

Hagar – Contemporary Palestinian Art

Tal Ben Zvi

Hagar – Contemporary Palestinian Art

Curator, editor, text: Tal Ben Zvi

Graphic Editing: Dina Shoham

Graphic Design: Tal Stern

Catalogue Production: Dina Shoham Studio

English translation: Daria Kassovsky

Arabic translation: Roaa Translations

Structure and language consultant: Gal N. Kusturica

Special thanks to Asaf Zippor

The curator wishes to thank Sami Abu Shehade and Ihsan Sirri who took part in the Gallery's activity; the artists participating in this catalogue: Reida Adon, Jumana Emil Abboud, Anisa Ashkar, Sami Bukhari, Ahlam Jomah, Ashraf Fawakhry, Ahlam Shibli. Heartfelt thanks to Ela Bar-David, Ruthie Ginsburg, Lilach Hod, Hana Taragan, Tal Yahas, Shelly Cohen, Hadas Maor, Naama Meishar, Faten Nastas Mitwasi, Hanna Farah, and Tali Rosin.

Prepress: Kal Press

Printing: Kal Press

Bindidng: Sabag Bindery

Published by Hagar Association, www.hagar-gallery.com

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, photocopied or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, or otherwise, without prior permission from the publishers.

ISBN: 965-90953-0-9

Production of the catalogue was made possible through the support of:

Israel National Lottery Council for the Arts

The European Union

Heinrich Böll Foundation



© 2006, Tal Ben Zvi

- E5 The Voyage In **Tal Ben Zvi**
- 59 **Ahlam Shibli** Positioning
- 71 **Sami Bukhari** Panorama
- 81 **Reida Adon** Pasateen
- 93 **Ashraf Fawakhry** Ikhtilal
- 103 **Ahlam Jomah** Tømmema
- 111 **Jumana Emil Abboud** Déjà Vu
- 121 **Anisa Ashkar** Barbur Aswad
- E39 CVs
- E42 List of Works



מוטראן
ממותקי נצרת

מוטראן
ממותקי נצרת

נצרת עוטו
ממתק
נצרת
נאפה גבירה בקלאוזה

The Voyage In | Tal Ben Zvi

Hagar Art Gallery in Jaffa was founded in 2001, and during its three years of operation has featured sixteen one-person exhibitions, ten of them by Palestinian graduates of art schools in Israel.¹

The gallery's activity takes place, in effect, within two parallel cultural fields: the Israeli and the Palestinian. As part of the **Israeli art field**, the gallery sets out to challenge the Hebrew/Jewish/Israeli/western character of the field, attempting to undermine the absolute hegemony of the Hebrew language in the discussion of art works, the virtually exclusive presence of Jewish artists, and the works' anchoring in the history of Israeli art and with regard to the construction of an Israeli national identity — all this within the western-Europocentric logic of the field. As part of the **Palestinian art field** the gallery endeavors to structure an intra-Palestinian artistic discourse in Arabic as part of the culture of a national minority within the 1948 borders and as part of a broader culture shared by Palestinian artists from various disciplines who are active in the Palestinian field of art, vis-à-vis the scant representation of Palestinian artists in galleries and museums in the center and the periphery alike.

Palestinian society defines its identity through various remote and detached communities. Its description as a society whose unity stems precisely from its divergence is due to its unique structure: a society that extends over four different geographical loci.² This principle of a unified cultural field based on divergence and a multi-dimensional intricacy — geographical, social and historical — has had a crucial impact on the Palestinian art field.

Indeed, similar to the **structure** of Palestinian society, the Palestinian **art field** also extends over four major geographic centers: in the West Bank and Gaza, inside Israel, in the Palestinian diaspora in the Arab world, and in the Palestinian diaspora in Europe and the US.

The largest group of Palestinian artists operates within the boundaries of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These artists exhibit mainly in a distinctive national framework, in art schools and prominent galleries in the Palestinian Authority.³ In addition, these artists participate in international exhibitions and, on relatively rare occasions, in exhibitions in Israel.⁴

The second largest group includes the Palestinian artists, graduates of art schools in Israel. In recent years this group gradually increased its presence in the Palestinian art field, confronting that field with the status

of the Palestinian citizens of Israel, in political as well as social and cultural contexts. These artists exhibit in art centers in the Palestinian Authority, in galleries in Israel,⁵ and in international exhibitions.

The third group operates in the Palestinian diaspora in the Arab world. These artists belong to the oldest group originating in the Palestinian culture that crystallized in the refugee camps mainly in Lebanon and Jordan. As the Palestinian Authority became more central to Palestinian nationalism, their number in the Palestinian art field decreased, and so did their influence, while the fourth group, comprising diasporic Palestinian artists in Europe and the US, has become increasingly prominent.

While members of all four groups co-exhibit in various shows of Palestinian art in cultural centers, museums and galleries in the Arab world, Europe, and the US, as well as in international exhibitions, such as biennials and the Documenta, where they participate as Palestinian representatives, to date there is not a single museum in the Palestinian Authority, in Israel, or in the Palestinian diasporas exclusively dedicated to Palestinian art and its unique features.

The Palestinian art field is characterized, as aforesaid, by three major elements: 1) Palestinian artists residing in four separate geographical territories who sustain a differentiated national cultural field despite the geographic differences; 2) the absence of "Palestinian" institutions of art studies and training throughout the world, including the Palestinian Authority;⁶ 3) the absence of a historical museum infrastructure. Hence, it may be said that unlike sovereign nation-states where the art field is based on national borders, national museums and institutes of learning, the Palestinian art field is based chiefly on artists operating within the frame of a **Palestinian identity**.⁷

Ahlam Shibli (Arab al-Shibli, 1970), **Sami Bukhari** (Jaffa, 1964), **Reida Adon** (Acre, 1973), **Ashraf Fawakhry** (Mazra'a, 1974), **Ahlam Jomah** (Taibe, 1965), **Jumana Emil Abboud** (Shefa Amer, 1971), and **Anisa Ashkar** (Acre, 1979) are seven young Palestinian artists, most of them graduates of art schools in Israel; artists who are part of an entire generation of **Palestinians, citizens of Israel**, born after 1967. Discussing the characteristics of this identity, Azmi Bishara maintains⁸:

From both the historical and theoretical perspectives, the Arabs in Israel are part of the Palestinian Arab people. Their definition as "Israeli Arabs" was formed

concurrent with the emergence of the issue of the Palestinian refugees, and the establishment of the State of Israel on the ruins of the Palestinian people. Thus, the point of departure from which the history of the Palestinians in Israel is written is the very point in which the history of the Palestinians outside Israel was created. One cannot point at a nationality or national group called "Israeli Arabs" or "the Arabs of Israel".

Bishara's definition pinpoints the identity of this group of artists in a dialectic sphere: on the one hand, as part of a broad Palestinian cultural system, and on the other — in a differentiated manner — as the Palestinian minority in Israel. Dan Rabinowitz and Khawla Abu-Baker⁹ note that this generation was born into the reality of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories since 1967, and the paradox created by that war: the decisive military outcome persuaded many Palestinians to accept the long-term presence of the Jewish-dominated state, and the fact that as citizens of Israel they were tied to the state and its fate; at the same time, it led to renewed contacts with Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and through them — with diasporic Palestinians throughout the Middle East, and to association with geographical and cultural realms where Israel plays a minor role. Moreover, in that period the Green Line separating the two populations acquired a significant role in the definition of separate identities.

The first Intifada in 1987 secured international recognition of the PLO, subsequently leading to the Oslo process and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, and in 1994-1996 — to the IDF's withdrawal from Palestinian urban centers. In the wake of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in October 2000 and the bloody events during demonstrations in the country's north in which thirteen Palestinian citizens were killed,¹⁰ the struggle of Palestinian citizens for rights, status, and identity, both in the State of Israel where they live as citizens and in the Palestinian people to which they belong, was reinforced. This dual disposition, oscillating between civil affiliation and national identity, prompted the shift from the identity construct **Israeli-Arabs** which employs hyphenated cultural conditions to the identity construct **Palestinian Citizens of Israel** which draws away from the multi-cultural identity, placing the definition in the sphere of national identity.

The universities in Israel play a major role in the definition of national Palestinian identity. The collective activity of students who are Palestinian

citizens of Israel characterizes campuses in Haifa, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, but stands in stark contrast to the activity of individuals seen in the art institutions in Israel, attended by a maximum of three Palestinian students per year.

Despite the scarcity of Palestinian students who graduate from art studies each year, their consistent presence, since the 1990s, generates a cumulating representation of Palestinian artists in both the Israeli and the Palestinian art fields. Furthermore, in-between the two cultural fields — the Israeli and the Palestinian — the studies of those Palestinian artists who attend Israeli academic institutions call for a process of socialization with some unique postcolonial features. First of all, the artist is forced to develop his artistic modes of expression in a language which is not his mother tongue, often a foreign language as far as he is concerned, since the language of studies is Hebrew, not Arabic; second, the artist's culture — Arab or Palestinian — is not part of the curriculum; for, the system's habitus, namely the cultural and artistic context, is anchored in the inter-space between the western and the Israeli art fields; third, not only is the Palestinian artist not represented by the official system, but the latter excludes and thus effaces the Arab-Palestinian culture from which he hails; finally, since the Israeli art field as a national field generally perceives the Arab Palestinian artist as an "other", namely as foreign to the local culture, it ultimately prevents his representation as an immanent part of the field.

This unique structure of the Palestinian art field, as the cultural field of a national minority, renders it part of the postcolonial discourse with all its characteristic traits. Edward W. Said in his essay "The Voyage In and the Emergence of Opposition"¹¹ described the operation of culture within the framework of postcolonial writing as a "voyage in" — a hybrid cultural practice of Third World intellectuals who write out of political or human urgency influenced by the unresolved political situation close to the surface. Their writing, he maintains, clearly stems from a position of knowledge and authoritative learning, but also from the position of people whose message of resistance and contestation is the historical result of subjugation.

Said describes the "voyage in" as a process of deconstruction. With regard to the work of these Third World scholars (such as Guha and Alatas) he maintains that they

choose to focus on rhetoric, ideas, and language rather than upon history tout court, preferring to analyze the verbal symptoms of power rather than its brute exercise, its processes and tactics rather than its sources, its intellectual methods and enunciative techniques rather than its morality – to deconstruct rather than to destroy. To rejoin experience and culture is of course to read texts from the metropolitan center and from the peripheries contrapuntally, according neither the privilege of “objectivity” to “our side” nor the encumbrance of “subjectivity” to “theirs.” The question is a matter of knowing how to read [...], and not detaching this from the issue of knowing what to read. Texts are not finished objects. They are [...] notations and cultural practices. And texts create not only their own precedents, as Borges said of Kafka, but their successors.¹²

In many respects, the artistic/textual process undergone by the artists featured in the current catalogue may be described similarly, as a process primarily based on the link between “experience and culture”, namely on the artists’ life experience, the unique power configuration within which and against which they operate, their own points of view and interpretations of their work, and the human and political urgency which they articulate.

The works of art selected for the catalogue were presented in solo exhibitions of artists who operate individually, and to a large extent, maintain no contact among themselves. This reading, which presents the exhibitions as a sequence, is intended to indicate several visual and narrative strategies that reflect the artists’ existential milieu, where the artist functions simultaneously as the subject of various cultural fields and as the subject of private–public, mainly political spheres where experience and knowledge, as well as labels, markers and various experiences absorbed by the body, are cumulated and consumed.

Three referential axes are discernible in the works: **the geographic sphere and its boundaries**, **Arabic as an intra–Palestinian sphere**, and **the gendered body**. These three axes unfold, via a diversity of intersections, an intricate system of interrelations and spheres of operation rooted in the Palestinian everyday reality, generating criticism that goes beyond the boundaries of intra–artistic reference, expanding them into extensive cultural, social and political references.

The Geographic Sphere and its Boundaries

Representations of the geographic sphere in contemporary Palestinian art are mainly realistic representations resulting from the choice of direct documentary photography to represent and reflect the artist's field of action.¹³ This realistic representation occurs in the works critically in the context of the **postcolonial** discourse and the notion of **ethnocracy** as a type of regime.

Within the postcolonial discourse, the historical, social, and cultural geographic sphere is described as one engaged in a bitter debate with a colonialist "past" and a "present" that still bears the stamp of colonial power relations underlain by notions of hegemony and subalternism; "First World"/"Third World" relations, categories of "East" ("Orient") and "West", minorities and "indigenous" native-born, immigrants, refugees, and exiles.

While the postcolonial discourse aims beyond the boundaries of the local geographic sphere, the latter, which is subordinated to an ethnocratic regime, functions as a quintessential local sphere. Oren Yiftachel and Alexander Kedar¹⁴ define ethnocracy as:

A differentiated type of regime facilitating the expansion of an ethno-national group in a controversial multi-ethnic territory. Such a regime promotes the spatial, economic, political, and cultural targets of the dominant ethnic group. In the ethnocratic state, ethnic rather than civil affiliation is the key to the distribution of resources and power.

Ethnocracy is a majority power strategy that consolidates its own power at the expense of the weakened minority. But the sphere subjected to such a regime does not directly and passively reflect the ethnocratic power structure; rather, it embeds possible ways of critical action against these power relations.

This gap between the Israeli-Jewish hegemony and the operational options in the geographical sphere exists in the art schools, the exhibition system (museums and galleries) and the everyday reality of the Palestinian population in Israel, and more intensely – the Palestinian population in mixed cities such as Jaffa, Acre, Haifa, and Jerusalem, where the artists on whose work the catalogue focuses reside.

Two different exhibitions delineate the operational range of Palestinian identity: **Ahlam Shibli's** exhibition, which presented the viewer with a Third World space, defining identities and identifications, and **Sami Bukhari's**

exhibition, which recorded Jaffa as a city entirely marked by traces of the Jewish-Israeli ethnocratic regime at points in time before and after 1948.

Ahlam Shibli | Positioning

Ahlam Shibli's work maps the geographical space vis-à-vis the postcolonial discourse. In her exhibition *Positioning*, the artist presented seventy-three photographs in the three rooms of Hagar Art Gallery. These were taken in the course of several years, in Palestine and other locations throughout the world: the village Arab al-Shibli in the Galilee; Haifa's Wadi Salib neighborhood; airports and aerial photographs taken during flights; a French fishing village near Marseilles; demonstrations against globalization in Brazil; demonstrations against racism in Durban, South Africa during the World Conference against Racism; a wedding in Majdal Shams in the Syrian Golan Heights; the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem in the West Bank; Brussels; horse races in Jericho; photographs from Sinai, Mount Tabor, the village of Ikrit in the Galilee, the village Arab al-Naim in the Galilee, Nazareth, Tel Aviv University, Haifa, etc.

The gerund "positioning" indicates an unending practice of self-positioning, fabrication of the biographical and personal vis-à-vis a multitude of territories, situations and roles, in relation to the politics of identity in the postcolonial and Third World discourse.

Some of the photographs document demonstrations from the **Durban Conference, August 2001** – the World Conference against Racism in South Africa. The photographs reinforce the tension between the body language of the policemen who are rooted in place, and that of the demonstrators who are photographed separately, thus generating a type of autonomous space that preserves their position. Other photographs in the series present Fidel Castro giving a speech to a large audience in a football stadium, flanked by flags of Cuba and Palestine which form the solidarity of the weakened, excluded, deprived, and oppressed. Another photograph features Gandhi on a billboard reading "The Voice of the People". From this position, Ahlam Shibli observes the Conference participants, including representatives from Third World countries (in Asia and Africa).

The labeling of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a global, international affair in the power configuration between the West and countries that

have experienced direct western colonialism — Third World countries — is discernible in a series of photographs taken during the conference “Socialism against Globalization” in **Brazil, February 2001**. Ahlam Shibli was invited to lecture in the conference as part of the Friends of the Earth forum, whose discussions pertained, *inter alia*, to the Middle East. A photograph of one of the demonstrations features a poster presented upside-down and sideways, reading in Portuguese “Intifada up, Israel down”. The poster is held up by a pair of hands, but not the hands of the figure seen at the center of the picture, standing with its back to the camera, wearing a red cap. The demonstrators’ faces are turned toward the depth of the picture, while the poster is turned toward the camera rather than the direction to which the audience advances, so that the composition which dissociates the poster from the internal space in which the audience moves, elicits a question about the target audience of the poster and its function in the depicted space.

An internal space is also seen in the photograph taken in **Majdal Shams, 2000**, during a wedding party of the artist’s friend from a Syrian Arab Druze family. The photographs portray a girl in a yellow dress standing and watching the men in a line dancing the debka. The girl’s gaze, while her back is turned to the camera, is a continuation of the photographer’s biographic point of view; her presence in the intra-communal interstice created between her and the line of men, conveys a sense of determination.

The realistic reflection of both intimacy and distress occurs in Ahlam Shibli’s work along a succession of viewpoints. The camera is not fixed on a single gaze, but on the contrary. The multiplicity of situations generates an encoded system where meaning stems from the sequence, the multiplicity, the syntax. Ahlam Shibli thus naturalizes the cultural, while refraining from constituting a schematic, stereotypical, essentially reductive reality.

One of the black-and-white photographs taken during a **horse race in Jericho, 1997**, features a Palestinian policeman watching the race, his hands on his waist, while the jockey is seen urging his horse to run the distance. Another photograph documents two children standing embraced watching the race, while yet another shows the large audience sitting, standing, creating a dense wall, betting on the horses as the tension rises. The series of photographs conveys a sense of space: sporting activity in an open, boundless space based on the breeding of thoroughbred race horses — a primordial cultural sphere.

One of the black-and-white photographs from **Tel Aviv University, 2001**, shows the Wiener Library and Mexico Building where Ahlam Shibli is studying for a Master's Degree in cinema. The place in the photograph is perceived as foreign and threatening, the bushes resemble thorns, and the gloomy, clouded sky seems to correspond with German Expressionism and with the realistic aesthetic in art. In some respects one may say that the building is signified by its function – allowing artistic expression, vis-à-vis the spectrum of human situations depicted extensively in the seventy-three photographs included in the exhibition.

In the space between the "landscape" photograph in the university and the range of photographs depicting "human situations" taken around the world, a pair of color photographs from the artist's **Haifa** home stands out: a naked man whose face is invisible, and the contours of his body are conspicuous against the backdrop of the white wall, transforming into a type of inner, domestic, encoded space.

In the catalogue *Goter* which accompanied Ahlam Shibli's exhibition at Tel Aviv Museum of Art, curator Ulrich Loock maintains¹⁵ that "Ahlam Shibli's most important decision is to take pictures of situations," namely "the way something is placed in relation to its surroundings." "More specifically," Loock goes on to say, "the situations Ahlam Shibli photographs can be defined as 'places to be in' and 'the being of people in those places'."

This link between "place" and "being" is described by Roland Barthes¹⁶ in *Camera Lucida* as an ontological desire that goes beyond an ethnographic approach, striving for the essence, the "*noeme*". The object is conveyed to us as a single unit and what we see is certain, hence its power as evidence. "Yet," says Barthes, "since Photography (this is its *noeme*) *authenticates* the existence of a certain being, I want to discover that being in the photograph completely."

The being which Barthes sets out to expose appears in Ahlam Shibli's series of photographs, and is closely linked to the subject's positioning – as a **private subject** versus cultural, social and political power systems, and as a **subject in transition** between the national, the ethnic, the class-oriented, and the gender-minded.

Ahlam Shibli engenders herself with a "dual consciousness" that allows her a concurrent gaze from the "margins" and from the "center" as changing, temporal locations. The definition of identity in relation to this border

culture, however, cannot avoid responding to the personal price paid by each subject, time and again, as a metaphorical as well as real border passage fee with regard to his positioning in these border realms. In this respect, Ahlam Shibli's work draws upon the critical multi-cultural discourse. This position decolonizes not only cultural and artistic representations, but also the power relations between various communities; it places a social system-wide perception at its core, aimed at a radical change of society and the power relations described in length in this essay.

Sami Bukhari | Panorama

In his exhibition *Panorama*, Sami Bukhari endeavored to map, delineate and document the boundaries of "Arab Jaffa" along the timeline before and after 1948.¹⁷ Bukhari climbed to the rooftop of the tallest building in Jaffa, a nursing home for Jewish senior citizens on Yefet Street, and took photographs of all four directions: north, south, east, and west. This point of view, the highest in Jaffa, as aforesaid, is a central observation point that expands the knowledge exposed through photography, pointing at spatial control and power; it is no coincidence that it is also used by the police to photograph demonstrations.

Bukhari was granted only fifteen minutes in which he could be on the roof by himself. The photographic act exposes the rooftops, the relations between the old and the new construction in Jaffa, as well as the vacant lots which appear like open wounds in the succession of residential buildings in the neighborhood.¹⁸ The open spaces become either fallow fields or provisional parking lots, marking primarily the destruction and ruin of Jaffa after 1948.

The vacant lots are juxtaposed with another series of photographs where Bukhari documents Jaffa's old Muslim cemetery, al-Kazachana. The series depicts the gravestones which preserve architectural motifs prevalent in residential buildings: arches, columns, capitals. The cemetery is clearly eroded: the cliff, which forms its western section, has been eroded by the waves, and the cemetery itself appears as though it is on the verge of collapsing into the sea. The photographic act ostensibly postpones the pending catastrophe, providing a tranquil picture: gravestones against the backdrop of a blue sea. Nevertheless, the series evokes a sense of a grand historical past seen in its ruin, and the sense of death is enhanced by the gravestone's transience and disintegration. When juxtaposed, these two panoramic series sketch an

analogy between the death prevailing in the cemetery photographs, and the post-Nakba (the Palestinian "Catastrophe" of 1948) Jaffa, with the cultural and social death it brought in its wake.

The ruin and neglect are not only a representation; they are clearly discernible in the building where the Hagar Art Gallery is located and in its surroundings. A large-scale panoramic photograph taken from the gallery terrace, looking down at Yefet Street and the al-Ajami neighborhood, was hung on the wall of the building at 99 Yefet Street, where the gallery operated. Seen at the center of the photograph are the home for the aged and the small shopping center at the foot of the building. The photograph faces the street, turning toward the passersby sitting in the commercial center, like a mirror image, thus placing the viewers in a broad expanse with depth of field and possibilities of movement. The viewer is at the center of an imaginary stage with a painterly perspective, and the photograph expands his point of view by providing him with information that is unavailable at street level. In a panoramic photograph the viewer is at the center: he does not move; the world engulfs him, and he loses his ability to judge distance and space. The physical body, unable to pinpoint itself at the observation point or reconstruct such a wide picture from the real observation experience, doubts the knowledge generated by observation of the photograph, which is experienced as observation of a theatrical play or a magic show.

In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes¹⁹ describes photography as "a kind of primitive theater, a kind of Tableau Vivant, a figuration of the motionless and made-up face beneath which we see the dead." Paradoxically, the panoramic photograph which is intended to reconstruct the possible field of vision, to revive the geographical space in a manner that enables control over it, and to decode the findings on the surface, generates the image of Jaffa as a living-dead body, misleading to those who come to document and revive it.

In the series *Boar*, the relationship between the photographic act and the representation of death becomes more acute. Bukhari depicts a boar, immediately after its hunting, documenting the process in which he opens the dead boar's eye in a series of photographs. The lens dwells upon the sharp bristles and the vitality of the eye which looks back at the camera, as if bringing the dead body back to life. In another photograph, the boar's head is placed on a platter, thus invoking the association of a victor bringing the head of the defeated leader to prove his demise.

Paradoxically, the masculine act (the male hunter bringing the boar's body as proof of his virility and leadership) undergoes a transformation when the boar's head is served as part of the female domestic food-serving tradition. The shift to the feminine is further enhanced by two additional works: one features a tin lid painted with red lipstick which appears like a shooting range target, and a row of red lipsticks underneath it; the other portrays a wooden board with a double mirror at its center that frames its viewer within a circle, once again as a type of target, and underneath it, a row of red and gold bullets, reminiscent of a woman's necklace.

Bukhari created a metaphorical link between the boar (pig) image as a representation of sin (in the Muslim and Jewish religions), as something ostracized, and the image of Jaffa in Israeli reality. In this context, the artist perceives post-1948 Jaffa as a reminder of sin. Jaffa remains an outcast, unwanted, an outsider. At the same time, it is the beautiful, made-up, Arab Jaffa, which adorned itself almost daily with golden bullets, that is at the core of the exhibition as a personification, a female figure, the "Bride of the Sea" (*arus al-bahr*) in Palestinian culture and literature.

Arabic as an Intra-Palestinian Sphere

Defining Arabic as demarcating the intra-Palestinian sphere implies, in fact, that it is the language of a national minority.²⁰ While Arabic is the second official language in Israel, it is almost entirely absent from the civil public sphere throughout all its manifestations: billboards, street names, municipal and intercity signposts, government forms, hospitals, etc. Hebrew, on the other hand, dominates the linguistic landscape, and is identified with the power relations of the Israeli majority, with all the consequent implications.

In the works to be discussed in this chapter Arabic is present exclusively – written (in print and by hand) and spoken; it is not translated into either Hebrew or English. When the exhibitions were on display, a translation of the titles and texts appeared on separate pages available outside the gallery's exhibition spaces. **Reida Adon's** works contain texts in Arabic pertaining to Palestinian history and memory; **Ashraf Fawakhry's** works contain Arabic texts pertaining to gender and cultural power configurations; **Ahlan Jomah's** works contain texts in Arabic as an encoded Arab-Palestinian cultural system.

Reida Adon | Pasateen

Like Bukhari's work, the image of the woman as a metaphor for the post-1948 geographic space recurs in Reida Adon's oeuvre as well. Whereas Bukhari uses a metaphor, and the figure itself is absent from the depicted space, Adon places the figure against the backdrop of a spoken and written textual system where Arabic demarcates the intra-Palestinian realm of memory. In her video art installation *Pasateen* (dresses), Adon juxtaposes two video works which together form a complementary narrative system: one room features eight upright black dresses hovering amidst the empty walls of the deserted stone houses in the village of Lifta, below the entrance road to Jerusalem; the other room shows the artist in the figure of Aisha from the play *Pasateen*, summing up her life from the 1948 Nakba to the present.²¹

Lifta, on the outskirts of Jerusalem, is one of the few villages not entirely destroyed after 1948. The video presents the dresses amidst fifty-five original stone houses that still stand. In the passage between the stone houses, the camera shifts to the blue sky, on which the artist inscribes in Arabic script:

I wanted them to talk, but they must have been worried about their words, of their chill. Something was holding them back December 28; they will save the answers so they can thrust them all at once, December-January 1947, without a voice in the silence (February) 1948.

The dates are directly borrowed from *Ki La Ninsa (All That Remains)*, historian Walid Khalidi's well-known book.²²

As opposed to the silence accompanied by the wind blowing between the stone houses, the second video features Adon playing the character of Aisha, who recounts her story in Arabic. Aisha al Sangrawiyah, who has resided in a Palestinian refugee village in Damascus since 1948, withholds her body from her husband Ahmad abu il-Abed, conditioning her surrender with a return to her village Sajara in Palestine – a condition which is underlain by a radical independent dimension against the patriarchal setting in which Aisha's figure operates. The sex strike has several precedents; the best known among them is described in Aristophanes's *Lysistrata*. But unlike *Lysistrata*, where the women seize the Acropolis, and the sexual starvation forces the men to yield

to their wishes, so that the comedy ends traditionally with reconciliation and peace, Aisha's case is different. She concludes:

Abu al-Abed was offended and got up, and ever since that day he never came near me. It's been years, and we live in Damascus. My body has chilled and died, and I stopped thinking about it. [...] And so, years have gone by, and my cousin died, prevented from me and from Sajara.

The demise of the sexual body and its cooling, the result of the radical female conditioning, are reinforced in the other video, where the female body is obliterated, becoming a phantom that moves in space through the blowing winds of memory, filling the empty black dresses, amidst Lifta's deserted stone houses and in the waters of the puddle that move one of the dresses floating on it. The erased body is represented by the textual position of the subject, "I wanted", and the figure becomes a real subject only when she demands a place and a role in national collective memory.²³

The memory of the Nakba in the context of Palestinian culture is a direct result of the absence of a nation-state. In other words, the uprooting from village life to the refugee camps, and the fact that the majority of Palestinian society lives outside the borders of historical Palestine, have anchored the Nakba as the national Palestinian tragedy.²⁴ This memory has been gradually constructed as a collective national memory via stories, in poetry, prose, and art.

Adon's desire "I wanted them to talk" is a demand of the "remembering self" to organize the past, the present, and the future along a continuum which has psychological, cultural and moral meanings. Shoshana Feldman²⁵ maintains that when memory (or testimony) has a function in defining the differentiated identity of the group in the political public sphere, it is defined socially and culturally as collective memory. Feldman further stresses that the unique quality of testimony stems from the witness's act of observation as one who observed the event with his own eyes.²⁶

Paradoxically, vis-à-vis the absence of the absent-present or present-absentees²⁷, the woman/ghost acquires the role of the witness who has seen the event with her own eyes. The image of the living-dead exists in several cultures in the nation-shaping process. One such example is found in the novel *Sarayah, Daughter of the Ghoul* by Palestinian author Emile Habiby.²⁸

But the link between Adon's videos and Habiby's novel does not end with the image of the ghost as a living-dead; it is also found in the direct appeal to those "absent present" of whom Lifta's stone houses have become a quintessential symbol.²⁹

The dialectic positive-negative position of the absent present is embodied both in the figure of the woman as a ghost, a living-dead, and in the figure of the woman whose sexuality is forbidden in her lifetime. This dialectic approach links the sexual body with the concept of "body of knowledge" which expresses the urge to remember, to preserve the memory, and to generate a text which is irreplaceable in the construction of collective memory.

The text in Arabic is not only a memory, but also a real marker of the border between the intra-Palestinian space in the works and the Israeli audience which does not understand the uttered words (whether in the play performed at the Acre Festival or at the Hagar Art Gallery). In a review of the play at the Acre Festival dated October 11, 2001, critic Eitan Bar Yosef³⁰ describes the scene where an Arab interpreter translates Reida Adon the actress's lines from Arabic into Hebrew for the audience:

It was clear that the good-hearted Nasil doesn't really want to translate what was being said there, on stage, word for word, but settles for a general impression in order to protect us, the bespectacled Jews who came from afar, against Reida's new national mania. Here too, it seems that the obedient spectators who cheered excitedly, didn't really ask themselves: Wait a minute, what exactly was said here? Are we clapping ourselves to death?

Memory sails back to the last days of the Crusader Kingdom, which was pushed to Acre before it was entirely effaced. Perhaps then too, a colorful festival was held in the monumental Crypt, and the Muslim neighbors were invited to act and play music, and the Crusaders who did not speak Arabic, raised their beer glasses and cheered the beautiful Arab woman who prophesized their imminent departure in an incomprehensible guttural tongue.

Bar Yosef's critique creates parallels between the Israelis and the Crusaders, and between the Palestinians and the Muslims, thus articulating the primal fear of the East. The lack of linguistic mastery is translated in practice into control of the field and the struggle between occupiers and occupied for the very possibility of generating the text as well as its translation and accompanying

meanings. In this sense, the figure of the “beautiful Arab woman” as the main speaker of the text marks the line between the intra-Palestinian/Arab space and the relations of occupation in which she operates.

Ashraf Fawakhry | *Ikhtilal*

Ashraf Fawakhry’s exhibition *Ikhtilal* (unsteadiness, imbalance)³¹ unfolds diverse representations of gender power relations. In an interview with *Haaretz*³² Fawakhry explained that there has been a linguistic distortion between the word ‘*ikhtilal*’ which denotes imbalance (and is written with the Arabic letter خ, pronounced ‘kh’) and the word ‘*ihhtilal*’ which stands for occupation (written with the Arabic letter ح, and pronounced with a ‘guttural h’). Since the majority of Jews nowadays cannot pronounce the guttural consonant, instead of saying occupation, some of them end up talking about imbalance.

In the dictionary, ‘*ikhtilal*’ is noted as the origin of the verb *ikhtal*: to be broken, shaken, weakened, loosened, whereas the entry ‘*ihhtilal*’ appears not only as the noun ‘occupation’, but also as the origin of the verb *ihhtal*: to occupy, to conquer a place, to fill a space. The semantic distinction between Hebrew and Arabic also generates a correlation between active and ostensibly passive action which is translated into essentially deconstructive possible modes of operation.

The exhibition *Ikhtilal* extended across three rooms of the Hagar Art Gallery. One featured a series of photographs digitally sampled from a movie centered on a boxing match between two women. The fist-clenching movement recurs in the photographs — an expressive bodily gesture which is not merely a pose, but also an act repeated like a social-cultural code indicating supervised violence. The two-dimensional photographic perpetuation of the movie, which naturally transforms the dynamic into static, records and freezes the movement, eradicating the potential violence inherent in it, and ultimately fixing it in a single moment that defines the power relations between the figures in the photograph.

The violence seen in the photograph results primarily from the decoding and interpretation of the visible scene. Referring to the photograph’s reading mechanisms, Roland Barthes³³ emphasizes that the photograph “is only perceived verbalized,” and that it is “immersed for its very social existence in at least an initial layer of connotation, that of the categories of language.”

Reading, in this sense, is culture-dependent, and "connotation drawn from knowledge is always a reassuring force."

This reassuring force is represented on two different levels in the reading process: one places the scene in the world of boxing, identifying the women as "ethnic", as opposed to their white coach who is seen in the photograph. Another reading is based on the Arabic script, as one of the photographs featuring a close-up of one boxer, contains a caption in Arabic at the bottom of the screen. The text, translating as "Cheeky, you'll lose," is a type of entry code into the power relations discernible in the photograph. Fawakhry sampled the image from a system of western popular culture and inserted it into an Arab textual system external to it. The result is an ironic expression of imaginary closeness to a multi-cultural system which is identified with ethnic otherness, an otherness that is part of an extensive discourse of equal opportunities and citizens' rights that goes beyond the field of boxing competitions and their representation in popular culture.

Another quotation of an image from popular culture and its insertion into an Arab cultural system occurs in a threadwork on board created by the artist and some of his male friends: colored threads wound around thousands of little nails hammered into the board, creating vegetal and floral patterns. At the center of the board, in black ink, is a painting depicting two male arms in an arm wrestling pose, inspired by an advertisement for a Jean Paul Gautier perfume where two handsome sailors, who look very much alike, are seen in a similar pose.

At first sight, the floral patterns connote Islamic ornamentation which is based on repeated decoration, articulating life's cyclicity. The association with arabesque as a tangled vegetal image, however, is but an initial visual link, for Fawakhry centers his work on a violent image whose foreignness is conspicuous not only in the fact that it is western, but also, mainly, in the fact that it violates the pattern and the sequence into which it is inserted.

From an encoded cultural system which requires erudition and internal cultural knowledge, Fawakhry moves to a system of popular culture: alongside the threadwork, at the center of a moving circle of horses on the wall, he mounted a bride doll, a golden thread connected to a skein in her hand; the circular movement of the object wraps the thread around her body and neck to the point of strangulation. The "supervised violence" and the binary quality inherent in the object are explicit; through these Fawakhry seems to affirm

the foretold fate of the bride trapped in a patriarchal, western as well as eastern, social milieu.

A reference to a patriarchal social system and to the fate of the bride was also addressed in a video installation presented in another room in the gallery, where a monitor was placed on the floor, with a red flashing light above it, infusing the space with signals of danger. The monitor presented a row of men dancing the traditional wedding dance, *khadai*, in a loop. The men move in a line, shoulder to shoulder, but a black strip conceals their faces, and the camera focuses on their lower bodies. During the dance female figures enter the frame, passing by the row of men in dancing steps. The soundtrack accompanying the video consists of male singing: "Our horse is alert toward death, move on, the young people of Mazra'a are dripping with beauty like lions who stride proudly in the plain." Against the singing in the background, the supervision and danger indicated by the warning light are not directed at the woman's fate on her wedding night, but rather at the group of headless men walking freely in their natural habitat (as indicated by the song). The time that passes between hearing the Arabic song and the reading of the Hebrew translation (which is external to the work) points at utterly different readings of the gender space, in keeping with the mastery of the translation languages and with an extensive, encoded cultural system.

In the sequence of images in the exhibition, the motif of "supervised violence" as a quintessential oxymoron, in fact describes the Israeli public sphere and the intra-Palestinian sphere, as well as the intermediate spaces between them. All these are characterized by Fawakhry as a human, existential state of imbalance — *Ikhtilal*.

Ahlam Jomah | Tommemma

Ahlam Jomah's exhibition *Tommemma* (Hide and Seek) extended across two rooms, each featuring a series of photographs whose common denominator was the fact that they relied on a previous source of printed material: the series of paintings (and its presentation via reproductions) was executed after photographed portraits published in the Arab press, whereas the series of original drawings was executed after Palestinian press photographs. In one room Jomah presented sheets of paper on which the figures of Palestinian women with expressions of pain and sorrow were outlined in black dots. The

black dots generate a softened expression which seems to soak into the paper. The cry is mute; it is identified neither with a specific figure nor with a concrete event, thus losing the documentary context lent by press photography which is their source. The act of copying from photograph to drawing by means of dots not only distances the specific testimony from the Palestinian reality, but also offers a public, collective sphere of mourning.

Presented in the other room, on a shelf, are volumes of the *Illustrated Arabic Encyclopedia for Youth*, 1995 edition. Wide open double-spreads display, in reproductions of Jomah's making, Arab and Palestinian cultural heroes, male and female.³⁴ The figures are painted in colorful realistic style like the paintings of Egyptian cinema on giant canvas billboards; they also appear on children's play discs arranged in a line along the walls of the room.

The use of a visual culture based on printed material and its distribution is a key concern in the perception of the Palestinian art field as a national cultural field. As part of Benedict Anderson's³⁵ definition of the nation as an "imagined community" and the importance of the spoken and written language in the shaping of nationalism, Anderson underscores the distribution capacity of printed materials that widely reproduce national cultural products. The use of printed materials becomes more significant when it pertains to national groups whose common socialization processes are weakened due to geographic dispersal, namely – national groups of refugees, exiles, and immigrants.

In the Palestinian art field these reproductions are a continuation of posters, postcards, and calendars featuring artworks by canonical Palestinian artists, among them Ismail Shammout, Nabil Anani, and Sulayman Mansur, distributed since the 1970s in the West Bank, Gaza, and the refugee camps in the Arab countries.³⁶

In continuation of this perception, which regards the reproductions of "cultural products" as playing a role in the construction of national identity, Jomah's work offers a gender-minded reading: even though the entire encyclopedia features only seven figures of women as opposed to seventy-one of men, the artist brings women who are key figures in the history of Arab feminism together on the shelf.

The first is **Huda Shaarawi** (1879–1947), an Egyptian feminist leader who founded the Egyptian Feminist Union (EFU) in 1923. The organization formed a social agenda, and Shaarawi addressed issues pertaining to the veil, women's status in the public sphere, and personal status laws. Shaarawi operated

within Islamic feminism — feminism rooted in Islam and Sharia (Islamic law), whose interpretation of social laws, economy, and the political system is nevertheless feminist, emphasizing the improvement of women's status as part of the national agenda.³⁷ This moderate feminism has become the operational model of women's organizations throughout the Arab world. At a later stage, since 1945, Shaarawi was president of the Arab Feminist Union, exercising considerable influence on other women's organizations founded in the Arab world.

The second figure is **May Ziadeh** (1886–1941), Nazareth born poet and writer, graduate of the Ein Tura College in Lebanon, known for its French cultural orientation. In 1907 she immigrated to Egypt with her parents, and in 1913 she opened a literary salon at home which became the center of intellectual life in Egypt, discussing questions of national identity and cultural issues, as well as the status of the Arab woman.³⁸

The third figure is **Oum Kulthoum** (1904–1975), who, in terms of nation and gender, follows the aforementioned two women. Oum Kulthoum began her artistic career dressed up as a boy. Later on she was a trailblazer for Arab female singing when she performed religious texts intended exclusively for men. In 1952 she was embraced by Egyptian president Nasser as the national singer, and was nicknamed "The Voice of Egypt" and the "Star of the East".

At this point in the sequence of powerful feminist women whose work reflects the link between nation and gender, a connection is made between the women and the title of the exhibition, *Tommema* (Hide and Seek), alluding to separate spheres and to the strategy of dialectic concealment at work within them. The first concealment sphere is the *Illustrated Encyclopedia* which creates a concealment/separation from the Israeli exhibition realm by constructing an encoded intra-Arab space underlain by the Arabic language and the ability to identify figures and understand the affinities between them. The second concealment sphere is distinctively gender oriented, and is manifested within the border demarcation of the intra-Arabic space. This critical gender position is based primarily on the mode of representation of female figures, and subsequently on their very choice. Thus it turns out that while the representation pattern of the female figure in canonical Palestinian art is usually that of a young nameless woman devoid of specific identification, who is presented metaphorically against the backdrop of the homeland's landscape/soil,³⁹ Jomah paints the women in a realistic facial close-up

which presents them in their maturity, names them, and anchors them in a canonical, cultural and feminist textual context. In addition she chooses to present female figures who were identified with public criticism (especially Huda Shaarawi and May Ziadeh), who argued that despite the contribution of women to the national struggle, and despite the recognition of their feminist consciousness and the promises to realize their demand for social change after the liberation, the promises they were given by the national institutions were ultimately forgotten, and the social struggle focused rather on reinstating women in their traditional roles.⁴⁰

Despite the gender position which brings a group of feminist, trailblazing women to the forefront, Jomah presents them within a foreknown textual frame. Her decision to present the figures as reproductions rather than as preliminary drawings on paper in keeping with the tradition of object presentation in the field of art, anchors the women in the canonical context, reinforcing the encyclopedic text as a primary source of authority.

The Gendered Body

The gendered body as manifested in this catalogue is a term intended to identify the signifiers of gender (in nationality, society, culture, and art) which shape the socialization processes of women and men, and establish essentially patriarchal hierarchic patterns. The realization that the differences between the sexes are "inscribed" into culture in general and onto the body in particular, requires mapping and deconstruction of key canonical texts which structure, signify, and even discipline the gendered body and all its components. These texts are a social power that operates on and into the body via knowledge and technology, prohibitions and legal restrictions, words and gestures.

The body representations in the work of **Jumana Emil Abboud** and **Anisa Ashkar** are clearly linked to Judith Butler's⁴¹ perception of gender, which is based on the performative nature of identity, on repetition, and the feasibility of a deconstructive position vis-à-vis the existing linguistic order. In Emil Abboud's works, the textual system is partly based on Christian iconography, and the repetition is anchored in the title of the exhibition, *Déjà Vu* (already said or seen), which emphasizes the reflexive yet repetitious position with regard to body representations in the works. In Ashkar's works the textual

system is social and religious Islam, and the repetition is based primarily on the performance itself, which is repeated in the exhibition, and secondly, on the characterization of the performance as a social, at once religious and gendered ritual.

Jumana Emil Abboud | Déjà Vu

Physical marking, comprising gestures and texts which operate on and into the body, is the main concern in Jumana Emil Abboud's works. Emil Abboud presents the body as a permeated figure, as a field of action where the systems of culture and iconography structuring it are clearly discernible,⁴² in a series of illustrations and color stains which she adds to the pages of a manual for growing orchids. The purpose of this professional guide is to domesticate the plant's sensitive growth system and control it so as to make it thrive as a rare beautiful flower. The first page features the title of the book in all capitals: ORCHIDEEN, and underneath it a schematic drawing of a face with the letter P on its forehead. Tattooing the letter as a marker of identity unfolds a possible system of codes for the viewer whereby he may enter the works: Person, Pretty, Palestinian, and perhaps also Phalaenopsis, the commonest genus of orchids.

On the pages of the book, washed with liquid paint, several repeated figures are sketched in contours only. In one drawing the figures are placed face to face, and a color stain flows from the eye of one through its mouth to the mouth of the other and into its heart. In another drawing a color stain flows from the heart to the mouth across; in a third drawing a hand is seen compassionately embracing the contours of a head, and in a fourth — a hand penetrates the body through a cut.

The body in the works is not contoured. It merges with the opposite figure and with the background, and is thus perceived as boundless, and signified as a permeated, diffusive and fragile body. The fragile body is, in fact, deconstructed against the backdrop of the textual system whose essence is control (to grow and domesticate the orchid as a rare flower which is very hard to grow). This fragility is further reinforced by the sense of death accompanying it against the real backdrop of the torn pages which stand in contrast to flowers, growth, and nature. The fact that the figures lack specific sexual markers leaves the image in the territory of universal body

and soul, as evidence of a human condition which is beyond spatial, temporal, and gender territories.

In other works, Emil Abboud's permeated figure is charged with explicit sexuality.⁴³ A drawing on paper features a nude female body whose hands hold an embroidery thread, sewing a sex organ. The figure's head covering is erased, and surrounded by a circle, like a halo of sanctity.⁴⁴ The embroidery thread leading from the genitalia to the hand connotes Christ's bleeding hand. Paradoxically, it seems as though the woman embroiders her self-empowering iconography with her body.

Indeed, the practice of embroidery in this context is a power operated on the body, limiting its scope of operation. Thus, for example, a drawing on paper portrays a woman wearing a dress through which her naked body can be seen. The woman's hands are crossed over her head, and she is holding an embroidery thread that sews her joints together. Another work depicts a female body with three arrows inserted through its upper part, between the woman's breasts, penetrating her body, while her arms and lower body are amputated.

In these works a tension is created between the contours outlining restrained, controlled and silent bodily gestures, and actions applied to the flesh, penetrating it, transforming the body into a field of action, a dialectic struggle between covering and exposure, sexuality and chastity, vulnerability and self-mutilation.

Mutilation of the living flesh in Emil Abboud's works is introduced vis-à-vis the flesh's emptying of its corporeality. The perception that the flesh, especially the female flesh, is an element threatening spiritual perfection is generally a central motif in all patriarchal, monotheistic religions. In Christian theology, the female body is described mainly as part of the vision of the Day of Judgment. The section dealing with the inferno describes female lust and male greed as the two most grievous sins. The punishment for the sin of female lust is often illustrated by women with exposed, at times even amputated, breasts – symbolizing the organs taking part in the sin, the breasts and genitals.⁴⁵

The signs of mutilation of the sexual body express the erasure of passion and its substitution by a divine power, both religious and spiritual. The motif of the "saint" – a virgin, a woman whose sexuality is absent, suspended, or denied, and her spiritual sacrifice, accompanied by mutilation of the flesh, elicits admiration and reverence – is the ideal model of womanly behavior, a

master narrative in western as well as Arab-Christian culture, functioning as a formative myth and a central cultural agent.

In the reading of Emil Abboud's work, it is interesting to note the way in which Judith Butler⁴⁶ links the contours of the body with its permeability. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler cites two observations made by Mary Douglas⁴⁷: According to the first, "the very contours of 'the body' are established through markings that seek to establish specific codes of cultural coherence. Any discourse that establishes the boundaries of the body serves the purpose of instating and naturalizing certain taboos." In other words, in the discussion of the body, the body's contours become "the limits of the social *per se*." According to the second observation, "the body is a model that can stand for any bounded system." However, since "all social systems are vulnerable at their margins, ... all margins are accordingly considered dangerous... [thus] any kind of unregulated permeability constitutes a site of pollution and endangerment."

Indeed, in all the aforementioned works, Emil Abboud draws a fleshless figure, bounded by contours and comprised of the color of the surface on which it is drawn; a figure marked as permeated, ostensibly challenging the realms of social hegemony and the accompanying taboo categories. In this context it seems that the sexual female body is not supposed to be erased at all, but on the contrary; its mode of representation and the multiplicity of works clearly indicate that Emil Abboud endeavors to present the way in which the power configurations acquire a real expression on the body, for the body is structured, constituted, and represented as part of these power relations.

Anisa Ashkar | Barbur Aswad

The exhibition *Barbur Aswad* concluded, in effect, the activity of Hagar Art Gallery. It opened in July 2003, and in September that same year the gallery was closed and reinstated as a residential apartment on Yefet Street in Jaffa's al-Ajami neighborhood. *Barbur Aswad* was exhibited in the gallery in three parts which differed in their modes of display (performance, installation, and photography), linking the major themes that surfaced in the previous exhibitions: identification of the geographic sphere as part of the postcolonial discourse and in contexts of ethnocracy, Arabic as reflecting an intra-Palestinian sphere, and the gendered body.

The first part, the performance, opened the exhibition on the evening

of July 17, 2003, on the gallery's terrace. The performance included two participants: Anisa Ashkar who was wearing a black dress, and a man whose identity was unknown to the audience⁴⁸, with a bare chest, wearing trousers, his head and face covered with a black stocking cap. The man sat in a bathtub and read aloud the text "Umha bint el-Khert advising her daughter on her wedding night – the will as a reminder and warning, marriage as a necessity" in Arabic from the book *A Collection of the Arabs' Speeches in the Golden Age*. To the sound of the man's authoritative voice, the artist was seen pouring bags of milk into a pot, boiling the milk with black ink. She then immersed a bathing sponge in the black inked milk and started rubbing the man's body aggressively. Throughout the performance the artist bathes the man while giving him orders in Arabic, such as 'raise your hands', 'turn your back', 'bend', etc. The violent ritual is accompanied, from beginning to end, with the voice of the man reading the mother's advice to her daughter, blending with the sounds of the al-Ajami neighborhood rising from the street. When the bathing ritual ends, the man gets up, turning toward one of the balcony bars. Ashkar sits before him, her head bent on her knees, and he places his hand on her head, praying: "*Allah hu Akbar*" – Allah is great.

The second part, the installation, spanned the terrace itself, bounded by Tsibi Geva's iron bars which stayed as permanent bars since his exhibition *Lattice*. Between the bars, in modern, geometric patterns repeated along the balcony, the artist painted a black arabesque pattern in tar. On the columns she inscribed the Arabic script of the text which the man read out loud in the previous performance.

The third part consisted of a series of photographs depicting Ashkar, with sentences in Arabic she had written on her face and around her eyes, some in ordinary handwriting, others in mirror writing.

The exhibition was centered on the written canonical text "Umha bint el-Khert advising her daughter on her wedding night – the will as a reminder and warning, marriage as a necessity," where the speaker is a woman (the mother), but the authority embodied in it is essentially patriarchal.

In contemporary Palestinian art, some female artists create a link between the textual authority that constitutes and controls the sexual body, and the figure of the mother. One of the best known examples is Mona Hatoum's video piece, *Measures of Distance* (1998)⁴⁹ which consists of conversations and correspondence between a mother and a daughter in Arabic and English. These

bi-lingual texts, maintains Hamid Nafici, represent a dialogue resulting from a conflict which arises between mothers and daughters due to the gap between different generational, cultural, class, linguistic, and imaginative worlds.⁵⁰

As part of mother-daughter relations, Ashkar, like Ahlam Jomah, seems to respect the canonical text: despite its numerous manifestations (the man holding a book, reading from it as a source; the text handwritten in Arabic on the balcony walls; and the text printed in Arabic on sheets of paper and translated into Hebrew and English), Ashkar does not change a single word in it, so that from beginning to end it appears as a solid system of authority.

Ashkar juxtaposes the solid authoritative language with a theatrical performance based on expressive bodily movements, repeated instructions and splashing of black milk in all directions. The interpretations associated with milk range from a diversity of metaphors pertaining to motherhood, breast milk, and breastfeeding to the image of breast milk which in the writing of 1980s radical feminist scholars is described as a tool expressing the body's profuse eroticism, and the perception of the breasts sprinkling milk – as an expression of freedom and liberation.⁵¹

Throughout the performance, the act of sprinkling (which begins with the opening of the milk bags and continues through the man's bathing ritual) becomes gradually more violent, as the liquid itself becomes blacker and blacker, all against the background of the text which emphasizes the textual repression of eroticism and its built-in control mechanism.

The subtitle of the text, "The will as a reminder and warning, and marriage as a necessity", underscores the element of caution and the array of meanings that have already undergone social institutionalization, within whose frame the ritual of the mother's loving advice takes place:

O, my daughter, adopt ten qualities which would be like a treasure [...]. Do not reveal his secrets and do not defy his orders, for if you reveal his secrets, he will take revenge, and if you defy his orders you will awaken his anger and rage. If he is in mourning, neglect all joy, and if he is sad, shed all happiness. The first attests to omission and failure to fulfill one's duty, the second is a mood spoiler. Praise him often and aggrandize his worth, and he will show you great generosity. The more you concur with him, the longer you will live together. Remember that your wishes won't be granted, unless you prefer his contentment to yours, and hold his preferences superior to yours, with everything you love or hate. May god be with you.

Roni Halpern⁵² notes that “Ashkar signifies the mother as a cultural agent. The fact that a man was selected to read the text exposes the real voice behind the maternal text and the patriarchal essence inherent in it”. As for the ritual of rubbing the inked milk into the body, Halpern stresses:

Ashkar exposes the ink as a fluid written into the body; not merely tattooed on it, but assimilated and absorbed into it with a latent text that strives to be impressed as natural. The ink is blended into the milk, and together with the basic primary foodstuff, we are being permeated by these texts. The blackness of the ink and its stamping/staining power expropriate the automatic identification of the maternal milk as something pure, exposing the poisoning potential of the text it inscribes, as well as the voice of the father dictating it.

As part of the dialogue between mother and daughter, Ashkar’s reply to the mother’s advice seems dialectical: she preserves the text intact, yet exposes the speaker’s position and the text’s influence on her life. In addition Ashkar rejects the text’s identification in a timeless sphere or a space devoid of geographical identification. Through the title of the exhibition — **Barbur Aswad** — she locates it in a concrete geographic realm. Barbur⁵³ (swan) is the Hebrew name of the artist’s neighborhood, given to it after the construction of a ceramic factory by that name in proximity to the residential houses, forming a severe hazard to the environment and inhabitants alike. In the exhibition Ashkar supplements the pastoral name “barbur” with the Arabic word “*aswad*” — black.

Ashkar rejects the bilingual disposition that has become rooted in her place of residence. She transforms the swan (*barbur*) into a black swan. Blackness prevails when she paints the “dark” body which is marked by (Arab-Palestinian) otherness with blackness that functions as an immediate stereotypical marker of ethnic and cultural differences.⁵⁴ This choice generates absolute borders between a system of language and identity which is marked as black, and an entire culture that has chosen to call itself “white” and which associates Ashkar, in terms of identity and identification, with the culture of national ethnic minorities.⁵⁵

In the other part of the exhibition Ashkar inscribes sentences on her face which are a repetition of linguistic precedents, some of them existing historical and cultural phrases, others — her own creation. The phrases — ‘**Freedom**

guides the nation'; 'You have betrayed the homeland, and what else?'; 'I and the Acre sea are alike, we are both salty'; 'I'm a woman, why?'; 'Note: I am a free Arab woman'; 'Take care'; 'The land belongs to those who respect it' — generate a continuum between the gendered, and the national and personal, and can only be read partially, as part of what may be termed intertextual art. Nafici⁵⁶ describes intertextual art as textual multiplicity which negates the status of the text as a unique, natural text, since the spectators are forced to engage in several simultaneous activities of watching, translating and reading. "However, because these techniques do not necessarily support each other due to their asynchrony and critical juxtaposition, the spectatorial activities do not fuse into an easily coherent interpretation."

The artist writes on her face in Arabic, a ritual which she performs daily before leaving for her studies at the Beit Berl Art College, an Israeli school of art where studies are exclusively in Hebrew. The Israeli viewer who encounters Ashkar in the public sphere (while walking on the street, in the bus station, and in the art school) identifies and marks her simultaneously as Arab and "other", but usually cannot tell what is written on her face. On the other hand, the Palestinian viewer encountering Ashkar in the same sphere identifies and even reads the Arab text inscribed on her face, but cannot decode the text in full since some of it is written in mirror image.

The isolation of the text — ultimately introduced as an implicit code, which at the same time marks and identifies its writer with an intricate system of otherness in an essentially ethnocentric public sphere — in fact indicates the *modi operandi* of contemporary Palestinian artists who operate separately from one another, artists whose personal voyage in is at the core of this catalogue.

1 For a discussion of the work of artists Tsibi Geva, Khen Shish, Gaston Zvi Ickowicz, and David Adika, see Tal Ben Zvi, *Biographies: Six Solo Exhibitions at Hagar Art Gallery* (Jaffa, 2005).

2 In 1998 Adel Manna indicated that the number of Palestinians throughout the world was estimated at 7.5 million: the citizens of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (including East

Jerusalem) are the most significant Palestinian community politically; demographically they form approximately 36% of the Palestinian people (2.7 million of a total 7.5). 900,000 Palestinians live in Israel, forming 12% of the Palestinian people; 3 million live in the Palestinian diaspora in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, which comprise 40% of the Palestinian people; the Palestinian diaspora in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf

States, Egypt, North Africa and Iraq numbers half a million Palestinians, which are 6.7% of the Palestinian people; 400,000 Palestinians live in Europe, the US, and Latin America, which comprise 5.3% of the Palestinian people. See Adel Manna, "Introduction: The Palestinians in the Twentieth Century," in Adel Manna (ed.), *The Palestinians in the Twentieth Century: An Inside Look* (Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, The Center for the Study of Arab Society in Israel, 1999), p. 14 [Hebrew].

3 Regular activity, including solo and group exhibitions of Palestinian artists, in the Palestinian Authority takes place mainly in the urban centers and universities. In East Jerusalem: Anadil Gallery (founded in 1992), Al-Ma'mal Foundation for Contemporary Art (founded in 1997), Al-Wasiti Art Center (founded in 1994). In Ramallah: The Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centre (founded in 1996), Ziryab Gallery (founded in 1998), Al Qattan Center (founded in 1998). In Bethlehem: Al-Kahf Gallery at the International Art Center, Bethlehem (founded in 1995). Exhibitions are also held at An-Najah National University in Nablus, in the Media Department at Birzeit University (opened in 1996), and in Hebron University and Bethlehem University.

4 An example is the exhibition "Palestin(a) – Women's Art from Palestine" (curator: Tal Ben Zvi) exhibited in 1998 simultaneously at Ami Steinitz Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv, and at the Al-Wasiti Art Center in East Jerusalem. Palestinian artists from both sides of the Green Line co-exhibited in these shows: Azza El Hassan, Dina Ghazal, Faten Nastas, Jumana Emil Abboud, Nidaa Khoury, Noel Jabbour, Rana Bishara, Suheir Ismail Farraj. To view the exhibited works, see the Hagar Art Gallery website: www.hagar-gallery.com.

5 Few artists exhibit in major Israeli galleries and museums. Therefore the artistic activity in Arab galleries and cultural centers is highly significant in the development of

Palestinian art in Israel. In 1994 the Arab Artists Association (Abdaa) was founded in the village Jullis in the Galilee to promote art in the Arab sector. The Art Gallery, Um el-Fahem was founded in 1996. Since 1996 annual projects are also held at Beit Hagefen – Arab-Jewish Center in Haifa, among them the Arab Culture Month exhibition, the Holiday of Holidays festival, and an outdoor sculptural project in Wadi Nisnas. In addition, there is extensive Palestinian art activity in cultural centers such as The Municipal Gallery, Nazareth; the gallery at the France Center, Nazareth; Tamra Gallery; The Gallery at Maalot Tarshicha; the galleries of the local youth cultural centers in Yarka and Peki'in; Eshkol Payis, Majar; cultural Center, Kufr Kara'a; Art Institute, Ar'ara; Cultural Center, Kufr Yassif.

6 In the Palestinian Authority, regular art studies are available only at An-Najah University in Nablus, where one can study sculpture, painting, ceramics and applied art. The universities in the Arab world – in Cairo, Alexandria, Baghdad, and Beirut – that are built according to the western academic tradition, obviously offer art studies in Arabic, yet these do not include Palestinian culture and art. Diasporic Palestinian artists in Europe and the US are graduates of western art academies, whereas in Israel there are no academic art institutions that teach in Arabic.

7 For more comprehensive reviews of the history of Palestinian art, see: Wijdan Ali, "Modern Arab Art," in: *Force of Change: Artists of the Arab World* (Washington: The National Museum of Women in the Art, 1993); Gannit Ankori, *Palestinian Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005); Kamal Boullata, "Art," in: Philip Mattar (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Palestinians* (New York: Facts On File, 2000); Tina Sherwell, "Bodies in Representation: Contemporary Arab Women's Art," in Fran Lloyd (ed.), *Contemporary Arab Women's Art: Dialogues of the Present* (London: WAL, 1999); Gannit Ankori, "Beyond the Wall: On Several

Tangential Points between Palestinian Art and Israeli Painting of the Early Twentieth Century," *Kav*, 10 (July 1990), pp. 163-169 [Hebrew]; Kamal Boullata, "Israeli and Palestinian Artists: Facing the Forests," *Kav*, 10 (July 1990), pp. 170-175 [Hebrew]; Kamal Boullata, "The World, the Self, and the Body: Pioneering Women in Palestinian Art," in Tal Ben Zvi and Yael Lerer (eds.), *Self Portrait: Palestinian Women's Art* (Tel Aviv: Andalus, 2001), pp. 178-167.

8 Azmi Bishara, "On the Question of the Palestinian Minority in Israel," *Theory and Criticism*, 3, 1993, p. 7 [Hebrew]; English abstract, pp. 148-147.

9 Dan Rabinowitz and Khawla Abu-Baker, *Coffins on Our Shoulders: The Experience of the Palestinian Citizens of Israel* (California: The University of California Press, 2005), p. 11.

10 At the center of the events was the figure of 17-year-old Asil Asleh, shot during the October events in his village Arrabeh in the Galilee. The fact that Asleh was a peace activist in organizations promoting co-existence, as well as the circumstances of his death (he was shot at close range while lying on the ground), caused shock throughout the country, among the Palestinian population and the Israeli peace camp. In the exhibition "13 Live Bullets" featured in Tel Aviv during 2001, curator and artist Shula Keshet presented shelves with photos of the thirteen victims, personal diaries, and a video piece, *Four Mothers*, comprising the testimonies of four of the October victims' mothers. See Tal Ben Zvi, *Brunette: 16 Solo Exhibitions at Heinrich Böll Foundation*, exh. cat. (Tel Aviv: Babel, 2003), pp. 102-107.

11 Edward W. Said, "The Voyage In and the Emergence of Opposition", in Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994), pp. 239-261.

12 *Ibid.*, pp. 258-259.

13 This realistic representation, based on direct, documentary photography, introduces a significant change in the representation of the geographic space in the work of key Palestinian artists. In fact, one may say that until the 1990s the representation of the Palestinian space in Palestinian art was based on its representation as an imagined utopian sphere in which the Palestinian village was a central metaphor. Tina Malhi Sherwell notes that "the focus on images of Palestinian villages coincided with a revival of Palestinian heritage and folklore beginning in the late 1970s. Since more explicit forms of national expression were denied, the village served as a suitable metaphor for Palestinian identity. By appropriating the village as a signifier of the nation, the Palestinian village was contoured into a general mold. The representations were not of specific villages so much as they combined elements of different villages which, together, constituted an ideal type. Often these included a landscape in full spring bloom, several stone houses, and a woman wearing traditional Palestinian costume surrounded by children or engaged in domestic activities such as baking bread, grinding wheat, or harvesting crops." See Tina Malhi Sherwell, "Imagining Palestine as the Motherland," in Ben Zvi & Lerer 2001 (n. 7), p. 164.

14 Oren Yiftachel and Alexander (Sandy) Kedar, "Landed Power: The Making of the Israeli Land Regime," *Theory and Criticism*, 16 (Spring 2000): 67-100 [Hebrew]; English abstract, *ibid.*, p. 280.

15 Ulrich Loock, *Ahlam Shibli: Goter*, exh. cat. (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 2002), unpaginated.

16 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans: Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980), p. 107.

17 For a detailed historical review of Jaffa during 1948, see: Sharon Rotbard, *White City*,

Black City (Tel Aviv: Babel, 2005), pp. 174-198 [Hebrew].

18 The open areas are, in fact, lots left after the demolition of homes. Demolition is the result of municipal policy towards these neighborhoods, striving to prepare the ground for a redevelopment plan that would absorb Jewish population instead of the existing Arab population. For this purpose Amidar (Israel's National Housing Corporation) and Halamish (Government-Municipal Company for Housing Renewal) perform systematic demolition of housing units in Jaffa as a whole, and in the neighborhoods of al-Ajami and Jibalya in particular. Between 1975 and 1985 2,515 housing units were demolished within the boundaries of Mandatory Jaffa, regardless of their physical condition. See: Dan Yahav, *Jaffa, Bride of the Sea, from a Major City to Slums: A Model of Spatial Inequality* (Tel Aviv: Tammuz, 2004), p. 317 [Hebrew].

19 Barthes 1980 (n. 16), p. 32.

20 For an elaborate discussion on Arabic as a minority language in Israel, see: Adalah (The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel) *Newsletter*, vol. 14, June 2005, <http://www.adalah.org/newsletter/eng/jun05/jun05.html>

21 The installation was created in continuation of the artist's work and involvement as actress in the play *Pasateen* by Muhammad 'Ali Taha presented at the Acre Festival in October 2001.

22 Khalidi's book, among the first to engage in the chronicling of Palestinian history, documents in detail the 418 Palestinian villages destroyed during the occupation of Palestine in 1948. It describes how the attack on Lifta started on December 28, 1947, and how in February 1948 the Hagana entered the Mukhtar's home. A famous quote in this context belongs to Ben Gurion: "Go through Lifta, and you will not encounter a single Arab." See: Walid Khalidi (ed.), *All That*

Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948 (Washington: Institute for Palestinian Studies, 1992).

23 Yuval-Davis describes the construction of collective memory as cultural reproduction, intergenerational transmission. "Women are often the ones who are given the social role of intergenerational transmitters of cultural traditions, customs, songs, cuisine, and, of course, the mother-tongue." In other words, women are responsible for the transmission of national history based on national memories and narratives. See: Nira Yuval-Davis, "Gender & Nation," in Rick Wilford and Robert L. Miller (eds.), *Women, Ethnicity and Nationalism: The Politics of Transition* (London: Routledge, 198), p. 28.

24 The memory of the Nakba (Palestinian Catastrophe of 1948) is a central theme in plastic art, with an extensive iconographic set based on two major axes: the Palestinian wound and the ideal of redemption and return. As part of the former, the Palestinian figure is situated in a crossroads and in refugee camps, its face conveying an expression of suffering, refugeeism, and the loss of a specific geographic or historical place; as part of the latter, it is metaphorically situated within the homeland's landscape, in the Palestinian village and in the historical archaeological past. For an elaboration (in Arabic), see: Kamal Boullata, *Istihdar al-Macan: Dirasat fi al-Fan al-Tashkili al-Filastini al-Muasir* ('The Recovery of Place: A Study of Palestinian Contemporary Painting') (Tunis: ALECSO, 2000) [Arabic]; Ismail Shammut, *Al-Fann fi Filastin* ('Art in Palestine') (Kuwait City: Qabas, 1989) [Arabic].

25 Shoshana Feldman, "In the Era of Testimony: Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*," *Zmanim* 39/40 (1991), p. 6 [Hebrew]; English abstract, *ibid.*, p. 156.

26 A documentary film centered on eyewitness testimony is Nizar Hassan's *Ostura* (Israel,

1998). *Ostura* (Arabic for legend or fable) was produced on the 50th anniversary of the Nakba, and deals with Palestinian collective memory of the 1948 events through the chronicles of a single family — the Nijim family in the village of Safuriya (today's Tzipori). A major axis in the film is a scene where three of Um Salim's sons and the director listen to her story as an eyewitness and a primary source for the winding family history. See: Tal Ben Zvi, "But I, and I Alone, Will Tell My Story: An Interview with Nizar Hassan," *Plastica* 3 (1999), pp. 75–81 [Hebrew]; George Khleifi, "A Chronicle of Palestinian Cinema," *Theory and Criticism* 18 (2001), pp. 177–192 [Hebrew]; Haim Bresheeth, "Boundaries of Palestinian Memory: Home and Exile, Identity and Disappearance, in the New Palestinian Cinema," *Theory and Criticism* 18 (2001), pp. 77–102 [Hebrew].

27 The Palestinian population which remained in Israel after 1948 numbered some 150,000. In Jaffa, whose original population was estimated at 70,000–80,000, only 4,000–5,000 citizens remained after 1948. Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal note that Palestinians prevented from returning to their homes and land, even though they stayed within the country during the war, were officially classified as 'present-absentees'. Thus the State was able to confiscate their 'abandoned land' through the Absentees Property Law of 1950. According to one estimate, up to 40% of Arab land (some 500,000 acres) were confiscated through this law. See: Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *Palestinians: The Making of a People* (New York: Free Press, 1993). For an elaborate historical discussion, see: Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), p. 96.

28 Sarayah is a character who surfaces in Habiby's memory to remind him and reconstruct for him his lost childhood in pre-1948 Haifa and the slopes of Mt. Carmel. See: Emile Habiby, *Sarayah, Daughter of the Ghoul*.

29 Ghosts returning to the houses of absentees are also seen in Ahlam Shibli's exhibition "Wadi Saleib in Nine Volumes" (Curator: Tal Ben Zvi). For an elaborate exhibition text, see: Tal Ben Zvi, *A New Middle East: 11 Solo Exhibitions*, exh. cat. (Tel Aviv: Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2000).

30 Eitan Bar Yosef, *Haaretz*, 11 October 2001 [Hebrew].

31 The exhibition debuted in January 2003 at The Art Gallery, Kibbutz Cabri (Curator: Drora Dekel).

32 Dana Gilerman, "In the Name of the Arab Woman," *Haaretz*, Gallery Supplement, 20 May 2003 [Hebrew].

33 Roland Barthes, "The Photographic Message," in Stephen Heath (ed. and trans.), *Image, Music, Text* (New York: Hill, 1977), pp. 28–29.

34 The male figures include: Mohammad Abed Alwahab (1910), singer and composer; Ali Mahmod Taha (1902–1949), poet; Zaki Mobarack (1895–1952), writer, poet, and literary researcher; Ahmed Rami (1892–1918), poet and composer; Mohammad Mahdi El Jawaheri (1903), poet and Journalist. The female figures include: Huda Shaarawi (1879–1947), Egyptian feminist leader; May Ziadeh (1886–1941), poet and writer; Dum Kulthoum (1904–1975), singer.

35 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London & New York: Verso, 1991 [1983]).

36 For a discussion of poster art, see: Haim Maor and Tuli Bauman, "Red Flower with Green Leaves: An Interview with Artists Sulayman Mansur, Nabil Anani, Taysir Barakat, and Ibrahim Muzzayen," *Studio Art Magazine*, 11, pp. 6–13 [Hebrew].

- 37 Kandiyoti Deniz, *Women, Islam and the State* (London: Macmillan, 1991).
- 38 For a discussion of Mariam (May) Ziadeh's feminist writing, see: Mira Tzoreff, "Woman's Honor, National Honor: A Reappraisal According to the Egyptian Intellectual Mariam (May) Ziadeh," *Zmanim*, 74 (2001), pp. 56–71 [Hebrew].
- 39 Tamari and Johnson note that the body of the young metaphorical woman emerges in relation to the geographical contours depicted in painting, and especially the round hills appearing next to the woman's body in many paintings by Palestinian artists, some of them also include round fruit signifying the woman's breasts and sexuality. By substituting signs of sexuality with national attributes, the issue of the sexual body and its sexual behavior are expressed in a metaphorical, repressed manner via the broad metaphor of mother earth. Identification of the woman's body as the body of the homeland is typical of nationalist perceptions that focus on the female figure of the nation and the homeland who need protection or liberation. In such instances the homeland is perceived as a body that must be protected against violation, just like the woman's body. The body of the homeland belongs exclusively to its people, namely — members of the nation, thus the intrusion of other groups is considered a violation of the land owners' honor and an infringement of their ownership, just as the woman's violation is ostensibly a violation of the husband's honor (or the family's dignity before she is married). The perception of the homeland as a woman exemplifies the link between the female body and the national body. This pattern, which ties the notion of land (*el ard*) with the notion of honor (*el ird*) recurs in Palestinian culture throughout its various fields since 1948. For an elaboration, see: Vera Tamari and Penny Johnson, "Loss and Vision: Representations of Women in Palestinian Art under Occupation," in Annelies Moors (ed.), *Discourse and Palestine: Power, Text and Context* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1995), pp. 163–172.
- 40 With regard to the link between gender and the national struggle, Nahla Abdo asks: "What is the guarantee that the liberation of Palestinian women will be part of the major agenda of the national liberation movement after being granted independence? The question arises out of the understanding that the process of liberation and the dynamics of the movement start to challenge the monolithic conception of the nation. Women's active participation in the movement must expose and challenge the basis of the nation's imagined harmony, especially with regard to sexual relations. See: Nahla Abdo, "Women of the Intifada: Gender and National Liberation," *Race and Class*, 34 (4) (1991): 19–34.
- 41 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 128–149.
- 42 Texts operating on and into the body are clearly discernible in Jumana Emil Abboud's previous works. See Ben Zvi & Lerer 2001 (n. 7), pp. 67–84.
- 43 This sexuality is also linked with the flower, for the meaning of the word orchid in Greek is testicles, due to the form of the flower's bulbs. This fact has infused the flower with myths pertaining to fertility and mating.
- 44 Christian iconography pertaining to representations of the female body was a central theme in Emil Abboud's exhibition "Sainthood and Sanity-hood" (intended for the Heinrich Böll Foundation Gallery, Tel Aviv, but ultimately exhibited at Hagar Art Gallery, Jaffa, in December 2001). For a documentation of the exhibition and the accompanying text, see: Ben Zvi 2003 (n. 10), pp. 88–93.
- 45 G. Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art* (London: Lund Humphries, 1972).

- 46 Butler 1990 (n. 41), pp. 131-132.
- 47 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London, Boston & Henley, 1969).
- 48 Durar Bakri, a student in the Art Department, Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem.
- 49 Mona Hatoum (1952), *Measures of Distance*, 1988. The 15-minute video work projects twelve photographs of her mother taking a shower in the bathroom of their family home in Lebanon. Excerpts of letters written by the mother (in her handwriting, in Arabic script), are screened on the mother's naked body, while her daughter reads the letters (in English translation) in voice-over. In addition to the letter reading, spontaneous mother-daughter conversations in Arabic about sexuality, familial relations and childhood experiences are heard in the background. The mother's nude photographs and the mother-daughter conversations were photographed and taped in Beirut, in the father's absence. For further reading, see: Michael Archer et al., *Mona Hatoum* (London: Phaidon Press, 1997).
- 50 Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001), p. 127.
- 51 In "Coming to Writing" (1976) Helene Cixous identifies the streams of mother's milk flowing from the breasts as white ink which enables writing against the current, a non-linear writing that celebrates its linguistic otherness. See: Helene Cixous, *Coming to Writing and Other Essays* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991).
- 52 From a conversation with Roni Halpern, 26 October 2005.
- 53 The Barbur neighborhood in Acre numbers 130 Arab Palestinian residents who have lived there since 1948. The neighborhood is "unrecognized" and its inhabitants are denied municipal services. It took a lengthy struggle before the Acre Municipality connected the neighborhood to the electricity grid in 2003. The background to Barbur's neglect is an ongoing struggle against the residents in the desire to evacuate them and transform the neighborhood area into a green area and railway siding. For a discussion of the objection to the municipal scheme proposed for the neighborhood, see: www.mahsom.com, 25 May 2005 [Hebrew].
- 54 Blackness as a visual category was a major theme in the exhibition "Mother Tongue" (curator: Tal Ben Zvi) at Mishkan Le'Omanut, Museum of Art, Ein Harod, 2002. The exhibition dealt with representations of Mizrahi Jewish identities in the work of 22 artists, most of them born in Israel, whose parents' migration from Arab-Muslim countries to Israel is integral to the definition of their identities. The chapter "Blackness: Recoding Mizrahiness" explored references to Black identity in general, and African-American identity in particular, from Mizrahi perspectives in the work of Zamir Shatz, Neta Harari Navon, Tal Matzliah, Eli Petel, and Miriam Cabessa. See: Tal Ben Zvi, "Deferring Language as a Theme in the Work of Mizrahi Artists," in *Eastern Appearance: A Present that Stirs in the Thickets of Its Arab Past*, ed.: Yigal Nizri (Tel Aviv: Babel, 2004), pp. 107-128.
- 55 For further discussion of the borderlines and intermediate realms of white culture/black culture, see: Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992); Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Mask* (New York: Grove Press, 1967 [1952]).
- 56 See Naficy 2001 (n. 50), pp. 124-125.

CVs

Tal Ben Zvi

1966 Born in Israel; lives in Tel Aviv. **1998–2001** Curator of Heinrich Böll Foundation, Tel Aviv. **2001–2003** Curator of Hagar Art Gallery, Jaffa.

A lecturer at Camera Obscura School of Visual Art, Tel Aviv, and the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem. Holds a Masters degree from Tel Aviv University (her thesis was titled: "Between Nation and Gender: The Representation of the Female Body in Palestinian Art"). Currently completing her doctoral thesis at Tel Aviv University on "Nakba Representations in Contemporary Palestinian Art."

Publications: **2006** Tal Ben Zvi (ed.), **Biographies: Six Solo Exhibitions at Hagar Art Gallery** (Jaffa: Hagar Association). **2005** Tal Ben Zvi (ed.), **Khilwe: Samira Wahbi** (Jaffa: Hagar Association). **2004** Tal Ben Zvi, "Mother Tongue", exh. cat., in Yigal Nizri (ed.), *Eastern Appearance / Mother Tongue: A Present that Stirs in the Thickets of Its Arab Past* (Tel Aviv: Babel). **2003** Tal Ben Zvi and Moran Shoub (eds.), **Brunette: Sixteen Solo Exhibitions at Heinrich Böll Foundation**, Tel Aviv (Tel Aviv: Babel). **2001** Tal Ben Zvi and Yael Lerer (eds.), **Self-Portrait: Palestinian Women's Arts** (Tel Aviv: Andalus). **2000** Tal Ben Zvi (ed.), **New Middle East: Eleven Exhibitions, 1998–1999, at Heinrich Böll Foundation**, Tel Aviv (Jaffa: Hagar Association). **1999** Tal Ben Zvi, "But I, and I Alone, Will Tell My Story: An Interview with Nizar Hassan," *Plastica* 3, pp. 75–81 [Hebrew]; Tal Ben Zvi, "The IDF (Galei Zahal) Broadcasting from the Field," *Studio* 100 (Jan.–Feb.), p. 26 [Hebrew]. **1998** Tal Ben Zvi, "The Right of Return," *Plastica* 2, pp. 102–112 [Hebrew]; Tal Ben Zvi, "Palestin(a): Palestinian Women's Art," *Maariv*, Jewish New Year Supplement, p. 35 [Hebrew].

Ashraf Fawakhry

1974 Born in the village of Mazra'a; lives and works in Haifa. **1992–1996** Studied art, The Neri Bloomfield Wizo Academy of Design & Education, Haifa; studied art, The Western Galilee College.

Solo Exhibitions: **2003** *Ikhtilal*, Hagar Art Gallery, Jaffa; *Ikhtilal*, The Art Gallery, Kibbutz Cabri. **2001** *Line 13*, Haifa Museum of Art. **2000** *Made in Palestine*, El Kahif Gallery, Bethlehem. **1999** *Made in Palestine*, Arts and Crafts Village, Gaza. **1998** *I am a Donkey*, International Art Space, Haifa; *I am a Donkey*, Al-Wasiti Art Center, Jerusalem. **1997** *I am a Donkey*, The Art Gallery, Kibbutz Cabri.

Group Exhibitions: **2005** *Made in Palestine*, SomArts Cultural Center, San Francisco, USA; **Shame**, Tamra Gallery, Tamra. **2004** *Identites*, Espace Culture, Marseille, France; **Shame**, The Israeli Center for Digital Art, Holon. **2003** *Made in Palestine*, The Station Museum, Houston, Texas, USA; **Black & White**, Beit Hagefen, The Arab-Jewish Center, Haifa. **2002** *Marshim-Identitások*, National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary; **The Voice of Ishmael**, The Municipal Gallery, Rehovot; **AwAw**, AM Qattan Foundation, Ramallah. **2001** *Line 13*, Tel Aviv Cinematheque; **Matrimony**, Beit Hagefen, The Arab-Jewish Center, Haifa. **2000** *Between the Mountain and the Sea*, Haifa City Museum; **Childhood**, Beit Hagefen, The Arab-Jewish Center, Haifa; **Art Aside**, Limbus Gallery, Tel Aviv; **Art Aside**, The Art Gallery, Kibbutz Cabri; **Heart Operation**, AM Qattan Foundation, Ramallah. **1999** **Top 2000**, Beit Hagefen, The Arab-Jewish Center, Haifa; **Story Time**, Liverpool, UK.

Sami Bukhari

1964 Born in Jaffa; lives and works in Jaffa. **1986–1990** Studied photography at the Department of Visual Communications, Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Expression Plastique, Marseilles. **1990–1992** Studied sculpture at the Department of Art, Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Expression Plastique, Marseilles.

Solo Exhibitions: **2003 A House in Jaffa**, Architect's House, Jaffa. **2002 Still Blood**, The French Institute, Tel Aviv; **Panorama**, Hagar Art Gallery, Jaffa. **1996 Photographs and Sculptures**, Tova Osman Gallery, Tel Aviv. **1995 Situations at Arm's Length**, photographs, The Photography Department Gallery, Hamidrasha School of Art, Ramat Hasharon. **1993 Nature Morte**, photographs, Théâtre de la Minoterie, Marseilles, France.

Group Exhibitions: **2005 Land, Peoples and Identities**, ElKahf Gallery, Bethlehem. **2001 Mechanical Wind Breaking Devices**, The Municipal Gallery, Kfar Saba. **2000 State of Affairs**, The New Art Workshop, Ramat Eliyahu, Rishon Lezion; **To All Appearances**, The Yavneh Art Workshop; **The National Exhibition of Arab Artists 2000**, Beit Hagefen, The Arab-Jewish Center, Haifa. **1999 Top 2000**, Beit Hagefen, The Arab-Jewish Center, Haifa; The Art Gallery, Um el-Fahem; **Four at Hamumche**, Hamumche Gallery, Tel Aviv; **Letters etc.**, Beit Hagefen, The Arab-Jewish Center, Haifa; **Identity, Contemplation and Vision**, traveling exhibition, USA. **1998 Photographs**, Tova Osman Gallery, Tel Aviv; **The Art of Arab Calligraphy**, Eretz-Israel Museum, Tel Aviv. **1997 Identity, Contemplation and Vision**, Studio Oman Gallery, Hadera. **1996 Another Embroidery**, The Art Gallery, Um el-Fahem.

Anisa Ashkar

1979 Born in Acre; lives and works in Acre. **1998–2000** Studied art, The Western Galilee College. **2001** BFA, Hamidrasha School of Art, Beit Berl College, Kalmaniya.

Solo Exhibitions: **2004 Me and Klee Paint**, Beit Berl College, Kalmaniya; **Ummi**, Seraya, Arab-Jewish Theater, Jaffa; **The Frogwoman**, Bamat Meizag, Performance Art Platform, Tel Aviv; **Untitled (Barbur 24000)**, Acre Theater. **2003 Barbur Aswad**, Hagar Art Gallery, Jaffa.

Group Exhibitions: **2005 Kodra**, Salonica, Greece; **X Territory**, The Municipal Gallery, Rehovot; **Play-Ground**, Beit Hagefen, The Arab-Jewish Center, Haifa. **2004 Light & Shade**, Beit Hagefen, The Arab-Jewish Center Haifa; **Connected Vessels / El-Awani El-Mustatricha**, The Acco Festival of Alternative Theater, Acre; **Last Dance**, as part of "Omanut Haaretz" Festival, Reading Power Station Compound, Tel Aviv.

Reida Adon

1973 Born in Acre; lives and works in Jerusalem. **2000** The Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance, Jerusalem. **2001** BFA, Department of Fine Art, Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem. **2002–2003** Voice Training, School of Visual Arts, Jerusalem.

Selected Exhibitions: **2003 House**, video, as part of the Border Line project by the Salamanca Group, Tower of David Museum, Jerusalem; **In House**, The Art Gallery, Um el-Fahem; **Artik 5: America-Israel (Sharet) Cultural Foundation Winners exhibition**, The Museum of Israeli Art, Ramat Gan; **2002 Pasateen**, Hagar Art Gallery, Jaffa (solo exhibition). **2001 Pasateen**, solo performance, The Acco Festival of Alternative Israeli Theater, Acre. **2000 Contemporary Jewish-Arabic-Israeli Art**, The Villa Center for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv. **1998 Hamsa**, Amalia Arbel Gallery, Tel Aviv. **1996 Two Sided Mirror**, The Artists House, Tel Aviv.

Jumana Emil Abboud

1971 Born in Shefa Amer, Galilee; lives and works in Jerusalem. **1996** BFA, Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem. **1997–1999** Post-graduate studies in the Young Artists Program, Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem.

Solo Exhibitions: **2004** *If I Could Stitch Your Tongue to My Bed*, performance, Tel Aviv. **2002** *Something to Confuse a Thief in the Dark*, Forum Schlossplatz Aarau, Switzerland; *Déjà Vu*, Hagar Art Gallery, Jaffa. **2001** *Sainthood & Sanity Hood*, Hagar Art Gallery, Jaffa. **1999** *Seven Days*, Herzliya Museum of Art, Herzliya. **1998** *Rapunzelina*, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Tel Aviv.

Selected Group Exhibitions: **2005** *The Seventh International Sharjah Biennial*, United Arab Emirates. **2004** *Shame*, The Israeli Center for Digital Art, Holon; *Unscene*, Stephen Lawrence Gallery, The University of Greenwich, London. **2003** *DisORIENTATION: Contemporary Arab Art from the Middle East*, The House of World Cultures, Berlin. **2000** *The Last Drawing of the Century*, Zerynthia, Center for Contemporary Art, Rome; *Havana International Biennial*, Cuba. **1999** *Mediterranean Biennial for Young Artists*, Rome; *Gateway*, National Gallery of Fine Arts, Amman; *Palestinian Artists Today*, Drammens Museum, Norway; *Murals in the City*, Jericho Winter Festival, Jericho. **1998** *Al-Nakba: Fifty Years of Arab Persecution*, Cultural Center of Art, Nazareth; *Palestin(a): Eight Woman Artists*, Al-Wasiti Art Center, Jerusalem; Ami Steinitz Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv.

Ahlam Jomah

1965 Born in Taibe; lives and works in Taibe. **2002** BFA, Hamidrasha School of Art, Beit Berl College, Kalmaniyah.

Selected Exhibitions: **2005** *Female Artists*, Eshkol Payis, Tamra; *Recipients of the Mayor's Prize exhibition*, Al Hatsuk Gallery, Natanya (solo exhibition). **2004** *Venus at the Hall*, Heikhal Hatarbut Gallery, Natanya; *Walls and Women Artists*, Heikhal Hatarbut Gallery, Natanya; *Back to the Future*, Al Hatsuk Gallery, Natanya; *Fragments: Mosaics and Reality*, Time for Art, Israeli Art Center, Tel Aviv. **2003** *In House*, Art Gallery, Um el-Fahem; *Tommema (Hide & Seek)*, Hagar Art Gallery, Jaffa (solo exhibition); *Artist Teachers*, Al Hatsuk Gallery, Natanya.

Ahlam Shibli is a Palestinian artist, born in the village 'Arab al-Shibli in the Galilee, presently living in Haifa. Ahlam Shibli realizes her works from a place where her own biography intersects with the history of the Palestinian people that came under Israeli rule in 1948. She gets involved with issues and situations that deeply matter to her and about which she has a reliable inside knowledge.

From **1999** to **2005**, she has realized several major series of photographs "*Wadi Saleib in Nine Volumes*", "*Horse Race in Jericho*", "*Voyage in Mt. Tabor*", "*Unrecognized*", "*Self Portrait*", "*Positioning*", "*Five Senses*", "*Goter*", "*Refuge in the Frost*" and "*Where are you going?*" which have been shown at museums and galleries in Europe and Asia. Recently, she participated among others in the following exhibitions: **Non-sect/radical: Contemporary Photography III** at Yokohama Museum of Art in Yokohama, Japan; **Lost Time** at Ikon Gallery in Birmingham, UK; **Staying or Leaving** at Umjetni kom paviljonu in Zagreb, Croatia, and Camera Austria / Kunsthaus Graz in Graz, Austria; **Regards Des Photographes Arabes Contemporains** at Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, France; **Istanbul – The 9th International Istanbul Biennial** in Turkey; **The Pantagruel Syndrome**, T1 Turin Triennial, Italy.

List of Works

Ahlam Shibli pp. 60–69

p. 60 Untitled, from "Positioning (Durban, South Africa)," 2001, color photograph, 50x70 cm.

p. 61 Untitled, from "Positioning (Durban, South Africa)," 2001, color photograph, 50x70 cm.

p. 62 Untitled, from "Horse Race in Jericho," 1997, b/w photograph, 50x70 cm.

p. 63 Untitled, from "Horse Race in Jericho," 1997, b/w photograph, 50x70 cm.

p. 64 Untitled, from "Positioning (Magdal Shams, the Occupied Golan Heights)," 2001, color photograph, 50x70 cm.

p. 65 Untitled, from "Positioning (Brazil)," 2001, color photograph, 50x70 cm.

p. 66 Untitled, from "Positioning (Tel Aviv University)," 2001, b/w photograph, 50x70 cm.

p. 67 Untitled, from "Positioning (Arab al-Shibli)," 2001, b/w photograph, 50x70 cm.

p. 68 Untitled, from "Positioning (Haifa)," 1996, color photograph, 30x40 cm.

p. 69 Untitled, from "Positioning (Haifa)," 1996, color photograph, 30x40 cm.

Sami Bukhari pp. 72–79

pp. 72–73 Panorama (Wild Boar), 2002, color photographs, 60x90 cm.

pp. 74–75 Panorama (a series of 13 color photographs, 360 degrees view of the city of Jaffa), 2002, 15x22 cm.

pp. 76–77 Panorama (Yefet Street, al-Ajami and Jebalya neighborhoods), 2002, color print on tarpaulin, 1.5x10 m.

pp. 78–79 Panorama (a series of 14 color photographs, the Old Cemetery al-Kazachana), 2002, 15x22 cm.

Reida Adon pp. 82–88

pp. 82–83, 88 Pasateen-Lifta, 2002, video, 12 min., loop

pp. 84–87 Pasateen-Lifta, 2002, video, 8 min., loop

Ashraf Fawakhry pp. 94–101

pp. 94–97 Ikhtilal (Unsteadiness), 2002, video installation, 1 min., loop

p. 98 Ikhtilal (Unsteadiness), 2002, mixed media

p. 99 Ikhtilal (Unsteadiness), 2002, mixed media on plywood

pp. 100–101 Ikhtilal (Unsteadiness), 2002, b/w photographs

Ahlam Jomah pp. 104–109

p. 104 Tommema (Hide & Seek), 2003, general view

p. 105 Zaki Mobarack, 1895–1952, Writer, Poet, Researcher, 1995, reproduction from *The Arab Youth Encyclopedia*

p. 105 Oum Kulthoum, 1898–1975, Singer, 1995, reproduction from *The Arab Youth Encyclopedia*

pp. 106–107 Tommema (Hide & Seek), 2003, black ink on paper, 43x30 cm.

p. 108 Huda Shaarawi, 1879–1947, Egyptian Feminist Leader, 1995, reproduction from *The Arab Youth Encyclopedia*

p. 108 Mohammad Mahdi El Jawaheri, 1903, Poet and Journalist, 1995, reproduction from *The Arab Youth Encyclopedia*

p. 109 Ahmed Rami, 1892–1981, Poet and Composer, 1995, reproduction from *The Arab Youth Encyclopedia*

p. 109 May Ziadeh, 1886–1941, Poet and Writer, 1995, reproduction from *The Arab Youth Encyclopedia*

Jumana Emil Abboud pp. 112–119

Untitled, 2002, from the exhibition "Dèjà Vu", 2002, mixed media on paper

Anisa Ashkar pp. 122–131

pp. 122–123 Barbur Aswad, 2003, wall pieces, balcony of Hagar Art Gallery, Jaffa

pp. 124–127 Barbur Aswad, 2003, performance, with Durar Bachri

p. 128 Barbur Aswad (I am a woman, why?), 2003, color photograph

p. 129 Barbur Aswad (Take care of yourself), 2003, color photograph

p. 130 Barbur Aswad (The land belongs to those who respect it), 2003, color photograph

p. 131 Barbur Aswad (Note: I am a free Arab Woman), 2003, color photograph

Photograph of Anisa Ashkar: Ron Amir

Performance: Durar Bakri

Video photography: Eliav Lilty

Video editing: Zamir Shatz