

What is the purpose of this demonstration | exhibition while the war on the Gaza Strip wages on?

This demonstration represents an alternative space and platform for Gazan cultural institutions and artists, in defiance of the destruction and genocide that cultural life in Gaza is being subjected to, which includes the burning, desecration, and looting of artworks. When the Occupation so brazenly aims to silence Gaza and isolate it from the world, we must reject this and pass on Gaza's voices. This endeavour also comes in the context of the ongoing dialogue about the role of art and culture in times of war, especially in light of the existential threat posed to Palestinians by the Israeli Occupation's aim to erase everything associated with the memory of Palestinians and our intellectual, artistic, and cultural achievements.

Why the name *This is Not an Exhibition*?

When we thought of what to name this demonstration, we found it necessary to stay true to the most expressive and accurate way to describe the spaces being presented, which is that this is not an "exhibition" in the traditional sense. Its undertaking took place under emergency conditions and thus was not implemented per procedures typically recognised by museums and galleries. Collecting the artworks, their arrangement, articulating their descriptions, hanging them on the walls: all of these things took place through a rather exceptional and unusual methodology.

This is not intended as a neat display of specific artworks by their artists, nor is the goal for the audience to enjoy the works shown and take pictures next to them. Rather, its goal is to affirm the existence of Palestinians and our creative achievements, for the Palestinian artist will always create art that uplifts the voice of Gaza and its people, no matter how isolated from the world they are by the Occupation. This is a space for solidarity with Gazan artists and a platform to present not only their perspectives but also their tenacious clinging to life and what life itself means to them.

What are the spaces included in the artistic demonstration?

For the **first space**, Eltiqa Art Gallery and Shababek for contemporary art have been invited to use the main exhibition hall of the Palestinian Museum as their space after the flames of war swallowed their spaces in Gaza. In this space, they present to us *This is Not an Exhibition*. This effort brings together more than 280 artworks by over 100 Palestinian Gazan artists that have been collected from West Bank homes, galleries, institutions and universities throughout historic Palestine, in partnership with more than 50 individual and institutional lenders. This moving act of solidarity was made possible by collective efforts that recognised the significance of this mission.

The **second space** is entitled *The Disappeared*, a solo exhibition by the artist Tayseer Barakat hosted in the Glass Gallery. Through the works that comprise it, Barakat has created a world built on loss in the broadest sense: of life and a sense of time, place, and ourselves, and thus our very existence.

The **third space**, *Women of Gaza*, is an ethnographic display in the Museum lobby comprised of traditional *thobes* (dresses) and jewellery. It tells the story of Gaza in all its details of creativity and material solidarity in the face of violent displacement, thus bearing witness to the eternal love embedded in the immortal heritage binding together the women of Palestine. It is the story of a past that has not passed and a future that has now begun.

Why is there a solo exhibition for the artist Tayseer Barakat in particular?

This exhibition is one of a series of individual exhibitions that the Palestinian Museum plans to implement for artists whose documentation of war since 2009 is part of their artistic projects. One of these artists is the Gazan artist residing in Ramallah, Tayseer Barakat, whose main subject of work for the last fifteen years has been war on Gaza.

How did the communication process with Gazan artists on collecting artworks take place?

The process of communicating with the artists was difficult and complex to the brink of impossibility many times, due to the Occupation's breakdown of communications and the displacement of artists and their families to encampments. Therefore, it was not possible to build real dialogue without relying on a wide network of relationships that helped us obtain the necessary information.

Does the *This is Not an Exhibition* space host a comprehensive collection of Gazan artists' works?

This is Not an Exhibition displays the artworks that we have had access to thus far during a time when communication with Gazan artists is almost impossible. The works were collected from people's homes in the West Bank and cultural and artistic institutions and universities throughout historic Palestine. This demonstration should be understood as a living breathing work to which works will be added throughout. These include works by artists we could not reach before the demonstration launch and works by artists to be replaced by others after this massacre ends, with changes made by following the pulse of breaking developments.

What are the standards used in arranging the works inside the main exhibition hall?

The works were arranged randomly on the walls of the exhibition hall, such that the colours, sizes, and materials used in their creation overlap. This is evocative of the conditions of displacement for survival in Gaza currently taking place; just as the war did not differentiate between young or old, man or woman, likewise, this exhibition space does not differentiate between artists. It does not favour one artist over another, and juxtaposes the works of established artists and young ones, for war is a brutal equaliser.

Why was dim lighting used in the exhibition?

A “Wall Washer Light” lighting system was adopted throughout the main exhibition hall, and no special lighting was placed next to each work of art as would typically be ensured. This is because we view the works as a singular artwork and a more expressive expansion. This lighting is also reminiscent of temples, thus adding a spiritual dimension to the space as a whole, which will compel the audience to solemnly and meticulously approach the artworks to learn about them in detail. Amidst attempts to obscure Gaza and isolate it from the world, we call for this approach to immerse oneself in the truth of the images before them in all its facets.

Why have the walls of the main exhibition hall been painted indigo?

The indigo colour of the walls refers to the dye for which the village of Majdal was famous. Women would use the plant to produce dye for their *thobes* (dresses) as a marker of mourning periods. Its use here is a metaphor for the fact that Palestine belongs to Palestinians from the river to the sea, for Majdal and the other cities and villages from which Palestinian refugees in Gaza were displaced are all Palestine, and our expression of grief is one.

In what ways is the Museum working to highlight the enormous loss in the arts and culture sector in Gaza?

This demonstration is part of our ongoing attempts to draw attention to and shed light on the Gaza Strip and is only a step with many more going forward. We have aspirations to intensify efforts with partner institutions to implement conservation campaigns for the surviving artworks, documents, antiquities, archives, and icons. We must do so to combat the comprehensively genocidal aims for Gaza, which include the permanent extinguishment of life through the erasure of place and people, past, present, and future, even beyond an official end of war.

What does the rubble in the middle of the exhibition hall symbolise?

Before the start of the war on Gaza, the Palestinian Museum was planning an exhibition for early 2024. With the onset of the war, we made an immediate decision to stop our plans and engage in works and exhibitions relevant to the reality of Gaza and the war of

annihilation that our people are experiencing there. So, we demolished what we had been building and what we used to think mattered, and over the wreckage of past plans and priorities is a space for Eltiqa Art Gallery and Shababek for contemporary art to display their artworks clawed out of the metaphorical rubble.

What impact does the Palestinian Museum seek to leave on the audience?

For decades, we Palestinians have been living the nightmare that is the relentless threat of displacement, erasure, and extermination. The related fears and anguish underpin this demonstration of our survival and rootedness in this land, and a general declaration to the world that we are an ineradicable people. If they bomb us in Gaza, it is only a matter of time before we rise up in the West Bank, and if they bomb us in the West Bank, we will come back from Lebanon and Egypt, and from everywhere in the world, remaining true to moral principles and with total conviction of the justice of our cause and our right to self-determination.