

Los Angeles Filmforum and Human Resources Los Angeles present
So Much I Want To Say: A Glimpse Into Palestinian Erasure
Screening + Lecture Performance
Sunday, December 3, 2023, 7:30 pm
At Human Resources Los Angeles

Los Angeles Filmforum is the city's longest running organization dedicated to weekly screenings of experimental film, documentaries, video art, and experimental animation. 2023 is our 48th year. www.lafilmforum.org

In person: curator Zaina Bseiso & Programmer Jorge Ravelo
Over Zoom: Bahaleen Collective

Dedicated to Bérénice Reynaud

Filmforum and Human Resources is humbled to present *So Much I Want To Say: A Glimpse Into Palestinian Erasure*, a screening + lecture/ performance guided by local curator and filmmaker Zaina Bseiso and followed by a zoom presentation from the Bahaleen collective based in Lebanon.

As we witness firsthand the abundance of power structures attempting to silence Palestinian voices, erasing and fabricating historical and current events, this screening and lecture/performance contextualizes the settler-colonial project's tactics of erasure. Hundreds of 16mm documentaries were made by the Palestine Film Unit and solidarity networks to portray the Palestinian struggle after the 1967 war. A large portion of those films were confiscated during the Israeli invasion of Beirut in 1982, making it virtually impossible to see and hear these stories. It is only through acts of solidarity and Palestinian resilience, exemplified by the [Tokyo Reels](http://www.tokyoreels.com), (www.tokyoreels.com) that we are able to access some of the films featured in this program, while many others remain locked in Israeli vaults, accessible only to vetted Israeli citizens.

This space of collective self-reflection will go beyond uplifting Palestinian voices. Borrowing its title from Mona Hatoum's video art piece *So Much I Want To Say*, this program recounts a timeline of refusals by artists and collectives to remain silent, instead utilizing their tools to contribute to Palestinian narratives.

Program (about 80 minutes)

[all films are excerpts unless marked with *, in which the full film will be shown]

This Is The Land (1935) by Baruch Agadati

"Baruch Agadati's seminal film depicting Zionist settlement in Palestine. Recently restored and preserved by the Spielberg Archive.

A chronicle of fifty years of trying to make a desert bloom and create a new state, Israel, in the land of British Palestine.

Land of Promise (1935) by Juda Leman

"This is one of Palestine's earliest sound films and part of a larger campaign to encourage settlement and investment in 'the Jewish homeland.' Land of Promise emphasizes secular accomplishments and portrays Zionist settlers with considerable cinematographic and editorial skill. Punctuated by evocative close-ups, this part-documentary, part-travelogue, part-message film shows Palestine as a land of opportunity, the place for fulfilling an ancient dream. Preserved by and made available in cooperation with the International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House."

Sands of Sorrow (1950) by the Council for the Relief of Palestine Arab Refugees

"On the plight of Arab refugees from the Arab-Israeli war. Dorothy Thompson speaks on the refugee problem. Refugees live in tents in the Gaza Strip, are given blankets and food by Egyptian soldiers, and receive flour from UNICEF. A Lebanese priest conducts services. Refugees work as plumbers, carpenters, tailors, and shoemakers in the city of Jerusalem. Doctors vaccinate refugees against disease. Shows the squalid living conditions in refugee camps, starving children, and emphasizes the hopeless condition of the refugees."

They Do Not Exist (1974) by Mustafa Abu Ali

They Do Not Exist is a stylistically unique work which explodes at the intersection between the political and the aesthetic. It covers conditions in Lebanon's refugee camps, the effects of Israeli bombardments, and the lives of guerrillas in training camps.

Jerusalem Flower of All Cities (1969) by Ali Siam

Set to the famous song by Fairouz, Flower of All Cities, a harmonious picture of Palestinian civil life in Jerusalem is disturbed by the Israeli army's occupation of the city following the 1967 war. A rare example of the work of Hani Jawharieh, one of founding fathers of Palestinian cinema.

Palestine in the Eye (1971) by Mustafa Abu Ali

Palestine in the Eye chronicles the profound impact of Hani Jawharieh's death for the PLO Film Unit. The film reflects on his life through interviews with family, colleagues, and his own cinematography, including the moment of his death while filming for the Unit in 1976. Although the film has later been attributed to Mustafa Abu Ali, the Unit's method of work was to describe everyone as a collective of "workers," and we see this in the film titles, which collectively list the names of all those who participated as a non-hierarchical collective. Through this reflection on Jawharieh, we are offered an understanding of the workings of the Palestine Film Unit and its international connections.

Looted and Hidden (2017) by Rona Sela

"The film *Looted and Hidden* explores Palestinian archives taken by Israeli / Jewish forces during the 20th century, now buried in Israeli military vaults. Stemming from a prolonged effort to access classified materials, the movie showcases once-lost archival footage and images. It emphasizes treasures seized in Beirut in the 1980s, spotlighting film and visual archives that chronicled the Palestinian Revolution from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. Additionally, it touches on photographic archives taken since the 1930s. The film questions archival practices in colonial regions and conflict zones, underscoring the importance of uncovering what's been altered or removed."

R21 Restoring Solidarity (2023) by Mohanad Yaqubi

"The growing struggle for Palestinian self-determination between 1960 and 1980 was supported by radical left-wing movements worldwide, also in Japan. This is illustrated by a collection of 16mm films by militant filmmakers from various countries, which were dubbed and screened in Japan. Their Japanese audiences felt oppressed by the US after World War II, and not only sympathized but also identified with the Palestinians."

****The Game, by Shirak***

Iraq, 1973, b&w, 16 min.

"In 1973, Shirak directed this short film in which the games of Palestinian children increasingly merge with warfare. Remnants of combat, such as bullets and tanks, are the toys of a group of young boys. When one of them finds a casing of a bombshell, their band disperses into a haunting game of hide and seek. This film was recovered as a part of a cache of archival films about various aspects of the Palestinian liberation movements that were found in Tokyo and therefore dubbed the 'Tokyo Reels.'"

Jamila's Mirror (1993) by Arab Loutfi

"Deals with the memories of Palestinian female guerilla fighters, currently in their forties, who were involved in military operations during their teen years."

Foragers (2022) by Jumana Manna

"Foragers depicts the dramas around the practice of foraging for wild edible plants in Palestine/Israel with wry humor and a meditative pace. Shot in the Golan Heights, the Galilee and Jerusalem, it employs fiction, documentary and archival footage to portray the impact of Israeli nature protection laws on these customs. The restrictions prohibit the collection of the artichoke-like 'akkoub and za'atar (thyme), and have resulted in fines and trials for hundreds caught collecting these native plants. For Palestinians, these laws constitute an ecological veil for legislation that further alienates them from their land while Israeli state representatives insist on their scientific expertise and duty to protect. Following the plants from the wild to the kitchen, from the chases between the foragers and the nature patrol, to courtroom defenses, Foragers captures the joy and knowledge embodied in these traditions alongside their resilience to the prohibitive law. By reframing the terms and constraints of preservation, the film raises questions around the politics of extinction, namely who determines what is made extinct and what gets to live on."

****Like An Event in A Dream Dreamt By Another – Rehearsal*, by Firas Shehadeh**

2023, color, sound 14 min.

Part of Shehadeh's ongoing research into video games and Palestinian youth culture, *Like An Event In A Dream Dreamt By Another* — Rehearsal combines found-footage of Twitch streamers and custom game mods for Grand Theft Auto V (Rockstar Games, 2013). Unpacking video game mods as a form of contemporary archive — and therefore digitizing historic and contemporary architectural sites in addition to seemingly ubiquitous objects — the artwork proposes Los Santos, a virtual replica of Los Angeles, as the biblical “land of milk and honey”.

****Guerrilla 8-bit*, by Firas Shehadeh**

2013, digital, color 2 min.

“A translation and a definition of the guerrillas and the "Black September" group, which was formed from various libertarian fighters from Palestine and the rest of the world, unknown in numbers, fighting towards the liberation of Palestine and defending the refugees in camps, who also aimed towards exporting the Palestinian cause to the World. The group surfaced in the late 1960s ensuing the beginning of the Palestinian revolution, coinciding with the first phase of the 8-bit computer processor development, which also paved the way for the technological revolution all over the globe. Therefore, the work displays a simple definition to Palestinian guerrillas, using the 8-bit technology, in an attempt towards re-examining both events, the Palestinian revolution as well as the technological revolution.”

Bahaleen collective Zoom Presentation

Zaina Bseiso, curator is a film director, producer, and curator working primarily in documentary and experimental cinema. Her work explores the relationship between the materialities of place and issues of memory, surveillance, corporeality, and nationalism. She received her master's degree in film and video from the California Institute of the Arts. Bseiso is based in Los Angeles and was raised in Egypt by Palestinian parents. Her practice mainly traverses Egypt, Palestine, Cuba, Mexico, and the US. She is co-founder of Bahía Colectiva, a community of filmmakers that collaborate in practice and curation.

Bahaleen Collective

Today, we are Aya Bseiso, Khalid Odeh, and Noura Salem. We are a group of friends, sometimes colleagues, and often collaborators who are Palestinian artists, architects, surveyors, calligraphers, and researchers based in Jordan. Together, we are Bahaleen, a research group dedicated to exploring the emancipatory potentials of arts practice through a constellation of acts, projects, and productions. We aim to unearth and investigate the socio-political histories and colonized infrastructures of the region through a methodology and practice that offer new ways to experiment and activate research and knowledge production with a larger public.

For the past three years, Bahaleen has been engaged in several multi-year independent research projects that circle around notions of temporality, crossing borders, and impermanent-permanent infrastructures. Through a series of roaming artist residencies, we search for, name, and subvert narratives around water bodies, oil and gas pipelines, tourist projects, nature reserves, privatized property, and the commons through the practice of creating databases of projects, laws, and political agreements that have colonized, commercialized, privatized, and militarized our soil. All the while, looking at the performance of politics on sites of extractive economies. Our research methodologies are driven by an artistic process that utilizes participatory research frameworks, fieldwork, desk research, and documentation while experimenting with and pushing traditional research practices forward, with the aim of treating the research process as a generative space of production in and around art and academic institutions.

Our work as Bahaleen—during war and ethnic cleansing—continues, and it must. We have come to understand the necessity of our research, always seeking Palestine. We remain captivated by the viscosity of oil and the flow of water, their movement and disruption as they permeate and carve through our geography, transcending their chemical properties. At this moment, our body of research scrutinizing the settler-colonial infrastructures of oil and water and interpreting their movement to chart their cultural, geopolitical, and environmental significance has become a mapping of the infrastructures that feed a genocidal war machine. We find ourselves asking over and over again—what if—as we witness the potential and possibilities of their disruption.

To that end, and to keep this short, currently, we are working on mapping these infrastructures, towards an article that narrates our research and the conversations we have experienced and facilitated. Alongside allies in London, we are

working towards a global campaign calling for the disruption of oil and gas flow to Europe specifically looking at Algeria, Iraq and Libya.

For Further Reading:

After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives, by Edward W. Said, and Jean Mohr

Palestinian Cinema in the Days of Revolution, by Nadia Yaqub

“For an imperfect cinema”, by Julio García Espinosa, <https://tinyurl.com/yc5ae8tv>

“Towards a Third Cinema”, by Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino

The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses, by Laura U. Marks

George Jackson, a Black revolutionary writer, was incarcerated in California for more than a decade, until he was killed in 1971 by prison guards.

Handwritten copies of two poems from the collection, “Enemy of the Sun” and “I Defy” by Samih al-Qasim, were also found in Jackson’s cell and were published as a single poem under his name in the Black Panther Party newspaper.

A “mistake of radical kinship” - Jackson hand-copied these poems for the purpose of sharing as contraband among prisoners. They have since had a “long Black life” and continue to be circulated under Jackson’s name to this day.

Beyond solidarity - transcending the physical bodies, boundaries and histories

Enemy Of The Sun

**I may--if you wish--lose my livelihood
I may sell my shirt and bed,
I may work as a stone cutter,
A street sweeper, a porter.
I may clean your stores
Or rummage your garbage for food.**

**I may lay down hungry,
O enemy of the sun,
But
I shall not compromise
And to the last pulse in my veins
I shall resist.**

**You may take the last strip of my land,
Feed my youth to prison cells.**

**You may plunder my heritage.
You may burn my books, my poems,
Or feed my flesh to the dogs.**

**You may spread a web of terror
On the roofs of my village,
O enemy of the sun,
But
I shall not compromise
And to the last pulse in my veins
I shall resist.**

**You may put out the light in my eyes.
You may deprive me of my mother's kisses.**

You may curse my father, my people.

**You may distort my history,
You may deprive my children of a smile
And of life's necessities.**

You may fool my friends with a borrowed face.

You may build walls of hatred around me.

**You may glue my eyes to humiliations,
O enemy of the sun,
But
I shall not compromise
And to the last pulse in my veins
I shall resist.**

**O enemy of the sun
The decorations are raised at the port,
The ejaculations fill the air,
A glow in the hearts,
And in the horizon
A sail is seen
Challenging the wind
And the depths.**

**It is Field Marshall Dedan Kamathi (Mau Mau)
Returning home
From the sea of loss.**

**It is the return of the sun,
Of my exiled ones,
And for her sake and his,
I swear
I shall not compromise
And to the last pulse in my veins
I shall resist,**

**Resist--and resist.
-- Palestinian poet, Samih al-Qasim**

Los Angeles Filmforum - Coming soon:

Dec 8 - Raphael Montañez Ortiz: Chopping Up the Classics, at the UCLA Film & TV Archive

Dec 10 - Hayoun Kwon: Virtually Real, at 2220 Arts + Archives

Memberships available, \$40 Student \$75 Individual, \$125 Dual, or \$225 Silver Nitrate

Contact us at lafilmforum@gmail.com.

Find us online at <http://www.lafilmforum.org/>.

Become a fan on Facebook and follow us on Instagram @lafilmforum and Twitter @LosAngFilmforum