

## **Made in Palestine**

May 3 through October 23, 2003.

### **Introduction**

The exhibition **Made in Palestine** chronicles the modern history of the Palestinian people from *Al Nakba* (the Catastrophe of 1948) to the present day. It gives a voice to a people struggling to keep their identity in the face of terrible odds—a brutal occupation by Israel punctuated by daily violence and daily sorrow. The exhibition reveals with powerful clarity the Palestinian side of the story. What is at stake here is of tremendous importance. The lives as well as the traditions and culture of an entire indigenous population are in grave danger of being extinguished.

Each of the twenty-three artists in the exhibit focuses on a telling aspect of the great calamity which has befallen the Palestinian people. A major theme is the wonton destruction of the villages and the forced relocation of the inhabitants into refugee camps. Emily Jacir makes this tragedy come alive through the metaphor of a life-sized United Nations refugee tent, *Memorial to 418 Palestinian Villages which were Destroyed, Depopulated, and Occupied by Israel in 1948*, which has embroidered on it the names of the villages razed to the ground during the Nakba and its aftermath. In his monumental canvas, John Halaka memorializes the more than seven-hundred thousand Palestinian men, women, and children driven into exile in 1948. The black, shadow-like dresses by Mary Tuma as well as the ceramic sacks by Mervat Essa dramatically remind us of the dispossessed. In Tyseer Barakat's installation, we follow the life of his father from the time before he was expelled from his home to his death in a refugee camp. His second installation is a tragic portrait of his mother.

Some of the artists make vivid the destruction wreaked by the Israeli military occupation. Rula Halawani's powerful photographs show Israeli tanks ravaging parts of Ramallah. Muhammad Abu Sall's small paintings document with terrifying reality the actual approach of an Israeli tank in his neighborhood, destroying everything in its path. Abdel Rahman Al Muzayen's superb pen and ink drawings tell the sorrowful story of the recent destruction of the refugee camp in Jenin. Several of Abdul Hay Mussalam's relief paintings commemorate the 1982 massacre of women and children in the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps in Beirut, Lebanon. There is a poignant installation by Vera Tamari which sets before us the photograph of a great old olive tree and below it hundreds of small ceramic trees, representing the destruction by the Israeli occupiers of this staple food source that has traditionally sustained the Palestinian people. In her extraordinary installation, *Blindfolded History*, Rana Bishara summarizes the fifty-five years of terror and destruction.

Life in the refugee camps, the cities of the West Bank, and Gaza has become intolerable because of increasing Israeli military pressure, the establishment of new Israeli settlements, the Apartheid wall that Israel is building, and the pervasive unemployment and poverty resulting from the occupation. Popular resistance in one form or another is inevitable. If the Palestinians did not resist the occupation, their trials and agony would be unknown to the world. By resisting they have become the target of two of the world's most powerful military forces, Israel and the United States.

The painful daily experiences of the Palestinians who are harassed and detained at the ubiquitous military checkpoints provide the subject of Emily Jacir's video installation. Another work of Jacir's is a collaboration with Anton Sinkewich: it is a barrier, both physical and intellectual, made of serious books about Palestine by Palestinians. Two artists focus on the courageous resistance of the Palestinian youth to the occupation. Raji Cook's work is an ammunition box filled with stones, a meager weapon given the technologically sophisticated arms of the Israeli army. Nida Sinnokrot's rubber-coated rocks conjure up the rubber-tipped bullets that the Israeli soldiers use to subdue or kill rock throwing Palestinian children. His two other remarkable works deal with issues of propaganda and surveillance.

In the United States, pro-Israeli news and propaganda is pervasive. Palestinians are usually portrayed as terrorists. Retaliation against Israeli civilians is front-page national news, but the US media barely acknowledges the Palestinian civilians that are killed and arrested everyday—their children murdered or crippled, their homes desecrated and destroyed.

To several of the artists, the subject of the martyrs is an all-important topic. A true martyr is anyone who gives his life in service of his people, including the rock-throwing children and suicide bombers that attack Israeli civilians. In addition, anyone senselessly or deliberately murdered by the Israelis is called a martyr, but in an honorific sense. Noel Jabbour evokes our compassion with her striking portraits of families who have lost a loved one. We are assailed on the other hand by Jawad Ibrahim's horrific images of people already martyred. There is one grim painting by Adnan Yahya that caricatures the President of Israel as he is torturing a Palestinian child. The frame bears the letters USA, implicating the United States government in the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

The first thirteen Palestinians who were martyred in the current Intifada, all Israeli citizens, are memorialized in Ashraf Fawakhry's double portrait of a young rock thrower over a table with thirteen pierced hearts. His marvelous donkey images are unforgettable symbols of the persistence of the Palestinian people in their quest to survive. The roses in Suleiman Mansour's monumental installation *Garden of Hope* pay homage to the heroic of the martyrs as the foundation of independent Palestine. A second work by this great artist consists of six life-sized earthen images of Ismael, the traditional ancestor of the Palestinian people, in a transitory state between death and rebirth. The work expresses the promise of the rebirth of Palestine from the earth itself.

A number of works give us a glimpse into the thinking and emotions of artists imprisoned under the worst possible conditions in Israeli jails and prisons. The works by Muhammad Rakouie and Zuhdi Al Adawi, done in prison, prove that they have not been cowed by their long and brutal incarceration. Hani Zurob, a professional artist imprisoned but never charged, makes known the isolation and humiliation of his experience.

Samia Halaby's extraordinary abstract painting symbolizes the rebirth of Jerusalem as the restored Palestinian capitol. This and her other masterful paintings point to a time when her

**people will be free to express the beauty that is within them and their culture.**

**The tour de force in the exhibition is the mural-sized work by Mustafa Al Hallaj that summarizes the history of the Palestinian people from the ancient myths to their present tragic struggle.**

**Made in Palestine exhibits a variety of artistic methods, materials, and techniques. Along with the fine art, the exhibition features distinguished poetry by Mahmoud Darwish, Natalie Handal, and Fadwa Tuqan which further reveals the intimate, human side of the Palestinian people. The documentary films, such as *Jenin, Jenin* by Mohammad Bakri, *Gaza Strip* by James Longly, *Al Sabbar* by Patrick Bürge, and *Nightfall* by Mohamed Soueid, and *the Green Bird*, by Liana Badr, expose the visitor to the everyday horror of the Israeli occupation.**

**In the articles that follow, Tarif Abboushi writes a short, pithy history of the Palestinian determination to be free and exposes the Israeli falsehoods that justify the occupation of the land of Palestine. Tex Kerschen, one of the three curators of the exhibit, supplies us with first-hand information about his experiences in Palestine, an appraisal of each artist's works, and an account of the difficulties that the curators had in organizing the exhibition. Salwa Mikdadi-Nashashibi, a distinguished curator of modern Arab and Near Eastern art, presents us with a scholarly history of contemporary Palestinian art. Allan Antliff discusses the current crisis of occupation in relationship to the paintings of Samia Halaby. Ileana Marcoulesco gives an in depth analysis of the works in the exhibit and provides a critical appraisal of the exhibition as a whole. Santiago Nasar examines the nightmare as a metaphor for the Palestinian's experience in the occupied homeland.**

**During November and December of 2002, Gabriel Delgado, Tex Kerschen, and I visited artists in refugee camps, towns and cities in the West Bank, Israel, Gaza, Syria, and Jordan. We were committed to mounting an exhibition that allowed these artists to tell their "truths." We were inspired by the writings of Edward Said and Noam Chomsky. We initially became aware of Palestinian artists working in the United States, Europe and the Near East thanks to Gabriel Delgado's extensive internet search for relevant information about their work. Samia Halaby made her important art library available to us and let us read the text of her remarkable history of modern Palestinian art in advance of its publication. Samia Halaby also accompanied us to Palestine. This exhibition could not have happened without her. Emily Jacir gave us a critical list of artists and also introduced us to artists in New York and in the West Bank. Raji Cook, a renowned graphic designer as well as a fine artist, designed this book. It is our conviction that the American public deserves to be made aware of Palestinian art as a profound manifestation of the humanity of the Palestinian people.**

**This exhibition is dedicated to Mustafa Al Hallaj, who passed away in December, 2002. He opened his home and studio in Damascus to us, and showed us decades worth of his work. A tremendously talented artist, with a truly generous spirit and a far-reaching mind, he will be remembered.**

**James Harithas**

[Preface... Gabriel Delgado, James Harithas, Tex Kerschen](#)

[Introduction, James Harithas, Director, Station](#)  
[A Land Without a People...Tarif Abboushi](#)  
[Allan Antliff](#)  
[Palestinian Artists Working Under Siege... Salwa Mikdadi-Nashashibi](#)  
[Ileana Marcoulesco](#)  
[The Stuff of Nightmares... Santiago Nasar](#)  
[Made In Palestine... Tex Kerschen](#)

## **ARTISTS:**

[Zuhdi Al-Adawi](#)  
[Tyseer Barakat](#)  
[Rana Bishara](#)  
[Rajie Cook](#)  
[Mervat Essa](#)  
[Ashraf Fawakhry](#)  
[Samia Halaby](#)  
[John Halaka](#)  
[Rula Halawani](#)  
[Mustafa Al Hallaj](#)  
[Jawad Ibrahim](#)  
[Noel Jabbour](#)  
[Emily Jacir](#)  
[Suleiman Mansour](#)  
[Abdul Hay Mussalam](#)  
[Abdel Rahmen Al Muzayen](#)  
[Muhammad Rakouie](#)  
[Mohammad Abu Sall](#)  
[Nida Sinnokrot](#)  
[Vera Tamari](#)  
[Mary Tuma](#)  
[Adnan Yahya](#)  
[Hani Zurob](#)

## **POETRY**

[Nathalie Handal](#)  
[Mahmoud Darwish](#)  
[Fadwa Tuqwan](#)