
Between Exits: Paintings by Hani Zurob

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Review by Richard M. Sanchez



Following the unfolding of a decade of art produced by Hani Zurob, this chronicle follows his shuttling exile from his home studio in Ramallah which he left in 2006 to his arrival and practice in Paris. The publication presents a close observation of the evolution of Zurob's paintings between 2002 and 2012, amongst a backdrop of sociopolitical and cultural forces. Attempting to trace the stellated growth of the artist in accord with his lived experiences at home and in exile, the book reveals a body of work created through a flux of changing periods.

Zurob's practice reveals an oeuvre of evolving approaches of understanding the events experienced that are not fixed in time, but fleeting from one subject to the other. Between figuration and abstraction, examining and questioning the conflicted Palestinian identity throughout an excavation of memories and an identification of the self, and always the artist looking back, activating past events and classifying them in order to understand a particular moment. Zurob belongs to the first generation of leading Palestinian artists whose work has evolved with the coming of the twenty-first century, as well as being at the vanguard of significant contributions to a contemporary Arab aesthetic, a special place in a developing canon.

Recalling the title *Between Exits* is the in-between of exiles, one of memory, friends, and family, while the other, his place of residence in Paris, where he continues to pursue his career as an artist. With no real discursive place to call home, you can identify a strong notion of displacement and

simply being 'political', another allegory for another exile escaping political upheaval, would only be a superficial understanding. Foremost is a probing for an expression of the collective identity, shared amongst all Palestinians and for his unique place within that brocade. A portrait of the experience of the self in the present and a Palestinian other of memory, in an interchanging manner.

By bringing these worlds together, Zurob's paintings unveil a peculiar representation of space. Space that has either been obscured by paint and tar, or compressed and confined, becoming flat and unreal. Space identified through the distance in a mirror. An achievement of abstraction through the immersion of what it means to be displaced by exile., 'Here is elsewhere' with the passage of time, the evolution of each us singly, Zurob captures his struggle for understanding, displacement, nostalgia, trauma, life. And yes, he is certainly a Palestinian, one of a subject people fighting for independence, but he is also Zurob the painter finding his way into and out of the smeary paint and pictorial space of each and every work.

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Kamal Boullata, Between Exits: Paintings by Hani Zurob, (Black Dog Publishing, 2013)
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