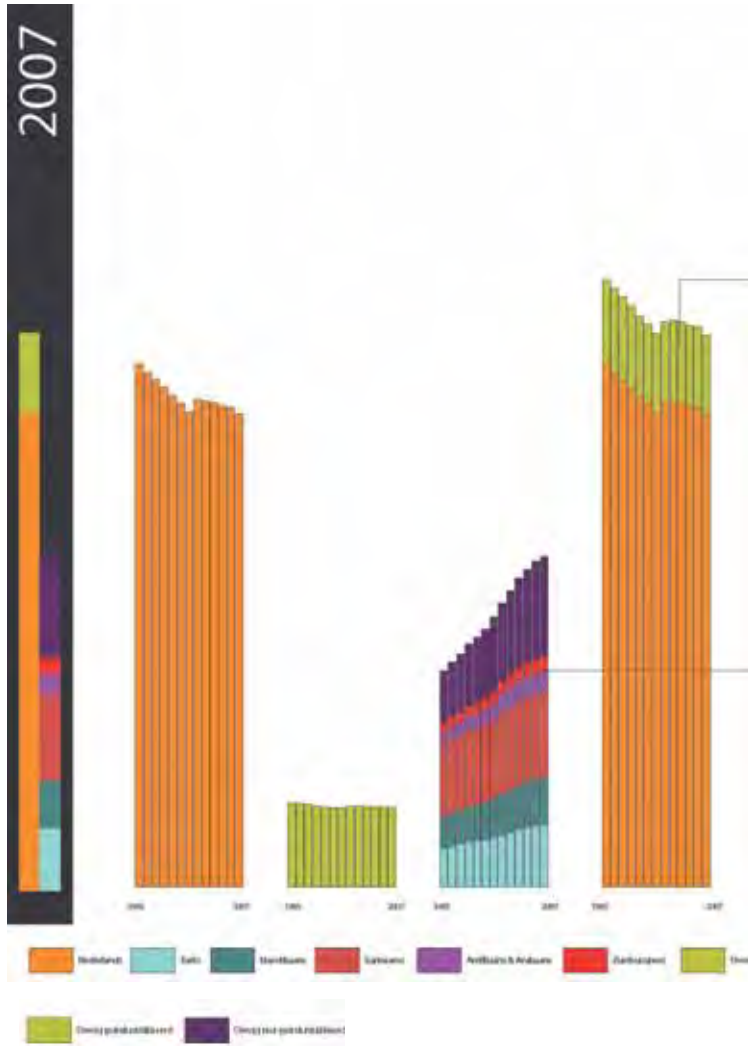
Green Zones in the Hague at alert levels LOW-HIGH

Alert Level



◀ At a low alert level both the green and the red zones are small, as most of the city is considered safe enough without extra measures of protection. As the alert level rises to an elevated level, the urge to protect large parts of the city leads to a green zone that is larger than the red zone. But when the alert level stands at 'severe' only the most essential areas of the city are protected, while large parts of the city are closed off to prevent further contamination by insecurity.

► This map shows how the area around the Zuiderpark might fare in a worst-case scenario where the Dutch military has to invade parts of The Hague to contain and eliminate an Islamic (terrorist) revolt. It is based on the experience of Israel in occupied Palestine.



▲ The Dutch population (in orange) has decreased steadily between 1995 and 2007, while the presence from other Western ('industrialized') nations has decreased slightly. Meanwhile the Turkish, Moroccan and West Indian communities have grown considerably, as has the population from other non-Western countries. The Surinamese population has remained more or less stable, at its previous high level. The Hague is known as the 'Hindustani' capital of Holland (to distinguish Surinamers and West Indians from South Asian origin from those of African origin). The Hague, for example, houses the largest Ahmadiyya community outside the subcontinent. This Muslim sect escaped persecution in the late 19th century by emigrating to the Dutch colonies in South America and the Caribbean, and came to the Netherlands with the independence of Surinam in 1975.



Special Zone
Family reunion
Food delivery
Market Place
Zuiderpark



STINE

سرق الأردن

Bank

Holy Land

ISRA

NO MAN'S LAND ?

*Contemporary Art from
Palestine*

Contemporary Art from Palestine

The space allotted to the Palestinian people has, over the past sixty years, been systematically reduced, fragmented and put under such pressure that the notion itself of nationhood and how it is related to territory has been transformed.

To start with, the attempt to end one diaspora has initiated another. Very few Palestinians live in the place their forefathers lived in, and very few have moved from that original location out of free will. The relation Palestinians have with their 'home territory' has accordingly long been characterized by pathos: the longing for home, the denied right to return, the deep feeling of injustice that this provokes, and the resulting state of limbo.

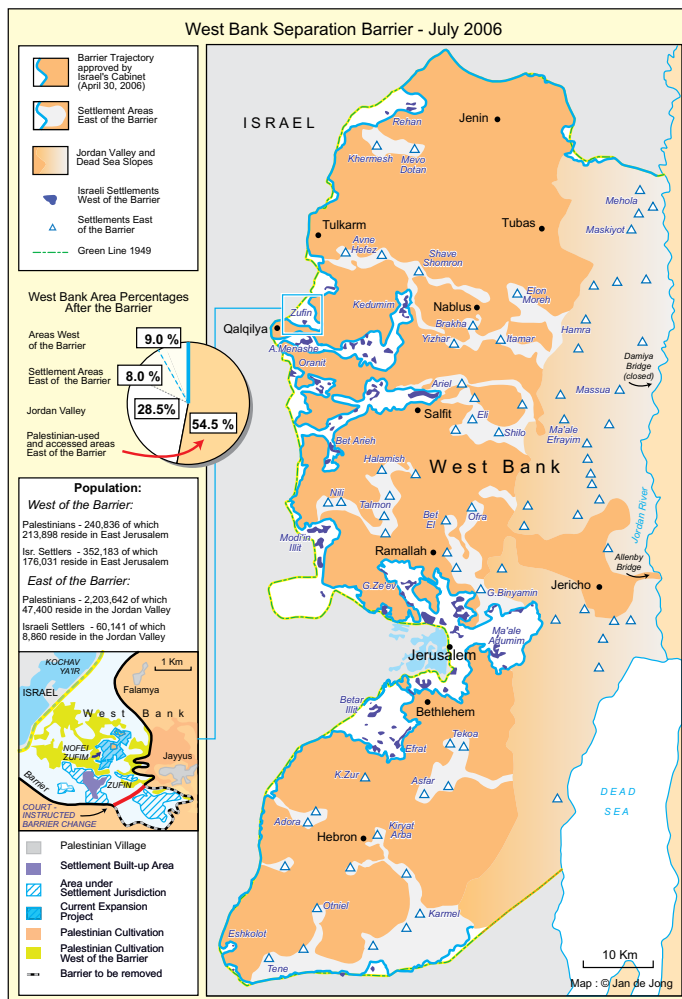
Many people in Palestine say 'the situation is set in stone' meaning they have lost all hope that Israel will cede any territory to the Palestinian State, or even allow it full sovereignty over the remaining parcels of territory it could theoretically receive. To the contrary, every year more Palestinian lands are occupied by settlers and the Israeli state. Collective approaches tried in the past, such as decrying the illegality of the situation and trying to muster international support for a fair solution to the plight of the Palestinians, or organizing violent resistance (intifada), have not produced the desired effect. Keeping the hope of return alive to unify the Palestinians behind a political leadership – the strategy of the PLO/Fatah and Yasser Arafat – no longer finds an echo among a by now disillusioned population. The idea itself of national leadership has been thoroughly hollowed out by Israeli policies which undermine Palestinian authority at all levels.

The reality on the ground shows that Israel has indeed achieved total dominance over the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank. This is manifested in several ways: through economic blockades, in urban planning, by pressure on the agricultural sector, militarily and through practices of policing and detention. Most essentially Israel limits the mobility of each Palestinian with a complex grid of obstructions formed by the Wall, Israeli settlements, military terrains, roads accessible to Israelis only and hundreds of checkpoints in and around the occupied territories. In *No Man's Land? 'Road Map'*, an installation by the international collective 'Multiplicity', shows how it takes a Palestinian car more than five times longer to get from point A to point B on the West Bank than it takes an Israeli, because of all these barriers.

The Wall which Israel is building around the remaining Palestinian enclave seems to be an inescapable theme for Palestinian artists. The photographer Rula Halawani, in a series of giant blow-ups of pictures taken with a mini-camera by day, captures its monstrous quality in what seems to be a personal confrontation with it. Defeated in the daytime, Rula seems victorious in the photographs she has taken of it by night (which were retro-projected every night on to the street side windows of Gemak), as if she had somehow managed to tame the beast.

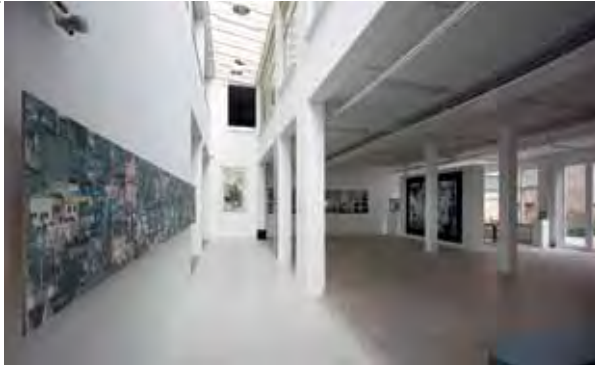
If one adds to the manifold barriers the Israeli policies of attributing different types of identity cards and travel documents to Palestinians, and allowing checkpoint commanders to take seemingly arbitrary decisions, one understands that Palestinians feel completely despondent. Immobilization and handicap feature prominently in the work of Samira Badran, to whom no movement seems possible without prostheses. A wheelchair, a wheelbarrow and improvised transparent prosthetic legs, waiting in endless queues, haunt her work.

Equally important, there is no piece of territory in Palestine (including private homes at night) out of bounds for Israeli security forces and their tactics of 'walking through walls' or targeted assassinations. It seems the last 'border' to cross is the very body of the Palestinians. In *No Man's Land? Sharif Waked*, in his video 'Chic Point', presents



Jan de Jong, Map of the West Bank, 2006

new fashion which allows Israeli soldiers to easily body search Palestinian men. However the typical defiant looks of male models as they stroll down the catwalk take on new meanings. Meanwhile Raeda Saadeh uses her body as a weapon to infiltrate Israeli/Western society, through performances and photographs of her taking on roles reserved for Western damsels.



Installation view in Gemak

Taken together these policies and the negation of any kind of statehood for Palestinians² have, over time, created deep crevices in the Palestinian national entity. Which common ground can be found between a Gazan that needs to rely on Muslim solidarity for basic community services in a state of siege, an inhabitant of the booming new political centre Ramallah, awash with international aid and relatively undisturbed by Israel in exchange for the acceptance of the status quo by its political elites, and an Israeli Palestinian who can participate up to a degree in the rich economic, cultural or academic life of Israel as long as he/she accepts to be a second class (non-Jewish) citizen? In the exhibition the gulf is evident between the artists from Gaza (Shady al Zaqzouq and Taysir Batniji), grappling with base reality, and the Israeli Palestinians (Raeda Saadeh and Sharif Waked) that mount sophisticated attacks on the art establishment.

As a result Palestinians are drifting apart: each individual is busy dealing with his/her own problems. Shady al Zaqzouq, a young artist from Gaza, shows this poignantly in his installation 'The Red Line', composed of paintings of contorted people within cardboard boxes, which are all huddled together in a corner of Gemak. Nobody has the space to develop in the conditions Shady depicts, and the forced proximity in adverse conditions does not necessarily lead to solidarity. Another artist in No Man's Land dealing with demographic pressure is Jawad al Malhi. He presents an amazing panoramic view, more than 5 meters long, of Shuhada refugee camp in East Jerusalem. Strangely the scene is devoid of the expected hustle and bustle of urban life, as if a catastrophe had hit it and it became a ghost town. It is impossible to avoid the issues related to being Palestinian and 'get on with life', even for many of those born in exile. The wounds caused by the violent severance of one's roots don't seem to heal easily, as the history of Jewry indicates; see for example the photographs of Raeda Saadeh, where she sets herself in idyllic landscapes

that used to be Palestinian but are now Israeli. The thorough injustice of the situation challenges one's understanding of how the rest of the world can let this happen; and practically, the daily encounters with obstacles related to living in a stateless and occupied country simply don't allow a Palestinian to ignore his/her particular status. Transits, a video work by Taysir Batniji, documents the endless waiting in bureaucratic purgatory that stateless Gazans trying to enter their enclave from Egypt have to endure.

Interestingly, the condition of being Palestinian is not only experienced by those born of Palestinian parents; many foreigners have in different ways become involved with the Palestinian 'cause' and are subjected to the same mechanisms of control and domination. In addition Israel has made a major export item of its expertise in security and control, responding to demand from buyers ranging from the US military in Iraq to the London metropolitan police. Much of the security hardware and software which is being installed throughout the world is made in Israel. No man's lands with their characteristic legal vacuum have emerged from Guantánamo Bay to the airport areas where political asylum seekers are herded to when they try to enter the West. Being Palestinian thus may become a metaphoric status that can befall any civilian that happens to find him- or herself in one of the interstices strategically defined as a no man's land by the dominant powers of this world.

Adequate responses then must be developed to deal with this status. The project 'Decolonizing Architecture', which includes Palestinian, foreign and Israeli architects along with local communities and students in Palestine plans constructively for the devolution of Israeli settlements to Palestinian authority. In a grassroots approach where the process – involving local actors – is as important as expected results, they reignite the agency of Palestinians: how can you collectively combat the paralysis and plan ahead? Of all the works shown in the exhibition, this may be the most 'political' one in the sense that it seeks to mobilize for a short to medium term objective. Another contender are the posters made by the collective of young artists and graphic designers Zan Studio, who supplied the visuals (poster, banners) for the exhibition. They constantly call for resistance against Israel, but not in the name of some outdated national project, but from gut feelings and intellectual outrage. Their work testifies to the emergence of a new rebellious spirit akin to hip hop (Ramallah Underground), and that directs its anger equally at the Palestinian elite, the Israeli occupier and the international circus that sustains both sides. But what about the long term objective? What impresses in the works shown here as well as the activi-

References

1. See the text 'Lethal Theory' by Eyal Weizman on page 109.
2. It is not our objective to point an accusatory finger at Israel, because it is likely that the Netherlands or another Western nation put in Israel's place would follow similar policies vis-à-vis the Palestinians. The experience of colonial European policies, the manner in which illegal immigrants are treated in Europe or current policies of the Western coalition in Iraq provide circumstantial evidence that this would be so. In this sense, as in many others, Israel is truly a Western state.



Zan Studio Ramallah: Banners produced for the exhibition in Gemak (www.zanstudio.com)



ties that took place during the exhibition are the efforts deployed by artists and intellectuals based in Palestine to develop a new identity narrative which can replace the battered national discourse and give new content to what it means to be 'Palestinian' today.

As the Egyptian novelist Ahdaf Soueif wrote, many months after the exhibition in Gemak: "The point about the art on show here is that it both resists the Israeli project for Palestine and resists being seen only in terms of resistance. (...) Palestinian talent is making itself felt. And, because of the divisions, there is no party line. They are making art out of adversity and are doing it with grace."³

Although she's discussing Palestine c/o Venice, a collateral event of the 2009 biennial, her words apply equally to the exhibition in Gemak. Palestinian artists and their allies abroad are becoming tired of the humanitarian approach to Palestinian art, where well-intentioned pro-Palestinian activists in the West attempt one of two approaches: either they want to denounce Israeli occupation by showcasing its most horrible effects, or they hope to create 'peace through art', typically by inviting Israeli and Palestinian artists together and fostering artistic cooperation between both. In both cases Palestinian art is made to serve a foreign-imposed purpose - which, incidentally, does not encourage good artistic practice.

To make matters worse, both patronizing approaches need to cast Palestine in the role of 'the other', especially in comparison with Israeli art, which is obviously closer to our Western art world. There are therefore valid artistic as well as political reasons for a Palestinian cultural boycott of Israel.

3. Ahdaf Soueif 'Reflect and Resist' in The Guardian, June 13 2009.

Cultural Boycott

Palestinian Filmmakers

Artists and Cultural Workers Call for a Cultural Boycott of Israel

Ramallah, August 12, 2006

Over 100 Palestinian filmmakers, artists and cultural workers have called on filmmakers and artists worldwide to cancel art exhibitions planned in Israel, to boycott Israeli film festivals, Israeli cultural venues, and to end all cooperation with Israeli art, film and cultural organizations and institutions sponsored by the Israeli government. In order to end the apathy and silence in Israel to the war atrocities being committed. The call comes at a time when Israel has escalated its attacks on Palestine and Lebanon, with over 1000 civilians killed, more than a million forced to leave their homes, and infrastructure in both countries destroyed, a war that is supported by a majority of the Israeli population.

The statement calls for an end to the war, and an end to the root of the problem in the Middle East which is the continued military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, that has lasted for almost 40 years.

Among those calling for the boycott are prominent Palestinian artists, writers and filmmakers Mai Masri, Vera Tamari, Suleiman Mansour, Hany Abu Assad, Khaled Jubran, Marwan Abado, Reem Banna, Walid Abu Baker, Kamal Boullata and Emily Jacir to name a few. The call has been supported by around 300 filmmakers, artists, writers, and musicians from countries all around the world.

To endorse or answer this call for a cultural boycott of Israel please send an email with your name, position and country to: pal.film-makers@gmail.com

http://www.pacbi.org/press_releases_more.php?id=333_0_4_0_C

Note by the author: almost all Palestinian artists participate in this boycott. The curator was consistently asked if he planned to include Israeli artists in the same show; if so the Palestinian artist wasn't interested in participating.

Multiplicity: The Road Map

Multiplicity is an agency for territorial investigation based in Milan, concerned with contemporary urbanism, architecture, visual arts and general culture. Multiplicity is an ever-changing network formed by architects, geographers, artists, urban planners, photographers, sociologists, economists, filmmakers etc. Multiplicity projects and produces intervention strategies, workshops, installations and books about the recent and hidden processes of transformation of the urban condition.

The territories of Israel and Palestine are, in these days, a laboratory of the world. This is a region where, in a few acres, an incredible variety of borders, enclosures, fences, check points and controlled corridors are concentrated.

On January 13th and 14th 2003 we tried to measure, with our EU passport, the density of border devices in the surrounding area of Jerusalem. On January 13th we travelled on highway 60, along with a person with an Israeli passport from the colony of Kiriat Arba to the colony of Kudmin. The following day, we travelled along with a person with a Palestinian passport from the city of Hebron to the city of Nablus. The two routes both start and end in the same latitude; at some points they overlap. Their travelling times, though, are profoundly different.

To move between the two latitudes, the Israeli traveller took around one hour, while the Palestinian took five and half hours.

The West Bank territories are divided into three different zones: Zone A: under Palestinian Authority military and administrative control. It includes most Palestinian cities; Zone B: under Israeli military control, but under Palestinian Authority administrative control. It mostly includes Palestinian villages; Zone C: under Israeli military and administrative control. It includes most Israeli colonies. This partition produced a leopard-skin like territory, where the three zones alternate with each other without any apparent logic.

The different temporality of the two routes is due to the fact that the Israeli travellers, in order to move from a settlement to the other – from a Zone C to an other Zone C – can use the so-called by-pass-roads, often in tunnels or elevated, which link the colonies by-passing Palestinian villages. On the other hand, the Palestinian travellers who want to move from one city in Zone A to another in a different Zone A must pass through B or C Zones which are under Israeli military control, crossing a number of both permanent and temporary check points – or trying to avoid them. The check points – which are situated along the “Green Line” that runs between Israel and West Bank as well as on the edges of East Jerusalem – cannot be crossed by those who have a “travel document” issued by the Palestinian Authority, unless they are also provided with a special permission issued by the Israeli government. Other check points are daily activated and removed according to Israeli government security guidelines.

(From www.multiplicity.it)



Multiplicity: The Road Map, 2003. Installation view in Gemak

Excerpt from: Asymmetries in Globalized Space: The Road Network in Palestine-Israel

by Alessandro Petti

Alessandro Petti and his wife Sandi Hilal are architects based in Bethlehem. They are members of the groups Multiplicity and Decolonizing Architecture, which both present work in the exhibition 'No Man's Land?' in Gemak. The following excerpt from his 32 page long analysis describes a journey undertaken through the Occupied Territories to Jordan in August 2006.



Checkpoint near Jericho

Tala, my daughter, was born in Bethlehem on a beautiful spring morning in the month of February. She was birthed in a clinic built with funds from the Japanese government and tended by a Palestinian nurse who spoke perfect Neapolitan, learned during a long stay in Naples where he had studied.

After the first few days spent rejoicing in her arrival, we find ourselves faced with a dilemma: how is Tala going to be able to cross the border and get out of the Occupied Territories? How will the border machine work on her, with a Palestinian mother and an Italian father? If Tala leaves Bethlehem as an "Italian" she'll only be able to come back as a tourist; if she leaves Bethlehem as a "Palestinian" she'll be treated as such by the Israeli army, meaning she won't be able to move freely around the Occupied Territories and Israel. (...)

To ensure ourselves some likelihood of crossing the border into Jordan, which is only open a few hours a day, we set out from Bethlehem at 4:30 in the morning. Luckily, Tala is sleeping. We get through the first checkpoint, called the container, without any particular problems.

I'm the only Westerner in the bus, one of the few Westerners to take the roads reserved to Palestinians. The soldiers at the checkpoints have often asked me, "What the fuck are you doing here?"



Checkpoint near Nablus



Palestinian buses waiting behind a checkpoint in Hebron

And I've always answered, "It's a long story, actually...". To save themselves the boredom, they almost always let me through. Having arrived as far as Abu Dis, I'm beginning to think that this is a charmed trip, with a remarkable lack of snags, when we suddenly come up against a mobile checkpoint. They stop us and tell us that we can't pass this way. The passengers start to get upset. They start shouting, waving airplane tickets departing from the Amman airport. The soldiers pretend they don't hear. There's no point in arguing. Tense and irritated, the taxi driver turns the car around and after a few yards sets off down a back road through the countryside. Tala wakes up: the car is rocking a little too violently to be mistaken for a cradle. I hold her baby seat against my chest as tightly as I can. We cut across a beautiful field of ancient olive trees. After a short while, we're once again on the main road, with the soldiers behind us grinning from the checkpoint.

The road starts to go downhill and we gaze out the windows onto the extraordinary landscape of the hills of the Dead Sea, dotted by colonies and Bedouin camps. My thoughts turn toward the nomadic city designed by Constant. I tell myself that its tragic dimension, rarely discussed, takes on concrete form in this place. I have always thought of Constant's New Babylon as a dystopia: the vision of a world in collapse, in constant conflict, not so much between nomads and sedentary peoples as between different conceptions of nomadism.

As I look out the car window, I recognize the encampments and the new colony expansions. Lost in my thoughts, I fail to notice that, instead of driving straight toward the Jordanian border, the taxi has detoured and is entering into Jericho. And I suddenly find myself in front of the mutated form of the border that I crossed four years previously.

The first time I arrived here from Jordan, I first met up with the Jordanian police and then with the Israeli forces, assisted by a Palestinian police unit. Now the Palestinians have been moved away from the border and have set up a sham border of a non-existent state on a piece of land measuring 150 by 500 feet.



The Separation Barrier near Qalandia

A barrier appears in front of our vehicle. We get out of the taxi and climb onto a bus that stops again after a few yards. Some Palestinian policemen climb on to check documents and luggage.

The bus starts again, and stops a few yards later. They make us get off. We pick up our suitcases from practically the same spot where we made our entry.

The Palestinian border is like a service station that leads nowhere. I'm flooded by a sense of overwhelming sadness. The idea of Palestinian sovereignty appears to have achieved its final form in this place: a sovereignty exercised over a minuscule plot of land inside of which all procedures are complied with for a border crossing into...nowhere. The real border is 5 miles away. I'm flabbergasted: the police and the people in transit diligently recite their parts in this puppet theatre. Everybody knows that it's make-believe, but no one objects to it. Back in the bus, we leave for the real border, presided over this time solely by Israelis. As an Italian citizen in a taxi, I could have reached the border directly.

Sandi and Tala, as Palestinians, had no way of avoiding this sham performance. We continue our journey, this time in the direction of the real border.

After hours of waiting to be able to enter the border zone, the moment comes to show our documents. Many Westerners with privileged passports do not understand the anxiety of people who are faced with the potential of being sent back. The Palestinian travel document is once again the paroxysmal expression of this control device. It's a travel document, not a passport, and it doesn't even specify a nationality. I've seen policemen at the airport stare at it with puzzled expressions and ask, "What the heck is this?" Whoever thought up this document didn't have the courage to write the word "Palestinian" in the box for "Nationality". The adjective "Palestinian" is becoming like the adjective "Jewish": a lot of people are too scared to even pronounce it. Bad consciences.

Even though Tala is registered on my passport, for the Israelis and Palestinians she's Palestinian, so she has to follow the same route as Sandi, a different one from mine. I don't object to this, I just ask the Israeli soldier to allow me to go with them, to let me follow the procedure reserved to Palestinians. I want to give up my Westerner privileges, air conditioning, cleanliness and cold drinks, in order to accompany my family into the crowded buildings and hallways reserved to Palestinians.

The soldier informs me that this will not be possible and that I have to stick to the procedures for tourists. A confused jumble of questions comes to my mind. By accepting this treatment, to what extent do I make myself an accomplice to this madness? Why do all the things I've read not come to my aid, preventing me from going crazy with rage? To stop myself from dehumanizing the soldiers standing before me, I imagine that Nadav, Eyal, Ravit, Runit and many other Israeli friends of mine might very well be disguised behind their uniforms and rifles. All I know is that I give in and, dazed, I watch Sandi and Tala walk away from me.

I enter into the area for non-Palestinians. Air conditioning and men in Bermuda shorts. I feel ashamed of myself for giving up and accepting this privileged treatment. Me, here, with the tourists and them, over there, hoping not to be sent home. Stunned, I obey the orders issued to me: pay here, open there, get up here, go there, step down, step up, sit down....

After a few hours, I cross the bridge. I'm in Jordan. I immediately start looking for the Palestinian exit, but it's not easy to find. The building is built in such a way as to prevent human traffic flows from ever meeting up, like in hospitals, where areas and routes for healthy people and patients are kept rigorously separated. Breathlessly, I search among lazy Jordanian policemen and sweaty tourists for the door connecting the area reserved to Palestinians with the area for everyone else. I finally find the door, and before opening it, I feel like Jim Carey in *The Truman Show* when he discovers the hidden door in the painted blue skyscape that may possibly eject him into the real world.

© Alessandro Petti, 2007



A man with dark, wavy hair is shown in profile, facing left. He is wearing a dark, padded vest over a dark shirt. The vest has a high collar and a strap across the chest. The background is dark, and the lighting is dramatic, highlighting the man's face and the texture of the vest.

Sharif Waked

Sharif Waked (born in Nazareth, 1964, lives and works in Haifa and Nazareth, Israel) studied philosophy and fine arts in Haifa, Israel. Over the past decade he has had many exhibitions in Israel, Palestine and abroad.

Since Palestinian suicide attacks on Israeli targets have become more common, Palestinians often must show their belly or torso when crossing an Israeli checkpoint. Traditional Palestinian garments are not suited to this purpose. Therefore the Palestinian artist Sharif Waked developed a new line of clothing, here presented by male models on a catwalk.

Typical Israeli vocals at a checkpoint:

STOP, STOP!
RAISE YOUR SWEATER
I AM TELLING YOU
RAISE YOUR SWEATER
TAKE OFF YOUR JACKET,
PULL UP YOUR UNDERSHIRT
DON'T MOVE, KNEEL DOWN
AND PULL UP YOUR CLOTHES
SHUT UP AND GET DOWN ON
THE GROUND
OK, OK, GIVE ME YOUR I.D.
STAY HERE
GO

*(From Jack Persekian's text 'Bally Jacket' pp 130-134
in Sharif Waked's book 'Chic Point - Fashion for
Israeli Checkpoints' published in Tel Aviv, 2007)*

◀ Sharif Waked:
Stills from *Chic Point -
Fashion for Israeli Checkpoints*
DVD, 7'00", 2003





Rula Halawani

Rula Halawani (born in East Jerusalem, 1964, and still resident there) abandoned a successful career in photojournalism to focus on photography. She set up the photography department at Birzeit University and has participated in major exhibitions worldwide.

“I started documenting the wall almost from when they started building it, but each time I developed the pictures all that showed was its ugliness and my anger. Then the wall reached Qalandia checkpoint. They started building it right in the middle of the road, my road to work. I always fantasized that one day we would plant trees in the middle of that road. Once it reached Qalandia, the wall reached me and found my fear. They put down the foundations, stopped for a while and then they put it up block by block along the middle of the road.

I wanted to photograph it at night. Maybe to show I wasn't scared. I went. The wall was so ugly, the land sad and scarred. There were only soldiers, heavy machines and the sound of dogs barking. I was terrified and desolate. I took the photographs during the day, but the memory of that night was in them.

After I finished the project, one night, and I do not know why, I suddenly felt I needed to go see the wall. It was the Jewish New Year. It was almost midnight but I jumped in my car and went back. I drove all along the wall and arrived back at my first night there, at the place with the heavy machines and barking dogs. They were all locked up. I enjoyed the scene. I returned home through the Mount of Olives, where I first stepped foot on this earth, my earth. I got out and looked and made a promise, a promise to my Land.”

(Statement by the photographer)

◀ Rula Halawani:
Unfitted (The Wall),
Digital Print, 2003



"On the 28th of March 2002 I was in Ramallah when the major Israeli incursion happened. I was shocked: everything around me looked so different. Every street and square I visited was dark and empty; no one was in the streets that day except the Israeli army and its tanks. I felt depressed and cold. The only Palestinian I met on the road was an old man. He was shot dead. I never knew his name, but I had seen him walking around those same streets before. That night I could not take away his face from my memory, and many questions without answers rushed inside my head. It was that night that my hopes for peace died".

(Statement by the photographer)



▲ Rula Halawani:
Negative Incursion,
 Digital Print, 2002/2006



“Every day
the same
gestures are
repeated, the
same words
spoken, and
the same
humiliations
suffered”

“Every day hundred thousands of Palestinians must cross Israeli checkpoints on their way to work, school, family or friends. Every day the same gestures are repeated, the same words spoken, and the same humiliations suffered. But given that new checkpoints may unexpectedly appear or be removed, that governmental policies may change on a daily basis and that each checkpoint boss enjoys considerable autonomy, you never know if you will arrive at your destination with all your things”.

(Statement by the photographer)

◀ Rula Halawani:
Intimacy
Slideshow of 22
photographs, 2004





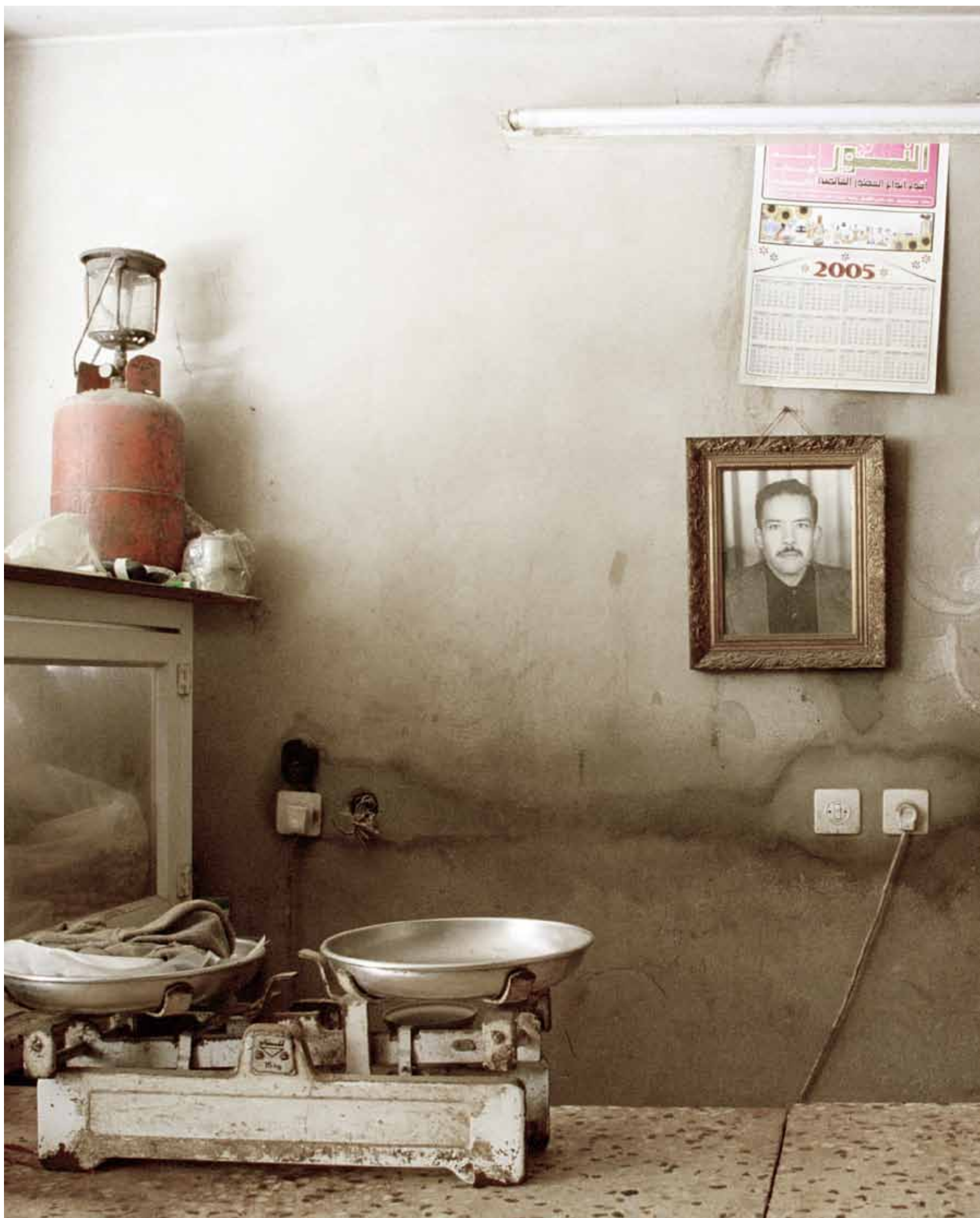
Taysir Batniji

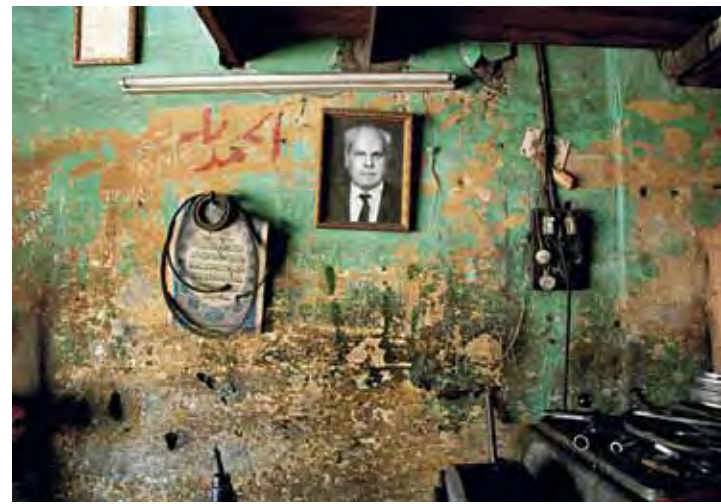
“After passing Egyptian controls they wait endlessly in no man’s land”

Taysir Batniji (born in Gaza, 1967, resident in Paris) studied art in Nablus, West Bank, before continuing his art education in France. Over the past years he has moved back several times to Gaza to continue his art practice there, but has been forced by the situation there to relocate to France each time. In the past years he has focused on photography in Gaza and made forays into video and installation works.

Transit: this video documents a typical trip to Gaza via Egypt, made by Batniji in 2004. When they arrive at Cairo airport Palestinians are not allowed into Egypt but they are brought to a separate lounge, where they await a special shuttle – sometimes they need to wait up to 24 hours. The shuttle brings them through the Sinai desert to the border, where after passing Egyptian controls they wait endlessly in no man’s land – often for days and sometimes to no avail – for the Israeli military to allow them through to Gaza.

◀ Taysir Batniji:
Stills from *Transit*
video, 6'30", 2004





Fathers

The Palestinian streets are full of martyr's posters. The young men who die fighting against the occupier are honoured with poster campaigns where they look like action movie heroes. Batniji's photographs show a different and more familiar aspect of masculinity: in Palestinian shops and family businesses it is common practice to hang a portrait of the father of the current owner, as a sign of respect and trustworthiness (continuity of the family business). The series incidentally also references Palestine's state of economic decay since Israel has locked the borders.

Taysir Batniji

Fathers

digital prints, 2006



Samira Badran

“They continue to cross artificial boundaries and barricades”

Samira Badran (Libya, 1954, currently resides in Spain) is member of an illustrious family of Palestinian architects and artists. After studying Fine Arts in Cairo and Firenze, Italy, she became active in the Palestinian art scene of the 1970's and 80s. She exhibited in the Middle East, the USA and Europe.

“In this work the prosthesis is a metaphor for the indomitable spirit of the Palestinians who seem always to find alternate routes to crossing barriers. The congested artificial limbs, some broken, others bandaged do not beg for sympathy, instead their seemingly frenzied march portray boundless determination and resilience, a tribute to the Palestinians steadfastness in the face of military and political domination, and that despite all constraints they continue to cross artificial boundaries and barricades.”

Statement by Salwa Mikdadi; art curator, Berkeley, USA, Aug. 2007

◀ Far left
[Samira Badran](#)
The New Walk
print on transparent Duraclear
2007.
Details and Installation

◀ [Samira Badran](#)
Silent Dance
print on silicone, 2002



Jawad al Malhi

Jawad al-Malhi (East Jerusalem, 1969, lives and works in Al Shufat refugee camp, East Jerusalem) has participated in many exhibitions in Palestine and internationally since the late 1980s.





"Jawad al Malhi highlights the forgotten question of refugees in the camps, articulating the site and experience of marginality via the contingent space of the camp. The camp is characterized by its chaotic concrete buildings that reveal the claustrophobia of the ghettos. The photograph is taken from the position of the neighbouring Israeli settlement – the only place from which such a 'view' can be captured."

(Tina Sherwell, director of the International Art Academy in Palestine)

My work explores the site and experience of marginality via the architecture and geography of a refugee camp. This refugee camp is not marked on official maps yet occupies a space on the outskirts of the city of Jerusalem with a population of over 35,000 people. It came into existence in 1965, as a result of a joint agreement between the Jordanian and Israeli government to transfer part of the refugee population who had been living in the old city of Jerusalem to this new camp before their neighbourhood was demolished. 520 families were transferred to 2km (squared) of land. Each family was allocated a plot of land 7 x 11 metres of space with one room measuring 2 x 3m.

Having been born in the camp and having lived there for over 30 years I have witnessed its transformation since a child. The geography of the camp is always in a state of transformation and flux as the unstable concrete structures are continually being built to accommodate the growing refugee population and their aspirations for a home.

My work in photographs explores the nature of the space and the layers of the built environment, in particular the accumulative and chaotic nature of the space of the camp. My work examines this contingent space, its architecture and the large physical presence of the camp characterised by concrete buildings. Through the exploration of space my work also examines the experience of claustrophobia and containment within the camp environment. The observations that make up the body of my work are taken from different viewpoints inside the camp and in contrast the neighbouring Israeli settlement, not accessible to Palestinians, which overlooks the camp, enabling the exploration of the image of camp from the position of an onlooker.

(Artist's statement)



Decolonizing Architecture is a project by the London/Bethlehem Architectural Studio, directed by Sandi Hilal, Alessandro Petti and Eyal Weizman. Gemak prompted the architects to prepare a visual installation of their project, which resulted in the production of two scale models (using stereolithographic digital laser cutting and CNC milling technology) of two project sites: the Israeli settlement of Psagot that dominates the heights above Ramallah/El Bireh, and the military post of Oush Grab overlooking Bethlehem.

The installation of the two scale models in Gemak was completed by a stereoscopic (3-D) video by the German artist Armin



Installation view of Decolonizing Architecture

Linke entitled 'Future Archaeology', a computer on which the video version of the Decolonizing Architecture manual played in loop, and a lecture by Alessandro Petti (see p.122) the day after the opening. See www.decolonizing.ps for full information on this project.

What is really revolutionary about the Decolonizing Architecture project is that it lifts an issue – the physical occupation of Palestinian Territories – out of the realm of pure ideology and makes it discussable. The normal, political and gut reaction to Israeli structures built on the West Bank and in Gaza is: they must go! The ideal is that of a tabula rasa, where all traces of Israeli occupation are erased and the Palestinians can build their own structures.

When Israel left Gaza in 2005, the army destroyed almost all the colonies, greenhouses and other built structures, leaving an immense pile of rubble for the Palestinians to clear. The Palestinians then destroyed the remaining structures. This was partially to vent their anger, but also the result of a lack of planning on the Palestinian side, what could be done with the remaining structures.

The idea of Decolonizing Architecture is to unleash the imagination of all Palestinian stakeholders: previous landowners, municipal authorities, non-governmental >





Decolonizing Architecture

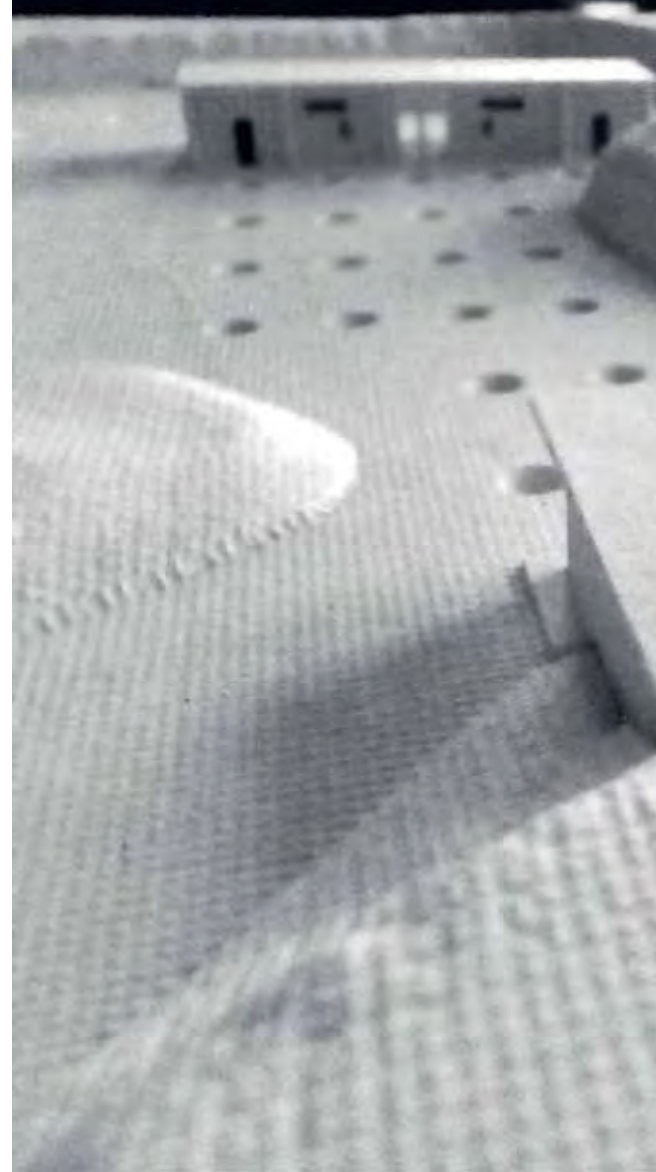
“Mobilizing architecture as a tactical tool within the struggle for Palestine”

“Our project uses architecture to articulate the spatial dimension of a process of decolonization. Recognizing that Israeli colonies and military bases are amongst the most excruciating instruments of domination, the project assumes that a viable approach to the issue of their appropriation is to be found not only in the professional language of architecture and planning but rather in inaugurating an “arena of speculation” that incorporates varied cultural and political perspectives through the participation of a multiplicity of individuals and organizations.

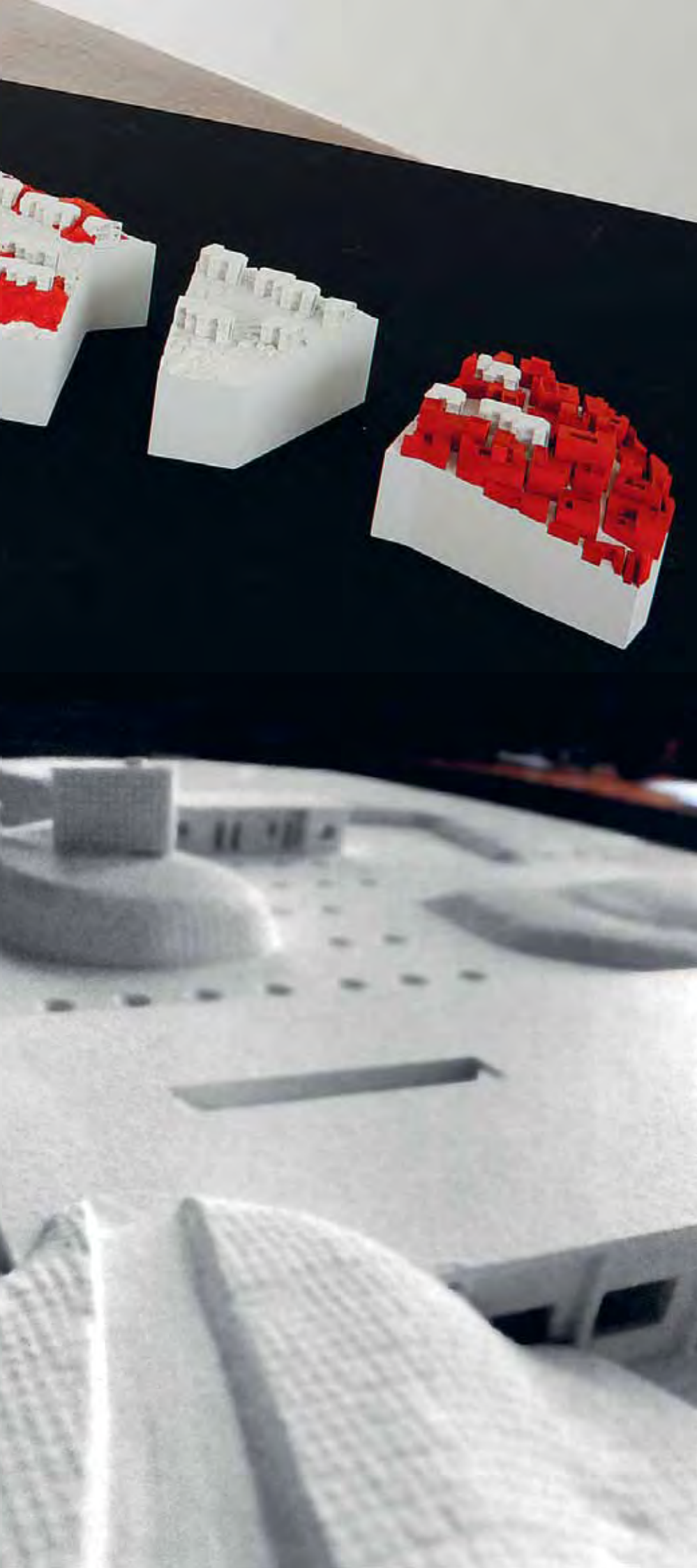
The project engages a less than ideal world. It does not articulate a utopia of ultimate satisfaction. Its starting point is not a resolution of the conflict and the just fulfilment of all Palestinian claims; also, the project is not, and should not be thought of, in terms of a solution. Rather it is mobilizing architecture as a tactical tool within the unfolding struggle for Palestine. It seeks to employ tactical physical interventions to open a possible horizon for further transformations.”

(Statement by the architects)

◀ One of the suggested interventions is ‘unroofing’ the European pointed roofs of Israeli settlements, replacing them with extra living space and flat roofs



- ▲ [Gemak](#)
Installation view of
Decolonizing Architecture
- ▶ The scale models of Oush Grab
after landscaping and Psagot
in its deparcelized form (above)



“Using architecture to articulate the spatial dimension of a proces of decolonization”

› organizations, students of architecture or social sciences, agronomists etc. in the search for manners in which the structures built by Israelis could be integrated into the Palestinian social, cultural and economic fabric. The single family housing units can be joined together to create schools or hospitals, the red pointed ‘European’ roofs can be transformed into flat roofs and the roads connecting the settlements to Israel, now useless, can be used to dry fruit and vegetables.

Not only does this allow the Palestinians engaged in this process to think the unthinkable (we could actually integrate this symbol of oppression into our polity in a positive manner) but it also reverses the typical top-down approach of architects and urban planners.

Fortunately the approach could be tested when the Israeli military left the observation post of Oush Grab. The local stakeholders and the municipality of Bethlehem made plans to create a park, a wildlife (bird) observation post and an outdoor leisure area.

In fact any progress has been made difficult because Israeli settlers keep violently reclaiming the hilltop. They are protected and then gently evicted by the Israeli military, only to return a few days later to set up a new camp and be evicted again. It is a challenge for the Decolonizing Architecture project, which has set its sights on a number of other Israeli settlements on the West Bank, to incorporate this element of permanent instability.





Raeda Saadeh

“The subject I represent reflect an evaluation of the self and that of the subject’s environment”

Raeda Saadeh was born in Umm el Fahem, Palestine, 1977. She lives in East Jerusalem. Raeda graduated with a Master in Fine Arts at Bezalel University in Jerusalem. She won the Young Artist of the Year award of Al Qattan Foundation in Ramallah in 2000. Since then she has participated in exhibitions in Jerusalem, Cairo, Sharjah, New York, Spain, Denmark and other countries. She works in photography, video and performance.

“I am seen in a desert landscape, attempting to vacuum the sand of the desert. It is an endless process, as I move across the sands in a continuous vacuuming motion, in an attempt to question how much life is given and how much taken?”

The actions of the subject I represent reflect an evaluation of the self and that of the subject’s environment, submission and revolt – attempting to live a life alongside occupying forces in all its forms, and regardless of its geography.”

(Statement by the artist)

Raeda Saadeh:
Vacuum
double video projection,
loop 17'00", 2007





During the opening of the exhibition the artist gave a performance which she had conceived especially for Gemak. She appeared in her underwear with a big platter of steaks and string. As if in a trance, she sat in the middle of the audience, slowly binding the meat to her body. When she was covered with meat the music came on and Raeda belly danced to the melancholic music of *Umm Kalthoum*. As she was dancing the meat started falling off, until she had little left. She then collapsed on the middle of the floor and lay there, silent, defeated.

◀ Raeda Saadeh:
performance for Gemak,
5 September 2008.



Shadi al Zaqzouq

Since Israel evacuated Gaza in 2005, and later almost hermetically sealed the border, this strip of land with 1.5 million inhabitants is sometimes called 'the biggest prison in the world'. Here it is difficult to live, but it is even more difficult to leave. This has dire psychological consequences for the inhabitants. The most recent Israeli bombing campaign and invasion, which resulted in the death of some 1300 Palestinians, started shortly after the exhibition in Gemak was over.

Shadi al Zaqzouq: born in Benghazi, Libya, 1981, lives in Gaza but currently resides in Paris, as long as return to Gaza is impossible. Shadi is a self-taught artist who attended various available courses in Gaza, ranging from music to furniture design. He has exhibited in Gaza, Ramallah, the Emirates and Paris.

▲ Shadi al Zaqzouq:

Red Line

acrylic on canvas, on paper & cardboard boxes, 2005 - 2008.

Installation view in Gemak



Detail of Shadi al Zaqzouq, Red Line

Palestinian Art Today; Retracing the Contexts of Practice

By Tina Sherwell, Director of the Palestinian Art Academy in Ramallah. Contributed for the publication of a newspaper which accompanied the exhibition.

Introduction

The contexts of Palestinian art practice have significantly changed in recent history and it is this transformation that I intend to outline as a way of providing a context to the art that is on view in the exhibition of No Man's Land? at Gemak. Palestinian artists do not live in one bound territory within Palestine but rather are a dispersed population. Therefore when considering the work of Palestinian artists, it is important to note the different contexts from which their art practice begins and is situated. Even within the Palestinian Territories the recent erection of the Separation Wall and the numerous checkpoints across the West Bank and surrounding Jerusalem, accompanied by the discriminatory military regulations that determine mobility for those who hold Jerusalem, West Bank or Gaza ID's, has intensified the segregation of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. For example the artists in this exhibition like Taysir Batniji holding a Gaza ID cannot travel to the West Bank or Jerusalem; and if he were to visit Palestine he is permitted only to enter Gaza; Jawad al Malhi cannot visit Taysir Batniji in Gaza; and Raeda Saadeh, who holds an Israeli ID, is legally not permitted to enter the West Bank.

Palestinians are a dispersed population within and beyond their homeland, the majority of whom are unable to return to the place of their family's birth. What is significant to consider is that Palestinians carry with them an original site of displacement. How this site is experienced, remembered and represented differs from person to person, but is an ever-present element in the process of identity formation and articulation. The topographies of Palestinian identity are constituted through the juxtaposition of experiences and influences, by shifts and alterations that are contested from within the self and via social contexts that contour determining factors of identity. As Ernesto Laclau and Lillian Zac have observed:

An act of identification is not purely a submissive act on the part of the subject who would passively incorporate all the determinations of the object. The act of identification, on the contrary, destabilizes the identity of the object.¹

Palestinian identity should not be defined in essentialist terms, in fact quite the contrary. The experiences of Palestinians reveal that the constitution itself of identity is constantly being re-mapped and negotiated by historical, external and internal factors. However both

the mainstream Palestinian and Israeli nationalist discourses have favoured essentialist representations in the context of an uneven conflict comprising the historical claims of two peoples to the same stretch of geographical terrain. And both have used different iconographies to represent their original, historical and eternal relationship to the land. Israel has the advantages of a state apparatus and a military authority, which not only fashions the image of the Jewish homeland internally and abroad but also suppresses and de-legitimizes other narratives. Israel has thus physically transformed the landscape of its state by carving it into an image of its ideal without contestation. However as W J T Mitchell argues, 'The face of the Holy landscape is so scarred by war, excavation and displacement that no illusion of innocent original nature can be sustained for a moment.'²

Changing Contexts

The consequences of this reality are that Palestinian art production has begun from many different starting points, and artists have been affected by the different contexts of their location. For example until recently no formal art school existed in Palestine, there were different courses that could be taken in various colleges and universities but no institutions dedicated solely to the study of art. In this context many of the older generation of artists studied abroad, in neighbouring Arab countries such as Syria, Egypt and Iraq or further a field, when possible, while others had no formal training. More recently, with support from various funding agencies, scholarships for Palestinian students to study overseas have become more readily available. Many artists living in Israel have studied in Israeli institutions, while those in Diaspora have studied in their host countries. The result has been a multitude of trainings and different ethos towards art practice. However the absence of recognition of Palestinian identity meant that for many artists this subject was a central issue to be addressed in their practice. During the early 70's the artists who came to prominence were those who explored issues of the experience of exodus from the homeland. Although there were artists who were concerned with issues of abstraction in painting, it is those who represented the experience of the Nakba, the dream of the homeland and the struggle of the revolution who are distinguished in the narrative of the history of Palestinian art.

During the 1980's in the Occupied Territories Palestinian artists were predominantly concerned with representing their cultural identity. This pre-occupation with creation of such imagery, must be understood in relation to the stringent military occupation, in which manifestations of cultural identity met with harsh reprisals. It was an era in which exhibitions were closed, paintings confiscated and books banned; an era in which the colours of the Palestinian flag were forbidden, making the painting of a watermelon illegal. In various interviews with artists in the early 1990's they explain in their recollections of this period that they saw their role as preserving and disseminating their

References

1. Ernesto Laclau and Lillian Zac, 'Minding the Gap; The Subject of Politics', in E Laclau, ed, *The Making of Political Identities*, Verso, London, 1994, P 14
2. William Mitchell, 'Imperial Landscape' in *Landscape and Power*, W J T Mitchell, ed, The Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1994, P 5-34

cultural identity to the people. Exhibitions were held in schools, local community centres and university halls. Attendance at exhibitions was considerable as the general public saw it as an affirmation of identity and a patriotic responsibility. The art of this period produced by artists living under occupation, focused on representing Palestine, through its landscape and cultural heritage, particularly drawn from the culture of the peasantry. Artists and writers developed the symbolism of the homeland that became the signifiers of the Palestinian experience, such as the rusted key, the keffiyeh, the olive tree, the Palestinian village, the Palestinian peasant woman in traditional costume and images of the Holy City, Jerusalem. Exhibitions were predominantly collective and 'skill' of execution was secondary in relation to artistic representations of cultural identity.

Major shifts in the vision of the role of the artist were to follow in the next 10 years, during the 90's, commencing with the first intifada and the arrival of The Palestinian National Authority. The first intifada began as a popular uprising. Artists who had seen themselves at the frontlines of an intellectual revolution now began to question their role, being inspired by the popular revolt. Some artists took to representing events on the ground while others moved towards the use of natural materials, as both disengagement with the Israeli market of art products and to move away from symbolic and idealistic representations of the homeland to an indexical presentation of place. It was in this era that Sliman Mansour began producing mud works, using traditional craft techniques in his work. The dramatic political situation also saw transformations in the medium of expression, for whereas painting, sculpture and reliefs had dominated the artistic discourse, there was a shift towards photography, video and installation, spurred by the desire to capture and articulate dramatic events.

Before the arrival of the Palestinian National Authority the interests of many local artists lay in representing cultural and political identity. But the methods, forms, styles and issues in Palestinian art came under question after a period of heightened nationalism with the arrival of Palestinian National Authority. While for some the absence of a direct political agenda in art left them without the necessary props for their creativity, artists also saw it as an opportunity to focus on their own particular concerns, to adopt the burden of creating national and cultural representations. Simultaneously art forms such as video, installation, performance and interventions which some artists began to employ and which was increasingly being used by Palestinian artists in the Diaspora created an active debate about the content and nature of art in this era of multiple visual languages throughout the 90's. This discussion was not in isolation however, the new international interest in art from the region has also affected how artists understand how international audiences and curators perceived and interpreted their work and what kind of art practice they favoured.

The opening of several art galleries and cultural centres in the Occupied Territories and Jerusalem facilitated opportunities for exhibitions for many of the artists and provided spaces for Palestinians from Israel and the Diaspora to show their work to their peers for the first time. Worthy of note is that the majority of exhibitions were solo exhibitions,

highlighting a move away from collective expression to the representation of individual artists' practices. A small purchasing public also emerged who invested in local art and helped support artists. In turn donor funding assisted these organizations with their programmes of art exhibitions, festivals, projects, and publications. Hence there began to be a rudimentary infrastructure for the visibility of artists practice among the non-governmental sector. However, isolation is still abundant as institutions confront many difficulties in bringing exhibitions from abroad. What they have been able to achieve is the creation of numerous residencies for international artists to research and create in Palestine. Most recently, there has been a discernable increase in international curators visiting Palestine, as well as artists being afforded opportunities for exhibitions and residencies abroad. In the past the latter were mainly confined to exhibitions centering upon solidarity with Palestinian people and its cause, which provided chances for exposure and the opportunity to foster new dialogues, but did stigmatize the exhibitions as political rather than artistic. Likewise the current entry of Palestinian art into the global market has been limited and is still problematic, particularly in relation to the conceptual compartmentalization of the global art market and its institutions.

Palestinian Art Today

Above is brief account of the transformations the contexts of artistic practice underwent particularly in the Occupied Territories. But what about Palestinian Art today? With a period of heightened nationalism having considerably subsided, artists are now focusing on their own individual research and exposure. Common themes can be found across the work of Palestinian artists, in the Palestinian Territories, Israel, the West Bank and the Diaspora as is evident by the work brought together in this exhibition. Issues that pertain to identity continue to be central, but are explored from a multitude of facets, which dovetail with other issues and debates. So imagery of an idyllic homeland has been replaced by a discourse of location and the specificities of place, while in their representation of cultural identity artists now explore multiple and layered identities, including popular culture and satire. Dominant definitions of masculinity and femininity are being unravelled and probed, evidence of which can be found in *No Man's Land*?

The transformation from 'homeland' to location can be evidenced in the work of several artists in the exhibition. Rula Halawani's photographs reveal the sombre reality of The Separation Wall via its monumental form and imposing structure, over which Palestinians have had no control. Her photographs encapsulate the dominant sense of foreboding. Jawad al Malhi highlights the forgotten question of refugees in the camps articulating the site and experience of marginality via the contingent space of the camp. The camp is characterized by its chaotic concrete buildings that reveal the claustrophobia of the ghettos. The photograph is taken from the position of the neighbouring Israeli settlement – the only place from which such a 'view' can be captured. Stateless Nation's Road Map reveals the realities of movement within the West Bank. Taysir Batniji explores the robbery of time as Palestinians wait endlessly for the right of passage while his father series deals with a different understanding of location and time. It is common



practice to hang portraits of fathers' in shops, as sign of respect and as way of marking the line of ownership; Batniji captures the nuances and popular aesthetics of this practice in his series and reveals another side of masculine identity outside the dominant discourse of heroism. Shadi al Zaqqouq also reveals the inner experience of confinement through his expressionistic paintings. Sharif Waked uses satire and parody to represent the way Palestinians adapt to their situations, drawing on traditions of humour and sarcasm while also exploring representations of masculinity and fashion. While Raeda Saadeh situates herself within the discourse of western art history through playful role play and employs satire to question domestic roles and the female position in relation to public space, as well as the impossibilities of identity.



Above:

Raeda Saadeh: *The Milkmaid*

Shadi al Zaqqouq: detail of 'Red Line'

Middle:

Taysir Batniji: *Fathers*

Samira Badran: *Wheel Barrow*

Sharif Waked: Stills from *Chic Point-*

Fashion for Israeli Checkpoints

Below:

Jawad al Malhi: Detail of *House #*

197/ installation

Raeda Saadeh: *Diana (detail)*

Rula Halawani: *Untitled (The Wall)*





Promised Land

*Contemporary Art from
Israel*

Contemporary Art from Israel

We have moved from the far end of the security spectrum (Baghdad) progressively closer to the centre. We crossed the no man's land (Palestine) and, being privileged first world citizens, were allowed through the Wall, aptly named 'Separation Barrier', into Israel.

And here we find that what manages to project itself as a very determined, muscular democracy, is in fact a thoroughly confused society. The overarching collective identity – Jewry – doesn't seem sufficient to bring together the pre-1948 Jewish inhabitant, the modern fundamentalist settler from the USA, the post-modern intellectual from Tel Aviv and the Russian, Ethiopian and North African Jews. In fact, only the external threat – from the 20% native Palestinian population, the Palestinians of the Occupied Territories and upset Arab neighbours – seem to keep the Israelis together. In this perspective, the constant efforts by the political establishment to keep the issue of security high on the public agenda seem a ploy to avoid tackling the prickly question of where Israel should go from here. Perceiving oneself to be under attack allows short term, conservative (i.e. defensive) actions to prevail over any forward planning.

Indeed Israel has repeatedly evoked the external threat to strike out 'in pre-emptive self-defence' or take radical fortification measures, but its society seems to be disintegrating nonetheless. We may have thought that the destruction wrought upon the periphery (Iraq, the occupied territories) was evidence of the strength (the will to power) of the West; but now it seems that this destructive impulse may be nothing but the projection of the stress ripping apart the centre.

One can see this in the landscape. The Israelis have turned their so ardently desired Promised Land into a wasteland of industrial zones, security barriers, military bases and roads, gated housing projects and enclaves where the 'Arabs' are supposed to live. Maybe some parts of the desert are blooming; but conversely many green areas have turned into deserts. Palestinian villages that used to be protected among olive groves along a small river lie in ruin, the river having run dry, the orchards uprooted; socialist-style industrialization projects of the 1950s are falling into disrepair as the economy is rapidly specializing in IT; modernist social housing projects are disintegrating - as is the entire modernist ideal.

This may sound familiar to people who have never been in Israel. Indeed, what is happening there is but an advanced version of the changes that are wrought upon many Western countries. Israel truly is a Western nation, or an outpost of the West in the Middle East. One Israeli curator told me: Israel isn't protected by the wall; Israel has become the wall. A wall, many Israelis believe, that is to shield the West from the Arab world, from a spiteful 'third' world. A small minority in Israel thinks that their country has become a security-obsessed police state. Israel has become a major developer and exporter of security solutions, from cameras to software designed to analyse terrorist activities. Most Israelis however believe the lack of privacy and the ever more stringent controls are the price they must pay for living in a front-line state.



Installation View of Promised Land in Gemak with photographs by Pavel Wolberg

The artists Yael Bartana and Pavel Wolberg explore the contradictions and resulting absurdities in a society which is struggling to function 'normally' despite its ongoing conflict with its original inhabitants and neighbours. A country that seeks safety in isolation, building walls and operating strict security precautions at its borders and crossing points – and if that doesn't provide a sufficient sense of security, it attacks. This permanent tension between aggressive and defensive attitudes has permeated the society with violence, as the psychologist Ruchama Marton remarks.

Pavel Wolberg was born in Russia but grew up in Israel. Although he trained as a press photographer in Israel, he claims he has always felt like an outsider. Experiencing the key historic events of his nation at close quarters, his perception from the sidelines enables him to observe his country with the clarity of vision that is only possible from that position.

Yael Bartana was born in Israel but trained at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam, where she also lived for a number of years. Her films reveal the dilemmas her country faces. Their emotional distance and symbolic approach make them works of art of broader significance, going well beyond Israel.

Between them – the outsider who has become insider and the insider who has become outsider – these two artists convey a striking and memorable picture of a conflict-ridden society moving towards an uncertain future.

Originally the participation of Roei Rosen and Eyal Weizman was planned; however this could not happen, and only the two artists mentioned above were selected for the show. However, as the work of the two cancelled artists fits very well with the theme 'Promised Land', I have reproduced texts from them instead, accompanying them with photographs by Pavel Wolberg. The third text incorporated here is by the psychiatrist Ruchama Marton. It is the basis of her intervention at the Jerusalem seminar held in Gemak before this exhibition.



Yael Bartana

“How long will
this troubled
nation continue
to perpetuate
this pattern of
ignorance?”

Videoartist. Born 1970 in Afula, Israel. Lives and works in Tel Aviv and Amsterdam. Studied at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem, the School of Visual Arts in New York and the Rijksacademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam. She is a successful artist, with many exhibitions worldwide.

“I am focusing on Israel in order to ask: what is this place where I grew up? How long will this troubled nation continue to perpetuate this pattern of ignorance? By manipulating form, sound and movement, I create work that triggers personal resonance. Personal, intimate reactions have the potential to provoke honest responses and perhaps replace the predictable, controlled reactions encouraged by the state.”

(Statement by the artist on her website)

▲ Yael Bartana

Still from *A Declaration*,
7'30", 2006



◀ Yael Bartana

Still from *Trembling Time*,

6'20", looped, 2001

Bartana is fascinated by themes of collective identity. She fixes fragments of the collective identity through its rituals - the Jewish settlers making the desert bloom through collective work, as in the documentary *Avodah* (Helmar Lersky, 1935) which she contrasts with international volunteers rebuilding Palestinian homes destroyed by the Israeli Army in her movie *'Summer Camp'* (2006). In *'Trembling Time'* (2001) she shows the moment a highway in Tel Aviv comes to a standstill as sirens announce the commemoration of Israelis that died in the 1948 war of independence. The scene, shot at night, becomes eerie, even ghostlike, as images of movement and standstill are superposed.

Yael Bartana creates her own individual interpretation of these rituals in the editing process, by warping the image and the sound until she achieves the desired effect: her own view on what she's seeing. *'When Adar Enters'* (2003) is shot during the festival of Purim in Jerusalem. This day, when Jews celebrate the victory over the Persians who tried to annihilate them in the 4th Century BC, is celebrated as carnival - being disguised, people may completely forget their social status and, if they wish, act as fools. The orthodox Jews especially tend to get very drunk. Yael wanders around Jerusalem with a camera, and she apparently elicits some hostile reactions - one clearly feels she is not at all part of the collective celebration; as it gets more intense and the people more drunk, she seems to be, behind her sober camera, more and more of an outcast.

Bartana seems to progressively light out the fascistic tendencies of collective rituals. There is a very troubling mixing of Leni Riefenstahl-like fascination with young, healthy and strong bodies and left wing idealism in films like *'Wild Seeds'* (which portrays young people playfully acting out an eviction of settlers by the army in the rolling green hills), *'Summer Camp'* and especially in *'A Declaration'* (2006). In this film, the third shown in Gemak, a strong young man (is he a soldier? Palestinian or Israeli?) is rowing towards Andromeda's Rock, a tiny island in the bay of Jaffa, where Jewish settlers used to arrive from abroad, and from where many Palestinians left their homeland when they were expelled. When he arrives at the island he replaces the Israeli flag flying there with a big branch of an olive tree. Although, recounted like that, the message may seem a simple one of peace and brotherhood, the way it is filmed makes it very ambiguous - the sweating male body, the Israeli flag filmed from below, beautifully flapping under a clear blue sky, the 'act of willpower' embodied by the individual who decides to conquer that island...



Yael Bartana: Still from *'When Adar Enters'*, 7'00", 2003



Yael Bartana: Stills from *'A Declaration'*, 7'30", 2006







Pavel Wolberg

Born in St Petersburg, 1966. Moved to Israel at age 7. Studied at Camera Obscura School of Art (Tel Aviv). Worked as stage hand, truck driver, as a photographer for Haaretz and, since 2006, for the European Pressphoto Agency (EPA). Has won several awards and participated in numerous exhibitions in Israel and abroad. Lives and works near Tel Aviv.

Wolberg has followed the news in Israel and the Occupied Territories for the past ten years, taking photographs for the press. Over the past years however his artistic background has moved to the foreground, and many of his photographs have been awarded and exhibited worldwide.

▲ Pavel Wolberg:

Purim, Tel Aviv

digital print 2007

◀ Pavel Wolberg:

Purim, Tel Aviv

digital print 2004

The Psychological Impact of the Second Intifada on Israeli Society

Israeli society uses stereotyped views of the Palestinians
to avoid facing the reality of their actions

*by Ruchama Marton in Palestine - Israel Journal of Politics,
Economics and Culture (XI, 1, 2004, 71-79)*

This paper examines Jewish Israeli society at the present stage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The second Intifada started in September 2000, following the breakdown of the Oslo peace negotiations. During this period, the Israeli tendency to believe in, and rely on, power has intensified to a toxic level. Israel's enormous military arsenal (endlessly renewed by the US) reinforces this reliance on the use of force. Politically, excessive use of force does not work: Both national security and personal safety are deteriorating in Israel. This is destabilizing for the Israeli psyche, both at the individual and collective level. Psychological disturbances that are becoming apparent include the avoidance of historical awareness, splitting, an image of oneself as a victim, increased aggression within society, cognitive dissonance, a sense of personal uncertainty, manifestations of psychological trauma, and the prevalence of dehumanization, demonization and antisocial behavior. The Israeli leadership manipulates the public to justify its excessive use of force, which is psychologically harmful for Israelis. On the one hand, s/he is eager to agree that the Palestinians are a permanent and cruel enemy and that overpowering them is the only option. On the other hand s/he sees with her/his own eyes that, in spite of the excessive use of force, the situation is getting steadily worse. This leads to confusion, disorientation and fear in the Israeli public.

The complexity of these psychological disturbances prevents the individual Israeli from developing an insight and understanding of their situation, which is essential for good mental health. Such insight would contradict what the Israeli militaristic hegemony wants and dictates. It might enable critical thinking about the principle of relying on the use of force alone, and the destruction caused to the Palestinians and within Israel.

The Avoidance of Historical Awareness

Conflict avoidance "arises from the simultaneous presence of two or more equal threats..." (Colman, p73)*. In the Israeli case, the two threats are: perceptions of the past, and perceptions of the future. Seeing the past accurately implies recognizing Israel's role in precipitating violent Palestinian reactions in the present. This is threatening, as it would make Israel largely responsible for the present terror. Having a vision for the future requires the vision of a just peace. This is threatening, as a just peace would involve returning the occupied lands to the

Palestinians. The vision of any return of territories falsely presented by all Israeli governments as "safety zones" is saturated with fear because it is seen as the beginning of the end of the Jewish state. By avoiding both past and future, Israelis reduce their historical vision to zero. The dominant Israeli assumption is that relations between Israelis and Palestinians began when Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered his "generous" plan to President Yasser Arafat and the Palestinians reacted with a violent uprising.

Reducing the historical perspective goes hand in hand with reduced thinking in general, particularly critical thinking. Avoiding historical analysis obliterates the potential for insight, and silences public political discourse: No voices of political opposition are heard. Refusing to look into the past is refusing to take responsibility for one's actions in the past. In the same way, the incapacity to envision the future amounts to refusing to take responsibility for one's actions in the present. If a state of war is to be preserved, as the present government desires, it is useful to avoid recognition of the ways in which Israeli actions played a part in causing current catastrophes.

Splitting

In Kleinian analysis, splitting is "the most primitive of all defense mechanisms, in which instinctual objects that evoke ambivalence and therefore anxiety are dealt with by compartmentalizing positive and negative emotions, leading to images of self and others that are not integrated" (Colman, p700).

The Israeli worldview is sharply divided into "us" - Israelis, right and just - and "them" - Palestinians, wrong and evil. From a developmental perspective this is an infantile dichotomy. Leading Israeli figures, such as the prime minister, chief of staff, etc., say the IDF is the purest, most ethical army in the world, while the Palestinians are murderous liars and terrorists. This distorted binary of good and evil obstructs a coherent perception of reality. Anything inconsistent with this distorted reality is not recognized; no comprehensive causality can exist in that frame of mind.

Splitting means large parts of reality can remain unseen. The suffering of the Palestinians can be ignored, since it is attributed to their evil nature. This makes any public discussion of the situation superfluous. Those who oppose the war against the Palestinians become out-

casts. Above all, splitting is necessary to maintain basic Israeli assumptions that we are good, just, righteous, victims and always united.

Self-Image as a Victim

Self-evaluation (self-image) is “one’s attitude toward oneself or one’s opinion or evaluation of oneself, which may be positive (favorable or high), neutral, or negative (unfavorable or low)” (Colman, p660). The image of oneself as the victim is, in this context, both negative and positive. On the negative side, a victim is helpless, powerless and unfortunate. On the positive side the victim is, by definition, free of responsibility and blame; perceiving oneself as victim can serve as a justification for wrongdoing.

Israelis have held on to their historical victim status long past its salient historical time. The State of Israel is the strongest military power in the Middle East and possesses nuclear capacities, the strongest air force and many other sophisticated weapons. Israel occupies Palestine and controls the lives and movement of Palestinians, as well as their natural resources and economy. In spite of all this, Israelis maintain they are the Palestinians’ victims.

I see this psycho-dynamic in individuals in therapy: When perceiving oneself as a victim, a person feels entitled to be cruel and unjust, deriving his/her energy from fear, anger and hate, and creating similar feelings in his/her partner. A vicious cycle is set in motion. Death and destruction caused by Palestinian suicide bombers in Israel fuels these feelings.

Increased Aggression and Violence within Israeli Society

“Aggression is behavior whose primary or sole purpose or function is to injure another person or organism, whether physically or psychologically” (Colman p18). Socialization limits and restrains aggression, directing people toward respecting the lives, dignity and property of others. Society ascertains these goals by exacting a high price for behavior which violates it. In Israel today, the lives of others are held to be cheap. Compassion, tolerance and respect for others are lacking. There is no universal standard for the value of human life. The lives of Jewish Israelis are considered more valuable than those of Palestinian Israeli citizens, or of migrant workers and sex workers. Palestinians from the Occupied Territories are at the bottom of the scale, their land confiscated, their houses demolished, and their lives extinguished through indiscriminate murders and killings. Palestinians’ dignity is shattered on a daily basis at the Israeli army checkpoints placed in every village, town and city.

One should also think about a connection between serving in the Israeli army in the Occupied Territories and the sharp increase in violence inside Israel. During the past two years, Israel has had the highest rates of juvenile violence in the world. Moreover, according to Haaretz journalist Vered Levi-Barzilai (Haaretz, November 7, 2003), “In the past two or three years, dozens of cases of murder or serious violence as a result of minor arguments have accumulated. Attackers and victims vary in age and social background. They have no typical characteristics except one: They are all men.”



Pavel Wolberg: *Neve Dekalim, 2005 (A settler boy shopping in an Israeli supermarket months before the withdrawal from Gaza)*

A clear indicator of the mounting aggression is the rise in domestic violence. The number of women murdered by family members has more than doubled over the past three years, and the number of rapes has increased. The scale of organized crime in the form of murder, “protection” and trafficking in women has risen to a level previously unknown in Israel. An army can be seen as the bank in which citizens of a nation deposit a portion of their aggression, in the belief that it will be managed wisely for the protection of the group. In Israel’s case, the army has unwisely refunded too much of the use of this aggression to the depositors. Other parts of the Israeli system, such as the government and the Supreme Court, do not do their part in supervising and controlling the use of aggression. No wonder, then, that aggression rules - not only in the Occupied Territories but also within Israel - within the family, on the street and everywhere.

Cognitive Dissonance

Two cognitions (items of knowledge or belief) where one psychologically follows from the converse of the other are considered dissonant. “The dissonance relation is a motivating state of tension that tends to generate ... dissonance-reducing behaviors” (Colman, p141). Since the outbreak of the second Intifada, a new kind of fear has emerged in the Jewish Israeli public, in addition to the normal personal fear of being killed. This new fear stems from a cognitive dissonance. Two cognitions that Israelis hold are the converse of each other. One belief is that the use of force will guarantee Israel’s national survival,

and assure Israelis’ individual safety. This agrees with the Israeli assumption that “the Palestinians only understand force.” The other cognition, based in reality, is that the greater the military force applied by Israel, the greater the danger: Every time the Israeli army assassinates “wanted” persons and other Palestinian civilians, more Israelis are killed by Palestinian suicide bombers.

Palestinian “terrorist” actions unmask the fragility of the feeling of safety based on the image of Palestinian submission and on the total belief that using force against them is the ultimate answer to the “Palestinian problem.” The demand for more power against Palestinians took the form of the slogan, “Let the IDF win,” which brought Ariel Sharon to power. But this has not worked, as could be expected. The Palestinian uprising has not stopped. On the contrary, it is getting worse. Therefore, even greater use of force is demanded, but without success. This loop aggravates the cognitive dissonance.

The mechanism of cognitive dissonance demands dissonance-reducing behaviors. Israelis cannot give up the belief that force is essential: This might destroy Israel’s military character and policies. On the other hand, Israelis cannot ignore the overwhelming reality of children, women and men torn apart by explosives detonated in buses and restaurants. They choose, therefore, to turn a blind eye to the causal connection between excessive Israeli military power and the Palestinians’ violent actions. This dissonance-reducing solution leads to feelings of loss of control and helplessness. Despite all the power in their hands, Israelis feel frightened, threatened and unprotected.



Pavel Wolberg: Purim, Jerusalem, 2007 (The ultra-orthodox have a religious mandate to get tremendously drunk on this feast)

Uncertainty

Israel's continued use of excessive force, in spite of its failure to achieve the expected outcomes, creates not only cognitive dissonance, but serves as a foundation for another psychological disturbance: personal uncertainty. Uncertainty is "the situation that exists when the outcome that will result from an action is not known with certainty" (Colman, p765). A sense of personal certainty is based on perceiving connections between one's actions and one's life. The sense of safety, which is an outcome of one's ability to predict the future, has been broken and has given way to a painful sense of uncertainty. Prevented from seeing coherent connections between action and results, Israelis do not see that humiliating and killing Palestinians does not result in their surrender, but rather in increased anger and hate. This is why violent Palestinian actions always catch Israelis by surprise and leave them shocked, scared and confused.

Psychological Trauma

When confidence in certainty is broken, psychological trauma appears, expressed in disorientation, anxiety and fear. Other symptoms might be an obsessive need for information expressed through, for example, listening to the news constantly. There might be excessive worry and fears, dysphoria or depression, rage, loss of confidence in oneself and of trust in others, intolerance, blaming others, or turning to mysticism, religion and extreme political and social ideologies. All of these symptoms describe psychological patterns currently prevalent in Israeli society.

The Prevalence of Hate

This state of psychological trauma might be translated into hatred and aggression, and/or into withdrawal and despair. Hate is the inverted energy of love. It can serve the ego as a source of energy, and might turn into an addiction. Hate nourishes angry feelings and actions. Hate and anger will usually serve the ego with a sense of righteousness, efficacy and self-preservation. As in many addictions, comprehension of reality is very poor or even absent. For the sake of a sense of well-being and self-preservation, a person and/or a collective ridden with hate are capable of destroying the environment, the other, and also themselves. Israeli self-hatred arose out of the (real and interpreted) Jewish experience of being victims during WORLD WAR II. The hatred of Israel toward the image and the reality of Jews as victims was so agonizingly deep and extensive that it could not be contained. It was therefore projected onto the Palestinian "other." The more the Palestinians' misery and passivity increased over the years, the more they became, for Israelis, the object of their displaced feelings of contempt and hatred. Being so close, both within the borders of Israel and across the Green Line, they served as a convenient repository for hatred.

On the one hand, the Palestinians were derided and hated for their weakness. On the other, the Jewish experience of the Nazis as an horrendous enemy was preserved and the Palestinians were seen as a mythical extension of the Nazis as a overpowering enemy. Hatred of the Palestinians thus serves an existential emotional need of Jewish society. Israeli depersonalizing of Palestinians into faceless enemies and the labeling of



Pavel Wolberg: *Purim, Hebron 2003 (Drunken settlers in one of the most tense areas in the occupied territories)*

all Palestinians as terrorists are mechanisms that sustain hate. The projection of hatred onto the Palestinians enables the preservation of the self-righteous Israeli Zionist self-image as morally pure, and serves as a cohesive force in Jewish Israeli society. Perceiving the Palestinians as a hated and mighty enemy (in spite of their evident weakness) provides Israelis with the sense that their energies are invested in self-preservation. Hatred towards the Palestinians functions as the outlet of Israeli fear of inner fragmentation: The price paid for inner peace is avoiding peace with the Palestinians.

Hatred becomes an addiction, a dominant guideline of Israeli behavior. The pattern of violence toward the Palestinian enemy is reproduced in patterns of violence, both between the different groups within Israeli society and between individuals. The only solidarity encouraged is the solidarity of hate.



Pavel Wolberg: Purim in Hebron 2003

Antisocial Behavior and the Policy of Separation

"Antisocial personality disorder is characterized by a pervasive pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others ... manifested by repeated unlawful behavior ... irritability and aggressiveness involving frequent assaults or fights ... and lack of remorse for the mistreatment of others, as indicated by indifference and rationalization"

In reaction to the second Intifada, Israel has attempted to deal with its psychological trauma through the supposedly magical tactic of "separation" from the Palestinians. This tactic is being applied one-sidedly, with brutal force, without regard for, or consultation with, the Palestinians. The new forms of "separation with control" allow hatred to flourish. When viable human contacts are prevented, the dehumanizing and even demonizing of the Palestinians can prevail. The benefits of the previous period of contact, which allowed for some mutual human awareness and dialogue with the other side through commerce, labor, tourism and human rights activity, have become a distant

memory. The numerous military checkpoints that control Palestinian movement are presented by Israel as "temporary security measures." This is a blatant rationalization for the deliberate attempt to destroy the fabric of Palestinian civil society. Today's most extreme manifestation of Israeli government's policy is the multi-million dollar "separation wall" currently under construction within the Palestinian territories. This monstrous barrier surrounds cities and groups of villages, isolating and dividing them, with indifference to Palestinian suffering the rule.

A lack of remorse for the mistreatment of others is characteristic of antisocial personality disorder. The more extreme this mistreatment, the more remarkable the lack of remorse for it. For example, in the process of assassinating Salah Shehadeh in Gaza (without due process), the Israeli air-force deployed a massive bomb, killing 15 innocent victims (Amos Harel, Haaretz, November 11, 2003). The Air Force Commander-in-Chief Dan Chalutz's reply to criticism for this action was that, in his view, the attack was justified and it does not prevent him sleeping well at night.

In Conclusion: The Trauma of Peace

In early 1982, I analyzed the psycho-political condition of Israeli society under the title "The trauma of peace", saying the severe fragmentation of Israeli society into various sectors that took place at the time required a war as a remedy for social disintegration. Therefore the impending peace in the north, in Lebanon, following the peace treaty signed with Egypt in the south, brought up an inner threat of fragmentation and disintegration to the degree that it produced psychological trauma. I predicted a war that would "save" Israel from the trauma of the peace. Now, more than ever, on the emotional level, Israeli society is in need of an enemy that would let it continue avoiding its internal conflicts. An enemy can solve the problem of Israel's need to create and maintain its own cohesiveness and internal borders. Only an external enemy will provide the necessary glue to overcome the internal hatred between secular and Orthodox, between Jewish settlers in the Occupied Territories and the Zionist left, between the haves and the have-nots, and the different ethnic groups. It might also keep Israeli Palestinians from demanding their share of the collective cake.

On one part of the separation barrier on the road to Jerusalem, a concrete divide blocks the view of Palestinian villages from Israelis traveling along the road. Uncomfortable with the grayness of the military concrete, some enterprising people have painted a pastoral view on the wall: painted trees and houses, a painted sky, a painted landscape empty of people. This act represents more than ever the process Israeli society has undergone: Rather than accepting the presence of another people on these lands, they forcibly block them out - and block them in - and wishfully paint a fake image of a land empty of people.

This virtual reality serves as a substitute for insight. I am afraid that only a huge shock can bring about a change in Israeli public opinion and in its policy-makers. Israelis might then invest in a just peace with the Palestinians instead of justifying the occupation and investing in it so much of their resources and their peace of mind.

(For a short introduction of the author, see the 'Jerusalem Seminar' page 128)

Roe Rosen: The Law is Laughing

Roe Rosen was one of the artists initially planned to participate in the exhibition 'Promised Land' with the installation of drawings and texts 'Live and Die as Eva Braun'. Unfortunately his participation could not be secured, due to reasons that have nothing to do with the artist. We are pleased to reproduce this text of his on the nature of Israel's legal system vis-à-vis the occupation and war.

The Law is Laughing: Fragments Following the War in Gaza,
by Roe Rosen

Prompted by Israel's invasion of Gaza in January 2009, the artist Roe Rosen examines the public articulation of conflict, specifically the military acts in the current Israeli Palestinian conflict. Rosen posits that the comedic mode, which has yielded innocuous names for aggressive military actions, is a core trait of Israeli law in that it reaffirms itself by negating the premise on which it is built.

Rosen's text was written before Benjamin Netanyahu's election as prime minister in spring 2009.

1. The Comic Mode of the Occupation

The name of Israel's recent war in Gaza, Operation Cast Lead, was taken from a Hanukkah nursery song that Israeli children know by heart. It was penned decades ago by Chaim Nahman Bialik who in Israel is known as the national poet (the complete line reads, "My uncle bought me a dreidel made of cast lead"). When a mass killing in which hundreds of Palestinian children are slaughtered in about three weeks has a name conjuring innocent childishness, we are faced with a vile joke. The comic bent of the occupation army and of Israeli law is persistent and has its own distinct literary style. Its poetics can be recognized in a long sequence of names offering a variety of reversals—a war being called "peace" in Operation Peace of the Galilee (the first Lebanon war, 1982); a destructive offensive rendered in terms of constructive defense in Operation Defensive Shield (2002); the horror of assault on the city of Rafah in Southern Gaza cloaked under a name of faux pastoral lyricism in Operation Rainbow in a Cloud (2004).

To set into relief the uniqueness of this comical lyricism, one need only mention the American offensive Operation Desert Storm, an infantile, repulsive name inspired by war movies, but undoubtedly a name without concealed smiles. In Israel, these reversals of meaning are ubiquitous and go beyond the naming of wars, so much so that they are routine presuppositions of daily life. In 2003, for example, I wrote about how a news story was seen as "positive" because it reported on the reduction in the jail-time sentencing for what are called "administrative detainees," prisoners who are never put on trial, and hence for whom a legal sentence actually doesn't exist. This amounts to a legal action that contradicts its own premise – or a joke by which the law negates itself.

(...)

5. The Legal-Illegal and the Illegal-Illegal

In my novel *Ziona*™ (2006), there is a minor character, Ma'adan (formerly Gordon) Dukas, who settles in a caravan on hill number 547, which he calls Tel Or (Hebrew for Mount Light): "a one-man settlement of the illegal-legal-legitimate kind (to be distinguished from the illegal-illegal-legitimate kind, and from the illegal-illegal-quasi-legitimate kind)." When the law negates itself, it perpetuates a dynamic, ever-expanding system of legal activity aiming to establish comic distinctions between legally approved crimes (the crime that is not a crime), and between those crimes that are still defined as crimes. This legal bustle is characterized by dizzying hyperactivity, and even though, by its very nature, it aspires to remain discrete, its signs cannot help but pop up in the media. Thus one can read about the versatile actions of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), specifically the department of international law and its attorney's office, whose primary goal is to render kosher those illegal military actions such as the killing of civilians (*Haaretz magazine*, January 23, 2009).

Then there is the plan to "incriminate," after the fact, every house bombarded during Operation Cast Lead—the creation of a dossier for each target that documents its hostile use—a plan whose natural offshoot ought to be the incrimination of every murdered child. There is also the exposure in the media of a governmental database, deemed secret by the defense ministry, that documents the fact that the vast majority of the settlements in the occupied territories—"The Legal Illegal"—are unlawfully expanding, building with no authorization on a massive scale, often on private Palestinian lots (*Haaretz magazine*, January 30, 2009). This database reveals that which is still "Illegal-Illegal" aspiring to become a "Legal-Illegal" as well, an activity in which practically all Israeli governments have engaged since the occupation, with varying degrees of concealment.

6. Values as Phlegm; Values as Zombies

When the law is its own negation, its comicality is like spasmodic coughing. The phlegm(s) secreted during such coughing fits are cherished values that are converted into refuse. In Operation Peace of the Galilee, the value that became refuse is the longing for peace. And in Operation Cast Lead, in its extraction of its name from a nursery song, the value/waste is the sensitivity to the lives of children. Values are the living dead—matter ejected that ever returns from within: an uncanny zombie. This explains why someone who holds the value as if it were fully alive (an Israeli mourning the murder of Palestinian children) might be intimidating and threatening, to the point of being called a criminal (a traitor). As zombie values resurge as the *Unheimliche*, there is a correlation between the Israeli psychological reactions used to cope with, for instance, the murder of children, and the major comic mechanisms described by Deleuze: disavowal as the mode of the masochist (e.g., we murder despite the terrible pain we feel; we murder because there is no choice; we kill as few as we can;

our suffering and our attempt to save those we did not have to kill attest to our humanity; we, in fact, do our best to save lives by killing) and negation as the mode of the sadist (Hamas is responsible; it is the Palestinians who put the children in harm's way; they murder themselves through the mediation of our weapons, hence, we do not murder).

Comic coinage in this situation is the zombie residue of values the law is supposed to affirm, that is, when it could still be “seriously” grasped as a law—the era when it could still be said without a bitter smile that Israel aspires to be a democracy, sovereign within its established borders. Think, for example, of a relatively bland product of the law, meant to signify humanism, abidance by international law, and the fear of hurting civilians: a procedure the IDF calls “knock on the roof,” that is, shooting “mild” ammunition at the roofs of people's houses in Gaza before deploying heavy ammunition that will eradicate the house and kill those who stay inside it. The name “knock on the roof” cannot but be associated in the Israeli memory with the infamous “neighbor procedure” (the army's use of Palestinian fighters' family members and friends as human shields in the attempt to lure them out of houses during the second Intifada). These names remain as verbal comic loci of zombie values.

7. Measured Crime

The comic phlegm, as well as the crimes themselves, has a dimension of proportionality. Thus, for instance, exceedingly cruel and prohibited cluster bombs were used against the civilians of Gaza and phosphorous weaponry was used against Lebanon, however the criminal measures that will be taken against the demonstrators in Bil'in, Palestine, who protest weekly against Israel's separation wall, will be more moderate (as many of the demonstrators are Jewish Israeli citizens)—with an occasional comic resonance. Among the diversity of such measures, the Israeli police recently introduced The Skunk, an armed vehicle splattering demonstrators with jets of noxious fluid. Thus, for humanitarian activists, the law reserves the more gentle reversal—that of treating protestors like criminals. This proportionality, however, is fluid, ever seeking opportunities to redraw its lines. War is such an opportune time. While the headlines were busy with Operation Cast Lead, tiny news items informed the Israelis that the Bil'in demonstrators were now being shot with 22 millimeter bullets, long declared illegal after their deadly potential was recognized.

8. Haaretz: The Criminal's Expression

It is difficult to add much to Noam Chomsky's exhaustive analysis of the way consent is manufactured by the media. Consent necessitates gaining the favor of those who perceive themselves to be critical and enlightened through a newspaper that has the appearance of integrity, criticality, and autonomy in relation to the law: in the United States, the New York Times (for example), rather than the tabloids, and in Israel, Haaretz.

During the war, the structures described by Chomsky were clearly reflected in the headlines of Haaretz. The daily number of Palestinians killed appeared customarily at the end of the



Pavel Wolberg: *Purim, Hebron, 2004*

Soldiers are nervous as Israeli settler children celebrate Purim in the centre of the Palestinian city of Hebron



bylines (if at all), and details of the killings were usually scarce and marginalized and accompanied by no images. The general composition of the daily, with the reports of Amira Hess (the only journalist who delivered substantial information from Gaza) relegated to page 8 or 9, reduced Hess's contribution to almost that of an Op-Ed. But what went beyond Chomsky's reflections were instances in which Haaretz portrayed the imagined nation as a singular, unified entity with its own collective psychology—that of the criminal. This is how, for example, Haaretz framed the United Nations' call for a cease-fire in a big headline on page 2: "Israel's Friends Sarkozy and Bush Disappoint in the UN" (January 11, 2009). The "disappointment" over the fact that the "friends" do not approve of the crime and decline to oppose the UN's resolution is not given in quotes. The disappointment doesn't even reside in dismay over the position of a right-wing leader. The disappointment is not a response to the news either (against which other reactions can be fathomed, such as relief and strengthened hope for a cease-fire). Rather, the disappointment itself is the news reported: "I" am disappointed—"I," that is to say "we," are disappointed, and we will to continue "our" war in Gaza by the criminal power that is the law.

9. Solemnity

From within the comicality of the law can be understood the radical dimension of the call of a thinker such as Ariella Azoulay who argues for a serious, willful return to the notion of citizen-

ship, and for the active assertion of a civil domain. In relation to the law as such, the coinage "a good citizen" might indicate conformism, obedience, and a normative stance, but in a law-negating state, good citizenship might be seen as a mutiny.

10. War Crime as a Political Qualification; The Timing of War

If the state is criminal, it stands to reason that part of its leader's job qualifications would include an ability to be a criminal, and since the problems at hand are no less than existential, white-collar crimes would not suffice: the leader should be a war criminal. This is why Ariel Sharon epitomizes the "leader" in the national imaginary. Sharon is the leader who was found unfit by a federal committee to serve as a defense minister following the massacres in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon (1982), and became a highly popular prime minister, not in spite of his crimes, but because of his proven ability to negate the law. This sheds some light on the timing of massive killings right before or after national elections: the second Lebanon war left about 1,000 Lebanese dead two months after an election and Operation Cast Lead left at least 1,300 Palestinians dead (of whom at least 410 were children according to Be'Tselem data of January 28, 2009) two months before an election. During election time the burden of murderous proof lies with the prospective leader, especially if the suspicion can be raised that his or her heart is not cold enough.

For the full text and reactions see: <http://branding-democracy.org/?q=node/199>



Pavel Wolberg: Northern Border, 2006 Israeli children dedicating rockets that will be fired into Lebanon

Eyal Weizman: Lethal Theory

Eyal Weizman, an architect, author, academic and artist, was also slated to participate in Promised Land with his installation 'The Lesser Evil', that could be seen in Manifesta 7 in the summer of 2008. In this multi-video presentation Weizman deals with the moral pitfalls that belie attempts to mitigate the effects of illegal actions by the powers that be, by choosing 'the lesser evil'.

The following text, abridged by the curator, deals with another matter: the use of contemporary philosophy to improve the tactics of the Israeli army. This is explored in more detail in his book "Hollow Land".

Eyal Weizman: Lethal Theory (excerpt)

The method of "walking through walls" that the IDF employed in the April 2002 battle of Nablus was developed from the necessities of a tactical condition. Palestinian resistance composed of about 1,000 guerrilla fighters from all Palestinian armed organizations had barricaded all entries to the Kasbah (old city) of Nablus and the adja-

cent Balata refugee camp by filling oil barrels with cement, digging trenches, and piling up trash and rubble. Streets and alleys were mined along their length with improvised explosives and tanks of gasoline. Entrances to buildings facing these routes were also booby-trapped, as were the interiors of some prominent or strategically important structures. Several independent bands lightly armed with AK47's, RPG's, and explosives were organized deep within the camp and based along major routes or at prominent intersections. In an interview I conducted with Aviv Kokhavi, commander of the Paratrooper Brigade, and at age 42 one of the most promising young officers of the IDF¹, he explained the principle that guided the battle. In order to put this interview in context, it is important to note that Kokhavi took time off from active service, like many career officers, to earn a university degree. He originally intended to study architecture, but ultimately pursued philosophy at the Hebrew University. In one of his many recent interviews in the press, he claimed that his military practice is influenced to a great extent by both disciplines. What was interesting for me in his explanation of the principle of the battle was not so much the description of the action itself as the way he conceived its articulation.

This space that you look at, this room that you look at, is nothing but your interpretation of it. Now, you can stretch the boundaries of your interpretation, but not in an unlimited fashion, after all, it must be bound by physics, as it contains buildings and alleys. The question is, how do you interpret the alley? Do you interpret the alley as a place, like



Pavel Wolberg: Tufah Village, 2002 Israeli soldiers entering a Palestinian house during Operation Defensive Shield

every architect and every town planner does, to walk through, or do you interpret the alley as a place forbidden to walk through? This depends only on interpretation. We interpreted the alley as a place forbidden to walk through, and the door as a place forbidden to pass through, and the window as a place forbidden to look through, because a weapon awaits us in the alley, and a booby trap awaits us behind the doors. This is because the enemy interprets space in a traditional, classical manner, and I do not want to obey this interpretation and fall into his traps. Not only do I not want to fall into his traps, I want to surprise him! This is the essence of war. I need to win. I need to emerge from an unexpected place. And this is what we tried to do.

This is why we opted for the methodology of moving through walls. . . . Like a worm that eats its way forward, emerging at points and then disappearing. We were thus moving from the interior of homes to their exterior in a surprising manner and in places we were not expected, arriving from behind and hitting the enemy that awaited us behind a corner. . . . Because it was the first time that this methodology was tested [at such a scale], during the operation itself we were learning how to adjust ourselves to the relevant urban space, and similarly, how to adjust the relevant urban space to our needs. . . . We took this microtactical practice [of moving through walls] and turned it into a method, and thanks to this method, we were able to interpret the whole space differently! . . . I said to my troops, "Friends! This is not a matter of your choice! There is no other way of moving! If until now you were used to moving along

roads and sidewalks, forget it! From now on we all walk through walls!"

Kokhavi's intention in the battle was not to capture and hold ground, but to enter the city in order to kill members of the Palestinian resistance and then get out. The horrific frankness of these objectives (...) is part of a general Israeli policy that seeks to disrupt Palestinian resistance on political as well as military levels through "targeted assassinations" "from both air and ground. The assumption, at least on the military level, is that, because there is no possibility of military training for Palestinians, the principal assets of the resistance are experienced fighters and political leaders ².

In a meeting called by Kokhavi in preparation for this operation, he explained to his officers the problems they faced in the impending operation. The Palestinians "have set the stage for a fighting spectacle in which they expect us, when attacking the enclave, to obey the logic that they have determined . . . to come in old-style mechanized formations, in cohesive lines and massed columns conforming to the geometrical order of the street network. "After analyzing and discussing this situation with his subordinate officers, Kokhavi included the following paragraph in his battle plan: *We completely isolate the camp, in daylight, creating the impression of a forthcoming systematic siege operation... [and then] apply a fractal manoeuvre swarming simultaneously from every direction and through various dimensions of the enclave... Each unit reflects in its mode of action both the logic and form of the general manoeuvre... Our movement through the buildings pushes*



Pavel Wolberg: Tufah Village, 2002; An Israeli soldier enters a Palestinian living room

[the insurgents] into the streets and alleys, where we hunt them down.

The attack started on April 3, 2002, when IDF troops cut off electrical, telephone, and water connections to the entire city, positioned snipers and surveillance posts on the mountains and on the high buildings that surrounded the area, and cordoned off the city and its surrounding camps in a perimeter closure. At this point, a large number of small military units entered the camp from all directions simultaneously, moving through walls and the homes of civilians rather than along the routes where they were expected. A survey conducted after the battle by the Palestinian architect Nurhan Abujidi showed that more than half of the buildings in the old city centre of Nablus had routes forced through them, resulting in anywhere from one to eight openings in their walls, floors, or ceilings, which created several haphazard cross-routes that she could not understand as describing simple linear progression, and which indicated to her a very chaotic manoeuvre without a clear direction³. For anyone who might imagine that moving through walls is a relatively “gentle” form of warfare, the following is a description of the sequence of the events: Soldiers assemble behind a wall. Using explosives or a large hammer, they break a hole large enough to pass through. Their charge through the wall is sometimes preceded by stun grenades or a few random shots into what is most often a private living room occupied by unsuspecting civilians. When the soldiers have passed through the party wall, the occupants are assembled and locked inside one of the rooms, where they are made to remain - sometimes for several days - until the operation is concluded, often without water, toilet, food, or medicine. According to Human Rights Watch and the Israeli human rights organization B’tselem, dozens of Palestinians have died during such operations. If moving through walls is pitched by the military as its “humane” answer to the wanton destruction of traditional urban warfare, and as an “elegant” alternative to Jenin-style destruction, this is because the damage it causes is often concealed within the interiors of homes. The unexpected penetration of war into the private domain of the home has been experienced by civilians in Palestine, just like in Iraq, as the most profound form of trauma and humiliation.

A Palestinian woman identified as Aisha, interviewed by the Palestine Monitor in November 2002, described the experience: *Imagine it - you're sitting in your living room, which you know so well; this is the room where the family watches television together after the evening meal... And, suddenly, that wall disappears with a deafening roar, the room fills with dust and debris, and through the wall pours one soldier after the other, screaming orders. You have no idea if they're after you, if they've come to take over your home, or if your house just lies on their route to somewhere else. The children are screaming, panicking... Is it possible to even begin to imagine the horror experienced by a five-year-old child as four, six, eight, twelve soldiers, their faces painted black, submachine guns pointed everywhere, antennas protruding from their backpacks, making them look like giant alien bugs, blast their way through that wall?*

Pointing to another wall now covered by a bookcase, she added: “And this is where they left. They blew up the wall and continued to our neighbour’s house.” Shimon Naveh, a retired brigadier general, directs

the Operational Theory Research Institute, which is affiliated with the military and trains staff officers from the IDF and other militaries in “operational theory” - defined in military jargon as somewhere between strategy and tactics. In an interview, Naveh summed up the mission of his institute, which was founded in 1996.

We are like the Jesuit order. We attempt to teach and train soldiers to think. . . . We read Christopher Alexander (can you imagine?). We read John Forester, and other architects. We are reading Gregory Bateson, we are reading Clifford Geertz. Not just myself, but our soldiers, our generals are reflecting on these kinds of materials. We have established a school and developed a curriculum that trains “operational architects.”

In a lecture, Naveh presented a diagram resembling a square of opposition that plots a set of logical relationships among certain propositions relative to military and guerrilla operations. Indications like Difference and Repetition - The Dialectics of Structuring and Structure; ‘Formless’ “Rival Entities; Fractal Manoeuvre: Strike-Driven Raids; Velocity vs. Rhythms; Wahhabi War Machine; Post-Modern Anarchists; Nomadic Terrorists”, and so on, resonate with the language of Deleuze and Guattari. In our interview, I asked Naveh, why Deleuze and Guattari? He replied:

“Several of the concepts in ‘A Thousand Plateaus’ became instrumental for us . . . allowing us to explain contemporary situations in a way that we could not have otherwise explained them. It problematized our own paradigms... Most important was the distinction they have pointed out between the concepts of ‘smooth’ and ‘striated’ space... [which accordingly reflect] the organizational concepts of the ‘war machine’⁴ and the ‘state apparatus’. In the IDF we now often use the term ‘to smooth out space’

References

1. Kokhavi was the commander of the IDF operation for the evacuation of settlements in the Gaza Strip.
2. IDF forces killed almost 80 Palestinian guerrilla fighters in this battle. The military now claims that if the political establishment had allowed the military to continue this operation, Kokhavi’s troops would have killed hundreds, but the pressure built up in the aftermath of the battle of Jenin brought the operation to a halt. Eyal Weizman telephone interview with Shimon Naveh, March 7, 2006. In this context, Naveh later said that “the military thinks like criminals. It enters into an area and starts killing the insurgents one by one.”
3. In the survey, Nurhan Abujidi found that 19.6 percent of buildings affected by forced routes had only one opening, 16.5 percent had two, 13.4 percent had three, 4.1 percent had four, 2.1 percent had five and 1.0 percent (two buildings) had eight. See Nurhan Abujidi, “Forced To Forget: Cultural Identity & Collective Memory/Urbicide. The Case of the Palestinian Territories, During Israeli Invasions to Nablus Historic Center 2002 - 2005. Unpublished paper presented to the workshop “Urbicide: The Killing of Cities?” Durham University, November 2005 (See p.125 in this book).
4. War machines, according to Deleuze and Guattari, are polymorphous and diffuse organizations characterized by their capacity for metamorphosis. They are made up of small groups that split up or merge with one another depending on contingency and circumstances. Deleuze and Guattari were aware that the State can willingly transform itself into a war machine. Similarly, in their discussion of “smooth space”, it is implied that this conception may lead to domination.

when we want to refer to operation in a space as if it had no borders. We try to produce the operational space in such a manner that borders do not affect us. Palestinian areas could indeed be thought of as 'striated', in the sense that they are enclosed by fences, walls, ditches, roadblocks, and so on... We want to confront the 'striated' space of traditional, old-fashioned military practice [the way most IDF units presently operate] with smoothness that allows for movement through space that crosses any borders and barriers. Rather than contain and organize our forces according to existing borders, we want to move through them."

And when I asked him if moving through walls was part of it, he explained that "in Nablus, the IDF understood urban fighting as a spatial problem... Travelling through walls is a simple mechanical solution that connects theory and practice. Transgressing boundaries is the definition of the condition of 'smoothness'."

(see http://roundtable.kein.org/files/roundtable/Weizman_lethal%20theory.pdf for full text and references)

Appendix

*Activities, lectures &
presentations organized
during the cycle of 'Borders'*

Debate cycle: the making of a terrorist

Discussion cycle in three parts

Iraq was invaded as part of the USA's war on terror. In the Netherlands, too, fear of terrorist attacks and the implementation of measures to prevent it have had a major impact on society, on public space, on the discourse about immigration and other public discourse.

The UN has failed to agree on a definition of terrorism. 'Terrorist' is an insult that each party of a conflict can level at its adversary. Nevertheless a clear image springs up when the word is mentioned, usually of one of the people the media commonly define as terrorist leaders.

The construction of the 'hostile Other' or 'terrorist' was addressed in this discussion cycle. In the first part we tried to find out what these people defined as terrorists actually say? It turned out that it is not what we 'hear'. This is because we rely on the media and public opinion makers to relay their messages instead. So the second debate was about the global media. Why do they maintain such an obvious slant in their reporting and what can the result of that bias be? An Iraqi journalist determined to give his version of the truth, that ran counter to accepted explanations of the situation in Iraq, confronted a Dutch opinion maker. It turned out that the gap between the two could not be bridged. The third discussion then obliquely addressed the results of this great misunderstanding, by looking at how this constructed fear of the terrorist affects city life in The Hague. If terror is not a real threat, then what about all the security measures taken to prevent it? Constant warnings to be on your lookout, false alerts, body searches, ID checks, security camera's, and expert discussions on terrorism meant to inform public opinion – what is it all for?

1: Know thy Enemy: a reading exercise

November 13, 2007

Three experts: Maurits Berger, Rashad Selim and Arjan Erkel were asked to give an objective analysis of the most recent texts by Osama ben Laden, President Ahmadinejad, Hamas and Hezbollah. The most recent texts of these leaders were provided in full version to the experts, while the audience was presented with atypical quotes from these same texts. Following are these quotes together with fragments from the discussion:

Maurits Berger works as an arabist at the Dutch Foreign Relations Study Institute Clingendael. He specializes in Islamic law and political Islam. Previously he worked as a lawyer in Amsterdam and spent seven years in Egypt and Syria as a researcher and journalist. His current research focuses on political Islam in the Western world.

Rashad Selim studied art in Baghdad and at St Martins in London. He worked in many different art-related functions in the UK, North Africa and Yemen, including as a consultant for the United Nations and NGOs. He currently is an artist-in-residence at Gemak in Den Haag, working on a public art project as part of the Green Zone / Red Zone exhibition.

Arjan Erkel completed cultural anthropology studies in 1997. He worked many years for the NGO 'Doctors without Borders'. In August 2002 he was kidnapped by Chechen rebels in Daghestan, and spent 607 days in captivity. After writing a book about this experience he wrote "Samir" (2007) based on his discussions with the Dutch terrorist Samir A. and members of his entourage.

From left to right: Rashad Selim, Arjan Erkel, Maurits Berger and moderator Natasja van den Berg



Excerpt of Osama Bin Laden's "Message to the American People"
6 September 2007



"The morality and culture of the holocaust is your culture, not our culture. In fact, burning living beings is forbidden in our religion, even if they be small like the ant, so what of man!? The holocaust of the Jews was carried out by your brethren in the middle of Europe, but had it been closer to our countries, most of the Jews would have been saved by taking refuge with us. And my proof for that is in what your brothers, the Spanish, did

when they set up the horrible courts of the Inquisition to try Muslims and Jews, when the Jews only found safe shelter by taking refuge in our countries. And that is why the Jewish community in Morocco today is one of the largest communities in the world.

They are alive with us and we have not incinerated them" [...] Why are the leaders of the White House keen to start wars and wage them around the world, and make use of every possible opportunity through which they can reach this purpose, occasionally creating justifications based on deception and blatant lies, as you saw in Iraq? In the Vietnam War, the leaders of the White House claimed at the time that it was a necessary and crucial war, and during it, Rumsfeld and his aides murdered two million villagers. [...] after it became clear to you that it was an unjust and unnecessary war, you made one of your greatest mistakes, in that you neither brought to account nor punished those who waged this war [...]. What I want to emphasize here is that not taking past war criminals to account led to them repeating that crime of killing humanity without right and waging this unjust war in Mesopotamia"

Maurits Berger: Osama is clearly a follower of Samuel Huntington's 'Clash of Civilisations' theory. He sees a Western (military) tsunami advancing on the Middle East, with a frontline stretching from Chechnya to Sudan. If you put yourself in his place you can see his point. But he goes further than the others who only denounce this: he fights back. This gives him a double identity: on one hand Osama is a Robin Hood, fighting on behalf of the dispossessed against the mighty Western military invaders. On the other he's a looney, engaged in an impossible struggle. Many people understand his motives but disagree with his methods. *Rashad Selim:* I don't fully agree, at least not on the basis of this text. Here he mentions shared religious values, as does Ahmadinejad. There is no absoluteness of 'the winner takes all' mentality in the clash of civilisations, such as exists on the US side. He remains open and searches for a common ground. This is a hallmark of all the texts we're commenting tonight: the effort to reach out, communicate and find a common ground with Western audiences. In that sense the desire for an Islamic world is a fantasy of the same order as the US fantasy of a fully democratic world; this dream of 'one system rules all'.

MB: I think both sides genuinely believe in their fantasy, and that the world would be a better place if democracy / Islam ruled all.

RS: What I find striking also is the element of compassion which is central in their thinking. See how Osama talks about the Jews, basically saying: there's no precedent in our culture for the holocaust that you Westerners inflicted on the Jews, so don't blame us! And I know from experience that many Arabs do miss the Jews that left to Israel. They were integrated into Arab societies and most left because of the opportunities offered by Israel, not persecution at home. But I find it strange hearing myself defend Osama Ben Laden!



Excerpt of President Ahmadinejad's "Address to the UN General Assembly" 26 September 2007



"Humanity has had a deep wound on its tired body caused by impious powers for centuries. Today, the problems that people around the world face are mainly rooted in the disregard of human values and ethics and also in the rule of the selfish and incompetent. The only sustainable way to the betterment of mankind is the return to the teachings of the divine prophets, monotheism, respect for the dignity of humans

and the flow of love and affection in all relationships, ties and regulations, and to reform the present structures on this basis.

To fulfil this objective, I invite everybody to form a front of fraternity, amity and sustainable peace based on monotheism and justice under the name of "Coalition for Peace", to prevent incursions and arrogance and to promote the culture of affection and justice.

I hereby announce that with the help of all independent, justice-seeking and peace-loving nations, the Islamic Republic of Iran will be heading down this path."

[...] "Peoples and governments are not obliged to obey the injustice of certain powers. These powers, because of the reasons already mentioned, have lost the competence to lead the world.

I officially declare that the age of relations arising from the Second World War as well as materialistic thoughts based on arrogance and domination is well over now. Humanity has passed a perilous precipice and the age of monotheism, purity, affinity, respecting others, justice and true peace-loving has commenced."

Arjan Erkel: The starting point for Islamic radicalization is not, as we believe, a problem with integration into our Western society. In fact Moroccans [seen as the most problematic group in the Netherlands in terms of integration] are more integrated into Dutch society than Turks or Chinese are. The latter stick to themselves, and are definitely less integrated. What do we mean by 'integrated' then? Apparently it means 'not creating problems for others'. Anyway most radicals are people who are well integrated, studying, working, not involved in drugs or criminality, often with a high level of education. But reading about the wars in which most victims are Muslims and feeling the West is not doing enough about this they gradually get involved. They start meeting other concerned Muslims and that's where you get 'a radical network'. Actually they are idealists wanting a better society, without prostitution, drugs, with the same rights and education for all. In Islam they find a structure and a discipline that Western society doesn't provide them, and guidance as to what a just society is. Then there is the romance of brotherhood – changing the world together – but also a gradual legitimating

of violent resistance.

Rashad Selim: We see that in all wars, in all violent situations, a culture of violence emerges.

Arjan Erkel: We should be careful not to criminalize Islam.

We have to distinguish between the criminal impulse and the idealistic one. We must listen to these young radicals just as we listen to Greenpeace and Al Gore, not dismiss their idealism as religious. We have to be capable of self-criticism to understand their points.

Excerpt of Hezbollah leader Sayed Nasrallah's "Speech for Al Quds International Day" 5 October 2007



"Let us not rule out the existence of a coordinated "Israeli"-American motive to drag Syria into war, and thus the entire region, because this is Bush's plan for the area. His project for the region is not one of peace but war, just as he did in Iraq, Palestine and as he did in Lebanon in July 2006 last year, he now tries to do the same at the entire regional level.

We know that when the

Americans want to implement

any project, they begin with the media, then pursue it politically and psychologically until it becomes the norm"

[...] "Imagine the state which possesses the world's second biggest oil reserve if not the biggest, a state leading the Countries of the world in petroleum exports, yet its people are displaced, migrated, poor and in need for food rations just to eat? This is the prosperity the Americans promised us: a people without nutrition, medicine, security, stability or freedom. Where is this freedom in Iraq today? Americans continue their systematic destruction of Iraq"

Arjan Erkel: The text of Hezbollah leader Nasrallah begins with some valid points about Western lives seemingly counting more than Palestinian ones, but then it falls into conspiracy theories when Nasrallah accuses Israel of being behind the recent spate of assassinations of Lebanese politicians. It reminds me of Joris Luyendijk's book 'They're Just Like People'. That the Israelis are so good in handling the media, and the Arabs so bad at it, is unfortunate, but at some point you also think: it's their own fault, they should express themselves more carefully. I found it boring to read Nasrallah's speech.

AE: While I was kidnapped by Chechens I heard them complain a lot about the role of the media, which they believe is controlled by Jews. I understand that because of news fatigue dead Afghans or Iraqi's don't make the news anymore, but I think western media have the task to give more background information, instead of merely reporting incidents. They are becoming less and less concerned about good international reporting generally.

Excerpt of "Program of Palestinian Unity Government" 17 March 2007, reflecting the views of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh



"The government, through national conciliation, will work on consolidating the calm and expanding it to become a comprehensive reciprocal truce happening at the same time between both sides and this should be in return for Israel halting its occupation measures on the ground in terms of assassinations, arrests, incursions and home demolition and leveling of lands and the digging works in Jerusalem; and it should work on removing the

check[points and reopening the crossings and lifting all the restrictions on movement and the release of prisoners"

[...] [the Palestinian Unity Government commits to caring for the sector of women] "so that women can assume the status they deserve based on their sacrifices and to secure to them participation in the decision making process"

Maurits Berger: Islam is a religion of social justice, so instead of talking about Islam the authors focus on the issue of justice. Christianity is a religion of love, which is a complicated message to translate in political terms; while the politics of Islam were already worked out in the time of the prophet Mohammad. He himself delivered a strong message of social justice, which is why he was nearly killed and kicked out of Mecca. And then he went about to establish it politically during his lifetime. Now all Muslims, hearing that message from the pulpits today, look around themselves and can't help noticing that they do not live in social justice. Add to that that the pulpit of the mosque is one of the few places where you can speak in public and the picture starts forming.

Rashad Selim: The idea of democracy is not novel in the Islam: all kinds of democratic processes of governance exist, from the micro-level to the highest spheres of government.

MB: Yes, these practices exist among the people, but not among the governments in the Middle East. These call themselves democracies but are quite clearly dictatorships. Therefore ordinary people have developed negative associations with democracy: it means abuse of power, corruption.

RS: Since the international community refused to accept the electoral victory of Hamas, common people in the Middle East understand democracy to be the means to impose some kind of Western agenda. Obviously Bush's rhetoric about 'democratizing the Middle East' and his track record in Iraq has reinforced this view.

MB: Exactly, it was stupid of the international community to not recognize Hamas after its electoral victory, because it has undercut all future Western efforts to promote democracy in the region. Hamas is actually looking for a means to establish a

system of government which is quite democratic without calling it 'democracy' to avoid these negative connotations. Interestingly, the Islamic parties are actually the most open to the West, of all political players in the region. It may be a desperate cry: please recognize us! It is surprising that the Islamic parties haven't shrugged their shoulders and turned their backs on the West, that they still engage in democratic and (banned) party politics and appeal to the West to defend their right to do so. *RS:* Terrorism happens on both sides. If one defines terrorism as striking terror into civilian populations by random violence, then the terrorism exercised by states can be many times worse in numbers of victims than the terrorism by non-state actors. For example, the cluster bombs dropped by Israel on Lebanon in the 33 days war, last summer. This is deliberate attack on innocent civilians: terrorism.

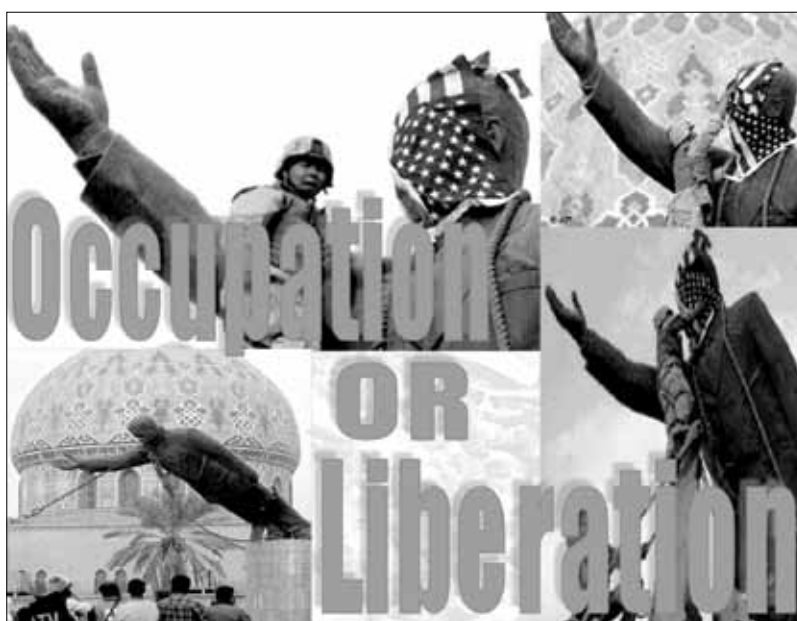
2: Reporting the Global War on Terror a self-analysis

December 11, 2007

The Iraqi journalist Ali Rifat, who works for the Sunday Times (UK) and has revealed some of the big scandals that rocked Iraq since 2003, came to The Hague to give a presentation of the 'Iraqi version of events' as opposed to Western reporting. His powerpoint presentation lasted nearly an hour, and was a fairly typical example of conspiracy theory. The Americans were seen as the perpetrators, together with Al Qaeda (who were defined as an American creation, possibly in cohorts with the US occupier) and the militias that formed 'As-Sahwa' ('The Awakening'), whilst the Iraqi people were cast as victims.

This presentation, as could be expected, led to stiff resistance from the audience, who pointed out that the Iraqi's were being denied any agency, the objectives given to the Americans were unrealistic at best, and that the black & white portrait Ali Rifat made of the situation in the country was a mirror image of the despised black & white representation of events used by Bush.

After the presentation, the well-known Dutch writer and opinion maker Pieter Hilhorst gave reasons why the version of events presented by Ali Rifat would never make it into a Dutch newspaper: according to him it was unlikely and at times illogical, insulting to most of the parties involved, and the argument was completely overstated. He admitted that the complexity of the situation in Iraq was not reflected in the Dutch media, as journalists tend to clarify issues, instead of rendering them more complex. Ali Rifat in turn could not conceive how one could ignore the amount of evidence, as he saw it, that supported his explanation of events. Another member of the audience (from Pakistan) claimed that a Dutch journalist could never understand the complexity of events in an Islamic country in the first place. An Iraqi member of the audience pointed out how the unspoken assumptions underlying Hilhorst's discourse contributed



to the popularity of conspiracy theories in the Middle East: almost all Western opinion-makers inherently believe in the good intentions of their governments, while there are few facts to support this view. The gap between the manner in which Dutch journalism rendered the conflict in Iraq and commonly held views in the Middle East became more apparent as the discussion progressed. Finally all sides did agree that mainstream Middle Eastern perspectives should at least be reflected in Western media, to allow Westerners to understand how public opinion is being formed in the Middle East.

3: Bringing Terror Home: the green and the red zones of The Hague

December 11, 2007

Two weeks before the end of the exhibition, the version 2.0 of Green Zone / Red Zone, including new works made in reaction to the GZ/RZ project, was inaugurated; the third debate in the cycle was held the same evening.

The artist in residence, Rashad Selim, displayed the results of his public art project; a giant 'Anxiety Hare' was placed among the exhibited artworks, and the Foundation for Achieving Seamless Territory, FAST, presented its work in progress on the atlas "The Hague Green Zone / Red Zone". See pages 48 – 55

The 'Angsthaas' project of the philosopher artist Bram Esser is the result of his research into the growing culture of fear in the Netherlands. Angsthaas literally means 'Anxiety Hare' and it's a term used to designate cowards. A giant polymer cast hare sat in the hall of Gemak, staring with its camera head at a TV that relayed CCTV images of one of the 'hotspots' of The Hague. These are places which popular imagination, fed by the media, believes to be dangerous areas, especially at night. Needless to say, nothing was happening on the screen. A smaller hare sat safely in a glass box, peeking at the outside world through curtains. One could even buy one's own plastic-cast 'anxiety hare' with its characteristic camera head, as a commentary on the mass-production and even desirability of fear.

During the debate Malkit Shoshan and Camila Pinzon Cortes from FAST presented their findings with a slideshow. The Dutch historian, Steven van Schuppen (author among others of the Historical Atlas of The Hague) reacted to and contested some of their findings. After this debate the artist Bram Esser held a Pecha Kucha presentation of his project on Anxiety Hares. The audience could then visit the modified Green Zone / Red Zone exhibition, and as usual quite a lot of alcohol was drunk at the Gemak bar.

'The Making of a Terrorist' debate cycle was supported by Kosmopolis Den Haag and the Hivos NCDO Culture Fund



Ali Rifat presenting his explanation of events in Iraq



Installation view of Bram Esser, Angsthaas, in Gemak, January 2008



FAST researchers Malkit Shoshan and Camila Pinzon Cortes

A lecture by *Nadje Sadig al Ali*

December 18th 2007



Nadje al Ali, born to Iraqi and German parents, and brought up in Egypt among other countries, is a social anthropologist working at the Centre for Gender Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, UK. She is specialized in women and gender issues in the Middle East, especially women's movements and activism in Egypt and Iraq. Nadje al Ali considers herself an activist academic and is

a founding member of Act Together: Women's Action on Iraq. She is also a member of Women in Black UK.

Nadje al Ali was fortunately able to come to the Hague to give a lecture on the position of women in Iraq over the past fifty years, based on her recently published book "Iraqi Women: Untold Stories from 1948 to the Present"

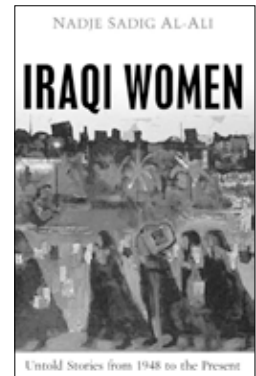
(From a review of the book by Susannah Tarbush, Al-Hayat, 03/05/07)

Soraya, an Iraqi woman in her seventies, recalls the exciting days of political and cultural blossoming in Iraq in the 1950's and early 1960's when she was involved in mostly clandestine political activism but also revelled in the cultural and intellectual life of Baghdad. "I used to meet my boyfriend in Cafe Swiss," she recalls. "There were always lots of intellectuals, painters and poets hanging around, drinking coffee and discussing things. Both men and women. Everybody used to know everybody. We would talk a lot about literature, art and music." Sumaya is the widow of an Islamist political activist in the Al-Dawa party and in the 1980's she was arrested and tortured a few days after her husband was killed by security forces in Baghdad University in the 1980s. She says his body was dissolved in a chemical solution in front of his colleagues, who were forced to watch. As a result of her torture, "I had to have my shoulder blades replaced. They beat me, and hung me by the hair. They hit me with a cable that had iron inside...I was a student of Amina Sadr, also known as Huda Bint Sadr. I am the only one of her students who survived."

Hana, a Baghdad University professor, complains of how life has changed since the 2003 invasion and occupation. "I want my country back. Why do I have to pay the price for their bad government? Since

the occupation, I do not feel safe to go to university. The university is no longer the place I used to know. I cannot socialize. I cannot visit my friends. I cannot even read when I want, because there is no electricity."

Soraya, Sumaya and Hana are just three of the many Iraqi women whose memories of Iraq's history over the past 60 years are included in the important and stimulating new book by Nadje Sadig al Ali, "Iraqi Women: Untold Stories from 1948 to the Present". Through her excerpts from interviews with Iraqi women, Al Ali gives a voice to Iraqi women of different backgrounds and ages, from teenagers to their late seventies, who spring vividly to life in her book's pages. She seeks to dispel any impression that Iraqi women are merely "passive victims." She shows that they have over the decades been resourceful in facing up to a succession of extremely difficult circumstances, and of coping with wars, sanctions, laws and state policies. From the 1920s they have set up their own organisations and have been part of political movements, and this continues despite the harsh conditions for women in today's Iraq.



Grand Café Oriental Shabandar

January 20th 2008

The closing party of Green Zone / Red Zone was a commemoration of Shabandar café, one of the most famous literary cafés of Baghdad. It was destroyed in the attack on the book market of Mutanabi Street and the owner lost three sons in the carnage. Shabandar is famous among Baghdadis, and its reputation was even established within the intellectual and arts communities of other Arab countries.



Grand Café Shabandar

The purpose was to organize a party where Iraqis in the Netherlands would feel fully at home and offer them good hospitality – knowing the Dutch are not champions in this regard. The assembly room of Gemak was furnished in the retro style of the old café, with chairs and benches arranged in sitting corners for 10-12 people. The walls were covered in old photographs of Baghdad, carpets and oriental bric-a-brac, like Shabandar itself. An excellent Iraqi traiteur kept the mint tea flowing and provided lovely Iraqi snacks during the break. The party coincided with the end of a Dutch literary festival, which this year happened to be dedicated to writers and poets from the Middle East / North Africa region. Most of the Arab poets and writers invited for this festival came to our event, including Tamim Barghouti, the young Palestinian poet and idol who recently won an international poetry competition in the Gulf. We also invited two Dutch Iraqi poets to intersperse the evening's programme with readings from their work.

Rashad Selim played the role of the host, introducing the people to each other and making sure every artist in the room would somehow contribute to the evening, preferably in a spontaneous way.

Café Shabandar @ Gemak, January 20, 2008



A mostly Iraqi audience thoroughly enjoying a poem of Tamim Barghouti



The Maqâm ensemble of Mohammed Qanun, and Tamim Barghouti declaiming a poem



Archipelagos and enclaves: Architecture of the contemporary spatial order

A lecture by
Alessandro Petti

September 6, 2008

Prof. Yazid Anani of Birzeit University (near Ramallah on the West Bank) had been invited to give a lecture at Gemak on strategies of architectural resistance against the Israeli occupation. He participates in the 'Decolonizing Architecture' project (p.81) with his students of the Faculty of Architecture. However he could not come due to new and more complicated visa issuance policies of the Dutch government for Palestinian citizens. Alessandro Petti, one of the founders of the Decolonizing Architecture project, gave a lecture instead. During the lecture a skype internet telephone connection allowed Prof. Anani to participate in the discussion. Alessandro explained the focus of his lecture as follows:

"The basic idea of my investigation is that the city and contemporary territory are changing according to a well-determined spatial model dictated by the paradigm of security and control. This spatial model is evident in Palestinian, but it is also present, declined in various ways and degrees of intensity, in other geographical contexts. Off-shore residential islands (Dubai), holiday camps (Sharm El-Sheik), gated communities (USA), bypass freeways and cordon sanitaires, asylum-seekers transit centres (Europe), gated-off world summits (G8), are just some of the different applications of the spatial model of occupied territories.

Tonight I will focus in particular on the comparison between the functioning of control devices in the laboratory of the occupied territories and the functioning of control devices in other geographical contexts."

(Introduction by Alessandro Petti)

01.

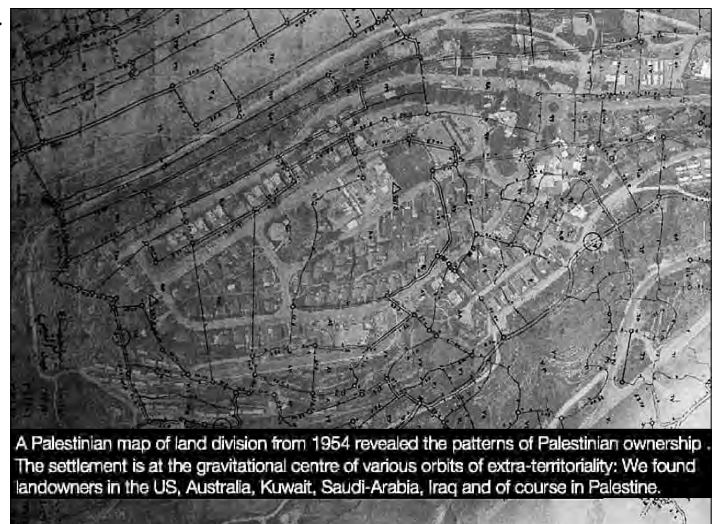


Images of the slideshow accompanying the lecture

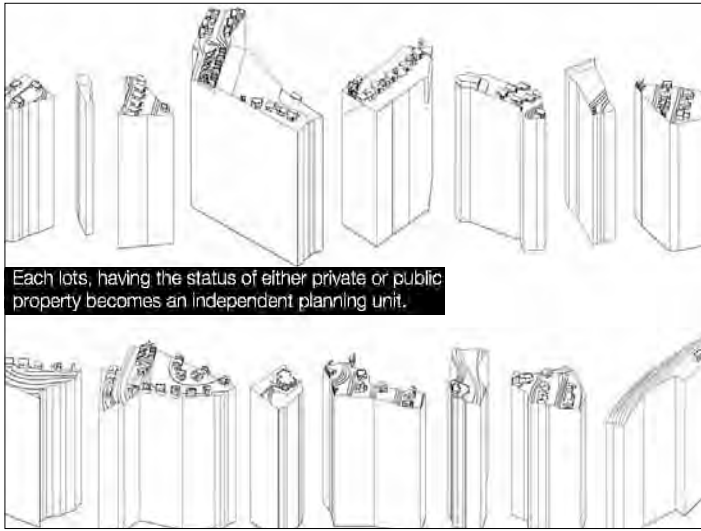
02.



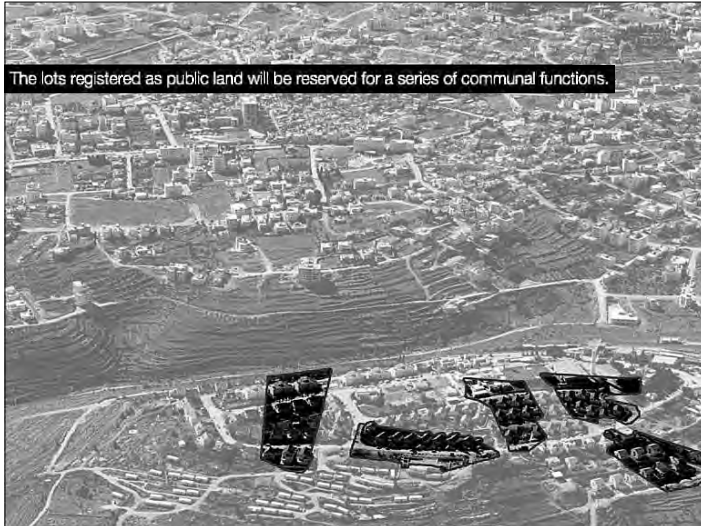
03.



04.



05.



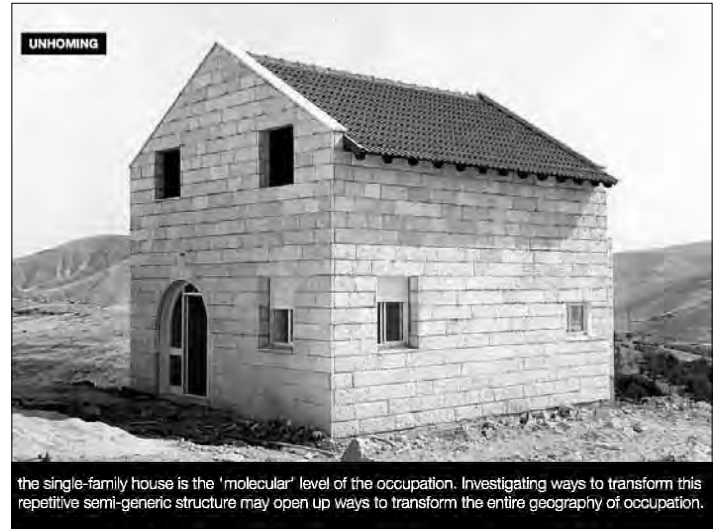
06.



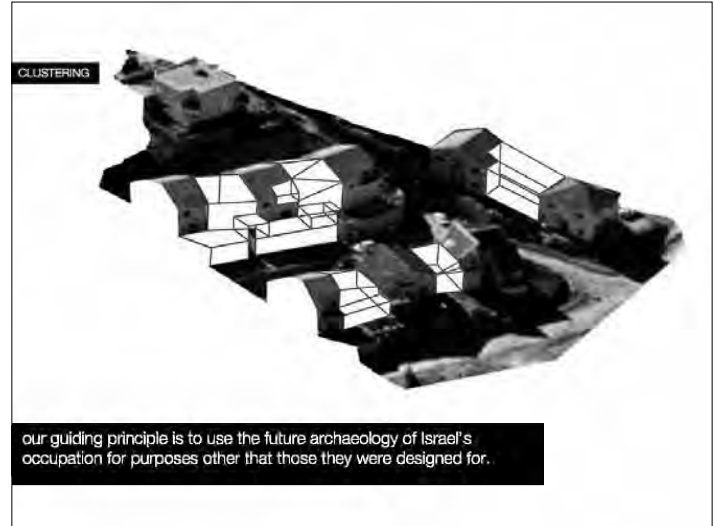
07.



08.



09.



10.



11.



Building a Palestinian Consensus

A Lecture by *Dr. Khaled Hroub*

September 12, 2008

Khaled Hroub, Palestinian, was born in a refugee camp in Bethlehem. Hroub is currently director of the Arab Media Project at Cambridge University, hosts a weekly book review programme for Al Jazeera TV, and has written four books, the latest being **' Hamas: A Beginner's Guide'.**

The lunch lecture of Dr. Hroub was sponsored by Cordaid.

Following are his remarks on the cultural particularism cherished by some Arab elites:

"The Arab elites defend a diffuse concept of "cultural particularism." For many who sympathize with it, it has become a romantic image of an imaginary situation which has little to do with the demands of our increasingly globalized world.

In reality, holding on to this concept with such persistence encourages a rigid view of the outside world, characterized by deep mistrust, and implying that everything which comes to us from this outside world must be a source of destruction and annihilation. It is as if the outside world has no other interest than to conspire against this "cultural particularism" and destroy it.

This leads in the end to an overemphasis on "cultural particularism" and – as a result of this sense of threat – to an increasing distance between Arab societies and the rest of the world. This is the case even though contemporary Arab societies want to liberate themselves from such rigid ways of thinking, and would rather meet the changes and challenges of the modern world with a spirit of openness."

(Khaled Hroub in Qantara, the German online journal of art and culture in the Middle East, 2008)





Resisting Urbicide: Restoring Palestinian Heritage

A Lecture by *Dr. Nurhan Abujidi*

September 16, 2008

During a public interview with Yoei Albrecht, Dr Abujidi explained how the destruction of key locations of a city is often planned intentionally in order to disrupt and paralyse the normal functioning of society, leading eventually to the annihilation of a community's cultural identity. The end result of urbicide – the destruction of urban life - is that slowly but surely the modern Palestinian State becomes unviable. According to her, as well as targeting symbols of Palestinian return (such as refugee camps) and Palestinian power (such as ministries), Israeli military campaigns also deliberately targets Palestinian symbols of cultural identity in cities such as Bethlehem, Hebron and Nablus.

Between 2002 and 2006, Dr Abujidi spent 3000 hours mapping out Israeli military action in Nablus in order to demonstrate the process of urbicide – over 2500 destructive actions were placed on the map as well as the consequences of the damage on the urban fabric. She concluded from her research that the high number of destructive actions was so immensely out of proportion that there could be no question of collateral damage as the Israelis claimed, but rather a selective and deliberate process of destruction. Furthermore, Dr Abujidi clearly differentiates between direct – the destructions – and indirect urbicide. According to her, indirect urbicide involves the measures undertaken to prevent the hinder of normality such as the prevention of mobility.

*This lecture was organized by the **Cultural Emergency Response of the Prince Claus Fund***

◀ *On the north side of the Labadda house, Israeli bulldozers destroyed three cars and dumped the wreckage on top of a neighbouring house. The bulldozer is about to drop the third car; in view are two cars previously dropped onto the porch of the neighbouring home. Earlier in the day, these cars were used by the Israeli occupation forces to blockade the street, and when they were no longer useful, they were dumped on the house. Photo by Michael Ramallah, Nablus, August 2006*

Images of the destruction in Nablus after the 2002 Israeli campaign



The Jerusalem Seminar

In October 2008, Gemak hosted a seminar for Palestinian, Israeli & Dutch activists, officials, scholars, students, writers, urban planners and analysts to discuss the urban development of Jerusalem.

For billions of people Jerusalem is not a real place but an issue or a symbol. Their Jerusalem is imbued with larger meaning, be it religious, nationalistic or geopolitical. In this seminar we were not interested in this symbolic city. We requested our guests (five Palestinians and three Israelis, all of them professionally involved in Jerusalem) to focus on issues of planning, strategies of daily survival, systems of occupation, municipal politics and sociological trends. We asked the Palestinian speakers to reflect on the influence of Israeli culture in their daily lives and intellectual perspectives, and requested the Israeli speakers to analyse the links between the development of the Israeli presence in Palestinian East Jerusalem and mainstream opinions in Israeli society. Finally, Western stakeholders (both pro-Palestinian 'do-gooders' and staunch supporters of the Israeli cause) were confronted by the speakers with the polarizing results of their own involvement in Jerusalem and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The goal was to reveal the unconscious motivations and unrecognized assumptions underpinning Western political or humanitarian involvement in the conflict.

At the last moment Jad Isaac was not allowed to transit through the Israeli airport of Ben Gurion, so he could not come. Dr. Adel Manna gave his presentation in his place.

The Jerusalem seminar was organized and directed by Derk Byvanck, and co-hosted by United Civilians for Peace (UCP), the International Institute for the Study of the Islam in the Modern World (ISIM), and the Netherlands Architecture Institute (NAI).

Participants and their themes:

Senan Abdelkader teaches at Bezalel Academy and works as an architect on the master plan of East Jerusalem. As a Palestinian with Israeli citizenship, he represented Israel at the 2007 São Paulo Bienal. He believes the overwhelming emphasis in political and cultural discourse on Jerusalem being composed of separate Palestinian and Jewish Israeli cities is misleading, as Jerusalem is and has always been a hybrid space which different and often conflicting communities share.

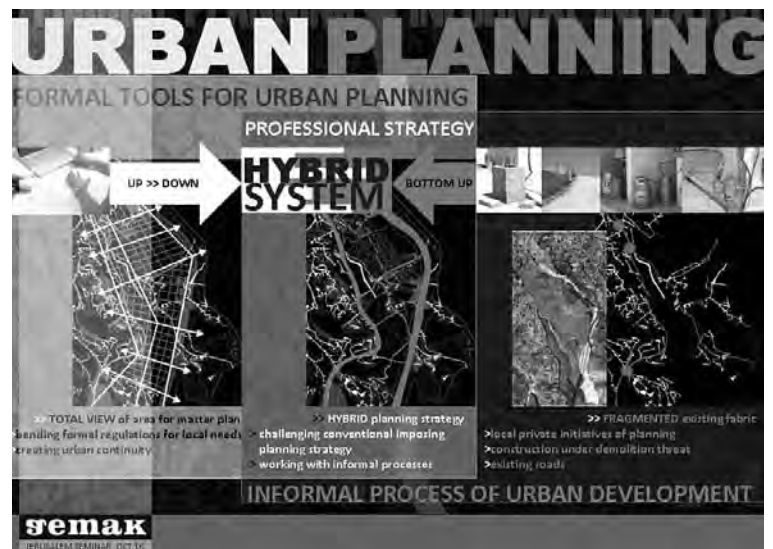
Amneh Badran is a lecturer in the political science department of Al Quds University, Jerusalem. For many years she was director of Jerusalem Centre for Women (JCW). She is concerned by how Israeli occupation policies set back Palestinian women's emancipation, directly (by not allowing them to move freely to their workplaces) and indirectly,



Daniel Seidemann, Adel Manna, moderator Paul Aarts (from the University of Amsterdam) and Meir Margalit on the second panel (day 1).



The panel during the third session (day 2), from left to right Hassan Jabareen, seminar director Derk Byvanck and Ruchama Marton

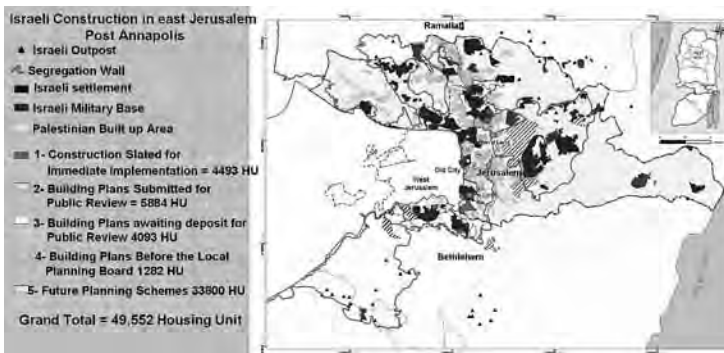


A slide of Senan's presentation where he argues that as an architect working in East Jerusalem one must take into account both the formal exigencies of the Israeli state and informal strategies deployed by Palestinian residents, and try to integrate both in one's project

by pressurizing Palestinian society in ways that elicit defensive conservative social reactions. The lack of law and order in the Palestinian neighbourhoods (Israel does not provide it and does not allow self-organization) also works detrimentally for women and children.



The Via Dolorosa in the old city of Jerusalem



A slide of Jad Isaac's presentation showing the plans for construction of Israeli settlements in the governorate of Jerusalem since the Annapolis conference (2007).

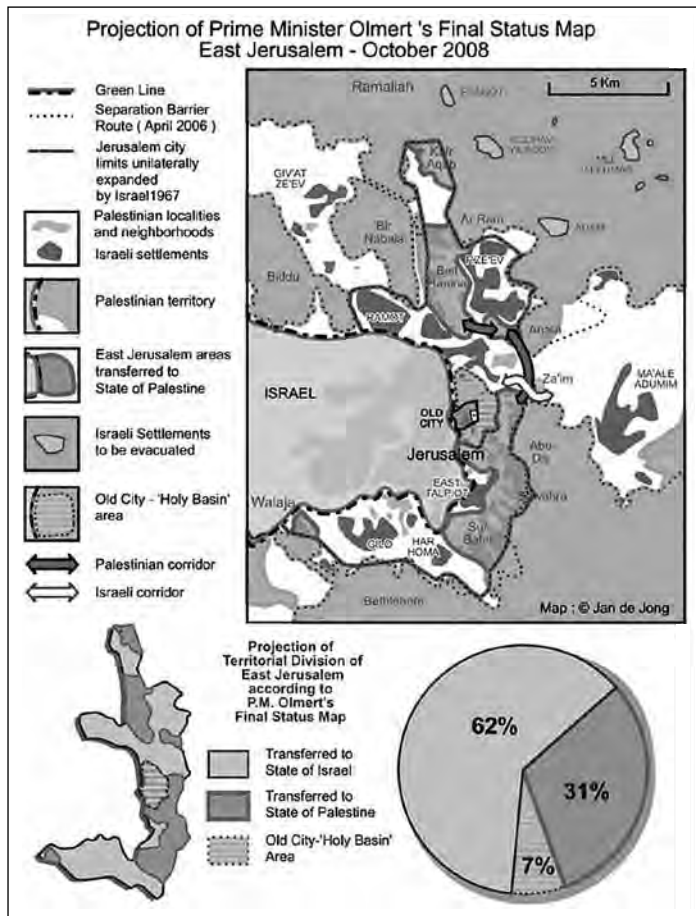
Jad Isaac is a prolific writer and the director general of the Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem (ARIJ), a leading Palestinian institute that conducts research on agriculture, environment, land use and water. He has also researched the depalestinization of Jerusalem, the subject of his presentation in Gemak. He gave cartographic evidence of how Israeli settlement and separation barrier construction policies were progressively completely cutting Palestinian East Jerusalem off from the rest of the West Bank, thus confining Palestinian Jerusalemites to ever smaller ghettos.

Hassan Jabareen is the founder of Adalah: The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel. He has litigated many constitutional law cases before the Israeli Supreme Court on issues of discrimination, political rights, land rights, and economic and social rights on behalf of Palestinian citizens of Israel and the occupied territories.

He argued that the Israeli constitution de facto applies to the Palestinian people as they 'enjoy' the status of occupied people under international law, thus giving them more legal rights than they are currently granted by most courts in Israel.

Adel Manna, historian, is Director of the Center for the Study of Arab Society in Israel at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. Born in Haifa, he is an Arab Israeli that chose to become Jerusalemite. In his presentation he compared the unsatisfactory legal status of Arab Israelis to the much worse one of East Jerusalemites. He gave a vivid description of daily life for a working father of school-going children in East Jerusalem: discrimination, humiliation, and the obstacle course that going to school or to work has become.

Meir Margalit researched the history of the Jewish community in Palestine before 1948. Previously an active member of Zionist settler groups, he changed his views and founded the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions. Currently he's member of the Jerusalem City Council for the secular left wing Meretz Party. Margalit described the mechanisms that lead to expropriation of Palestinians, house demolitions and land grabs and particularly dwelled on the racist policies of the Jerusalem municipality.

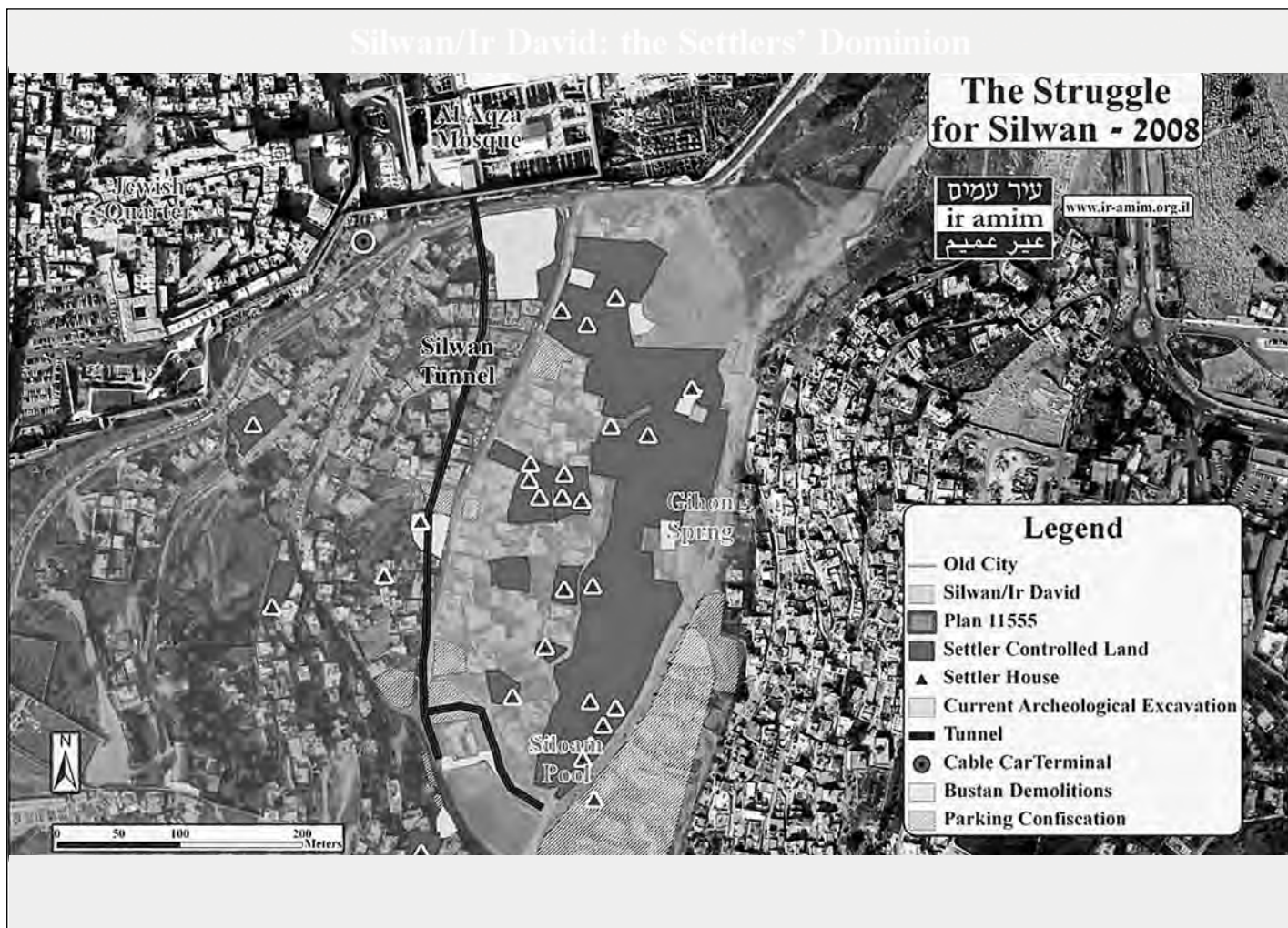


Ruchama Marton is psychiatrist, feminist and human rights activist. She is the founder and president of Physicians for Human Rights, Israel. In her presentation she described the development of the Israeli national psyche. She gave evidence of how the increasingly brutal occupation policies and wars initiated by Israel were accompanied by ever greater violence and frustration within Israeli society. For a full exposé of her theories go to p. 100

Daniel Seidemann, founder and consultant to 'Ir Amim', a non-profit association dedicated to an equitable, stable and sustainable Jerusalem, has been a practicing attorney in Jerusalem since 1987, often defending Palestinian victims of Israeli policies. He is frequently consulted on Jerusalem-related issues by Israeli, Palestinian and international decision makers and stakeholders. In this seminar Seidemann described the explosive issue of Silwan and predicted that the incorporation of this neighbourhood could lead to violent outbursts worse than the second intifada.

◀ Jan de Jong, *Map of the West Bank*, 2006

▼ Slide of Seidemann's presentation indicating the gradual colonization of the Palestinian neighbourhood of Silwan, adjacent to Al Aqsa mosque in East Jerusalem





Opening of the exhibition Promised Land



The exhibition was inaugurated on January 9, 2009, in the middle of the Israeli bombing campaign in Gaza. This obviously attracted a lot of attention to the exhibition, which was covered extensively in the Dutch press - especially as Israel did not allow journalists into its theatre of operations.



Photos of the inauguration. From top to bottom: the curator addressing the crowd, the departing director of the Gemeentemuseum and the director of the Vrije Academie, and Pavel Wolberg. Other photographs taken by Palestinians during the 2009 Israeli military campaign in Gaza.

Living with Walls

Israeli film cycle in Gemak organized by Gate 48.

Gate 48 is a platform for critical Israelis established in the Netherlands.

Not only are walls being built between Israeli and Palestinian land, also within Israel barriers are erected to separate Jews from Palestinians or Bedouins living in Israel. Much effort is furthermore made to separate groups of “others”, such as immigrants from the Jewish collective.

Surrounding itself with walls is part of a long process with which Israel has been secluding itself from the rest of the Middle East in order to protect its Jewish identity. In November-December 2008 GATE48 will organize four screenings and discussions in Gemak that will draw a tragic portrait of Israel as a state that prefers to live with walls surrounding and dividing it over getting to know its neighbors and minority groups; a state that is so fearful of its past as a victim, that it prefers to become a victimizer. Israel has become a state that builds real barriers, which in fact stand only as symbols for the mental barriers it has created over time. The event in Gemak will feature four different instances where such barriers are created; physical and symbolic.

(From the Gate 48 website www.gate48.org)

Wednesday, 5 November 2008 : On the separation regime
4 short films: from ‘Jerusalem Moments’ and by ‘Machsom Watch’ followed by a discussion with **Hilla Dayan**

Wednesday, 19 November 2008 : Borders within
The film Paper Dolls (Tomer Heymann)
followed by a discussion with **Barak Kalir**

Wednesday, 3 December 2008 : David and Goliath: portraying a nation under siege. The film Avenge But One Of My Two Eyes (Avi Mograbi) followed by a discussion with **Erella Grassiani**

Wednesday, 17 December 2008 : Cultural boundaries
The film Bridge over the wadi (Tomer Heymann & Barak Heymann) followed by a discussion with **Yael Lerer**

Example of one evening:

Borders Within

The film ‘Paper Dolls’ is a powerful exploration of Filipino transsexuals who immigrated to Israel to take care of elderly orthodox Jewish men. Filled with contradictions and shattering preconceived expectations, the film is a journey of a young Israeli filmmaker - Tomer Heymann - who befriends this group. In the process of documenting their lives, he comes to understand more about his own.

Synopsis of presentation given by Barak Kalir after the screening of Paper Dolls:

The state of Israel has been established (Declaration of Independence 1948) as a Jewish state. Induced by the Zionist ideal of the ‘Foregathering of the Diaspora’, Israel actively encourages the immigration of Jews while officially rejecting the immigration of non-Jews. Nevertheless, a series of global and geopolitical changes have prompted Israel to engage since 1993, for the first time in its history, in the importation of thousands of non-Jewish migrant workers. [NDLR: one of the main reasons is that the Palestinian workforce who used to perform most of the low-skilled labour jobs was progressively barred from entering Israel after the first intifada started, and completely shut out during the second intifada. There has been a conscious national security policy of replacing Palestinian workers by labourers imported from the Far East and other non-Muslim areas].

The legal framework that regulates the employment of migrant workers in Israel is widely known the “Binding Arrangement”, as it practically ties migrant workers to a single employer in Israel. If workers, for whatever reason, cannot be employed by their exclusive employer, their visa is instantly invalidated and they must leave the country. This restrictive legal scheme created an absolute dependency of migrant workers on their exclusive employers. While in some cases this close dependency led to the development of correct and even friendly relationship between workers and employers, the more general picture is one of systematic and rampant exploitation of migrant workers by Israeli employers, with the Israeli authorities doing little to protect workers’ rights. The exploitation of workers led many of them to run away from their exclusive employer in search of undocumented work. This dynamic created a situation whereby in the early 2000s an estimated population of 200,000 undocumented migrants resided in Israel.

In 2002 Israel inaugurated a special Immigration Police whose task was to locate, arrest and deport 50,000 undocumented migrants each year. Techniques used by the immigration police for apprehending undocumented migrants included the knocking down of doors with heavy hammers and the breaking into suspected undocumented migrants’ apartments in the middle of the night, often without warning and with little consideration for the traumatic affects on the migrants. Suspects were handcuffed and loaded on to vans or buses as if they were dangerous criminals, and immediately evicted from Israel.¹ The ways in which many migrant workers were treated in Israel raise some disturbing questions: why did Israel allow for workers’ systematic exploitation by employers and brutal arrest by policemen? why did the police treat migrant workers, who were mostly hard-working and law-abiding, as dangerous criminals?



Still from Tomer Heymann: Paper Dolls, video documentary, 84 min, 2006

Why was there not a massive outcry among the Israeli public (opinion) with respect to the treatment of migrant workers? To answer these question, I believe that we must explore the existence of borders which run through society and which shape citizens' view of migrants. It is largely because migrant workers in Israel were never considered as "subjects" in the full sense, but were reduced merely to their economic function, that an inhuman treatment could be applied on them.

Barak Kalir is an assistant professor of anthropology at the University of Amsterdam. His interests include transnational flows of migrants and the impact of global transformations on changing notions and definitions of migrants' belonging to nation-states.

1. This immigration police is followed by Israeli activists in Uri Bar-On's documentary '5250' of 2006. Excerpts of this documentary were shown during the debate at Gemak.

The Atlantikwall

A Lecture by *Rose Tzalmona*

Rose Tzalmona has investigated the origins of the fortifications built by the Nazis along the Atlantic coast in the light of German cultural history, art and architecture. Her research (and her lecture on this occasion) focuses in particular on the process of the wall's design and construction and its consequences for The Hague. Around a hundred thousand people were evacuated and large swathes of the city were destroyed to make way for the Atlantikwall.

This lecture in Gemak had been advertised in the local press, which attracted a number of elder inhabitants of The Hague who had childhood memories of the second World War. Their participation in the debate was vivid.

Miss Tzalmona, rather than adopting the usual tone of moral outrage and rejection which seems to be required in public discourse about the Nazis, gave a carefully balanced account of the design and implementation of the fortifications along the coast. She provided compelling evidence of how Bauhaus ideas and a mystic understanding of German cultural history had influenced the architecture of the bunkers and watchtowers. In fact the Atlantikwall was, at its time, a daring and quite progressive architectural undertaking. The remains of the bunkers one can still find along the seaside of The Hague bear testimony to that.

Another point the lecturer made, which caused quite a stir among the audience, was the degree of collaboration of The Hague's city authorities with the devastating project. At the time positive aspects were seen in the building of the Atlantikwall and the urban changes it brought along with it. Some of the green areas and communication axes cherished by the city's residents today are the result of the construction of the fortifications (and attendant demolitions).

About Rose Tzalmona:

Ten years ago, Tzalmona settled in the Netherlands. After several years working in architecture, she began her research project on the Atlantikwall in 2005. Concerned about the changes in Dutch society following the assassination of Theo van Gogh in 2004, she felt – as a foreigner and a Jew – an obligation to find a way to confront today's society with the shadow side of the rising tide of nationalism. The remains of the Atlantikwall are particularly important in this context because they are the only surviving examples of Nazi building in the Netherlands. As such, they are the only remaining structures which can provide future generations with tangible evidence of the crimes committed at that time by the occupying power.

SPERRGEBIET I - DE BEZETTING VAN DEN HAAG - HAUPTKAMFLINIE GRENZEN



Collages made by Rose Tzalmona as part of her study

One Land / Platform Paradise

Presentation of the project for the Arab village of Ein Hawd in Israel

by Malkit Shoshan, director of the Foundation for Achieving Seamless Territories (FAST)

Ein Hawd was established following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War when 35 members of the Abu al-Hija family from the abandoned village of Ein Hawd (now called Ein Hod) returned to the village lands after being released from an Israeli prisoner of war camp, refused to leave the area and settled on the village lands. They established a new village. Attempts to dislodge them did not succeed, and they were eventually granted Israeli citizenship. Initially, the new village was not recognized, but in 1988 it joined the Association of Unrecognized Arab Villages in Israel and was recognized by the state in 1992. In 2005, Ein Hawd achieved full recognition, including connection to the Israeli electric grid.

In 2004, the Foundation for Achieving Seamless Territory (FAST) organized an international architecture and design competition for the development of an alternative master plan for Ein Hawd. More than 100 plans from more than 30 countries were received. The winners of the competition, a group of architects and designers from France, Germany and Israel have developed what they believe is a sustainable solution for the village. The project is divided into two parts, "One Land," and an art show, "Platform Paradise."

On 10 December Malkit Shoshan, an Israeli-born architect and activist living in Amsterdam, presented the results of FAST's project in Ein Hawd. The Foundation decided to focus on this particular Arab village in Israel because Ein Hod, the original village from which the Palestinians were routed, became a state-sanctioned 'artists' village. A visit to the website www.ein-hod.info shows that the 'artists' commune now in charge of the village does not mention the fact that it was taken over in a hostile manner from its original inhabitants. Instead it is mentioned that 'a group of progressive artists led by Marcel Janco rebuilt the village on ancient ruins'. Efforts by FAST and other Israeli and international activists to raise awareness among the residents of Ein Hod about the fate of the original inhabitants, that had settled close by and never gave up their claims on their ancestral village, were received with disinterest or blunt dismissal. Therefore FAST and its supporters decided to not only work on the development of the new village (which was finally recognized in 2005, partially because of the international attention generated by this project) but also challenge the sleepy, state-sanctioned art produced in the Israeli village with an international exhibition of cutting-edge political art in the Palestinian hamlet.

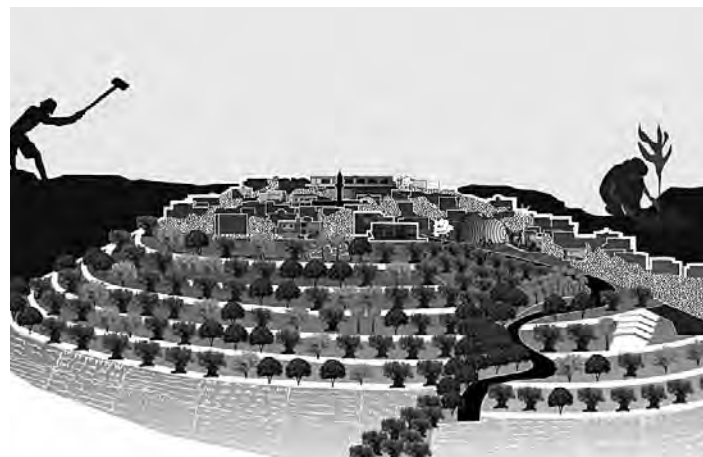
The intervention by FAST resulted in a new master plan, developed together with the village residents and the local Israeli authorities, that allows for growth, new activities (market, tourism, services), new

or improved communal buildings (school, mosque, restaurant) and reverses the environmental damage inflicted on the Mediterranean landscape by the introduction of the Alpine Pine tree.

To attract attention to the development and inaugurate the master plan, FAST organized an international art event 'Platform Paradise' between September 6 and November 1, 2008. Curated by the Italian Maurizio Bortolotti, the event attracted more than 20 artists and architects from many different countries, who lived in the village among the residents and developed their art projects in cooperation with them. See <http://www.slashseconds.org/issues/003/002/articles/mbortolotti/index.php> for a description of results by the curator.

The crowning achievement of the project was the installation of the inflatable Golden Heart Pavilion, designed by M. Shoshan, as a temporary community centre. Given the Israeli government's systematic reluctance to issue building permits to Palestinians, the structure was designed as an inflatable building, which can be taken down and inflated again as needed. From the outside the structure reminds Palestinians of the Haram al Sharif, the golden dome of the famous holy site in Jerusalem (also known as Dome of the Rock). From above one sees a heart, in an attempt to create a friendly impression on the Israeli authorities that study aerial photographs or satellite images to detect illegal Palestinian buildings. Inside the building was divided into two chambers: a salon and an exhibition space.

This project may appear to involve a disproportionate effort for 65 (!) villagers; however it is a concrete example of how activist efforts that engage local residents and authorities, while managing to attract international attention, can provide a solution to the drama of the hundreds of unrecognized villages in Palestine. As the organizers of the project put it: *we suggest to transform the village into a pilot and an example, and into the most beautiful Palestinian village in Israel.*



Master plan for Ein Hawd, an artists impression

ANNEX:

Interview with the curator

The Hague, home to the Netherlands' seat of government and to the International Criminal Court, does not immediately conjure up an image of a contemporary art hub. If anything, it is the heartland of Dutch and International politics. However, it may well be that precisely these factors render it an interesting locus to open a new venue focusing on arts and politics. **Gemak** was born out of a partnership between **The Hague's Municipal Museum** and the **Free Academy**, and opened its doors to the public on October 20th. Following is an interview with Gemak's curator-in-chief Robert Kluijver, who previously has worked in Afghanistan for an NGO for the preservation of cultural heritage, then as civil/political affairs officer of the United Nations political mission in Afghanistan, later as a consultant for the World Bank, and finally as the representative of the Open Society Institute (Soros) in Afghanistan and the Executive Director of the Afghan Foundation for Culture and Civil Society (FCCS) which he established with a group of Afghans in 2003. Besides programming art events in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Tajikistan and beyond, he secured the first pavilion for Afghanistan at the Venice Biennial (2005).

Nat Muller: Gemak aims to connect emerging global artistic trends to contemporary political and social debates in the Netherlands (and beyond). In other words it treads into the murky realms of arts and politics in an explicit manner. There is much discussion lately about activist art, political art, activism using artistic strategies, art as conflict prevention, art for social change, etc. An often heard – and not entirely untrue – argument is that if art becomes subjugated to an overtly political or social agenda, the aesthetics become redundant, or when art becomes instrumentalised predominantly for socio-political purposes it loses its autonomous status. What is your position on these issues, and what is your curatorial approach within that context thematically, as well as methodologically?

Robert Kluijver: I wouldn't ever try to subjugate art to any agenda. My role as curator is at best to develop fragments of a new language. The language of politics has been emptied of its meaning. This is a phenomenon that seems to intrigue, amuse or fire many artists. It also preoccupies me. Between the reality of our world and our rendering of it into language lies a gap that allows, almost demands individuals to come with their own interpretations. I can juxtapose or contrast these in various ways that accord more with my own experience of reality. I don't pretend this rendering is closer to the truth but I do hope that it's closer to the subjective reality experienced daily by so many non-Western people.

The themes I'm interested in are very general and current issues such as global war, the so-called clash of civilisations and the envi-

ronmental crisis but also consumerism, the obsession with the body and spiritual disorientation. Having decided on a general theme I next develop a narrative structure within which this theme can be developed through exhibitions, debates, encounters and public projects. Then I start integrating artworks, preferably in a dialogue with artists. This process brings up new angles and developments in the foreseen narrative – it is a very creative process.

NM: The Hague seems to be a strategic locus for Gemak. What kind of interactions do you foresee with the urban setting of The Netherlands' administrative capital, its local audience, and the possibilities for interesting exchange that would be specific to The Hague?

RK: The Hague is a city with conflicting character traits. It is the seat of government but also a city with large pockets of unemployed immigrants. 40% of the population is of non-Dutch origin. You have skilled expatriates living aside a native 'white trash' population and a mass of commuting bureaucrats. These contrasts don't lead to polarization but to a wide range of urban experiences that rarely meet. It is tempting to use art in the public space to make one's own connections between these parallel worlds. That's why I plan to invite a foreign artist to accomplish a public art project with practically each major exhibition in Gemak.

It is curious that nothing comparable to Gemak exists in this cosmopolitan city. Why is this? It seems all cultural and intellectual activities in the Netherlands are concentrated in Amsterdam. However in size and composition of the population The Hague is comparable to Amsterdam. I hope Gemak will contribute to creating a cultural scene here which is transnational. We'll leave the self-referential and self-congratulatory art scene to Amsterdam!

NM: The first exhibition "Green Zone/Red Zone" investigates how in Iraq regulating policies of containment and control are implemented within an urban setting, and what its wider global ramifications are. The exhibition successfully merges very different discourses and genres, ranging from an Iraqi car wreck that in and by itself has no art object value, to social artistic projects, such as Open Shutters, to documentary film, to more traditional "white cube" art. Art disciplines of course also have their own boundaries: how have you negotiated breaking these perceptual boundaries in your choice of artists and exhibition design?

RK: I don't think I agree with your statement that art disciplines of course have their own boundaries. Try to tell the artists that! Documentary movies and photography - or even objects - can be as esthetically moving as art. Meanwhile artists apply more and more documentary processes in their work. Think of the Atlas group's work, for instance. There are so many examples. I don't feel any such tension

in my own approach. In my next exhibition 'Future: Afghanistan' I plan to integrate billboard campaigns and pulp TV entertainment programs with 'high' art by international Afghan artists to give a general feeling of the world young Afghans are growing up in.

In the past our world maps used to have depictions of monsters in Africa. Now our picture of Africa is determined by starving children and desolate landscapes of environmental or urban catastrophe. Both images are fictional representations which say more about us, the map-makers, than about Africa. In Gemak I will give representatives of other cultures the chance to make statements not only about their own cultures but about ours as well.

NM: Future exhibitions sport titles like "The Wall" and "Terminal". Can you tell us a bit more about them conceptually, and which artists will be showing what type of work?

RK: "The Wall" and "Terminal" are parts 2 and 3 of a cycle on 'The Border' which started with "Green Zone / Red Zone". The current phase of history is characterized by the violent reshaping of the world order, with a view to retaining Western hegemony. The concept of the Border is changing but it definitely is not disappearing! The War on Terror signals a new moment in international relations: States are now attacking individuals directly. That used to be a question of law and order, now it is militarized. The border therefore is not only a line between states, between territories, but increasingly among citizens. Of course there were always borders between groups of people, but now the State is drawing them, using its monopoly of violence and its unequalled resources to separate the good citizens from the bad. Real or imaginary threats are amplified and used to convince us that we better accept these borders, even if it means impingements on our privacy, liberties and rights. We all succumb to this moral blackmail: why should one be against these security measures if one is on the 'good side'?

This is the phenomenon of the 'green zone' vs. 'red zone' which I think is becoming global. First we create the fear of the other, which is currently the Arab, Muslim 'fundamentalist'. It could also be (and has been) the yellow or black man, the feminist or the drug addict. The fear justifies building a wall to keep him out. In the exhibition 'The Wall' I want to study what happens to a society that isolates itself from what it (irrationally) fears. We can think of Israel but also of Korea, the US-Mexican border or Europe, and draw our lessons from Berlin. However the wall cannot last because we cannot keep out the other. As a Palestinian mentioned to a friend of mine, 'who builds walls gets tunnels'. So we then build a terminal in the wall to filter the passage and control who gets in. In the third exhibition I will look at this terminal, but from the outside. The terminal, as the etymology of the word

indicates, is not so much a passage from one place to another, but the end of a journey – and the beginning of something new. For young African males the passing of the European border, for example, can be like a 'rite de passage', an obligatory test of manhood that can result in death. But the terminal is also the bland, impersonal structure that we know from airports – a purgatory of sorts, between worlds, but also a self-contained universe in itself.

In each exhibition I plan to invite about a dozen artists from areas directly affected by the themes, and include documentary works and objects which don't have the pretence to be art.

NM: The exhibitions are accompanied by an extensive public program of debates, discussions, dinners and workshops. Also here there's a mix of artists, journalists, political scientists, etc. What role does the critical discourse generated in these events take, within Gemak's objectives?

RK: I was just comparing my general approach to curating as that of a narrator, building up tension from one part to the next – or, to use a better analogy, from one act of a play to the next – with the elements that the artists bring in. Now the public meetings are like the dialogues of the play. The phrases that emerge in the exchange of ideas between the participants of these meetings animate the exhibition, they give it an ephemeral but concrete meaning (or direction). The public meetings therefore always have to do with the subject matter and they tend to follow each other in a logical sequence. In our first 'Green Zone / Red Zone' debate for example we asked experts to give a neutral analysis of integral texts by the most famous 'terrorists': what do they want from the West? In the second meeting we discussed what we hear about these terrorists thru the media, and why that is so different from what they say in their own words. In the third meeting we will analyze how the warped translation of what they say is used by the State to reorganize public life. But I won't be rigid in this approach. We request speakers or performers who happen to be passing by to give a presentation in Gemak, and we can also participate in current debates as they pop up, if they have something to do with our general field of concerns.

NM: Finally, you have a background in political science. What can art do that politics cannot do, and perhaps I also should put the question the other way round: what can politics do, that art cannot do?

RK: I think I have partially answered this question in my first answer; but very succinctly: art has freedom while politics has power. Vice-versa artists wield little power while politicians enjoy scant freedom.

Index of People and Organizations

Abdelkader, Senan: 126
Abdulla, Mohamed: 34-35
Abid, Kasim: 42
Abidin, Adel: 15, 24-25
Abujidi, Dr. Nurhan: 111, 125
Ahmadinejad, President: 114-116
Ali, Emad: 42-43
al-Ali, Nadjé Sadig: 120
Anani, Yazid: 122
Badran, Amneh: 126
Badran, Samira: 60-61, 76-77, 92
Barghouti, Tamim: 121
Bartana, Yael: 94-97
Batniji, Taysir: 61, 72-75, 89-91, 92
Berg, Natasja van den: 114
Berger, Maurits: 114-117
Bijl, Marc: 15, 30-31
Bilal, Wafaa: 15, 26-27
B'tselem: 111
Byvanck, Derk: 126
Chan, Paul: 16, 28-29
Cordaid: 2, 124
Dayan, Hilla: 130
Dolberg, Eugenie: 44
Erkel, Arjan: 114-117
Esser, Bram: 119
Faraj, Maysaloun: 16
Faris, Saleh Hassan: 18, 121
FAST: 14, 16, 41, 54-57, 119, 133
Gate48: 130-131
Grassiani, Erella: 130
Groenlinks: 18
Halawani, Rula: 61, 68-71, 90, 91
Halsema, Femke: 18
Haniyeh, Ismail, 114, 117
Heymann, Tomer, 130, 131
Hilal, Sandi: 64, 80
Hilhorst, Pieter: 119
Hivos & HNCf: 2, 119
Hroub, Khalid: 124
IFTVC: 16, 42-43
IKV Pax Christi: 18
INCIA: 16
Ingram, Alan: 16, 39, 41
Isaac, Jad: 126-127
ISIM: 126
Jabareen, Hassan: 126-127
Kalir, Barak: 130-131
Kennard, Peter: Cover, 15, 16, 36-41
Klijnsma, Jetta: 10, 11
Kosmopolis Den Haag: 119
Krimpen, Wim van: 10, 11

Kufi, Nedim: 15, 32-33
Laden, Osama ben: 114-115
Linke, Armin: 80
Machsom Watch: 130
Mal Allah, Hana: 12, 15, 16, 20-21
al-Malhi, Jawad: 61, 78-79, 89, 90
Manna, Adel: 126-127
Margalit, Meir: 126-127
Marton, Ruchama: 94, 100-104, 126, 128
Mikdadi, Salwa: 77
Mondriaan Foundation: 2
Muller, Nat: 7, 134-135
Multiplicity: 60, 63, 64
NAi: 126
Nasrallah, Sayed: 114-116
Open Shuttters: 15, 16, 41, 44-49, 134
Pachachi, Maysoon: 42
Partizan Publik: 18
Persekian, Jack: 67
Petti, Alessandro: 64-65, 80-83, 122-123
Picton-Phillipps, Cat: Cover, 15, 16, 36-41
Pinzon Cortes, Camila: 119
Postma, Herman: 11
Raad, Iman: 45
Rifat, Ali: 117, 118, 119
Rollema, Ingrid: 10, 11
Rosen, Roe: 94, 105-108
Saadeh, Raeda: 61, 84-87, 89, 91
al-Sayyab: 32-33
Schuppen, Steven van: 119
Seidemann, Daniel: 126, 128
Selim, Rashad: 15, 16, 22-23, 50-53, 114-117, 119, 121
Shabandar Cafe: 14, 16, 18, 43, 120-121
Sherwell, Tina: 79, 89-91
Shoshan, Malkit: 14, 16, 54-57, 119, 133
Soueif, Ahdaf: 62
Staal, Jonas: 18-19
Tzalmona, Rose: 132
UCP: 126
Vrije Academie: 10-11
Waked, Sharif: 9-11, 51
Weizman, Eyal: 80, 94, 109-112
Wolberg, Pavel: 92, 94, 98-110, 129
Zan Studio: 58, 61, 62
al-Zaqzouq, Shadi: 61, 88, 91

Photo Credits:

All photographs used in the book and not mentioned here were provided by the artists or their galleries.

Beekman, Martijn:
portret of author, p10

Boer, Roos:
IKV Pax Christi: p19 wrecks in Utrecht

Donker Duyvis, Paul:
p114-115 participants in debate

Faris 'Rainbow':
p121 video stills of Café Shabandar

Kennard Phillipps:
front cover / workshop p40

Kluijver, Robert:
p9 interior Gemak / p17-18 War on Error in Amsterdam / p19 Gemak installation views of wrecks / p19 map / p34-35 Mohamed Abdulla performance / p44-45 Open Shuttters installation view / p51-53 Rashad Selim's public art project and annotated map / p63 installation view / p76 installation view / p80 installation views / p82 installation views / p94 installation view / p119-120 debates & lecture / p126 seminar participants / p127 Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem

Kluijver, Marinus:
p10 foto's van Krimpen, Klijnsma, Selim / p86-87 Raeda Saadeh performance / p129 opening of Promised Land

Peters, Mariko:
p64-65 roadblocks in Palestine

Staal, Jonas:
p18 wrecks in Rotterdam / p19 jewelry made of wrecks

Vogels, Rick:
p12&20-21 Hana Mal Allah / p22-23 Rashad Selim / p36-39 Peter Kennard & Cat Picton Phillipps / p50 Rashad Selim graffiti / p53 black & white image

Zweerts, Jan: Gemeentemuseum Den Haag
p9 exterior view of Gemak and installation view / p30-31 installation view / p61 installation view / 78-79 installation view / p88 installation view

In addition the following pictures were found on internet:
p10 portrait of Ingrid Rollema / p18 book market blast in Baghdad / p19 Gogbot festival, New Museum show and newspaper article / p51 US soldiers in Iraq / p115-117 portraits of 'terrorists' / p120 Shabandar Café / p124-125 wreckage in Nablus / p129 2009 war in Gaza

The following galleries provided general support to the exhibitions:
Aya Gallery, London (Hana Mal Allah and Rashad Selim). Huuto, Helsinki (Adel Abidin). The Breeder, Athens (Marc Bijl). la B.A.N.K., Paris (Taysir Batniji). Annet Gelink, Amsterdam (Yael Bartana). Dvir, Tel Aviv (Pavel Wolberg).



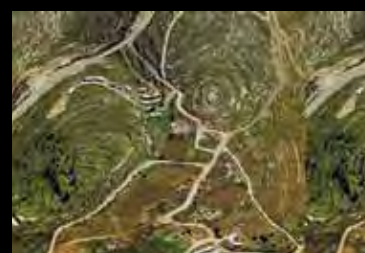
Borders gives an overview of how artists and intellectuals from the Middle East and beyond come to terms with political conflict in their region. The impact of the obsession with security on their societies, new mechanisms – soft and hard – to separate and control groups of people, the withering of public space and the discourse that shapes it, the loss of meaning of nationhood: these urgent themes are tentatively explored by artists, architects and other critical observers from the Middle East.

This collective artistic research formed the backbone of three exhibitions and the accompanying activities in Gemak, a new centre for art and politics in The Hague. Artists and experts from the Middle East were invited to extend their activities to the Dutch city – known as the capital of international law – in order to ascertain how far the shifting nature of *Borders* is also redefining public life in the old Western metropolises.

The author, Robert Kluijver, spent a decade working in international relations, social research and cultural development in the Middle East, Central and South Asia before curating these exhibitions in Gemak.



A bomb car



خرة بالحظ

KHARAH BIL HAD

FUCKING BAD LUCK

