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Other Lives: Views of Palestine from Norway

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Introduction

Home

HOME, can be an apartment to live in, a language to communicate with other people, a money to travel from a place to another. You can say the entire world is my home.

I born in Palestine – Jerusalem and I grew up in Saudi Arabia – Jeddah, I finished my high school and Diploma degree and Bachelor degree in Palestine – Jerusalem and Ramallah, Now I life in Norway.

I lived with my family in Saudi Arabia and in Palestine and I lived by myself in Norway and now I live with my husband in Norway.

Life is not easy, and everybody has his or her experience in life.

Home; Cultural, Society, System, Rules, Knowledge and Intellectual Property...

After two years in Norway, I feel in a major development in my artwork, and the link between Palestine and Norway through my art, some of my artwork inspired from Palestine and some artwork I thought it deeply in Norway. In Palestine I talked about; Religions (Hijab), Politics, Charlie Chaplin Character (his movies) and the Wedding. I spoke on the same themes in Norway but in another way. I have also introduced a new threads, I think that the art student always looks different (Imaging and Ideas).

I thought if I can have a big word (HOME) made from trees wood and near this word I want to put a bulldozer machine, and take a photos, and the audience will start thinking in different ways, when a man start to destroy this word the audience will start imagining a real Home being destroyed: the daily life, a father, mother, relatives, friends, widows, doors, rooms, garden, kids and neighbor's ... etc.

The Bulldozer machine also used to build or destroy things!

Olive Trees also like a Home!

Olive Trees it is a source of livelihood for many people!

Israeli Soldiers they destroy the Palestinian Olive Trees into the bulldozers ... Same Machine when they want to destroy houses!

They destroy it to make a road for cars!

Now I have created a home from cardboard and it's easy to burn, but when I created another home from clay, so fire will not burn it will make it strong.

Fire, when we ignite a fire in the house the heat will spread everywhere within that house, and when we create a model out of clay in the form of a house we need to leave it to dry and then we need to put it in the oven to become tough and paint it with colors that we desire and then we put it in the fire.



The Triangle

When I came to Norway I discovered many things between two countries, People, Culture, Society and System.

In Arab (Islamic) Country; when we are kids we can get everything, then we must think about the rules, you can do that and you are not allowed to do that, when we are around + 18 years old we must take care of ourselves (girls and boys).

Then we start to think about: Religion, Life, Society, Culture, Halal and Haram (Taboo).

Talent and Skill: Some people they do not know the meaning of the two terms.

In general we want to learn everything, we want to be always number one.

Education is not just for rich people. In our countries we need to pay to the college and university to complete our studies after high school, and it's really expensive for those people who don't have a lot of money and for those people how have a lot of kids.



Then the triangle becomes smaller.

In Europe Country there is a rule for the kids it is not allowed to get everything, when they are around + 18 years old (girls and boys) they can do what they want.

Talents and Skill: Talent is an entry point, skill is a destination.

Education in Norway for free.

Then the triangle becomes much bigger.

I think there is many people like to live like a Europeans and other people like to live like an Arabs.

This is a private decision, and you can decide how do you want to live?

In the end we must respect each other and it is important to learn the good thing from the other culture and society, and leave the bad thing.

Spaces

Cinema and Home

Different feeling when I watch a movie from the TV or The Computer.

I start thinking about the spaces and the sizes, I like the small houses and I like the big and huge cinema, I feel calm and relax in the small houses, and I feel really excited when I go to the huge cinema to watch movies; Big Screen, and Sound System.

We have cinema in Palestine but I didn't go to any cinema there, some of them are closed, some of them in the Israel part.

It's really nice to watch a movie in the cinema; big space, high quality for the image, many people watching the movie and I feel when we buying the pop-corn like when we visiting our families and friends and someone make the hospitality with us.

In some movies I feel I'm an actor too.

Analyzing the Movie

Sometimes when I see the movies it helps me to think more in my artwork in different ways.

Fury Movie

I went to the cinema in Oslo in 2014, to watch Fury Movie (Brad Pitt) played a role in this movie, The film talks about the war between United State of America and German, and they fight against each other to defend their own countries, and Brad Pitt and his friends they sit inside the tanks I felt they sit inside a rooms at their houses, someone put a photo for his family, and they drunk the beer, and I liked when Brad Pitt said this is my home, I understood this in two ways America and The tank.

No one like WARS, No one likes fighting, No one wants to lose their families and Friends, and no one wants to lose their HOME.

Life it's really hard. The Image it's not clear, It's hard to know the truth, why there is no one say the truth, the conflicts everywhere with everybody, when I decide to go to the cinema I said to myself I want to watch a romantic story (movie), but when I saw the programs list I like the action movie more.

I like to watch a action movie because I want to see how the MEDIA & the CINEMA how they create the stories, if they say the truth or not, If they talk about Islam or not, If they respect Muslim people or not.

I remembered from Fury movie, what happened in August 23rd, 2014 in Gaza In the latest conflict; the rockets of the Israeli occupation demolished the house of my parents-in-law. They destroyed the building that was a residential 14-story building, because there was one office for Hamas in it.

They Destroyed Houses and We are building new houses ...

Examples of My Artworks

Adhan (2013)

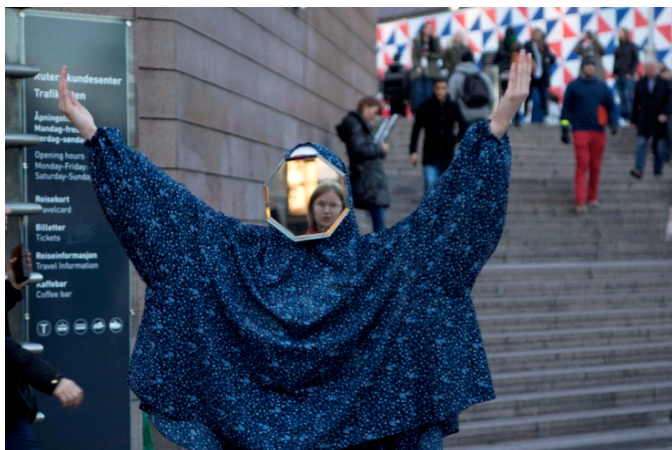
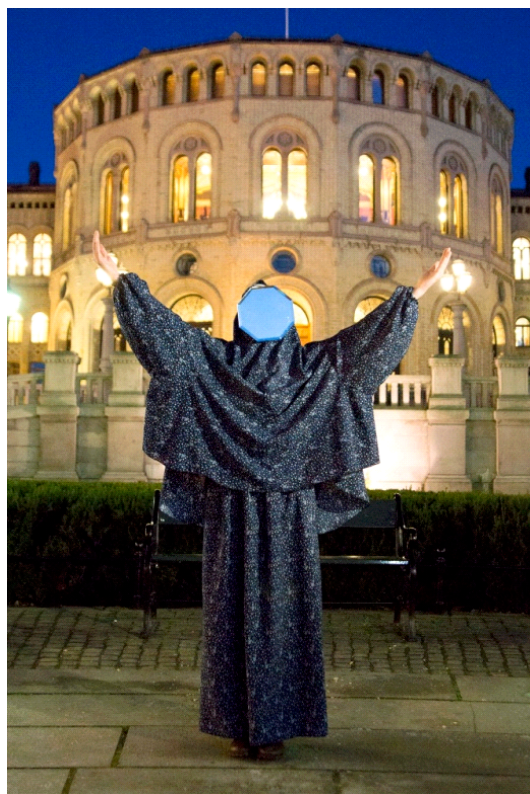
When I first arrived in Oslo, I noticed that I did not hear the Adhan (the Muslim call to prayer). In Arab countries you would hear this five times a day. Even non-Muslims use the Adhan to mark the time of day. There are many mosques in Oslo, but I only heard the bell from the churches. In Palestine, Muslims respect the rituals of other religions.

My friend told me that Jernbanetorget was a place where drugs were sold for many years. I thought that the Adhan purifies and relaxes the soul. I took a mirror to Jernbanetorget, near the statue of the tiger. I was wearing special clothes for Salah, which is a two-piece outfit for women with long arms and a Hijab, which women wear to pray. I placed two speakers on the ground connected to a computer, which had a recording of the Adhan from Saudi Arabia, which I played at the same time as the third call to prayer in the mosques. The Adhan always uses the same words, but the singing is different in different places. I grew up in Saudi Arabia and it also the place where people go to Mecca al Mukarramah. When the call started, I put the mirror over my face like a mask and raised my arms, until the call was over. There was a small audience of people from the academy.

A man I did not know spoke to me afterwards. He was from Somalia, he said don't make anything ironic about Islam. I replied that I am a Muslim and that I was trying to help people who did not know about Islam understand the Adhan, but he did not listen and walked off. He did not ask what I was doing or why, perhaps he was nervous because of the mirror.

I repeated the performance outside the parliament at the fourth call to prayer the same day. That time no one spoke to me afterwards.

I used the mirror so that the audience saw their face through my face and my Hijab. I wanted the audience to think about their relationship to Islam and the Adhan. We must respect other religions.



The Other Life (2014)

Another student and I went to visit OSLO LADEGÅRD, OSLO GATE 13, where we were having an exhibition. The woman who showed us around was always telling us “Don't touch!” I began to imagine doing a performance where I just stood wearing a sign saying, “Don't touch”. But when I saw a space with what looked like a small grave. I imagined a performance where I lay down there. I asked the woman if I could use the space for a performance and she said yes.

I am always thinking about death, because no one knows when or where it will happen. I imagined a performance where I would appear dead. I had heard about a Jordanian actor who died on stage. I was interested in playing with the audience's uncertainty when they saw me lying on the ground.

When I went home I started to think about what I should wear and I found some white clothes and a white sheet. For the performance I wore the clothes and then wrapped myself in the sheet, so it covered my whole body including my head. I wanted to remind people that life is short and that we must respect one another not worry about things like money, because when we go to the other life in the grave we can only bring our good works.

The audience was very surprised by the performance. I could not see people's faces because of the sheet, but I could see the flashes from their cameras. Afterwards lots of people spoke to me and said that I touched them.

All the time in Palestine I would take photographs in the street. There is one famous tomb in Jerusalem and after the performance I found a photograph of it, which I had taken. I imagined making a poster using that image, with a text connecting it my experiences of Norway.

The other life might be the afterlife – but we have many 'other lives', for example living outside our own country. And even within Palestine there are other lives, because people living in Jerusalem or the West Bank cannot visit Gaza. People in Gaza cannot travel anywhere.



There Is No Place Like Home ...
My Motherland Is Palestine ...

We want to live in Our Country !
We want to save Our Homeland !

There is many people lived outside Palestine
and our heart and our minds still in Palestine we can't forget it ...

We study and work outside Palestine to return to Palestine
to help people from our studies !
to build houses, companies, mosques,
church, hospitals and schools to live there.

We are Human Beings !

But Life Unfair

War Never End !

Thanks God For Everything,

Razan F. Akramawi A.

2013-2015

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How to Learn Arabic? (2013-2014)

When I arrived to Norway I have got the suggestion of my school to join a Norwegian Course for the first level. I joined those lectures. While I was sitting in this class I was wondering if I could create a piece of art called, HOW TO LEARN ARABIC?

The day after when we went to Oslo Kunsthavn to prepare an exhibition of other students I was surprised with this location. The furniture and the design gave me a recall of my trip to Nablus where I was visiting an exhibition. A part of this exhibition was showing a school scene of the regular life there.

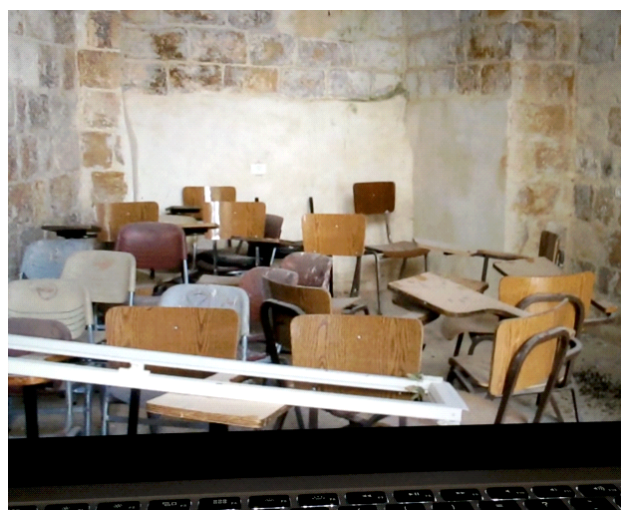
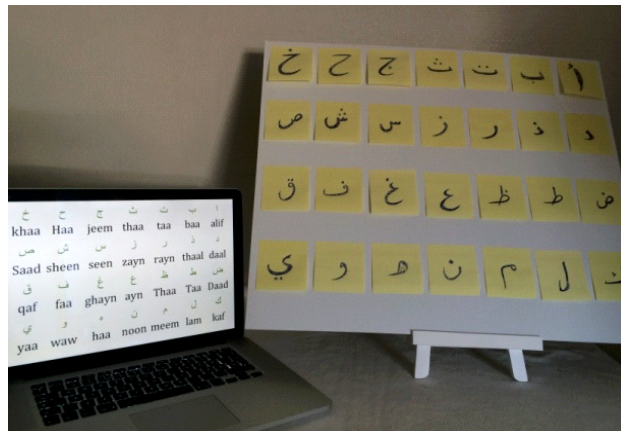
Everything appeared in an old way and the equipment was used and broken.

I have taken a video of this scene because it remembered me of an important event in the Israeli-Palestinian history, which is called Al-Nakba.

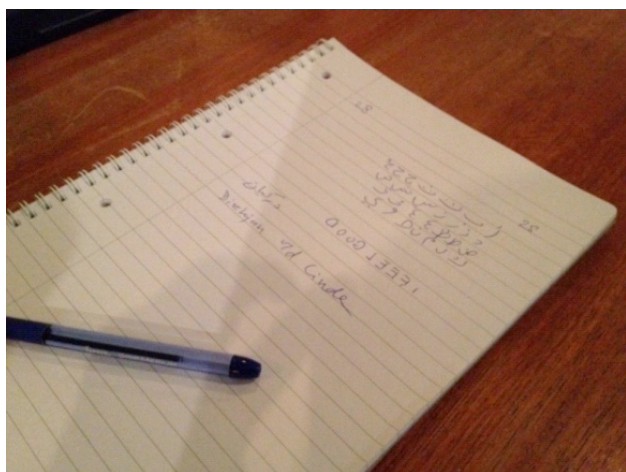
Al-Nakba describes the year of the Israeli occupation of Palestine in 1948. During the occupation happened a lot of destruction of Palestinian property. And the old and broken furniture were symbolizing this destruction for me. In my imagination I was comparing the situation in Norway and Palestine - Nablus.

When I saw the location and the furniture I knew how I could realize my ideas of artwork. Especially the furniture could help me to represent an authentic picture of this school scene.

The chairs and the table have been quite similar so that I could imitate the scene of a good way. During my preparation I tried to find a black board as I remembered from Nablus but I had to buy a canvas since I couldn't find something similar.



28 alphabets letters in Arabic Language.



I wrote each letter on a small piece of papers and I post those papers on a white canvas.

In addition I recorded my voice in to a tape where I introduced myself as a teacher and invited the others to learn Arabic together with me.

I asked them to read the letters in the Arabic way, which means from the right side of the left side, and try to write the 28 alphabet letters on my Notebook.

In the second exercise they were supposed to mix three or four letters together in purpose to create some Arabic words. Many of those who tried to create some Arabic words by mixing the letters were really successful. Some of them asked me to write their own names on their hands with Arabic letters.

The feedback on this exercise has been really interesting from my professors and a lot of students and the audience.

How to Learn Arabic?



The World Map and Globe (2014-2015) as a Master Graduation Project (2013-2015)

When I came to Norway in August 2013, I started to compare the situation between Palestine and Norway, of course it's hard to get everything in the same time we must lose something and get another, then I started to think about my Motherland and Home, and World Map and the Globe.

I had an Idea about the Motherland and Uterus (Womb) and the baby.

Performance and Installation.

The Globe: Motherland, Mother

Transparent Plastic Ball: Like a Uterus (Womb)

The Audience and I: Like a Baby

My Idea was: The Transparent Plastic Ball and the Globe with solid threads and this threads like the umbilical cord, and I want to sit inside the transparent plastic ball as a Baby, and the Motherland like my mother, we consider Palestine as a second Mother.

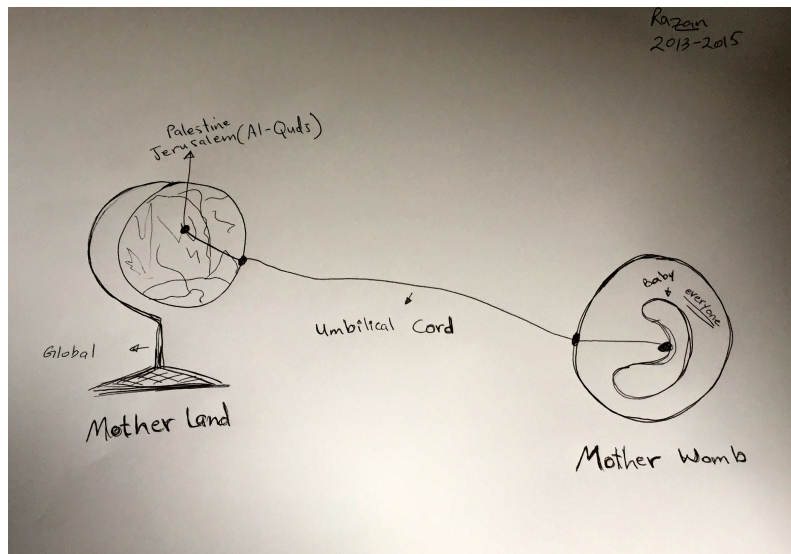
I asked my professors and my friends if they have a transparent plastic ball, but no one have it.

My Professor said to me we can created a transparent plastic ball at school, but it's cost a lot of money and we must be careful with the materials some of them made of glass, for me I have no enough money to do it, and I felt scared from the glass! And I started to imagine if I will sit inside the transparent plastic ball and destroyed it and hurt myself.

I tried to find the Ball on Internet. I found this ball on eBay website!

In the end I started to develop my idea and for this one I need a big space to do a performance, to feel free to moving around, and some extra money.

I decided to postpone the implementation of this idea, at least when I have enough money and when I find a good space. I pushed myself to think more and more about The World Map and The Globe, to create a good idea.



NOMADEN Store (2015)

I went to one Store Called NOMADEN in Norway - Oslo, they have a lot of Globes in different sizes and colors, and I saw one huge globe! I asked the girl she work in this store how much cost this globe? She said to me 100,000 Norwegian Kroner. I said to her there are no Palestine on it and it cost 100,000 Norwegian Kroner and the globe incomplete!!!

She said to me this globe made in German, *Columbus Verlag - Made in Germany - COLUMBUS Globe.*



I found Palestine on one Globe in the same store.



IKEA (2015)

I went to IKEA in Norway - Oslo, I saw two World Maps there but no Palestine on both of them ! I was surprised and I asked myself several questions:

- Why there are many countries in the world they did not recognize in Palestine? Or they don't want to recognize in Palestine! IKEA started from Sweden and Sweden recognize in Palestine.
- Why there is no Palestine on the World Maps in IKEA?

After two weeks I went again too IKEA, and I wrote Palestine - Jerusalem on small pieces of paper then I put it on the World Map.



I have done many performances Razan like Charlie Chaplin in Palestine and Norway. I presented the documentation to my professor (my performance in IKEA) then I got a suggestion about Charlie Chaplin when he started to play with the balloon and this balloons like a Globe. The suggestion was if I could go to IKEA again to do a performance like Charlie Chaplin character and add Palestine on the World Map. Check on YouTube (*The Great Dictator - complete globe scene*).



Stickers with Palestine word (2015)

I printed some stickers with Palestine word and I want to put these stickers on the World Map that I saw in IKEA.

I asked my professors and my friends in all over the world to take a photo of the World Map and Globe that shows the Middle East Part, and send me the photo with the name of the city (the photo is from).

If I found Palestine I don't need to put a sticker on this photo.

A Palestinian flag color is White, Green, Red and Black. I chose a Green circle, and Palestine written in white color.

This Design looks like a parking sign. With this green circle and (P) in white color I mean Palestine. I want people to think more when they see this on the World Map or Globe.

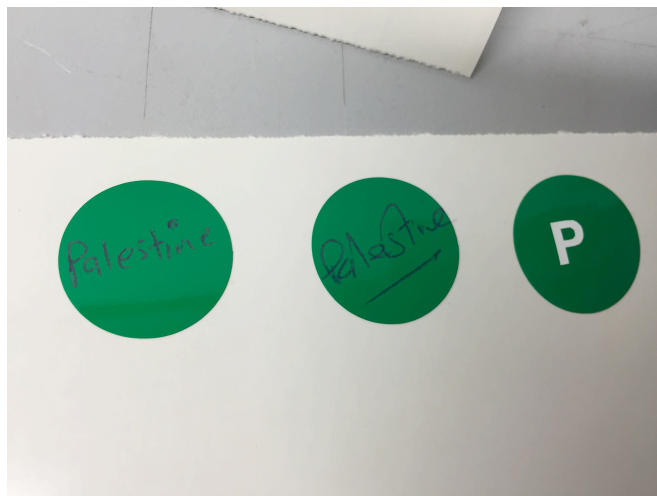
This the good colors for me, the meaning of these color in my opinion is:

White means peace, comfort and purity.

Green means the earth and olive trees.

Red means blood.

Black means sadness and mourning.



Palestine

I got a Globe in a medium size from Palestine, with Palestine on it.



Norway

I got a photo for a Globe, with Palestine on it.



Belly Dance Dress (2014 - 2015)

In 2014, I bought some clothes for my wedding and I bought this Belly Dance Dress in Red Color, I bought it from Jordan, when I wore a dress I discovered something on this dress it looks like a Palestinian Country Map, I was shocked and I asked myself several questions:

- Why this dress looks like a Palestinian Country Map?
- Who done this piece?
- Did you think they imagined that?
- Did you think they just want women to be sexy and naked and attractive?

This kind of dress for women's, Muslim girl and non-Muslim girl can wear this dress, and for Muslim girls they wear it at home. They don't need to wear Hijab in front of father, brother, uncle, nephew, husband, son and father in Law.

I want to explain some thing for a reader; Palestine is the holy land, Palestine such as a woman.

Many countries in the world they don't recognize or admit in Palestine, and they don't want!

I want all people to know Palestine, We must believe in Palestine.

Israel and several countries occupied Palestine and raped her, and they enjoy tormenting her.

I am talking about the old and real World Maps and the Globe, Check the old World Maps and Globe and you will find Palestine, before 1948. I want to complete both of them and add Palestine on it.

I don't want to say Free Palestine in normal way I want people to think more and more and more in my artwork and my Ideas. Then they will say Free Palestine!



Conclusion

When I decide to complete my studies in Art, was really hard decision. It's hard to explain to people my Ideas, and they asked me when you done where you can find a job? Or what do you want to do?

In the end, is not easy to satisfy all people.

I found myself in performance art, then I start to develop my Ideas to touch people, I want people to think more about art and art not just a canvas and painting. ART it's a big world and everyone have his or her taste.

I learned many things from my studies when I was in Palestine when I was a student at Women Society College – Ramallah; I get a Diploma Degree in majoring in Graphics Design. I was a student in International Academy of Art – Ramallah; I get a Bachelor Degree in Visual Contemporary art. I was happy when I get the scholarship to complete my Master in National Academy of Arts – Oslo.

I believe in that art is for everyone, and we can help people from own artworks, we must leave something good and strong to the new generations, and we must do what we want, you done many tutorials with many people; artist, professors, students, friends and family, then you develop your thoughts and you decide to do what you want.

I need to read more about arts, reading in general it's important for everyone.

It's really important to visit many museums and talk with many people about art to develop your own ideas. You can find art everywhere.

We need to analyze everything and understand and put it in our own ways and see thing from different angles.

I know there are many countries in the world have a war and conflict with other countries and here I'm talking about my Motherland and we must to protect all the oppressed nations. And we must fight to save our lands in positive way we can fight enemies through education, Arts, Thoughts. And prove to everyone that we are not weak.