

RE-IGNITING MEMORY

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Nabil Anani: Palestine, Land and People, Book Cover

By Corinne Martin

Nabil Anani: *Palestine, Land and People* explores the lived Palestinian experience.

Nabil Anani is one of the most prominent Palestinian artists working today. Anani's development is analogous with major events in Palestinian history. Nabil Anani: *Palestine, Land and People* is the first monograph of Anani's work. A painter, ceramicist and sculptor, Anani has built a beautiful body of work consisting of innovative art, over the past five decades, and has pioneered the use of local media such as leather, henna, natural dyes, papier-mâché, wood, beads and copper.



Holy Family, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 105 x 120 cm

“The works of Nabil Anani simultaneously perform the roles of novelist, poet, historian, architect, filmmaker, musician and restorer of memory,” writes Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti in his introduction to the book. This book is not only an exploration of an artist, but also an exploration of Palestine. Throughout this volume, themes in Anani’s work are explored, alongside his style and progression as an artist. Contributions from leading Middle Eastern art historians Rana Anani, Lara Khaldi, Bashir Makhoul, Nada Shabout, Housni Alkhateeb Shehadeh and Tina Sherwell offer fascinating insights into Anani’s impressive body of work.



Imwas, 1989, watercolour on paper, 40 x 65 cm

The word “intifada” literally means “to shake off.” Lara Khaldi’s essay, *Passage into The Light*, gives an in-depth understanding of Anani’s rebellious use of materials, which began in 1988 after the beginning of the first intifada that called on all Palestinians to boycott Israeli products. “What Anani and his fellow artists did during the First Intifada was the very shaking off of the medium itself. They became aware of the very infrastructure that holds the work of art, and that is one form of revolutionary art,” explains Lara Khaldi.



Family from Jerusalem, circa 1920s, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 115 x 148 cm

After the Intifada Anani started using leather as canvas and henna and tea as paint. One of the formal changes that the leather as a material enabled was the transgression of the borders of a geometric canvas, so that it could spill over the usual limitations. Anani's use of local materials such as leather and natural dyes relieved him of the obligation to use familiar and clichéd symbolism, which enabled him to create a truly distinct and unique oeuvre.

This book presents Anani's complete body of work, which reflects the lived Palestinian experience, exhibiting distinctive responses to issues of exile, dislocation, conflict, memory and loss. Anani's artistic vision restores and celebrates a denied and often-forgotten reality, his work re-igniting memory.