

Israel / Palestine: An Act of Seeing

Images + Text – Mocha Jean Herrup

Acclaimed artist Mocha Jean Herrup brings a filmmaker's eye and a queer deconstructive lens to an exhibit of photographs that redefines the frame of Israel / Palestine.



DESCRIPTION

"Israel / Palestine: An Act of Seeing" is a series of digital images and personal narrative from the contested and conflicted place of Israel / Palestine. Photos are paired into seamless diptychs whose juxtapositions evoke connection and exclusion, reflecting the picture taker's own awareness of racialized seeing and passive acts of demarcation.

"This exhibit is an artistic expression of my personal experience becoming more aware of a pre-determined lens that organizes and excludes certain people. It is my struggle to identify that lens when it shows up, over and over again."

"What began as a project on Israeli film expanded to something else. I've been holding on to these images— Academy Award nominated filmmakers, tear gas flying, The al-Aqsa Mosque, illegal settler construction, The Western Wall, Turkish coffee, Palestinian police, prime ministers, walls of separation, disappeared Arab villages, cinematheques, Israeli activists, Vadi Salib, queer Tel Aviv, Media Studies at Al Quds, Arafat's grave, Ofer Prison, The Old City of Jerusalem, and more—looking for a way they could talk. Lying on a friend's couch in San Francisco, feeling safe, I saw two images together, and my work began."

There is nothing to show, everything to reveal.

Prizer Gallery, Oct. 14-29, 2016, Austin, Texas.

**Prizer Gallery:
Israel/Palestine: An Act of Seeing**
The acclaimed filmmaker **Mocha Jean Herrup** presents a series of evocative images from the contested and conflicted land in the Middle East.
Reception: *Fri., Oct. 14, 6-9pm.*

Prizer Gallery
2023 E. Cesar Chavez, Austin, TX
78702



Sobia Khan added 4 new photos — with Mocha James Herrup at Prizer Gallery.
Just now · Austin · 🧑🏻

Met the artist, Mocha, and followed the story of Palestine/Israel through her eyes. Brave work.
#ActOfSeeing



A different perspective from the one expressed in this exhibit is easy to find. Watch the evening news, open a newspaper, turn on the radio, click on CNN. Mainstream media frames its reporting around national struggle, anti-Semitism, non-state terrorism, and Western innovation. Rarely, if ever, does the frame include colonialism, empire, water resources, internationally recognized human rights, and racial capitalism. One person's conflict is another's Occupation. This exhibit is an attempt at solidarity with Palestinians and all Indigenous people of color. It is my project, as an Ashkenazi American Jew, to hold another's suffering without comparing it to my own.



ARTIST STATEMENT

I am a queer Jewish filmmaker, writer, performer, and professor.

Raised in an observant Jewish family with a dad who worked as an executive director for several Jewish Community Centers, I went to Hebrew school three times a week; Had a Bat Mitzvah at 13 and read from the Torah (not customary for girls); Traveled to Israel as a teen on a Jewish congregation sponsored trip; Studied Hebrew in college; Grew up in a community of lifelong learners; Convinced Magnolia Café, in 2006, to permanently add lox and bagels to the menu.

I traveled to Israel / Palestine in 2013 to research Israeli film. Through my connections with international communities of filmmakers, festival programmers, academics, artists, activists, and OK Cupid enthusiasts, I traveled back and forth between the State of Israel and the occupied West Bank (Ramallah, parts of Jerusalem, and Bil'in).

It is painful to admit but when I began my research, Palestinian film was not part of the project. It hadn't occurred to me. Not because I didn't know it existed. I have seen, admired, and studied work by Elia Suleiman, Hany Abu-Assad, and Michel and George Khleifi, but in my mind there was a separation. I thought it possible to focus on one and not the other, and I understand how that is no longer possible.

The people living in this region have a shared, bitterly contested history. So contested it is impossible to refer to the land using nomenclature that is not ideologically loaded. "Israel" and "Palestine" mean different things to different people, and when you refer to one and not the other, you are taking a side.

How you see the land is in itself an ideological act. Am I looking at a beautiful forest built with trees provided by the American Jewish National Fund, or am I looking at a place that was once an Arab village? Am I in a Jewish suburb just east of Jerusalem, or am I in the West Bank? Am I researching a successful film industry in which many great artists find support, or am I researching an industry that, regardless of intent, can be a tool of distraction, normalizing an occupation of more than 4 million Palestinian people.

To focus on one and not the other perpetuates the myth that these two [and more] can be separate. Either way it is an act of exclusion and erasure, but with different powerful consequences, and I no longer wish to participate in that act. I present photos in this form, as images that are always, in some way, connected to another vision, and that would always, in some way, do something different if presented on their own.

It was a complicated trip.
It didn't change my politics. It changed the way I see.
Because I saw how I was seeing.

Mocha Jean Herrup
Austin, Texas
2016



Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad at a protest in Bil'in /
Graffiti image in Haifa of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu



Inside an illegal Jewish settlement in the West Bank on Purim / A flower blooms
on land inside Israel's 1948 boundaries that was once an Arab village



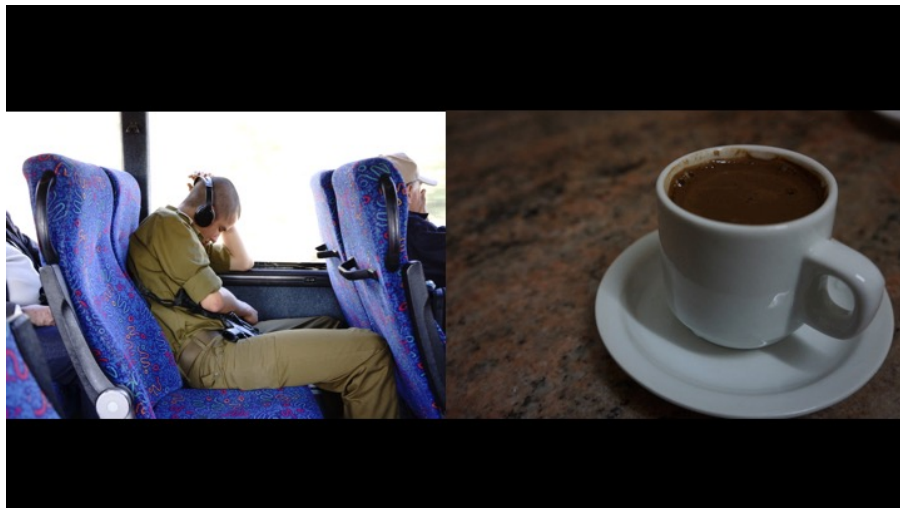
The Al Aqsa Mosque / The Western Wall



Filmmaker Eran Kolirin in Tel Aviv / Ofer prison outside of Ramallah



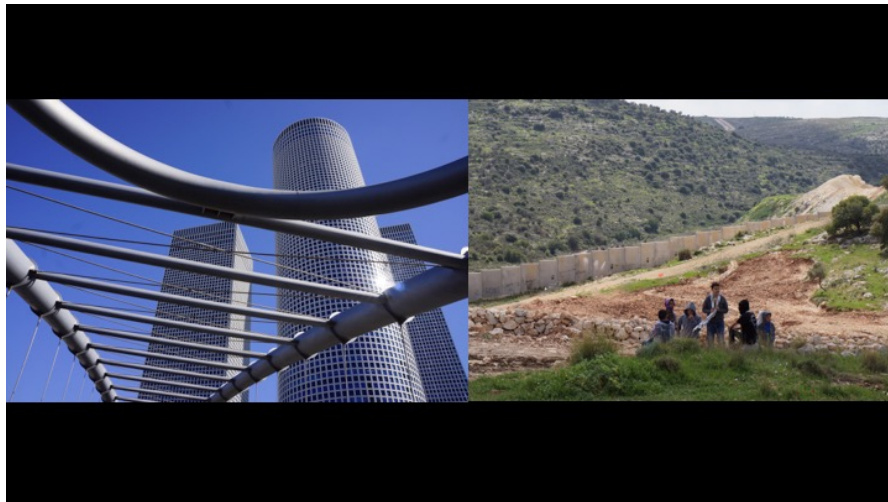
Jewish Israeli activists and Palestinian friends, Bil'in / Kumquats in Ramallah



Young Israeli soldier on a bus from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem / Espresso in Jerusalem.



Queer Performance & Visual artist Oree Holban in Tel Aviv / Students at Al Quds University in Ramallah



Azraeli Building in Tel Aviv / Palestinian kids in Bil'in



Eytan Fox at the premiere of his film, CUPCAKE, in Tel Aviv / 8th year anniversary of protests in Bil'in



Mocha Jean Herrup, Prizer Gallery, Oct. 14-29, 2016, Austin, Texas.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Mocha Jean Herrup is an award winning filmmaker whose work has screened at the Walker Art Center, SXSW, on the Sundance Channel, Northwest Airlines, and in festivals around the world. Herrup uses humor, alternative storytelling ,and queer praxis to confront arrangements of power that hide in plain sight.

ARTIST CONTACT

Mocha Jean Herrup
mjherrup@gmail.com
mjherrup.com

CREDITS

Images & Text.....Mocha Jean Herrup
Media Specialists.....Seth Dahl, Kari Rosenfeld
Copy Editor.....Katie Pace
Additional Research.....Batya Hecker, A.R. Tripp
Additional Photography.....Anne Cremieux

Thank You

Sinai Abt- Al Quds University in Ramallah - The Austin Communit College- Dr. Lawrence Afrin - Ra'anan Alexandrowicz - Udi Aloni- Austin Interfaith Community for Palestinian Rights - - Ori Bader- Amad Barghouti- Moheeb Asad Barghouti- Dalit Baum - Pascal Bos - Ramona Brown - Emad Burnat - Celeste Chan - Heather Courtney - Anne Cremieux - Guy Davidi- Digital Services Bureau for Learning at the University of Minnesota - Masha Dion - Etai Eisenger - Peggy Ellithorpe - Haitham El-Zabri - Avner Faingulernt- Audrey Ferrie - Friends Meeting of Austin- Elle Flanders -Jett Garrison - Rachel Gold - Mahala Guevara - Craig Harris - Karen Haselmann - Barak Heymann- Tomer Heymann- Yair Hochner- Oree Holban - Philip Hopper - Dorit Ingbar - Nachman Ingber- Jewish Voice for Peace, Austin, Bay Area, Twin Cities- Carrie Kenny, Prizer Gallery – Susan Horwitz- Rachel June - George Khleifi - Shirin Khosropour - Eran Kolirin - Evie Leder - Gretchen Lee- Michael Mayer- Dror Moreh - Abed Natour- Erez Laufer- Claudia Levin- Madeline Levine- Katriel Schory- Pauline Martin- Kiki Luv - Ziv Naveh- Deb Norris - Lucy Nusseibeh- Lynda Pavak – Alon Pdut - Yael Perlov- Sawsan Qaoud- Yair Qedar- Saul Schaul- Katriel Schori- David Silber - Kobi Snitz- Texas Starr – Jenn Steinfeld- My good friends in Arizona and Pacific Grove–Illana Rossoff –Tali Shapira - Tamira Sawitzky – Lia Tarachansky- November Wanderin- Kate Ward - Alesia Weston- Devorah Winegarten - Yariv Mozer - Yasmin

*For my cousin, Elaine Cantor Fischer.
I wish you were here.*