

Negotiations: From a Piece of Land to a Land of Peace
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Curatorial Statement

High-tide on the day of war, before we are drowned into another twilight of repressed and forgotten truths, engulfed in the light of explosions, last year in Afghanistan, this year in Iraq, every year, for fifty-five years, in the land historically known as Palestine, we ask: how do we change our world to change our fate? This question points directly to the ethics of our intentions and practices for it is no longer possible to question the urgency and the imperatives. The world must change if we are to live with one another in dignity. To live with ourselves, we must change. The empire is unmasked, yet again. Rulers are at work to redraw the map, yet again. Bodies have lined up to stand witness to this violence, yet again. Violations are countless and cannot be checked against the anachronistic terms of "human rights." Bombs, tanks, armoured helicopters, guns and missiles are not bound by any charters, and our utopian investments in international laws and institutions have failed to produce any profits except for the profiteers at war for more control over land, resources, human lives and histories. Resistance was yesterday's response. Today, openly formulated insurgence is a reality.

The Second Palestinian Intifada, which erupted in September of 2000, provides an instance of such insurgency. This is a new phase in the century-long Palestinian history of anti-colonial struggles, ongoing since 1897. Contrary to mainstream representations, the Intifada is not simply a localized Palestinian nationalist response to the repressive Israeli occupation and its war machine; rather, it is a demonstration of indigenous peoples' refusal to surrender their agency to the hegemonic hold of colonial regimes. In spite of the gross imbalance of powers, the Palestinians have risen up, yet again, to challenge colonialism's intrinsically xenophobic discourses and its structural patterns of exclusion and domination. More than anything else, the Intifada exposes the failures of colonialism to subjugate the will of the Palestinian people and silence dissenting voices.

The radicalization of this will has swept over the checkpoints and barbed wire to infiltrate the consciousness of Israelis and of people around the world. The new forms of Palestinian-Israeli and transnational collaboration, manifested through organizations such as the International Solidarity Movement and Ta'ayush, draw on a renewed will to organize civil communities in countering economic, political and military colonization. Such social mobilization calls for different forms of representation; for a thorough shake-up in our habits of thought. It calls for a conceptual creativity that sets out to ethically enact strategies of change and pragmatically prefigure the horizons of a different world. This, we believe, is the fertile land where a new insurgent art movement can grow.

For this exhibition, we called on artists to formulate and realize the ways in which transdisciplinary artistic practices can nourish stronger, more ethically accountable, multi-faceted and multi-vocal responses to the social imperatives we face. A gathering of politically responsive work, WILL is dedicated to the project of change: excavating, remembering, coming to voice, naming and, rooted in the depths of consciousness, actively intervening in the social field. The modes of intervention utilized by the projects in WILL exceed conventional practices of

representational art. Each work shown in this exhibit has emerged through intense negotiations and co-labouring, of which the ultimate products are the social and personal relations and transformations that transcend the artwork. Here the artwork is only a landmark for new conceptions. The real work is ongoing, constantly evolving and defiant of representation as it unfolds in the plains of awareness and action.

WILL provides opportunities for engagement, and asks that we engage differently. We encourage you to actively participate and contribute your labour to this work.



Inadvertent Monuments **Ilana Salama Ortar, Stephen Wright**

Our project focuses on what was initially a deeply-entrenched border cairn, constructed after World War I, intended to separate the French mandate of Lebanon from the British mandate of Palestine. During the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon from 1982-2000, and under the protection of Tsahal, layers of top soil were scooped up from vast tracts of occupied land and taken by dump trucks to Israeli settlements near the border - a fact to which the stone cairn bears subtle though irrefutable evidence: the cairn, whose bottom half was deeply entrenched in the earth, now stands some eight feet above the ground. While its top portion is the same light tan colour as the surrounding topography, the bottom three feet are a dark ruddy brown - identical to the soil once covering them. Intended as a horizontal territorial marker, the cairn has come to mark verticality - raising a variety of issues regarding the difference between land and soil, territory and earth. It is an inadvertent monument. As such, it stands as a condensed metaphor of the conflict embedded in the historical present; a public mirror for anyone who cares to look at the issue of peace and partition not as event but as sign. Taking this land-art-like unintentional "monument" as its hub, this project refuses to be partitioned within the territory of "art." Instead, using art-related skills to refocus attention on an otherwise invisible symbol, it foregrounds art's use-value in negotiating the shift from a piece of land to a land of peace.

The collaboration between Ilana Salama Ortar and Stephen Wright on Inadvertent Monuments is based on an extra-disciplinary approach to art: contrary to trendy inter-disciplinary approaches (which accept disciplinary partitioning as a precondition for association) and the apparent lack of discipline characterising so much contemporary art, they seek to mirror the disciplinary extraterritoriality and non-situatedness of their practice in the issues that they focus. Using art-related methodologies, they seek to draw the sort of sustained and thoughtful attention to inadvertent symbols and monuments - particularly in situations of social urgency, suppressed memory and identity loss - that art-specific proposals often enjoy. Stephen Wright is a Paris-based theorist of art-related practice. Ilana Salama Ortar is a Haifa-based artist, working extensively on the development of "civic art" (city + civitas), investigating the visible and invisible traces of the erasure of individual and collective memory in the urban fabric. They previously collaborated in the exhibition *L'Incurable Mémoire des Corps*.



Destinations: A Palestinian-Israeli Audio-Visual Installation

Galia Shapira, Aref Nammari, Haggai Kupermintz, Phil Shane

The Destinations installation makes use of photographic images collected from Palestinians and Israelis that convey their profound connection to their shared land and its history. Sound recordings capture personal stories of love, hope and pain that the images document. A multiple slide projection, the large photographic images are projected onto the gallery walls in a continuous sequence and are accompanied by Arabic and Hebrew audio narratives - including poetry and literary pieces by Israeli and Palestinian writers. Surrounded by images of the shared land, as seen through Israeli and Palestinian eyes, viewers are invited to re-examine conventional perceptions of the conflict. Collection and dissemination of images and stories continue as the artists constitute a growing archive of hope and struggle towards a common destiny.

Since November 2002, a group of activists has been meeting in an effort to explore a new vision and discourse to deal honestly and courageously with the Palestinian and Israeli experiences. We emphasize recognition of common destiny, mutual acknowledgement of pain and suffering, and the embracement of the humanity of each other as keys to reconciliation. Group members are: Galia Shapira, an Israeli visual artist; Aref Nammari, a Palestinian electronics engineer and activist; Haggai Kupermintz, an Israeli assistant professor of education; and Phil Shane, an American associate professor of accounting. The Destinations group aims to promote the co-existence of historical, cultural, and spiritual Palestinian and Israeli narratives, through collaborative intellectual and artistic expressions. By braiding together the stories of peoples' love for their land, their struggles, pain and hopes, we strive to develop a new understanding of reality. Our work stems from the realization that a great responsibility for promoting an alternative vision lies with the intellectual, spiritual, and arts communities in developing new images of co-existence that resist self-serving political and economic dictates. We hope to give voice to a grassroots movement, expressing Israeli and Palestinian deep yearnings to transcend their tragic destiny as eternal communities of suffering.



Dance

Alexandra Handal with poets Karen Alkalay-Gut and Nathalie Handal

Alexandra Handal's multimedia installation, Dance, is based on a joint poem written by Israeli poet Karen Alkalay-Gut and Palestinian poet, Nathalie Handal. A digital animation of the poem, which becomes entirely legible only at the end, is projected onto the floor. While watching the projection, the viewer experiences the words of the poem transform into abstract shapes that resemble lightning, needles, feathers, and webs. As they are colliding, moving past and against each other, the words begin to emerge as lines of a poem, then stanzas, breaking the fear of sharing the same space in order to dance together. Dance is a space which invites the viewer to gather round and experience - through movement, color, and rhythm - the pain, frustration, fear and joy involved in taking the first steps towards negotiating our present, ourselves. Dance compels the viewer to ask: how can we not dance together?

Alexandra Handal is a Santo Domingo-NYC based Palestinian artist whose installations, drawings and digital media focus on issues of transnationality, cultural migration/displacement, representation, and memory. Her work has been represented in exhibitions in NYC, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, and Sydney, Australia. Currently, she is a Visiting Artist Lecturer at the Escuela de Diseno in the Dominican Republic, affiliated with Parsons School of Design. Karen Alkalay-Gut was born on the last night of the Blitz in London to refugee parents who brought her to the United States after the war. She has spent her adult life teaching poetry at Tel Aviv University, writing, and trying to get people to listen to each other through poetry. Her 20 books include five poetry books in Hebrew, a biography of the American poet, Adelaide Crapsey, an e-book of magic poems called Avracadivra (2002). Nathalie Handal is a Palestinian poet, playwright and writer who has lived in the United States, Europe, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Middle East. She is the author of the poetry book, The NeverField, the poetry CD, Traveling Rooms, and the editor of The Poetry of Arab Women: A Contemporary Anthology, an Academy of American Poets bestseller and winner of the Pen Oakland/Josephine Miles award. Nathalie Handal currently teaches at Hunter College in NYC.



Farah: In Search for Joy
Rami a.k.a. Jaromil

The Farah project documents my three-week trip, in August, 2002, through the occupied territories of Palestine. During this time I crossed East Jerusalem, Gaza, Bethlehem, Hebron and Ramallah. This was while Bethlehem and Gaza were still under siege and Ramallah was experiencing another full-time curfew after the assassination of Ahmad Saadat. I set out for this trip independently, but, once in Palestine, I had the chance to collaborate with some valuable people of the Palestinian Progressive Youth Union, Tactical Media Crew, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, International Solidarity Movement and Indymedia Palestine. Farah is an effort to document the life and culture of the Palestinian population in zones of war, without actually mentioning the war itself. It is a net-art project in the way that it tries to use the net as a privileged medium to unveil a beauty usually made far by war. It is the content that counts in Farah, the medium only provides the necessary means for the message to be conveyed. The project is born from the need to discover and document that which remains untouched by war: everything in the tales of children and older folks that pervades in the identity of a people in spite of dispossession, humiliation and violence. Farah is a search for joy and for a resistance that organizes itself in thousands of forms in the imagination. It is to recognize the millenary Palestine in the untouchable dreams of its children. <http://farah.dyne.org>

Rami a.k.a. Jaromil (<http://korova.dyne.org>) is a free software programmer and streaming media pioneer, media artist and activist, performer and emigrant. Wired to the matrix since 1991 (point of NeuromanteBBS on Cybernet 65:1500/3.13), Jaromil co-founded (1994) the non-profit organization Metro Olografix for the diffusion of information technology, and in 2000 founded the free software lab dyne.org; sub-root for the autistici.org / inventati.org community. Jaromil is active in the Italy Indymedia Collective, and is currently the software analyst and developer for PUBLIC VOICE Lab (Vienna). He recently co-curated I LOVE YOU, an exposition about software viruses at the Museum of Applied Arts in Frankfurt. His past collaborations include,

among others: Giardini Pensili, digitalcraft.org, 01001.org, August Black, [epidemiC], Florian Cramer, 92v2.0, LOA hacklab, Lobo, Freaknet Medialab, CandidaTV, the Mitochondri, the HackMeeting community. Jaromil's most recent online piece is Farah: a documentation of his travel through the occupied territories of Palestine, in search for joy.



Video Petition Project Artist Emergency Response

The Video Petition Project is a visual testimony of North Americans voicing their opposition to the Israeli Occupation. Despite their large and growing numbers, these voices are significantly underrepresented by the mainstream North American media. They are comprised of Jews and non-Jews alike whose sincere, thoughtful, and eloquent speech cannot be dismissed as self-loathing or anti-Semitic simply due to their criticism of the Israeli government and its policies. Some participants present their own statements and others use one or another among a variety of statements prepared by AER and imbue these with their own sincerity. Our ultimate goal is to present the project at schools, community organizations, art venues, museums, public access television, radio, and internet sites, and also to public officials and leaders, thus helping to further aid the acknowledgement and rightful consideration of this growing movement. The 80-min video premiered in September 2002 at the Piece Process exhibit at Chicago's ARC gallery and was recently (April/May 2003) on display at the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art as part of the exhibit War (What Is It Good For?).

Artist Emergency Response (AER) is a Chicago-based collective of artists and activists - including many Jews and Palestinians - working for a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We seek a just and lasting peace through the minimal, general framework of the implementation of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, a just solution to the status of Jerusalem, and a just solution to the Palestinian refugee crisis. We strongly condemn the escalating violence against civilians on both sides of the conflict and demand that the United States end its economic, military, and political support of Israel until the illegal occupation ends. We are dedicated to fostering dialogue between communities and combating anti-Arab, anti-Muslim, anti-Palestinian, and anti-Jewish rhetoric and violence.



Olive Fair Negotiations Working Group

Olive Fair renders visible the material conditions and the strategies of survival and resistance in occupied Palestine. The installation displays olive products by Palestinian producers - obtained through Sindyanna, a fair-trade company based in Jaffa - side-by-side with video documentation of a direct action by the International Solidarity Movement in support of a group of Palestinian growers in the West Bank who were resisting the uprooting of their olive trees by Israeli soldiers and bulldozers. Olive Fair invites gallery visitors to take product samples in

exchange for contributing personal responses to a website, thus enabling networked consciousness and informed dialogue. As the olive products in the gallery diminish, what remains in the physical space - transmitted through the ISM video - is the reality of the struggle in Palestine cultivating a growing public awareness and solidarity in the virtual space.
<http://olivefair.net>

We are women of diverse cultural background (Anglo-Canadian, Iranian, Italian, Jewish and Palestinian) and with different skills and experiences (some are artists, some academics, and most full-time activists). Our differences have constituted the productive and pragmatic spaces of our 'negotiations', and our work together has been the shared experience of learning our ethical accountability to one another and to a larger political project that touches our everyday lives in different and not always readily acknowledged or immediately visible ways. In spite of all the difficulties and uncertainties inherent in working towards social transformation, months of intense volunteer labour have taught us how to be allies and friends while navigating through politically contentious, socially complex and historically painful grounds. This work has made us more determined: negotiations cannot be channeled by any prescribed roadmaps; they demand complete openness, transparency and good will. Negotiations Working Group started as a small formation with dynamic membership - by choice, chance or guile - within Creative Response. For records of other CR initiatives, visit <http://creativeresponseweb.net>



Squares in the Pavement & Beau temps mauvais temps **Shahrzad Arshadi and Josée Lambert**

Squares in the Pavement & BeauTemps, Mauvais Temps is a photo-documentary project created by two artists: one from the East, the other from the West. Every Friday since September 14, 2001, these two artists have met each other in front of the Israeli Consulate in Montreal to stand vigil for peace and justice in Palestine. For a period of one full year, rain or shine, Josée and Shahrzad have documented the participants at these vigils as a testimony to their collective hopes and fears. The collaboration between the two artists is an installation of 104 black and white photographs. While Josée's contribution symbolizes time, season and continuity, Shahrzad captures portraits of people wearing the most immediately recognizable symbol of Palestine - the "keffia" - people of all walks of life, teachers, workers, artists and students; young and old from all races and origins, Jewish, Muslim, Atheist and ...

Josée Lambert is a freelance photographer in the cultural domain. Twelve years ago, she began documentary work in the Middle-East. Often associating herself with humanitarian organizations, Josée's work primarily focused on the impact of sanctions on the Iraqi people. She also produced, in collaboration with Amnesty International, an important documentary with prisoners of Khiam Detention Centre, south of Lebanon. For her exhibition *Ils étaient absents sur la photo*, she was awarded *artiste pour la paix* in 1998. Shahrzad Arshadi, a human rights activist and Montréal-based Canadian/Iranian artist, came to Canada as a political refugee on December 24, 1983. In the past ten years, Shahrzad has ventured into different fields of photography, painting and video, enabling her focus on issues of memory, culture and human rights. Shahrzad has exhibited her work in various locations across North America.