



Raouf Haj Yihya - Still from *Meter Square*, 2009 Video game - Courtesy of the artist

## Future Movements

### City States: Jerusalem

(City States is a strand of the 2010 Liverpool Biennial's international exhibition)

Exhibition dates 18 September to 28 November 2010

*Curated by Samar Martha*

*Organised by ArtSchool Palestine*

Location:

Contemporary Urban Centre (Ground Floor space),

41 – 51 Greenland Street

Liverpool L1 0BS, UK

As part of Liverpool Biennial 2010, ArtSchool Palestine is organising an exhibition entitled *Future Movements – Jerusalem*. The exhibition, part of *City States*, will open on 18 September and will run until the 28 November 2010.

*Future Movements* draws inspiration from the city of Jerusalem and its changing urban structure. The exhibition takes the viewer to places outside the Old City to locations that, despite their importance in shaping the contemporary metropolis, have rarely been referenced or addressed in literature and the visual arts. The exhibition exposes Jerusalem as a contemporary city in all its physical, social, economic and political complexities – demonstrating how the urban space is divided, conquered, abandoned and re-occupied.

*Future Movements* will feature artwork by 13 international artists who explore the multi-variant spaces of the city of Jerusalem from its cemetery to its refugee camp, and from its old city streets to its isolated suburbs. The exhibition is a culmination of work by artists who have taken part in ArtSchool Palestine's 2009 residency programme, these are: Sarah Beddington – UK; Anna Boggon – UK; Maj Hasager – Denmark; Jakob Jakobsen – Denmark; Bouchra Khalili – Morocco/France and Oraib Toukan – Jordan. Additionally, the exhibition will feature newly commissioned artworks by Palestinian artists living in Palestine and the Diaspora, including: Jawad Al Malhi – Palestine; Raouf Haj Yihya – Palestine; Alexandra Handal – Palestine/UK; Shuruq Harb – Palestine; and ongoing projects by other international artists and collectives including CAMP group – India; Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou Rahme – Palestine and Larissa Sansour – Palestine/Denmark.

The residency programme and newly commissioned artworks offered artists the

opportunity to explore and reflect on the actuality of Jerusalem today. Due to extensive Israeli settlement activity, road building and the erection of many barriers, alongside policies that have resulted in fragmented Palestinian realities and an urban fabric that is distorted and truncated by political, social and cultural divisions, Jerusalem has changed a great deal over the last decade. The city, once a commercial, cultural and administrative centre of the West Bank and Gaza, has been transformed into an isolated place that is barely surviving.

Policies of house demolition and eviction have been adopted by the military since the city was occupied. The video art game *Square Meter*, produced by Raouf Haj Yihya, clearly depicts how the residents of Silwan live in fear of similar military action in their neighbourhood. In a humorous and interactive manner, the artist gives the audience 15 seconds to save five Palestinian households who have received an eviction order. Thus, indicating that no matter how fast you are, it is almost impossible to save these houses. Mirroring reality, the dilemma the residents of Silwan face on a daily basis is trying to save their homes. Locals run between municipality and court to try and preserve their 'outlawed' buildings, only to find the detested demolition order pinned to the door on their return.

The CAMP group from Mumbai chose to use a surveillance security camera to depict some of the actualities of the city and to explore the neighbourhoods and homes of the Old City, East Jerusalem localities of Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan, and other areas of Greater Jerusalem including Beit Hanina and Azariyah. In their seven-episode video art *The Neighbour before the House*, CAMP probes into the landscape of East Jerusalem where residents view nearby

archaeological digs, their own recently evicted homes, the 'Wall', both near and far settlement activity, and other seemingly mundane details of the slow and deliberate occupation of East Jerusalem.

In the same manner, and via photography, Jawad Al Malhi offers a panoramic view of a landscape segregated by a wall. On one side of the wall stands an Israeli settlement, overlooking the overpopulated refugee camp of Shufat, the only refugee camp in Jerusalem that has been enveloped recently by a wall. The photo offers the viewer a new perspective on the truncated landscape and a panoramic vision of an area that is marginalized and neglected. The scene casts light on the silences and fissures that exist in the land and the way in which architecture has become a testimony to, and inscription upon the landscape of, the realities of Palestinians.

The Franco-Moroccan artist Bouchra Khalili, in her video art *Mapping Journey #3*, demonstrates the impossibility for a young Palestinian from Ramallah to visit his Palestinian fiancé, who lives in East Jerusalem, despite the short distance of 14 kilometres that separates them. As a Palestinian ID holder the young man has no right to go to Jerusalem, except with a permit that is almost impossible to obtain from the Israeli authorities. Defying the ban, he draws on a map the illegal roads he uses in order to avoid the checkpoints and the wall of separation.

Some of the artists play the 'witness' for the deletion and erasure of the past, and eloquently record how histories are being deconstructed. The artist Sarah Beddington, in her poetic video art *Elegy to Mamilla*, records the destruction of an historical site by creating an act of memory in a place that represents numerous proofs of

deletion. In West Jerusalem, Beddington filmed the building site of the future 'Museum of Tolerance' from dawn to sunset. Financed by the Simon Wiesenthal Centre and with an original design by the architect Frank Gehry (who resigned from the project in January 2010), the museum is being built over the Muslim cemetery of Mamilla. A lawsuit suspended the work for four years, but construction has recently restarted and the human remains have since been relocated to a mass grave.

In some cases, artists have tried to reconstruct the memory of a place and create a visual map that no longer exists. Alexandra Handal's installation *Vanishing Point I* is based on a walk the artist took on 15 April 2007 with Palestinian refugee Issa Soudah through the divided neighbourhood of al-Musrara in Jerusalem. More than three years after the event, the artist began to piece together her recollections of that moment by referring to the material she had gathered about this vanishing world: a mental map that Soudah drew, sound recordings, images and notes that document the stories he told her during and after the walk, and pictures from his album of rescued photos depicting life before the division of the city.

Similarly, the video art work *Two Within Close Range*, by Maj Hasager, investigates urban spaces in the city of Jerusalem that remain private or inaccessible despite their public significance. The artist takes two locations as her points of departure. Firstly, a park which was once frequented by residents that has now been turned into a gated area to which people have no access, and secondly, the Rockefeller Garden and Nuseibah building, which were built originally to house a hotel. However, construction was stopped by a military order once Jerusalem was



occupied. Maj Hasager brings these two public spaces to our attention as the focus of her video-art. The two sites are represented through still images, video and film which correspond with written narratives woven together in an attempt to re-write and expand what already exists as the oral history of these places. The written narratives deal with the recent past of the area, as well as historical and political narratives, through a more descriptive and spatial approach.

Finally, the British artist Anna Boggon's artwork *How Long is a Piece of String* comprises a series of maps of countries, each including a linear intervention. The initial map in the series, *As the Crow Flies*, is a printed map of the UK. It appears initially as an ordinary map, including county boundaries. However, a line, printed to scale, spans the distance from London to the Highlands of Scotland - a staggering 709km - equivalent in length to the Israeli Separation Wall. The map is an effort to translate something incomprehensible into another language, be it a journey from childhood to adulthood or a ten-hour drive. This map is a personal translation relevant to the artist's background as she currently lives in London but was born and

brought up in Scotland. The other maps seek to create different translations; they include India, the Caribbean, China and North America. Each line takes on a different shape or configuration as if the artist is trying to make a drawing with a 709km piece of string.

All of the artists explore the sharper edges of Jerusalem through personal experience by offering diverse perspectives and examining the relationship between the individual and the place. This creates an exhibition setting where personal confessions and stories of the everyday are recounted. Depicting Jerusalem as a place overshadowed by the weight of history and scarred by divisions, the work marks the city's fraught legacy of conflict and violence. Moving between locations, the artists look at how cultures of remembering are constructed in the contemporary city through architecture, memories and stories.

*For all further information visit [www.artschoolpalestine.com](http://www.artschoolpalestine.com) or contact Salma Tugan on [salmatuqan@hotmail.com](mailto:salmatuqan@hotmail.com)*

**Bouchra Khalili** - Video stills from *Mapping Journey #3*, 2009 Single channel video, 03-30 min - Courtesy of the artist

