BASHIR MAKHOUL AISSA DEEBI

OTHERWISE OCCUPIED

29 MAY–30 JUNE 2013
VENICE BIENNALE 2013
55TH INTERNATIONAL ART
EXHIBITION

Edited by Ryan Bishop and Gordon Hon

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29 May–30 June 2013 Venice Biennale 2013
55th International Art Exhibition

Edited by Ryan Bishop and Gordon Hon

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Al Hoash

OTHERWISE OCCUPIED:

BRUCE W. FERGUSON

Just to be clear: this installation is the Not-The-Palestinian Pavilion. It is not an exhibition of "Palestinian art", although the two artworks are made and presented by artists who are Palestinian by birth, and each of the artists remains emotionally and intellectually attached to his own, individual, idea of that place. The exhibition is neither entirely official nor unofficial. The exhibition is "affiliated" with the larger Venice Biennale project, but it has a quasi-legitimate standing that hasn't been sanctioned by any state, least of all by a state which itself has no national standing. The exhibition is without pavilion; without country; without normative status. The exhibition is then meant to reside in spaces between and among definitions of easy identity and is not meant to contribute to regularized formations or manifestations of definitive categories. It is an intervention into traditional classification systems in order to stretch a dialogue about identity, and its politics and its art that is often frozen in a set of binary oppositions.i In our press release we say, "Both artists were born inside the 1948 borders, in the margins of another state in their homeland and outside the occupied West Bank and the centers of contemporary Palestinian culture and have emigrated to become citizens of other states operating in a globalised art world. They still think of themselves as Palestinians and are in continuous search of new ways to imagine the nation from a distance."

But of course, thinking of themselves as occupying a place, in Benedict Anderson's famous phrase, of "imagined communities" and what they are and how they are perceived is just the beginning of the many and complex and even contradictory ways in which they themselves are actually, and are not actually, "real." Or at the very least, both artists are indivisible from the names the "real" takes or are given and the ways in which it is performed in both language and culture. In other words, there are many, many Palestines as well as many, many resident and migrant versions of them. As Rimbaud said so eloquently and famously "Je est un autre," or, as Sartre, said (in translation) similarly, "I am what I am not. I am not what I am." These are synoptic sayings that understand how we are in and of the world complexly. The artists and the art they make are both constitutive of reality and constituted by it and are both always in a historically specific time. The artists and the art here, then, are not representative of anything explicitly referential in a sense, but of themselves, and that is already an amalgam of identities and characteristics to think through and be expressed, and recognized or misinterpreted. But, of course, the artists are both more and less than their subjective desires and personal histories as they are both, like the artworks, symptomatic and also diagnostic of any cultural moment as their beings – the human and the made object - are also formed through and in society at a particular moment.

In short the artists are, as is the art, provisional at best, like all of us - unstable and always inaugurating and negotiating themselves dynamically over and over. They have no inherent traits and they are always in quest of the next best provisional definition. They oscillate between and amongst their imagined own sense of self and society's imagined sense of them, sometimes in correspondence and sometimes in dispute or dysfunction in the way that identities and the identities of works of art do.

Clearly, our pronouncement in the press release, although chronologically and statistically accurate, is, of course, the kind of extreme absurdity that emerges for some "Palestinians" or any oppressed peoples, often and fatefully. In this case it is deliberately due, amongst other things, to the ongoing massive injustices and inequalities imposed by the illegal presence of Israel and its lethal so-called "defense" forces. Today, in other words, for such people as Bashir Makhoul and Aissa Deebi, the artists in *Otherwise Occupied*, how possible is it to be OF a place or even FROM a place that is, in effect, now as imaginary to them, or more so, as it is real? The most recent pernicious winds of media ideology – the rhetorical pressures of a romantic Zionism - have almost entirely eroded a rich historical story to make way for a fiction or a fairy tale told and retold by the imperial exaggerations of the paranoid occupier. Palestine, under various names, was a rich and robust space, a place, a home, a history – a geo-image - which was occupied complexly for over 3000 years of recorded history before it became the distorted space it is today, now forced to mirror the displaced hatred that compels its neighbor's hysterical grotesquerie of power and rights. Palestine is now an endless passage of grief, its land and people uprooted and dispersed, like an ancient olive grove bulldozed over callously without moral guidance and therefore without fear of consequence.

How does one deal with the insidiousness of living hampered by a rogue country that constantly rattles the nuclear sword of annihilation in the world's face (and often obeys whims to create pre-emptive strikes like Syria in 2007)? How does this unbearable "chained flesh" find dignity under such intimidation? How does one express the inexpressible?ii For an artist today, though, the question, more importantly, is how to get beyond the all-too-evident representations of repression, violence and injustice? Of course, these questions are all now legendarily known but seem somehow exhausted even to empathetic addressees. The iconoclash, to use Bruno Latour's useful term, diametrically produces a mirror-image of the asymmetry of the political two-state solution and thus, while stating the issues of searing brutality, oppositionally and vividly often, the images of the "occupation" now seem to have difficulty producing a new state of reflection.

Clearly, the imaginary is the place that people without human justice seek. The imaginary is the only state that can't be violated with strip searches or endless terrorization, nor can it be rendered inaccessible by zealous fundamentalist stupidities or the impossible bureaucratic or militaristic idiocies of fanatics. Or even if the imaginary is pornographic in these ways, it doesn't destroy lives from its cognitive location. It can be a place of refuge or a place to plan the future from. The imaginary is the rebellious utopian-cum-projected space that still exists always, and always will, in the future: the only place in which artists and revolutionaries and activists and human rights advocates can hold on to, however precariously, particularly against any "real" narratives of vice triumphant. A kind of ur-Utopia exists in the desires of the imaginary despite the torturous environment that looms nearby in fences and towers and barbed wire.

Art shares this utopian impulse of the imaginary, as probably it is the one other space that is always in crisis, by definition, or in the stage of construction as a process as it redefines itself and its roles constantly. If utopia is primarily a process – a sense of the possible or the hopeful at the very least - we can see that art is equally imprudent and, importantly, unregulated. Likewise, there is probably a fundamentally romantic reason that it is artists who often feel the most contempt for those in power and even more so for those who misuse it. Art's reputation, well-deserved at certain moments, acts as THE great mythic narrative force for freedom in the modern period. From the role of institutional handmaiden of the wealthy and the religious centuries ago, art has, in the last century, become a powerful forbearing industry that represents the rhetoric of freedom over

Aissa Deebi, *The Trail*, 15 min 2 channel video installation 2013

repression, expression over suppression and a counter force to the large and small daily injustices within overly-governed lives.

Regardless of the fate of the twentieth century *avant garde's* eventual absorption into, and embrace by, mainstream media processes, art seems to remain, for many, the fabled – the imaginary - space of an individual's rights, particularly when the state deliberately and routinely suffocates public discourse, as it does almost everywhere. Insecure authorities realize that art seems to have a power far beyond the actual and legal power of any individual artist whose citizenship, or even life, is always just as vulnerable as anyone else's to authoritarian commands. And as acts of the imagination share utopian roots, if nothing else, artists are often, at the very least, at the forefront of the renunciation of past values. They are deeply invested in art's parable of social engagement for change. Icons are understood as potent forces and even today, "proper" iconography (i.e. image writing) is still of great import to institutions of power. Putin's fear of Pussy Riot is the pure raw evidence of attempts to deny the authority of non-regulated, non-institutionalized fields of conviction and inquiry; namely art and imagination. Artists undermine the efficiency of state propaganda everywhere, which is why Plato banished poets from his Republic.

All art would seem to have this sense of being in and of the world in this Mobius strip way of both prescience and blindness - factual and fictional – describing both what is there accurately and offering a displacement from it simultaneously. If it might be said that all contemporary art is about trauma of some sort, it will never be a perfect offering but a gift nevertheless, to use a Leonard Cohen's insight.

But to be consequential today, art's assertions cannot be emancipatory in the way that the historic *avant-garde* made claims for art, but they will be utopian in the sense of "completely new sets of objects" (Wallace Stevens). The question in an exhibition is how to effect this displacement in a positive sense. Both the artists in this exhibition know that images of defiance are actually acceptable – even embraced - as metaphor or icon. This was the lesson from an *avant-garde* committed to deconstruction and then discouragingly embraced by its very subjects of discontent – the museums, the collectors and so on. Works of art are acceptable as images of insubordination, not as acts of civil disobedience.

POLICE
REVOLUTIONA

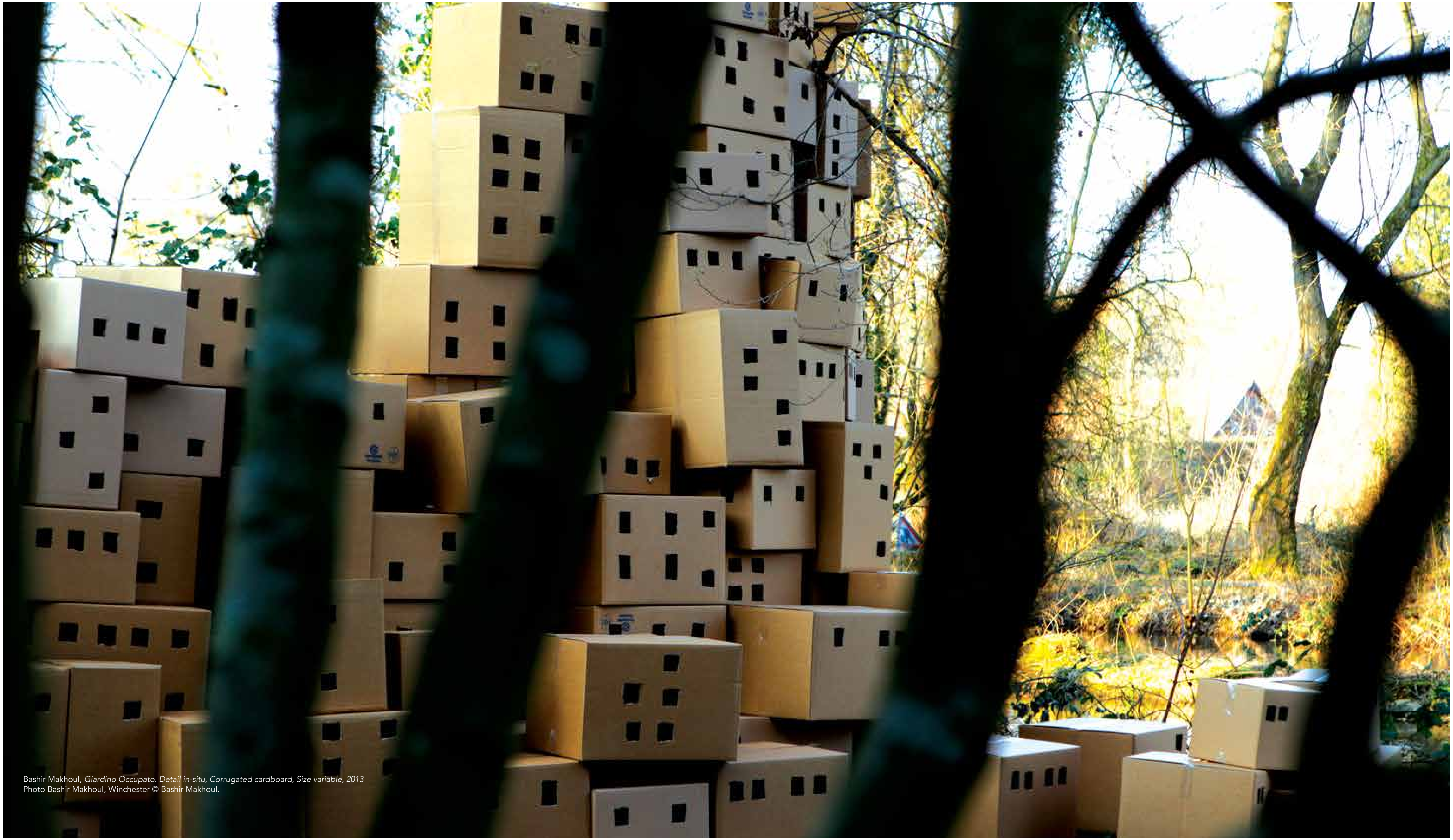
Aissa Deebi, *The Trail*, 15 min 2 channel video installation 2013

In *Otherwise Occupied*, we see two artists who are valiantly and successfully making works of art whose claims are modest, even slightly humorous, to declare a small territory that is both ironic and serious at the same time. The attempt is to make art in a way that is agnostic on the surface and yet persuasive. Both artists understand that these new limitations, as described above, on the making of art can be ironically and potentially expansive, despite the restrictions. It is as though they understand that Sisyphean activity is in itself a kind of progress of knowledge or consciousness, if not of territory and power. In this way, they identify with Camus' modern interpretation of the ancient myth. The "enchanted rock" which Zeus devised is maddening and elusive, and the task is never complete as a result, but in an absurd world, in Camus' terms, it is as though the "true struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart." Just as in the myth of Scheherazade, there is hope (however mitigated and perhaps false) in a kind of "constant revolt" which plays itself out incrementally and without closure – incompletely. The protagonist in either story is an absurd figure at first glance but it may be that only an absurd figure can overcome subjugation and retain the power of dignity as a legitimate hero; it is perhaps contradictorily the progressive protagonist – the traditional hero or heroine - who can take on that mantle only as a result of abuses of power.

Like these literary references, both artists rely on process, or, we might say "performativity": a dynamic quickening of space and representations rather than still iconography and static representation. The difference is acute but somewhat enigmatic. Performativity explicitly evokes temporality – the time of viewing, yes, but also other times embedded simultaneously. In order to activate the viewer's own sense of self, the artworks here embody not just lightly touched spatial choreography but the idea of simultaneous time(s) – historical time, imaginative time, as well as contemporary time.

Deebi deliberately seeks a kind of skepticism toward content. The destabilizing of speech is central to his version of *The Trial*: the actors stumble over words, stutter, make mistakes and begin again. The controlling metaphor of universality, as the work focuses on Daoud Turki's mouth at the historic moment of him testifying in Haifa in 1973 - the high moment of revealing Israel's colonial rule - and the pre-text for Deebi's *The Trial* is thus made precarious and vulnerable. This re-recording or plaintive re-mediated echo has none of the full authority of the monumental political and ethical power of the originary situation whose vast wholeness we might embrace as nostalgia or moral high ground. But by virtue of the new conditions of speech in Deebi's video, the context as well as the content are still available to us, and the struggle to speak with a voice divergent from the dominant norm is available precisely in the instability and hesitancy of the recorded and performed speech. The text and its recorded ricochet are re-created not as history *per se* but now as the voice of both cogency and vulnerability, of authority and deficiency, of courage and defeat. Deebi is a kind of ethnographer of pain, as Anneka Lenssen has noted, and the video and its references occupy otherwise the problems of representation. Instead of cohering a historic moment as an icon of accomplishment through a sleek production of representations, the work seeks to ground sounds and images in the human susceptibility of the moment. It is the time of dispossession just as it is the time of possession by the official bureaucracy. Jail, torture, and the pain of loneliness and officially sanctioned acts of inhumanity – the inevitable and pre-destined results of the trial as well as the Sisyphean supplement in any tale of justice in front of an unjust legal system -are all presaged in the uncertainty of the speech. And this is a speech that, if spoken by officialdom, is so astute, so profound in human terms, so sympathetic in its reach that it would be famous, but here it is instead, necessarily, rendered as pre-destined exile. The speech is disguised as impossible or illegible in order for us, as activated viewers, to still find the possible within it – the hope it hoped for.

Kafka originally wrote his unfinished novel, *The Trial*, as a way of showing how a state's deep madness encourages its own self-deception and ruin. The story's narrative trajectory is a labyrinth of justice and legal conundrums and, as such, has become a kind of touchstone of the ways in which any government of any ideological ilk conducts its business as a form of magic and mystery to those who are its dependents. Totalitarian states, of course, see it as a kind of recipe for power's disguises. Yet so-called "democracies" like Israel, who rely, like Mubarak did in Egypt, on "emergency law," - inherited from the British Mandate in their case - utilize no differently many abuses of law and power too. Neither Kafka, nor Orwell lived long enough to see their science fictions of totalitarian bureaucratic regimes become the realities they are today, with machines of death and language

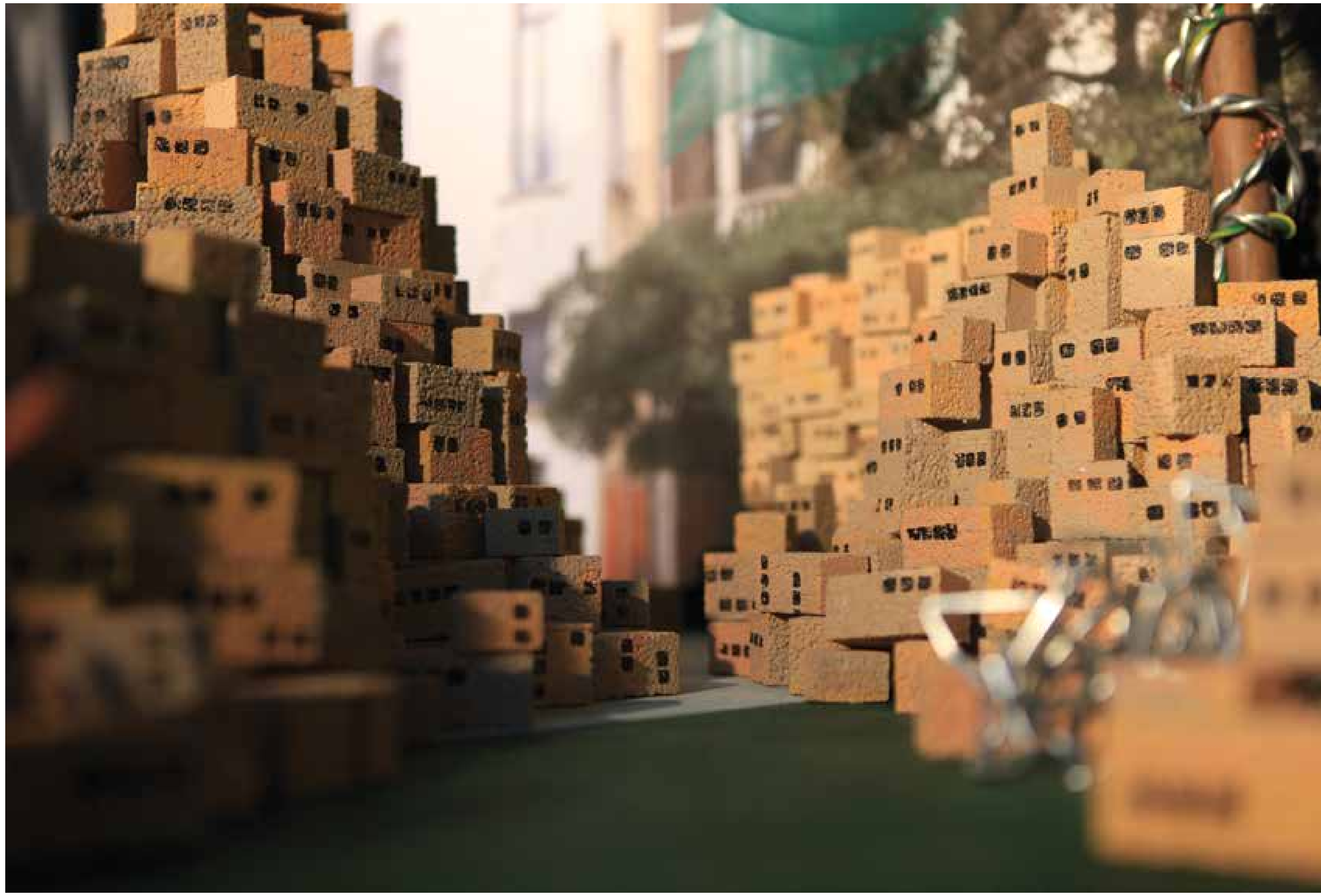


Bashir Makhoul, *Giardino Occupato. Detail in-situ, Corrugated cardboard, Size variable, 2013*
Photo Bashir Makhoul, Winchester © Bashir Makhoul.

reversals so extreme that, rolling over in their graves as they must be, they might not have recognized them as their own. *The Trial* is also, importantly, an unfinished novel, like the process of performativity described above. In fact, the German title was *Der Prozess* and it is this striking modernist feeling of inescapability – of no human progress – that is central to the incomplete narrative. As for Douad Turki in Haifa and Josef K. in Prague, there is no way out regardless of logic or heart or even truth.

In using this sense of performativity, I am persuaded by Jacques Rancière's idea of "other forms of temporality, dissensual forms which create distensions and breaks in that temporality." That "temporality" to which he is issuing a challenge is the dominant one, meaning specifically the widespread notion of the "present" easily presumed and disseminated by governments and mainstream media. Against this, Rancière presents the idea that "emancipation is in fact a way of putting several times into the same times, it is a way of living as equals in the world of inequality." In Deebi's presentation, for instance, we find the time of the historical text, 1973, as spoken and then recorded from Daoud Turki, who represented the Israeli leftist group, the Red Front, which was on trial in Haifa.

But we also have the voices and highly edited image-positions of the actors re-enacting imperfectly the text in a fragmented, incomplete, incompetent manner that is present to our time although not of our time. We also have Kafka's "trial" hanging over us as text, as cinematic and theatrical productions, and as literary patrimony. We also have our time as viewers in Venice to engage, study or inflect it, not from the museological position of a specific "somewhere" but from moving through a room at our own pace, conscious of drawings on the wall which may be from the original or the re-recording or merely subjective memories or expressions. The power of the image – of pure representation – is mitigated (not erased) by the power of temporal crossings - horizontal and vertical criss crosses of history, real and authentic, practiced and rehearsed, casual yet serious. Thus, we get Rancière's "incompatible times: the time of the documentary and the time of the tragedy." Or it might be said we get a time framed in our present for a future present.



Bashir Makhoul, *Giardino Occupato. model, Size variable, 2013*
Photo Ray Yang, Winchester © Bashir Makhoul.

Similarly, as Jonathan Harris has written in this same publication, Bashir Makhoul's almost *arte povera* cardboard boxes as buildings, being made by the actants in Venice, and then set in an ever-increasingly full garden, "set in train a development the results of which he will not be able to control…." How familiar do those words sound in light of the momentum of military actions, material and immaterial, in their ceaseless drive toward a realization that consistently eludes them? An endless occupation, an interminable invasion, the war without end or boundary – these are the escalated processes of military action sedimentized into states of being. The material of the cardboard box embodies the temporary nature of settlements, dwellings, encampments – the life of the refugee on the move, living in temporary accommodations but perhaps permanently so. Further the cardboard boxes evoke the simulated villages used to train military personnel for urban fighting, as discussed by Steve Graham. The occupied garden becomes a simulation of the simulated Arab village, recalling not only these military sites but the set design for Hollywood action films and indeed many computer games (themselves recruitment tools for the military). The humble cardboard box comes packed to its shipping brim with visual resonance and associations not containable by the pleasant garden walls.

The overall effect in the garden in Venice is one in which the time of finding and placing a box is inevitably overlaid with the brutal history of militaristic oversight of illegal settlements which self-advertise their aggression. As Ryan Bishop and Gordon Hon note, however, the garden, despite its connotations of peace, meditation and immersion in nature, is always, from the outset, an act of violence, of converting nature into landscape. The garden ceases to be a garden, or at least the same kind of garden, as the boxes begin to pile up. Access and navigation will become increasingly difficult. Harris calls the brutal history of building (as I would call Deebi's work as well) a "double-coding," which, for him, stands between utility and art. I think it also refers to the double-timing of both pieces, the way in which more than one temporal reference swells into another, undifferentiated from each other: the coalescing of different temporalities in the same space. And with double-timing we always have an implicit duplicity. And we swim within these enfolded times due to a performativity that is double-barrelled as well: referring both to the present within anyone's control and the present and past out of control. It will be interesting to see if anyone resists placing his or her "box in a garden."

By performing these works here in Venice, there is an implicit rejection of integration or full acceptance of full identity as both works of art seem to use that refusal as their collective metaphor. Perhaps not controlling the space and the experience here is then meant to understand what is there?

Endnotes

i The processes of identity and identification are fraught and doomed, regardless of whose rhetoric might be dominant. In this I agree with Diana Fuss who has written that identification is "a process that keeps identity at a distance, that prevents identity from ever approximating the status of an ontological given, even as it makes possible the formation of an illusion of identity as immediate, secure and totalizable.". *In Identification Papers, Routledge*, 1995, p.2.

ii At the end of the Second World War the overwhelming and continuing shock was that Germany, a member of Western Civilization, writ large, could have been capable of unrestrained barbarism. At the end of the twentieth century and now over a decade into it, global shock similarly is confounded by a "civilized" Israel, which has proven itself barbarous in similar ways and is in denial with regard to global disgust with its monstrous ongoing acts.

THE GARDEN AND THE TRIAL AS CAMOUFLAGE

RYAN BISHOP & GORDON HON

The Emperor, so the parable runs, has sent a message to you, the humble subject, the insignificant shadow cowering in the remotest distance from the imperial sun; the Emperor from his deathbed has sent a message to you alone. – Franz Kafka, "An Imperial Message"

They emigrate from the fence to the garden,

leaving behind a will with each step across the yard

of the house:

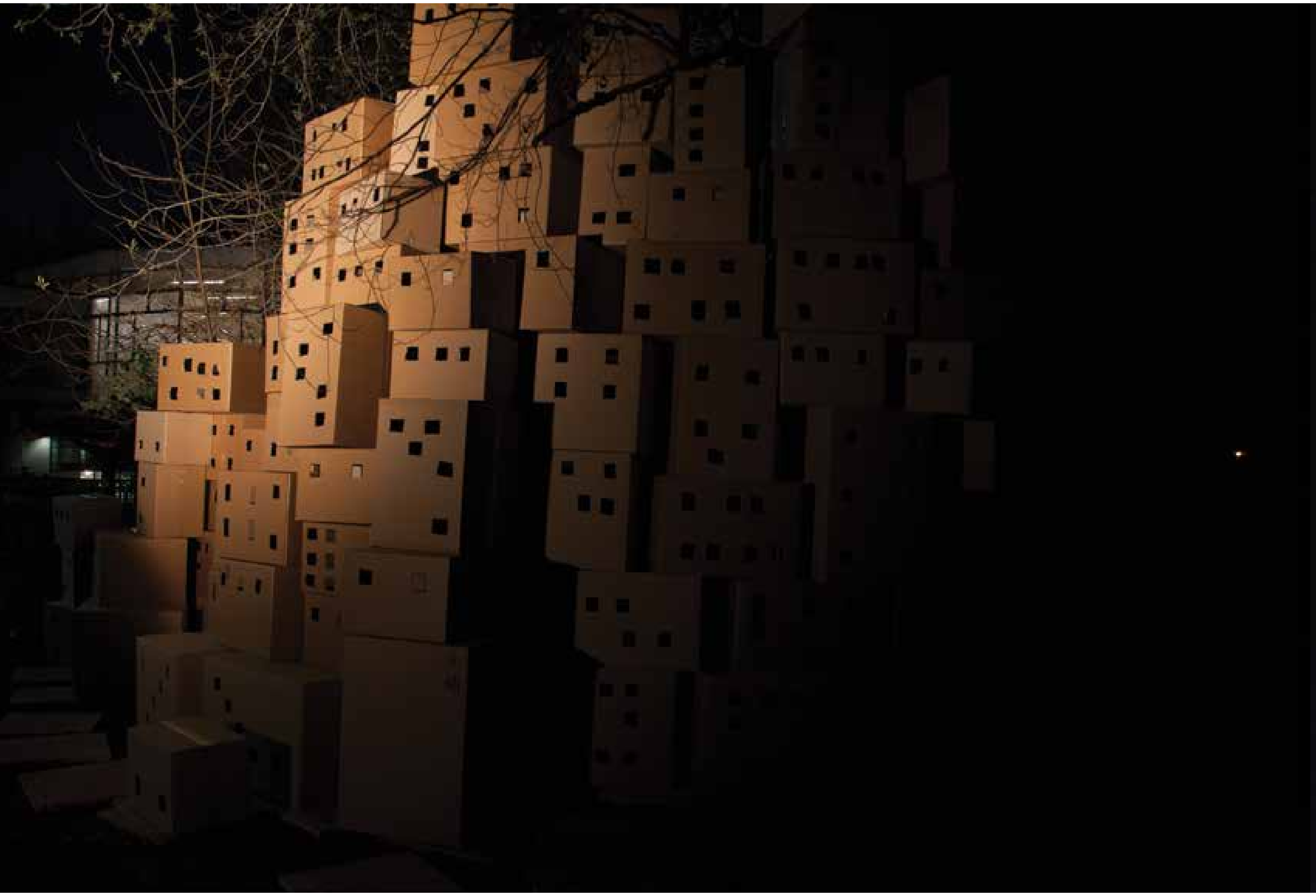
"After we're gone, remember only this life." – Mahmoud Darwish, "The Exiles Don't Look Back"

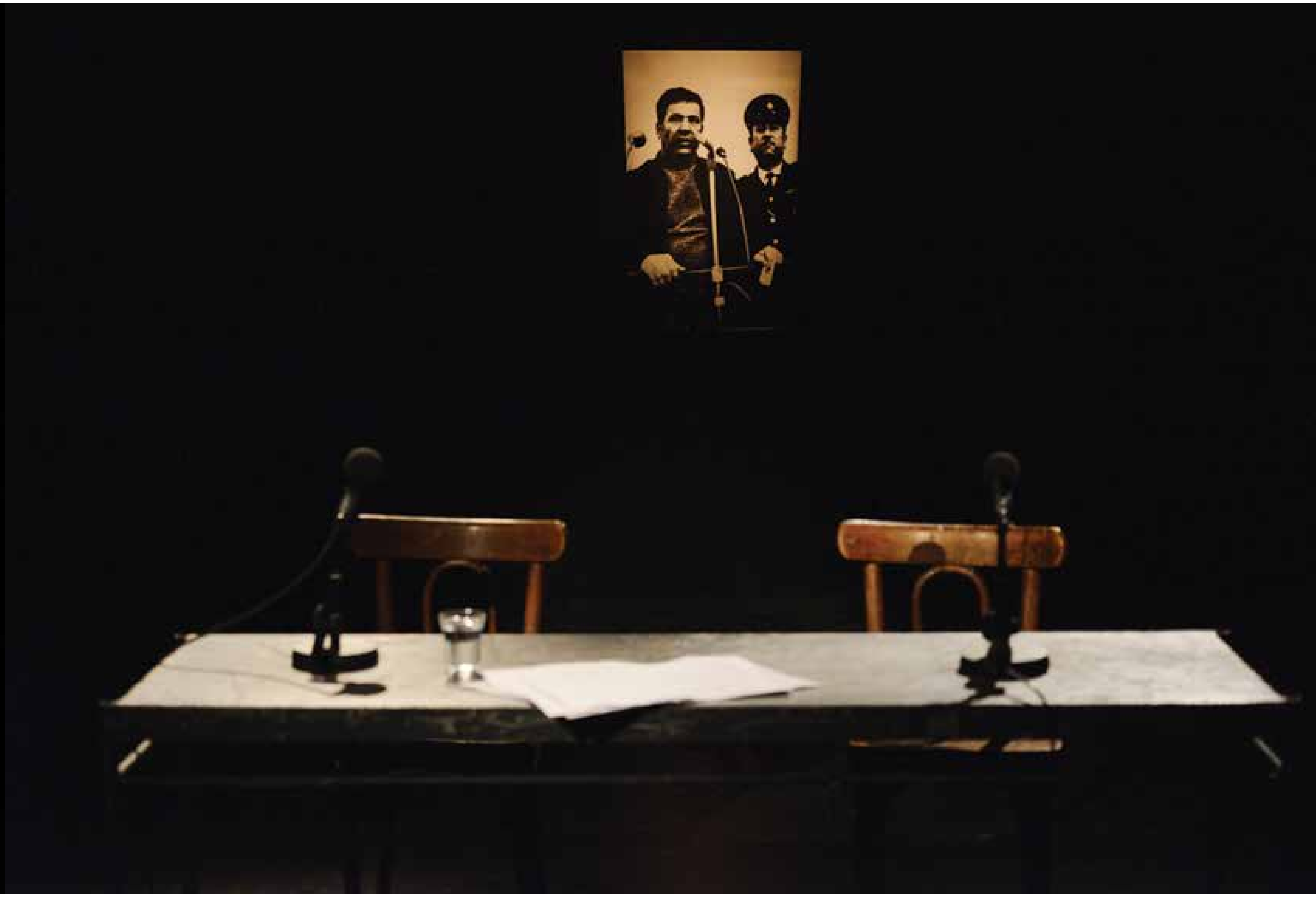
BEFORE THE LAW stands a doorkeeper. To this doorkeeper there comes a man from the country and prays for admittance to the Law. But the doorkeeper says that he cannot grant admittance at the moment. – Franz Kafka, "Before the Law"

In the garden, houses proliferate. In the courtroom, justice vanishes. In the garden, someone stands trial. In the courtroom, flowers of evil bloom.

In the exhibition, a garden and a trial merge. They combine to create antiphonal responses to local struggles played out on the global geopolitical stage as much as in the neighbourhood. Bashir Makhoul's "Giardino Occupato" and Aissa Deebi's "The Trial" offer, respectively, a sculptural and architectural installation and a video/performance installation accompanied by drawings. By providing boxes that model "Arab" houses for visitors to install in the exhibition's garden, Makhoul obliquely invites speculation about the state of nature and its impossible origins, the violence of dwelling and the mental states of occupation. By restaging a pivotal moment of resistance and re-presenting it as performance and film, Deebi evokes lost possibilities for political action, the violence resident in the Law and the dangers of nostalgia in the suffocating embrace of victimhood. Together they form "*Otherwise Occupied*".

In the garden, you become my neighbour. In the courtroom, you stand trial charged for being my neighbour.





Bashir Makhoul, *Giardino Occupato. Detail in-situ, Corrugated cardboard, Size variable, 2013*
Photo Alexander Makhoul, Winchester © Bashir Makhoul.

Aissa Deebi, *The Trail*, 15 min 2 channel video installation 2013

THE PROBLEM OF PEACE

All men are entitled to present themselves in the society of others by virtue of their right to communal possession of the earth's surface. Since the earth is a globe, they cannot disperse over an infinite area, but must necessarily tolerate one another's company. And no one originally has any greater right than anyone else to occupy any particular portion of the earth. – Immanuel Kant, *Essay on Perpetual Peace* (1795)

People who have grouped themselves into nation states may be judged in the same way as individual men living in the state of nature, independent of external laws; for they are a standing offense to one another by the very fact that they are neighbours. – Immanuel Kant, *Essay on Perpetual Peace* (1795)

The two quotations from Kant's formulation on perpetual peace contain an empirical problem, perhaps even an irresolvable paradox. Every human, he claims, has a right to the earth's surface because we are bounded by its spherical shape. If the earth contained infinite space, then such claims could not be made. But by the very act of claiming one's natural right to this space, Kant also asserts, one becomes an offense simply by being another's neighbour. Kant's essay on perpetual peace becomes instead an essay on perpetual antagonism as the unintended result of striving for perpetual peace. The aporia expressed in Kant neatly articulates Palestine's position as indicative of both historical and contemporary conditions: the result of untimely meditations and mediations.

Kant's quandary leads us to a certain kind of limit with regard to rational thought and forces us to engage an alternative intellectual and critical faculty: the imagination. Whenever violence takes hold or is the order of the day, when our mere being is an affront to our neighbours, then there is a failure of the imagination. It is the unimaginative reach for the club rather than a reach for solutions. If we playfully consider the English word 'imagination' as a portmanteau consisting of image, nation and imagine, then we have gone some way to consider the declaration by the two artists who are declaring this exhibition, "*Otherwise Occupied*", which is the non-Palestinian Pavilion for the Venice Biennale. For the image of a nation, how we imagine a nation or want a nation to be becomes a collective and dispersed imagi-nation, which results from focusing not on being and dwelling but on becoming.

Only 'legitimate', 'recognized' and 'independent' nations can have a proper pavilion at the Biennale and not what is called beautifully 'a collateral event'. Because Palestine has no such status – and the mind boggles at what an independent nation might actually be or mean – and because Palestine has been occupied for so long, it is no longer a spatio-temporal entity but a construction of the imaginary: a national designation that includes a far-flung diaspora, a huge population of refugees, as well as members of an indeterminate territorial authority under occupation and even a large number of Israeli citizens. There exist simultaneously no Palestinian state and many Palestinian states. It is the quintessence of Benedict Anderson's classic formulation of nationhood as 'imagined communities.' What we have in this pavilion is a collateral event.

Well into the 21st century, the stories of how nations are birthed, develop and progress – the stories of the *Volk* and the *Geist,* Tradition and Justice, language and unity – inherited from Enlightenment ideals continue to be foisted on the peoples of the world and have become 'common-sense' ideological formulations for political formations. These stories are of nativity and claims to statehood through natal rights, resulting in a formidable linkage of narrativity, nativity and naiveté that invariably bind thought, action and imagination. This exhibition and event, though, owe more to the elusive tales of space and constructs found in Italo Calvino's hauntingly apt "Invisible Cities" and cartographies of imagination than to traditional tales of origin, foundation and stolid representation of terrain. "*Otherwise Occupied*" could claim its agenda is the deterritorializing of Palestine but this agenda has already been accomplished, and thus event becomes a means of artistically and critically thinking through this state of play.

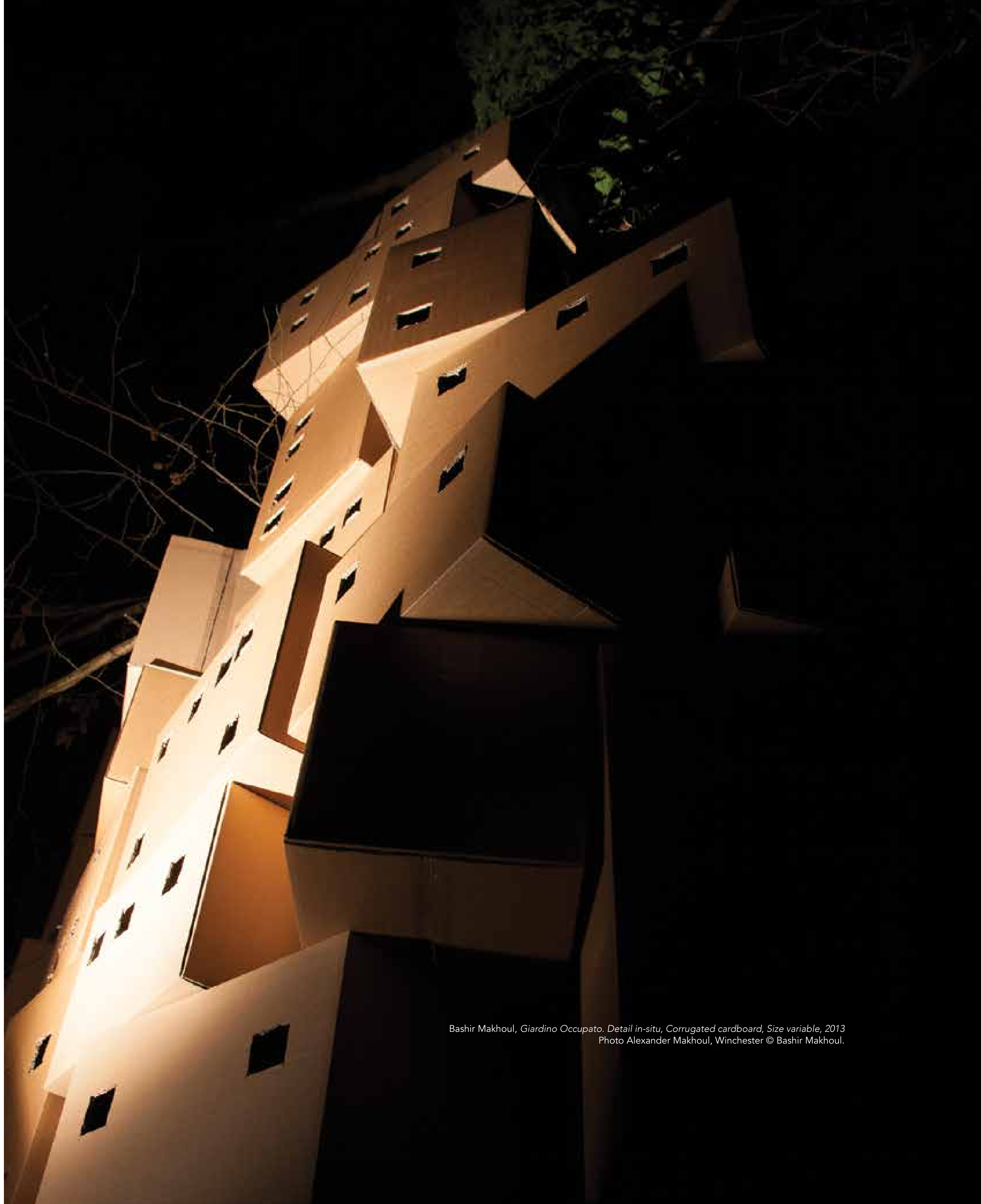
The diffused, plural and processual realities of Palestine are realized in the installation and its various media, including the 'Arab village' constructed of cardboard boxes, video, the documentation of the legal system, court records, TV broadcast, performance and drawings. The spectre of nationhood and the spectre of identity operate in these insubstantial articulations. The instability of the image and the materials used for the village metonymically evoke the instability of dwelling and indeed the nation. The Arabic word *rassama* means to draw, to fix an image and render the image static and stable. This is the futile hope of nation-builders and nationalists everywhere, a futility embodied in the mobile and evanescent media of the artworks in this exhibition. The problems of space and perception, and the problems that are space and perception, constitute two primary thematic concerns in the installation.

"*Otherwise Occupied*" turns the tables on the technologies of surveillance, control and occupation by using them as vehicles of art and critical engagement. The entire installation renders the scopic regimes used for defense, containment or occupation of geophysical terrain as navigational tools in a site specific and conceptual manner to provide a set of strategies and tactics that address the rules of art, exhibition and politics. The material and technological modes of artistic production and military control become occupied by the immaterial critical and conceptual apparatus of artistic thought.

THE GARDEN AND THE TRIAL

"In a riddle whose answer is chess, what is the only prohibited word?"   I thought a moment and replied, "The word *chess.*" – Jorge Luis Borges "Garden of Forking Paths"

Camouflage works the terrain between the visible and the invisible. Its basic defensive dimensions operate in nature and as nature, using the elements of habitat for animals and insects to avoid becoming prey through visual mimicry, trickery and subterfuge. Camouflage constitutes turning disadvantage to advantage, terrain and entrapment into shelter and safety. Camouflage is metaphorically extended beyond nature to the military, in which it turns materiel and personnel into landscape for defensive or offensive purposes. It is this metaphorical extension that becomes used in public discourse to mean subterfuge, an attempt to hide a certain reality, often one having to do with the use and misuse of power. For each of the works in "*Otherwise Occupied*", for both



Bashir Makhoul, *Giardino Occupato. Detail in-situ, Corrugated cardboard, Size variable, 2013*
Photo Alexander Makhoul, Winchester © Bashir Makhoul.

Makhoul's garden and Deebi's trial, camouflage may be said to be in operation. Makhoul's garden operates as camouflage of civilized dwelling on the land that is actually a constant war zone while Deebi's trial operates as camouflage for a legal system that claims to result in justice but which might well be serving other ends.

The garden as a generally accepted signifier of gentility and civilization actually camouflages the violence required to wrest a slice of paradise from nature and turn it to human aesthetic ends. The conditions of the garden are destroyed in and through the making of it. The garden demands tactics, planning, insertion, control and negotiation between warring elements, whether in Gaza or London or Shanghai or Ramallah. The removal of pests, vermin, weeds and others that threaten the purity of the envisioned ideal of nature tamed in the garden has led theorists such as Zygmunt Bauman and Martin Jay to posit the 'Gardening State' as a metaphor for socio-political organization and policing: the weeding out of undesirables from the envisioned ideal of the state, itself discursively formulated as an extension of benign nature. The hand of government becomes the hand of the gardener tending a demarcated patch of earth - snipping off stray tendrils, nipping trouble in the bud and controlling all activity according to a plan. The mark of civilization found in the garden camouflages the violence or barbarity necessary to realize it. In some sites the mere appearance of a garden is an assertion of control of the terrain, an unwillingness to capitulate to constitution of the land as one type of symbolic space for another. Thus even a Peace Garden can camouflage the violent resistance required to craft it.

The garden camouflages the violent unbuilding required of the built environment just as architecture camouflages its production of space rather than its mere containment of it. The country manors of England that emerged in the latter part of the 18th century offer a paradigmatic case of unbuilding camouflaged as an ideal (and indeed idyll) of nature. Entire villages were moved or razed as the expansion of the estate literally uprooted trees and hedges. The goal was to create an uninterrupted view from the main house of nature without any apparent human presence, and not the nature that was already there though itself hardly originary. The desired view reveals the greedy eye in its all-consuming power to produce an illusion of beauty and tranquillity. This was the creation of landscape camouflaged as nature, a warped return of nature to camouflage other operations.

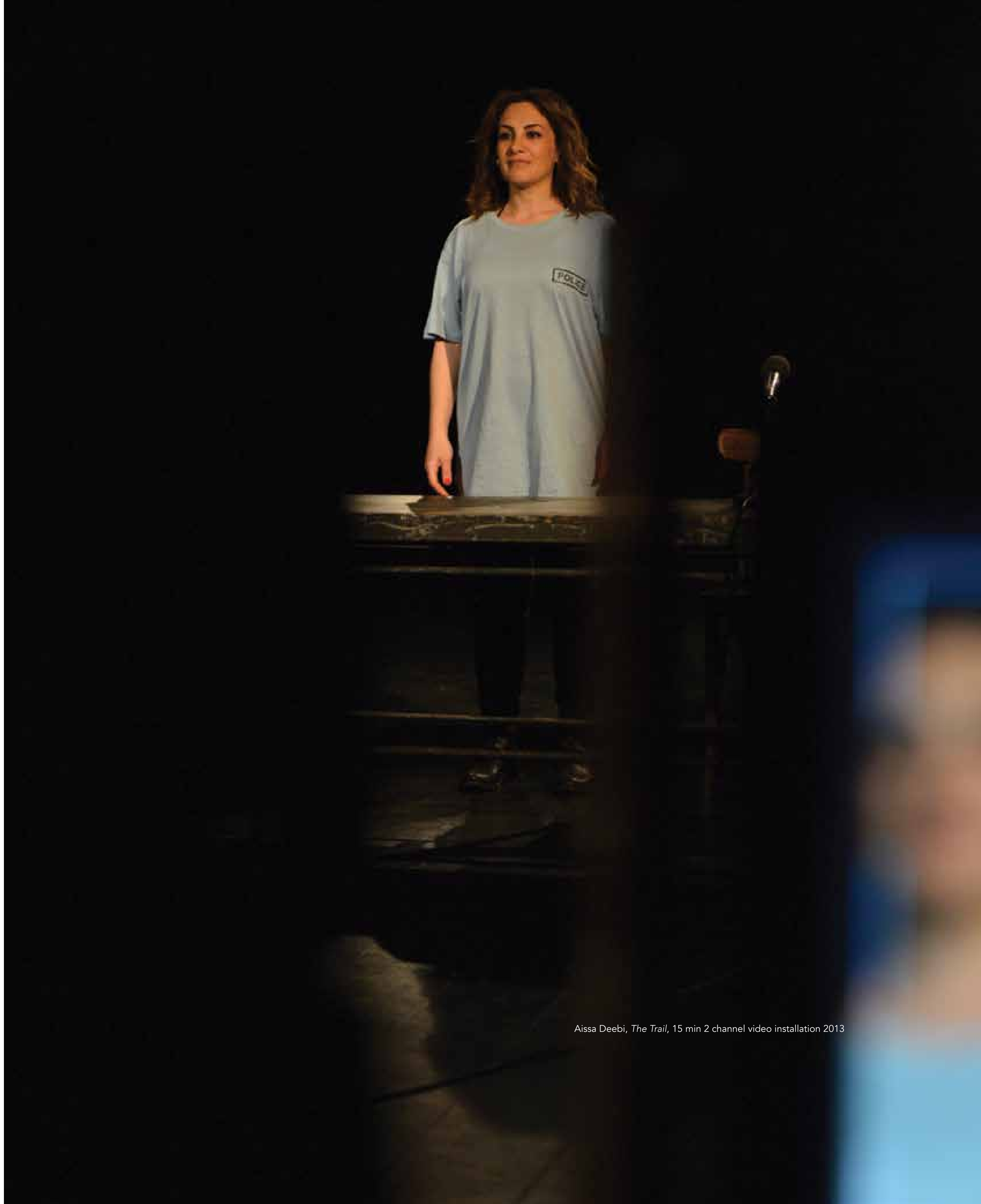
The trial as camouflage for justice enacted within the legal system, within the Law, further camouflages the founding moment of the Law as foundational entity and the violence necessary to establish it. Attempts to distinguish justice from violence tend to reproduce the distinction between foundation(s) and end(s). The Greek notion of the founding violence of law can be uneasily compared with Jewish notions of divine, destructive, annihilating violence; equivalent notions of founding violence exist in the Indo-European tradition, in Islam and in pre-Socratic thought. In each instance these notions of founding and foundational violence are coupled with catastrophic ends: the last judgement, divine positioning, the combination of teleology and eschatology (the end of hope in death and the final destiny of the race and species). In concrete political terms, the metaphysics of origin and end becomes the pragmatic distinction of means and ends, in which one can only be justified in relation to the other: the ends justify the means or the means justify the ends. Aristotle's distinction between legitimate force and criminal violence presupposes a law-governed constitution that has been founded and established. The good of that foundation (although arbitrary itself) must be distinguished from the arbitrary and impetuous acts that demarcate crime. However what the law fears most in its others is what resides in itself: its being founded on an arbitrary violence justified only after the fact.[1]

This is the situation obliquely evoked by the ambiguous, mystical parable by Kafka, "Before the Law," which appears at the outset of his posthumous novel *The Trial*. The preposition and adverb "before" in the title includes physical positioning – the subject in front of the bar or at the dock as in Deebi's re-enactment – and temporal positioning - the moment of existence prior to the Law. The temporal moment before the Law is the state of barbarism and primitiveness that the legal/religious system supposedly ends, just as the nation-state supposedly overturns the arbitrary randomness of sovereign rule and its violent potential embodied in the caprice of one individual. But the nation-state judicial system is no less capricious though perhaps more prone to be methodical, deliberate and systemic in its enactment of Law, force and violence. Due process and parliamentary procedures, as well as distributed agency, provide the camouflage for state-sponsored violence to be interpreted as measured enactment of national security.

When Orson Welles made his famous film of the novel, he established the ineluctable links between bureaucracy and the Law as a form of occupation. Welles reads the novel as addressing the conditions of Czech occupation by the Austro-Hungarian Empire through their bureaucracy, of which Kafka was a participant and no innocent victim. The emergence of Modernity that Kafka espied lurking just beyond the edge of his desk at the Workers Accident Insurance Institute was one fuelled by the momentum of bureaucracy. Kafka evaluated the wounds workers suffered in factories and placed a price tag on individual injury, arriving at a figure determined by actuarial tables. This was his day job, writing his night job. The absurd, paradoxical gift of state and industry came in the form of a new limb, or by extension, compensation of a sort. “Limbs became commodities,” as British playwright Alan Bennett tells us, “and to be given a clean bill of health [at Kafka’s office] was to be sent away empty-handed . . . It was a world where to be deprived was to be endowed, to be disfigured was to be marked out for reward . . . In Kafka’s place of work only the whole man had something to hide, the real handicap to have no handicap at all . . . and a helping hand was one that had been first severed from the body.” (339) So Kafka’s novel simply exemplifies that most basic precept of creative writing courses: write what you know.

The movie visualizes the futural, faceless and sterile bureaucracy of the post World War II moment as well as the embodied, dusty and aged bureaucracy of pre-nation-state European imperial power. Welles wanted to display “the traditions necessary to perpetuate the occupiers’ monstrous lives,” as he put it in an interview, and to show how the earlier forms of occupation gave birth to and continued on within contemporary forms. In so doing he brought Kafka’s ever-contemporary vision of the Law in relation to Justice into the Cold War present of his filming while generating a set of issues uniquely situated to specific instantiations of occupation. The scrupulous specificity of Kafka makes him uniquely generalizable.

One more instance of camouflage exists, one discernible in the combination of garden and trial, and that instance is Palestine. Palestine - as an abstract entity, as a slogan to chant in the streets or markets, as dispersed metaphor of geopolitical injustice - can also be said to operate as camouflage throughout the region. Whenever Arab citizens wish to protest against their own governments but face



Aissa Deebi, *The Trail*, 15 min 2 channel video installation 2013

the possibility of being stopped or arrested, they can take to the streets against the Israeli treatment of Palestine without fear of being thwarted in their protest. Palestine becomes a code or camouflage for national, internal critique, one that the government is powerless to do anything about for it would not want to be perceived as pro-Zionist by stopping the protest. The governments must lie to themselves. They must say that the camouflage is the real. They must see the map and willingly confuse it for the territory. These are the musty traditions necessary to perpetuate their own monstrous lives.

OTHERWISE OCCUPIED

"The Dead Hand"

Temptations still nest in it like basilisks.

Hang it up till the rings fall. – WS Merwin, "The Moving Target"

The problem of knowledge is inextricable from the problem of violence. To speak of epistemological violence in the 21st century might feel almost tautological. When the dominant strands of scientific, but especially technological, knowledge have not only served but also indeed driven the development of military epistemologies and technologies, then one cannot talk of knowledge without evoking violence. Even beyond the evident military sphere, mainstream scientific and technical knowledge can be analysed as a kind of legitimating force, which not only produces the legitimate bounds of a particular branch of knowledge, but also classifies knowledge generally, relegating, domesticating, even subjugating alternative forms of knowledge.

In this way, the traditional discourses of Orientalism (in policy, commerce, scholarship, artistic production) can be said to characterize, through several kinds of representation often operating under the guise and legitimation of scientific objectivity, an Orient that replaces – literally stands instead of – anything that might have been produced as Oriental knowledge as such. These representations are all the more powerful for their combining of condescension, scorn and hypostatization, which produces the hallucination of a fully formed *relationship.* Orientalism, in this sense (and to the extent that this argument is valid) would only become a *knowledge* in the deepest sense of the term with the *acknowledgement* of the violence of these projections. It seems, then, that knowledge, according to traditional and perhaps ancient principles, ought to be *opposed* to violence. Nevertheless the problem of violence is considerably more complex than such ideals allow.

The artists in this exhibition are otherwise occupied with these complexities, and therefore they occupy otherwise.

Endnotes

1. This discussion of violence and the one about violence and knowledge are modified from Ryan Bishop and John Phillips article "Violence" in *Theory Culture & Society* 23:2-3, 2006, pp. 377-38

OTHERWISE REPRESENTATIONAL: THE RISK OF NATIONS WITHOUT STATES

RAWAN SHARAF

Otherwise Occupied is an exhibition organized within the collateral events of the 55th International Exhibition at the Venice Biennale 2013. This exhibition signifies the outcome of a long-term partnership between al Hoash and the Winchester School of Art, the University of Southampton, and features two Palestinian artists who have through their body of work over the years tackled, interrogated, researched and explored notions of identity, nationhood and nationality, memory, and colonial systems and dynamics. The featured artworks in this exhibition propose an alternative approach to researching, understanding, questioning and realizing the processes that produce Palestinian identity for each of the artists separately based on their different experiences, knowledge and memory. Each presents an art project that results from serious, ongoing research into Palestinian history within the enmeshment of the contemporary conditions operative both within an increasingly globalized world as well as under occupation. Each bears in mind that the self-same technologies and procedures that result in contemporary global practices and conditions also play an integral, if not foundational, role in the current modes of occupation and its manifestation.

This exhibition marks the second exhibition to be featured in the Venice Biennale presenting solely Palestinian artists. This is without a doubt an important achievement, one on the level of bringing visual productions of Palestinian artists into the international arena while bringing along debates about notions critical in establishing the accumulation of our history and that remain crucial for the formation of our future. In the summer of 2009, al Hoash hosted a copy of artist Taysir Batniji's piece Atelier, along with other galleries and venues in Palestine who featured at that time works of the Palestinian artists selected by curator Salwa Mikdadi to participate in the exhibition "Palestine c/o Venice." That was the first Palestinian exhibition to ever take place in the Venice Biennale and was also organized as a collateral event, since unacknowledged countries are not allowed an official pavilion. In an interview for nurart.org, Mikdadi asserted that this exhibition was meant to give a "Voice for Palestine", establishing a depiction and presentation of contemporary Palestine and Palestinian art through artists who lived in Palestine.

The exhibitions of these works in Palestine were spread over various venues across the West Bank, the geography internationally recognized as Occupied Palestinian territory. Their openings were parallel to the opening of the exhibition

Aissa Deebi, *The Trail*, 15 min 2 channel video installation 2013

at Venice, celebrating and strongly ascertaining the representative nature of the Venice exhibition. That summer also marked the 5th birthday of al Hoash, a time when, after establishing our credible position locally among the cultural organizations in Palestine, we were planning to reach out further to the globe and to the international art arena, especially to the Venice Biennale. However our agenda differed somewhat significantly from the 2009 exhibition in that we were seeking, and continue to seek: not the representation of Palestine per se, but rather to globally display the cultural production of Palestinian artists with their diverse, multiple and fragmented backgrounds, identities and associations. The singular voice of the 2009 show had become a multiplicity of complementary and contradictory voices.

Nevertheless, taking the present decision that al Hoash would organize a Palestinian exhibition at the 55th international art exhibition at the Venice Biennale, again endorsed within the collateral events section – and despite the fact that this decision came after months of discussions among the partners and participants about the approach, organization and concept of the exhibition – the event still came as a shock to my system: a strong shot of adrenaline that ran through my veins all the way up to my brain, making my pulse race at record pace. Intellectuals often avoid and are unwilling to admit to such feelings, but I was on a rollercoaster of mixed emotions: excitement, enthusiasm, anxiety and most assuredly a chilling sensation of responsibility – responsibility for organizing an Exhibition in *the* Venice Biennale, knowing that according to the Biennale's administration statistics that there would be around 350,000 visitors who might view the exhibition. Truly this marks both an outstanding opportunity and at the same time a huge professional responsibility. However, I have to say that these were not my main concerns, weighty though they may be. Rather, the huge burden that arrived with the idea and reality of organizing an exhibition for Palestinian artists, and what that might entail for potential misinterpretations, weighed heavily on me. Most specifically I worried that the show might be misread as claiming an authoritative representation of Palestine or Palestinian art when such claims are very far from the endeavor's spirit and ethos. I worried we would be seen as *the* voice of Palestinian art, rather than a few voices in the loud clamour of divergent Palestinian art.

The Biennale's regulations only provide space for 'legitimate', 'recognized' and 'independent' nations to have an official representation through a pavilion at the Biennale to show their latest, highest, most sophisticated and best productions of visual arts and other forms of cultural production. Since Palestine has no such status, and fails to meet any of the official criteria, the exclusion of the Palestinian pavilion not only demonstrates a kind of denial of existence, but also correlates nations with the existence of their internationally recognized state. This raises questions about what and how an independent nation / state might actually be or mean. It questions the idea of an "official" representation of Palestine or any other nation. Can such a claim be made for any nation? Much less one without a state? And is such a claim even desirable if perhaps attainable?

In *Otherwise Occupied*, the provisional nature of our status, as a collateral event, as not a pavilion of a recognized nation, allows us to take risks, in order to go beyond the easy certainty of what an official nation provides as an assumed, defined, cultural and national identity. Representation can take different forms and approaches. In many ways, not being representational in a traditional sense supports and brings different meanings to a relative intellectual and artistic independence, allowing us to choose risk and uncertainty over nationally approved positions, controlled and asserted by a recognized nation-state.

On the other hand, the major question raised is whether anything or anyone at all – a pavilion, an exhibition, a work of art, an artist, an academic, a businessman or an entrepreneur – can embody Palestine in such an exclusive manner? Palestinians, in their modern history have been fragmented and dispersed across the world, living either in isolated ghettos created by the Oslo Accords and administered by the Palestinian Authority forming a state-like entity hung in abyss, or living in Israel holding Israeli citizenship while living on their land on what is referred to as historic Palestine, a geographic definition established by the British Mandate, or Palestine of the orange orchards, and the olive groves created mythically and nostalgically in the imaginary of millions of refugees spread across the globe living in diverse contexts and going through widely disparate experiences. This is a status that ultimately cannot be brought into the frame of categorization, or indeed within any frame at all in adequate fashion. This reality can only result in a cultural production with an identity that is multiple, fragmented and diverse, representing only the individual's unique experience and the identity of its producer while also realizing that this identity is itself the product of historical, geopolitical and economic forces rather than individual subjectivity and agency. It is crucial that we recognize that Palestinian identity is widely fragmented, multiple and diversified, and therefore impossible to represent. This again raises questions about the possibility of individual identity in a globalized world that stands as the opposite of a collective identity. The Subject so important to political, national, legal and philosophical systems has long been a disseminated processual entity, no more so now for Palestinians necessarily than for anyone else – just part of the current global moment.

In the sixties, seventies and eighties of the last century, a large part of the Palestinian visual artistic production was meant to envisage a collective Palestinian identity that responded to the Palestine Liberation Organization's revolutionary direction, directly depicting a visualization of the landscape and its architecture, the agony of dispersion and persistent desire for liberation. The visual production at that time was a tool, had a defined role, a mission to fulfill and a nation-denied existence to be represented collectively: each part, each articulation, stood for the whole. It was directed and supported in all means by the PLO. This production was intended to establish visual support to the discourse of each faction utilizing its symbols directly to touch people's feelings and reinforce their commitment and engagement for the cause of liberation and independence. It also played a role in establishing a memory, documenting events, life styles and memories in addition to creating and defining the symbols of identity. The PLO with its various factions played the authoritarian role of directing the formation of this singular identity and the production of the collective visual memory. This authority was nourished by the individual desire to belong to the collective and to serve the revolution in whichever way possible.

In the contemporary context, and with a weakening of the collective identity established by the PLO as contra to the occupation and the abortion of the Palestinian National project, Palestinians still live across the world in many different contemporary contexts and realities with various possibilities of openness and expression available through access to new media, IT and communication facilities, yet falling ironically under a new form of authority. They live within a globalized world where the definition of Palestinian identity in the previous manner is not valid anymore and thus the representation of Palestine has been rendered impossible. No longer does each part stand for the whole and these conditions have placed into question whether any part in the past actually did either, or if this was merely wish-fulfillment and a naïve belief in the power of representation (artistic and political). The whole in our current moment clearly has holes. Perhaps it always did.

Throughout the modern history of Palestinians, self-identification has been largely realized, categorized and established through the relation with the colonial context and its history. The identity became either a visualization of the colonizers' perceptions of Palestine or Palestinians, or totally the opposite, which in effect becomes an identification created by the colonizer. They are two-sides of the same ideological and discursive coin. This exhibition comes not to represent Palestine but rather to present works of two artists who, through the accumulation of their artwork, have been questioning the notion of identity, its usefulness, its drawbacks, and what it might mean or look like in a context characterized by dispersion, fragmentation and diversity. Simultaneously they do so through a sustained critical engagement with history, memory and the archive to touch upon events in the past that at some point contributed to establishing the identity now placed in suspension and doubt. They realize the multiplicity of an identity that is neither exclusive nor clearly defined but rather in a process of production, evolution, development and realization. In this exhibition, our goals as curators and theirs as artists has been to embrace, query, interrogate and celebrate the diversity and multiplicity of Palestinian identity, while seeking to establish a debate that looks at the formation of said multiple identities which transcends the colonizer. This is where we come to recognize capacities of strength and power that can contribute to the process of decolonization of the space and the mind. The many, varied and valiant histories and cultural productions of occupied peoples throughout the world's history become catalysts and inspirations for the works on offer here.

This exhibition comes to present a platform for discussion, a space for questioning and critique as well as to establish a debate over the non-existence of the one sacred identity that defined Palestinians for decades collectively and established a frame that excluded more than it included while keeping our realization and self continuously related to the occupier. The Palestinian was either the revolutionary or the collaborator, and the identification of our space, our geography, was established through the checkpoints, walls, towers, fences and settlements. A major disappointment in the cultural history of the Palestinians is that despite our ultimately rich and challenging art and cultural production, we for a long time have failed to establish the accumulation, interpretation and critical engagement of this production. The Palestinian narrative, history, archive and identity have continuously been established and narrated by the Other, with the added irony that it has been Palestinians who have been cast as the Other by those so narrating. This exhibition, along with other initiatives by al Hoash, is an attempt to establish a platform for those who have also seen Palestinians within a frame they wish to highlight, query, dismantle and rearrange.

Al Hoash is knowledge-based art organization, critically driven, adopting ethics of inclusiveness, locally rooted while seeking global reach, we see our role in contributing to knowledge production through research on visual culture and its production historically and in the contemporary context. Through researching visual culture we are tackling one complex element in the formation of a Palestinian cultural and national identity, defining its symbols and visual references. Visual production in its diverse forms is a critical constituent of our individual and collective memory and thus a contributor to the incessant formation of our cultural identity.

'THE UNACHIEVED STATE OF A BUSY GARDEN'

('LO STATO INCOMPIUTO DI UN GIARDINO OCCUPATO')

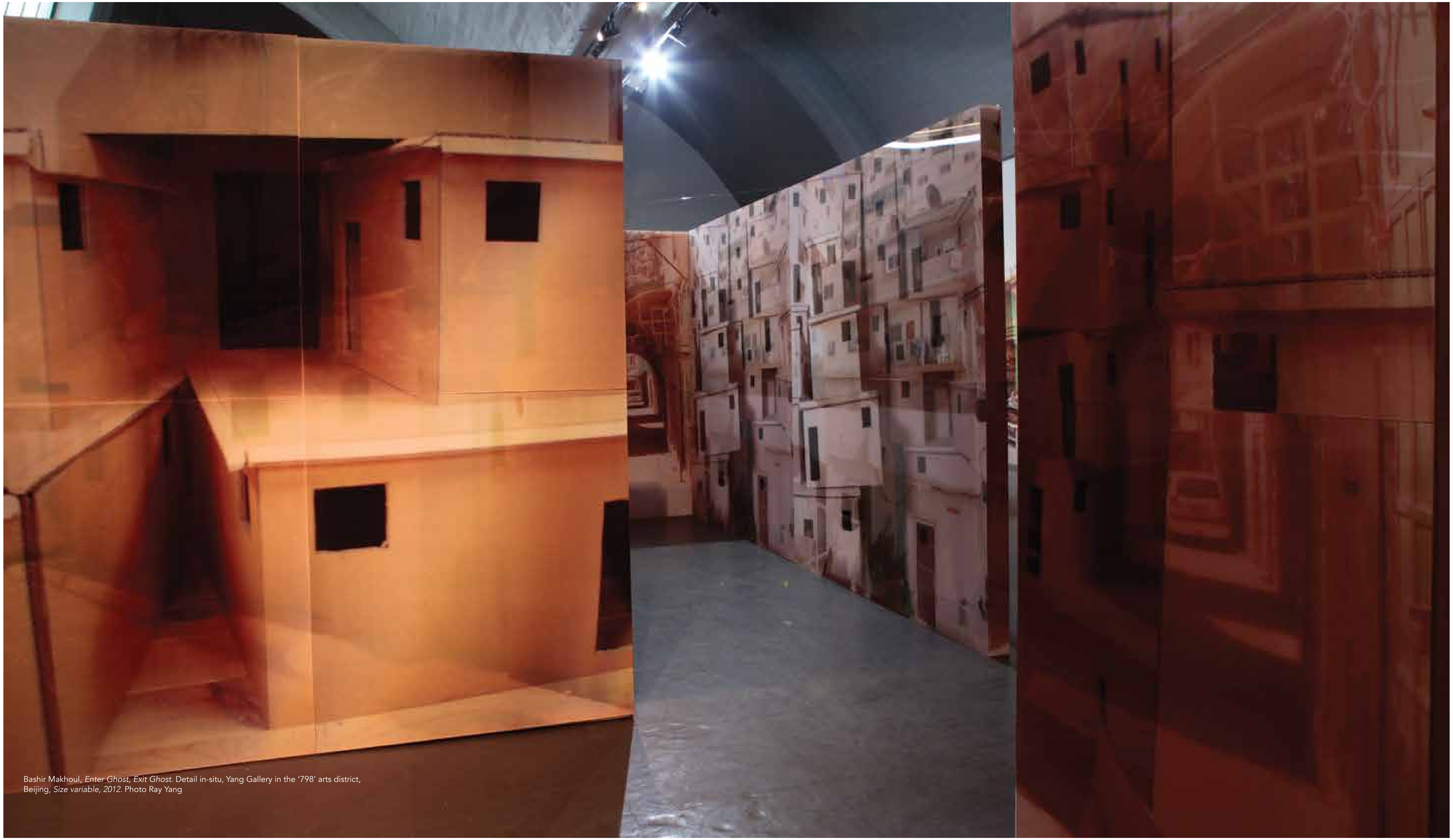
JONATHAN HARRIS

'To live otherwise […] is to be other and elsewhere: a desire displaced by alienation and in this sense cousin to phases of the utopian, but without the specific of a connected or potentially connected transformation and then again without the ties of a known condition and form.'[1]

Pick up your box, then, and place it where you will in the garden.

Your work in performing this act is *poetic* – a labour of making and composition, though not completion. The word 'poetry' derives from the Greek verb ποίησις: 'to make.' Poetry was an action that transforms and perpetuates the world. The cardboard box you hold is as formal a material as that implied within the term's original sense – for poetry was understood not to be merely a technical or romantic creation, but rather a construction that performed a kind of reconciliation between thought, on the one hand, and matter and time, on the other. The cardboard houses will form Bashir Makhoul's *Giardino Occupato*, built in the garden at an art school, the Liceo Artistico Statale di Venezia (LASV), within the grounds of Palazzo Ca' Giustinian Recanati, in Venice, for a limited time during the Biennale of 2013. The form is also a formation, as the use of *poiesis* as a suffix in biology indicates: hematopoiesis is the process of the formation of blood cells.[2] *Giardino Occupato* also concerns the blood of the living, and is itself living in its self-composition through the actions of visitors adding to the cardboard city in a garden of the city of Venice.

Makhoul's contribution to the Biennale has significant relation to some of his previous installations, particularly the ambitious and large-scale *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost* exhibited at the Yang Gallery in the '798' arts district in Beijing in 2012.[3] I shall turn to this work in a while. Makhoul, a Palestinian, was born in Galilee in 1963, in what had by then become the territory of the achieved state of Israel.[4] Some earlier related works produced in other media including painting, print and photography exemplify his elegiac poetry made from the violence of the creation and continual recreation of Israel in dealing with the Palestinians in its way.[5] These works, which I shall also discuss, figure elements of the personal *Nakbah* (catastrophe) of the Makhoul family – such as the flight of family members from their homes and land to the relative safety of Lebanon in the early years of the existence of the achieved state of Israel. *Giardino Occupato* may be read as a

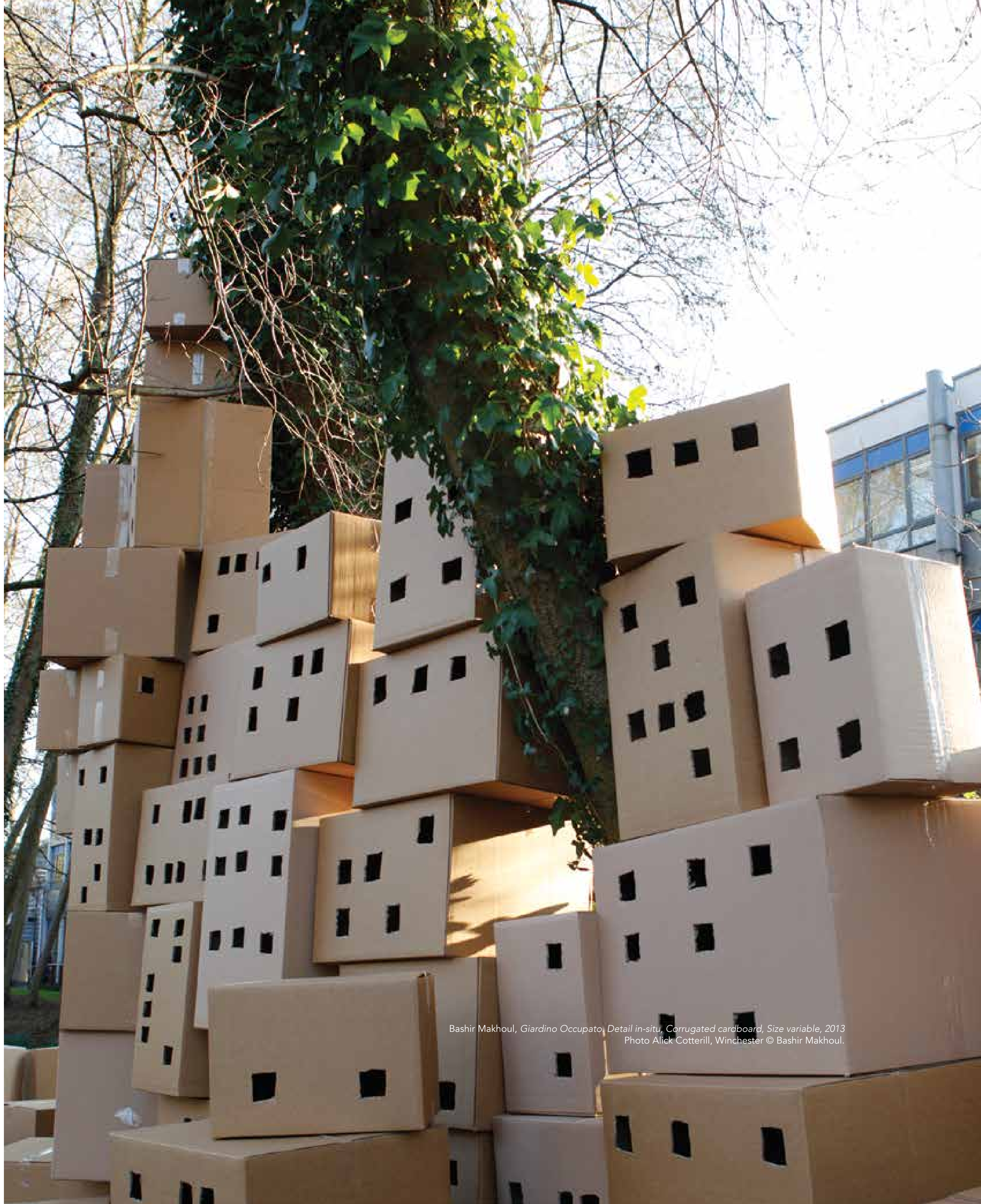


Bashir Makhoul, *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost.* Detail in-situ, Yang Gallery in the '798' arts district, Beijing, *Size variable, 2012.* Photo Ray Yang model or mirror of the kind of cities the Palestinians are left to build in the spaces that the Israelis have not, yet, occupied.[6]

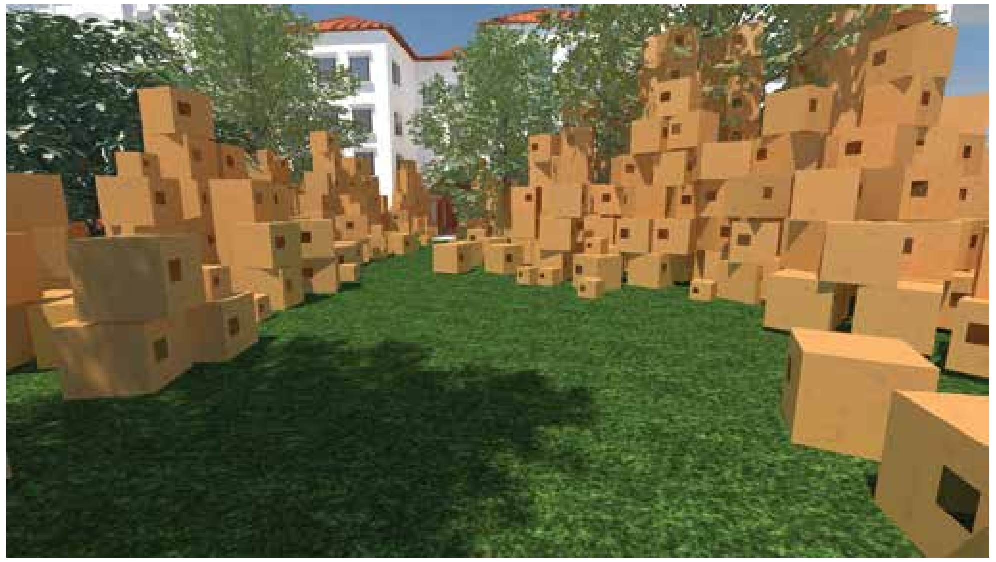
The origins of the term 'city' in Latin, however, relate poorly to its modern sense. *Civitas* came from the noun *civis* meaning citizen, which is nearer to our sense of a 'national.' 'Civitas' was the term for a body of citizens rather than the name for people from a particular 'settlement' or type of 'settlement.'[7] Eventually, however, the meaning of the term changed and came to refer to 'the chief town of such a state.' 'City' also became a term of relative approbation, referring to a place held to be superior to a mere 'town.' Biblical villages such as Bethlehem – a Palestinian settlement in the central West Bank interminably encroached upon by Israeli housing developments – achieved its 'city status' in this way, because the epithet, by the thirteenth century, was also intended to indicate a significant religious place.[8] As you build and add to the cardboard city in the garden, the space available for its further growth diminishes: The Palestinian *civitas* are the citizens now of a stateless nation; of a local (Palestinian) authority within the achieved state of Israel; of striated and non-contiguous territories bound up inside and alongside Israeli 'settlements;' of the Gaza camp patrolled and controlled by the Israel Defence Force on three sides; and of a global dissemination that has displaced Palestinians and their senses of Palestine everywhere – and therefore here, too, in the *Giardino Occupato*, placing their cardboard boxes where they can.[9]

The boxes, these cardboard houses in their places, may constitute a crude poetry. But in that they also mirror or model the bad poetry of the achieved state of Israel's building as well as that of the Palestinians in the spaces allowed to them. 'Poetry,' declaims Martin Heidegger, 'is the original admission of dwelling.' Nor is poetry 'building in the sense of raising and fitting buildings:

> The statement, *Man builds in that he dwells*, has now been given its proper sense. Man does not dwell in that he merely establishes his stay on earth, beneath the sky, by raising growing things and simultaneously raising buildings. Man is capable of such building only if he already builds in the sense of the poetic taking of measure. Authentic building occurs so far as there are poets, such poets as take the measure for architecture, the structure of dwelling.' (italics in original) [10]



Bashir Makhoul, *Giardino Occupato. Detail in-situ, Corrugated cardboard, Size variable, 2013*
Photo Alick Cotterill, Winchester © Bashir Makhoul.



Bashir Makhoul, *Giardino Occupato. Digital model, 2013*
Ray Yang, © Bashir Makhoul.

The so-called 'Security Fence' which the Israelis have built in an attempt to divide Israeli citizens from the Palestinian *civitas* – built mostly with the doubly alienated labour of the Palestinians themselves – concretely embodies and symbolizes the bad poetry of Israel's building. The wall has choked the life out of the village of Jayyous, in the agricultural centre of Palestine. Four thousand olive trees were uprooted here to make way for the wall – 'collateral damage' to bear in mind when playing your part in the creation of the *Giardino Occupato*, one of the 'collateral events' of the 55th Venice Biennale. The production of fruit and vegetables in Jayyous more than halved between 2002 and 2008, as the wall was constructed. In September 2008 only 216 out of the village's 700 farmers had permits to cross through the wall and work their land. Unemployment in the village stands at 70 per cent and two thirds of the people depend on food aid.

The wall at this point cuts 6 kilometres into the West Bank from the Green Line, putting six Palestinian water wells inside the wall's new de facto demarcation of Israel's territory. The now thriving illegal Israeli 'settlement' of Zufin was subsequently built on Jayyous's land.[11] There is a telling connection between the term 'citizen' and the idea of civilization. The root word for civilization is *civil*, from the Latin *civilis*, meaning of or belonging to citizens. 'Civilize' appeared in seventeenth century English and meant 'to make a criminal matter into a civil matter, and thence, by extension, to bring within a form of social organization.' The implication was that a truly 'civil society' was ordered, based on *civility*, a word derived from the Latin for 'community.' Civilization in its modern sense has come to mean an achieved condition of organized social life, but the word actually developed from the earlier sense of a *process* of development: 'to civilize.'[12] Israel's own civilization, as the building of the wall indicates, is a continued process of appropriating space and other resources belonging to the Palestinians.

If the poetic work of cardboard box building in the *Giardino Occupato* is also a process that mirrors or models the work of the achieved state of Israel's civilization in reducing the space for the Palestinians, then a parallel 'subjunctive' (future) tense is also at work in both these labours. Makhoul's project has been to set in train a development the results of which he will not be able to control – though he may have imagined the outcome. Utopian and science fiction writings have focused on this question of how to pose a possible future – a way of living 'otherwise,' as my epigraph indicates. Three types of such a place / time may perhaps be identified in this body of writing. The first, the most familiar perhaps, is the creation of a kind of *paradise*, in which a happy life is described as simply existing somewhere. The Biblical 'Garden of Eden' is the ur-form of this place / time. Makhoul's *Giardino Occupato* cannot escape some analogy to this – though only in the negative, in its refutation. If the Garden of Eden before the Fall is a 'Heaven' of sorts then its opposite is also implied: the 'Hell' below, and the cardboard city is a model or mirror of the Hell of refugee camps, life for Palestinians by the wall and in the territories now superintended by Israeli military and environmental control.

The second type of imagined world in utopian and science fiction writing is one made possible by an event beyond the control of humans – for instance, the arrival of enlightened alien beings or the consequences of a revolutionary discovery. Again, though, the 'dystopic' mode is immediately also brought to mind – the apocalyptic destruction of war brought from space or a biological disaster. The ever-diminishing space in the *Giardino Occupato* as the cardboard houses mount mirrors or models such a catastrophic loss of control for the Palestinians.[13] The third type is based on humanly-willed transformations intended to create a new kind of life. In this sense the makeshift poetry of the cardboard city that is built in the garden might stand as nothing less than a symbolic inversion of the consequences of Zionist belief in the 'God-given' Jewish homeland and in the appropriations of Palestinian life and land that this belief has necessarily entailed.

Heidegger is instructive, once again. If authentic dwelling and building are matters of poetry – 'a taking of measure for all measuring' – then true place is a matter of peace:

'The Old Saxon *wuon*, the Gothic *wunian* […] mean to remain, to stay in place. But the Gothic *wunian* says more distinctly how this remaining is to be experienced. *Wunian* means to be at peace, to be brought to peace, to remain at peace. The word for peace, *Friede*, means the free, das *Frye*; and *fry* means preserved from harm and danger, preserved *from* something, safeguarded. To free actually means to spare.' (italics in original) [14]

Consider the Palestinian village of Azun Atme, which has inadvertently found itself on the western side of the wall – neither in the West Bank, nor in the achieved state of Israel. This occurred because the building of the wall took into account illegal Israeli 'settlements' and so its trajectory moved eastwards to include these while also swallowing Azun Atme. Its people now require permits to go in and out of their own town, which is locked down at night like a prison camp. So, despite the internationally recognized illegality of the Jewish 'settlements,' the Palestinians are punished twice – their land was confiscated to make way for the wall and then they found their own freedom of movement severely restricted in order to 'protect' the colonizers. Emergency medical services have restricted access to Azun Atme, which is controlled by Israeli military personnel – it is they who decide when or if access will be permitted, allowing Palestinians movement only to other West Bank locations. [15]

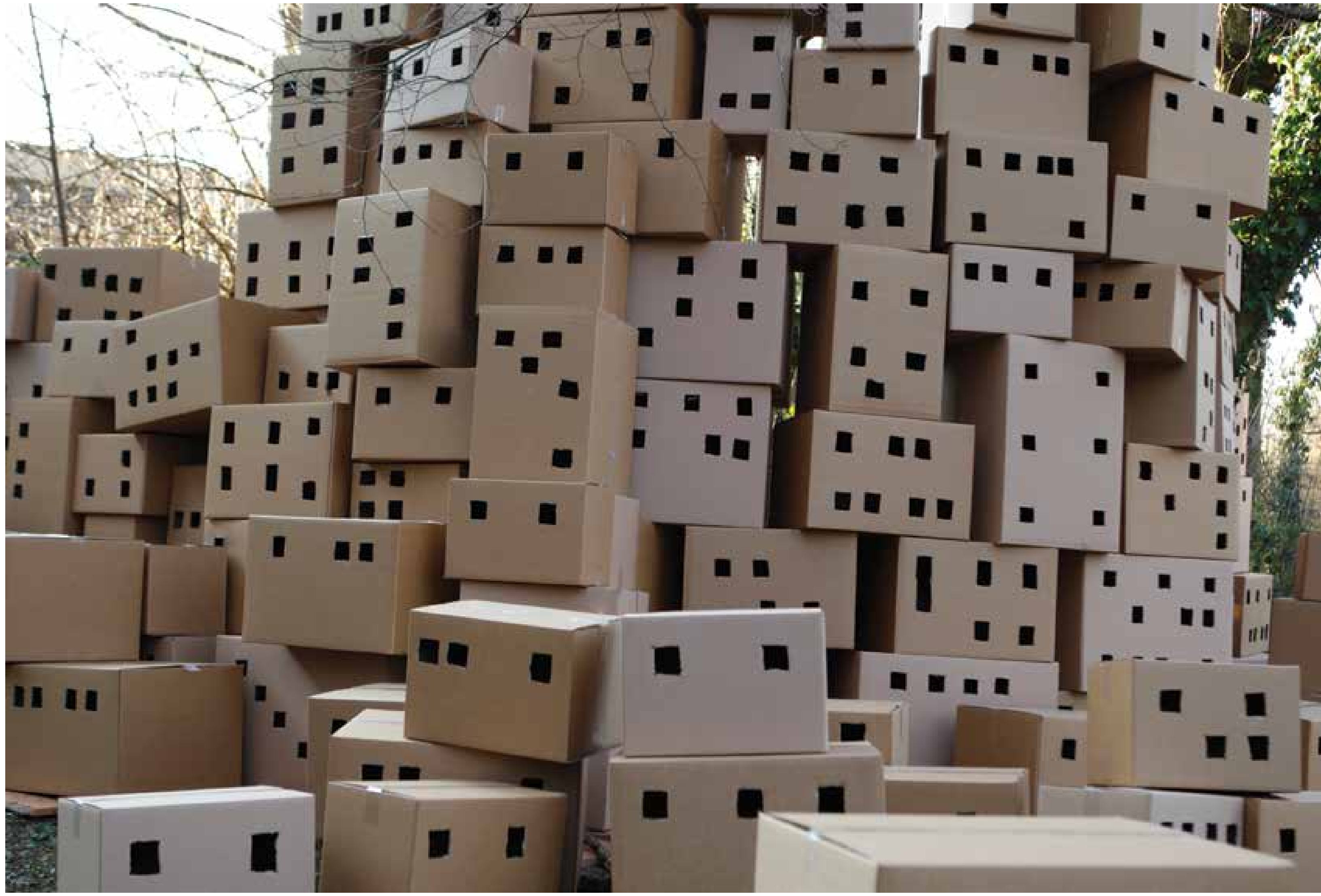
The land of the achieved state of Israel, it is clear, cannot really be separated from the activities of those who live and labour upon it. Makhoul's *Giardino Occupato* ('Makhoul' is also the name of the village in Galilee where the artist was born) simulates this interactive constitution: the taking and placing of the boxes, on the grass, below the trees and the sky, poetically recreates the place. The work performs, as I have suggested, a miniature version of Heidegger's reconciliation of thought with matter and time. John Locke, the English seventeenth century liberal philosopher, understood the then emerging idea of private property to depend upon this actual, but then later highly abstracted, sense of the mixing of labour with the earth – the modern notion of 'real estate' partly derives from it.[16] The placing of your box in the garden probably requires no great labour, a term whose earliest senses linked manual work (such as the ploughing of the land) with the experience of pain or trouble. The Latin origins of the word – *laborem* – are uncertain but may relate to a 'slipping' or 'staggering under a burden.' Labour meaning childbirth is a sixteenth century sense.

Qalqilia was once one of the West Bank's chief commercial centres. The wall now surrounds the city, again cutting in several kilometres from the Green

Line. Its people have been cut off from the towns and villages to the south and severely restricted in travel to the east and north. The wall has strangled Qalqilia's businesses, while around it, on the Israeli side, larger 'settlements' connected by a good infrastructure have burgeoned. Hassan Shqairo, a farmer on this land, established a successful nursery and a market for trees and flowers in the 1990s. The wall cut straight through his land and the market was levelled by the Israelis who concreted over the whole area. Ninety per cent of Hassan Shqairo's business was destroyed and he received no compensation from the achieved state of Israel. The nursery is now on the Israeli side of the wall and most of its customers are Israelis free to travel without the permits that the owner, a native of this land, himself needs to get to and from his business every day.[17]

The accumulation of cardboard box houses in the *Giardino Occupato* may seem to develop naturally, as one box is placed, carefully, in proximity to another and a sense of organic or pleasing overall structure is created. As a small child, brought up in a Catholic family, I used to help place the items in our Christmas *nativity* scene – figures, animals, the crib as well as the surrounding farm buildings. 'Nativity' is a synonym for birth, and has suggestions of innateness or naturalness (as well as a later connection to the idea of nation). In the era of nineteenth century colonialism, however, it developed its still strong negative meaning: the 'natives' or bondsmen, those born into bondage; the locals in servitude to the colonizers. Heidegger's sense of an authentic dwelling in a *place*, its poetry and peacefulness (though no doubt romanticized) recognizes the impact of colonization which reduces poetic place to abstracted and commodifiable space ripe for appropriation. His positive image is that of a bridge: 'As a thing,' he says, 'it allows a space into which earth and heaven, divinities and mortals, are admitted. The space allowed by the bridge contains many places variously near or far from the bridge.' But these places may, he notes, 'be treated as *mere* positions between which there lies a measurable distance […] Thus nearness and remoteness between men and things can become *mere* distance, *mere* intervals of intervening space'(my italics). [18]

The open, even ambiguous, symbolism of Makhoul's *Giardino Occupato* is reminiscent of some of the works of Christo and Jeanne-Claude, that artistic partnership also centrally concerned with the phenomenology of place, space



Bashir Makhoul, *Giardino Occupato. Detail in-situ, Corrugated cardboard, Size variable, 2013*
Photo Bashir Makhoul, Winchester © Bashir Makhoul.

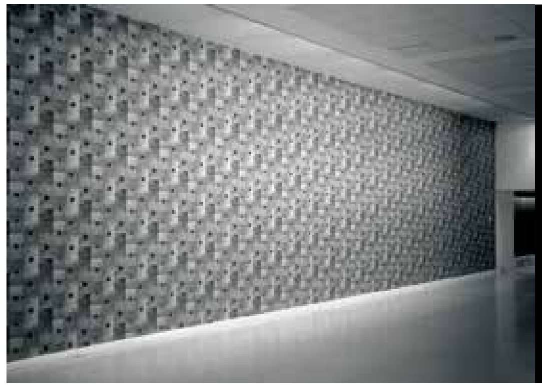
and the significance of human structures of many kinds. Labour on their 1975-85 *Pont Neuf Wrapped* project took ten years to come to fruition, a long time for an artwork perhaps, but not, as Christo pointed out, for an architect or an engineer actually trying to build a bridge and needing to get necessary permission from an array of different public agencies. With the *Pont Neuf Wrapped* project there is the suggestion of a symbolized utopian transcendence – in the sheer beauty of the resulting image of the wrapped bridge's living 'otherwise,' and in the sympathetic human collective productive capacities garnered temporarily in order to create the work. Christo, however, downplayed this symbolism. His concern was, he said, essentially 'practical,' though it inevitably suggests Heidegger's quiet sense of the moral poetry of true human structure.

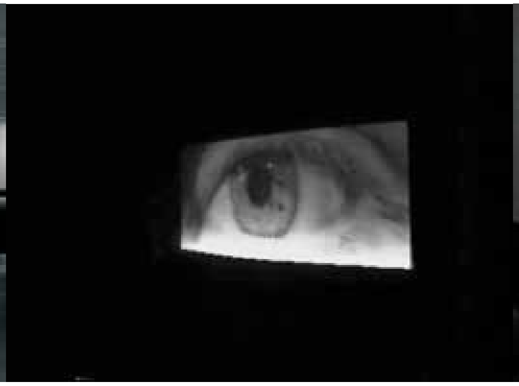
Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Pont Neuf Wrapped* re-visions the socio-spatial relations of the bridge and its connection to that part of Paris, and the people who inhabited it were core to their concerns. The legal and administrative issues related to the temporary use of that social and physical place, which they 'borrowed' from the state authorities and the people themselves, generated much of the work of which the bridge wrapping consisted.[19] The assiduous following of legal and civil procedures characteristic of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's works over many decades – always including extensive consultation with the people likely to be affected by their wrapping projects – is in salutary contrast with constructive Israeli illegality, violence and threat rendered negatively into symbolic form in Makhoul's cardboard city, mirror or model of the colonized spaces of *mere* nearness and remoteness left to the Palestinians.

All of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's wrapping projects, whether building- or landscape-centred, have involved these periods of negotiation, planning and contracting; processes of social interaction exposing official hierarchies and pecking orders. All, too, have involved questions of the relations between socio-political and geo-spatial territories, given the human legal ownership, though not ever total practical control, of the earth and its resources. The *Wrapped Coast, Little Bay, Australia* (1969), *Valley Curtain, Colorado* (1970-72) and *Running Fence, California* (1972-76) projects, though centred on features of landscape and ocean, all also entailed lengthy processes of consultation, public meetings and discussions with ranch and farm owners, public authorities and local residents.

This mode of 'relational aesthetic' working toward desired ends implied and required forms of collaborative, negotiable, respectful *civil* relation between artist and public. However, though eminently practical, this mode also afforded a model of ideal inter-relation: an image of human praxis that might be taken as a workable paradigm for all social relations in a radically differently organized society – one *otherwise* projected and displaced, certainly, from the dominant realities of the present, and of course from the present realities of the achieved state of Israel.[20] Makhoul's *Giardino Occupato* instantiates such a relation in its own Edenic practical poetry of placement.

The artist's earlier works, such as the installation *The Darkened Room* (1998) and the video work *Going Home* (2005), reveal, however, the underside to the playful constructiveness evident in the cardboard city in the garden. In the former, in a blacked out room a close-up video screen plays a recorded image of Makhoul's own eye, tracking the minute oscillations of its cornea and alterations in the colouring of the pupil and iris. A sound track plays a tape made by Makhoul's grandmother – forced by the Zionists to leave her home in Galilee to go to relative safety in Beirut, Lebanon in 1949. Classified himself as a 'non-Jewish Israeli' (the achieved state of Israel preceded Makhoul's own nativity), the artist was not allowed to visit his grandmother and, like many hundreds of thousands of other Palestinians, attempted to bridge the physical gap and create some


Points of View (detail; wallpaper) 1998


The Darkened Room (detail; video projection and audio installation) 1998

Going home (detail; video) 2005

intimacy in communication through the exchange of such tapes. *The Darkened Room* was made after his grandmother's death and records the length of time it took for Makhoul to produce a tear while listening again to her voice. *Going Home* also makes central a recorded voice, this time his mother's, while we watch video footage of the olive tree Makhoul inherited from his father who died in an agricultural accident when he was a small child. We see the tree at dusk and as the sky darkens to black the tree becomes barely visible. The story his mother relates concerns the circumstances of the passing of the tree from Makhoul's father to himself – and, in a sense, another bridge is created, symbolically reuniting the artist's parents.[21]

Consider, now, the Allenby Bridge, also known as the King Hussein Bridge. This is a crossing between Jordan and the Palestinian Authority town of Jericho in the West Bank – a crossing rarely ever actually open because the Israelis have overriding control over its use – where IDF security personnel stand hidden behind a one-way mirror, monitoring both the Palestinian border police before them and those wishing to cross through. This false or 'prosthetic sovereignty' fools very few who know that the 1993 Oslo Accords agreed to by the Palestinians under Yasser Arafat's leadership confirmed and performed their general subordination to the Israeli state in terms of territory, citizenship, and access to resources.[22] The bad poetry of the Allenby Bridge (remember Heidegger: 'The nearness and remoteness between men and things can become mere distance, mere intervals of intervening space') is an pertinent example through which to consider the generative relations between Makhoul's *Giardino Occupato* and his immediately preceding work, *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost*.

In one sense it is the Allenby Bridge that leads Palestinians finally to the cardboard city. A version of this city terminated the visitor's journey through *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost*'s maze of lenticular photographic panels that showed, simultaneously, as one moved past each panel, past and present images of Palestinian places, before and after British and then Israeli occupation. The shifting photographic images in this installation depict past and present moments in the cities and towns of the Palestinian Authority and in the achieved state of Israel. They represent the presence, within these imbricated territories, of another people whose own nation, Palestine, once existed, but whose images and symbols are also now a matter of ellipses, shifting shapes, places, meanings, peoples and plans.[23] The maze that is *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost* stands some comparison with the architecture of checkpoints and border crossings that both link together and divide Israel and the Palestinian Authority territories.

Take the Qalandia crossing for pedestrians between Jerusalem and Ramallah in the West Bank. This maze operates five stages in the circulation of its temporary occupants. These channels link iron turnstiles, x-ray gates, more turnstiles, inspection booths, and then x-ray machines for bags. Palestinians negotiating this structure are hailed by the Israeli guards and other security personnel by loudspeaker and move through its locks controlled by remote controlled gates. The glass panels enabling Israeli surveillance and operation of the crossing are so thick that they prevent the Palestinians seeing the humans responsible for their transit through or detention in it. The architecture of this structure instructively embodies the hieratic architecture of visibilities and invisibilities that the Israeli state has created, maintains and constantly refines in its dealings with the Palestinians.[24] *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost* is both a meditation upon, and a simulation of, this structure or 'logic of the visible' in Israel, and its connections to power and Palestine.

But *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost*, like *Giardino Occupato*, also has a playful, poetic character. While voluntarily 'lost' in its diverting maze, a temporary loss of sense of direction can be enjoyable, even exhilarating. Much contemporary art, after all, simply reaffirms where we know we are already and feeds our persisting appetites. In contrast, real insecurities of place and position in art, as in a social order, can be deeply threatening. Bruce Nauman's three constructed 'situations,' *Performance Corridor*, *Live-Taped Video Corridor*, and *Touch and Sound Walls* (all 1969) utilized a provisional but effective architecture (like Makhoul's installations) but instead tightly regulated the movement of spectators allied to a specular regime of more or less enforced 'looking,' 'seeing' and 'being seen.' Note the differences between these terms. Looking is an adopted physical disposition of attentiveness (though we also adopt a 'look' in terms of how we dress and wish to appear, look, to others). We think of seeing, however, as an intellectual ('perspectival') as well as a sensorial/censorial ability – there are things, that is, we (and the Israeli state) believe simply should not be seen. The spectators' unease generated in Nauman's

Bashir Makhoul, *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost*. Detail in-situ, Yang Gallery in the '798' arts district, Beijing, *Size variable, 2012.* Photo Ray Yang

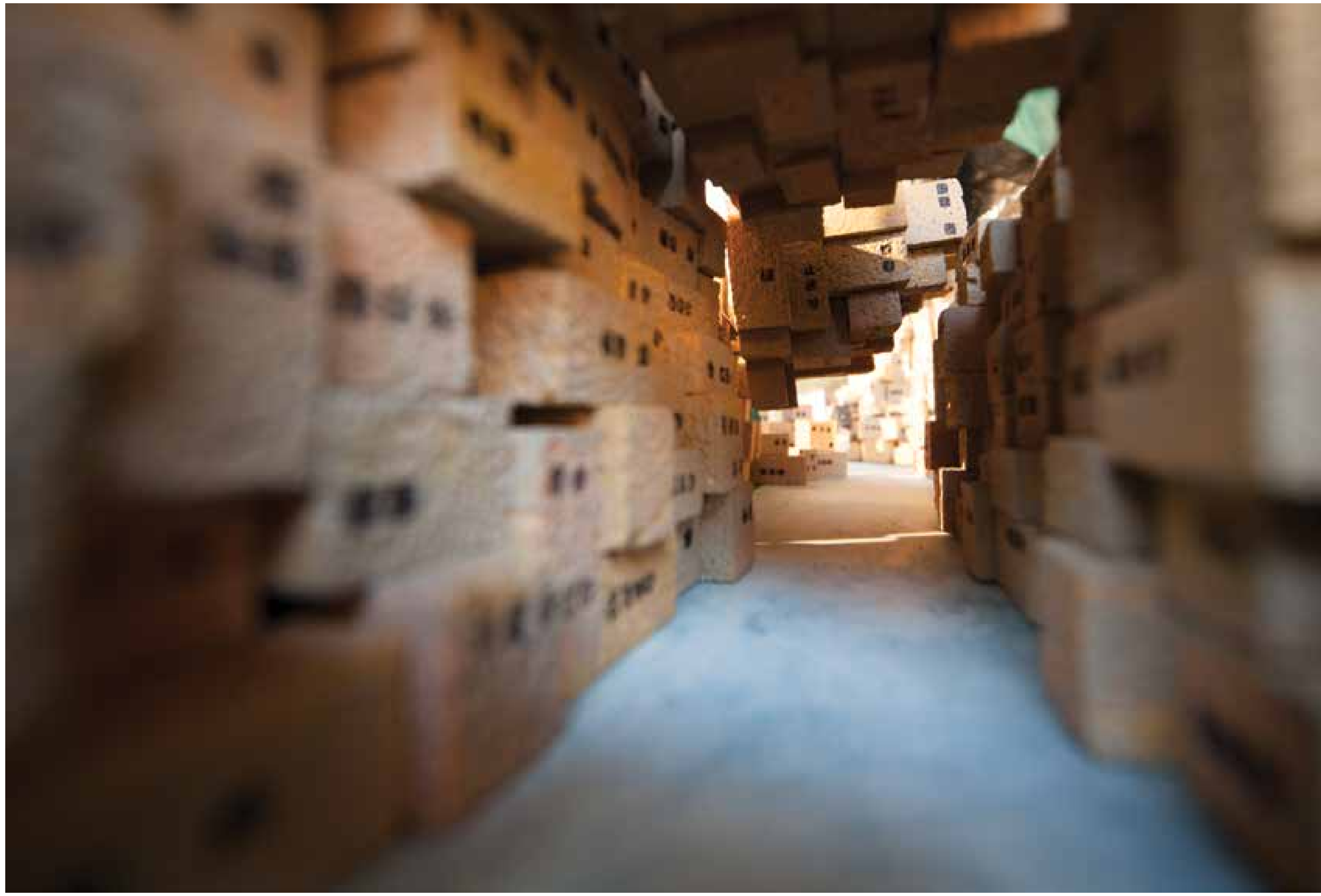
'situations' partly arose from a too-closely bound up self-awareness of both looking and seeing oneself being looked at, as well as being exposed as having a 'look' visible to too closely proximate others (the video time-delays added to these disturbing confusions of place, position, identity and appearance).

The shift from play and poetry to implied threat can be sudden and disconcerting. This is a device Makhoul utilizes in many of his works. *Points of View* (1997), for example, is a series of decorative wallpaper panels which, upon closer inspection, are seen to be composed of serial photographic prints of bullet holes in the walls of buildings in Beirut in Lebanon. But these images, when serialized and recreated as wallpaper, appear to return to something of the domesticity from which they came – after all they were bullets fired into the walls of other cardboard houses. Like *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost* the bullet entry wallpaper effects a shift in focus, or, better, creates a simultaneous multi-focus: not on spectacular destruction but on small-scale human experiences, such as that of his grandmother's, whose home in Beirut he saw for the first time while taking these photographs.[25] Similarly, Abdullah Mahmoud, from the village of Jubarah, lives in a place now isolated on the western side of the Israeli wall, which cuts eastwards here five kilometres from the Green Line. The wall has consumed 300 *dunams* (plots of land) from Jubarah and altogether made 9,000 inaccessible to Palestinians from the neighbouring villages. The Israelis forbid people originally from Jubarah to move back to the village now – under the guise of 'security' – ensuring that the village will eventually die. The division the wall has created is both physical (visible) and administrative-coercive. [26]

Another wall, the Berlin Wall, was erected in 1961 to prevent citizens from East Germany crossing into the zones of the city controlled by the Americans and their allies. This wall both expressed and deepened the Cold War division of Berlin and Germany within the superpower conflict between the USA and the Soviet Union. Christo and Jeanne-Claude erected their own *Iron Curtain – Wall of Oil Barrels*, again, though, with official permission, in the Rue Visconti in Paris a year later, in what was an early artistic commentary on the aesthetics and politics of the Berlin Wall. Seemingly ambivalent or 'neutral,' this practical, temporary, even playful, division of a street by a high stack of coloured oil barrels both roughly imitated and yet might be thought to have offered a critique of the Berlin Wall itself – though the meaning of the action in blocking the Paris street for a number of hours overnight still resists any simple or singular reading. The structure they built, however, focused upon an act and situation elsewhere – the construction and maintenance of the Berlin Wall – which had both reflected and produced extremely powerful practical, ideological, social and emotive effects, within that city and its population, divided Germany, Western Europe and the Cold War world beyond.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Iron Curtain - Wall of Oil Barrels* worked through a 'distancing' device which both literally separated – physically dividing the street in Paris – and drew attention, metaphorically, to the action of the Berlin Wall, using its different formal materials 'poetically,' via a *verfremdungseffekt* ('making strange') device.[27] *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost* performed a congruent action, leading us to reconsider the socio-political meanings of quotidian terms and preconceptions such as 'walls,' 'doors,' 'roads,' 'barriers,' 'partitions,' 'beginnings' and 'endings'. It did so both to entertain and to prompt critical thought. The so-called 'making strange' devices associated with twentieth century avant-garde artistic practice included juxtaposition and dissonance in compositional (ordering) strategies. The lenticular panels central to the experience of *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost* materialize this principle, combining as they do historically disparate and opposed images – pasts and presents of Palestinian life held visually together within acts of vision which themselves mutate as the spectator moves along the walls that channel their progression through the maze. The 'maze' here, however, refers as much to the fate of the Middle East within the logic of the Cold War and to the history of the Palestinians since the *Nakbah*, as it does to the actual warrens of paths in their towns and the playful-yet-serious mirror or model of these in both *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost* and the *Giardino Occupato*.

The latter's use of cardboard, an arte povera material, leads to another potential form of *verfremdungseffekt*, while the cardboard shoe box has been utilized in other works with 'relational aesthetic' implications, such as Gabriel Orozco's 1993 *The Empty Shoe Box* exhibited at Tate Modern in London in 2011. Here it was left largely to be ignored or kicked around by visitors to the museum, most barely or unaware that it had the status of an artwork.[28] Outside of the museum's walls, in the garden of an art school, cardboard may accrue other meanings and



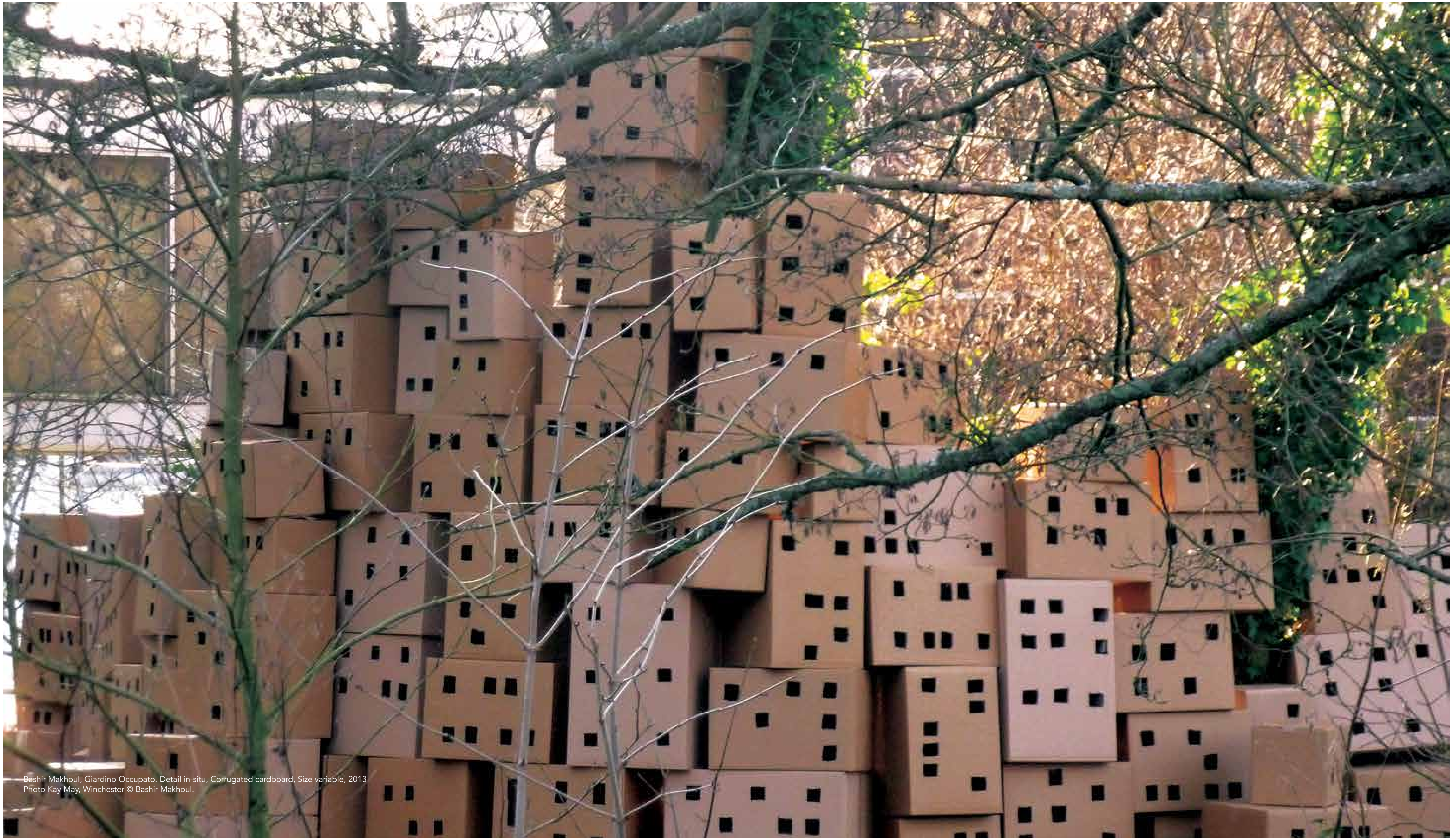
Bashir Makhoul, *Giardino Occupato. model, Size variable, 2013*
Photo Ray Yang, Winchester © Bashir Makhoul.

Bashir Makhoul, *Giardino Occupato. Detail in-situ, Corrugated cardboard, Size variable, 2013*
Photo Alexander Makhoul, Winchester © Bashir Makhoul.

uses – those both literal and metaphoric. Its practicality as a versatile material for preservative constructions of many kinds is alluded to in Makhoul's work. In New Zealand after the earthquake in 2011, a cardboard based structure was erected to serve as a temporary cathedral to replace the one destroyed in the disaster. An A-frame building was built from 600 millimetre diameter cardboard tubes, coated with polyurethane and flame retardants, able to hold 700 people. [29] In this sense, Makhoul's cardboard box city created by the serendipitous placements of those who visit the art school may be understood to be as much a dense text or texture of ideas as it is an accumulation of objects. The substance is a by-product of wood, and the Latin word *codex* originally referred to a block of wood that could be split into leaves or tablets. 'Text' itself derives from the Latin *texere*, 'to weave.' Hence it is possible to see how damaging oppositions drawn between a 'practical' and an 'aesthetic' function – as Heidegger's notion of poetry indicates – are oblivious to the constructive, textual qualities inherent in both.

As a versatile and cheap material, cardboard could be described as *utilitarian*, a term which carries the pejorative undertow of 'only practical.' Yet the origins of this term and its development into a philosophical system by J.S. Mill and Jeremy Bentham in the nineteenth century contained powerful elements of political radicalism. Utility and utilitarianism could be used as arguments *against* definitions of social purpose which excluded the interests of a majority of people, or which asserted the overarching value of a particular social system, or of a god, over all people. 'The greatest happiness of the greatest number of people' was the objective of the Utilitarians, and it is ironic that, instead, a caricatured notion of utility has become the day-to-day theory of bureaucratic, industrial capitalist societies, including that of the achieved state of Israel.[30] The sheer ugliness of the wall they have built against the Palestinians is exemplary. Muneera Amr lives in her home in Mas'ha, an hour's drive north of Jerusalem. The wall and electric fence surrounds her house on three sides, while the fourth is now a wall of new homes built by Jewish 'settlers.' An IDF patrol road also runs through her property. Muneera Amr and her family have stayed on their land in their home but they have faced retaliations, including regular midnight searches by the army.[31]

Makhoul's *Giardino Occupato* points in two directions at once, then. On the one hand, to the physical, visual and moral ugliness of the social order the Israelis



Bashir Makhoul, Giardino Occupato. Detail in-situ, Corrugated cardboard, Size variable, 2013
Photo Kay May, Winchester © Bashir Makhoul.

have built (for themselves as much as for the Palestinians) and yet, on the other, to the potential re-creative capacities of humans freely and collectively engaged, symbolized by the cardboard city arising in the garden. This 'double-coding' militates against the dichotomy between utility and art, which forces apart critical and poetic reflection from practical value. The city in cardboard in the garden may be seen romantically, or in some ways as *picturesque* – after all its final form will be consumed by many simply as image, rather than as a three dimensional construction within which one could walk. Yet the ideal and whole sense of 'use', recovered from its demeaned significance in capitalist society, insists on the unity of practical and poetic functions. Further, utility cannot be separated from equality and peace.

Listen to Heidegger again, this time on the issue of the need to build new homes. 'However hard and bitter, however hampering and threatening the lack of houses remains,' he noted, 'the real plight of dwelling does not lie merely in a lack of houses […] What if man's homelessness consisted in this, that man does not even think of the *real* plight of dwelling as *the* plight?'(italics in originals) [32] A 'plight' is a difficult or unfortunate predicament, a set of circumstances deeply affecting if not absolutely determining what may happen next. The term seems to have come into English from the old French words *ploit* or *pleit*, meaning a fold. It is related to 'convolution' – a fold again, or turn, a twist. The definition of 'equality' – of level, and perhaps of justness (from the Latin *aequus*) – moved from a matter of measuring physical quantity to a social concern in the fifteenth century with equivalence of rank.[33] By the eighteenth century, with revolutions in France and the USA, the term was radicalized again to refer to the idea of a universal condition, that 'all men are born equal.' This was not the claim that all men have the *same* attributes or abilities, but rather a recognition that they are all equally valuable as human beings. The revolutionary constitution of these societies depended on the removal of inherited privileges in order that all men should start with equal opportunity.

We know, of course, that these beliefs, written into constitutions, related in only bitterly tangential ways to the actual socio-political forces and interests predominant in these emerging states, whose leaders used the rhetoric of 'equalitarian' and 'egalitarian' demands within highly partial manoeuvres for power and control. But the creation of the foundational texts supposedly underpinning these revolutions shared something with Makhoul's *Giardino Occupato*: they formed *subjunctive* propositions. That is, their purpose was to set out a path of development that was *wished*, or *hypothetical*, rather than known in advance. They involved senses of a probability of actions calculated on the basis of constitutive knowledge ('we hold these truths to be self-evident'), within a particular, contingent historical predicament, and a known set of resources. Similarly, all men and women are born equal to choose a cardboard box and decide where to place it in the garden, though their decisions are affected by some pre-existing constraints – for example, the sizes of cardboard boxes available, the length of the queue of people lining up to enter the garden, the clusters of cardboard houses already occupying space. Some other possible constraints on visitor's actions could not be determined by the artist or the building and its grounds: for instance, the rainy or windy weather on the day you decide to visit, the hazardous behaviour of foxes and birds in the garden, whether the Euro or dollar in your pocket was able to support your trip to Venice in the first place.

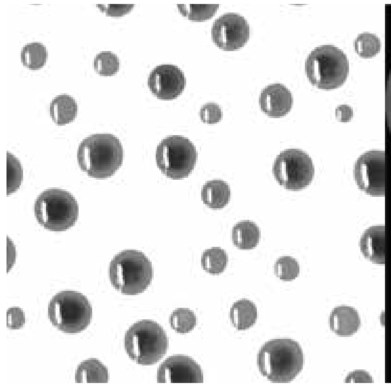
Contrast this situation with the plight of Said Eid Zwahra and his family. Said was born in his home in 1938, just south of Jerusalem (in what is now the occupied West Bank), a decade before the achievement of the state of Israel. In 1993 Israeli officials photographed his house, which has two bedrooms. He has since been forbidden to make any additions or renovations to his home on penalty of a fine and a demolition order (for which Said will be required to pay). Thirty-six members of his family now live there, including fifteen children. Opposite the house the Israelis have built the colony of Har Homa, in violation of international law. While Said is forbidden to build onto his own home or on his 28 *dunams* of land, the colony has stolen five *dunams* of his land for its own expansion. Meanwhile, behind Said's house, the wall has cut his family off from the Palestinian community of Beit Sahour, requiring them to acquire permits to travel – using expensive taxis – to get to school, hospital services and to visit their relations in the village. The Israelis do not allow them to bring meat and dairy products from Beit Sahour to their home and restrict the amount of fruit and vegetables they can carry. The so-called 'Humanitarian' permits that they are granted in order to travel into Jerusalem forbid them from driving or working in the city but they are allowed to buy more expensive food there.[34] The Jewish authorities have tried to bribe Said Eid Zwahra to leave his home, but the family will not go.

Israel has now achieved effective control over more than 90 per cent of historic Palestine.[35] Many international organizations have recognized the creation of a de facto apartheid state in Israel and some internal groups of Jews have joined with the Palestinians. The Israeli Coalition Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) is a non-violent, direct action group that works in close co-operation with local Palestinian organizations in the occupied territories. The state of Israel demolishes two kinds of Palestinian houses. The first group is those that contravene planning laws and the second those that contravene military penal codes. ICAHD estimates that more than 24,000 homes have been destroyed by the Israeli government since 1967. This is in direct contravention of the 4th Geneva Convention which prohibits occupying powers from carrying out collective punishments and destroying property belonging to natives.[36] The practical indivisibility of land, peace, equality and freedom has been recognized for many centuries by some radical political organizations (such as the Levellers in England in the seventeenth century), constitutions, political parties, philosophers, and artists. Less so, however, by architects and planners.

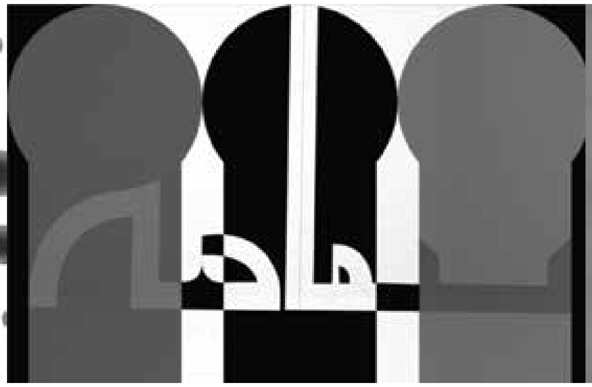
Heidegger's 'poetics of construction' embodies the realization of this indivisibility. 'A space is something that has been made room for,' he observes:

> something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary, Greek *peras.* A boundary is not that at which something stops but […] the boundary is that from which something *begins its presencing* […] Space is in essence that for which room has been made, that which is let into its bounds […] *Accordingly, spaces receive their being from locations, not from 'space.'*(italics in original) [37]

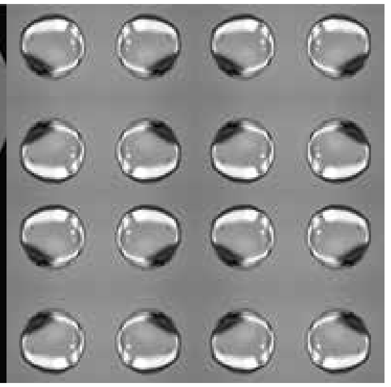
In English the word 'place' contains more fully the sense that Heidegger was trying to communicate in German, for which 'space' is an inadequate misrepresentation. We think of 'space' as abstract, divisible, and rather characterless – unless it is qualified in conjunctions such as 'theatre space' or 'gallery space.' These terms, actually, partially convert 'space' into 'place': an actual, humanly used, and bounded area, which might be a room, a building, or include the grounds of a building, or part of a conglomerate of buildings such as a street or square. Makhoul's *Giardino Occupato*, as a subjunctive, or 'wished for' artwork created through the actions of those who pick and place a cardboard box in the garden,



One Drop of My Blood (detail; photograph) 1999



Intifada (acrylic on canvas) 300cm x 200cm, 1990



One Drop of My Water (photograph) 200cm x 200cm, 1999

demonstrates the principle that Heidegger is pointing to as the grounds for the moral poetry of construction and human living, that which he called 'dwelling.' The 'rightness' of where and how to build should be based, he is insisting, upon a moral core.

The Israeli state has turned its appropriation of space, place and architecture into a mode of violence. It has, as I have noted in discussion of its *threat* to demolish Palestinian homes, created its own dismal 'subjunctive' – a future that will be very tense. Violence is an emotive word, with a stratification of linked but sometimes confusing meanings. Its primary sense is immediate physical assault, but violence is also carried out remotely, through bombs, missiles, and bulldozers. The term, however, is often used by one force to describe the actions of its enemy. Ostensibly *legitimate* force, good force, usually describes its own violence as 'defence' – hence the 'Israeli Defence Force.' The root of the term lies in the Latin *violentia*, closer to our senses now of 'vehemence' and 'impetuosity,' terms denoting intensity or volatility, not physical attack. The link to 'violation' is also vivid in the word violence, with the clear meaning of 'rape' in French. Violation in a broader sense, however, means a 'breaking into,' with the also clear sense of a boundary or border being broken. It is telling that within virtually all Makhoul's works over several decades, the motif of literally or metaphorically permeable boundaries recurs – the walls in the lenticular panels in *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost*, the blasted walls of houses in *Points of View*, the membranes of blood droplets in *One Drop of My Blood* (1999) and the surface tension molecules in *One Drop* *of My Water* (1999), the cornea wall of his eye in *The Darkened Room*, and the decorative surfaces of abstracted figure/ground patterns dating back to his first paintings made in England in the 1990s, such as *Intifada* (1990) and *Jerusalem* (1991). Makhoul's *Giardino Occupato* thus continues a personal and artistic history ineluctably bound up with the artist's life lived both inside and outside of the realities of being Palestinian – busily occupied, still, with his own trauma (from the Greek τραῦμα, 'wound') of a place violated.

Antoinette Knesevich teaches music in the Aida refugee camp, two kilometres north of Bethlehem in the central occupied West Bank. She lives in a home nearby, from which her family had 80 *dunams* confiscated by the Israelis when the wall was built. 'They can build walls,' she says, 'and surround us like animals or prisoners, but the wall will not bring them security – only justice will bring that. They have taken our land. They have taken our water. They have taken our rights. But written on every forehead of our people is "I am a Palestinian." In our veins runs Palestinian blood. The Israelis cannot take this from us.'[38] Makhoul's work has always involved a critical exploration of structures of different kinds, including the structures of resistance to Israel built by Palestinians. Too often, he has argued, their representatives have simply, and damagingly, mirrored the actions and objectives of the Israelis themselves.[39] In a way, as I have claimed, *Giardino Occupato* attempts to depict the negative, or inverse, of the complex structure of oppression built by the achieved state of Israel – the structures, that is, of individual houses, conglomerate developments ('cities') and the physical-administrative-military nation state as a whole.

'Structure' derives originally from the Latin *struere*: 'to build.' Like 'civilization,' structure was originally a noun of process – the action of building, 'to structure.' It contains some important related senses, referring to the whole product that is a building *and* to the manner or form of construction. Because of this double meaning, it has lent itself to a very wide range of ambiguities and extended uses. Distinct from *function* structure contains a strong sense of internality: the relations between constituent parts. By the late nineteenth century it had accrued a clear opposition – in the language of engineers and architects – to the 'decorative;' structure here meant utility and internal order. The sense of active, dynamic and possibly transformative process became repressed. In linguistics, structuralism

Bashir Makhoul, *Giardino Occupato. Detail in-situ, Corrugated cardboard, Size variable, 2013*
Photo Bashir Makhoul, Winchester © Bashir Makhoul.

developed as a purported science of 'deep' or 'permanent' structures and ignored the question of how change did or might occur in language and meanings.[40] The decisive value of structural analyses in all areas of knowledge had been in its attempts to turn over unconsidered habits and erroneous preconceptions. But the danger it created – especially in the study of the arts and social life – was that of a reification of dynamic human relationships, abstracted into fixed or mechanical patterns.

Makhoul's works have always sought practical and poetic means to radicalize the question of dynamic process in both his art and in the making of new Palestinian identities. This recognition of plurality and continuing pluralization – of 'Palestines' and 'Palestinians' proliferating inside and outside of the achieved state of Israel, the occupied territories, the Palestinian Authority; in Europe, the USA and the world beyond – is itself subjunctive, hypothetical, contingent, wished for. *Giardino Occupato* is this work's most recent manifestation, a form-specific deliberation on the interconnections of land, peace, equality and freedom in the present Palestinian plight, but its future tense – like that of the Palestinians – is one that allows, and requires, creative reconstruction.

Pick up your box, then, and place it where you will in the garden.

Endnotes

1. Raymond Williams, 'Utopia and Science Fiction,' in Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (Verso, London: 1980): 196-212 (209).
2. Makhoul has explored the symbolic properties of blood in the photographic works *One Drop of My Blood* (1999) and *One Centimetre of My Blood* (1999), discussed later in my essay. See Lewis Biggs, 'Hold,' in August Jordan Davis and Jonathan Harris (eds.), *Bashir Makhoul* (Palestinian Art Court – al Hoash, Jerusalem: 2012): 80-103.
3. Held 17 March – 15 April 2012. *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost* catalogue ISBN 978-981-07-1606-6 published by the Yang Gallery, Beijing. See Jonathan Harris,' "Visible but unverifiable:" spectacles of power and Palestine in *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost*' and Ryan Bishop, 'Spectres of perception, or the illusion of having the time to see: the geopolitics of objects, apprehension and movement in Bashir Makhoul's *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost*,' in Davis and Harris (eds.) Bashir Makhoul: 206-247.
4. See the biographically informative dialogue of Bashir Makhoul and Gordon Hon, 'Found in Conflict,' in Davis and Harris (eds.) *Bashir Makhoul*: 138-205.
5. David Owen, 'Returning Time: The Political Art of Bashir Makhoul,' in Davis and Harris (eds.) *Bashir Makhoul*: 104-115.
6. See, e.g., William Parry, *Against the Wall: The Art of Resistance in Palestine* (Pluto Press, London: 2010) and Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (Verso, London: 2007).
7. On the egregiously euphemistic use of this term by Israeli Zionists conducting illegal land grabs in Palestinian areas, see Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman, *A Civilian Occupation: The Politics of Israeli Architecture* (Verso and Babel, London and Tel Aviv: 2002).
8. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Fontana Press, London: 1983): 55-7.
9. On refugee camps for Palestinians outside of Israel, see the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East website at http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=73
10. Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (Harper and Row, London: 1971 trans. A. Hofstadter): 227.
11. Parry, *Against The Wall*: 106-7. The 'Green Line' refers to the demarcation created in the 1949 armistice agreement between Israel and the contiguous countries (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria) after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. The Green Line also denotes the division between Israel and the occupied territories captured in the 1967 Six-Day War, including the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula (the last was returned to Egypt as part of the 1979 Israel-Egypt peace treaty).
12. Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*: 57-60.
13. The literature on utopias and dystopias is vast. See, e.g., Fredric Jameson's *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (Verso: London and New York, 2007) and Erik Olin Wright's *Envisioning Real Utopias* (Verso: London and New York, 2010).
14. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*: 148-9.
15. Parry, *Against The Wall*: 113-7.
16. Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*: 177.
17. Parry, *Against The Wall*: 100.

18. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*: 155.
19. Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Interview with Barbaralee Diamondstein, *Inside the Art World* (Rizzoli: New York, 1994): 35, 36.
20. Richard Serra's 1981 outdoor sculpture *Tilted Arc* came to symbolize the dystopian realities of corporate-commissioned art projects (in this case a sense of utter dissatisfaction felt in the end both by the voiced representatives of 'the public,' for whom the artwork had been nominally acquired and sited, and the artist himself, who decided to have his own work removed after the legal battles, and whose displacement, Serra noted, meant the effective destruction of the work). See Nick Kaye (ed.), *Site Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (Routledge: London, 2000): 2 and Clara Weyergraf-Serra and Martha Buskirk (eds.), *The Destruction of Tilted Arc: Documents* (October Books/MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass, 1991).
21. See Makhoul and Hon, 'Found in Conflict,' in Davis and Harris (eds.) *Bashir Makhoul*: 173-5 and Sean Cubitt, 'The Churning of the Waters,' in Davis and Harris (eds.) *Bashir Makhoul*: 60-79 (73-8).
22. Gaza-Jericho Agreement, Annex I: Protocol Concerning Withdrawal of Israeli Military Forces and Security Arrangements, Article X: Passages, http//telaviv.usembassy.gov/publish/peace/gjannex1 and Azmi Bishara *Checkpoints: Fragments of a Story* (Babel Press: Tel Aviv, 2006).
23. See, e.g., Neil Asher Silberman *Between Past and Present: Archaeology, Ideology and Nationalism in the Modern Middle East* (Holt: New York, 1989) and Nadia Abu El-Haj *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 2001).
24. Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land*: 151-2.
25. Makhoul and Hon, 'Found in Conflict,' in Davis and Harris (eds.) *Bashir Makhoul*: 158-61.
26. Parry, *Against The Wall*:121-3.
27. Ernst Bloch, 'Enfremdung, Verfremdung: Alienation, Estrangement' trans. Anne Halley and Darko Suvin, *The Drama Review* vol. 15, no.1 (Autumn, 1970 [1962]): 120-125.
28. http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2011/feb/07gabriel-orozco-tate-modern
29. http://www.designboom.com/architecture/shigeru-ban-new-zealand-quake-city-cardboard-cathedral
30. Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*: 327-9.
31. Parry, *Against The Wall*: 102-3.
32. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*: 161.
33. Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*: 117-9.
34. Parry, *Against The Wall*: 148.
35. Parry, *Against The Wall*: 149.
36. Parry, *Against The Wall*: 31 and http://www.icahd.org/
37. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*: 154.
38. Parry, *Against The Wall*: 40.
39. Makhoul and Hon, 'Found in Conflict,' in Davis and Harris (eds.) *Bashir Makhoul*: e.g., 138-42.
40. One of the most well-known tracts written against this position was the social historian E.P. Thompson's *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (Monthly Review Press, New York: 1980).

THE RETURN

SARAH ROGERS

The setting is poignantly sparse. Under the occasional eye of a silent, watchful female guard and a single, glaring light, two men in red t-shirts with the labels "revolutionary" sit at an empty desk - the omnipresent symbol of bureaucracy. Directly facing two fixed video cameras, the men deliver the same impassioned speech into a stationary microphone. Displayed on a two-monitor installation, the double recordings (two actors, one speech) are haunting in their contextual ambiguity and allusion to German writer Franz Kafka's 1915 novel, *The Trial*. Indeed, displayed on the wall behind the twin monitors are 24 drawings in red: stills from the video, suggestive of courtroom sketches. Yet as the spoken words of the seated men mediate between the eyes of the guard and those of the camera, their speech is continuously disrupted: the guard provides water; someone delivers papers; the speaker fumbles over his words and exits the camera's view. He returns, takes a different seat, and begins speaking, only to stutter again. Although the speech seems to be cohesive in its content, the men begin at different point each time; the origin and destination continually shift: Bertolt Brecht interrupting Franz Kafka.

The video concludes with each man humming *The Internationale* and a brief text detailing the 1973 trial of Palestinian Israeli poet and intellectual, Daud Turki. An Arab nationalist and Marxist, Turki was a member of the Revolutionary Communist Alliance-Red Front. After a trip to Damascus to allegedly meet with Syrian military intelligence, Turki, along with 23 other Red Front party members, was arrested, interrogated, and charged with collaborating with the enemy and espionage against the State of Israel. Turki was sentenced to seventeen years in prison. He was released on May 20 1985 as part of the Galilee prison exchange between Israel and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. On March 8 2009, Turki passed away in his childhood town of Haifa, a city located within the 1967 borders of Israel.

Aissa Deebi's installation, *The Trial*, produced for the 2013 exhibition *Otherwise Occupied* at the Venice Biennale, revisits the deposition of Turki. In certain respects, the installation's blunt Socialist references are historical. The Red Front, established just a year before Turki's arrest, was a splinter of the Israeli Socialist Organization, also known as Matzpen. Certainly, the videos together with the related courtroom sketches mobilize a deceptively straightforward approach to

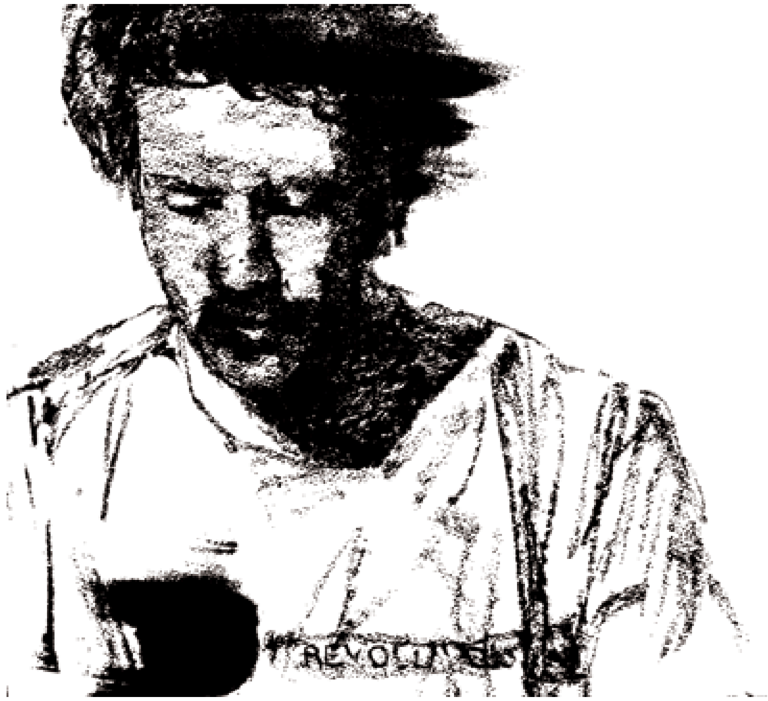
Aissa Deebi, *The Trail*, 15 min 2 channel video installation 2013

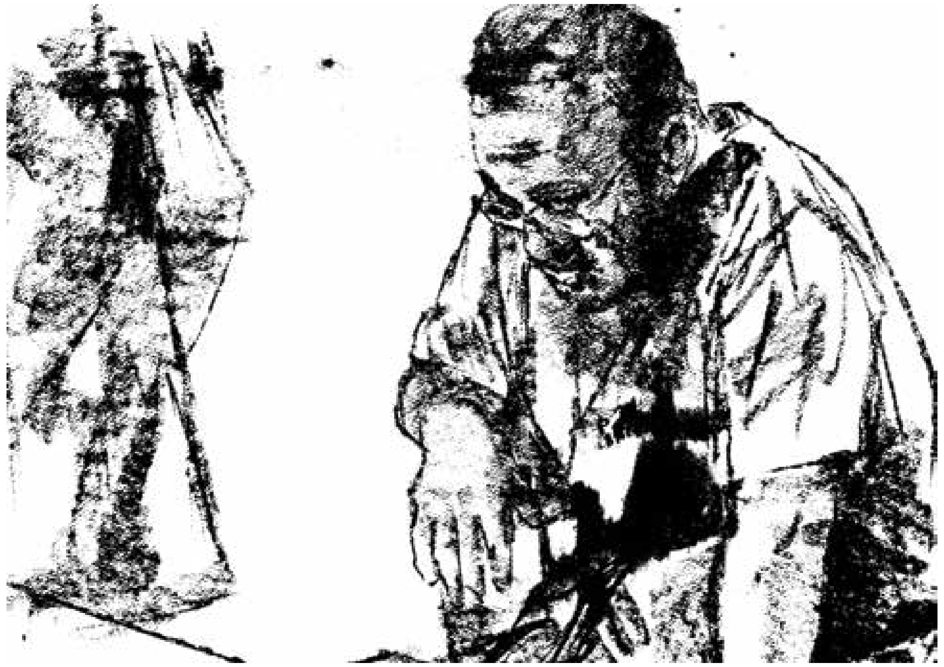
revisiting the historical episode of Turki's trial. Yet the illusion of the documentary genre is not because Deebi relies on the blurring of fictional and historical boundaries to reflect critically on official narratives – a well-worn strategy among contemporary artists. Instead, the installation's generative force derives not from a purportedly seamless approach to history but rather from Deebi's strategic use of Brechtian theater tactics: the twentieth century German playwright and poet Bertolt Brecht, a Marxist no less, is famed for the deliberate disruption of the willing suspension of disbelief in theater. In *The Trial*, Deebi's continual disturbance of the possibility of the viewer's absorption in the re-enactment of Turki's deposition mirrors the contemporary perspective's inability to believe in the radical utopian vision for Israel and Palestine determinedly professed by Turki.

IMAGINING A DIFFERENT PRESENT: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE RED FRONT

Also known as Abu Aida (the father of Aida), Daud Turki was born to a Palestinian Christian family in the village of al-Maghar in Galilee. He grew up in Haifa, where his father was shot by British troops during the 1936-39 Palestinian Arab uprisings against the British Mandate (1920-48). After the 1948 establishment of the State of Israel, Turki and his family fled Haifa for the Druze village of Beit Jan. A founding member of the Palestinian Communist Party branch in Haifa, Turki joined the Israeli Communist Party Maki after 1948. He was expelled in 1963 for his pro-China views and his insistence on the right of return for Palestinians. In turn, he joined Matzpen, established as the Israeli Socialist Organization in 1962 by former members of the Israeli Communist Party. Turki's individual story unfolds within the broader history of Matzpen.

The founders of Matzpen comprised a small group of Jews born in either Jerusalem or Tel Aviv during the 1930s and who had grown up with the Zionist Youth Movements whose revolutionary socialist vision later endeared them to the Communist Party. By the early sixties, however, the party's platform failed to appeal to the founders of Matzpen, most of whom had been expelled or left





REVOLUTION
REVOLUTIONARY

Aissa Deebi, *The Trail*, 15 min 2 channel video installation 2013

due to a perception of the party as anti-democratic in organization and more of a declared alliance with the USSR than a revolutionary movement with the goal of radically changing society. Announcing their address with the newspaper Matzpen ("compass" in Hebrew and the name for which the organization became known), the Israeli Socialist Organization explicitly declared itself as anti-Zionist and anti-capitalist. Against the monolithic political ideology of the Communist Party, Matzpen accepted any belief within the position of anti-Zionism and anti-capitalism.

A self-declared minor political party within Israel (the party dissolved around the 1980s although its members remain in close contact with one another and are individually active), Matzpen represents an extraordinarily significant moment in the histories of anti-Zionism and the Communist Party in Israel.1 As scholars have elucidated, the inception of the Zionist movement in the late nineteenth century posed an acute problem for the Communist movement of 1917 and the formation of the Third International (Comintern) in 1919.2 Lenin's 1920 theses on the national and colonial question called upon communist parties to back revolutionary movements and the struggle against European and American Imperialism. Support of Zionism and Jewish immigration to Palestine was thus considered to sustain British Imperialism. In a 1946 Statement submitted by the Communist Party to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, "European Jewry and the Palestine Problem," the party stresses the need to divorce the issues of anti-semitism and Jewish migration to Palestine.3 According to the statement, unlimited immigration to Palestine would, in effect, only compromise the position of Jews who do not immigrate by positioning them as aliens in their countries of residence. Furthermore, the claim to Palestine as a Jewish national state would alienate it within a predominantly Arab region, rendering the state prey to European and American imperialist ambitions. For this reason, partition as a solution was equally problematic, isolating the Jewish state and leaving it susceptible to support and interference from international powers. Furthermore, at the time of the statement, Palestine was ruled by Britain under the League of Nations Mandate despite the 1939 White Paper, which had declared Palestine's eventual independence as a state over the next ten years. According to the statement, no just settlement of the problem was possible until the Mandate was terminated.

Communist policies towards Palestine thus prescribed three direct formulations: opposition to British imperial rule; condemnation of Zionism; and exposure of Arab and Islamic forces that collaborate with imperialism. Yet there nonetheless remained unresolved issues in terms of a precise delineation of the relationship between Zionism and imperialism. From the inception of the Palestine Communist Party (PCP) in 1919, the nationalist ambitions of its Jewish members stood in stark opposition to the Comintern's policies. Yet if the PCP opposed immigration and settlement, Jewish members would be alienated. Moreover, although the Comintern called for the party's recruitment of Arab members throughout the 1920s, Arabs were implicitly alienated by the acceptance of Jewish rights in Palestine. The eventual solution was Yishuvism: the rejection of Zionism as an ideology and political movement, but acceptance of a legitimate community that would continue to grow due to immigration. Yet escalating political unrest in Palestine only heightened internal conflict and resulting fragmentation. The Arab revolts of 1936-39, for instance, surfaced the Comintern's distance from the daily realities of life in Palestine, isolating policies for local members. Unsurprisingly, the 1948 establishment of Israel as a Jewish state heightened ideological debates over the relationship between colonialism and Zionism. The 1962 founding of Matzpen, comprised of Jewish and Palestinian Israelis, was a response to these internal debates and policies.

According to members, the formation of Matzpen went relatively unnoticed until the organization's proclaimed response to the 1967 War, known in the Arab world as *al-Naksa* ("the setback"). Declaring Zionism a settlement issue and the Israeli-Arab conflict as colonial, Matzpen called for the immediate and complete recall of the territory captured during the 1967 war and unconditional support of the Palestinian authority, regardless of who was chosen to represent the Palestinians. Matzpen was immediately cast by the media and Israeli society as anti-patriotic.

Over the course of the next several years, Matzpen too suffered from internal fragmentation in regards to the organization's ideological outlook. Debates primarily centered on the relationship between nationalism and the class struggle within the larger aim of Socialism. In response, Jewish Israelis Udi Adiv and Dan Vered founded the Revolutionary Communist Alliance-Red Front. With an ambition to form a common anti-Zionist military resistance for Arabs and Jews within Israel, the Red Front sought to link forces with the PLO. Following a purported secret mission to Damascus to meet with military intelligence, Adiv and Vered were arrested on December 8 1972. Among the 24 Israelis arrested, four were Jewish and twenty were Arabs. In addition to Adiv and Vered, the only Jewish members convicted, four Arabs were sentenced, including Daud Turki. Broadcast live in Israel, the trial was a highly publicized media event and the depositions of Avi and Turki were published in the March edition of the periodical *Shu'un Filastiniya* (Palestinian Affairs).[4]

The published deposition of Turki is the basis of Deebi's *The Trial*, providing the literal script for the two actors. However, unlike Turki's ability to convey a cohesive testimony, the actors in Deebi's video are unable to deliver a performance that allows the viewer to follow Turki's outline of his arrest and interrogation and the outline of Red Front's program. Instead, the viewer is privy only to brief glimpses into Red Front's aspirations, underscoring a marked contrast between the strict ideological program guiding Red Front and its contemporary re-enactment. Further deterring the viewer's absorption in the historical moment of the trial are the costumes and setting, which seek to expose the bare bones of a theater rehearsal. Despite the fact that the accompanying 24 drawings are premised directly on scenes from the re-enactment, the veracity of the video recording is never in question as the re-enactment reveals its own making. In these formal decisions rests the clue that critical reflection rather than nostalgia is the motor of *The Trial*. Moreover, Deebi himself appears in the scene, acknowledging his own role in both the production of the installation and the history of Daud Turki.

ARTISTIC BEGINNINGS: AISSA DEEBI

In certain respects, the story of Daud Turki intersects with that of Aissa Deebi. In 1969, the year Turki split from Matzpen to join Red Front, Deebi was born in Haifa, the locus of the Israeli Communist Party. Nearly twenty-five years later, upon Turki's 1985 release from prison, he returned to Wadi al-Nisnas in Haifa, to the neighborhood of his youth and that of Deebi. Moreover, Deebi's career began under the umbrella of support of Communism as the leading political party among the Arab Palestinian minority in Israel from the 1960s to the mid-1980s.5 During the nineties, Deebi worked at the party newspaper based in Haifa, the Arabic daily, *al-Ittihad* (the Union) doing layout and publishing political cartoons under a pseudonym. Working under famed writer Emile Habibi and leading artist Abed Abdi, the young Deebi was inducted into the national project through the philosophy and ideology of the party. Despite this geographical and political proximity to Turki, Deebi would only later access his neighbor's history with Red Front. The majority of archival research conducted by Deebi was in Hebrew, a paradox that elucidates the sustained investigation of the state of diaspora that runs throughout Deebi's work.

Aissa Deebi, *My Dream House, 1999*

Aissa Deebi, *Dead Sweet, 2002*

Aissa Deebi, *Killing Time, 2004*

In 1999, Deebi undertook a project for the Haifa Museum of Contemporary Art's First International Triennale of Installation that reflected on his position as a Palestinian artist living in Israel. Located directly behind Deebi's childhood home, the museum grounds and parking lot had served as a playground for the neighborhood children. Previously housing a high school run by the local Protestant church, the building had been confiscated by the Israeli government and was known by local Palestinian children as *Mala'ab al-Yehud* (the playground of the Jews). During the long days of summer, Deebi and his childhood conspirators would build tree houses on the back of the museum's grounds. Much to their dismay, the museum security guard would always dismantle the makeshift constructions until the next day when Deebi and friends responded with a new tree house. The childhood game continued until the museum enclosed its property with a metal fence.

Nineteen years later, Deebi re-built the tree house of his childhood in *My Dream House*. Constructed on the railing that circumscribed the museum grounds, the tree house straddled the street so that it could only be accessed off of the museum's grounds. Deebi's strategic choice of location, with the entrance to the piece outside institutional confines, intended to underscore the artist's status as a Palestinian living in Israel. The piece assumed a decidedly resistant position within the structure of support: an acknowledgement of the land and settlement issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict underlying an apparently innocent cat-and-mouse game between museum security and the neighborhood children. Sadly, those politics remained stridently in place, governing the exhibition: an essay by British curator Gordon Hon on the position of Palestinians within a Jewish state in relation to Deebi's piece was refused by the museum for publication in the catalogue.[6]

A year later, in 2000, Deebi left Haifa to move to New Hampshire. Uprooted from everyday familiarities, Deebi experienced a sense of artistic isolation during this period, producing only one video piece, *Dead Sweet* (2002). Whereas the urgency of artistic production under the national cause was somewhat removed from Deebi's daily life in New Hampshire, and the video is absent of any explicit iconographical reference to Palestine, *Dead Sweet* nonetheless suggests Deebi's exploration of boundaries, an interest previously evinced in *My Dream House*. The 12-minute video captures an unassuming young woman slowly licking, biting, and savoring a small soldier figurine made of chocolate. Although silent, the video displays a sumptuous treat that captivates the viewer's sense of touch, taste, and smell. Translating the domineering image of the soldier into an edible delight, Deebi records the boundaries between the horrific, the pleasurable and the banal, exploring the conventional distinction between fantasy and reality through the figure of the toy soldier.

Deebi's engagement with geographical, political, and cultural borders deepened with his 2002 move to the urban metropolis of New York City. There, he became increasingly active within the city's diverse diasporic populations, particularly among the Arab American communities. In 2003, in the fraught aftermath of 9-11, he joined other cultural activists to found ArteEast; a New York-based non-profit organization dedicated to promoting artists from the Middle East and its diasporas. Deebi also took on the role of visual arts advisor for *MIZNA*, a journal (est. 1999) dedicated to Arab American literature. Both projects enabled Deebi to consider his individual position within broader socio-political landscapes.

Deebi's intimacy with New York's Arab American communities served as the premise for his 2004 project for the Queens Museum of Art. After moving to the city, the artist found himself intrigued by the *shisha* (water pipe) cafes along Steinway Avenue in Brooklyn. Although he had avoided these male-dominated spaces in Haifa, the café's familiar smells, sounds, and tastes momentarily suspended his homesickness. Centered on El Khaiam café, *Killing Time* chronicles Deebi's daily witnessing of the café, its regulars, and the narratives that led them to the café. Positioning himself at a table in the corner every day over a period of several weeks, Deebi photographed the regulars as they smoked *shisha*, debated politics, and cheered on their favorite teams during televised soccer matches. *Killing Time* displays the photographs accompanied by segments of a diary that Deebi maintained throughout the project, accompanied by a recording of the café's sounds. Together, the text and images convey humor (the regular who offers to star in what he presumes is a movie), poignancy (the Tunisian who frequents the café to remind himself of the depressing monotony back home), tragedy (the Iraqi lawyer who now works as the café's waiter) and monotony (Deebi's own boredom). The sense of community that the café works to establish is contrasted with Deebi's formal strategies: certain photographs are visually suggestive of the fragment, conveying an aesthetic and contextual dislocation. However, Deebi's method involved neither editing nor cropping the original images. Placing his camera on the table, Deebi shot the photographs without making eye contact with his subjects, in an attempt to minimize disruption to the regulars' daily routine.

Killing Time marks a pivotal moment in Deebi's artistic trajectory, especially in his approach towards the notion of cultural displacement. In Haifa, he had been a Palestinian living in Israel. Now, he held an American passport and critics and curators increasingly framed his art as Arab American. The legality of Deebi's position, his personal experience of that status, and the manner in which it informed the display and reading of his work catalyzed Deebi towards an intense critical engagement with the notion of diaspora and its possibility for accommodating artistic practice. Unlike contemporary understandings of diaspora as liberating perspective offering cultural hybridity and critical reflection, Deebi considers the theoretical concept of diaspora to lack accountability for the diverse histories, circumstances, and experiences of exile and migration. He came to experience New York City as an urban culture that did not accommodate Diaspora as a political ideology. In 2006, Deebi left New York and enrolled in a doctoral program at Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton under artist and art historian, Bashir Makhoul.

As Deebi's doctoral research intersected with his artistic practice, he shifted his focus towards the natural migration habits of birds. For a 2007 exhibition at a contemporary art center in Umm el-Fahem, a Palestinian town east of Israel, Deebi presented a series of large-scale photographic images, produced in low resolution digital processing, of flocks of birds in flight. The photographs, taken by Deebi, were based on a long-term research project he had been conducting into the migration patterns of a species of birds, the Sununu, which migrate from Palestine every winter, crossing the Atlantic, and returning to Palestine the next season. During his research, Deebi learned from the newspaper that eight million Sununu would pass through Somerset, England on their migratory path. Over the next several months, Deebi joined a community of committed birders who document the movement and annual migration cycles of different species of birds. The result was the project, *Dust and Dispute,* exhibited for the first time at Umm el-Fahem Gallery.

Clearly *Killing Time* and *Dust and Dispute* share an interest in migration and a documentary approach to Deebi's reflections on the topic. A preliminary reading might view the photographs in both projects as capturing the habits and formulations induced through the state of diaspora. In a certain way, the images presented in *Dust and Dispute* produce an iconography of diaspora that is at once literal and abstracted. Despite the specific patterns formed through the birds' regulated movement, the photographs – because of Deebi's camera angle from below – offer no clues as to a specific location. Instead, images portray either a single black bird whose body fills the frame or a flock visible only as black specks patterned against the sky. The formations are particular to the birds' journey, yet the photograph offers no hint as to the birds' origin or destination. Importantly, the project was exhibited in a show that sought to explore the relationship of three artists, including Bashir Makhoul, with the site of their childhood as a disputed city inside the 1967 borders. *Dust and Dispute* presented a series of photographs in which Deebi refused to visualize the land. For Deebi, it was a position that refused to stay grounded in a single position.

Deebi's next professional opportunity brought him to Monterey, Mexico for a teaching post. As his own body traveled, thereby literalizing his subject of research, Deebi began to aptly conceive of his computer as a virtual studio. As assistants in England and Mexico worked with Deebi to collect data on migration and exile, the dispersive nature of the project's very process mirrored its subject. Furthermore, the assistants mobilized the internet to expand Deebi's growing visual and textual database. Deebi then relied on his training as a graphic designer to compile and distill the information into a typeface based on bird migration patterns. Given its virtual nature, the project was able to continue through Deebi's next move to Bangkok, Thailand, where he took a position as a visiting professor. The resulting piece, *Don't you forget about me!* took the form of a design poster based on the typeface Deebi had previously developed. The artist's experience in Bangkok, however, shifted the direction of his ongoing research. Feeling acutely isolated, Deebi relied on Facebook and Skype for his social networks. This activity produced a virtual gallery, curated online by Deebi, of site-specific contributions by friends and acquaintances, which explored themes of distance, transit, and mobility.

Aissa Deebi, *Migration, 2009*

In terms of its form, *Don't you forget about me!* stands in marked contrast to *My Dream House*. Considered as bookends to a larger body of work, the projects capture a dramatically different relationship between Deebi and Haifa in terms of physical proximity and site-specific related work. In this way, Deebi's practice tracks a dynamic and fluctuating understanding of diaspora that crystallizes around particular instances of production. Unsurprisingly, when Deebi returned to the region in 2011 to head the Visual Cultures Program at the American University of Cairo, he began his research on another fragment in this complex story of diaspora—that of Turki and Red Front's revolutionary aspirations for an utopian homeland.

THE HISTORICAL IN THE CONTEMPORARY: THE SITE OF VENICE

The formally sparse language of *The Trial* suggests both the law's purported transparency and its seemingly remote, inaccessible authority. Directly referencing Kafka's *The Trial* through its title, Deebi's installation poignantly speaks to our contemporary moment. In art historical terms, the recovery of historical moments, events, and documents is a research-based practice that has come to represent one of contemporary art's most striking characteristics over the last two decades. For Deebi, however, the archival document does not present an opportunity to meditate on the relationship between history and memory. Instead, the strategy of continual disruption, or perpetual postponement, of Turki's deposition through its re-enactment consciously reflects on the content of the archival document as integral to a particular historical instance.

Certainly, the overt references to the political ideology guiding Red Front in Deebi's installation are historical, yet they are also displaced to an ideological space that is now lost: it is nearly impossible today to imagine a moment of collective action by two dozen determined individuals aspiring to build a radically different future in which Palestinians and Israelis would be united under Socialism. It is almost as if the generic labels "revolutionary," and "police," on the actors' shirts playfully undermine a contemporary perspective's potential recasting as

Aissa Deebi, *The Trail*, 15 min 2 channel video installation 2013

Aissa Deebi, *The Trail*, 15 min 2 channel video installation 2013

generic of a historically specific political movement. Furthermore, *The Trial* is presented as a recorded reenactment, a double removal. As with Deebi's use of Brechtian theater strategies throughout the deposition's reenactment, these formal strategies wedge open a small space for critical reflection. Refraining from a historically precise, intact, and comprehensive presentation of the Red Front trial, Deebi creates an opportunity for historical return that demands reflection on possible becomings that are no longer plausible: the strict ideological programs of subsequent decades that offered real possibilities for alternative histories in the making have transformed into radically divergent forms of resistance to the Israeli Occupation post-Oslo. In this way, Turki's deposition is compelling as a haunting foretelling of the violence that sustains and solidifies the cultural, religious, ethnic, and national borders between Palestinians and Israelis today. Indeed, the failure of Red Front only serves to confirm their predictions of ongoing conflict: a perpetually postponed peace conveyed by the actors' stuttering words and unfilled completion of Turki's visionary deposition.

The Trial might also be considered to represent an acknowledgement of Deebi's own beginnings as a young artist working at *al-Ittihad* and the role of the Communist Party in providing an infrastructure and guiding framework for aspiring Palestinian artists living within Israel. In this way, the installation represents yet another return, to the ideological space that launched the conceptual backbone of Deebi's practice, to the history of a movement and a political party that provided representation for the Arab minority in Israel. Particularly meaningful therefore is the launch of *The Trial* at a venue such as the Venice Biennial as its prestige causes pause for reflection on one's artistic accomplishments. Paradoxically then is the premiere of *The Trial* at *Otherwise Occupied*, an exhibition on the outskirts of the Biennial's official pavilions.

As the curatorial statement clarifies, *Otherwise Occupied* focuses on two artists who were born in the margins of another state in their homeland, marginalized within both Israel and Palestinian centers of artistic production in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza. The curatorial concept evinced in the show's title thus refers not only to the military occupation of Palestine but also to an action that is removed from the center. For Deebi's *The Trial*, that activity represents both a political party operating outside mainstream Israeli and Palestinian politics and a dream for the possibility of a nation. As the presence of exhibitions such as *Otherwise Occupied* suggest, the Venice Biennial holds tight to the organization of artistic production along national lines while also acknowledging those nation-states still in the extraordinarily fraught process of becoming. Such an act offers, similar to the formal strategies of *The Trial*, the possibility that the site of the margin enables a potential for action, thought, research, and production against the conventional perspective: how we might begin to imagine the nation outside the parameters of the state.

In its acknowledgement of the ideological structures of the past, with all their promises and failures, Deebi's *The Trial* professes a poetic thoughtfulness. Situated within a body of work that struggles to creatively grapple with diaspora, *The Trial* confronts us with a more elusive reading of the concept: a space of lost utopian visions in the contingent realms of art and politics. Perhaps more important, however, is *The Trial*'s political urgency for today. As the revolutions, civilian unrest, and state-sanctioned massacres of the Arab Spring persist, and Palestinians persevere in resisting the harsh realities of life under occupation, the charges against Turki and his fellow members of Red Front stand today as a frightening testimony to the stringent policies that police the border between the purported security of the nation-state and protecting civilians' rights to imagine the state of the nation. Exhibited at the Venice Biennale, itself a sort of specter of art history given its format of national pavilions, *The Trial* returns us to a history that considers the possibilities for imagining a radically different future, against the occupations of today.

Endnotes

1. On the history of Matzpen, narrated through interviews with founding members, see Eran Torbiner's 2003 documentary, "Matzpen," on youtube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfcFno2pqJg. See also www.matzpen.org
2. See Musa Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party, 1919-1948* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 1979, 2010) and Ran Greenstein, "A Palestinian Revolutionary: Jabra Nicola and the Radical Left," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 46 (summer 2011): 32-48.
3. *European Jewry and the Palestine Problem, statement submitted to the Anglo-American Committee of enquiry by the Communist Party* (London: Farleigh Press, 1946).
4. For the English translation of Turki's deposition, see *Journal of Palestine Studies* 2/4 (Summer 1973), 144-150.
5. Al information on Deebi's artistic biography is from personal conversations with the artist and his dissertation. See Aissa Deebi, "Who I Am, Where I Come From, and Where I Am Going: A Critical Study of Arab Diaspora as Creative Space," diss., University of Southampton, 2011, 81.
6. Deebi 84.

A SELF WITHOUT GUARANTEES: THOUGHTS ON PAIN IN THE WORK OF AISSA DEEBI

ANNEKA LENSSEN

Aissa Deebi has never bought into the romantic notion that an artwork is the expression of a unified, non-alienated self. This skepticism about the creative act provides the conceptual thread through a heterogeneous body of work that deals with immaterial subjects like dreams, life, and pain. Time and again, Deebi returns to the conditions of dispossession and alienation as subjects for exploration. These points of interest would seem to befit his experience as a Palestinian Arab who grew up in Haifa, Israel, in the 1970s and 1980s, yet crucially his exploration proceeds not as a proclamation of identity, but rather as a process of disassociation. Deebi constitutes his art through a search for evermore fully dispersed forms of documentary representation. The consistency of his working method is his labor to render the intimacy of habits and memories into formulas, to sustain a process of cognitive abstraction that perpetually defers corporeal experience.

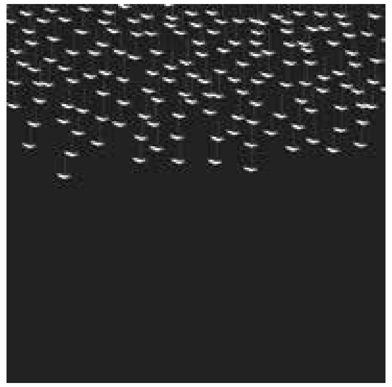
Consider *Tel al-Samak*, a 2011 installation of constructed photographs dedicated to Deebi's younger brother Nassim, who died in 1999 while in Israeli police custody (the medical report classified the death a suicide, a catch-all term which almost never really means suicide but which effectively strips the mourning family of recourse). The photographs in the installation purport to capture images from a precisely demarcated sliver of meaningful landscape: the route the artist and his brother used to travel from their home to the beach that had for generations been called Tel al-Samak. The brothers had swum and fished there as children, enjoying the feeling of freedom they found only at the seaside, where the vastness of the sea promised to overrun more recent impositions upon the terrestrial landscape: new alphabets, the flags of new national sovereignties, military installations. Not one of these photographic images offers anything like a monocular view onto this memory, however. To the contrary, they refuse all access to it. Deebi created the

Aissa Deebi, *Tel al-Samak*, photographs 2011 photographs he displays only by means of a proxy, asking a friend to walk a route that he specified and to capture the views on his behalf. By this transposition, one view became three: that of the artist, the friend, and the photographic device. Deebi then transposed the images a second time by rendering them with a lenticular printing technology. A lenticular print is essentially a low-tech hologram, in this case constructed out of six different source photographs, each of which is sliced into strips and distributed into one face of a faceted support, such that each image aligns from one viewing angle but dissolves into shimmering effects from the others. Once these compound photographs were installed on the gallery walls in sequential gridded formation, they presented viewers with destabilized mirages that oscillated between multiple, discontinuous views. The photographic trick – one that is currently popular with Cairo's wedding photographers – here has the effect of making the viewer suddenly aware of the irretrievability of memory. The piece registers loss as a totality. Not only is Nassim lost, but so too is the protected space of Tel al-Samak a mirage.

Deebi conceived *Tel al-Samak* for a joint exhibition with Iraqi Swiss artist Al Fadhil at Art Laboratory Berlin, which the artists entitled "My Dreams Have Destroyed My Life. Some Thoughts on Pain." Their project arose from their shared experience of having lost brothers to militarized conflicts, and the unspeakable quality of the pain they suffered in common (Al Fadhil lost one brother to the Iran-Iraq war, and a second to the American invasion of Iraq). Over the course of their conversations during the artist residency in Taiwan where they met, both artists had realized they thought of their pain as existential, a response not only to the fake heroics of war and the machismo of state power but also the cognitive dissonance of the bodily absence of the martyred figure. Indeed, one of the cruelties of both incarceration and military service is the complete impossibility of verifiability between inside and outside. For Deebi and Al Fadhil, both of whom lived and worked outside their countries of origin while their brothers remained "inside," their subjectivities had already been riven from their families before the actual fact of their brothers' deaths. *Tel al-Samak* recreates some of the impossibility of this emotional triangulation, and its antagonistic relationship to powers of perception, in the gallery space. The lenticular images may only be activated through their precise alignment with a singular viewer's line of sight, thereby offering the viewer, who moves his position around to achieve resolution, a feeling of individual integrity. And yet, that feeling of integrity is also alienated, for no single view can ever be held in common with any other body in the gallery. No guarantee of reproducibility or transferability is offered to the viewer, such that the verifiable truth of experience is withheld. Moreover, given the utter contingency of the information provided, the act of seeing becomes irreconcilable with one's sense of a continuous self. Ultimately, the piece explores a phenomenon of irretrievability that is not limited to the passing of a person or place from the lives of others. It demonstrates the irretrievability of *any* unmediated or non-alienated experience.

Such a work, although deeply political and arising from a keen awareness of the power of language, class, and racial identity as originating conditions, does not offer the viewer any of the fetishes of identity that have become familiar fixtures in the contemporary art scene. Deebi refuses to gratify expectations for exaggerated cultural difference by offering his Palestinian Arab origins up as an aesthetic end in itself. He, as an artist, is simply not concerned with "Who am I?" and "Where am I?" as a form of conceptual pre-writing. Instead, Deebi queries his biographical context in terms of the economic, ideological, and geopolitical relations that produced it, including interrogating the use-value of his own presence in a setting: "What am I doing here?" and "How have others interpellated me?" Deebi also continually pulls away from asserting artistic agency – asking others to release the shutter, programme scripts, e-mail work orders, etc. This deference could easily be interpreted as a product of a disjunctive biography, i.e. we know he is a photographer who would just as soon avoid taking his own photographs and, congruently, he is a Palestinian Arab from Haifa who always resisted inhabiting his Israeli citizenship. Similarly, Deebi is a former card-carrying member of the Communist party, who, although he long ago renounced his membership, still makes work that resists conforming to the model of a bourgeois collectible. And yet, while these identifying details do prove significant as frames for his intellectual life, they are not precisely the conceptual source of the limitations he places on the sovereignty of the artistic act. Rather, Deebi's exploration of the ideological binds of identities – national, racial, cultural, or civilizational – unfolds more intuitively, through his encounters with the limits of the integration of self and setting, and laboring subject and productive system. He avoids biographical categorization not because he expects it will allow him to recover full sovereignty as an artist, but rather because he is uncomfortable with the compensatory effects of any fetish.

To put it bluntly, I am arguing that Deebi produces alienated works of art. Consider also the typeface EXILE I, which he developed over five years of research



Aissa Deebi, *EXILE I*, 2009

Aissa Deebi, *Killing Time (2004-5)*

into migration behaviors and patterns. The originating idea for the work had to do with the artist's own migratory movement from Haifa to the United States to the United Kingdom, and then onward to points elsewhere (he has taught in Mexico and Thailand in addition to his current position in Cairo). Staying true to his auto-critical mode of working, Deebi framed his questions about displacement not in terms of an immigrant success story but rather around the depersonalized notions of instinct, habit, and even coercion. Honing in with the most intense focus on the migration pattern of birds, he photographed migratory movements in Mexico, England, New York, and elsewhere. He then built up a database of images and migratory forms from these patterns: the curves of a wingspan in motion, the internal ratios between birds in a flock. To produce the character set that comprises EXILE I, he matched a single, vector-based rendering of a distilled bird-in-flight form to each key of the standard QWERTY keyboard. Deebi has said that he originally thought to use the resulting typeface to render existing texts about migration, exile, and longing – Mahmoud Darwish poems, Fairouz song lyrics, and the like – into abstract embodiments of entire migratory populations, thereby stripping those texts of their sentimental recognizability while graphically presenting their ubiquity as a piece of Arab culture. The result is something a bit different. Rather than heightening the fact that emotional expression is culturally conditioned, EXILE I would seem to suppress it. When a typist uses the font to compose a text on screen or page, he or she produces block arrays of bird silhouettes that are visually punctuated with the white internal spaces and margins of any more legible typeface. To use this font to produce a statement is to depersonalize one's own articulations – subsuming human utterance and desire into the trans-human forms of an instinctual practice of displacement. While the history of artistic interest in avian speech is, interestingly, quite long (one thinks of Picasso's claim that the expectation that his paintings should mean something concrete is like asking birdsong to convey a specific message; various Fluxus and Dada poetry games; etc.), Deebi strikes out along a more complex path here. He has encoded a precise typographical meaning into each bird sign, thereby mobilizing code to produce typographical rebuses that maintain a non-representational relationship to more conventional, decipherable fonts. Within the space of EXILE I, the pain that is typically called exile may be felt or thought, but never spelled out as a name. Speech-based communication remains a technical possibility, but it is simply not privileged as a fully transparent transaction.

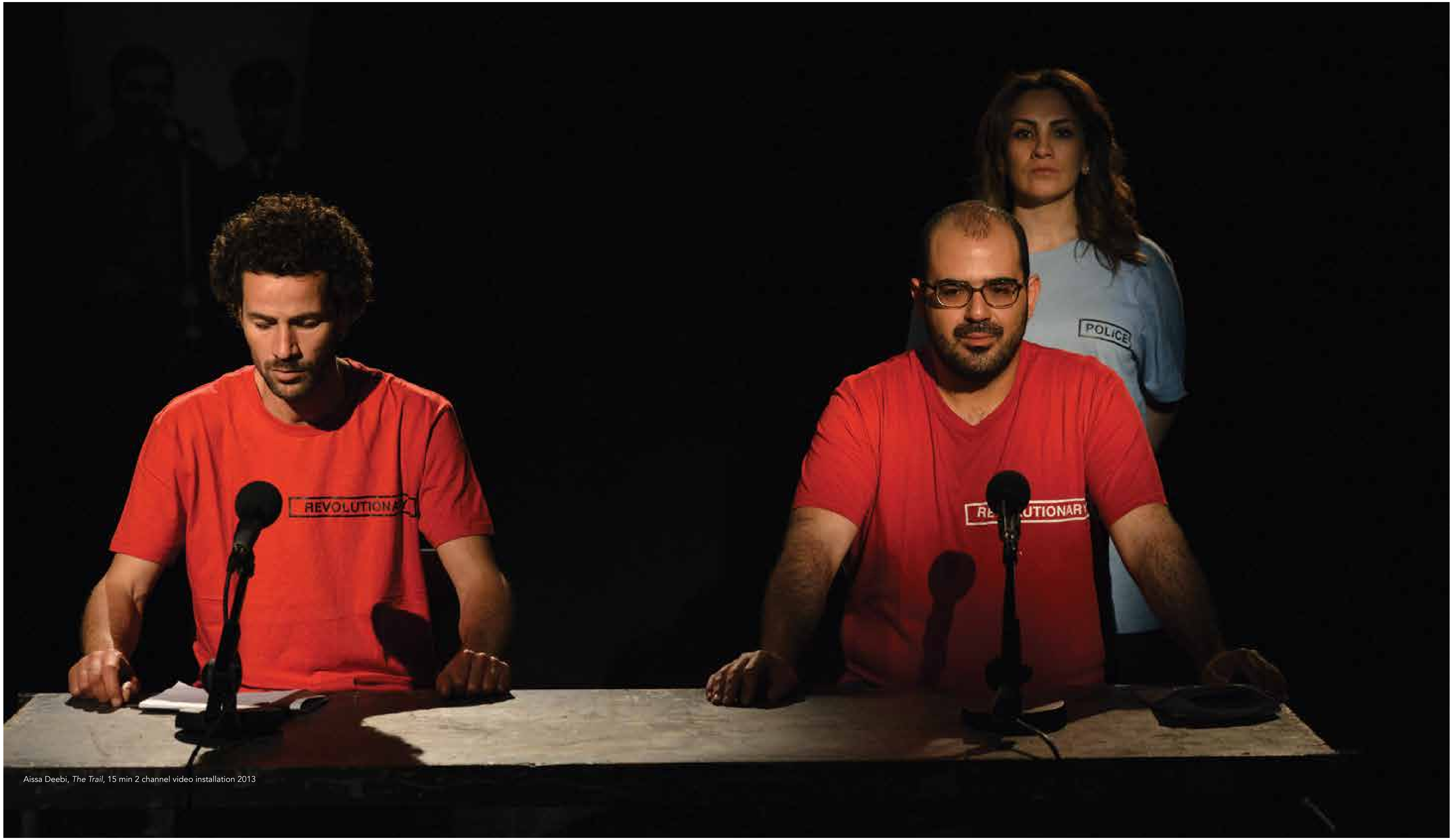
The project *Killing Time* (2004-5), a photographic essay for Queens International at the Queens Museum of Art, is another thorough meditation on the condition of alienation that is absolutely devoid of dogma or pathos. The work takes as its subject the sounds and images of a shisha café on Steinway Street in Astoria, a neighborhood in Queens in New York known for its sizable Arabic-speaking immigrant population. Although the artist had never frequented shisha cafes when he lived in Haifa because he found the idleness of their all-male clientele repressive, when he encountered them later in New York, these familiar characteristics took on a new appeal for him. This is not to suggest that Deebi was interested in surrendering to the non-places of diaspora survival, with its lulling rhythms, circuitous conversations, and claustrophobic interest in everyone else's business. Rather, he explored his own morbid fascination with the café rituals by adopting the tools of an embedded ethnographer, conforming to the visit schedules and routines of a participant observer and the burdens of falsifiability. The artist arrived every evening around 7 pm, taking up a place in a particular corner and slowly accruing the status of 'regular' and the invisibility that entails. After gaining the other patrons' trust, he asked to take photographs as well. So invariable was the setting and the comportment and attitudes of the patrons, the artist reports, the photographs he took over several weeks might just as easily have been shot on a single evening. Most of these images are close-up shots in warm, saturated colors. One sees lots of hands. Gestures are slight, as if tethered to the small cups of coffee or tea on the tables.

For the purpose of exhibition, Deebi enlarged these intimate views into museum-scale prints and added a component of ambient sound, piping in a track of quiet chatter and music he had recorded during one of his visits. He also posted wall texts that recount his own observations of his subjects. These serve to register a skeptical counter-narrative to the stasis of the images and sounds, and document Deebi's own internal forays into critical reflection and even self-rebuke. One such text describes how "the deadening routine, the long hours spent at the pipe or sipping tea provided a welcome piece of home for these men, a place utterly familiar and predictable in a world that was otherwise so precarious and uncertain," only to confess that "I found myself wondering whether one should consider these places as escapes or cultural prisons." The work, in other words, leverages the familiar expository language of a documentary to offer visitors a glimpse of a space without any stable ontology. The café is a realm of displaced masculinity that is endlessly produced and reproduced independently of time or place. *Killing Time* reveals how a deadening routine both prolongs the self and imprisons it, rendering it inaccessible.

All of which returns us to the question of pain, and what it means to think about it. The experience of pain, it would seem, should require embodiment in a person. As a result, artwork made on the subject of pain often becomes hyper-masculinized around questions of mastery over flesh. Vito Acconci's performance piece *Trademarks* (1970), for which the artist bit into his own body and inked the indentations and printed them onto paper, provides a particularly dramatic instance and a useful point of comparison with Deebi's approach to questions of pain. Acconci's piece, in which both the action and its result are dubbed a "trademark," makes clear reference to the myth of the autogenesis of the creator. The artist claims himself as the physical, indexical source of his artwork, twisting his body around to "circle in on myself, claim what's mine" as sovereign owner of both self and its selfsame products. And yet, in spite of Acconci's proclaimed intentions, the bite can also be seen to split himself into decoupled halves: active subject (the biter) and passive object (the bitten). What might seem at first to be a great act of machismo also becomes a form of emasculation, an event of psychical violence. Deebi's pieces on pain, by contrast, deal with a conception of pain that cannot be localized in either body or psyche. No victim is ever shown in the works, no bodies produced or consciousness revealed.

Deebi's newest piece, a film produced on the occasion of the 2013 Venice Biennale entitled *The Trial*, follows many of these same strategies of separation and withdrawal. The work is a re-enactment of a historical event in which actors (Saleh Bakri, Amer Helehel, and Hanan Hillo) give body to a set of idealist convictions that were originally voiced by a recently deceased revolutionary figure: a speech that Daoud Turki, an Arab citizen of Israel, delivered at the Haifa District Court just before he was convicted of espionage for his activities as a leader of a Marxist cell called "Red Front" and sentenced to a 17-year prison term (he would be released in 1985 as part of a prisoner exchange). As an historical text, the speech is remarkable not only for its vision of a single socialist state that would restore the interest and dignity of both the Jewish people and the Arab people who lived in Israel, but also for Turki's unwavering commitment to taking action toward realizing that political totality. In its 2013 resurrection, these sentiments sound so distant that the words seem like relics. Artifacts of a preceding generation, they are the words of a subject who claimed personal integrity and defined his sense of self in opposition to the compromised positions of the politicians who acted in his name. The subjectivity evinced in the speech has since passed into a historical register, such that it can only reemerge as estranged. We wonder whether, only forty years ago, it was really possible to call for workers, peasants, and other repressed citizens to unite against the paranoid Zionist policies of the Israeli state and demand a space of shared restitution.

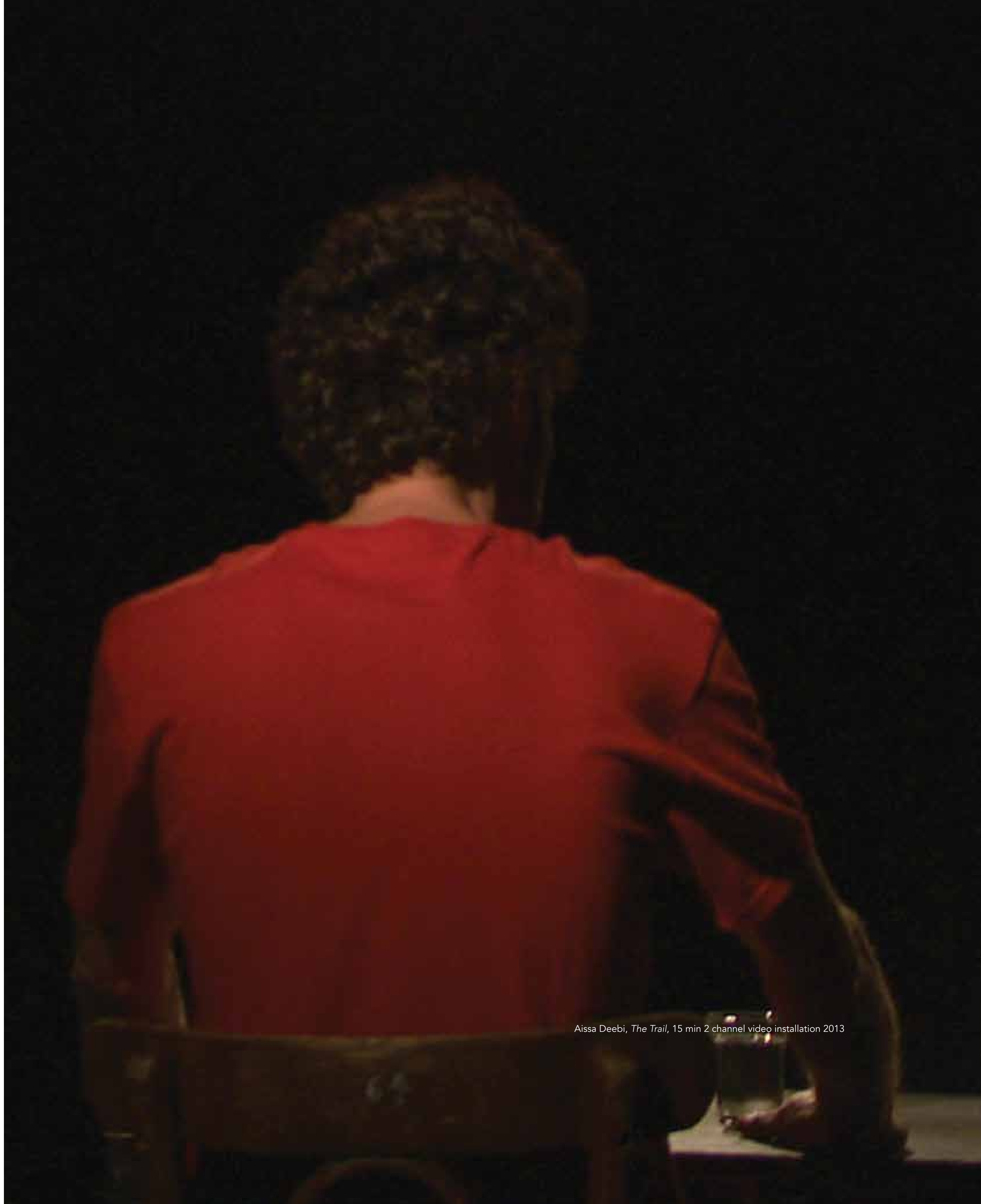
The actors who speak in *The Trial* serve as avatars for Deebi in this other sense as well, as figures who try to enunciate a better world that might have been. When Turki stood trial in 1973, he was 48 and Deebi was five. The men who armed themselves in the service of these ideas were put to trial on the literal terrain of the artist's childhood. The Deebi family home in Haifa was beside the Turki home. After Turki was released in 1985, he lived there quietly, spending a good deal of time composing political poetry in classical *qasida* format. These verses would appear regularly in *al-Ittihad,* an Arabic-language Communist daily and the newspaper where Deebi found employment as a teenager interested in graphic design. In other words, Turki continued to perform a set of conscientious activities "inside" the very system that Deebi would leave behind in order to become an artist who is committed to working globally. Given the tightly intertwined trajectories of these biographies and their eventual divergence, it is fitting that the actors who deliver Turki's words in Deebi's film make no effort to imbue their script with world historical authority. Instead, their physical appearance is relentlessly ordinary. No simulated heroism emerges upon the stage to give a compelling visualization to the bold declarations that can be heard. In Deebi's version of the


REVOLUTIONA
RE UTIONARY
POLICE

Aissa Deebi, *The Trail*, 15 min 2 channel video installation 2013

trial, the assuredness of the defendant as a politically conscious actor is at once preserved and made utterly unavailable to either audience or artist.

In EXILE I, a typist will always be severed from her intentions, and the forms on the page made separate from the thoughts they encode. In *Killing Time*, bodies are evacuated of their capacity to live in time. In a work like *Tel al-Samak*, which specifically takes up pain as a subject, the concept of pain is figured broadly as a dispossession of the collective and not of agentive experience in a body. It can hardly be articulated and is too diffuse to be "suffered" or purposefully "inflicted." Viewers are invited to encounter the photographic evidence put on display, only to lose themselves and their bearings. In *The Trial,* an old speech is given new voice but imprisoned in the process. Deebi's oeuvre is striking precisely because it occludes the very temporal actions by which it is constituted, closing painful experience in upon itself. As these works range across many various forms and biographical terrains, they remain animated by a philosophical act of dispossessing the viewer. The artist evicts us from his works, depriving us of occupancy in demarcated communities or communicative codes. Importantly, he does not invoke this kind of dispossession as if it were an exceptional or identity-based condition. Rather, it emerges as a result of his deep intellectual engagement with the problems of identity, placement, and displacement. Deebi endeavors to make us confront the impossibility of recovering a unified, non-alienated self. This body of work exists outside any physically located setting, occupying forms of deeply real feeling and recollection that cannot be shared in the world without loss.



Aissa Deebi, *The Trail*, 15 min 2 channel video installation 2013

THE FANTASY OF AN UN-OCCUPIED COMMUNITY

VALENTÍN ROMA

The moment when a feeling enters the body / is political. This touch is political

Adrienne Rich, "The Blue Ghazals"

Do not swear at all;
Or, if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious self,
And I'll believe thee

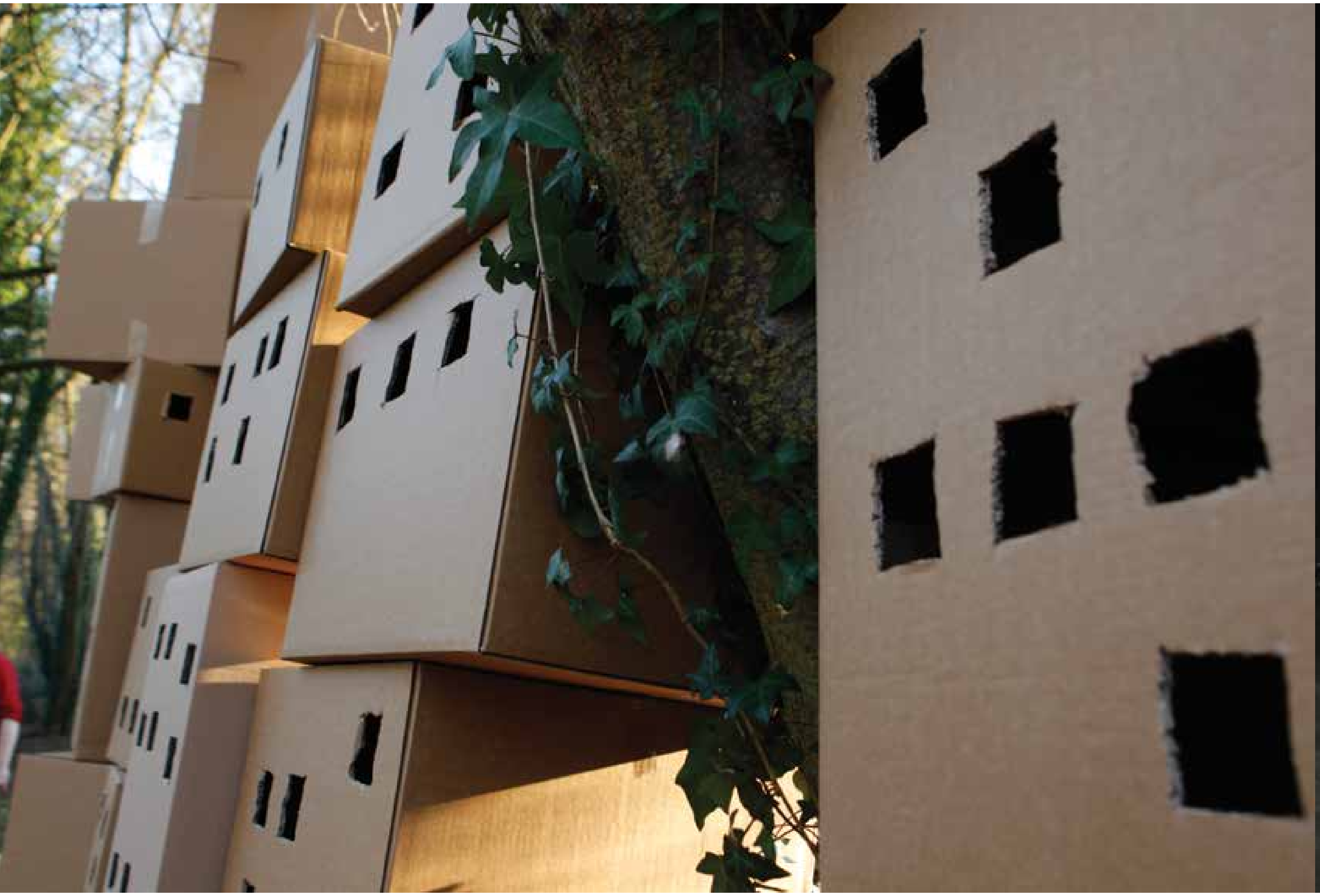
William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*

In 2004, I read intensely Maurice Blanchot's book entitled *The Unavowable Community*, an obscure text and, to some extent, cryptic but that, nevertheless, seems to offer a whole new set of possible horizons from which to reflect on the meaning of this vast concept of the *common* and how can we foster it.

The Cuban writer Iván de la Nuez, author of remarkable writings such as *El mapa de sal*, *La Balsa perpetua* and *Fantasía Roja* – just to name a few – earnestly recommended that I read the above mentioned book, alerting me to one of the ideas that he had been already exploring across various texts, according to which, Blanchot defined communism as "*what creates community*", that is, a sort of exchange and collective expression distant from dogmas, instructions or any kind of orthodoxy. Indeed, de la Nuez was not mistaken: *The Unavowable Community* is an essay in which we can *feel* the contradictory intensity that represents being within *us*, where we can notice that the common or shared imperatives, instead of ones that merely dictate, offer shifting structures to share.

Once I had read it I wondered almost intuitively, how could Blanchot's ideas be translated into the art world, or, in other words, which kind of ideological communities become incarnate in the works of some of the artists with whom I had previously collaborated.

Taking this question as a starting point, I began work on a exhibition project, the title of which literally referred to Blanchot's book, and that five years later was chosen to represent Catalonia in its first participation in the 53rd Biennale di Venezia 2009[1]. It must be said, that *The Unavowable Community* was held in



Bashir Makhoul, *Giardino Occupato. Detail in-situ, Corrugated cardboard, Size variable, 2013*
Photo Bashir Makhoul, Winchester © Bashir Makhoul.

Aissa Deebi, *The Trail*, 15 min 2 channel video installation 2013

the so-called *Eventi Collaterali*, an additional section, created in 2005 to mend somehow the characteristic severity personified by the Giardini, the main venue where the thirty national pavilions are located and where each country exhibits its respective artists.

Being part of the Biennale from this anomalous position involved, from the very start, placing oneself in what could be considered a distanced perspective from the media dynamics that surround the well-known artistic event. At the same time, being the representative of a national identity without a proper state, together with attending that international vitrine to show, itself entails a number of contradictions that are impossible to evade. Finally, appealing to the notion of community, that at that moment had different connotations than perhaps it does today, and to do it from the frame of the unavowable – a hermetic and ambiguous concept – without a doubt provoked more than a few paradoxes about that Catalan pavilion.

Thereby, within the range of the Spanish state, the idea of the Catalan participation aroused different polemics, especially amongst conservative groups that read this presence as a nationalist excision. Notwithstanding, from Catalonia certain critical voices also called attention to the convenience of presenting artists that were not born in Catalan territory; on top of this initial reaction, we felt we should place the particular response to the selected pieces, which already brought up highly critical opinions, and position them against the official perception about the symbolic and political content related to Catalan identity.

All these matters, together with the massive media attention that contextualised that first Catalonian attendance in the Biennale, most certainly affected the focus of my project, contributing a tone that perhaps erred on the side of trying to exacerbate and impugn. Paradoxically, however, we realised after the magnificent amount of visitors that the pavilion got, likewise the special critical attention that we received, that our distance to the temper of that 2009 edition of the Biennale – curated by Daniel Birbaum under the ethereal title of *Fare Mondi / Making Worlds* – was not improper and that, in some way, the Biennale could admit proposals from outside the prevailing currents, based on dynamics that did not elude ideological or political controversy.

Over four years have passed since then and during this time I have kept the secret possibility – the unavowable hope – of re-reading Blanchot's book with a different code of interpretation, another paradigm suitable to the new political frames in which we find ourselves at the moment.

Due to one of those fortuitous circumstances of life, Palestine participated for the first time in the Biennale of the year 2009 as well, and now proposes for this new edition of the Biennale a project entitled *Otherwise Occupied*, with works by Aissa Deebi and Bashir Makhoul, for which I see an expected contingency, which can be amended, perchance, with this present text.

There is a saying that it is pronounced many times that when reality is being pushed from any of its corners, that "history is being written." Nonetheless, sometimes with the hypocritical usage of this maxim we exclude many of the tellers that simply relate what is happening in the rear, apart from the celebrations and major events, that is to say, day by day. Because, in the end, all these men that write history represent Humanity without surnames, in general but in capital letters as well - a Man who narrates time as if he were the owner, as if he were alone in the interstices of his own temporal story.

In this sense, *Otherwise Occupied* seems to be reflecting on an unexpected possibility, about the ways to "live" history while we are imagining it. Apropos of this matter, Jacques Rancière has pointed out that the principal commitment of artists – and their most unavoidable responsibility – lies in what the philosopher refers to as "imagining politically," which consists of thinking about, pointing at and provoking those ruptures where many of the consensus that articulate the accepted reality could be weakened. Then, according to Rancière, in front of the consecutive systems that structure the existence of individuals, art points out other hypothetical casts, other regulations that allow us to reorganise, both at the same time, the historical environment and daily living.

Someone could say, accusing us, that this is the innocuous language with which utopias are expressed; however, observing *Giardino Occupato* by Bashir Makhoul and *The Trial* by Aissa Deebi, I cannot avoid remembering a sentence from another Cuban writer, José Lezama Lima, that states "the impossible in acting on the possible engenders a possibility in infinity." And it is precisely here, in the urgency of impugning this monumental agreement that History articulates, that we seem to be hunting the singularity, the specific and the distinct stories, in which we can find a different rhythm for the art and for the artists: invoking uniqueness, imagining new fashions of being possible that perhaps should be extended outside chronological narrations, or perhaps implanting them in people's minds.

Nevertheless, how could we accomplish this assignment? With what tools could we carry it out? How could we distinguish its results? Dissociated of its individualistic character, that is, built collectively, fantasy is a weapon with potentialities always unexpected. Simultaneously, imagination refutes the solidity of the world and incorporates, as well, new arguments, new images and new words.

Traditionally, Blanchot's proposal about a community that has to administrate its own silences has been questioned for being too heavily poetic and deficiently ideological. Although, it must be said that the French writer produced his text in very particular historical conditions, within that big ideological gap of the left wing that started from the razzias executed by the French Communist Party in the fifties – during which were ejected Edgar Morin, Marguerite Duras, Jacques François Rolland and Eugène Mannoni, amongst many others – and that continued towards May 1968 and stayed at the doors of The Berlin Wall, that is to say, in the anteroom of this fierce and imperial capitalism, that is not only commanding global finances but also designing the map of war and identity conflicts from an equally globalised perspective.

From such political depths, it does not seem odd that Blanchot claimed the absence of words as collective protection, in the same way that Jean Luc Nancy had already proposed the absence of works – i.e. dismissing production – in his book entitled *The Inoperative Community*, a work that, by the way, exhorts the concept of the unavowable.

I insist that it could seem that through their respective writings both philosophers are questioning two of the most substantial fundamentals of communal momentum: the potential of testimony and patrimonial symbolism. Regardless, I prefer to believe that Blanchot and Nancy are pointing at a fundamental issue for the understanding of the nature of the common: any community is, essentially, a whole made out of fictions fed collectively and, moreover, an entity of fantasies that endures *in danger*, threatened by the violence coming from another community.

From here is where that reinterpretation, mentioned at the beginning of this writing, for the Catalonia Pavilion of the Biennale 2009 is coming, because today I sense, perhaps observing the ideas spread by *Otherwise Occupied*, that what is truly significant is not how to build communities, but how to preserve them, allowing them to be imperceptible and indestructible. Therefore, it is not important that the words or the works of the community *could be*, in the sense that they obtain a condition and a consistency, but rather in the strength and the desire that they *would be* able to produce.

An exceptional Spanish poet of The Generation of '27, Luis Cernuda, referred – in one of his most celebrated books entitled *La realidad y el deseo* – to that false platonic and Christian dichotomy based on having to discern between reality and the imagination; despite that, today we are able to assure, radicalising his words, that behind the opposition to desire we can find only the inhibition of itself, and that a community, as with an individual, can only choose between "resignation and desire".

But, continuing with the path of those desiring communities, which disconcert the consensus and strike at the possible from the impossible, that preferred not to continue writing someone else's history in order to start telling their own stories and the stories of their inhabitants, we should ask ourselves a question of great importance: what are we alluding to when we say that these communities are fragmentary?

Without a shadow of doubt the community's articulations of itself take place inside the same world, ours, that seems to move in waves of uniformity or, on the contrary, jumping between polarities. Precisely these two fluctuations, or the outlines drawn in between them, are where the fragmentation becomes a sort of stigma that punishes and isolates those who stand up for it. Every community has something fragmentary, especially when they operate from resistance. Nonetheless, one of the situations that menaces them is that they are obliged to get rid of resistance as an "anomaly" – and yet how can they reject the idea of that anomaly being their unique argument, their flag or legacy, their only reason to be? Normalising fragmentation or, in a more poetical way, concurring with the fragmentary, probably now constitutes the most important collective challenge, and perhaps is one of the urgencies that cannot be postponed if we really *desire* to keep alive the community drive.

Mahmud Darwish, the great Palestinian poet, said in one of his most impressive poems, entitled *The Last Afternoon on This Land*: "Suddenly we are not capable of ironizing / because the space is ready to shelter the void". Indeed, when we have arrived at a certain point irony sounds so unsatisfactory, miserable, and cowardly…Maybe then, the only thing that is left is the determination of art to "unoccupy," to leave us, to evict from us, to dissolve us into something that most likely does not have a name but that points perfectly at its objectives: perhaps the fantasies that the artists have contributed to their creations could fill our lands and our existence, leaving outside those who are trying to conquer our words, and letting us be alone with the emptiness, alone with their emptiness.

Endnotes

1. *The Unavowable Community* were Sitesize / Joan Vila-Puig and Elvira Pujol; Technologies To The People / Daniel G. Andújar and Archivo. The selected projects shown by each collective were entitled respectively: *Metropolitan Narratives. Permanent Classroom; Postcapital Archive (1989-2001)* and *On Zero Economy.*

   For further information please visit: http://www.lacomunitatinconfessable.cat/project/curatorial-text/

MATERIAL OCCUPATIONS

SHEILA CRANE

A CITY GROWS IN A GARDEN IN VENICE.

The box houses of Bashir Makhoul's *Giardino Occupato*, constitute a temporary, evolving agglomeration on the grounds of the Liceo Artistico Statale di Venezia. The project builds on the 2012 installation, *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost*, in which a full-scale labyrinth and a cardboard model of an Arab town or refugee camp infiltrated the Yang Gallery in Beijing.[1] Displaced from gallery to garden, the biological metaphors through which the city is routinely understood seem here to be heightened. Cardboard houses, including those added over the course of the exhibition, disrupt cultivated landscape even as they are subject to deterioration through exposure to the elements and perhaps also the actions of visitors.

The *Giardino Occupato* conjures a familiar understanding of the city as organic growth and as process, a set of associations that have been powerfully animated in relation to the informal city. But, even as this formulation is conjured here in the garden, it is disrupted, most vividly through the project's materiality, its engagement with the representational conventions of architectural models and its modes of occupation. As a construct, this assemblage of cardboard houses registers Georges Bataille's insistence that the conglomeration – the city or settlement – is "the fundamental element of human society" and is thus "at the root of all empires."[2] It is an entity produced by the animating and opposing forces of attraction and repulsion. And, as Bataille reminds us, the city is an apparatus of social organization and control, where the material domination of the state is often assured through policing and through administrative and regulatory operations intended to ensure its stability.[3] Seen in this light, the city is at base a colonized terrain, produced through acts of taking possession, of destruction, construction and restructuring. With this in mind, let us begin again.

A MAKESHIFT SETTLEMENT COLONIZES ENCLOSED URBAN TERRITORY.

This collateral event, situated at a remove from the Biennale's insistently nationalized spaces, is an occupation in formation. Under the umbrella of the *Otherwise Occupied* exhibition, the provisional city in the garden references the radical de-territorialization of the Palestinian state under occupation and the extreme displacements produced in the perpetual states of emergency of occupied territory, refugee camp, and shantytown. Here we are confronted with a haunting vision of the futural city, simultaneously located in relation to, and never fully contained within, current geopolitical realities.[4] Indeed, the cardboard conglomeration vacillates in its address between specificity and abstraction. Stacked boxes pockmarked with rudimentary apertures become a means of recasting buildings, settlements and cities as instruments of regulation and control understood through the broad frame of colonization. These are the far from pastoral terms of Bashir Makhoul's garden occupation.

MATERIAL/MODEL

The empty boxes populating the *Giardino Occupato* are haunted by the spectre of the distinctive representational conventions of modern architectural practice. The ubiquity, availability, and low cost of cardboard fed directly into its ascendancy, in the early decades of the twentieth century, as the material of choice for building models.[5] With the aid of a scalpel or an X-Acto knife, flat sheets were readily transformed into three-dimensional constructs. It is tempting then to understand the pale tones of card and subtly textured surfaces of pressed pulp as active participants in modernist aesthetics and architectural imaginaries. Cardboard provided an ideal medium through which to project the quintessential building blocks of whitewashed walls and flat roofs, forms simultaneously subject, in the *Giardino Occupato*, to citation and rewriting.

Bashir Makhoul, *Giardino Occupato. Detail in-situ, Corrugated cardboard, Size variable, 2013*
Photo Bashir Makhoul, Winchester © Bashir Makhoul.

As in *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost*, cardboard is suggestive of concrete walls, in reference to refugee camps and West Bank towns, where, as Ryan Bishop has observed, "the plasticity and strength of concrete (which so fascinated that great urban planner and architect with a military bent: Le Corbusier) transforms into the ephemerality of cardboard."[6] Thanks in part to its tonality, corrugated cardboard likewise evokes stone or sun-dried brick, materials that were understood as essential building blocks of Palestinian vernacular architecture, particularly as it was described and codified during the British mandate (1918 – '48). In his 1930 survey of the Palestinian house, Taufik Canaan, a Palestinian physician who was also a dedicated ethnographer, emphasized the "simple square form" and grayish color of peasant houses. Canaan praised these qualities of *fellah* dwellings as the source of their harmonious relationship to the landscape, which he argued made them more responsive to the climate than most "modern, occidental houses."[7] In other descriptions of Palestinian Arab architecture, the simple village house merged with the urban courtyard dwelling, thanks largely to their formal and material similarities. Canaan asserted an insistently rooted building taxonomy to articulate a nationalist project. However, these same tropes might just as easily dissolve into a geographically displaced and highly generalized image of Mediterranean architecture, similarly defined by rectilinear volumes and solid stone or earthen walls.

The vernacular frame performs a distancing function through the assertion of timelessness and radical anteriority. Fixing structures and their inhabitants in an imagined distant past, one set apart from the present, is in turn a familiar colonialist strategy, one frequently imposed through the enforced homogenization and regulation of building materials. The first British Mandate military governor of Jerusalem insisted in 1917 that new constructions in the Old City utilize a restricted palette of so-called "Jerusalem stone," and a decade later stone cladding was mandated for the entire municipality. Following the 1967 Israeli occupation and annexation of eastern Jerusalem, this mandate was extended across this zone. Eyal Weizman has revealed the material ironies of this recasting of stone, imported from quarries near Palestinian villages in Galilee, "to reinforce an image of orientalized locality."[8] Regulated stone façades, even when reduced to the thinnest of veneers, were a means of cladding the occupied city in an aura of authenticity. A striking material reversal of Israeli and Palestinian building cultures is at play here, as the stone façades of Jewish neighborhoods in Jerusalem contrast with predominantly concrete structures in many Palestinian areas.[9]

We see similar dynamics elsewhere in the occupied city. After the French invasion of Algeria in 1830, calculated demolitions of vast swathes of the city of Algiers became instrumental tools of occupation. Targeted destruction of the existing urban fabric was undertaken hand in hand with the systematic reordering of buildings that were allowed to remain standing, newly subject to ordinances enforcing uniform whitewashing of their exterior walls.[10] Not unlike the stone of Jerusalem, this regulatory coating became a sign of indigeneity, carefully controlled and policed by the occupying army. The militarized reordering of the colonial city not only initiated the wholesale obliteration of buildings in targeted areas, but also the reframing of what would become known as the Casbah as a clearly bounded island cordoned off from the rest of the rapidly transforming and insistently modern city.[11] The targeting of buildings as objects of such violent attentions served likewise to fix the image of a timeless Mediterranean vernacular, defined by the familiar ciphers of stacked, box-like houses with monolithic walls, internal courtyards, and flat roofs.

Considered in material terms, the corrugated boxes in the *Giardino Occupato* are caught between the solidity of concrete, the evocative anachronism of stone or sun-dried brick, and the flimsy ephemerality of cardboard. Cheap and disposable, cardboard is simultaneously a source of waste and excess – as a ubiquitous artifact of consumption – and a salvage product.[12] On multiple levels then, Makhoul's cardboard houses at once index and occlude stable material references. The disposable city is shadowed by the colonial city, especially insofar as it was a critical stage for the often violent fixing of vernacular form and its simultaneous absorption and suppression within the walls of modernist architecture. Cardboard made concrete made stone made mud.

INFORME/INFORMALITY

The architectural model has been aptly described as "a psychological ploy," one that turns on the immediacy, directness, and accessibility of the miniaturized building.[13] Embraced alternately as a means of readily communicating architectural ideas to a broader audience or as a medium of experimentation and design development, the model is simultaneously object and idea. In their uneven apertures and packing tape assembly, the cardboard boxes of Makhoul's *Giardino Occupato* reject the meticulous fabrication and pristine forms of presentation models. Turning away from mimesis and simulation, these houses recall instead rapidly constructed study models, where facture and fabric are intended to enhance, rather than upstage, a defining concept.[14] As much as corrugated boxes might allude to concrete, stone, or mud brick, they simultaneously forestall fixed material references. Figured as generic non-substance, cardboard becomes a blank screen for projection.

The accumulated mass of precariously stacked cardboard boxes in the Palazzo 'Ca Giustinian Recananti's garden appears as spontaneous accretion. Repeated components coalesce into a sprawling, disorderly conglomeration – an emblematic simulation of the informal city. The artist and other commentators have underscored the degree to which the image of the "Arab street" or "Arab town" evoked by proliferating model houses references overtly militarized mappings and occupations of urban space.[15] Despite the deeply ingrained impulses of colonial taxonomy, whereby architectural form becomes a representational instrument for identifying, making legible, and aggressively policing difference and hierarchy, anonymous dwellings *en masse* are invariably understood as labyrinth. The colonialist fantasy of the disordered city absorbs and homogenizes everything in its path, collapsing Arab village, "native" town, Casbah, shantytown, and refugee camp onto one another.

The imagined city without rules, in its myriad guises, is a spatialized expression of the urban *informe*, the amorphous, impure mass of humanity identified by Bataille as the target of the state's exclusionary operations.[16] For Bataille, the *informe* does not simply reference relationships of form and content in the realm

Bashir Makhoul, *Giardino Occupato. Detail in-situ, Corrugated cardboard, Size variable, 2013*
Photo Bashir Makhoul, Winchester © Bashir Makhoul.

of representation,[17] but, most importantly, registers the effects of the intersecting psychic and political forces of repulsion and attraction within the social field. The unrepresented masses of humanity, or in Bataille's terms, "*misérables*," are the subject of pity, but pity quickly shifts to aversion.[18] Those who might have initially attracted sympathy are just as readily perceived as menace. The crucial move of abjection, then, is to set apart, contain, eliminate, and destroy, with all of the violence that such actions entail. Bataille's emphasis on the exclusionary operations through which human beings are rewritten as excess, as surplus, and as waste are likewise significant by-products of the occupied city.

That which the system cannot assimilate, it must reject. In the case of the mandating of "Jerusalem stone" as the material of choice for all constructions across the formerly divided city of Jerusalem, a homogenizing veneer was a means of covering over and displacing the heterogeneous materials and occupants of the cosmopolitan city. As Eyal Weizman has argued, this systematic reordering of the built landscape was directly tied to anxieties about disordered, provisional structures made of mud brick, wood and tin hastily erected by refugees of war: "An artificial topography had been created outside the city walls by generations of refuse deposited there."[19] Here we might bear witness to the active rewriting of the urban *informe* within the same frameworks of threat, contagion, and waste against which the walled city recognized itself.

In this light, it is not inconsequential that in the French Maghreb, architects, planners, sociologists, urban geographers and the colonial state trained their attentions on the *bidonville* (shantytown) as cities like Casablanca and Algiers became sites of intensifying conflict over the future of the French occupation. In Algiers, the rapid proliferation of shantytowns on the urban periphery was a direct product of the aggressive militarization and accelerating violence of the late colonial state. In the context of protracted urban conflict in Algiers, informal settlements were products of strategic exclusions, developed in relation to specific topographies, and further inflected by local conventions of property ownership and mandatory resettlements by the French military of hundreds of thousands of rural residents.[20] The subsequent targeting of the shantytown led directly to the forced displacement of residents, the systematic demolition of buildings, and the re-appropriation of cleared land for the functions of state, most notably for the construction of mass housing blocks intended to contain, control, and overtly police their occupants.[21]

Far from spontaneous constructions or unstructured, organic agglomerations implied by the image of the labyrinthine city, informality is the result of formalized operations and strategic exclusions. However, exclusionary acts do not simply obliterate their target, but invest it with renewed attentions.[22] As a construct, the *Giardino Occupato* offers a compelling challenge to the imagined city without rules; without structure, without legible form – a projective urban space marked by the very fears and desires it generates. The provisional conglomeration aggressively infiltrating the garden in Venice threatens its own reversals, by implicating us in the shifting poles of repulsion and attraction.

CITY/CITÉ

The architectural model is generally assumed to prefigure an anticipated dwelling. In this light, it is worth reconsidering – although not in the sense that the architect intended – Peter Eisenman's observation that the architectural model is "a building deprived of the need to be lived in."[23] For Eisenman, the model provides a decidedly liberatory terrain insofar as it releases the designer, at least temporarily, from the burden of considering the needs of impending occupation and the desires of future occupants. In this sense, the model exists in a state of suspended animation, cut off from the past and anticipation of the future.[24] Such is the temporality of occupation – the provisional state of an indefinite present and as-yet inconceivable future. Instigated at the urban scale, occupation is a specific instrument of city targeting, one that simultaneously references the act of taking and maintaining possession of space by force.[25]

Eisenman's formulation suggests that the architectural model might be understood as a vivid expression and construct of homelessness, the aporia at the heart of modern dwelling. Here we might recall Adorno's insistence that, following the systematic destruction of cities during World War II, homelessness emerges as the fundamental contemporary condition.[26] For its part, the cardboard city is the very

Bashir Makhoul, *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost*. Detail in-situ, Yang Gallery in the '798' arts district, Beijing, *Size variable, 2012*. Photo Ray Yang

embodiment of transiency and dispossession. However, the *Giardino Occupato* further accentuates the radical evacuation of dwelling from the construct. Its apertures suggest animation – windows as eyes, building as body. The jagged outlines of gaping openings and dark shadows made visible within accentuate these structures' emptiness. The silent ghost town bespeaks the violence of forced displacement, the refugee camp, and the very condition of statelessness. Arguably, the logics of settler colonialism and territorial occupation push these dislocating dynamics to further extremes, not only through the construction of new settlements, but also in assertions of belonging articulated through claims to home, possession, attachment, origins, and homeland.

In the *Giardino Occupato*, the obliteration of dwelling as static, rooted, timeless existence suggested by the architectural model opens up a space of possibility, suspended uncertainly between a poetics of dwelling (as explored by Jonathan Harris) and its radical evacuation.[27] Étienne Balibar's insistence on the *droit de cité* might be another means of reanimating the space between these poles. Expanding Henri Lefebvre's earlier formulation, Balibar recasts the relationship between *cité* as housing estate, as city, and as citizenship, no longer conceived in strictly nationalist terms.[28] Even as it is poised in a state of suspended animation, Bashir Makhoul's provisional city in the garden reclaims the *cité* as a simultaneously material and immaterial terrain that might be occupied otherwise.

Endnotes

1. Jonathan Harris explores these echoes at greater length in, “The unachieved state of a busy garden,” his essay in this catalogue.
2. Georges Bataille, in *The College of Sociology (1937–39)*, edited by Denis Hollier, trans. by Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 127.
3. Bataille, *The College of Sociology*, 132.
4. This formulation is indebted to Ryan Bishop, John Phillips, Wei-Wei Yeo, “Perpetuating Cities: Excepting Globalization and the Southeast Asian Supplement,” in *Postcolonial Urbanism: Southeast Asian Cites and Global Processes* (New York: Routledge, 2003).
5. Karen Moon, *Modeling Messages: The Architect and the Model* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2005), 43, 161. Harvey Wiley Corbett’s four-part series on “Architectural Models of Cardboard,” published in *Pencil Points* in 1922 provide vivid testament in this regard.
6. Ryan Bishop, “Spectres of perception, or the illusion of having the time to see: The geopolitics of objects, apprehension and movement in Bashir Makhoul’s *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost*,” in Davis and Harris (eds.), *Bashir Makhoul*, 206–47.
7. Tawfiq Canaan, *The Palestine Arab House: Its Architecture and Folklore* (Jerusalem: The Syrian Orphanage Press. 1933); quoted in Susan Slyomovics, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 84–85.
8. Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel’s Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007), 30.
9. Weizman, 52.
10. Assia Djebar, “Introduction,” *Mudan al-Jaza’ir fi-al-qarn al-tasi` ‘ashar/Villes d’Algérie au XIXe siècle* (Paris: Centre Culturel Algérien and Alger: Entreprise Algérienne de la Presse, 1984). See also Zeynep Çelik, *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations: Algiers under French Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
11. See Shirine Hamadeh, “Creating the Traditional City: A French Project,” *Forms of Dominance*, edited by Nezar AlSayyad (Brookfield, VT: Avebury, 1992).
12. “Cardboard consists of ~ 90% endlessly recycled material and, following use, can be recycled again to a degree of ~ 90%.” M. Eekhout et al., eds., *Cardboard in Architecture* (IOS Press, 2008), v.
13. Martha Sunderland, *Modelmaking: A Basic Guide* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999).
14. Sunderland, 10.
15. See Bashir Makhoul, “A Threat of Space: Discussion between Bashir Makhoul and Gordon Hon”; and Bishop, “Spectres of Perception”, 229
16. Georges Bataille, “En effet la vie humaine,” *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 2: *Ecrits posthumes, 1922–1940* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1970), 163–64.
17. See Yves-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, *L’informe: mode d’emploi* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1996) for the seminal re-reading of Bataille in these terms.
18. Georges Bataille, “L’abjection et les formes misérables,” *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 2: *Ecrits posthumes, 1922–1940* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1970), 217–19.
19. Weizman, 29.
20. See Pierre Bourdieu and Abdelmalek Sayad, “Colonial Rule and Cultural Sabir,” *Ethnography* 5:4 (2004): 455–56. Bourdieu and Sayad assert that “in 1960, the number of resettled Algerians reached 2,157,000, a quarter of the total population.”
21. See Sheila Crane, “The Shantytown in Algiers and the colonization of everyday life,” in *Use Matters: An alternative history of architecture*, edited by Kenny Cupers (London: Routledge, forthcoming 2013), 111–27.
22. Bataille, *The College of Sociology*, 126.
23. Peter Eisenman, quoted in Moon, 16.
24. Marc Augé, *Les formes de l’oubli* (Paris: Editions Payot, 1998), 75–77; and Paul Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), 452–54, 654–55.
25. See Ryan Bishop, Greg Clancey and John Phillips, “Cities as Targets,” in *The City as Target* (London: Routledge, 2012), 1–3.
26. Theodor Adorno, “Refuge for the homeless,” *Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life*, trans. by E.F.N. Jephcott (London: NLB, 1978), 38–39.
27. Harris, “The unachieved state of a busy garden.”
28. Etienne Balibar, *Droit de cité* (Paris: Editions de l’Aube, 1998). See also Verena Andermatt Conley, “The city as target – retargeting the city: French intellectuals and city spaces,” in *The City as Target*, 143.

GAZA IS EVERYWHERE

STEPHEN GRAHAM

A hidden archipelago of between 80 and 100 mini cities is rapidly being constructed across the world. Rising far from the world's main metropolitan corridors, in obscure edge-of-city and rural locations, these new 'cities' are set deep within military bases and training grounds. The vast majority are located in the United States, presenting jarring contrasts with the strip-mall suburbia that surrounds them. Others are rising out of the deserts of Kuwait and Israel, the Downs of Southern England, the plains of Germany and the islands of Singapore.

Some such cities are replete with lines of drying washing, continuous loop-tapes playing calls to prayer, wandering donkeys, Arabic graffiti, even ersatz 'minarets' and 'mosques.' Others have 'slum' or 'favela' districts and underground sewers with built-in olfactory machines, which can create the simulated smell of rotting corpses or untreated sewage on demand. Still others are populated occasionally by itinerant populations of Arab-Americans, bussed in to wander about and role-play in Arab dress.

Beyond these temporary inhabitants few, except military personnel, ever see or enter these new urban complexes. Unnoticed by urban design, architecture and planning communities, and invisible on maps, these sites constitute a kind of shadow world urban system. As a global system of military urban simulations they lurk in the interstices between the planet's rapidly growing metropolitan areas.

Otherwise Occupied is part of an ongoing effort by researchers, activists and artists around the world to reveal and problematise the multifaceted colonial project within which sit this burgeoning archipelago of urban warfare training sites.

Crucially, though, it is more than a critique - it is an affirmation. *Otherwise Occupied* grapples with the challenges of *positively* imagining the Palestinian national polity and society beyond the borders of Gaza and the West Bank. It wrestles, in other words, to counter the often dominant, imaginative power of a dubious transnational nexus, which intimately links security-industrial complexes, national security states, and popular, corporate media. This works to continually render Palestinian society, nationhood and urbanity as nothing but a devious, Orientalist threat with a boundless terrain of endless war and necessary occupation. It is, as the *Otherwise Occupied* programme notes argue, " vital that the idea of Palestine is not defined by the occupation."

PRACTICED DESTRUCTION

Turning to urban warfare training 'cities' in more detail; rather than being monuments to construction, dynamism and growth, these sites are violent theme parks for practicing urban destruction, erasure, and colonial violence targeting real, far-off or, in the case of the Israeli projects, not so far-off cities. These sites are being constructed by military specialists, with the help of military corporations, theme park designers, Hollywood experts, universities and video games specialists. They are simulations of the burgeoning Arab and Third World cities that are deemed the de facto zones of current and future warfare for Western forces[1] They are small capsules of space designed to mimic in some way what US military theorist, Richard Norton, has pejoratively labeled the 'feral' cities which Western military planners deem to be the strategic environments dominating contemporary geopolitics.[2]

As Eyal Weizman[3] emphasizes, Israeli and Western military doctrine now stresses the need to enter and try to control large urban areas. Also important here is the challenge to physically reorganise colonised city spaces so that high-tech weapons and surveillance systems can work to the occupiers' advantage. Weizman calls this "design by destruction". As he puts it, "contemporary urban warfare plays itself out within a constructed, real or imaginary architecture, and through the destruction, construction, reorganisation, and subversion of space."[4]

In keeping with the post-Cold war mutation of Western military doctrine into the planned remodelling of cities by force, the purpose of simulated urban warfare training cities is to allow US, Western and Israeli forces to hone their skills in designed urban destruction. Following extensive training in these sites, Western and Israeli military units deploy to the real cities of Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, or elsewhere, to undertake what, in military parlance, are termed 'Military Operations on Urban Terrain' (or simply 'MOUT ' for short).

Like the rest of the world, then, military training sites are rapidly being urbanised. Colonel Thomas Hammes, writing in the *US Marine Corps Gazette* in 1999, was one of many defense planners arguing at that period that a wide range of new mock cities were needed because US military training sites were out of phase with "the urban sprawl that dominates critical areas of the word today." "We know we will fight mostly in urban areas," he continued. "Yet, we conduct the vast majority of our training in rural areas – the hills of Camp Pendleton, the deserts of Twenty Nine Palms, the woods of Camp Lejeune, the jungles of Okinawa, Japan." [5]

The US military's response has been particularly dramatic. Between 2005 and 2010, the US Army alone built a chain of 61 urban warfare training 'cities' across the world.[6] Whilst some of these are little more than air-portable sets of containers, designed to provide basic urban warfare training when deployed around the world, others are complex spaces mimicking whole city districts or sets of villages, as well as surrounding countryside, infrastructure, even airports. Leading examples of the more complex sites include Fort Carson, Colorado (which has three different mock 'Iraqi villages'), the national 'Joint Readiness Training Center' at Fort Polk, Louisiana, Fort Benning, Georgia, the Marines' main site at 29 Palms in California, and Fort Richardson, Alaska.

Along with a wide range of simulated western cities, developed as sites within which to practice police and military responses to terror attacks, civil unrest or infrastructural collapse, these sites provide a global architectural simulation, a shadow archipelago of 'cities' which mimic the urbanization of real wars and conflicts around the world. These sites "tackle calamity in an amusement park of unrest, insurgency and its abatement," writes Bryan Finoki. "Architectures both elaborate and artful, [they are] designed solely for the purposes of being conquered and reconquered."[7]

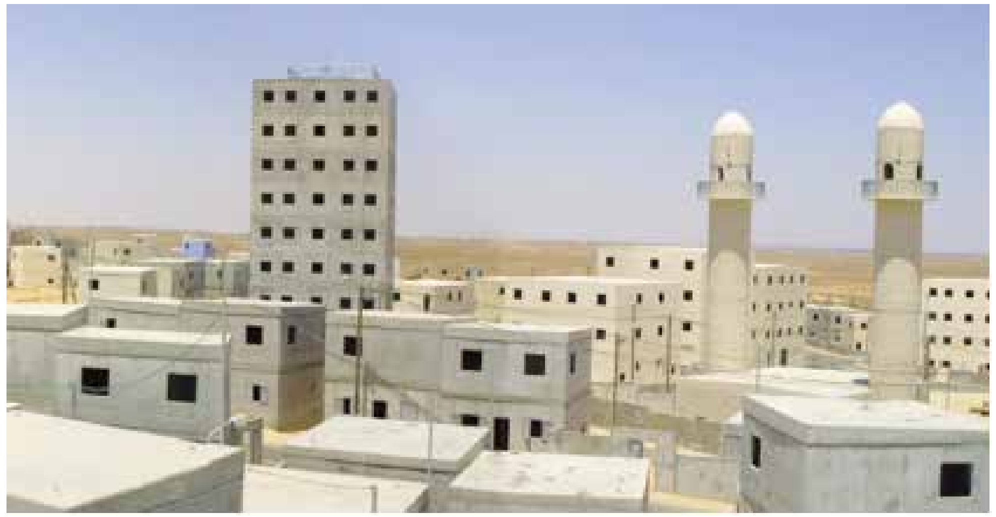
Urban warfare training 'cities' are stark embodiments of the imaginative and real urban geographies that have been at the heart of the global 'war on terror' and its decendent political projects. Powerful materialisations of what Derek Gregory has called "our colonial present",[8] they need to be understood as part of a much wider effort at physically and electronically simulating Arab, Palestinian or global south cities for tightly-linked imperatives of war, profit, pacification and entertainment. Indeed, these complexes take their place within a wide constellation of simulated Arab cities and urban landscapes, which draw on Orientalist tropes and traditions. These are also emerging within video games, virtual reality military simulations, films, newspaper graphics and novels. Together, these contribute to one massive discursive trick: to construct Arab and Third World cities as stylised, purely physical, and labyrinthine worlds, which are somehow both intrinsically terroristic and largely devoid of the civil society that characterises normal urban life.[9] The result is that Arab cities emerge here as little more than receiving points for US military ordinance and colonial military incursions – whether real or fantastical.

Where the cultures and sociologies of Arab cities are beginning to be considered in urban warfare simulations, Orientalist cliché, or high-tech dehumanisation, tends still to be the norm.[10] Some simulated 'Arab' cities in the U.S., for example, have been 'populated' but merely by locally recruited role-players in *keffiyehs* muttering Orientalist clichés. Meanly, the 'populating' of electronically simulated 'cities' is simply generated by computer software electronically generating 'crowds' within the cities to be attacked. Either way, this constellation of urban simulacra thereby do the important geopolitical work of continually reducing the complex social and cultural worlds of Arab, Palestinian or global south urbanism to the city as mere target, or 'battlespace,' to be assaulted in a purported campaign against 'terror', or for 'freedom.'

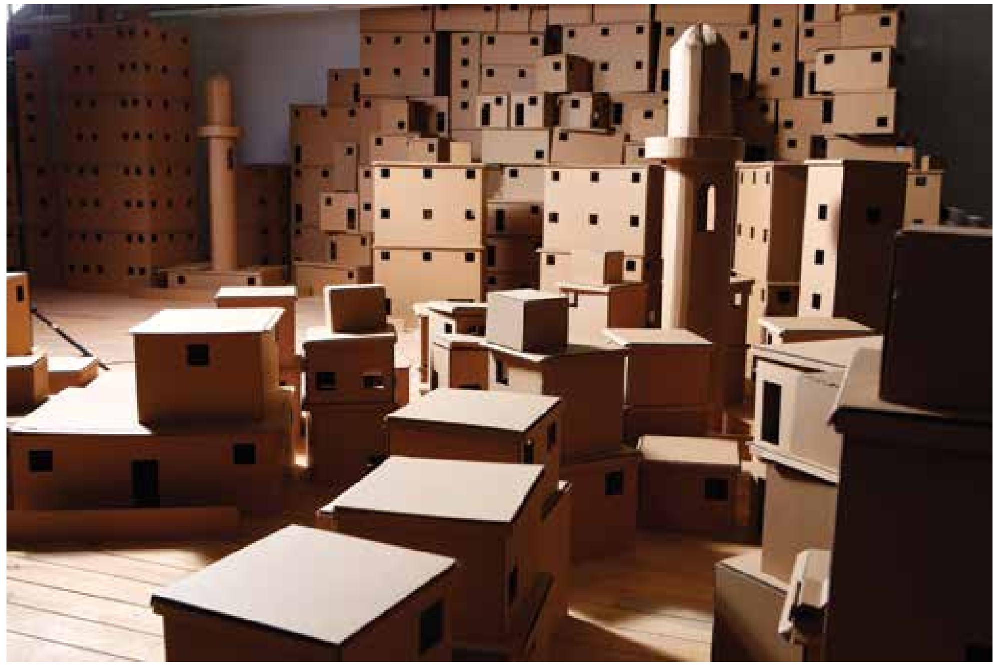
BALADIA: 'THIS IS OUR PLAYGROUND'

"It is here, in this parallel world, that the occupation of the Palestinian territories is played out by generations of Israeli soldiers, over and over again."[12]

By far the most ambitious and controversial mock 'Arab' city so far constructed, however, is not a US-facility at all. Ostensibly, it is an Israeli one: the 'Baladia' facility at Israel's Ze'elim base in the Negev desert (Figure 1). However, given that the site has been paid for by US military aid, was built between 2005 and 2006 by the US Army Corps of Engineers and is used by US Marines, perhaps 'US-Israeli' would be a more accurate description.



Baladia *The Baladia mock Palestinian city in the Ne'gev desert, built for the Israelis by the US Army.*[11]



Bashir Makhoul, *Enter Ghost, Exit Ghost.* Detail in-situ, Yang Gallery in the '798' arts district, Beijing, *Size variable, 2012.* Photo Ray Yang

Costing approximately $40 million and covering 7.4 square miles, Baladia has 472 complete concrete structures and four miles of roads. It is the first urban warfare mock city, which begins to mimic the scale of real urban areas. The Baladia complex has been explicitly built to generalise the purported military lessons of Israel's regular incursions into Palestinian cities and refugee camps since 2002 to the whole of Israel's armed forces (as well as friendly militaries). The complex simulates a complete Palestinian town.[13] The 'town' is split into four 'quarters' and is wired up with surveillance equipment to monitor the 'combat'. Most notable at Chicago (the other name for Baladia) are a range of mechanical cut-outs depicting bearded caricatures of Arab men which are programmed to pop-up in windows and street corners during live-fire exercises.

Baladia has simulated apartment buildings, a market place, mosque and a concrete 'casbah.' Its "cemetery doubles as a soccer field, depending on operational scenario";[14] its 'nature reserve' hides Hezzbollah-style rocket launchers. "Charred automobiles and burned tyres litter the roadways"; [15] streets are filled with mock booby-traps. As well as a complex surveillance system to track soldiers' performance, an elaborate audio system that can replicate helicopters, mortar rounds, muezzin prayer calls, and about 20 other distinct sounds." [16]

As in US complexes, "hundreds of soldiers, most of them 19- and 20-year-old women, graduates of Arabic language and cultural programs, [operate as] play-acting civilians and enemy fighters." Baladia even has ready-made 'worm-holes': the openings in the walls of buildings that Israeli soldiers routinely blast their way through Palestinian cities and refugee camps to avoid the perceived vulnerabilities of the street.

The scale of Baladia allows it to be flexibly re-arranged in order to provide a purported simulation of any specific city within which the IDF or other forces are planning to launch operations. Baladia can thus be easily reconfigured into renditions of 'Gaza', 'Lebanon', the 'West Bank' or 'Syria'.[17] "This is our playground to practice for anything we need," reported Lt. Col. Arik Moreh, the base's second in command. During 2007, for example, Lebanon and Syria were the main Israeli preoccupations. Thus "creative engineering [was] required to transform the area into what IDF officers here call Hezbollahland," writes Barbara Opall-Rome. "During a late-May visit [in 2007], IDF planners were busy transforming large portions of Baladia City into Bint Jbeil, a Hezbollah stronghold from which extremist Shiite forces extracted a heavy price on IDF ground troops in last summer's Lebanon War.'"[18]

In 2006, Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, two Israeli photographers, succeeded in making a detailed study of Baladia (which they referred to as "Chicago"). Their research about the complex concludes that it "was not based on a specific town but is a generic 'Arab' place, designed by the soldiers themselves, building on their intimate experience of the minutiae of Arab cities." Great attention has been paid to detail. "Graffiti has been applied to the walls with obscure declarations in Arabic: 'I love you Ruby' and 'Red ash, hot as blood'."

Baladia embodies strange contortions of simulation and denial. As Broomberg and Chanarin suggest, "this convention of using the name 'Arab', rather than Palestinian, effectively obscures identity, and in this sense Chicago as a ghost-town evidences the thread of denial that runs through much of Israeli discourse about relations with Palestinian towns like Ramallah and Nablus."[19]

Following their visit to the complex to complete their photography, Broomberg and Chanarin spoke about its deeply unnerving qualities. "It is difficult to pinpoint what it is about the place that is so disturbing," they said. "Perhaps it's the combination of the vicariousness and the violence. It's as if the soldiers have entered the enemy's private domain while he's sleeping or out for lunch . . . It's a menacing intrusion into the intimate"[20].

By December 2006, the complex was also receiving regular visits from US military commanders. "This is a world-class site that the Israelis have built," LTG H Steven Blum, the chief of the National Guard Bureau, gushed during a December visit. "We probably should have a facility like that of our own; in the interim, we should explore the opportunities to train here […]. It couldn't be more realistic unless you let people actually live there." [21]

To Lt Blum, Baladia provides a much closer approximation of Arab urban geographies than did the mock cities he encountered in the United States. "It is the most realistic, extensive replication of the sort of urban area typical of this region of the world that I've ever seen," he said. "It is just such a superb training facility for all the nuances and the situational awareness and the battlefield conditions that Soldiers face in this part of the world," Blum said.[22]

Baladia helps concretise Aissa Deebi's critique in *Otherwise Occupied* of the Zionist fantasy of a 'pure' geopolitical project sustained by permanent war and an endless targeting of the racialised, demonic other. The project demonstrates the sheer banal materiality of that Zionist project in its recent phases – not just in the more familiar landscapes of militarised borders, confiscated landscapes and illegal settlements but in urban landscapes who's very role is to sustain the projection of colonial violence against Palestinian society.

Bashir Makhoul's large-scale installation project "*Giardino Occupato*" also resonates powerfully and rather eerily against Baladia. During the show, members of the public assemble and reconfigure the cardboard city. This represents the endless mutations with which Palestinians are forced to occupy and claim space - informal settlements and refugee camps - within wider geopolitical regimes that render them invisible, illegitimate and unimportant. But this very process acts as a shadow to Baladia, where the spaces are deliberately and endlessly reconfigured to mimic the next target of colonial, expeditionary war.

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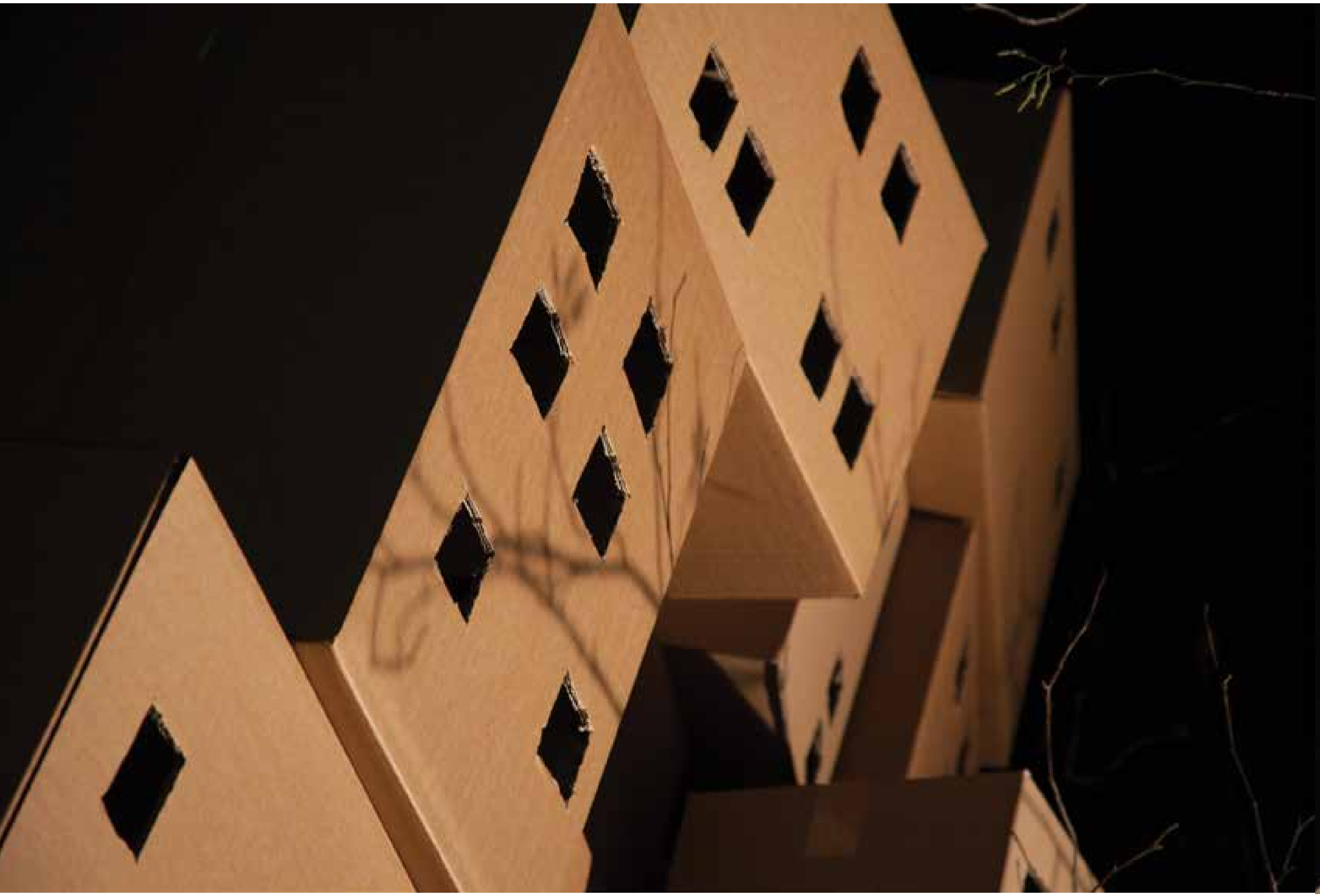
BETWEEN THE CASTLE AND THE VILLAGE

JOHN BECK

'You're not from the castle,' Franz Kafka's K. is told in *The Castle*, and 'you're not from the village, you're nothing' (2009: 46). Not quite nothing, however, but 'a stranger, a superfluous person getting in everyone's way, a man who is always causing trouble' (46). Always between places, the stranger gets in the way wherever he is, an awkward, anomalous figure who fails to reach any sort of settlement with regards to place. This is what Judith Butler calls Kafka's 'poetics of non-arrival'; there are horizons and goals but 'there is no actual departure and there is surely no actual arrival' (2011). The perpetual physical and psychological displacements, the journeys with no end, and the labyrinthine bureaucracies prone to foundationless accusations so common in Kafka's writing have made his work, as Jens Hanssen argues, 'part of the Arab political lexicon precisely because many Arabs feel they have experienced his fiction as reality.' (2012: 179) The affinity with Kafka is clearly present in Aissa Deebi's contribution to *Otherwise Occupied*, the two-channel installation *The Trial*, which borrows its title from Kafka's best-known work. Dealing with Palestinian Communist poet Daoud Turki's 1973 trial for treason in Israel, Deebi focuses, through a re-enactment in English, on Turki's anti-Zionist speech as an attempt to move beyond the Jew/Arab binary toward the possibility of a broader-based class solidarity. Bashir Makhoul's *Giardino Occupato*, while not directly related to Deebi's installation, shares, I think, a relation to Kafka through the ambivalent trope of the village. Makhoul's cardboard self-assembly model proposes, like Turki's socialism, a kind of collectivism made visible in the stacked individual units that make up some unidentified, imagined community.

Treason is a crime committed against one's nation, but the charge of treason suggests a confidence in assigning citizenship to the accused that is complicated in the case of Palestinians in Israel. Turki's participation in a Palestinian-Israeli campaign against the occupation from within Israel is only really treasonous if Turki is embraced as a full Israeli citizen. Since Turki and his comrades were attacking the state of Israel as an occupying power, it is hard to see how treason is the most appropriate charge. Nevertheless, what is broadly clear from this is that the boundaries between inside and outside, belonging and exclusion, identity and difference are scrambled when insiders and outsiders – Jews and Arabs – collaborate to overthrow a common adversary. As Uid Adiv, one of the Israelis charged alongside Turki, explains, this is the reason their sentence was so harsh:



REVOLUTIONARY
REVOLU AR

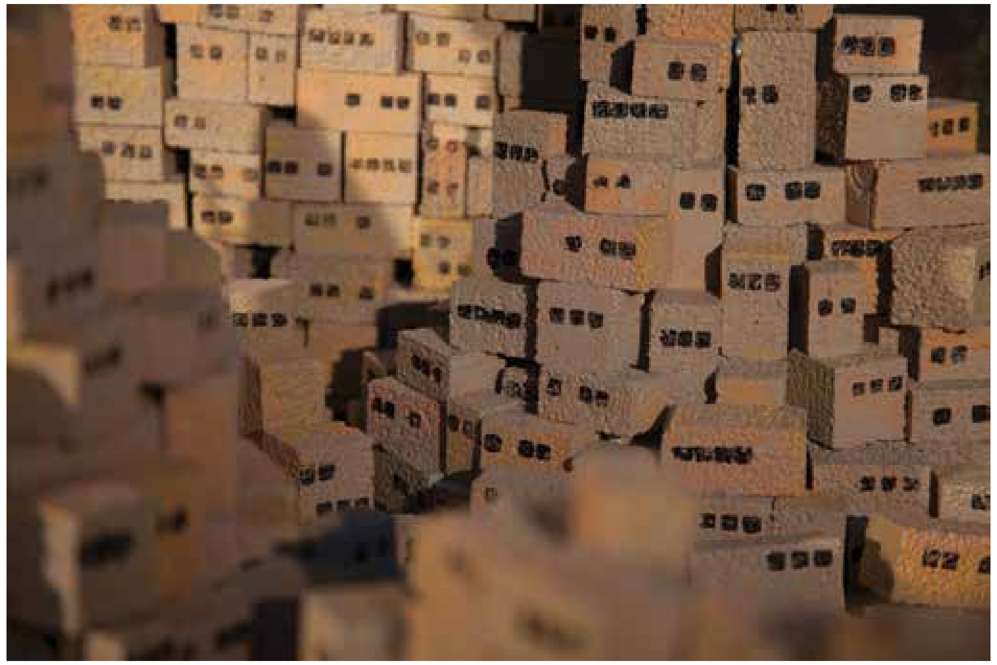
Bashir Makhoul, *Giardino Occupato. Detail in-situ, Corrugated cardboard, Size variable, 2013*
Photo Alexander Makhoul, Winchester © Bashir Makhoul.

Aissa Deebi, *The Trail*, 15 min 2 channel video installation 2013

> What made people so crazy was that we were Israelis. It confused them. It forced them to think and, instead of reflecting, they blamed us for doing this to them. It couldn't just be Jews against Arabs any more. We were Israelis sitting with Palestinians. We were no longer completely white. There was never any question in my mind that we'd be convicted. In the end, Daoud and I received the harshest sentence possible, 17 years. (Adiv quoted in Nelson 2006:132)

Claiming to be from neither the village nor the castle, Turki's rebels become the troublemakers who disrupt the logic of the system and must, as a consequence, be eliminated.

While the castle in Kafka's narrative represents the seat of power to which the village is subordinate, there is, as the schoolteacher explains to K., 'no distinction between the local people and the castle' (2009: 12). Klamm, the high-ranking castle official, is also visible in the faces of others, not least K.'s assistants. K's mistress, Frieda, observes that the assistants' eyes, 'so guileless yet sparkling, sometimes remind me of Klamm's. Yes, that's it, those eyes of theirs sometimes look at me as Klamm's did' (2009: 124). The power of the castle, then, is not an externalized entity but one that permeates the life of the village and animates the behaviour of all that it commands. Indeed, the castle itself is not a discrete structure but 'an extensive complex of buildings, a few of them with two storeys, but many of them lower and crowded close together. If you hadn't known it was a castle you might have taken it for a small town' (2009: 11). So the castle is like a town and the village is indistinguishable from the castle. While the opposition between castle and village appears to govern and give definition to everything, what Kafka in fact presents is a continuum of power that may have its source in the castle but which is disseminated so thoroughly among spaces and populations that there is no clear or meaningful distinction to be made between ruler and ruled. To be apprehended by K.'s assistants as if it were Klamm, as Frieda says, is to have the interrogatory power of the castle embedded in the everyday life of the village.



Bashir Makhoul, *Giardino Occupato. model, Size variable, 2013*
Photo Ray Yang, Winchester © Bashir Makhoul.

Makhoul's cardboard village looks like a Palestinian refugee camp, improvised and thrown together. But it also grows vertically, like surveilling hillside Israeli settlements bordering onto Palestinian land. The cardboard units also recall the ersatz buildings used in MOUT (Military Operations on Urban Terrain), training facilities such as the 'town' known as Chicago built in the Negev Desert by the Israeli Defense Force in the early 1980s to provide rehearsal space for military manoeuvres. Makhoul's model is not categorically a village or a castle but borrows aspects of both. The cardboard structures appear to celebrate the organic growth of a collective enterprise but they also participate in the occupation of space, however temporarily. On a different level, the work is also both unrelated to the official Venice Biennale (Palestine does not have an official pavilion in 2013) and reliant upon the fact of the Biennale as the defining inside to which it stands outside. *Otherwise Occupied* appears to want to be inside but is left outside; on the other hand, its outsider status is precisely what gives it significance as an articulation of Palestinian exclusion. Not from the castle, not from the village: not quite nothing, a stranger who gets in everyone's way.

PLAY AS COMPLICITY

'What is it with kids and boxes?' asks the TV ad as children disappear among assorted cardboard boxes while *You Give a Little Love*, a song from the soundtrack of *Bugsy Malone* (1976) promises that 'we could have been anything that we wanted to be.' The product being promoted is McDonalds fast food, and the cardboard box play session concludes with a couple of kids opening a happy meal carton. Another ad: the front door opens and a woman in stockinged feet picks up a package left on the step. 'We're the people with the smile on the box,' announces the male voiceover. 'We're the reinventors of normal. We dream of making things that change your life and then disappear into your everyday, of making the revolutionary routine.' This is an ad for Amazon products and services.

Both of these advertisements are currently (April 2013) running on British television and they share not only the anchoring trope of the cardboard box but also the generic affirmation of so much promotional material: aspirational, familial, creative, playful, sincere. The ordinary stuff of everyday life is offered here as both utterly transformed and profoundly unchanged: it is the revolution that keeps everything the same. The cardboard box is the polymorphous medium of invention and the container of desire. It promises 'anything' (though a happy meal is a happy meal whether it is ordered in Seoul or San Francisco) and is capable of hooking up all things and all places: the package on the doorstep delivers the fruits of the global market without the recipient having to leave the house. Is this what it means to say that there is no distinction between the local people and the castle? That the act of participating in the consumption of globalized brands and services dissolves the consumer into the apparatus of power, the violence and exploitation underpinning those goods and services disappeared into the everyday?

The emphasis in the ads, of course, is on abstractions like freedom and playfulness that are given form through the act of opening the box of possibility, of creativity – especially the notionally unmediated creativity of children - as the transformation of the ordinary into the extraordinary (that is still, curiously, ordinary – making the revolutionary routine). The rhetoric of expression is, then, built in to the act of consumption even when the product is a hamburger or an electronic device, since it is not the hamburger that is really being sold here; rather, what is pitched in these ads is the old dream of the avant-garde: the revolutionary transformation of everyday life through the dissolution of the distinction between art and life. The cardboard box is crucial because it is the protector and the carrier of the tantalizingly close but concealed object, whatever it might be; the box is the skin of desire and as such is an interface between outside and inside. As the embodiment of a promise as yet unfulfilled, the box is also, in many ways, like many unopened gifts, more interesting than the item it contains.

At the end of Steven Spielberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) the Ark of the Covenant is shown being stored away by government operatives in a vast hangar full of crated secrets somewhere in Area 51. This brief scene, along with the end of *Citizen Kane* (1941) which provides an oblique aerial shot of Charles Foster Kane's huge horde of possessions was claimed by Rachel Whiteread to have been an inspiration behind her 2005 contribution to Tate Modern's Unilever Series of commissions. *Embankment* comprised 14,000 white polyethylene boxes, cast from the inside of cardboard boxes, variously stacked and glued together inside Turbine Hall, a series of tower blocks and mountain peaks through which visitors could wander as through the valleys of some synthetic crystal formation or as if among the streets of an improvised and oversized architectural model. As a temporary work – the polyethylene was later ground up to make bollards – *Embankment* draws on the provisional nature of the cardboard box as the necessary but always secondary object of transit and storage. Like the film scenes to which Whiteread alludes, though, the work is also bound up with notions of treasure and hoarding, since Tate Modern is itself, like Kane's warehouse and the hangar in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, a kind of vault within which possession and status confer symbolic value upon a heap of cultural artifacts. Indeed, there are no actual cardboard boxes in *Embankment*, only the cast interiors made possible by their absent forms. It is the space defined in the provisional demarcation of volume by the box that is considered of value here: like Turbine Hall, it is the capacity to occupy space and to make known the volume of that space – to quantify and claim it - that *Embankment* celebrates.

In interviews conducted to promote *Embankment*, Whiteread referred to the difficulties of moving house and dealing with the possessions of her recently deceased mother. The dislocations of moving are here located in the everyday as the ordinary business of dealing with the affairs of life and death, with the difficulties of boxing and unboxing things, of living with the boxes themselves as physical obstructions and the emotional heft of things placed in or lifted out of storage. More compelling than *Embankment* itself, perhaps, is this more prosaic attention to the box as an object capable of containing, literally and affectively, the stuff of life and its attachments. Like the Ark of the Covenant, which by association with the things it once contained took on a symbolic life of its own, the generic cardboard box is freighted with the burden of the sum of its uses.

The significance of the box lies not only in the associations it may have with change and loss (in movement from one space to another or as the repository for the effects of a person or time no longer present) but also in the promise of protection and secure passage. The function of the box is to contain and protect something; without objects to move or store, there is no need for boxes. As such, the cardboard box speaks of the possession of objects, of goods, and of the responsibility to tend to them, keep them, or convey them from place to place.

The installation *Cardboard Cloud* (2009), designed by Fantastic Norway Architecture on behalf of the Norwegian Center for Design and Architecture (DogA) in Oslo, is in some ways a lighter (physically and conceptually), inverted *Embankment*. The point of the installation was to provide a framework for an exhibition of Norwegian design, and the idea of hanging 3000 cardboard boxes in cloud clusters came, the architects explain, from 'the thrill of unpacking' (Cilento 2009). What Whiteread identifies as a burden (moving) and an expression of loss (bereavement) is here positioned as anticipated consumer fulfillment: the box is less a mode of protection in this case and more the enticing wrapper that must be torn away to reveal the object of desire. As in Whiteread's sculpture, though, press releases for *Cardboard Cloud* remind readers that all boxes were recycled after the show. Art, it seems, may only be produced out of everyday objects so long as they are allowed to return to the place from whence they were appropriated. How many sculptures might serve a higher purpose as landfill is not disclosed.

The benign multi-purposefulness of the box in *Cardboard Cloud* is reiterated in a folksy 2011 work by Alexander and Savannah Jarman called *This is a City*. Exhibited as part of San Diegan artist Judith Pedroza's *Sala de Espera* (Waiting Room) project that uses Pedroza's apartment as venue, *This is a City* comprised stacks of reused cardboard boxes taped together into awkward floor-to-ceiling intestinal towers. In an artist statement that emphasizes the numerous sequential uses to which any given box may be put, the Jarmans appear to have in mind a cardboard version of urban plurality as imagined in the strapline for the 1948 film (and its TV spin-off) *The Naked City*: 'There are eight million stories in the naked city'.

The problem with installations like *Cardboard Cloud* and *This is a City*, regardless of how environmentally sustainable and improvised they may be, is that they are irredeemably self-regarding and ultimately whimsical in their celebration of retooling the materials of everyday life into 'creative' configurations. To a considerable extent this is also the case with Whiteread's *Embankment*, which speaks more to the practical dilemma of how to fill the cavernous Turbine Hall than how processes of accretion and accumulation might address implied concerns regarding the precarious condition of a life lived out of boxes. There is none of the darkness here that is registered in the 1893 Sherlock Holmes story 'The Adventures of a Cardboard Box', where the package contains a mysterious pair of severed human ears preserved in salt. Nevertheless, latent in these works is the shadow of dispossession, of an encroaching dematerialization that leaves the packaging as the only remaining sign of a now absent concrete existence. *Cardboard Cloud*, for instance, recalls the advance of so-called cloud computing, whereby information previously embodied in individual machines is displaced into the ether and onto remote servers that function as virtual warehouses of personal and corporate 'content.' While such innovations are pitched as facilitating mobile access across numerous devices, among the effects of the divestment of files into the cloud is the unmooring of individual users from any fixed relationship to the workplace and its supporting material apparatus. As such, the cloud is a sign of advanced precarity where the invisible ties to the digital network are all that remain to anchor the worker or citizen in place. The icon for programme installation on Macintosh computers is, of course, an open cardboard box, a golden translucent cube protruding from within the carton like the gift of seamless incorporation into the wireless body. Here is the covenant protected by the cardboard ark, one click away (the thrill of unpacking) from transcendence of all software limitations.

What is missing from the works discussed above is any direct engagement with the precarity built into the cardboard box's paradoxically protective-yet-vulnerable nature and its significance as a marker of transit and insecurity. A more skeptical eye than that cast by the designers of *Cardboard Cloud* or *This is A City* might perceive in those works the spectre of global commodity circulation and deracinated populations cut adrift from the customs and habits of collective endeavor. Whiteread, I think, is closest, with her recollections of *Citizen Kane* and *Indiana Jones*, to recognizing the dumb power that comes with massive accumulation, a power that turns a village into a castle and resides in ownership rather than use. At the same time, though, Whiteread's project, like the other, more provincial versions of her grand design, remains fixated on the transformative creative capital invested in cardboard by the artist-as-visionary. In a very significant way this is why cardboard is important in these works, as a sign of how even the lowliest material can be sprinkled with the fairy-dust of imagination and converted into 'art'; artists, as everyone knows, are able to think outside the box. Here, despite the processual element to these projects, the manipulation of cardboard becomes a demonstration of the artist as, in Claire Bishop's terms, the paragon of neoliberalism; 'the virtuosic contemporary artist,' claims Bishop, 'has become the role model for the flexible, mobile, non-specialised labourer who can creatively adapt to multiple situations, and become his/her own brand' (2012: 12). Like the children playing with boxes in the McDonalds ad, the artist (as conceived along the Romantic continuum from childhood to adult creativity) is the figure most able to display the promise of infinite possibility latent in goods delivered just in time.

This is not to say that there might not be a politics of the cardboard box and it is not inconceivable that there might be an art capable of giving shape to such a politics. There is something ludicrous in the idea, to be sure, a playfulness already acknowledged in the works cited thus far but overplayed in these cases. The blank anonymity of the box needs to be embraced rather than transformed; the dull brown surface has to be allowed to erase any signature style and be exposed in all its replicated banality. Most of all, in keeping with the self-cancelling aspect of the box, which is given form only by that which it serves to protect, the art made of cardboard has to be bad. What I mean is that it has to look and behave nothing like art. The failure of Whiteread's *Embankment* and its ilk is that it announces itself so loudly as a work of art, as if the announcement makes it so. The cardboard box, though, as I have noted, is a place-marker rather than a thing in itself; the box is always the disposable (though enticing) shell, never the object of desire. An indifference to the box – like poet Ted Berrigan's use of the Brillo box sculpture, gifted to him by Andy Warhol, as a coffee table – and attention to the space it takes up shifts the focus from the forms produced through 'creative' manipulation of the material and toward the action of space-taking itself.

DO-IT-YOURSELF

The politics of the box is, I think, only beginning to be explored in works like *Embankment*, a politics that is explicitly taken up in Makhoul's recent cardboard works. Makhoul's boxes are generic, near identical; they are not 'found' or reused but, like Whiteread's, manufactured to the required size. Square holes cut in the sides convert the boxes into representations of rudimentary dwellings, though as model houses there is little concession to skill and no interest in detail. Indiscriminately stacked, the boxes grow into a cluster of houses, a refugee camp or some other improvised village thrown together. A more ordered positioning of the units and they might take on the form of an Israeli settlement, the apertures becoming the overseeing eyes of windows facing down onto Palestinian territory. But the ad hoc arrangement suggests less planning, an absence of design, a more immediate response to the contours of available space. Makhoul's boxes are not much to look at, though once stacked they can be easily mistaken for the kind of camp or village or even castle they resemble. In a curious way, then, they are successful as representations despite the indifference to craft or design. In Makhoul's previous work with boxes, *Enter Ghost Exit Ghost* (2012), the cardboard city is found, already built, at the end of a maze of photographs of a real village. In *Giardino Occupato*, visitors are invited to contribute to the cardboard occupation and to build their own forms. This gesture toward the participatory shifts the emphasis away from the act of stacking as an explicitly 'artistic' act of creation and places the work at, as Bishop suggests, 'a critical distance towards the neoliberal new world order' (12) by virtue of its (oblique, to be sure) allusions to 'community, collectivity (be this lost or actualised) and revolution' (12). Whether or not allowing the public to complete the box stacking constitutes a critically participatory or emancipatory act, the sense of ongoing and unguided process is clear. In theory, visitors might choose to dismantle the box structure and redistribute the units in unforeseen configurations; to an extent the outcome is unknowable.

Getting visitors to contribute to the box stacking not only leaves the form of the work indeterminate but it multiplies and confuses the agency of the builder. The work can no longer be construed only as the singular symbolic act of a displaced Palestinian artist but becomes a generalized process of putting things together. This out-sourcing of labour recalls, though in a more playful form, the kind of delegated performances undertaken by Spanish artist Santiago Sierra in works like *People Paid to Remain inside Cardboard Boxes* (G&T Building, Guatemala City, August 1999), where low-paid and unseen workers are employed to occupy boxes in a duplication of their invisible, subordinate socio-economic situation. Makhoul's invited participants are not positioned in any explicitly political fashion, but the introduction of an interactive dimension does expand the significance of being 'otherwise occupied', the relatively idle diversion of playing with cardboard blocks in an art exhibit introducing an element of arbitrariness to what might otherwise be an earnest demonstration of spatial domination. The arbitrariness is not without a point, though, since the ad hoc beginnings of many illegal Israeli outposts, the unpredictable nature of checkpoint procedures, and the generalized sense of spatial instability produced across contested territories reveal how seemingly unregulated acts – the positioning of a shipping container, the placement of a checkpoint, the marking out of a wall – are able to capture space through a series of seemingly uncoordinated but interconnected moves. It is hard to tell in Makhoul's work what is being occupied and by whom. Whose boxes are these? How much space might they take up? How permanent are they? What are they for? Do these model dwellings represent an aggressive building programme designed to acquire territory or are they the jerry-built shacks of a displaced population? When Makhoul's boxes appear, though, whether in a Beijing gallery or a garden in Venice, they undertake a process of what Eyal Weizman calls, referring to Israeli policies, 'erratic occupation' that reshapes the space within which they are placed. For Weizman, it is not merely through military actions that Palestinians are dispossessed but, more perniciously, it is through 'the mundane elements of planning and architecture' that 'life, property and political rights are constantly violated' (2007: 5). It is here, I think, in the mundane, in the throwaway materiality of the overdetermined cardboard box, that Makhoul manages to locate the troubling power of the ephemeral and how the village becomes indistinguishable from the castle.

It is the makeshift insubstantiality of Makhoul's cardboard cities that differentiate them from, for example, Wafa Hourani's similar explorations of Palestinian space through the architectural maquette and playful diorama. Hourani's *New Cities* project (2007-9) is more historically and politically specific than Makhoul's spatio-temporally indeterminate villages, using the future centenaries of decisive moments in the history of Palestine – 2047 (birth of Israel); 2067 (Six-Day War); 2087 (first Intifada) – as the dates on an imaginary timeline that follows the transformations of the Qalandia refugee camp and checkpoint. The installations are room-sized, highly detailed models of the camp, airport, checkpoint, and security wall made of paper, cardboard, fabric, photographs, model cars and sundry domestic materials. Grounded in observation and experience yet shrunken to improvised science fiction models of their real-time, real-world counterparts, the fabricated Qalandias are a strange mix of playful invention and grim verisimilitude. Presented at table-top level, the viewer of the models takes on the position of a mobile surveillance presence, approaching the streets and buildings from an oblique aerial vantage point and able to swoop down to peer into windows and behind walls and fences.

Part of the attraction of Hourani's work is in the attention to detail, the care with which figures have been placed, the possibility of producing a narrative from the street scenes and projected spatial futures. Makhoul's models do not yield anything like this level of thick content, and seem instead to have been dumped into the space. Bereft of the craft skills that would signal the work as something produced by the hand of the artist, Makhoul leaves the boxes in transit, yet to arrive at any conclusive destination. Neither castle nor village, though in some respects capacious enough to contain both, the work is nothing but also gets in the way. The extent to which the castle and the village are indistinguishable, the degree to which audience participation will determine whether the boxes reproduce existing power relations or dismantle them, is yet to be determined.

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