

"Jerusalem Lives": the inaugural exhibition at the Palestinian Museum

***Art Radar* takes a look at the Palestinian Museum's ambitious inaugural group exhibition "Jerusalem Lives".**

"Jerusalem Lives" at the Palestinian Museum looks at the relationship between a globalised world and media and life in the city of Jerusalem.



Installation view of "Jerusalem Lives" at Palestinian Museum. Photo: © Hamoudi Shehadeh. Image courtesy The Palestinian Museum.

The [Palestinian Museum](https://www.palestinianmuseum.org/), which first opened its doors in May 2016, launched its inaugural exhibition "[Jerusalem Lives](https://www.palestinianmuseum.org/exhibitions/jerusalem-lives/)" on 27 August 2017.

The four-chapter show unites 48 artworks by Palestinian, Arab and international artists, including new commissions. The exhibition seeks to question and contest the exclusionary policies enforced by militarisation and closure across the city of Jerusalem.

Running until 31 January 2017, the exhibition approaches the city of Jerusalem as a case study in a wider question about the ways in which globalisation both amplifies and constrains citizens' real and imagined voices. The exhibition is oriented towards the future, in that it aspires to sketch out a better future as well as expose the neoliberal colonial and imperial challenges imposed by the Israeli occupation. The works on display have been carefully selected to pull out nuances in theories and histories of resistance or tell what the global media deem a well trodden history in a way that offers new insights. As written in the press release, the exhibition asks:

Could the title "Tahya Al Quds" transform from a mere slogan to presenting real content and support for life in the city? What are the stories of collective resistance? How do we make Jerusalem live?

Rafa Al Nasiri, 'Palestine: A Homeland Denied', 1979. Image courtesy The Palestine Poster Project.

As [quoted](#) in *Aljazeera*, exhibition curator [Reem Fadda](#) stated:

We are told to look at a city from its cultural, economic, political, ideological and environmental perspectives. That's the methodology that I used to look at the city and examine how this globalisation, this universalist phenomenon, has failed.

Among the artists participating, in addition to the ones profiled below, are:

- [CAMP](#)
- [Rula Halawani](#)
- [Khaled Hourani](#)
- [Iman Issa](#)
- [Khaled Jarrar](#)
- [Mohammed Kazem](#)
- [Yazan Khalili](#)
- [Sudarshan Shetty](#)

Art Radar highlights six stand-out works in the exhibition.



Mona Hatoum, 'Present Tense', 1996, soap and glass beads, 4.5 x 299 x 241 cm. Installation view at Gallery Anadiel, Jerusalem. Photo: Issa Freij. Image courtesy the artist and Gallery Anadiel, Jerusalem.



Mona Hatoum, 'Present Tense', 1996, soap and glass beads, 4.5 x 299 x 241 cm. Installation view at Gallery Anadiel, Jerusalem. Photo: Issa Freij. Image courtesy the artist and Gallery Anadiel, Jerusalem.

1. Mona Hatoum — *Present Tense* (2008)

Lebanese-born Palestinian artist [Mona Hatoum](#)'s work *Present Tense* (2008) departs from her own encounter with a copy of the controversial Oslo Accords Map, infamously signed by Yasser Arafat in 1993, which she

found hanging on the wall in a colleague's office. She decided to make her own version of the map using 2,200 bars of Nablus soap. The bars of soap are extremely vulnerable to temperature and humidity, and degrade very quickly in the gallery environment, showing beads of "sweat" that smudge the image of the map inscribed above. The choice of material reflects the artist's critique of the clear unsustainability of the Accords, which effectively organised the Palestinian population into controllable ghettos of the city where they could be subjected to surveillance and disciplining. The work is spread across an entire area of the main exhibition's floor.



Emily Jacir, 'Untitled (Servees)', 2008, sound installation at the Palestinian Museum. Image courtesy The Palestinian Museum.

2. Emily Jacir — *Untitled (Servees)* (2008)

[Emily Jacir](#)'s sound installation *Untitled (Servees)* (2008) explores one of the key themes of the exhibition "Jerusalem Lives": the increasing isolation of the city, whose connectivity to the rest of the world has been constrained since it was occupied by Israel in 1967. The artist has placed loud speakers that amplify a series of voices across the museum car park. The voices are taxi drivers asked by Jacir to recreate the emotion they

had to take clients across cities of Palestine and beyond, before the controls were put into place. The taxi drivers recount their memories of a free time when one could drive from Lyd to Ramle to Ramallah and even to Damascus and Beirut without controls. The effect is a chaotic urban soundscape as people shout the names of cities that Palestinian citizens can no longer easily access.





Basel Abbas & Ruanne Abou-Rahme, 'We know what it is for/we who have used it', 2017, four 3D-printed marble masks, 5-channel sound installation. Image courtesy the artists.

3. Ruanne Abou Rahme & Basel Abbas — *We know what it is for/we who have used it is* (2017)

[Ruanne Abou Rahme](#) and [Basel Abbas](#) collaborate on research-based artistic projects that investigate sound, environment, temporality and agency. *We know what it is for/we who have used it is* (2017) consists of marble masks made with a 3D printer, an installation set to accompanying sounds composed by the duo. The 13 masks reference the oldest known masks, many of which were looted by United States and European countries throughout the 18th and 19th century. According to the artists' research, in 2014 the Israel Museum in Jerusalem mounted an exhibition of the masks that instrumentalised them by linking them to nationalistic narratives based on ideas of an ancient and contemporary 'Land of Israel'. In a critique of militarised origin stories, the artists hacked the designs of the masks, reproducing and circulating multiple copies.



Khalil Rabah, '48%, 67%, detail from Palestine after Palestine New Sites for the Museum Department', 2017, steel, dimensions variable. Image courtesy the artist.



Khalil Rabah, '48%, 67%, detail from Palestine after Palestine New Sites for the Museum Department', 2017, steel, dimensions variable. Image courtesy the artist.

4. Khalil Rabah

[Khalil Rabah](#) is renowned for his project "The Palestinian Museum of Natural History and Humankind" (2003–ongoing), which blurs the boundaries between art and institutional infrastructures using conceptual techniques that usually play out in a series of locations over a long period of time. His works *48%* and *67%* (2017) can be considered a detail from Rabah's work, *Palestine after Palestine New Sites for the Museum Department*. These larger than life-sized rusting steel sculptures emerge from the ground as though they had just been excavated. The numbers '48' and '67' refer to the years of the Nakba and Naksa in Palestinian history. In the work historical markers are turned into spatial domains, with the percentage sign (%) alluding to what has been lost of the land since the years 1948 and 1967.



Rain Wu & Eric Chen, 'Threshold of Being', 2017, galvanised steel, Jerusalem stone, timber, 1200 x

300 x 500 cm. Image courtesy the artist.

5. Rain Wu & Eric Chen — *Threshold of Being* (2017)

[Rain Wu](#) is an architect whose practice extends across art and design to include installation, drawing, curating, set and building design. Wu's architectural training informs her artistic practice, and her collaborations with [Eric Chen](#), a scholar and principal architect of ArchiBlur Lab, include projects that consider the connections between bodies and controlled landscapes, and how the organic functions within order. For the 2017 [Sharjah Biennial 13](#), they produced *Collectivism*, an installation constructed out of 700 bulletproof shields. The structure wrapped around a garden that visitors could walk into, and referenced Taiwan's recent civil protest movements and the conflict between the individual and the institutional. *Threshold of Being* is an elevated structure that appears as a wall or bridge rising between two rows of olive trees at the end of the Palestinian Museum's gardens. Constructed out of galvanised steel and Jerusalem stone, the structure is walled off, almost imprisoned, indicating both access and separation.



Oscar Murillo, 'Institute of Reconciliation' (assistants' preparation of the installation), 2012–ongoing, mixed media installation, dimensions variable. Image courtesy the artist.

6. Oscar Murillo — *Institute of Reconciliation* (2016-ongoing)

Colombia-born, London-based [Oscar Murillo](#) had a very steep rise to fame. Having recently graduated from studies at the Royal College of Art in London, during which he also worked as a cleaner to support his artistic career, his expressive, scratchy and scrawled paintings began to fetch six figure sums in 2013 opening the doors to exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art and the [56th Venice Biennale](#). At the Palestinian Museum Murillo has created an installation of heavy, sewn and torn black canvases, painted with black oil paint. They construct a sprawling installation that hangs on lines or drape on steel. The installation, entitled *Institute of Reconciliation* (2016-ongoing), is the Jerusalem iteration of a work that has taken place across various sites. To complete the work, Murillo shipped canvas and black oil paints to Palestine and established collaborations with cultural institutions in Jerusalem, such as the Silwan

Club and the African Community Center. The work reflects on histories of labour, trade, community, consumption and art.

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"Jerusalem Lives (Tahya Al Quds)" is on view from 27 August 2017 to 31 January 2018 at the Palestinian Museum, Museum Street (off Omar Ibn Al-Khattab Street), PO Box 48, Birzeit, Palestine.

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