**A People by the Sea: Narratives of the Palestinian Coast**

**Participating Artists**

**Manar Zuabi**

**Biography**

Palestinian artist, born in Nazareth in 1964. She earned a BA in Contemporary Dance from the Wingate Institute, and an MA in Visual Arts from Haifa University.

Zuabi's practice encompasses performance, installation and video art. She has produced a number of artworks, including: “The Butterfly Effect is not Seen, the Butterfly Effect Shall not Fade” (2020), “Stop! or I Will Shoot You.” (2018), and “Without Roses” (2018). She also participated in a number of exhibitions, including: "On a Thin Line" (2015), "Berlin Performs" (2015), and "Without" (2007-2008). Manar Zuabi lives in Nazareth.

**Description of the Artwork**

***Saraya, The Third Appearance***

The work examines the possible affiliation between art and the novel. It questions the nature of this affiliation in the following manner:

How can art derive its images and symbols from the novel? Is it possible that art conveys what literature already represents? Is it capable of such a representation in the first place? Or should art, somehow, draw some distance from literature? Art may be able to create an independent semantic and aesthetic space, yet at the same time, it may still be affiliated with the novel from that point where it had its first encounter with it. The novel maintains its position and status as a source of inspiration, and both push forward the process to seek an artistic language in a void that had not yet seen the light.

*The novel Saraya, the Ogre's Daughter: A Palestinian Fairy Tale by Emile Habibi* inspires the artwork "Saraya, The Third Appearance.". This multimedia created for the new Palestinian Museum exhibition “A People by the Sea: Narratives from the Palestinian Coast.". The artist attempts through this work, to explore the relationships between different art media: Visual, audio, installation, performance, and the discursive on one hand, and between structuralism and deconstruction on the other; in an attempt to evoke that which is lost between the imaginary and the real.

**Bashar Khalaf**

**Biography**

Palestinian Realist artist and visual arts educator, Bashar Khalaf was born in Rantis on May 17, 1991. He holds a BFA from Al-Quds University.

Throughout his artistic practice, Khalaf participated in a number of solo and group exhibitions, among them are: 2016 “Shadow of the Shadows” and 2018 “Perceptual Immunity” solo exhibitions held at Gallery One Ramallah, and his 2019 “In Search for a Self- Portrait” exhibition at Zawaya Gallery in Ramallah. Aming his most important art works are “Al Hoash Auction” (2015), “Assassination” (2018), and “Near I Can’t See, and Far Away Right In Front Of Me” (2017). He also

Khalaf won the “Yaya” Young Artist Competition Award (2014) awarded by the A. M. Qattan Foundation; the Ismail Shammout Award for Fine Arts (2015); and the Young Creators’ State Appreciation Award (2017).

Khalaf works and lives in Ramallah.

**Description of the Artwork**

***Live the Dream***

Bashar Khalaf’s work explores the concept of geographical isolation that Palestinians experience. He presents an alternative image to the lost archive of the coastal areas of Palestine which disappeared as a result of the Israeli occupation of 1948. Khalaf tackles in his research the remains of places, and the change in conditions and parameters of space throughout time. He represents the domination of the Occupation, not only on the land, but also its manifestation in the stealth of images of the land, and their erasure from history.

Palestinians’ narrative, burdened with grief and suffering, bears contemplative images of the lost coast. Khalaf expresses this loss through his observations of the vast fields surrounding the towns and villages of the West Bank, and the dream of a vanishing liberation project.

Khalaf regularly observes the streets of Ramallah, and used them in his work, as in his collection “In Search for a Self-Portrait” (2019), where he tackles commercial and capitalist advertisements. He scrutinizes extensively and with great concern, the concepts of commodification that dominate our visual memory, and contribute to the destabilization of young generations’ immediate memory, which hardly holds any archive of the pictorial history of Palestine.

The phrase "selling views of the Palestinian coast" propagated by commercial advertisement for real estate, conceals an existential anxiety triggering the idea of extinction and fragile dreams. To elaborate on this theme, the artist presents his work “Live the Dream”, where he uses a huge banner for “Coca-Cola” with its logo. The drink is represented on the banner in the form of a sea of black waves, with a model for a huge “Cola” can presented in exaggerated form to exaggerate its impact on viewers. The advertisement with its visual immensity dominates the scenery that had once offered, from a spot in downtown Ramallah, an aerial view of the coast. The metaphor implies an alternative sea, and an alternative dream.

**Caption**

Bashar Khalaf, “Living the Dream,” 2020-2021. Oil on canvas, 300 x 180 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

**Dima Srouji**

**Biography**

Palestinian artist and critic, born in Nazareth on October 14, 1990. She holds a BA in Architecture with honors degree from Kingston College of Art, London, and an MA in Architecture from Yale University.

Srouji's method is research-based and interdisciplinary. She explores through her practice intersections of various mediums, including Glass, plaster casts, films and photography. Srouji's work focuses on creating alternative landscapes of Palestine through critical cartography, deep mapping, and critical analysis methodologies.

Among Srouji’s artworks are: “Sabastia” (2020), “The Recipe for Happiness” (2020), and “The Depth Unknown” (2019.) She has participated in a number of exhibitions, including at the: Niewe Instituut Rotterdam x E-Flux (2020), Sharjah Architecture Triennale (2019), and the Qattan Foundation’s Weed *Control* (2020).

Srouji lives in Ramallah, Palestine.

**Description of the Artwork**

***Fragments from a Continuing Civilization***

The municipality of Jaffa, headed by Youssef Haikal in 1946, contracted the Egyptian architect Ali Al-Meligy Masoud, to develop a modern urban plan for Jaffa. Confronting British support for Zionist efforts to build Tel Aviv, the mayor took the initiative and asked Palestinian architects to contribute to the completion of the urban planning for their city. The plan, however; did not come to fruition due to the demolition of the northern part of the city, and the displacement of most of the Jaffa population.

Dima Srouji's artwork reproduces the blueprints of the urban plans for the city of Jaffa via carving on wood. The artist embarks on an experimental endeavor pertaining to the urban and architectural condition of the city towards the end of the Mandate period. The artwork explores a moment in the history of urban development in the city that was unrealized due to the emergence of Tel Aviv. The main lines of the city appear faded, referencing the ghost of an alternative city that settled on its borders.

**Caption**

Dima Srouji, *Fragments of a Continuing Civilization*, 2021. Multimedia, 594 x 841 mm, 594 x 841 mm, 594 x 1782 mm. Courtesy of the artist

**Shareef Sarhan**

**Biography**

Palestinian artist and photographer, born in Gaza on November 25, 1976. He holds a Diploma in Art from ICS University in the United States of America. Sarhan belongs to several artistic schools, and adopts various styles, especially in works of a contemporary compositional nature. As for painting, his style falls in an area between abstraction and contemporary impressionism.

Sarhan has produced a number of artworks, including: “The Lighthouse of Gaza” (2016), his work is an installation sculpture in the public space, and "Clutter re-Making" (2018), which is a sculptural installation, and "Soldiers and the Concrete Base" multimedia (2019 - 2021). He has also participated in a number of exhibitions, including: “Landscape and Mankind” Exhibition (2001), “War Game” Exhibition (2014), and “Gaza Live” Exhibition (2012). Sarhan won the Bronze Award from the Union of Arab Photographers in Berlin (2010), and the International Oscar Cultural Biennale in Cairo (2009).

**Description of the Artwork**

***Microscopic Vision Restoration***

The Palestinian coastline extends to 240 km from Ras Al-Naqoura in the north to Rafah in the south. It has witnessed geological transformations that occurred as a result of several political, economic and social causes. These transformations were accompanied by changes that left an impact on the relationship between Palestinian and their coast. This work investigates the relationship between Palestinians and their coast by tracing the geological make-up of the hidden components of the place.

This artwork explores the relationship between the coast and the sea as it poses questions that lead to understanding the changes that occurred in this relationship. This is done through restoring a microscopic vision of different scenes from different places on the coast, in order to identify their transformations with their complexities, possibilities, and history. It takes into consideration that this is a dynamic relationship that is bound to change as a result of migrations from coastal cities to inland towns and cities, and vice versa.

**Caption**

Shareef Sarhan, *Microscopic Vision Restoration*, 2020-2021. Multi-media, including photo images, videos, and music.

Courtesy of the artist

**Description of sample images:**

1. Sea water sample taken from a site opposite Gaza City, on December 3, 2020, 140 x 200 cm.

2. Sea water sample taken from a site opposite a water drain by the sea in Gaza city, on December 3, 2020, 140 x 200 cm.

3. Sea water sample taken from the Gaza Valley on January 6, 2020, 140 x 200 cm.

4. A beach sand grain taken from a site opposite Gaza City, on December 3, 2020, 140 x 200 cm.

5. A beach sand grain taken from a site opposite Gaza City, on December 3, 2020, 140 x 200 cm.

6. A beach sand grain taken from a site opposite a water drain on the sea in Gaza city, on December 3, 2020, 140 x 200 cm.

7. A beach sand grain taken from a site opposite a water drain on the sea in Gaza city, on December 3, 2020, 140 x 200 cm.

8. A beach sand grain taken from the Gaza Valley on January 6, 2020, 140 x 200 cm.

9. A beach sand grain taken from the Gaza Valley on January 6, 2020, 140 x 200 cm.

**Essa Grayeb**

**Biography**

Palestinian visual artist, born in Nazareth in 1984. He obtained his bachelor’s degree in photography from Bezalel Academy in Jerusalem. He is completing his MFA in the same academy.

Grayeb works with photography, video and installation, using found objects, footage and audio recordings from everyday life, that he reappropriates.

Grayeb has produced a number of artworks, including: "Pictures of the Sun" (2020), "The Return of Osiris" (2019), "Healing" (2017). He participated in a number of exhibitions, including: "Under the Tower", "Emergent", Fjorn, Belgium (2020), "Weed Control" (2020), and "At the Gates of the Ninth Heaven: "Jerusalem: Reality and Possibilities” (2018) “Subcontracting Nations” (2018.) He screened his films at a number of festivals, among them: San Diego Arab Film Festival (2021), Harlem International Film Festival (2020), Toronto Palestine Film Festival (2020), Paris Festival for Alternative and Experimental Cinema (2020).

Essa Grayeb resides and works in Jerusalem.

**Description of the Artwork**

***Separate Pathways May Lead to the Same Journey (2021)***

Installation of found objects

Video played on a continuous loop 1:14 min

Light box (55x104) including fragments of packaging material (35 mm each)

The project consists of objects, fragments of wastepaper, plastic, and commodity packaging, collected during the past year from various locations along the Palestinian coast; from Ras Al-Naqoura in the north to the Gaza Strip checkpoint in the south.

These decomposing objects took different shapes and colours, bearing with them the effects of erosion caused by marine conditions, water salinity and the Mediterranean sun. Some of these objects began to dissolve and break as they reached land, while others became almost transparent with faint colours after travelling from the shores of neighbouring countries, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, and Turkey.

The objects floated subjected to the effects of wind and surf, until they were able to enter one of the most controlled areas. It is as if they were trying to redraw trade routes among the ports of the coastal cities on the Mediterranean Sea: Jaffa, Acre, and Haifa on one side, and Alexandria, Port Said, and Beirut on the other.

Those trade routes, which were disconnected from each other, reaffirm their existence, however symbolically, through the movement of objects as they are able to reach the shores of Palestine without any restrictions or inconveniences.

**Caption**

Essa Grayeb, *Separate Pathways May Lead to the Same Journey*, 2021. installation, video, 1:14 min, light box, 55 x 104 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Amir Zuabi

**Description of the Artwork**

***Cold Floors***

Artist Amir Zuabi resides in Jaffa and finds that the demolition his city was subjected to is ongoing. Zuabi collected over the years, debris and wreckage of houses demolished by Zionist groups in 1948, and their rubble cast off to sea. The waves washed back the wreckage onto the shore, shards of colourful tiles from Jaffa homes. Walking by the sea with his son, Zuabi collected the pieces and re-membered the prosperity that prevailed in the richest coastal cities of Palestine. The tile shards are a touchstone of the ethnic cleansing Jaffa was subjected to. Zuabi collected the fragments over time, an used them to draw back the map of Jaffa, as it was before the destruction of its neighbourhoods, and the dispossessing of hundreds of thousands of its inhabitants and their scattering to Gaza, Nablus, and to Arab cities. Those who remained were detained by military rule inside the Ajami neighbourhood for eight years. They were eventually forced to evacuate in favour of Israeli real estate investments.

**Caption**

Amir Zuabi, **Cold Floors**, 2021. Artistic installation of stone and tile fragments, 10 x 6.5 m. Courtesy of the artist

**Nasser Soumi**

**Biography**

A Palestinian artist who was born in Palestine in 1948. He studied art at the National School of Fine Arts in Damascus, Syria, from 1971 to 1977, continuing his studies at the National School of Fine Arts in Paris, France, from 1980 to 1982. Soumi is a painter and, primarily, an installation artist. He transforms a variety of ordinary materials into works of art. His use of

different shades of indigo blue was inspired by Palestine’s first color, used thousands of years ago. It was extracted from two sources: murex, which is a kind of seashells that inhabit Palestinian and Syrian coasts; and a plant

called woad, which used to grow between Bisan and Jericho. In 2006, he was awarded the UNESCO Five Continents Medal, and in 1996, he won the First Prize of the Cairo Biennale, Egypt. Soumi has participated in

numerous exhibitions. His solos shows have included: Indigo memory (contemporary dance performance, inspired by indigo dye) Haidarabad, India (2006), Aleppo, Syria (2010); Watadour: Concept and Scenography, Masrah al-Madina, Beirut (2014); The Sound of the Universe, Elbareh Gallery, Bahrein (2012); Between Ebal and Gerzim, Birzeit University

Museum, Nablus, Palestine (2011); Mère, Fils et Esprit, Aart International, Paris, France (2007); Icon for Jaffa, Darat Al Funun, Amman, Jordan (1996); Anadil Gallery, Jerusalem, Palestine (1993); Galerie Lelia Mordoch, Paris, France (1989) and many others. Soumi lives and works between Beirut and Paris.

**Description of the Artwork**

**The Dove**

A painting by artist Nasser Soumi painted after his return to Jaffa in the spring of 1993. In his description of the artwork, he says:

“The Dove” is the name which sailors from Jaffa used to call their city as it appeared to them from afar upon their return by sea. Soui recounts: “In the late 1970s, my friend Hani Mendes told me the story of a Palestinian sailor from Jaffa who was exile in 1948. He sought refuge in the city of Tyre in Lebanon, thinking this would be a temporary situation, like many Palestinians did at that time. Time passed, and the return was delayed. Tired of waiting, the sailor took to his boat and sailed towards his dove. Upon his arrival to the coast of Jaffa, the Occupation forces arrested him.

The soldiers searched his boat, but they did not find anything, not even food provisions, and when they asked him about what he was doing there, he replied that he had been longing to see the dove. The soldiers could not understand what he meant and thought that might be a code. After they realized he had come to see his hometown, they locked him inside his boat making sure he did not lay eyes on his beloved city, not even from very far. They forced him to return to where he came from after a few days. The sailor remained alienated after returning to Tyre and did not integrate in the new society as other Palestinians did. Less than a year later, he died of grief because of his separation from his dove, Jaffa.

I returned to Jaffa in the spring of 1993, and toured its neighbourhoods and beaches, and then remembered the story of the dove. I collected small yellow seashells and photographed some of the seaport's shops by smuggling a camera through broken windowpanes. I was surprised by the dark indigo paint on the walls, which resembled the dark colour of the sea depths. Indigo was the dye that people of Jaffa were famous for extracting. It continued to be grown and processed in Palestine until the arrival of synthetic indigo with the British Mandate.

A whirlwind appears in the painting, a symbol of the Canaanite god of fertility Baal. I used lime, Jaffa’s indigo, dried orange peels, and Jaffa’s yellow seashells. I named it the dove (La Colombe)“.

**Caption**

Nasser Soumi, *The Dove*, 1993. Quicklime, indigo, dried orange peel and seashells from the sea of Jaffa, 124 x 124 cm.

Courtesy George Al Ama Collection.