

Jerusalem, a divided city, comes to life in two exhibitions

Exhibitions at the Israel Museum and the new Palestinian Museum offer differing perspectives

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A view of Jerusalem with the Temple Mount, a holy site for all three Abrahamic religions
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Few cities have been more fiercely fought over than Jerusalem. In its more than 5,000-year history, during which it has become a sacred site for Jews, Christians and Muslims, it has been attacked 52 times, captured 44 times and destroyed twice. Even today, “there is no apolitical way of

exhibiting the history or the current realities in Jerusalem”, says Ilan Pappé, a professor of history and the director of the European Centre for Palestine Studies at the University of Exeter—especially considering that 2017 is the 50th anniversary of its most recent takeover, when Israel captured East Jerusalem during the Six Day War.

This autumn, both the Israel Museum and the Palestinian Museum have shows about the city. At the Israel Museum, an exhibition tentatively titled Jerusalem in Detail is based on research by the Israeli architect David Kroyanker. It looks at how different cultures have left their marks on the city’s buildings over time, primarily through photographs. It also explores the meanings behind the monograms that displaced Arab families have in their homes, says the curator, Dan Handel. “We attempt to stress the links between ideas that emerge in different cultural and religious contexts,” he says.



A detail from Orient House, part of the Israel Museum’s Kroyanker exhibition Assaf Evron

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Museum’s exhibition Jerusalem Lives is the

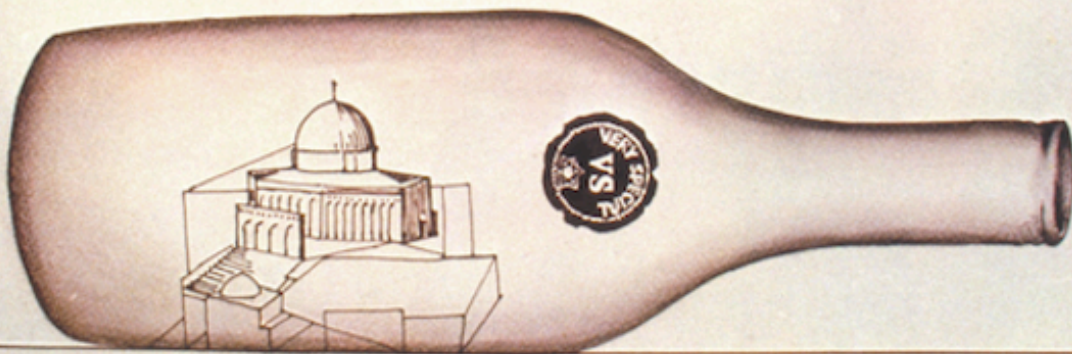
first in its new building, which opened in May 2016. The main part of the show includes contemporary works of art and 20 large-scale commissions in the museum's gardens by international artists including Oscar Murillo and Palestinian artists such as Mona Hatoum, Emily Jacir and Khaled Jarrar.

"I didn't [focus on the Six Day War] in a very literal sense because I don't want the culture of Palestinians or people living in Palestine to be defined by catastrophe," says Reem Fadda, the curator of the exhibition and the former associate curator of Middle Eastern art at the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi. Instead, the overtly political and participatory show "aims to focus on the living aspect of the city and support its people".

اَمَّا اَعْطَى عَبْدُ اللَّهِ عُمَرَ امِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اَهْلَ اَيْلِيَاءِ مِنْ
 وَسَقِيمِهَا وَبَرِيئِهَا وَسَائِرِ مِلَّتِهَا، اَنَّهُ لَا تُسْكَنُ كَنَائِسُهُمْ وَلَا تُهْدَمُ
 مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ، وَلَا يُكْرَهُونَ عَلَيَّ دِينَهُمْ، وَلَا يُضَارُّ اَحَدٌ مِنْهُمْ
 اِلَى اَهْلِ اَيْلِيَاءِ اَنْ يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ كَمَا يُعْطَى اَهْلَ الْمَدَائِنِ. وَعَلَيْهِ
 اَمْرٌ اَنْ يَتْرَكَ اَهْلَ اَيْلِيَاءِ حَتَّى يَبْلُغُوا مَا مَنَّهُمْ. وَمَنْ اَقَامَ مِنْهُمْ فَهُوَ
 مِنْ اَهْلِ اَيْلِيَاءِ اَنْ يَسْبِي نَفْسَهُ وَمَالَهُ مَعَ الْاَوْثَانِ وَيُحْبِي بَعْضَهُمْ
 مِنْ اَهْلِ اَيْلِيَاءِ اَنْ يَتْرَكَ اَهْلَ الْاَرْضِ فَمَنْ شَاءَ مِنْهُمْ فَعَدَّ، وَعَلَيْهِ مِثْلُ
 مَا كَانَ مِنْهَا مِنْ اَهْلِ الْاَرْضِ فَمَنْ شَاءَ مِنْهُمْ شَيْءٌ حَتَّى يُحْصَدَ
 مِنْ شَاءَ رَجَعَ اِلَى اَهْلِهِ، لَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهُمْ شَيْءٌ حَتَّى يُحْصَدَ
 بَوْلُهُ وَذَمَّةُ الْخُلَفَاءِ وَذَمَّةُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اِذَا اَعْطُوا الَّذِي عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ الْجِزْيَةِ
 كَتَبَ وَحَضَرَ سَنَةَ ١٥ هـ

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شهد على ذلك
 خالد بن الوليد عمرو بن لعل عبد الرحمن بن عوف
 معاوية بن أبي سفيان



JERUSALEM 1979

Al-Jazeera 78

Designed by Rafiq al-Nasiri (Iraq). Published by The Iraq Cultural Centre, London on the occasion of 'The Baghdad International Poster Exhibition 1979' - London March/April and Baghdad May 1979

Rafa Al Nasiri's Palestine: a Homeland Denied (1979), part of the Palestinian Museum exhibition
The Palestine Poster Project

The main conceptual difference between the shows is the way in which they address globalisation and multiculturalism. While the Palestinian Museum focuses on contemporary art and frames Jerusalem and its ongoing conflict as an example of the failures of globalisation, the Israel Museum's show is more historical and discusses multiculturalism positively as a contributor to the aesthetics of the city.

The difference speaks to a wider political rift. "It is difficult to discuss Jerusalem, particularly with regard to the Old City, where contestation of space and historical memory is not just a subject for historians, but continues on to this day," says Michael Stephens, a research fellow for Middle East studies at the Royal United Services Institute, a London-based think tank for defence and security studies.

But is there space for meaningful dialogue? "One day there will be—and maybe it has already begun—a process we call in historiography 'the bridging narrative': a more inclusive way of looking at the possible heritages, chapters of history and artistic representations," Pappé says. "But it may be too premature."

- *Jerusalem in Detail, Israel Museum, Jerusalem, 3 October-May 2018*
- *Jerusalem Lives, Palestinian Museum, Birzeit, until 15 December*