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Impossible Identification: Contemporary Art, Politics and the Palestinians in Israel

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Résumé

Quel est le sens donné à l'art par la minorité palestinienne d'Israël dans un contexte où l'État se définit uniquement en termes ethno-nationaux et religieux ? Les écrits sur l'art en contextes coloniaux et postcoloniaux ont tendance à considérer l'art comme une ressource de revendication identitaire face à une situation de domination. Autrement dit, l'art est souvent présenté comme un acte politique de reconnaissance à travers l'affirmation d'une contre-identité. Suite à un travail intensif de terrain ethnographique dans la région, cette recherche démontre que pour les artistes palestiniens en Israël, l'aspect politique de l'art ne vient pas de sa capacité à exprimer des revendications identitaires. À travers l'observation des pratiques et l'analyse des discours des artistes, elle remet en question la relation présumée entre l'art et l'identité. Plus concrètement, elle analyse les pratiques d'un groupe d'artistes issus d'une minorité nationale indigène dont le travail artistique constitue une interruption des régimes spatiotemporels d'identification. L'aspect politique du travail des artistes palestiniens en Israël s'exprime à travers un processus de *désidentification*, un refus de réduire l'art à des catégories identitaires dominantes. Les œuvres de ces artistes permettent l'expression d'une rupture esthétique, manifestant un « ayant lieu » politique qui se trouve entre l'art et le non-art. Il s'agit d'un espace qui permet la rupture de l'ordre sensible de la société israélienne à travers l'affirmation et la vérification d'une égalité qui existe déjà.

Mots clés :

Art visuel, Esthétique, Palestine, Israël, Politiques, Colonialisme, Haïfa, Désidentification

Abstract

This thesis explores what it means for the Palestinian indigenous minority in Israel to produce art in a setting that has simultaneously controlled their movements and excluded them from full citizenship. It takes on the question of how Palestinian artists face discrimination within a monolithic state structure that defines itself primarily along religious and ethno-national lines. Most writing about art in colonial and postcolonial contexts tends to see art as a resource for asserting repressed ethnic, racial and indigenous identities in the face of ongoing control and domination. Art, in other words, is considered a political act of recognition through the assertion of a counter identity. The central question of this thesis concerns what happens when artists contest the colonial conditions within which they live without having recourse to identity-based claims about equality and rights. Based on intensive ethnographic fieldwork in the region, this research demonstrates that for Palestinian artists the political aspect of art is not related to claims about identity and that the relationship between art and identity is not homologous. Specifically, it explores artistic processes within a context in which spatiotemporal regimes of identification are being disrupted by an indigenous national minority. It establishes that politics in the case of Palestinian artists in Israel is a form of disidentification that is articulated through the figure of the present absentee. The central tropes found within the works of these artists can be seen as disruptive aesthetic acts, a "taking place" of politics that is between art and non-art, and outside of given identities; that is, a scene for the rupture of the "sensible order" of Israeli society through the affirmation and verification of an already existing equality.

Keywords:

Visual Art, Aesthetics, Palestine, Israel, Politics, Colonialism, Haifa, Disidentification

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Maisa Azaizeh: Distancing

For some time already I had been asking Maisa about these four mysterious white lines in one of her paintings, what she intended by them, what they meant. I was genuinely obsessed: What were these white lines that vertically crossed and cut across the canvas? Were they bars of a prison? Empty and void spaces? Were they spaces of separation? These four crisp and sharp white lines, which connected with the white outer border, hovered mysteriously above the canvas, becoming the screen by which the spectator was forced to see the view of the town behind (Figure 1). Every time she would start to offer me an answer, she'd hesitate, saying, "I forgot, I'll need to think about it, I'll tell you next time."

She never told me the next time, or the time after that, or the time after. Instead, after the first few meetings, as I began to realize that she might again have me wait until the next time, I decided to take the initiative and prepare my own interpretation with the far-fetched hope she'd disagree and thereby be compelled to finally tell me. There we'd be, having another beer at Elika, and I'd ask, again, "So, did you figure out what you meant by the white lines?" "I don't know, I hadn't thought about it, what do you think?" she'd reply, turning the conversation back to me. "Well," I'd start, thinking what I was about to say was finally going to have her reveal to me the mystery, "they seem to be…" Obviously she'd agree with all my interpretations, often enthusiastically, sometimes with surprise followed by the exclamation, "Yes, I'd never thought of that, but yes." Finally, one

day, when I decided to press her more than usual, she told me that these lines were what I wanted them to be, that she'd prefer to know what I thought they were.

Was this just another instance of aloofness on the part of the artist in thinking they didn't need to explain their work, that the work of art is somehow self-explanatory?[1] This idea had initially crossed my mind, but after getting to know Maisa I realized that her unwillingness to get into discussions about her work had less to do with their being "art" than her own disposition regarding her status as an artist, or, in this case, her refusal to consider herself an artist, with all that entailed. When I first met Maisa in 2010, her work was being exhibited at Azad, a recently opened Arab restaurant and bar in the neighborhood where I was working.[2] The work on exhibit consisted of a handful of paintings and small sketches, one specific work a series of small sketches framed together (Figure 2). Creating an almost mosaic effect, what was most striking about these small sketches was the incompleteness and fragmentary quality of the images: headless bodies, legless torsos, unattached feet and hands, some bounded (Figure 2 detail). Despite their utter simplicity, I was moved; the spectator is never offered a full and complete body, not in any one sketch or as a whole. Neither is there a discernible face, someone recognizable with whom we might identify. When we met one evening at Azad to see a performance of Darwish poetry, only the second time I had met with her so far, I asked Maisa about the sketches, but she was reluctant to talk about them, telling me I

[1] Of all the artists with whom I met and talked during my fieldwork, Maisa was the only one not to
[2] Azad was an Arab owned restaurant and bar on Hillel Street, one street north of Massada. Within 6 months of opening it became the target of a right-wing Zionist Youth organization for refusing to serve a uniformed soldier. See Chapter 1 for a more thorough account of Massada neighbourhood as field site.

was free to tell her what I thought. I chalked this response up to her shyness and our having just met. But this wasn't the last time she was going to resist talking about her work.

Maisa and I would meet every few weeks for a beer and, after the perfunctory back and forth about the white lines, we'd talk about her work, what she'd been up to and when I might see something new. "Soon," she'd say. "You always say soon!" I quipped. "I don't really have a schedule for painting, it's not something I do regularly, only when I get an idea, or I have to paint, then I'll sit down and paint," she responded. During one of our last beers together I told her matter-of-factly that this is unfortunate because she's a very good artist. I was stunned by her response, which I had never heard before in all our conversations: "I don't want to be an artist." "What do you mean you don't want to be an artist?" I retorted. "I mean, I don't want to get into the whole game of producing and selling, it's not what I want. I'm happy doing what I do." This was all the more surprising, as not a few minutes earlier Ahmad Canaan, one of curators at the Jaffa Salon for Palestinian Art,[3] had sold two of her paintings that morning. "Isn't this good news, selling some of your work?" I asked? "Of course!" she replied, "but it's not what I want to do." This wasn't the first time Maisa's work had sold; the year before, when the Salon first opened and when Ahmad took a selection of works to other galleries in Israel and the Palestinian Territories, all of her works were bought within the opening days and she was asked to make more. So what did Maisa want?

[3] The Jaffa Salon for Palestinian Art opened in 2010 and was the only gallery in the Tel Aviv/Jaffa area dedicated solely to Palestinian art. I discuss the Salon further in Chapter 1.

On the weekends Maisa would return to her village, Dabburiya,[4] to teach the local children art. On a number of occasions she suggested I join her, but as I would have had to stay overnight, we agreed the circumstances were not amenable; as a man – a foreign man to boot – coming to her village would have prompted, well, talk and most likely a few misguided assumptions. Asking her why she returned to her village on weekends to teach art, Maisa said, "this is a very poor village and many children have never been exposed to art." "So what do you teach them? I inquired. "I give them basic technical lessons, drawing, painting, sculpture," she replied. I continued, "And since they have little exposure to art, do you also teach them a bit of art history?" "Yeah, I show them art from around the world, like Picasso, Van Gogh, Cezanne," she said. "Do you also show them Palestinian artists?" I asked. "Of course!" Maisa ardently responded, "They all know Asim Abu Shaqra, Abed Abedi Asad Azi, Ibrahim Nubani." Of course, Maisa's time in her village teaching art was voluntary, something she did for her village but also, as she put it, to "let kids know about art." This penchant for working with children and youth went beyond her village: she also worked with Baladna, a Haifa-based NGO for Arab youth[5] and also volunteered with the community in the Wadi Jemal, an area of Haifa near the sea where

[4] Dabburiya is an all-Muslim Palestinian town just east of Nazareth with a population of around 8500. Dabburiya recently made headlines in Israel due to its outdated and poorly funded educational infrastructure. See http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/in-arab-village-dabburiya-the-classroom-is-the-hallway-to-the-toilet-1.385659 (last accessed 18.03.12).

[5] Baladna works to "enable and strengthen the Arab youth's understanding and application of the principles of democracy and gender equality, pluralism and tolerance, youth empowerment and community building, as it is part of a growing trend towards building independent institutions and striving to equalize the Palestinian community's relationship with the State. In conjunction to this, Baladna engages the youth with discussions and debates concerning the history, grievances and culture of Palestinians in Israel, the occupied territories and Diaspora." See http://www.momken.org/ (last accessed 18.03.12).

together with members of the community she would coordinate various public art projects as part of the municipal effort to beautify the area.

The last time I saw Maisa, sitting again at Elika over a beer, she told me about a recent project she had been working on in the Wadi Jemal. For a number of years she said, she had been working with children from the area to paint various walls around the area, mural depicting the lives of the Wadi Jemal inhabitants. Her latest project, which the municipality had requested, was to paint a mural on the wall of the pedestrian overpass between the Wadi and the sea. Maisa completed a plan for the mural and submitted it to the members of the municipality council. "I got the idea to do a mural that would reflect the history of the Wadi, so I came up with a scene of a valley with camels, as Wadi Jemal means Valley of Camels." This seemed to me a good idea, nothing provocative, nothing overtly political. As it turned out, the municipality rejected outright Maisa's plan: "They said it was too political." As she then explained, the municipality of Wadi Jemal, which is Jewish, has been slowly erasing the Palestinian history of the area through the process of "Judaization."[6]

[6] The term "Judaization" was the term used by various Israeli governmental and non-governmental organizations over the last sixty plus years to refer to the process of establishing a Jewish demographic majority in Galilee area of Israel. The exact term used by the Jewish Agency, the Interior Ministry and the IDF was "Judaization of the Galilee" (*Yehud ha-Galil*). As Lustick puts it in his discussion of the Military Administration (1948-1967): "The 'Judaization of the Galilee' has been an ongoing program of the regime undertaken by various governmental and nongovernmental agencies" (Lustick 1980, 129). The term is now used to refer more broadly to any process of erasing the Palestinian presence inside Israel, from changing street names and names of neighborhoods to evictions and the destruction of homes. See also Rabinowitz (1997) for an ethnographic and historical account of this governmental program in Nazareth during the 1950s to present.

It would appear that to paint a mural of a valley of camels would to easily recall the Arabic name of the area and, more disconcertingly, visually portray the Palestinian historical presence in the area. “I was asked to come up with something less controversial and more visually appealing: sun, sea, children,” Maisa said. “And what did you come up with in the end?” I asked. “Well,” she said, “I proposed a mural looking from the village out to the sea, where there are lots of boats with people in them.” “And they were happy with that?” I replied. “Yes, they thought it was very beautiful,” she answered. “But?” I asked? I got a sense that Maisa hadn’t quite said everything, that the council of the municipality finding her proposal “beautiful” wasn’t the whole story. “Well,” she continued, “there are boats with people on them, but they are Palestinian refugees returning!” “Wow,” I declared. “And I’m guessing the council didn’t notice this detail?” “No, not all of them,” Maisa said proudly and with a grin: “Mostly they saw what they wanted to see: the sea, the sun and people. Some people noticed, mainly the Palestinians, and they liked it but didn’t tell anyone.” She knew her proposal for a mural of a valley of camels had a political edge to it, but, being fully aware of what was afoot in the Wadi Jemal, she wasn’t prepared to appease the council with something merely “visually appealing.” This was the first time I had ever seen Maisa be openly political in her work. When I first met her she told me: “My work isn’t political. I don’t have a political idea and then make an artwork. The politics comes out naturally, it is not something I think about when I paint, it’s there because it’s part of my world. Everything is political here for Palestinians.” Yet, with this mural for the Wadi Jemal, Maisa clearly chose to be explicitly

political. When I asked her directly about this change of approach, she simply confidently retorted, with a smile: “I didn’t have a choice.”

As was our custom by this point, I had again asked Maisa about the white lines that last day we met. While Maisa was still no more willing to offer an explanation, I was ready to push further given her revelations about her work at the Wadi Jemal: “So what is political about these lines?” I inquired. “What do you mean?” she asked. “Well, I suppose I was thinking that their ambiguity might be what makes them political. They seem to have multiple interpretations, even, at times, opposing interpretations. I suppose in this way they resist being read in any one way, sort of like the people on the boats. Is that what you are maybe hoping for?” Maisa was silent for a moment and then looked at me intensely, as if she was about to finally reveal the secret of the white lines: “I guess I want people to make their own interpretation; it is up to them to decide what they mean. I don’t know if this makes them political, but that’s how I see what I do.” At this point I couldn’t help but point out that this ambiguity, or incompleteness, was a quality I noticed in almost all of her artwork: “I see this same openness in your other work too. For instance, in the portrait of the young man with the red kuffiyeh (Figure 3): he’s presented in fuzzy black and white while the kuffiyeh is crisp and a vibrant red. Or the various incomplete bodies in a number of your sketches and paintings.” “Yes, I suppose that’s true. But really, it’s still up to you to interpret them. And I’ll be curious to hear what you write!”

Figure 1: Maisa Azaizeh, *Untitled*, 2010

Figure 2: Maisa Azaizeh, *Untitled*, 2009

Figure 2 (detail 1): Maisa Azaizeh, *Untitled*

Figure 2 (detail 2): Maisa Azaizeh, *Untitled*

Figure 3: Maisa Azaizeh, *Untitled*, 2008

Chapter 1: Art, Politics and the Palestinians in Israel

> "Art that tries to be political becomes cliché and boring." - Eyas Salman, filmmaker (personal communication)

Kull shi siyaasi: Everything is Political

Maisa and I agreed to meet each other at Elika in the early afternoon. It was early March 2010 and I had recently returned to Haifa after a few months away and was eager to start meeting with artists in the area. I had heard about Maisa from friends, everyone describing her as a highly talented up and coming young artist. I had seen a few of her works at a local Palestinian-owned restaurant the week before and was quite excited to meet her. When I arrived Maisa was already there, sitting by the window, a beer in hand. My friend Riyad introduced us and I sat down. Our conversation started slowly, Maisa being shy and this being one of my first interviews. I started by asking her about her art, where she had gone to school and what she had recently done, and, as the conversation progressed, she in turn asked me about my research. What interests me, I said, is the relationship between art and politics, specifically how Palestinian artists in Israel think their work is related to such issues as the struggle for equality.

My questions seemed to fascinate her. When I asked her if she considered her work to be political, she turned toward me and confidently responded: “My work isn’t political: I don’t have a political idea and then make an artwork. The politics comes out naturally, it is not something I think about when I paint, it’s there because it’s part of my world. Everything is political [Arabic: *Kull shi siyaasi*] here for Palestinians.” Her response intrigued me. “So, your art is political by the fact of being where you are, the situation within which you live and work? Because you’re Palestinian?” Maisa seemed to agree with what I said and repeated what she had already told me: “I never do a painting to make a political statement, but what comes out will be political.” I felt as if what she was telling me I should understand, it seemed uncomplicated, yet for some reason I was unable to appreciate what made her art political for her. I understood that it was not a matter of setting out to convey a pre-existing political message or statement; what I did not understand was how, if she had no intention of being political, in the end her art was nonetheless political. As I was to learn during my fieldwork, art is political because everything is political.

Maisa’s responses to my questions were important at this early stage of my research, and her way of expressing the relationship between art and politics in her work had a significant impact on the direction of my research to come. Over the coming months, as I met with other artists and asked the same question, I heard more or less similar versions of what Maisa told me. As Michael Halak put it: “I don’t do politics, it’s about art. I want people to appreciate my art for its aesthetic quality.” I was not

convinced: “What about the politics that I so clearly can see in your work?” I asked. “It’s there of course, you can’t avoid it. There will always be something political. I paint what I see.” When I sat with Durar Bacri in his studio in Tel Aviv he told me: “Of course, being Palestinian and living in this city [Tel Aviv] it [art] is going to be political.” Nardeen Srouji expressed the idea this way: “My art is personal, but here [Israel] that’s political.” Although each artist had a unique way of expressing this idea, each with their own inflection, all agreed that everything is political.

But what does it mean to say: “everything is political”? Whether in the Occupied Territories, the refugee camps, the diaspora or in Israel, it is an idea that many Palestinians agree with, young and old, men and women, Muslim and Christian. Yet, while *kull shi siaasi* is not an idiomatic expression or an adage, it is a commonly occurring idea that is communicated in different ways in various settings. Be it land or food, speaking or listening, the conflict of identities and histories, where you go or who your friends are, there is nothing that isn’t political. Yet, in some sense these things are not political as such, but rather become political. In other words, everything is not *always already* political; politics emerges when choosing to live in a specific town or city as the only Palestinian Arab, to speak Arabic on the train from Tel Aviv to Haifa on a Thursday afternoon,[7] to teach Palestinian culture and history to one’s students in direct defiance of the curriculum guidelines of the Israeli Ministry of Education as was the case with a primary school teacher I met during the Land Day March in 2009. These acts become

[7] Thursday afternoons are the start of the weekend in Israel, during which time soldiers crowd the buses and trains on their way home.

political because they take place in the context of a society that attempts to keep Palestinians unseen and unheard. Art, as a form of cultural production and expression, is a prime example of a space where everything becomes political. As Helga Tawil-Souri has recently argued, for Palestinians the very act of creating culture or art is a political act, in this case an act of resistance:.

> … given Palestinians' political condition, their cultural praxis – whether of the everyday, the institutional, the mundane, or the monumental – is an act of resistance, because it *de facto* attempts to reverse [Golda] Meir's proclamation that Palestinians do not exist; more complicated than that, it attempts to negate subjugation and silencing" (Tawil-Souri 2011, 5).

Given the prohibitions on all forms of Palestinian cultural expression between 1967 and 1991 in the West Bank and Gaza, Tawil-Souri notes that any effort to counter these prohibitions is impossible to read outside of politics. She is referring here to Edward Saïd's "permission to narrate," for Palestinians to tell their story in the face of their silencing and erasure. Indeed, Tawil-Souri (2011, 11) goes on to note that cultural expression is "not only about commemoration of the Nakba, but the desire to be visible, to be heard, and to be documented". In this sense, what Maisa appeared to be saying is that her work is naturally going to be political because it is an act of appearing, of being heard and seen.

For Tawil-Souri and others (see Davis 2006, 4), cultural production, whether visual art, music, cinema, or literature, is a form of political resistance in so far as it allows for the expression of a Palestinian identity that has been denied, subjugated and silenced through the policies of the Israeli state. Indeed, across these various forms of cultural

expression one often finds assertions of Palestinian identity that counters the Zionist narrative of "a land without a people for a people with a land." As Maisa's work made increasingly obvious and as this thesis will explore, however, there was no identity being asserted, there was no self-realization. To be sure, none from this younger generation of artists with whom I worked seemed to be creating art in order to assert an identity. Rather, as I will argue, each of them was undoing identity; their works serving as acts of what Jacques Rancière calls disidentification. Through looking at the work of the artists who participated in my research, talking with them, and telling them what I saw, it became apparent that the desire to be visible and to be heard was far more complex and subversive than the mere expression of a Palestinian identity. As I learned from these artists, to be political meant to be visible and audible in ways that disrupted the world in which they lived and worked. Thus their art can be seen as acts of politics not in the sense of resistance or identity, but primarily as acts of presence.[8]

Art and Politics in the Colony

This thesis is about what it means for the Palestinian indigenous minority in Israel to produce art in a colonial setting that has simultaneously controlled them and excluded them. It takes on the question of how Palestinians face discrimination and marginalization within a state that defines itself along religious and ethno-national lines

[8] Johannes Fabian has written extensively on the notion of presence (1991). I have been influenced by his writing on this topic, but also by his work on popular painting and memory (1996).

without making sweeping claims in the name of identity. Most writing about art in colonial and postcolonial contexts tends to see art as a resource for asserting repressed ethnic, racial and indigenous identities in the face of control and domination. Art, in other words, is a political act of self-realization through the assertion of a particular (counter) identity. This approach largely follows thinking across art history, art criticism and anthropology since the 1980s, which assert that with the globalization of contemporary art there has been an unprecedented rise of identity related issues across the art world. Relying on the modernist belief in the "universal language" of Western art, colonial and postcolonial artists, the argument goes, are afforded a medium within which to demand recognition of their identity, be it cultural, ethnic, racial, gender or religious. The central question of the present thesis concerns what happens when artists contest the colonial conditions within which they live and work but do not demand recognition on the basis of identity.

More specifically, it explores artistic processes within a context in which spatiotemporal regimes of identification are being disrupted by an indigenous national minority. With the creation of the Israeli state in 1948 a far-reaching apparatus of control and regulation was put into place for the indigenous Palestinian population that remained within its borders. By limiting Palestinians' movements and their ability to organize, this apparatus of control had significant impact on social mobility and political cohesion among Palestinians. A key component of this apparatus was a series of policies that most prominently included a breaking down and dividing of the Palestinian population along ethnic and religious lines. This was further coupled with a process of de-

Palestinianization that separated and divided Palestinians in Israel from the Trans-Jordan, Gaza and refugees in neighboring Arab countries. I argue that this apparatus of control, which exists until this day, is fundamentally a regime of identification that is rooted in space and time.[9] The space of the state of Israel, according to Zionist ideology, is a Jewish space that upon its redemption will suture the temporal rupture of Jews with the biblical land of Israel. Thus, the containment and displacement of the Palestinians in Israel spatially, through access to land, resources and mobility, is also a temporal dislocation, their removal from time. It is against this spatio-temporal displacement that the struggle for equality among Palestinians in Israel has been waged since 1948.

The analysis presented in this research takes its starting point from the spatiotemporal organization of Israeli society, how it is, following Jacques Rancière, a specific sensible configuration, that is, a distribution of what can be said, heard, thought, and done. I argue that Palestinian artists in Israel recognize this sensible order as something that is configured to keep Palestinians out of place and out of time, and they seek to disrupt and reconfigure it. Yet, given the regime of identification this sensible order sustains, Palestinian contemporary artists are also aware that the assertion of identity and the demand for its recognition is always in danger of being recuperated and neutralized, a point made to me on numerous occasions by the artists who participated in my research. Thus, the analysis presented here sets out to show how these Palestinian

[9] Both Neve Gordon (2008) and Eyal Weizman (2007) offer important studies on the infrastructure of control and its spatial dynamics in the Occupied Territories since 1967. Gordon in particular notes the historical connection between these infrastructures of control in the Occupied Territories and their development in Israel under the Military Administration prior to 1967, a glaring omission in Weizman.

artists in Israel are engaged in a form of politics as disidentification even though they resist the notion of "political art". Instead, I would argue, Palestinian art in Israel can be seen as a "taking place" of politics; that is, a scene for the rupture of the spatio-temporal organization of Israeli society and public culture.

Because of this insistence that their art is neither about identity nor about politics, I have found the work of philosopher Jacques Rancière particularly helpful in developing the core arguments of this thesis. Coupled with careful and detailed ethnographic fieldwork with artists and others in the Palestinian community in Israel, this theoretical framework has been especially productive in allowing me to develop how art is not invariably tied to identity politics. Importantly, Rancière's work on aesthetics and politics was not unknown to some of the artists with whom I worked, or to other cultural workers, such as curators. In this sense, my fieldwork with Palestinian artists was in many ways a series of discussions about our mutual interest in certain ideas or philosophical perspectives, collaborative in the sense of "co-philosophers" as set out by Paul Radin (see Lassiter 2005). Together with these artists, the theoretical framework I set out below allows for understanding the "taking place" of the politics of art outside of the conventional art as identity paradigm.

The ethnographic material in this research challenges the notion of a particular relationship between art and politics, one that remains largely unexamined in the contemporary literature on the anthropology of art, namely, the homologous relationship between art and identity. Thus, a major thrust of this thesis is to critically explore the

limits of this relationship through an ethnography of art and artists who, living in a colonial context and struggling for equality, refuse any such identification. As such the thesis is itself an attempt to work with and alongside these artists in their politics. The literature on the relationship between art and anthropology has underlined how the two practices are both concerned with the examination of culture in contemporary life (Marcus and Myers 1995). This literature demonstrates how both are practices of identity making, each "tracking, representing, and performing the effects of difference" (Marcus and Myers 1995, 1). This affinity between art and anthropology, in other words, points to a homologous relationship between art and identity. Yet, if this homologous relationship between art and identity is applicable in other cases, for Palestinian artists in Israel a different approach is necessary.

The point of departure for this thesis, then, is how Palestinian artists living in Israel are engaging a politics without having recourse to notions of identity. My analysis proceeds by considering the figure of the "present absentee," a legal category created by the Israeli state in the 1950s to designate those Palestinian Arabs remaining within the newly established state but not on their property. The problems facing the present absentees in Israel, often neglected in discussions of the larger refugee question, became a topic of debate throughout the 1990s, including the formation of local NGOs who became involved in the expression of various forms of public outcry (Masalha 2005). Although the present absentee has gained a visibility in Palestinian and Israeli political discourse over the last 20 years, when a Palestinian friend, who is not a present absentee,

announced one night, in English, that "we are all present absentees," I was both surprised and intrigued. In this seemingly simple statement, which was echoed and amplified by many of the people with whom I worked, an impossible identification was made patent. Palestinians in Israel who were not present absentees had aligned themselves with a minority within a minority, with those whom the state had deemed out of place and out of time. The paradox within my friend's announcement was a political gesture in so far as in aligning the struggle of all Palestinians in Israel with the present absentees it overturned the regime of identification within this colonial category, disidentifying both those it was meant to contain and those who aligned with it. For my research, I considered this to be a breakthrough, the disclosure of a figure by which to frame the work of artists whose work refused any form of identification, and thus a way of thinking the politics of art without identity.

Palestinian Art in Israel, Brief History[10]

The emergence of Palestinian art within Israel is a relatively recent phenomena, beginning at the end of the Military Administration in 1967. With the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948 the Palestinians in Israel were put under a Military Administration that forcibly contained their movements and controlled their activities. The goal of this containment was also to restrict expression, and artistic expression was no exception. It

[10] For a general history of Palestinian art see Ankori (2006), Boullata (2009) and Shammut (1989). Of these, Boullata's is considered the most comprehensive, though he gives very little attention to Palestinian art in Israel.

also served to undermine, even deny, Palestinian history and belonging, such that until the 1990s Palestinian artists were defined as “Arab Israeli” artists. Thus, it was not until the early 1970s that Palestinians in Israel began to enroll in art schools in Israel and abroad.

These early years were quite difficult for Palestinian artists, the institutions within which they found themselves marked by a Zionist framework whose visual culture was hostile to (or at least excluded) Palestinian history and presence. Working within a colonial context has meant not only that the language of instruction is in Hebrew, and thus the linguistic setting for the development of creative expression limited, but also the visual field available to the artist is also accordingly arranged and distributed:

> This forcible injection of the Jewish into the Palestinian has had a clear place within the Zionist visual arts movement since its inception. Everything was turned into part of the artificial Jewish inheritance, which transformed all aspects of the Palestinian environment – houses and faces, clothing and customs, light and sea, shepherd and olive, hills and cacti – into part of a Zionist legacy, in a conscious and concerted intellectual effort. This is the legacy that the student of the arts imbibes from the Israeli academies. Naturally, Arab Palestinian artists must contend with this school of thought (Shehada 2012, 2).

The place and land within which the Palestinian lives is transformed. In this manner the Palestinian is not simply “other” but, following Zionist logic of waiting for the arrival of a Jewish Messiah, a figure that is out of place and out of time, having passed through 2000 years of history without leaving any footprint. As Tal Ben-Zvi (2009, n. p.), the director of Bezalel Academy, notes:

> This built-in negation is intertwined and assimilated into the inner logic of the Israeli art field, which was shaped as part of the broader logic of the developing Israeli nation-culture from the establishment of the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts to the present.

In contrast to the Palestinian artist in the Occupied Territories or refugee camps or diaspora, the Palestinian artist in Israel is embroiled in a state of collusion with Zionist thought. It is a relationship of dependence and attachment in which the colonized is forced to live side-by-side with the colonizer, and forced to accept the colonial regime (Nashif 2012). The place of Palestine, from the land to its history, has been redistributed according to a Zionist legacy such that the very body of the Palestinian in Israel, its spatial-temporal existence, is structurally predetermined. Contemporary Palestinian artists in Israel, despite this impossible complicity, aim to free themselves from this legacy.

For those artists with whom I worked, this collusion was recurring theme throughout our conversations. As Durar explained to me, it was a matter of accepting his exclusion as one of the only Palestinian Arab students during his years at Bezalel.[11] Interestingly, on the other hand he countered this by telling the story of how he was excluded from the Palestinian art scene in Ramallah because of the fact that he was a Palestinian from Israel.[12] Michael Halak told the story of how half of the students, all of whom were Jewish, enrolled in his course in basic art techniques at the University of Haifa decided to abandon the course upon finding out he was an "Arab." This problem of

[11] The Bezalel Academy, located in Jerusalem, is considered the most important and prestigious art school in Israel. Established in 1906 the aim of the school was to foster a national style of art using Biblical and Zionist themes. See Manor (2001).
[12] See chapter 4.

collusion and complicity also split many artists when it came to seeking funding, with some refusing any money from the Israeli state and others arguing that, as part of the society, they have a right to these funds as much as any Jewish Israeli.[13]

The lack of financial support for Palestinian art is felt widely across the nearly 180 Palestinian cultural associations in Israel. From 2010 to 2012 the Ministry of Culture has allotted less than 2% of the annual budget to the Palestinian community (Zaher, personal communication). Funding is further regulated by local councils who decide which of those cultural associations are to receive funding. As Jamal Hasan, the director of Ibda'a (The Arab Association for Plastic Arts) in Kufir Yasif and one of first cultural associations with an educational and gallery space, explained to me, the increasing cuts in funding have put most of the Palestinian cultural associations in Israel on the verge of collapse. It is therefore not difficult to imagine that the Palestinian artistic community is deeply fragmented, with many artists working in isolation and little coordination between associations and galleries. In 2010 there was a brief moment of hope that a space for Palestinian art in Israel had arrived to finally bring together artists and public.

Through the work of Ahmad Canaan, a visual artist from Tamra, and Amir Neuman Ahuvia, an entrepreneur and social activist, in 2010 the Jaffa Salon of Palestinian Art was set up in the Jaffa port. With Canaan as curator, the salon opened in May 2010 to large

[13] One of the artists I had hoped to include in this study was Ahlam Shibli. Ahlam Shibli, a Palestinian of Bedouin descent, is an internationally recognized art photographer who lives in Haifa. In 2003 she was awarded the prestigious Gottesdiener Israeli Art Prize. When I contacted her in 2010 she firmly refused my invitation to meet on the grounds that my research focused on artists that are Palestinian citizens of Israel. In her reply she stated: "I am from Palestine and that doesn't fit with your research."

crowds and was generally considered to be a great success. The salon was the first gallery space dedicated to Palestinian art in Israel, to encourage and exhibit young and upcoming artists and to foster sales of works. In 2011 Canaan and Neuman, along with the support of Serge Tiroche, a prominent art dealer in Tel Aviv, established an annual prize for the best Palestinian artist, with the winner receiving 20,000 NIS prize and an exhibition.[14] For reasons unknown, the salon closed its doors in the fall of 2011, with Ahmad Canaan also closing his gallery in Tamra soon thereafter.

Today the Palestinian art scene in Israel remains as fragmented as ever. As several artists told me, exhibition opportunities are rare and when the opportunity does arise it is often as part of group shows with Jewish Israeli artists. These exhibits usually have a distinctly political tone to them with the Palestinian artist included as a token representative (a "pet Arab"), a demonstration of Israel's democratic character (see Barsky 2011). Therefore, when it comes to defining Palestinian artists in these exhibits, whether in Israel or internationally, the colonial regime of identification is invoked in clear and uncertain terms. It is the contestation of this regime of identification through their art practices and works that this thesis will discuss.

[14] Rumors surrounding the closure of the Salon included mismanagement of funds and a dwindling willingness of established artists to participate. A few artists mentioned to me their decision to withdraw from the Salon due to Ahmad Canaan's undervaluing of their works, but, more significantly, the choice to create an award for a Palestinian artist which would have an exhibition of their work take place in a confiscated refugee property, where the gallery of Serge Tiroche, ST-ART, is located.

Evolution of the Research Project

This project started with an inquiry into the state of cultural rights among the Palestinians in Israel. In 2009 I left for the field[15] with the idea that the struggle for Palestinians in Israel concerned two core demands: equality and cultural autonomy. My particular interest was in how cultural rights were being formulated and practiced within Palestinian NGOs in Israel and their impact on the demand for equality.[16] My questions focused on how individuals involved in the work of NGOs defined culture and in what way these definitions were being translated in the practices of local organizations and communities.

The core demands of equality and autonomy were articulated in the 1990s by Azmi Bishara, the founder of Balad (or the National Democratic Assembly), one of the most prominent Palestinian political parties in Israel [Arabic: *al-Tajamu al-Watani al-Ademucrati*).[17] The question of equality is a demand that stems back to 1948 and the granting of citizenship to those Palestinians remaining within the Israeli state. For the most part this citizenship was largely formal: the right to vote and to stand for election. In

[15] Fieldwork was carried out for 15 months between February 2009 and June 2011.

[16] Palestinian Israeli NGOs are the key players in the civil and political demands of Palestinians in Israel and have close relationships with most of the Palestinian political parties in Israel, both practically and ideologically. As of 2005 there were over 700 registered local Palestinian NGOs in Israel. See Payes (2005).

[17] In 2007 Azmi Bishara went into exile after being accused of treason. Today any party or party member that openly challenges the definition of Israel as a Jewish state is subject to being banned from the ballot list, both individually and/or as a party. Over the years, numerous Palestinian political parties have been removed by the Elections Committee only to be reinstated by the Israeli High Court. The most recent instance was the ban of Haneen Zuabi of the Balad party in December 2012, which the Israeli High Court overturned in a unanimous ruling on 30 December 2012: http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/12/30/257826.html (last accessed 30 December 2012).

most circumstances, Palestinians in Israel were excluded from social and political spheres through a system of widespread discrimination and segregation. The demand for equality that Bishara put forward goes further by calling on Israel to be a "state for all its citizens," where each and every citizen is guaranteed the same rights, regardless of religion or ethnicity. Bishara also demanded the recognition of Palestinians in Israel as a national and cultural minority with distinct collective rights. These rights include the Palestinian community in Israel to manage its cultural activities independently. For Bishara, the demand for cultural autonomy is meant to reinforce the struggle against colonization in an active way (Bishara 1993). Importantly, the idea of cultural autonomy for Bishara is to be buttressed by civic and political equality, and is thus a goal that follows rather than precedes or coincides with the attainment of full equality.

My first four months of fieldwork were devoted to working with members of Adalah (English: Justice), a Haifa-based legal NGO.[18] As one of the most prominent Palestinian NGOs in Israel, Adalah's work covers a broad range of legal and political issues, which also include questions of cultural rights for the Palestinian minority. In my meetings and interviews with the director and other lawyers, my queries about the state of cultural rights were met with a resounding consensus: Following Azmi Bishara, all agreed that cultural rights had to wait, that putting them ahead of more basic civic and

[18] In addition to my work at Adalah, this period was also focused on language training and getting to know Palestinians in the Masada neighborhood where I was living. These daily conversations with Palestinians in the area were important in my coming to understand the issues facing them, from their relationships with Jewish Israelis, their family villages, other Palestinians to political parties and experiences of discrimination. This *préterrain* was highly formative in understanding the issues and struggles facing the Palestinians in Israel, not to mention the obstacles they faced in their everyday lives.

political rights would not only jeopardize the latter, but more importantly might run the risk of ghettoizing Palestinians in Israel. While I understood their arguments and concerns, an article by the Palestinian political scientist Amal Jamal (2008) a year earlier had argued that despite these concerns a "default cultural autonomy" was in place on the ground. That is, a pre-existing cultural autonomy was forming outside of the work of NGOs and Palestinian political parties in Israel. To this they agreed, there was cultural activity among the Palestinian community, but they had little to add in terms of what this activity might have to contribute to the struggle for equality or where these cultural producers might be.

Over the last couple months of this initial stage of research, with my initial project in disarray, I was curious where this cultural activity was taking place, who these cultural producers might be and what they were doing. I was also unsatisfied with the idea that cultural activity had nothing to contribute to the demand for equality among the Palestinians in Israel. As I started asking around among friends in Haifa and Nazareth about this cultural activity, I discovered that the neighborhood in which I was living in Haifa was the central "hub" for Palestinian artists in Israel. This little neighborhood of cafés (all life in the area circulated around the cafés) had Palestinian writers, actors, painters, filmmakers, musicians, as well as left-wing journalists, academics and everyday philosophers. Having spent much of my time in the neighborhood and its cafés, I had been aware of these artists in the area, most notably Juliano Mer-Khamis and Salah Bacri, but I had little knowledge of how it was a general gathering point for aspiring Palestinian

artists from villages and towns across the north of Israel. With the University of Haifa nearby, apartments that were generally inexpensive and a bohemian lifestyle many Palestinians did not have in their villages, the area attracted Palestinians from all over the country. As I soon discovered, there was a vibrant and engaging scene of Palestinian cultural production.

Masada Street: The “Field”

As one walks down Masada Street in Haifa it quickly becomes apparent that the neighborhood is not in any way characteristic of Haifa or anywhere else in Israel. As my friend Bilal once put it, rather matter of factly: “Masada is not Haifa.” In a stretch of no more than 100 meters are four cafés, multiple small boutiques and an atypical group of residents. Walking on the north side of the street from east to west, from HaShalom toward Balfour Street, the first thing one notices is an increase in graffiti on the fronts and sides of the buildings along the street. Within a few meters is the Bardo Store, a small urban underground boutique for skate, graffiti and urban fashion. Proceeding down the street, there is a used bookstore (principally in Hebrew with a few English titles), a hairdresser, and a number of other miscellaneous shops and boutiques. Just after these shops a large trunk of a tree stretches horizontally a couple meters above the sidewalk before returning to a vertical ascent.

Upon passing under the hulking trunk is the first café on the street, Elika. A Palestinian owned café, Elika calls itself an art bar café, with monthly movie nights showing local Palestinian filmmakers, a small gallery space within the café and a popular hangout for many Palestinians, from writers, actors, musicians, artists to others. The owner is Waheed, a Druze who has spent time in jail for refusing to serve in the military, a predicament for many Druze men since 1948 who have been forced to serve (see Kanaaneh 2009). A few meters further down the street is Zoom Café, a relatively new place that occupies the same space as Café Katan, the first café in Masada that opened in the mid-2000s. Across the street is Pazel Coffee, a Jewish only café and the only one on the southern side of the street. About 50 meters further down the street is Café Masada, a Jewish owned café. The owner, Eran, runs a place where Palestinians and Jews mix freely and patrons engaging in anti-Palestinian speech are systematically asked to leave.

For the Israeli media and visitors to the area, Masada is a symbol of co-existence, of Arabs and Jews living and socializing together and more. Outside of the artificial co-existence communities in Israel, such as Wadi Salaam and Givat Haviva,[19] the Masada neighborhood is not the result of any formal initiative or planning and thus is totally unique. For many Palestinians in the neighborhood it is a place outside of the eyes of their village where they can do as they wish. But this seemingly peaceful oasis of co-existence

[19] While these two are established "co-existence" communities, co-existence in Israel is a loaded and contentious idea. For many Jewish Israelis on the left it is an idea espoused and rewarded when visible, as in the case of Masada Street and the throng of journalists I witnessed in 2009, including one contacting me for an interview about a blog piece I wrote about the area at the time. For Palestinians the idea of "co-existence" is a term of amusement and ridicule. See http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/the-amusing-term-coexistence-1.256042 (coincidentally, the author lives in the Masada neighborhood).

turned out to be no more than an illusion. When Azad, a nearby Palestinian owned restaurant refused to allow uniformed soldiers into their restaurant, cleavages erupted and lines were redrawn. Not surprisingly, and as I found out first hand, the cafés were the most visible barometers of these events: Elika became the Palestinian café and Café Masada becoming the Jewish café.

Fieldwork

When I returned to Haifa in the winter of 2010 I asked my friend Riyad to introduce to me artists in the area, particularly contemporary artists working in painting, installation, photography and video. Within a day of my being back in Haifa I was sitting at a table with Nardeen Srouji, an artist from Nazareth now living in Haifa. A week later I was scheming with Riyad to "accidentally" run into Sharif Waked, an internationally renowned artist who also lived in the area, but who was generally reluctant to give interviews about his work. Over the coming weeks, I met numerous artists, both up and coming as well as more senior and well established in their fields. I was visiting galleries and studios, discussing with friends the Palestinian art scene, and slowly starting to prepare for more formal interviews in the coming weeks. I also met cultural workers, those people running the cultural organizations, the curators, the gallery owners and, when possible, the buyers of art.

My research focused on the practices and works of five Palestinian artists living and working in Israel. They were chosen with some concern for physical location, gender and the content of their work. My first aim was to consider those artists living and working in Haifa, as part of this small community of Palestinian artists. This decision was based on being able to spend time with these artists both in and out of their studios, to meet for dinners, drinks and other people, and be part of their art worlds.[20] With the exception of Durar Bacri, all of the artists I worked with live and work in Haifa, though each also retains a strong tie to their familial villages. In the case of Michael Halak, from Fassouta (a Christian village near the border with Lebanon), and now living in Haifa, I was very interested to get to know him and his work as he was the only one of the five artists who worked in the hyperrealist genre of painting. He was the first Palestinian contemporary artist to work in this style, which gave his work a quality that, as he put it, "made the real more real." As the sole non-Haifa resident, Durar Bacri was pointed out to me by friends from his home town, Akka, just across the bay from Haifa. While Durar lives and works in Tel Aviv, his Akka roots are never far from hand in his practice and work. Durar's work also stood out for his outstanding talent, a painter's painter if you will. As the first artist I met, Nardeen Srouji (a Christian originally from Nazareth) gave me a privileged access to Palestinian art world, from other artists to curators and galleries. More importantly, however, her work had a personal dimension that underscored a sensibility to issues that

[20] When I asked a few of the artists if they would prefer I not use their real name in the research, they insisted that I must use their real names. I then consulted with the other artists who likewise agreed. This is significant as it is again a demonstration of their desire to seen and heard: to be present.

seemed to go unaddressed by male artists. Similarly, Maisa, from Dabborya (a Muslim village east of Nazareth), and now living and working in Haifa, revealed a point of view on Palestinian society that was deeply personal, an attentiveness to the body and its surroundings. Finally, Sharif Waked, whose family are refugees (present absentees) from the Muslim village of Saffuriyya and who now lives and works in Haifa, is an internationally recognized artist whose video work instantly entrances the spectator. Given the international stature of Sharif's work, his participation in the research allowed me to see how the issues within the works of contemporary Palestinian artists in general were being addressed by an artist working in the "global art world."[21]

Undoubtedly a key factor in choosing these five artists was the impression their work made upon me. Well before I had come to understand their works and the issues and questions they were addressing, something within each of their works kept me wanting to know more. And even though there was considerable divergence in the styles and subjects, there was an affinity between them that I felt but could not explain. If this type of reasoning seems abstract and enigmatic, when approaching an art object it is precisely this sensibility that must be reckoned with. Following Davide Panagia (2009, 2),

[21] Over the period of my fieldwork I met with other artists, some less often than others, but for various reasons was unable to include them in the thesis. Most notably was Mahmoud Kaiss, a young artist at the University of Haifa from Nahef, and a student of Michael. I wanted to include Mahmoud in my research but our schedules and language barriers ultimately proved insurmountable. Mahmoud was more at ease discussing his work in Hebrew (which I did not know) than Arabic and he did not speak English. There was also Rana Bishara from Tarshiha and now living and working in Beit Jala outside of Bethlehem. Rana and I talked often, meeting a few times in Haifa, but were unable to coordinate my visiting her at her home. And there was Raafat Hattab, a multimedia queer artist living and working in Tel Aviv, and originally from Jaffa. With Rafaat it was mainly due to his overbooked schedule that we were only able to meet a couple times during my fieldwork.

what I felt was a sensation that interrupted my sensibilities, those conventional ways of seeing the world; an experience of what he calls disarticulation or disfiguration as collective political moments.

My aim for this research was not only to speak with artists and view their work, but to meet them in their studios and discuss their art in the context of its production to the extent that this would be possible. I wanted to also see and understand the world in which they lived and worked. Recalling Howard Becker's (1982) "art worlds", this approach included meeting and talking with non-artists an other types of artists such as musicians, filmmakers, actors, writers. It also included interactions outside of the world of art per se, from participating in public talks, political events and demonstrations to joining friends with their families for dinners and drinks, birthdays and weddings. These "art worlds" were invaluable to my learning and understanding the worlds within which contemporary Palestinian artists in Israel live and work.

My work with artists in this project included a series of meetings over several months, with some constraints depending on schedules. Many of these meetings began as conversations, general discussions about them, their work, their influences, as well as broader issues of politics and society. As our meetings progressed, I developed a series of questions on the basis of these conversations that would be used in a more systematic fashion with each of the artists, following a semi-structured interview format. This approach made it possible to compare their individual experiences and responses. The questions developed were broad in nature, mainly having to do with the artists'

perceptions of the relation between art and politics, the role of the Palestinian artists in Israel, perceptions of their profession and work by family, Palestinian and Jewish society and audiences. From this starting point I was able to elaborate a more focused series of questions for each artist that were based on the responses of the earlier broader questions.[22] These questions focused on particular aspects of their work, their backgrounds and experiences, and delved further into their ideas about art, society and politics. Over the last period of my fieldwork in meetings with the artists I reverted to a less formal structure, returning to a conversational approach. This allowed breathing space and let our discussions become more personal while at the same time allowing me to share with them my impressions and interpretations of their work, conceptual issues (e.g., Rancière) and the other artists with whom I was working. In some cases these more in-depth conversations about other artists led them to establish contact with one other. This response was unexpected but very welcome, especially in the context of an artistic community that is in many ways a deeply fragmented, as I will discuss below.

One of the aspects that came out most clearly in my interactions with artists, though perhaps less so with curators and other cultural workers, was the unrelenting rejection of identity as a means to understanding and interpreting their practice and work. If some of the artists were less vocal about it, others, such as Sharif Waked, were confrontational, telling me explicitly to stop bothering with thinking of his practice and work in terms of identity. For Michael Halak the reproach was subtler, him sending me the

[22] This technique is similar to what Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan (2008), referring to the work of Glaser and Strauss on "grounded theory," discusses as the iterative function of qualitative research.

text for a show of his work at the Tel Aviv Museum in which the curator struggles with the problem of linking his work to identity. This was a point I appreciated early on in my fieldwork and it forced me to rethink not only the relationship between art and identity, but art and politics as well. It was a point underlined in a recent short text by Husni al-Khatib Shehada, a Palestinian art historian at Bezalel Academy for Arts and Design in Israel. In his text Shehada (2012, 2-3) discusses the world of Palestinian artists in Israel today, a world that mirrors developments in the institutions of the global art world:

> There is no doubt that admittance to these institutes requires students to probe pain within themselves and to search for a lost and marginalized cultural identity, in order to reconcile it with the prevailing political "wisdom": the United States is the ultimate location for self-expression by the artist, in a place of freedom and democracy. This educational approach is also dominant in Israel, as a "democratic" entity that allows Palestinian artists to search for themselves, for their identities and personalities. In most cases, what befalls the Palestinian artist in Israel is what befalls him or her in the United States, since visual expression necessarily requires a negative view of the student's background. He must therefore confront the past with courage and present this negative image in its entirety; if he does not, then he is not being "true to himself".

Here Shehada is attacking the regime of identification that underlies the global (Western) art world, pointing to its demand that one must speak in terms of identity to pass into its ranks and that this identity must be rendered as a matter of individual experience or self-actualization. Shehada's words on this matter meant a great deal to the artists with whom I worked, and is an issue to which I will return to chapter 3.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters, with five extended descriptions about the different artists included in the research, interspersed between the chapters as a series of interludes. These interludes are based on my interviews and conversations with each of the artists, and are oriented toward providing a background to their work as well as a view of the production of knowledge itself. The structure of the chapters is as follows: chapter two gives the historical background of the social and political conditions of the Palestinian community in Israel and the spatiotemporal world within which they live; chapter three opens to a discussion of the relationship of art and anthropology around the issues of identity, space and place; chapter four develops the theoretical framework of the thesis, examining the notion of politics followed by the relationship of art and politics; chapter five is an analysis of the findings of my research with a specific focus and analysis of the works of the artists.

Chapter two is not a historical account of the Palestinians in Israel. It is not, in other words, a chronological narrative of events, political parties, social mores, or cultural customs. Instead, my aim in this second chapter is to provide an overview of the sensible world within which Palestinian in Israel live. I argue that this world is configured as a particular spatiotemporal order following the Zionist ideology of Israel as a Jewish state. It is a configuration where the Palestinians inside this state are contained and controlled to maintain this order.

Chapter three considers the claim that culture is the shared object of anthropology and contemporary art by exploring the spatial moorings underlying the idea of culture as a "site" of difference and contestation. I argue that this spatial conception of culture leads to an understanding of anthropology and art as practices of place making. In the final part of the chapter, I look to anthropology and art as practices of place making and ask whether the continued adherence to culture as the site of identity/difference has not led to an over-emphasis on the question of identity politics.

Chapter four lays out the theoretical framework of the thesis following the writings of Jacques Rancière. The first section is focused on the notion of politics as a practice of the disruption of the distribution of the sensible [*le partage du sensible*], or configuration of what is visible, sayable, audible, doable. At the heart of this disruption is a verification of equality that has been twisted by the sensible order, an equality of anyone with everyone. The second section turns to Rancière's conception of political subjectivation as the act of politics in which a political subject takes place. In the third part I then examine how this notion of politics is positioned in his understanding of art through the idea of aesthetic equality.

Chapter five delves further into the notion of the present absentee as a polemical and political gesture, how this colonial category is being appropriated by Palestinian artists in Israel as a figure of political subjectivity, an impossible identification that ruptures the sensible order. The next section concentrates on a series of tropes within art works from the artists as instances of this alignment with the figure of the present

absentee (these tropes are heuristic devices and therefore should not be read as reducing the artists and their works to specific motifs). I then consider how these sensible disruptions can be seen as the *taking place of politics*, that is, how they are stagings for the rupture, suspension and interruption of the spatial and temporary configuration of Israeli society. In the final chapter I conclude by returning to the idea of the appropriation of the category of the present absentee as an act of political subjectivation in which an "impossible identification" becomes the condition for reimagining the common and being-in-common.

The conclusion returns to the questions that were set out at the beginning of the present chapter regarding the role of cultural production in the struggle for equality among the Palestinians in Israel. It also highlights a number of threads not addressed in this project as suggestions for future research.

Durar Bacri: Interruption

"If you want to meet artists, you must meet Durar!" exclaimed my friend Jamal, "he's important and a really good artist." "What does he do," I asked? "Painting, video, photography, installation?" "He's a painter, a very good one," Jamal replied. "Sounds great, where does he live," I asked? "Tel Aviv. But he's from Akka, an 'Akkawi, from the Bacri family and a good friend of mine, just tell him Jimmy sent you." "Hold on, Tel Aviv? Really? I didn't think any Palestinians lived in Tel Aviv," I quipped, with a smile and a hint of sarcasm. The idea that I would be meeting a Palestinian artist living and working in Tel Aviv seemed odd, as none of the artists I had met until that point lived or worked in Tel Aviv. That said, I knew that Palestinians lived in Tel Aviv, either for school or work, notwithstanding Joseph Massad's misleading claim to the contrary,[23] but I was all the more intrigued to know that an artist, not to mention an artist from Akka, an 'Akkawi,[24] was living and working in the heart of Israel's "global city" whose population is nearly

[23] In an article for al-Jazeera (18.11.2011), "Truth, Facts and Facts on the Ground," Joseph Massad (Associate Professor of Modern Arab Politics and Intellectual History at Columbia University) writes (my emphasis): "It is Israeli laws that restrict access to Israel's lands to its non-Jewish Palestinian citizens, even though 90 per cent of that land was confiscated from the Palestinian people. It is also Israeli cities that remain Araberrein; indeed, *as many observers have noted, Tel Aviv is the only Western city that does not have any Arab or Muslim inhabitants*." We are never told who these many observers are, but in my short experience I met many Arab and Muslim inhabitants of Tel Aviv. See http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/10/2011102583358314280.html (last accessed 14.3.2012)

[24] People from Akka (Acre) often consider themselves to be the most "true" Palestinians. From my experience, this wasn't arrogance but a matter of pride and was expressed by the emphatic declaration: "ana 'akkawi," (I am an 'Akkawi, which literally means a person from Akka). For my friend Jamal, also from Akka, the status of people from Akka was also present in the Arabic they spoke, which he said was much richer in expressions.

92% Jewish. A few days later I talked with Durar by telephone and we agreed to meet at his studio the following week.

Following a stop off at the Salon for Palestinian Art in the Jaffa port, and given its proximity, no more than a few kilometres, I decided to walk to Durar's studio on Chlenov Street in the Florentine neighborhood in the south of Tel Aviv. The Florentine is a well-known area with a distinctive assortment of people, from artists to migrant workers, ample galleries and generally an evening hot spot. It is also an area that has undergone considerable change and development (i.e., gentrification) over the last years. Meeting me downstairs, I followed Durar up to the top floor of a relatively non-descript apartment building, to his studio, effectively a small 4-room apartment situated across the street from his home, where he lives with his girlfriend and her son. Entering the apartment directly into the living room, I immediately noticed the art works, small and large, originals and photographic reproductions blanketing the walls; to my right a vivid painting of young boy, a fisherman, with a downward gaze, standing on a quay, fishing rod in hand (Figure 4); opposite, to the left, on the top right of the wall, a shirtless male figure at an angle, back to the viewer, his body streaming in what seemed to be a dark oil, his hands covering his ears, his head slightly raised, facing a wall: a self-portrait of Durar as a muezzin (figure 5).[25] On the floor, leaning against the wall directly in front of the

[25] A muezzin is the person who calls for prayer in Islam. Durar was proud to point out that this self-portrait is now hanging in the Israeli embassy in Australia. The irony was not lost given recent calls by members of the Knesset, with the support of Netanyahu himself, to ban mosques from using loudspeakers to call for prayer – 'to end the suffering from the noise' as one MK put it. See http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/netanyahu-backs-law-to-ban-loudspeakers-at-mosques-1.400875 (last accessed 17.03.12). See chapter 2.

entrance, across the room, slightly hidden by the coffee table, a plush green Galilee landscape against the backdrop of a dark and ominous gray sky (Figure 6).

I sat on the couch as Durar prepared us two coffees. He asked me about my research: Why Palestinian art? What do I want to know? I explained to him my project, my interest in understanding the connection between art and politics among Palestinians in Israel. He appeared to understand precisely what I had said, picked up his pack of cigarettes, offering me one, and with cigarette and coffee in hand, got up and went to the room just to the right of where we were sitting. "Come, look," he said. I followed into the room, cigarette and coffee in hand. Durar sat down on a small stool near the corner of the room, hunching over his computer. "What do you think of this?" he asked enthusiastically. I looked at the image on the screen, a painting of a young man in a red shirt and jeans next to a goat in a rocky landscape (Figure 7). "I just saw this a couple days ago in an article about Amos Schoken, with him standing in front of it in his office,"[26] I replied. "I like it!" "Yeah, he [Amos] bought it a few years ago, he's a good friend and buys a lot of my work," Durar added. Before I had a chance to get another word in, Durar started to breakdown some of the details in the painting: "Look, it's a self-portrait. Instead of an old man in a *hatta*, it's a young man, in jeans and t-shirt. But look closely, look at the belt –

[26] Amos Schocken is the owner and publisher of Ha'aretz, one of Israel's leading newspapers. The article I was referring to is a piece by David Remnick in *The New Yorker* (28 February 2011: http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/02/28/110228fa_fact_remnick - last accessed 14.03.12).

it's from Crocker. You know Crocker? It's a company that won't hire Arabs. The jeans and t-shirt are from Crocker too."[27]

Durar then turned around to show me another painting, an unfinished view of the marina in Akka that had been commissioned for a private collector through his Russian agent (Figure 8). As I looked at it I was somewhat befuddled, "It's nice, but there's something missing…" "Ah, yes," Durar said, "you saw, there's no minarets!" "But why?" I asked. "The person buying the painting asked me to paint Akka without any religious symbols," Durar replied. Why would anyone ask for a view of Akka without the major symbols that define it?[28] Durar's answer was referring to the fact that the buyer did not want to have a painting that uncovers the history and the original inhabitants of the place. In the end he said, "it's a commission." However, he did point out, with a grin, that there's very little mistaking the dome in the front right is clearly a mosque, despite the missing minaret. I then noticed another painting directly behind us, again unfinished. "Yeah, I have a few paintings I'm working on at the same time," Durar said without my having pressed him. This was another self-portrait, this time of Durar sitting in front of an unfinished canvas painting, a paintbrush in one hand, a cigarette in the other (Figure 9).

[27] In 2009, Channel 2 News (Israel) reported that the Crocker chain had fired Arab workers on the basis that: "one of the managers was tired of seeing Arabs working in the company's shops." In a report by Mada al-Carmel, the Arab Center for Applied Social Research: "the Arabs were dismissed because they were Arabs. 'There is no difference between Gaza and Taibeh [Palestinian Arab town in Israel in the 'triangle'],' the manager was recorded as saying. 'You can't find normal people to work? I am not willing to have people from Taibeh work in our shops.'" (Israel and the Palestinian Minority: Political Monitoring Report Covering September-November 2009, Issue No. 6, 2010, Mada al-Carmel, p. 12: http://mada-research.org/UserFiles/file/PMP%20PDF/PMR6-eng/pmr6-eng-final-final.pdf - last accessed 14.03.12)

[28] The dome is from the el-Jazar Mosque in the center of the old city, which dominates the view of Akka. The el-Jazar mosque was completed in 1781 and is the largest mosque in Israel after al-Quds (Jerusalem). Coincidentally, Jamal's father is the custodian of the mosque.

We slowly returned to the couch and, turning to Durar, I asked him why he felt the first painting he showed me, *Self portrait with a goat*, was political. Almost matter-of-factly, Durar said it was not "directly political" as in "making a statement," but more in the sense of turning particular representations of Arabs on their head: "The goat is important. Israelis like to joke a lot about how Arabs have sexual relationships with their goats and other animals. If you see, I'm looking at the goat suspiciously, as if I can trust him anymore, as if he has given me a bad reputation. But there's also a sexual tension in my look, something still there, we're both unsure." Durar continued, "and the Crocker outfit is also subversive. It's a cliché for younger Arabs to wear Crocker clothes, but we can't work there." I interject, "is it self-critical too?" "Hmmm, I don't know, perhaps," he answered: "Yeah, I suppose, it's about us [Palestinians] being part of society…" At this point our discussion veered off the topic of his paintings and more generally about politics. He told me about his mother who was a great singer and actress, how he started painting at a very young age,[29] about his art school training at Bezalel, the most prestigious art academy in Israel, and what it was like to be one of the only Arabs in the school,[30] to learn art and art history in a language that is not his own, his ambivalence regarding the famous film of his cousin, Mohammed Bacri, *Jenin, Jenin*.[31]

[29] "From a very young age I would just paint and draw and already my family saw my talent; my mother always encouraged me to be an artist."
[30] "I was only of a few Arab art students at the academy and we were mostly ignored and excluded; but I didn't care, I was strong, but some of my friends didn't handle it too well."
[31] "It wasn't honest enough; it needed to show what really happened but didn't." *Jenin, Jenin* is the controversial documentary about the Israeli invasion of a Palestinian refugee camp in Jenin in 2002.

We both lit another cigarette, and after a few minutes of silence, Durar jumped up and pulled out another painting to show me. But before showing me the painting, he asked me if I had ever looked closely at the back of the Israeli agora (agorot),[32] had I ever noticed behind the Menorah that is on the back the map of greater (Eretz) Israel? “Most people don’t notice this, don’t even see it,” Durar continued, “which is amazing because it tells you exactly what their aims are: Israel from Iraq to Egypt.” Durar started to talk more about politics and his belief that the goal of Israel was the disappearance of Palestinians. He then turned back to the painting he pulled out (Figure 10). “Look, what do you see?” he asked me. “I see a picture of your neighborhood, a cityscape,” I replied, knowing full well that I was missing something, that I was supposed to see more. And indeed, there was more to see. “No, look more closely!” Durar demanded, but still I did not see what he wanted me to see, what he wanted his viewer to see. I was embarrassed; I should see what he wants me to see, what he thinks I should see, what all spectators should see. I gave up, “ what am I supposed to see?” “In the middle, what do you see?” Durar crisply insisted. “I see an old building, seemingly abandoned,” I hesitatingly replied. “Exactly!” Durar exclaimed, “but what about it?” Without waiting he straightaway drew my attention to the Arab arch in the building at the center of the painting, which I had noticed: “You see, an Arab arch surrounded.” He then proceeded to tell me about the mise-en-scène of the painting: “Do you see the light coming from behind, moving with the big city behind,

[32] The agora or agorot is a small copper/nickel/aluminum money unit worth 10 agora or 1/100 of a shekel. This particular version of the agorot was introduced in the early 1990s. After Durar told me this story, I was told by friends of the story of Arafat keeping a pocketful of agora to show people how Israel had its sights set on the large swaths of the Middle East.

slowly swallowing this building, and everything else, the whole Florentine? This area is going to disappear in a few years as it gets developed and they kick out the migrant workers and the artists."

At 28, Durar is full of confidence, almost arrogant: "I want to be known as a great painter!" he said on more than one occasion. As we met over the weeks talking, smoking far too many cigarettes and drinking copious cups of coffee, to the point where I was unable to sleep at night, Durar's work undoubtedly left an indelible impression upon me. After our last meeting, some weeks before I returned home from my fieldwork, as I took the train back to Haifa, I wondered if his aspiration to be a great painter would come to fruition or whether, with the eventual fad of Palestinian artists in Israel passed, he would disappear.

Figure 4: Durar Bacri, *Young fisherman from Yaffa*, 2010

Figure 5: Durar Bacri, *Self-portrait with a mask*, 2005

Figure 6: Durar Bacri, *Galilee Landscape*, 2011

Figure 7: Durar Bacri, *Self-portrait with a goat*, 2006

Figure 8: Durar Bacri, *Acre's Marina*, 2011

Figure 9: Durar Bacri, *Self-portrait*, 2011

Figure 10: Durar Bacri, S*outh Tel-Aviv, looking from the roof, Lewinsky St.*, 2010

Chapter 2: Palestinians in Israel: Present Absentees

> Are you what you were or what you are now? (Darwish 2011, 135)

> "Celui que l'on ne veut pas connaître comme être politique, on commence par ne pas le voir comme porteur des signes de la politicité, par ne pas comprendre ce qu'il dit, par ne pas entendre que c'est un discours qui sort de sa bouche." (Rancière 1998a, 243)[33]

In the spring of 2011, MK Anastasia Michaeli, a member of the Israeli Knesset and rightist party Yisrael Beiteinu, proposed a law that would require mosques in Israel to lower the "noise" of the call to prayer (in Arabic, *adhaan*). In response to what the local media would begin to refer to as the "muezzin law", she argued that this term was woefully inaccurate as the proposed law wasn't directed at any one group or religion, but was about protecting the "quality of life" of Israeli citizens. In other words, it wasn't political. As the debate around the proposed law ensued, Michaeli asserted the following:

> The bill is simple. When a place of prayer becomes a nuisance to those around it, anyone who will not consider the way a civilized country should run would have to listen to the letter of the law. There are many simple options to regulate public address systems, such as directing the system into the community, using computer applications or simply lowering the volume. The solution is not the problem. Our problem is that half of the mosques in the country are working without a license, making their own laws and not operating out of religious interests but merely to be defiant of the law.[34]

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[33] "If there is someone you do not wish to recognize as a political being, you begin by not seeing him [sic] as the bearer of signs of politicity. By not understanding what he says, by not hearing what issues from his mouth as a discourse" (Ranciere 2010a, 38).

[34] See "MK Michaeli: 'Muezzin Law' is About Quality of Life" http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/150936 (last accessed 3 September 2012).

As the debate and reaction to the proposed law gained force, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu waded into the discussion in support of the bill, stating that Israel should not function any differently from countries in Western Europe:

> The same problem exists in all European countries, and they know how to deal with it. It's legitimate in Belgium; it's legitimate in France. Why isn't it legitimate here? We don't need to be more liberal than Europe.[35]

Over the ensuing weeks, following concern from Likud Knesset members who warned against the "Arab reaction" that would result were it to become law, the government postponed discussion of the bill, instead recommending it to a committee for further review. Despite this turn of events, the debate surrounding the bill, from within the government and the Israeli public, including the Palestinian community who held demonstrations against the bill in Taybeh, raises two important questions.[36] The first can be gleaned from Netanyahu's protestation of not needing to be more liberal than Europe. Referring implicitly to recent legislation across Europe, Netanyahu's point is not only to align Israel with Europe (again), but to defend the state from accusations of being insufficiently liberal or tolerant with respect to its Arab citizens. How could Israel be un-

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All the mosques in Israel are monitored by the state, a system introduced following the establishment of the state in 1948 to monitor political and religious activity.

[35] See "Netanyahu backs law to ban loudspeakers at mosques" http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/netanyahu-backs-law-to-ban-loudspeakers-at-mosques-1.400875 (last accessed 3 September 2012).

[36] Following the newspapers and television, and talking with friends, I had the impression that this bill had considerable support from the Jewish Israeli public, even from towns and areas where there were no Palestinians, let alone a mosque. As for Palestinians, it was generally seen negatively and again an attempt by the state to erase the Palestinian presence. Nevertheless, many admitted that the mosques do at times compete with each other and churches, leading to louder and louder prayer calls, and at times to be provocative in mixed towns.

liberal or unfair if the same legislation was being passed in Europe, the home of liberal democracy? Netanyahu's point then was that as a liberal democratic state, Israel embraces all voices protects the rights of all, and from this point of view the inclusion of Palestinian Arabs as members of the Knesset is evidence of this argument. Leaving aside Netanyahu's contentious point about Israel not needing to be more liberal than Europe, the second question, and the one I want to focus on, is the so-called "problem," that is, the "noise." Indeed, with most media commentary focused on the audacity of Netanyahu's claim that Israel does not need to be more liberal than Europe, I will argue that there was a failure to consider the issue of describing the *adhaan* as "noise."

Michaeli's claim that the proposed bill is not political but a matter of "quality of life" implies that the problem is the "noise" emanating from the mosques around the country and that the solution is a matter of insulating the Israeli public from this disturbance. But what is this noise? In making an association between the call to prayer and "noise," Michaeli is effectively saying that what is being broadcast by mosques is without meaning. The *adhaan* is here declared to be nothing more than babble, and thus not relevant to the political order. Of course the *adhaan* is not mere noise or babble, but a statement of faith, with *Shahada*[37] or prayer often repeated in silence. In discounting the *adhaan* as mere noise, in effect, Michaeli is disavowing the speech of Palestinians as something that Israelis did not want to acknowledge.

[37] The Shahada, or statement of faith, is what is sung in Sunni Islam as part of the *adhaan*: "Allah Akbar. Ash-hadu an-la ilaha illa Allah wah. Ash-hadu anna Muhammadan-Rasulullah. Hayya 'ala s-salah. Hayya 'ala 'l-falah. Allaahu akbar. La ilaha illah-Allah." ["God is great. I bear witness that there is no deity except God. I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of God. Come to prayer. Come to success. God is greater. There is no deity except God."]

At the heart of Michaeli's proposed law is a fear of the speech of those who are not to be seen or heard. The particular historical configuration of Israeli society has been focused on creating and maintaining a Jewish state. As I will demonstrate, this configuration is, at its core, a spatiotemporal issue, a matter of containing and segregating the Palestinians in Israel, ensuring their invisibility and temporal absence. Emanating from the speakers of the mosques is the speech of those whom the state has attempted to silence and render absent since 1948. While there is little argument that many mosques have intentionally increased the volume of their *adhaan* over the years, the issue at hand, I would argue, is not about noise per se, but instead about the speech of Palestinians in Israel as the noise of democracy. The current chapter examines the dynamics of this spatiotemporality and the emergence of a series of disruptions in the figure of the present absentee. In the first section I ask *who are the Palestinians in Israel*, *and how have they been identified by the state of Israel as well as by themselves?* I situate these questions of identity within the establishment of the state of Israel and the subsequent Military Administration that governed the Palestinian population for almost 20 years (1948-1967). The second section explores the policies that emerged within the Military Administration and its persisting effects on Palestinian society, well beyond its formal abolishment in 1967. I focus on how issues of movement, surveillance and containment of Palestinians are central problems for the newly created state by examining the various policies and apparatuses invented for these purposes. The third section argues that the problems of movement and containment are most visible in the

case of those Palestinians who were forced out of their villages in 1948 but remained within the state, technically speaking “internally displaced persons”, or, as Israel would define them, “present absentees.” In conclusion I point to how this category of the “present absentee” is being re-appropriated as a figure of political subjectivity by Palestinians in Israel at large as an impossible identification that disrupts the spatiotemporal configuration of the Israeli state. It is this figure of the present absentee as a form of political subjectivity that will be at the heart of the chapters that follow, and which will be elaborated throughout the thesis.

Israel’s Arab citizens

The “invisible man” (Smooha and Peretz 1982), a “trapped minority” (Rabinowitz 2001), the “forgotten Palestinians” (Pappé 2011): who are the Palestinian Arabs in Israel? An indigenous national minority, the Palestinians in Israel are those Palestinians who remained within the boundaries of the newly established Israel state at the time of the partition of British Mandate Palestine in 1948. Numbering roughly 150,000 to 160,000 in 1948, the Palestinians that remained in Israel are comprised of Muslims (including Bedouin), Druze, and Christians and are located in three principle areas within Israel, the Little Triangle (Muslims), Northern and Western Galilee (Druze, Christians, Muslims), and Negev (Bedouin). As of 2011, the Palestinian citizens of Israel make up nearly 20% of the

Israeli population and 12% of Palestinians worldwide (Kanaaneh 2009, 2).[38] Defined by the Israeli government and Israeli Jews as the "Arabs of Israel," (Hebrew: *3arviye Yisrael*) or "Arabs in Israel" (Hebrew: *ha-3aravim be-Yisrael)*, a definition that has problematically became transformed into English as "Israeli Arabs,"[39] Palestinian Arabs in Israel refer to themselves as the '48 Palestinians (Arabic: *Falastinyyet El-Thamanyeh w'arb3in*), Palestinian citizens of Israel, and increasingly today, Palestinians in Israel (Arabic: *El-Falastinyyeh fi Israel*).[40] These questions of definition are not mere labels but forms of contestation within a colonial regime of identification that was born within the first months of the establishment of the state, and whose dynamics are still present today.

For those Palestinians who remained within Israel, and who did not leave their homes or lands, citizenship was arranged in 1952, a few years after the establishment of the state.[41] The rights accrued to the Palestinians in Israel on the basis of their newly acquired citizenship included the right to vote, to stand for election, and equality before the law; basic political and civil rights guaranteed by citizenship in most liberal democracies. Yet, the attribution of citizenship was not without its problems: this group of Palestinians was immediately set apart from the Palestinians in Mandate Palestine,

[38] This does not include Palestinians living in occupied East Jerusalem, who do not hold citizenship, and Druze living in the occupied Golan.

[39] According to the Palestinian anthropologist Moslih Kanaaneh, the term "Israeli Arab" is an English invention created by Jewish/Israeli anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists. Abner Cohen's *Arab Border Villages in Israel* (1965) in one well-known example (see Asad 1975). It is a term that does not exist in either Hebrew or Arabic, and, according to Kanaaneh, "is most likely a politically motivated coercion rather than an 'innocent' linguistic mistake" (Kanaaneh, unpublished manuscript).

[40] As is the case anywhere in the world, naming is an important political gesture, as what defines the non-Jewish citizens of Israel is far from a homogenous or united community with shared social, political, and religious outlooks.

[41] For an important study of this period, see Robinson (2005).

shunned by other Arabs in neighboring countries, and, given their pan-Arab and Palestinian nationalist sympathies, considered an internal threat by Jewish Israelis (a potential fifth column). As the configurations discussed above testify, being citizens of the state of Israel is not a simple matter.[42]

Finding themselves within the newly established Israel state in 1948, in the wake of the *Nakba* (the Catastrophe), the changes for Palestinians in Israel were not only dramatic but traumatic. As to be expected, social conditions were extremely difficult, as most of the middle and upper classes had left for neighboring Arab countries, taking with them political leadership and many of the building blocks of social and economic organization (Pappé 2006). Moreover, in a matter of months they were reduced from a majority to a minority and put under a "Military Administration" (*Memshal Tzvai*), which included severe limitations on their physical mobility as well as many aspects of their political and economic everyday activities.[43] In effect, the establishment of the Military Administration was premised on the belief that Palestinian Arabs in Israel constituted a form of "unfinished business," that is, a population that represented a significant threat

[42] Dan Rabinowitz (2001, 73) refers to the Palestinian citizens of Israel as a "trapped minority." Being marginalized twice over by an enclosure that is historical, finding oneself a minority within an alien state, and being caught between a host state and a mother nation.

[43] The Military Administration was applied to the Palestinians in the Galilee, the "little triangle," the Naqab and mostly rural areas. In urban areas, such as Haifa and Akka, it was a civilian versus military control. The "Military Administration" or "Rule" was based on the British Mandate's Emergency Regulations and came under the Ministry of Defense and the Shabak (Israeli secret service). As Pappé (2011, 49) explains: "According to these regulations the governor had the right to arrest people without warrant and detain without trial for long periods; he could ban their entrance to a place or expel them from their homes; he could also confine [them] under house arrest. He could close schools, businesses, newspapers and journals, and prohibit demonstrations and protests". To this day the Emergency Regulations that Israel adopted from the British Mandate period are still in place.

to national security (Pappé 2011). Beneath this security claim, however, the principal objective of the Military Administration was to contain Palestinian Arabs inside the state in order to ensure a division of the Palestinian community that has had lasting effects to the present day.[44]

Despite the formal acknowledgment of Palestinian political and civil rights, the Military Administration that was in effect until more or less 1967 curtailed the full expression and realization of these rights. Given the physical separation of Palestinian villages and the permits required to move between them and (at times) within them, the aim of these policies was to thwart political activity and organization in the name of guaranteeing security.[45] Indeed, to move from one village to another village, even neighboring villages, required proper identification and travel permits, without which one was tried in a military court. As Jiryis (1976, 17) explains, Article 125 "grants the military governor the power to proclaim any area or place a forbidden [closed] area…which no one can enter or leave without…a written permit from the military commander or his deputy", whereby all Palestinian towns effectively become "closed areas". Worse, included in Article 125 was the authority to expel and relocate groups of Palestinians, in some cases entire villages, as was the case in the Naqab and border villages, including at

[44] My analysis will not be an overview of the details of the Military Administration, but a focus on its key objectives. For a more detailed legal and juridical account, see Jiryis (1976, 9-35).
[45] However, as Hillel Cohen (2010, 4) has argued, this did not mean that there was no political activity or organization among Palestinians in Israel, noting that "despite close surveillance by Israeli intelligence" Palestinians "organized large-scale, adamant protest activity" during the period of the Military Administration. While Cohen's corrective to the perception of Palestinians as passive is important, the reality was still one in which political activity and organization was to a great extent repressed and marginalized.

least 2000 Palestinians transferred to Gaza in 1950 (White 2012, 74; see also Morris 1994).[46] Considered a potential, if not immediate, hostile threat from within, Israeli containment policies regarding Palestinian Arab political organization were purposely divisive. As Ian Lustick (1980, 25) has pointed out, starting in 1948, the Military Administration imposed by Israel on the Palestinian Arab population had the crucial goal of curtailing and impeding the emergence of a cohesive and organized Arab community, especially in terms of political organization:

> … the failure of Israel's Arab minority to "organize itself" and the minimal significance, to date, of the communal segmentation of Israeli society for the operation and stability of the Israeli political system are due to the presence of a highly effective system of control which, since 1948, has operated over Israeli Arabs.

As Lustick suggests, the Israeli political strategy regarding the Palestinian Arab population was implicitly aimed at curtailing the civil and political rights of Palestinians in Israel, despite the formal acknowledgement of their citizenship.[47] Yet, these measures of

[46] One of the most tragic events for Palestinians to have resulted from the Military Administration was the Kafr Qasim Massacre in 1956. On the eve of the Israeli invasion of Sinai, the military head in the Kafr Qasim area changed the curfew time to 17h from 21h, the time the people of village had been previously informed. When the villagers were returning from the fields, unaware that the curfew time had been changed, the military shot and killed 48 Palestinians (see Robinson [2005] for a detailed account of these events).

[47] One result of this curtailment of Palestinian Arab political organization was their support of the joint Jewish-Arab Israeli Communist Party (ICP), also known by its Hebrew acronym, *Maki* and Arabic *Maqi*. The reason *Maqi* was able to garner so large Palestinian support had to do with its defense of Arab minority rights, including calls for the end to the appropriation of land, the return of refugees and support for the Palestinian state alongside Israel (Ghanem 2001, 66-67; also see Landau 1971, 81-92). *Maqi* eventually split due to ideological differences among its Arab members, and from it emerged *Rakah*, a fully Arab communist party that was headed by Emil Habibi, who was later to become a prized novelist. Not surprisingly, communist parties will play a central role in Palestinian Israeli politics well into the 1980s with the dissolution of the Soviet Union (see Kimmerling and Migdal 2003, 184-185).

repressing and marginalizing political organization and activity had deeper aims. One of the most immediate and visible illustrations is the divided and fragmented Palestinian community in Israel that emerged from this period. In their definition of Palestinians as "Arabs of/in Israel," an identification that emerged in this period and that continues to be used to this day amongst many Jewish Israelis, not only are all national or communal ties to the Palestinians in Mandate Palestine symbolically severed, any sense of the shared values and history amongst those Palestinians who remained in Israel are erased.[48] In other words, the label "Arabs of Israel" not only denationalized, it fragmented from within. On the one hand, such a definition allowed for a process of historical erasure; portrayed simply as Arabs, there was no right to the land of Israel, or, for that matter, any connection to historic Palestine. To a degree this strategy of de-Palestinization is exemplified in the Palestinian educational system that is controlled by the state, and which disavows the teaching of Palestinian and Arab history, society, culture and politics. On the other hand, it permitted the Israeli state to take advantage of the different "ethno-religious" groups within the Palestinian Israeli community (Muslim, Druze, Christian, Bedouin) as a way of dividing and inhibiting their political organization and socio-cultural unification.[49] As Cohen (2010, 233) explains:

[48] Between 1948 and 1967 all travel and communication of Palestinians in Israel with either Mandate Palestine or other Arabs countries was impossible (not to mention other parts of Israel).
[49] This relationship to the Palestinian community cannot be likened to Euro-American models of multiculturalism that tend to "ethnicize" their minorities through liberal democratic principles. Although multiculturalism has a place in Israel, it is one focused on the multicultural dimensions of its Jewish population (see Shafir and Peled 2002). As a homeland for the Jewish people, the Palestinians are first and foremost a security threat that is inseparable from the Jewish-Zionist character of the state (see Al-Haj 2002).

> […] the state exacerbated distinctions and discord among different parts of Israel's Arab population, played off one religious and ethnic community against another […] Indeed creating this new Israeli Arab identity was one of the state's tacit goals.

Following Cohen, then, it becomes clear that the aims of the Military Administration were not only to restrict movement and contain Palestinians in Israel, but further to divide and fragment the Palestinian community, to rupture any sense of collective identity that might have fostered political organization and activity. But these strategies were not simply that. At the root of the Military Administration was the Zionist aim of ensuring consolidation of Israel as a Jewish state. To this end, containment of the Palestinian population and its de-Palestinization were paramount.

While the Military Administration was officially abolished in 1967, for various reasons there was not a complete turning of the page on these policies. First, the changes brought about under the leadership of Levi Eshkol at the end of 1966 were largely a transfer of these policies from a military administration to a civil administration (Jiryis 1976, 63). In other words, policies were transferred from the military and secret police to the internal security services and local police. Second, many regulations of the Military Administration were only nominally adjusted, such that this "new policy" was more focused on maintaining a positive image of Israel than actual changes in discriminatory and repressive practices.[50] For example, as Kretzmer (1990, 124) explains in regard to

[50] It is important to note that the "Defence (Emergency) Regulations" that were invoked in 1948 as part of Israeli domestic law remained in effect after the so-called dissolution of the Military Administration, and remain in effect to this day. In short, these regulations allow for the continuing application of such restrictions as those contained in Article 125 discussed above (see Kretzmer 1990, 141-142).

Article 125, the closure of Arab areas was not repealed, but instead replaced with the granting of general permits for Palestinian citizens to enter and leave these areas. At the end of 1966, control over these permits was given to local administrative heads (three military commanders, one for each Arab area) and a local advisory officer, who acted as liaison between the security services and the local civilian police (Jiryis 1976, 63). In sum, although these changes were cosmetic, they appealed to domestic and world opinion that was becoming increasingly concerned with the treatment of Palestinian citizens of Israel (Ibid., 64).

If the Military Administration was officially abolished in 1967, the deep fragmentation incurred upon the Palestinian community had lasting repercussions. For nearly ten years following the end of the military administration, the "internal colonization" of the civil, political, and social organization of Palestinians was still being felt (see Zureik 1979, 166-187). As Pappé states, "Military rule scarred the Palestinians in Israel for life, as much as the *Nakbah* tormented the Palestinians as a whole" (Pappé 2011, 46). In essence, while formally acknowledging the civil and political rights bestowed upon Palestinians in Israel by virtue of their citizenship, the practice of those rights were all but negated by a ubiquitous system of control that presented itself as a matter of security but functioned as an ethno-national project of colonialism. The identity dynamics noted earlier are but one dimension of this period and its lasting effects in what has become a regime of control and its contestation. Yet, this is but only part of the picture, which several observers have referred to as a spatio-temporal "Judaisation" of the state.

The Internal Frontier

Unlike other settler movements in America, Africa and Australia, the land the Jewish people in Palestine wished to settle was decided *a priori*. Zion, or the land of Israel, is a central tenet of the Zionist movement, even if this land was referred to in mostly metaphysical and abstract terms in the earlier periods of the movement. As Kimmerling (1983, 9) notes:

> Zionism without Palestine was evidently doomed to failure as a nationalist movement, a movement which had imposed upon itself a task not imposed on any other nationalist movement – to build a membership from among the people who were dispersed throughout almost all parts of the world (and who, as became apparent later, differed not only in terms of country of origin, but also culturally and even ethnically).

Premised on the idea of Palestine as a frontier, a "free land," the Zionist movement of the late nineteenth century believed Palestine to be sparsely populated and full of potential wealth, "a land of milk and honey." The reality, however, was quite the contrary. The arrival of early Jewish settlers between 1882 and 1915 found a land that was far more populated, far more settled, and far more developed agriculturally than had been anticipated. Land, therefore, and settlers' ability to occupy and exploit the land, was a central issue from the very first establishment of the state as a Jewish space.[51]

[51] As Kamal Boullata (2008, 3) has explained with regard to the notion of space in Hebrew: "In its noun form, *makom*, [Hebrew] simply means 'space' or 'area to be filled or occupied.' By preceding it with the article *ha*, the word *ha-makom* literally means the 'place.' Coming from the trilateral root *k-w-m*, a word such a *kiyyum* could mean 'existence' as well as 'settled area.' Most importantly, unlike the Arabic word *makaan* that has no metaphysical connotations whatsoever,

Confronting a native population, a people that already had ownership of most of the land, the leadership of the newly established state had the choice to either ignore them, as was done to the Aborigines in Australia (at least until 1967), or to treat them as part of the hostile environment.[52] Following the latter, the basic strategy for Israel was therefore to spatially restrict ethnic minorities within the state through economic, political and territorial legislation (i.e. land policies), such that the rule and presence of the dominant ethnic group would remain unchallenged (Yiftachel 1998, 44). Indeed, as Yiftachel points out, in the case of Israel, there has been a territorial strategy to push newly arrived Jewish immigrants to these peripheral zones (see Tzafadia and Yacobi 2011, and this is not unique to Israel), in this case Palestinian villages, in order to create a break between them and also in order to limit their further expansion and development. The result is that the internal frontier zones of the state have become ethnically "mixed" but have also resulted in a large degree of segregation (Ibid., 45). The idea of the Zion (the land of Israel) as a frontier, a free land, did not exist in reality, thereby requiring a series of spatial policies surrounding the internal frontiers of the state through strategies of containment and restriction on the native Palestinian population (Yiftachel 1998, 46).[53] As Kimmerling (1983, 14) notes:

HaMakom also refers to God. Believed to be omnipresent, 'God is [thus] not only THE place, but place itself'" (Ibid.; original emphasis).

[52] While British colonization and Israeli colonization differ on this point, both shared the idea, as did many other colonial empires, that the land they were settling was a *Terra Nullius* ("no man's land" or "empty land"), which in Australia shaped land legislation until 1992. See Yiftachel (1998, 43-44).

[53] The issue of internal frontiers and peripheries is to be distinguished from borders and the keeping out of external outsiders. First, Israel has never properly defined its borders, thus leaving

> From the beginnings of the Zionist movement, its leaders were aware (a) that the acquisition of substantial areas of land in Palestine was an essential basis for the development of a future Jewish society or state, (b) that the desired land was then in someone else's hands, and (c) that it would be necessary to raise and allocate economic and political resources to obtain the land.

The central premise here is that once the land was in Jewish hands it would acquire a national significance toward the fulfillment of a Jewish state. Further, these spatial policies of containment and segregation were embodied in the apparatus of the state. The internal frontiers of the newly established state were thus sites of territorial control and the creation of dominant and dominated, colonizer and colonized.

The full extent of these spatial policies was revealed a number of years after abolishment of the Military Administration in the leaking of the Koenig Report in 1976. An internal and secret document written by Yisrael Koenig (Northern District Commissioner of the Ministry of the Interior at the time), the Koenig report outlined the program for "diluting existing Arab population concentrations" through existing practices of "discrimination [i.e., distinguishing] and containment." The report was an attack on the government for not being forceful enough in the "Judaization of the Galilee"[54] and advocated for an increased expropriation of Palestinian land for Jewish settlements. In some respects the report was not so much a plan to be put into action, but a revelation of

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open the question of what constitutes the space of the state itself (Dakwar 2007). Indeed, this is why today Israeli leaders continually refer to the Occupied Palestinian Territories as "disputed territories." Second, the frontiers and peripheries within Israel itself were areas designated for Development Towns, settler spaces for (non-Ashkenazi) Jewish immigrants (see Tzfadia and Yacobi 2011).

[54] As Lustick (1980, 333) notes, this phrase, although predominant in government documents, was often softened with terms such as "populate the Galilee" or "develop the Galilee."

already existing policies and measures that had long been in place, albeit perhaps not as radical in their implementation as Koenig wished. Indeed, according to Lustick (1980), the report's description of the demographic, political, and economic factors among the Palestinian Arab population and the means for controlling them strongly reflected the overall orientation of the Israeli government during Military Administration period of 1948-1967. Although the government repudiated the policies detailed in the report, as Pappé (2011, 127) points out, it nonetheless implemented most of its recommendations, thus opening a period of spatial policies explicitly designed to "Judaize" the land.

At the basis of the Military Administration, and in conjunction with the division and fragmentation of the Palestinian community, was the curtailing of movement. The goal was to ensure that Palestinians would not make claim to any further lands, nor that any land would be reclaimed by internally displaced persons (IDP), those who fled or were forced out of their villages but remained in the newly established state. As the Koenig Report stated, the goal must be to "expand and deepen Jewish settlement in areas where the contiguity of Arab populations is prominent," "to dilut[e] existing Arab population concentrations," and "limit 'breaking of new ground' by Arab settlements (Koenig in Kanaaneh 2002, 53).[55] On the one hand, there was the rationale of limiting Arab access to the lands that Israel wished to keep for incoming Jewish immigrants. Framed as an

[55] The appropriation of Palestinian Arab land, or what might also be called, the "de-Arabizing" of the land, was the central task of the Jewish National Fund, an organization established before the creation of the Israeli state with the responsibility of purchasing land in Palestine for Jewish immigrants. Most of the land belonged to Palestinians that were pushed out or fled during the fighting of 1948, or land that "went fallow" due to the Orwellian-esque creation of "present absentees" (see Dieckhoff 2006, 88; Kimmerling and Migdal 2003, 172-173).

economic necessity, the aim of this rationale was to avoid high levels of unemployment for newly arrived Jewish immigrants that would have necessarily occurred without imposing limitations on Arab mobility. On the other hand was the deeper rationale behind the protection of land. As Shafir and Peled (2002, 112) argue, labor and land were the two principal motivations for the installation of a "Military Administration," and security was nothing more than a ruse used to pursue these colonial objectives. Put simply, the effort to contain and control the movement of Palestinians in Israel in the name of security, even in those cases of labor, was basically a strategy focused on the expropriation of land:

> … the prevention of movement was used by the Israeli government to expropriate land without being interrupted by protest or by legal action. … For this purpose, the Emergency Regulations were used again to expropriate land without compensation or the right to protest. The land was used for new Jewish towns and community centres (no new Arab towns were built despite the high rate of natural population growth and the limitations on Palestinians who wished to reside in Jewish areas) in order to attract upwardly mobile people from Tel Aviv (Pappé 2011, 51; 127).

Here so-called security questions surrounding movement and containment are deeply tied to the control of land and a policy of fragmentation through the disruption of a certain geographical continuity. At the source of the question of security was the desire to break Palestinian autonomy and establish a Jewish majority in those areas where Palestinians had already a dominant presence (especially the Galilee and the Naqab). One telling example is the creation of lookout settlements (Hebrew: *mitzpim*) in the Galilee in

the 1970s and 1980s by the Jewish Agency. Built on hilltops, these settlements allowed for the surveillance and fragmentation of the Palestinian Arab community:

> These sites were selected to create wedges between clusters of Arab villages and to physically observe Arab building and agricultural activity in the region. … the new settlement program would 'save the state (i.e. Jewish) land from Arab invaders,' thereby giving the new settlement process a status of extreme national importance, as it acted against threats to the Jewish collective (Yiftachel 1998, 58).

The symbolic significance and control of land for the state of Israel is fundamental to understanding its relationship to Palestinian Arabs. For the Zionist movement in the early twentieth century, the land of Palestine was a frontier, or free land, an open space (Kimmerling 1983, 9). It is a relationship expressed most clearly in the Zionist motto, "a people without a land returning to a land without a people." The importance of securing the land to the nationalist movement, of making the land of Israel a land of the Jewish people, underlies the formation of the Military Administration, but also the policies and regulations that continue to shape and determine the spatial policies of the state as an ethno-national entity. To this day it is nearly impossible for most Palestinian towns to expand beyond the borders that were assigned to them in 1948; Nazareth is a prime example where no more land is available, forcing many families to build on top of their existing homes as they grow (Rabinowitz 1997). Further, it is equally difficult for Palestinians to live in Jewish towns (see Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker 2005).

A case in point is the Supreme Court decision surrounding the Qa'dan case (2000). In 1995 Adel and Iman Qa'dan, with their three children, sought to purchase land to build

a home in Katzir. While Palestinians were already living within Katzir, the Qa'dan family was seeking to buy land in a newly developed region of Katzir, Western Hill, an exclusive and upscale project being planned and implemented by the Jewish Agency. All potential residents had to go through a committee-based evaluation before their purchase was accepted. The Qa'dan's request was flatly refused on the basis of their being Arab, or, in other words, being non-Jews. The regulations regarding the sale of land in Ketzir stipulated that it was officially prohibited for non-Jews to buy land in Ketzir (a policy of the Jewish Agency).[56] At this point the Qa'dan's contacted the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) who stepped in and filed a petition on behalf of the couple, claiming that such a decision violated the Law of Human Dignity and Freedom.[57] The case eventually ended up in the Supreme Court where chief justice, Aharon Barak, after initially encouraging that the case be settled out of court, ruled that it is unlawful to discriminate against Palestinian Israeli citizens in the allocation of land. As Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal (2003, 207) note, the initial reaction to this decision among journalists, academics and others was phrased as "revolutionary", an opening toward a "post-Zionist" Israeli society. Basing his decision on the US Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown vs.*

[56] The defendants in the case were the Cooperative Association of Katzir, the Jewish Agency and Israel Land Association (Shafir and Peled 2002; Kimmerling and Migdal 2003; Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker 2005). Another poignant example of how policy prohibitions inhibit Palestinian settlement in Jewish communities is examined in the ethnography of Upper Nazareth by Dan Rabinowitz (1997).

[57] Israel has no constitution but instead a set of what are called "Basic Laws." The Law of Human Dignity and Freedom is one of these laws and it stipulates that when the allocation of state resources (such as land) are at issue, equality must be ensured, that individuals can not be excluded or given preferential treatment. Yet these same basic laws also stipulate that Israel is a Jewish *and* Democratic state.

Board of Education, chief justice Barak made it clear that differential treatment based on nationality or religion is unjust (Shafir and Peled 2002, 132). Looking closer at this decision, however, reveals a deep and troubling dilemma. Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker (2005, 141) clearly spell out:

> On the one hand, [the Supreme Court] could not condone such an obvious violation of a basic right. On the other hand, the justices realized that a ruling in favor of Qa'dan and against Katzir, the Jewish Agency, and the Israel Land Administration would have far-reaching historic and political consequences.

What are these "historic and political consequences"? In short, the undermining of Israel as a Jewish state; that is, Israel as an ethno-national state. The dilemma facing chief justice Barak was, if the state could not give preference to Jews in matters of state resources (in this case land), what future did it have as a Jewish state? The weight of this dilemma is revealed in the final statement of the court. While chief justice Barak's ruling stipulated that discrimination against Palestinian citizens was unjust, and *recommended* that the Jewish Agency and the Cooperative Association of Katzir tender a plot of land for the Qa'dan family, how precisely the family was to acquire property rights, build a home and take residence were left unaddressed.[58] It is important to underline that this decision was a recommendation, not a decree. Which is to say, there was no order or obligation that the Qa'dan's be leased or sold a plot of land, only that the Katzir Cooperative

[58] Shortly after the court ruling the Qa'dan family re-submitted their application to the Katzir Cooperative Association. They were invited for an interview but finally rejected by the Association on the grounds that they were not "suitable residents." The family appealed this decision and in 2009 were finally able to sign a contract lease, though as of spring 2009 they had still not moved (see Jabareen 2010, 78).

Association and the Jewish Agency reconsider their decision. This left any final decision as to the sale of land to the Katzir Cooperative Association and the Jewish Agency.

While the struggle over land has been central to the relationship between the state and the Palestinians in Israel, nowhere is this more palpable then in the case of those Palestinians that were displaced in the early years of the establishment of the state, but who remained within its borders, namely internally displaced persons or present absentees. Unlike refugees who fall under the care of international bodies, it is the host state that is responsible for internal refugees. In the case of Israel, this "care" has amounted to a brutal and extensive expropriation of their land.

The Present Absentee

> Symbolizing Palestinian Arabs citizens' precarious status in Israel are hundreds of villages whose existence remains unrecognized. For them, no official map bears witness to their presence, and the development policies of the state conspire to make their absence a fact on the ground. The residents of the "unrecognized villages" form the weakest link in a chain of surviving indigenous communities within Israel's 1948-49 borders and constitute one of the last frontiers for Israel's population transfer of Palestinians from the lands occupied before 1967. Other Palestinians uprooted from their homes during the war but who remained within Israel's borders bear the paradoxical title "present absentees." The term denotes the familiar estrangement of internally displaced and dispossessed citizens still living out of place, so close yet so far from their confiscated homes and lands (Schechla 2001, 20).

The post-Zionist history of Israel that emerged in the late 1980s explicitly points to how the state made a significant effort to reduce and minimize the number of Palestinians that

remained within its borders (Morris 1988, 1994; Pappé 1994; Masalha 1992, 1993; Segev 2000).[59] For those who were displaced but not pushed out of the borders of the state, they were to soon find themselves in a precarious situation, their status unclear and their presence being deemed a hindrance. During the period of 1948-1951, the principal aim of the state was to counter the unregulated movement of Palestinian Arabs, especially those who had fled their towns and villages or who had returned from exile. As Shira Robinson (2005) notes, this unregulated movement was in many ways a threat to the sovereignty of the Jewish state. As many of these people did not have the proper papers, i.e. those distributed in 1948, there was a subsequent loss of residency, but also a loss of rights: those without official papers became Internally Displaced Persons (IDP). Forced out of their homes and villages but remaining in Israel, the hope of returning to their homes and land was impossible, the Israeli government and military having deemed most of these villages closed security zones, with most since being settled as Jewish towns. In fact, for many IDPs it was not until the 1980s that many were finally able to obtain citizenship, though only upon proving beyond a doubt their registration within the towns they were forced out from (Davis 2003, 89).[60] Nevertheless, to this day, "present absentees" (Hebrew: *nifkadim nokhahim*) are still not permitted to return to their land and homes.[61]

[59] The post-Zionist history emerged with the release of government documents that shed light on the policies and practices of the Israeli government since 1948, but also before. Consisting of Jewish historians, the key figure in this history was undoubtedly Benny Morris whose work exposed the systematic policy of ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in 1948 (1988). As the movement spread, questions about the definition of the state as Jewish and democratic were also critiqued (see Nimni 2003).

[60] Uri Davis explains that Palestinians falling under the category of "present absentees" were classified as "Class C" citizens in Israeli law (Absentee Property Law, 1950). As such, they had no

In 1950 there were an estimated 46 000 internally displaced persons out of 156,000 Palestinians who remained in historic Palestine[62] Although some Palestinian "present absentees" were granted citizenship under the 1952 Israeli Nationality Law, their classification, as well as that of their descendants, remains that of a "present absentee," thus permanently forbidding them from returning to their villages. The Absentees' Property Law (1950) that created this legal category of identification was effectively a set of measures by which to ensure that the land of historic Palestine did not fall back into the hands of these internal refugees. On the one hand, the absentee laws barred Palestinians from returning to their lands and then transferred ownership of absentee property to the state (Jiryis 1976). Under these laws, all abandoned property went to the Israeli government, specifically the Jewish National Fund (JNF), which was to later be managed by Israeli Land Administration (ILA). Today 93% of the land in Israel is owned by

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right to any properties, such as land, houses, corporations, shares, bank accounts, etc. According to Davis, at least 25% of the 2003 population of Palestinians in Israel (250,000) is classified as "present absentees." See Davis (2003, 89). I will of course return to a fuller discussion of the present absentee below.

[61] The most notable cases are Iqrit and Kufr Bir'im – both of which were declared "security zones" – two villages in the Galilee whose residents, now present absentees, have been repeatedly permitted to return by the Israeli Supreme Court but have been blocked by the government and military. I have been to both villages in 2009 and in the case of Iqrit there has been an effort by former village members to maintain their presence, including sit-ins and the maintenance of the Greek Catholic Church. As for Kufr Bir'im, in 1953 the land was decreed abandoned, confiscated and declared state lands, and today is a park administered by the government. The refusal to allow residents to return to their villages despite Supreme Court rulings, as stated by former prime minister Golda Meir, was to "avoid setting a precedent" (see White 2012, 31-32). The term "present absentees" is only ever used in Arabic [7adareen 3'aebeen] in legal texts or legal contexts.

[62] As Amal Jamal has recently noted, there are various figures for how many Palestinians ended up IDPs, which, depending on the source, ranges from 31 000 to 50 000 (Jamal 2011, 111-112). The figure of 46 000 is taken from UNRWA. Nur Masalha estimates that as of 2009 roughly a third of all Palestinians in Israel are present absentees (Masalha 2009).

the state and the JNF, land which, by the mandate of the JNF and the ILA, is to held "in perpetuity by the Jewish people" (Masalha 2005, 35).[63] On the other hand, the outcome of this legal framework was such that the social status of IDPs was effectively annulled; that is, it superseded the historical and cultural connection of Palestinians with their land.

At the heart of the creation of the category of "present absentee" is a peculiar temporality and a clear distinction between space and place. The category of "present absentee" was created to regulate and contain IDPs inside the state by assigning them to a specific legal framework that would ultimately undermine their social status and hence their historical and cultural attachment to the land. To begin, under subjection (iii) of the Absentees' Property Law of 1950, an "absentee" refers to those Palestinians or residents of Palestine who had left their "ordinary place of residence" and were "in any part of Palestine outside the area of Israel" after 29 November 1947, or in any "place outside Palestine" before 1 September 1948. In sum, an absentee is any Palestinian who left their ordinary place of residence for anywhere outside the area of Israel between the 29 November 1947 (the UN partition date) and 1 September 1948. Designated as an absentee, the additional qualifier "present" specified those who remained within the territory of Israel. For those Palestinians wishing to counter their inclusion within the category of "present absentee" and to have their ownership recognized, the requirement was to demonstrate their presence in their place of residence. The trouble, as we will see, is that as "absentees" their "presence" in these places was illegal as the ownership of

[63] Today, if Palestinians make up just over 20% of the population in Israel, they control only 2% of the land.

their property and land had already been handed over to the Custodian of Absentee Property, and thus was now the official property of the state.[64]

There are two fundamental paradoxes in the category of "present absentee." First, as Jamal (2011, 114-115) points out, the designation of absentees as those outside of the area of Israel after 29 November 1947 is problematic insofar as Israel did not yet exist, the state only have been declared a state on 15 May 1948.[65] In chronological terms there is a retrospective aspect to the law, an assertion of the state's jurisdiction prior to its establishment, the effect of which was to "legalize measures that had already been taken" (Ibid., 114). The second paradox has to do with the relation between space and place. As Jamal (Ibid., 115) explains:

> The law differentiates between "ordinary place of residence" as a particular place and Palestine as a more general spatial area. By leaving their concrete place of ordinary residence, Palestinians were not entitled to their property anymore, even if they remained within the areas of Palestine that became the "area of Israel." The political space of Palestine that became Israel was not respected as a source of legal standing and territorial identity. Instead, place, in its concrete material sense, was treated as the only factor legitimating the entitlement for property.

To put it differently, through the Absentees' Property Law the space of Palestine that was colonized ('48 Palestine) was effectively denied any existence prior to the establishment of the state of Israel, thus requiring that any claims to land and property be contingent

[64] The risk of "present absentees" re-establishing themselves on their land and property was precluded by the state by forbidding them to live or work in their former villages. As Hillel Cohen (2002, n.p.) explains: "Even after the transfer of the lands to Jewish settlement, the Israeli authorities laid down that 'under no circumstances must land be leased to Arabs formerly from that village, or originally from there'." Jews or Arabs receiving land in the abandoned villages had to commit themselves not to employ refugees whose origins were in that village.

[65] The date 29 November 1947 was the date of the United Nations partition plan.

upon residency in a concrete place, an "ordinary place of residence."[66] This maneuver of erasing a Palestinian space and separating it from place is made possible through the containment of Palestinians and through the conflation of identity and place. By being outside of a concrete place, which is to say, their proper place, the absent Palestinian was stripped of his or her rights, thus making the historical and temporal relationship to property and land null and void. Through the Absentees' Property Law, presence in a designated place during a certain time was considered a necessary condition for justifying a granting of citizenship. To be out of place is necessarily to be out of time, in every sense of the expression. As present absentees had no basis to claim their property and land, the state was able to legally justify the systematic expropriation of land.[67] This logic not only criminalized the absentee, it also allowed Israel to "reduce the number of Palestinians as much as possible" (Jamal 2011, 115). In this way, the creation of the category of the "present absentee" was a radical spatio-temporal displacement of Palestinians in Israel, despite the fact that their original displacement was the result of a deliberate state policy.

The problem of IDPs or present absentees has re-emerged over the last two decades after a near silence following the end of the Military Administration and the

[66] Significantly, Jamal (2011) points out, this legal framework was in stark contrast to that which applied to Jews, who were granted full rights and property on the basis of their Jewish identity from anywhere in the world.

[67] Many of these villages have since become "unrecognized villages" under a series of legal measures undertaken by the Israeli state with the Building and Construction Law in 1965 and the Markowitz Commission in 1986. These measures have cut off these villages from electricity, water and other services, made their existing infrastructure illegal, with demolitions, and have transferred their populations (see Schechla 2001, 23-26). It must be noted that these measures continue today, especially among the Bedouin communities in the Naqab (Negev).

occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967. While the struggle for many present absentees to return to their villages was never resolved, the principle reason for their re-emergence within political discourse was tied both to their "sense of alienation which [they] felt in their new homes" and to the fact that new legal and political avenues have emerged since the 1990s to pursue their rights. Jamal (2011, 108) notes:

> …the Palestinian present absentees have adopted new legal and political strategies based on the new opportunity structures that opened with the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, changes within the Israeli legal and political systems, and the globalization of human rights discourse….

Fearing being left out of the peace process on account of how their condition was being framed by the Israeli legal system discussed above, the IDP community established their own strategies, re-emerging in the form of new a social movement (Ibid.).[68] The most marked aspect of the return of the refugee question was the focus of annual Nakba events on those villages that were erased and whose residents that came to be known as "present absentees."[69] The significance of Nakba Day cannot be understated. As Nur Masalha (2009, 8) puts it:

[68] Most significantly, this included the creation of the Association for the Defense of the Rights of the Internally Displaced in Israel (ADRID) in 1995 when it was becoming clear that Palestinian internal refugees in Israel were being sidelined in the peace process (Wakim 2001; Peleg and Waxman 2011, 67; for a brief background of ADRID see Masalha 2005, 41-43; Sabbagh-Khoury 2011, 43-44).

[69] While a different village is chosen each year, one of the notable examples is Saffuriyya, a village that was completely destroyed and cleansed in 1948, and whose habitants who remained in the state settled on the edges of Nazareth in the overcrowded Safafri quarter, only a few kilometres from Saffuriyya and whose name means people from Saffuriyya. Both Sharif Waked, an artist that is discussed in the dissertation, and the renowned filmmaker Elia Sulieman are present absentees from Safafri/Saffuriyya.

> The Nakba Day connects the relatively isolated Palestinian communities inside and outside historic Palestine. Collective memory helps consolidate national bonds, mutual solidarity and shared history and memories.

Nakba [The Catastrophe] refers to the day that Palestinians were dispossessed from their lands and homes, a day (15 May) that coincides with the establishment of the state of Israel. It took on an unprecedented status in the early 1990s as the visibility of the present absentees increased. These events became focused around those dispossessed and "unrecognized" villages, with former individuals and families from joining and leading the marches. These annual marches underline how the Nakba is not a past historical event, a finished historical event to be commemorated year to year, but a "present unfinished act" (Massad 2008). As Jamal (2011, 101) writes: "The memory of loss is repeated during the marches as a collective statement against the insult of the past and the role that the state plays in keeping it fresh".[70]

The predicament of the present absentee and their increasing visibility throughout the 1990s must be understood within the more broad "politicization" of Palestinians in Israel in the 1990s and 2000s. Throughout the 1990s the success of the Labor government, from Rabin and Peres (1992-1996) to Barak (1999-2001), depended considerably on their securing the support of Palestinian parties and vote. In exchange, however, the

[70]In 2011 the Israeli government sought to counter this act of memory by passing what is called the Nakba Law (Amendment 40 of the Budget Principles Law). This law threatens to imposse harsh fines on any government-funded organization that contributes to the commemoration or teaching of the Nakba: "an expense which, in essence […] marks Israel Independence Day or the day of the establishment of the state as a day of mourning" (see http://www.acri.org.il/en/2011/05/15/"the-nakba-law"-and-its-implications/). In 2012 the High Court of Justice rejected an appeal made by ACRI and Adalah for rejecting this law on the basis that it violates the exercise of free speech (see http://www.adalah.org/eng/pressreleases/5_1_12.html).

Palestinian parties received no access to the centers of power (such as ministries), instead being forced to show their support from the outside.[71] The disappointment and sense of betrayal felt by Palestinians in Israel was reinforced in 1999 when Ehud Barak promoted his candidacy to Palestinians on the promise of a "state for all," echoing a long-standing desire in the Palestinian community of "a state of all its citizens."[72] While Barak won the election, receiving nearly 95% of the Palestinian vote, his promise of "a state for all" was quickly shelved for fear of being a politically volatile position given his desire to build a broad coalition together with left, right, and religious parties (Al-Haj 2004, 115).

The second event that has had a detrimental effect on the advances of the Palestinians in Israel was the failure of the Oslo Accords and Camp David, the end result of which culminated in the second Intifada in 2000. I will not dwell on the failings of the Oslo Accords or Camp David, but it is important to point out that they did play a critical part in the uprisings within the West Bank and Gaza Strip. When the leaders convened for the Camp David meetings in July 2000, three issues remain unresolved. First was the question of the territorial contiguity and integrity of a Palestinian state; the second was the problem of Jerusalem; and the third the question of the fate of the Palestinian refugees.

[71] In 1992 the Rabin government depended on the votes of "Arab" delegates from the Democratic Front and the Arab Democratic Party to maintain Labor's Knesset majority. Neither of these Arab parties was included in the governing coalition, nor did they get any ministerial posts. What they did receive, with the additional support for the Oslo agreements in the Knesset, was better treatment in terms of access to social services. See Al-Haj (2004, 115) and Shafir and Peled (2002, 131).

[72] Laurence Louër (2007) explains this in terms of Barak using the "political language" of the "citizenship pact." As she explains, "[t]his was a conscious return [by Barak] to the theme of citizenship, initially developed by Azmi Bishara", (2003, 121-122). For more on the political thought of Azmi Bishara see Fraser and Shabat (2003).

Within months, on 28 September, Ariel Sharon, under heavy police escort, decided to visit the *al-Aqsa* mosque, knowing it would be considered a provocation.[73] As one of the three holiest sites of Islam, there was wide spread rage among Palestinians, both in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and in Israel. Within twenty-four hours, thousands of Palestinians in Israel held mass counterdemonstrations in which Israeli police killed five Palestinian citizens. At the same time, there was an outbreak of violence and clashes with the Israeli Defense Forces in the Occupied Territories. In response to the deaths of five Palestinian citizens and in solidarity with their brethren in the territories, on 30 September the Supreme Follow-up Committee of Israeli Arabs called for a general strike across the Palestinian towns of Israel. In the end, thirteen Palestinian citizens were killed, as well as one Jewish Israeli citizen.

In November 2000 the Orr Commission was set up to investigate the October 2000 events and the killing of Palestinian citizens.[74] The report, which appeared in September 2003, is in many ways a statement on the identity and citizenship status of the Palestinian minority (see Peled 2005). As Rabinowtiz and Abu-Baker (2005, 158-161) argue, the fifty-page introduction to the report goes further than any other state document in acknowledging the predicaments of Palestinians of Israel and their struggles for equality, going so far as to suggest that, as an indigenous minority, the Palestinians in Israel have a right to claim certain collective rights. While the report does not go into any detail as to the reach and definition of these collective rights, the very acknowledgment that such

[73] Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker (2005, 101) point out that Sharon's visit was also motivated by an internal power struggle within his own Likud party, and in particular Netanyahu.
[74] Named after the Supreme Court justice who headed the committee, Theodor Orr.

rights exist for the Palestinian minority opens the question as to whether Israel is something more than a state for Jews (Ibid., 161). In other words, it brings into question the problem of Palestinian citizenship within a Jewish and democratic state.

Unfortunately, the conclusions of the Orr report fall well short of the tone taken in the introduction. As Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker (2005, 162) note:

> On the whole, however, the conclusion [of the Orr report] is a faint shadow of the sweeping and refreshing impetus apparent in the introduction. It is as if, before composing the conclusion, the commission reread its own introduction, panicked at its implications, and decided to shrink the scope of is recommendations to a level more acceptable to mainstream Israel.

For all its efforts to assert itself, to move from a "politics of protest" to a politics of "power-sharing," the second generation of Palestinians in Israel that had supported the Labour government from Rabin to Barak found itself back in the political conditions that preceded the 1970s, and simultaneously suffering from fatigue.

There is little doubt that the period from the mid-1970s to the late 1990s brought significant and often positive changes to the Palestinian community in Israel. From economic opportunities and increased birth rates to access to higher levels of education and social services, this period was in many ways a "golden era." But it also brought with it the realization that little had changed, that Palestinians remained second-class citizens in a Jewish state. For all these gains, levels of employment and income, health care, social services, remained lower than the Jewish Israeli population. Moreover, through a series of legislative moves with the Knesset, political participation had become difficult for those who opposed the "ethnocratic" nature of the Israeli state, an idea that I will address in

greater detail below. Thus, when demonstrations erupted in October 2000, what emerged was a new generation, one that was young, educated and highly disillusioned.

Importantly, according to Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker (2005), all but one of the Palestinians killed in October 2000 were under thirty, with two in their late teens. This was the first political stand of the new generation, what they call the Stand-Tall generation.[75] This generation was born roughly around the time of Land Day in 1976 and "came of age" with the previous generations' failed efforts at civil equality and the rise of the Palestinian national movement during the first intifada in 1988 (Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker 2005, 113). Having been raised during this period, the third generation took confidence and pride from the achievements of the Palestinian national movement, particularly the PLO, which it then turned on the previous generation to highlight its misguided attempts to see the Palestinian people accepted as full and equal members of Israeli society (Ibid.). This new generation also saw the identity politics that the previous generation attempted to mobilize as futile, an endless effort that would never result in a desirable outcome. In other words, in their eyes, any effort to conceptualize a double or dual Palestinian-Israeli identity is a foregone failure given that genuine equality and inclusion are impossible from the start. This "impatient skepticism" has led the third generation to radically rethink identity, and with it, its understanding of Israeli citizenship. It is a generation that is reasserting its presence in a social space in which they were previously neither visible nor heard. It is in this sense that the fear behind Michaeli's proposed law to silence the

[75] As Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker (2005) point out, the place of this new generation is yet to be determined.

noise emanating from the Mosques in Israel is surely the noise that is reconfiguring this spatio-temporal order; the noise of democracy.

"We are all present absentees"

The generation that took part and organized the Land Day protests in 1976 had broken the silence and confronted the fears of their parents' generation who had endured nearly twenty years under a Military Administration. For the first time, Palestinians came together as a community and demanded from the Israeli government their full and equal civil rights, which, by the 1990s was phrased as "a state for all its citizens." If there was a sense of renewed possibility among this generation, by the 1990s, with the exclusion of the Palestinians in Israel from the Oslo process and their continued discrimination and exclusion within Israel, this generation had become "worn out."

The "stand tall generation" that emerged after 2000 has taken a different approach to political struggle. While continuing their struggle within the political arena, either through the Knesset and political parties or through NGOs, it is a generation that has also sought to rethink the terms of their identity, skeptical of how far identity claims can go in attaining equality. It is therefore not surprising that the internal refugee or present absentee question was to re-emerge at this time. The present absentee was the embodiment of the condition of Palestinians in Israel as a whole, a people that have been displaced and become strangers at home (Arabic: *al-ghurba*). As Masalha (2009, 5) states:

> The internally displaced found themselves in a unique situation. Despite their historic, geographic, cultural and national ties with the Palestinian people, they were "refugees" in their own homeland and their special situation was shared with the Palestinian minority in Israel. Sharing common memories of their "towns and villages of origin," they formed a distinct group (in a distinctly weak position) among the Palestinian citizens of Israel: "a minority within a minority" – with its adverse consequences of "double marginalization".

As I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 5, when my friend Adi bluntly stated, "we are all present absentees" what he was doing was re-appropriating this colonial category for all Palestinians in Israel. As Leela Gandhi (2011, 32) has noted: "There is, of course, a rich tradition within numerous oppressed cultures for the positive re-appropriation of pejoratives". At work in this re-appropriation, I will argue, is a figure of political subjectivity, an impossible identification that is not simply a resistance to state regimes of identification but more significantly a disruption of these regimes of identification and their spatio-temporal ordering. It is an "impossible identification" insofar as those aligning themselves with it are not "present absentees," thus overturning its colonialist underpinnings. Moreover, it is the expression of a radical equality that has been twisted; it is the noise of democracy.

Michael Halak: Suspension

The last time I saw Michael before leaving was when he had asked me to come to his studio at Pyramida, a gallery space with a number of artist studios in the Wadi el Saleib area of Haifa. He wanted me to come to see some new pieces he had just finished, works he thought I'd find interesting for my research. Up until this point I had always been given a lift by friends to his studio, usually someone on their way either to Akka or Nazareth. This time, however, I decided to walk. I knew the Wadi el Salib well, having heard about it in the news over the previous months and from many early weekend mornings with friends at the flea market. Among Jewish Israelis, the Wadi el Salib is known for the riots in 1959 between Jewish Moroccan immigrants and the Haifa police, since becoming a "site of Israeli memory" reflecting the ethnic discrimination against Mizrahim Jews (see Weiss 2011). For Palestinians, however, lost in this history is their presence in the Wadi el Salib before 1948, what was once a flourishing community and the center of life in Haifa.[76] Before leaving Michael's studio that day I went to a window that overlooked what had once been the center of the Wadi. Since 2007, many of the properties in the area, the majority of which are refugee owned and therefore protected by Israeli and international law, are being sold to private investors.[77] The fragmentation of Wadi, both historically and

[76] The Wadi el Salib area was the subject of the artist Ahlam Shibli's 1999 photographic series, *Wadi Saleib in 9 Volumes*. In this series Shibli returns to the Wadi el Salib and photographs Palestinians re-inhabiting the abandoned homes. I will discuss her work, and this series, in a later chapter.

[77] These properties are protected under the Absentee Property Laws and are to be held by the Israel Land Administration until the refugee question is resolved. Israel claims that a second law

in the public memory, is nicely captured in Michael's playful painting of photographic snapshots of the area (Figure 11).

When I got to Michael's studio he was hanging one of his new paintings on the wall for me to see, a painting I had already seen the week before on his Facebook page. In the middle of the canvas was an Israeli Blue-ID card held by two pieces of masking tape on to what appears to be a section of a brown carton shipping box, a sticker directly below the ID card saying "FRAGILE: HANDLE WITH CARE" (Figure 12).[78] Michael was visibly proud of this work and it garnered many positive comments in the week since he put it up on Facebook. "So what do you think?" Michael asked. "I like it, very much, but I can't help but feel there's a lot going on here," I answered. Michael smiled in affirmation. "On the one hand," I continued, "it is deceptively simply but, on the other, the composition suggests far more." Michael paused, looking at the painting: "You're right, what do you see?" "Let me think more about it and I'll let you know," I replied. Michael then showed me a sketch of a glass vase with three apples suspended inside sitting inside a shoebox. Before I had a chance to say anything he told me, "wait," and quickly disappeared to an adjacent room, what appeared to be a supply room. After a few minutes he returned with a shoebox in hand, the outside of which was in a bright orange: "This is the box, what do you think?" he asked (Figure 13). I looked at the sketch and then back at the box and said: "well, I see the apples are suspended in air, with the orange of the box framing, almost

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passed in the 1960s does not forbid the sale of refugee property in urban settings. Adalah is presently contesting this claim. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hm1fTLwKuWQ

[78] The Blue-ID (*Teudat Zehut*) is an identity card that every Israeli citizen, as well as those with legal resident status, over 16 is required to carry.

enclosing them, as if to signal a warning or danger. Is this what you had in mind?" Michael appreciated my interpretation, "I always want to hear what other people see, it helps me see new things."

Over the following few weeks I carried an image of Michael's painting of the Blue-ID around on my phone, showing friends to see their reactions. For the most part the response was positive, though not amazed, that is, until I told them it was a painting: "Really? Wow!" They would then look again, more intently, their indifference turning to appreciation. However, not everyone was impressed, my friend Bilal rather bluntly asking: "Why didn't he just take a photograph?" I suppose that showing people such a painting on a phone was not the best way to appreciate it. Those who were impressed with the painting chuckled about the "Fragile" sticker below the Blue-ID, recounting stories of how they had lost theirs or how they didn't have it on them when they were stopped by the police. Other friends got into more detailed discussions about the way the older ID cards used to say Jewish or Arab, which the state, after much criticism changed. They further pointed out how the new ones continue to distinguish who is Jewish and who is Arab, albeit less obviously by way of a line of asterisks or the format of the date of birth, which includes the Hebrew date of birth for Jewish citizens. As my friend Khulood poignantly said, "these [ID cards] are just another way they [Israel] make sure they keep us [Arabs] separate."

As Michael and I got to know each other over the year, our conversations often tended to cross a variety of topics, but one subject we always returned to, without much

prompting, was the issue of identity. A particular conversation was especially perspicacious. Sitting in a friend's apartment in Haifa during one of our first long talks, Michael told me he was from Fassouta, an Arab Christian village near the border of Lebanon. As we continued talking about his village, Michael abruptly declared, "I'm not Palestinian or 100% Arab." At first his denial of being Palestinian greatly confused me considering his work had a nuanced but strong political message regarding the state of Palestinians in Israel. Maybe he was being flippant with me, trying to be a bit provocative for the anthropologist. At the time our conversation quickly moved on to another topic, and I didn't have a chance to confront Michael about this statement. But it stayed with me and I was not willing to let such a claim go, and some time later I asked him: "Do you remember telling me one time that you weren't Palestinian or Arab? What did you mean by this? Michael clarified: "My grandfather from my dad's side is American, my other grandparents have Lebanese roots and I'm Catholic. In Jewish eyes I'm Arab and Palestinian, as are all the '48 Arabs in Israel, and they treat us so." I suppose I had assumed, wrongly it turns out, that the issues of identity in Michael's work were about a Palestinian identity. But was I entirely wrong? What did Michael mean by "and they treat us so"?

Thinking about this statement I was reminded of something Michael told me that day sitting in a friend's apartment in Haifa, about a recent event at the University of Haifa where he taught in the art department: "Last semester something funny happened. I was teaching a course, basic introduction to art techniques. One day I found out that almost

half of the 20 students, the 9 out of the 10 Jewish students, were dropping the second part of the course," Michael said. "Why?" I asked. He continued: "When I asked why they were dropping the course, they said because they cannot be taught by an Arab; they couldn't continue and would wait until a Jewish professor gives the course to do the second half." I was stunned: "Because you're an Arab!?! But how did they not know you were Arab? When they signed up for the course, or at least when they first came to the course, couldn't they tell?" I inquired. "Michael is a common Jewish name, and my last name, it's not so easy to tell; and it was impossible to tell from my Hebrew. It was only when I spoke to a few of the Arab students in Arabic one day that they found out, and that's when they decided they couldn't continue. I pointed out that this was a basic art techniques class and that my being Arab made no difference, but it didn't matter." As we talked it became clear that the reaction of Michael's students to drop the second part of the course, decided on the basis of his proclaimed identity in Jewish eyes as an Arab, is what undoubtedly what Michael meant when he said to me later, "and they treat us so." It was not entirely surprising that identity was a troubling issue for Michael, and many of his self-portraits express this sense of unease and discomfort. While on numerous occasions he hinted to me of the importance of his self-portraits, he said very little more about them. Each of his self-portraits would appear to express an anxiety of sorts, but as I got to know Michael, I started to see something different, something about not belonging to the traditional categories of identification that were being imposed. The first indication I got of this, even though I wasn't aware of it at the time, was when I first met him.

My friend Nardeen, also an artist and close friend of his for many years, insisted I should meet Michael and even offered to introduce me. Still at Pyramida, he was in a different studio space that was smaller and more confined. As I walked through the door I noticed unfinished portraits leaning against the far wall, but it was when I turned around that I saw the works Michael wanted to show me. On the wall was a series of paintings, the most striking of which was one with three green apples over-towering a single cherry front and center (Figure 14). I moved forward to see it more closely. On one of the apples was a sticker, “48,” an obvious reference to the establishment of the state of Israel. But I was curious, what was a cherry doing here? I turned to Michael, “A cherry? They aren’t even native here,” I said. “Neither are the green apples,” he replied, “they came with the creation of Israel, imported from Europe.” “So,” I continued, “nothing is native in this painting?” “Nothing,” he replied. “And the cherry? If the apples are to represent Israelis coming from Europe, is the cherry supposed to be you?” With a sly smile on his face, Michael said, “it is.” But,” I asked, “how are you not native to here?” This was the first time I had met Michael and I assumed he was Palestinian and that therefore the “you” was a collective subject referring to Palestinians in Israel, to portray himself by way of an imported cherry seemed to me to be odd, but I didn’t then understand his own uneasy relationship with his identity, not for a few more months at least. I remember expressing my puzzlement regarding the cherry, or at least its apparent incoherence. As it was our first time meeting, and as Michael was quite shy to begin with, there wasn’t much

explanation, but he did make a remark that took me many months to understand: “I’m not native here either.”

Michael was never short of contradictions. The last day I saw him he pulled out one final painting for me to see, a landscape. On a grey and slightly tattered wall hangs a small piece of paper that has been torn out of a spiral bound notebook. Having been folded in four, perhaps to put in one’s pocket or to maybe to pass along to someone else without revealing its contents, a secret note, it is now opened and its message exposed (Figure 15).

As I stared at the painting I didn’t know what this list was supposed to tell me. The objects were typical symbols – a shepherd, sheep, olive trees, a blue sky, no clouds – symbols Palestinians might invoke to talk about what they lost in 1948. An image formed in my mind, was the point to remember this now lost place? Yes, there was the question of the numbers, which didn’t seem in any way random: 1, 10, 20. Confused, I turned to Michael and asked: “What is this list and the corresponding numbers supposed to designate?” Without any hesitation, Michael replied: “1 is for the day, 10 is for the month, 20, plus a 0 for the blue sky and a 0 for no clouds, a year.” 1 October 2000, the October Ignition when 13 Palestinians in Israel were killed by Israeli police in demonstrations and strikes in support of the Second Intifada. If Michael claims not to be Palestinian, artistic gestures such as this landscape suggest otherwise. But then he was never without contradiction.

Some days after seeing Michael for the last time I sent him a short message about the painting of the Blue-ID he showed me that day: “One thing that I keep thinking about is that it’s not clear whom this identity card belongs to since we can’t see inside of it to know for sure. It’s as if its fragility is what is unknown. Arab, Jew, Christian?” A few hours later I got an even shorter response from him: “☺”.

Figure 11: Michael Halak, *Wadi el Salib*, 2011

Figure 12: Michael Halak, *Fragile*, 2011

Figure 13: Michael Halak, *Untitled*, 2011

Figure 14: Michael Halak, *Untitled*, 2009

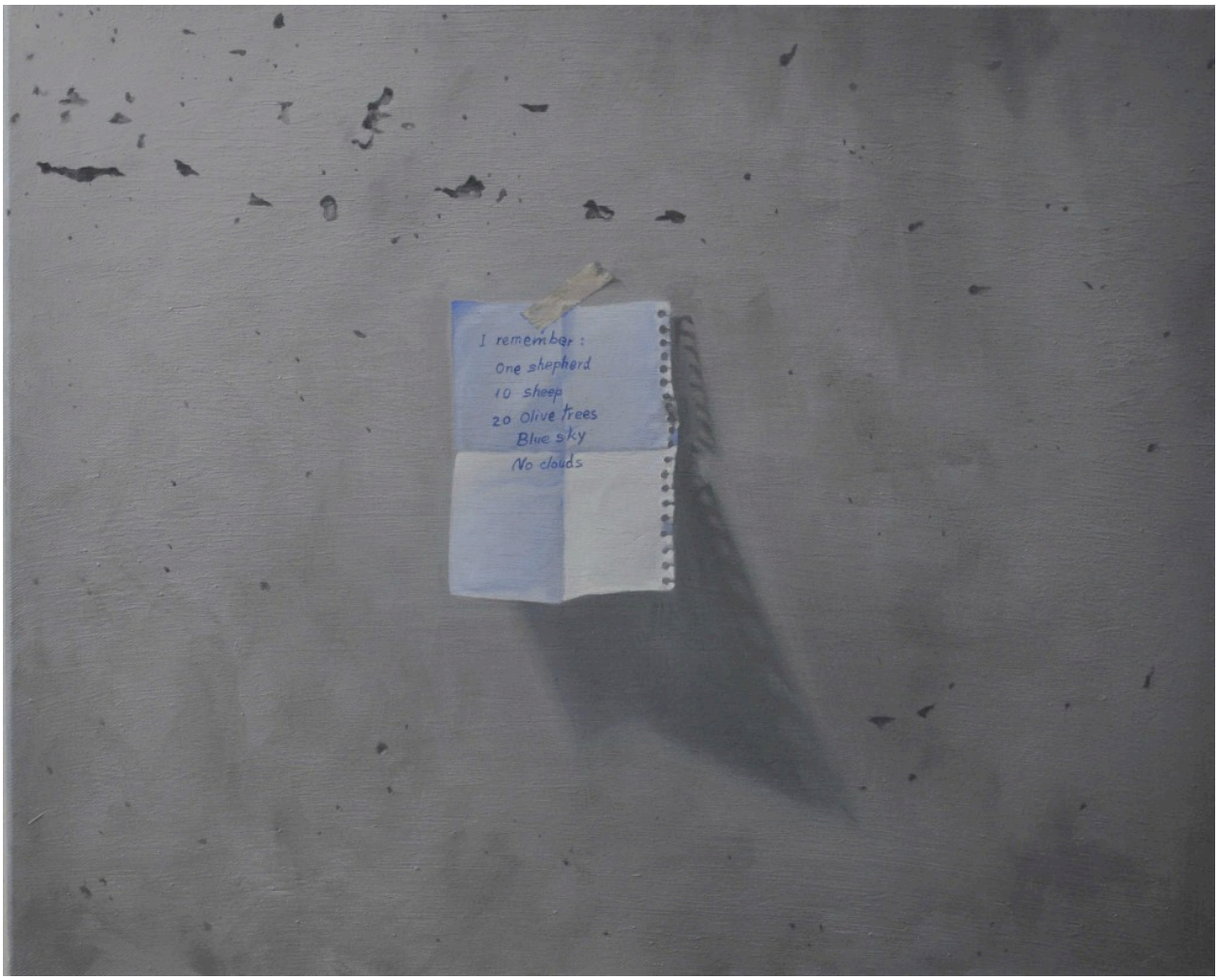

Figure 15: Michael Halak, *Landscape*, 2011

Chapter 3: Anthropology, Contemporary Art and the Politics of Place

Introduction: Contemporary Art and Anthropology

In their now seminal text *The Traffic in Culture*, George E. Marcus and Fred Myers' (1995, 1) begin with the bold claim that anthropology and contemporary art share a common object of culture: "In contemporary cultural life, art has come to occupy a space long associated with anthropology, becoming one of the main sites for tracking, representing, and performing the effects of difference in contemporary life". Both contemporary art and anthropology are thus involved in "positing or evoking difference" (Ibid., 20) and, moreover, of "transforming difference into discourse, for making it meaningful for thought and action" (Ibid., 34-35). To be sure, the affinity between these two practices, as "discursive arenas for comprehending or evaluating cultural activity" (Ibid., 5-6), is rooted in their common critical stance toward modernity (Ibid., 6). In other words, both are cultural practices that, in being discursively separate from culture, have culture as their object. Their central point is that, modern anthropology and modern art have long been engaged in the game of representing and producing cultural difference.[79] In a similar vein, the idea of contemporary art and anthropology sharing a common object is also maintained by Arnd Schneider (1996,185) who claims, "artistic expression is as legitimate

[79] Although they note that the influence of art discourses on anthropological thinking about culture is a history that has yet to be written, they do offer an outline (Marcus and Myers 1995, 11).

and valid in representing other cultures as academically legitimized and institutionalized forms of anthropological writing, film and photography" (see also Schneider and Wright 2006; 2010; MacClancy 1997).

For Marcus and Myers (1995, 11), discussions of cultural difference in the West have long been developed in the art world, and, moreover, "art continues to be the space in which difference, identity, and cultural value are being produced and contested". What they signal is that the traffic between anthropology and art, the condition of their present affinity, has a strong historical precedent (see Rampley 2000), with modern art figuring in many anthropological concerns about cultural difference (e.g. primitivism, cubism, surrealism) and anthropology providing many of the ideas within these same movements (e.g. Frazer's *Golden Bough*). Indeed, as Schneider (1996: 200-201) contends,

> … differences between artists and anthropologists are matters of historical, social and cultural choice and disciplinary confinement, rather than being founded on differences in substance of the cognitive processes knowledge acquisition and production.

Such affinities might appear to open up numerous probing questions and collaborations, a crossing of boundaries and borders with distinct opportunities for challenging both practices, as Arnd Schneider and Christopher Wright have provocatively explored (2006; 2010; see also Marcus 2010; Strohm 2012).[80] As Morphy and Perkins (2006, 470) note:

> If done in collaboration, such visual or artistic methodologies can, as with ethnographic film, play an important role, since expressive representations

[80] For Schneider (1993) in particular, the relationship between art and anthropology dates at least from the 1960s in the uses of fieldwork by such artists as Jean Rouch, Susan Hiller, Joseph Kosuth, etc.

> are natural formats for the dissemination of anthropological research on cultural practices that are themselves artistic or expressive forms in the communities where they are produced.

Setting aside the promising avenues opened up in this affinity of practices, the relationship between contemporary art and anthropology Marcus and Myers (1995) are asserting demands closer inspection. To be more specific, what exactly is this "shared object of culture"? Further, what does it mean that art and anthropology occupy the same site as culture?

While anthropologists have long been aware of the difficulties of defining the concept of culture (see Brightman 1995; White 2006a), focusing on Marcus and Myers' use of the concept, as well as its reiteration by others working in the anthropology of art (Schneider 2006; McClancy 1997; Morphy and Perkins 2006; Schneider and Wright 2006, 2010), but also following more recent thinking about culture across anthropology, culture is here broadly conceived as "a site of difference and contestation." Culture does not so much designate "a domain of sharing and commonality" as it does a "ground and stake of a rich field of cultural-political practices" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997a, 5; see Appadurai and Breckenridge 1988, 6-7; Marcus and Myers 1995, 11). For Gupta and Ferguson (1997b) there is a distinct emphasis on the spatiality of culture and its transformation from a bounded place to a "site of difference and contestation." Thus, when Marcus and Myers (1995) note that art and anthropology occupy a common space, it is arguably this "site" of culture that they have in common, and of which they both are part. To be sure, at the beginning of their introduction they point out that one of the distinguishing factors of a

critical anthropology of art, setting it apart from previous scholarship both in anthropology and more broadly, is a recognition that "anthropology is implicated with the very subject matter that it wants to make the object of its study: art worlds" (Ibid., 1).

Of particular interest to me here is how this spatial understanding of culture functions within Marcus and Myers' program for conceiving the relationship between art and anthropology. Conceived as a *site* of difference and contestation, they argue, anthropology and art both *occupy a space* in which difference is both ground and stake, something given and disputed. In order to further unpack this idea, I want to focus on the spatial metaphors of "site" and "space" in so far as they point to an underlying spatial logic within Marcus and Myers' argument. Beyond elaborating the relationship between anthropology and art, I am also interested in what these spatial metaphors can reveal about the conceptualization of politics in the anthropology of art, a discussion I will take up in more detail in the following chapter.[81] Within the writings on the relationship between space and place within anthropology (e.g.,Gupta and Ferguson 1997a), the processes by which place is space made meaningful, especially as a practice of politics, is a central consideration. It is this relationship that I read back into Marcus and Myers' understanding the affinity between art and anthropology.

Starting from these spatial metaphors, the current chapter explores the affinity between anthropology and contemporary art by situating it within wider anthropological

[81] To be fair, it is not as though politics is absent in the anthropology of art. Indeed, there is often an indication of politics in the claim that art is most often tied to the assertion of identity claims, a point I will discuss at length at the end of this chapter and in the following one. That said, it is nonetheless disconcerting that in Morphy and Perkins' (2006) reader in the anthropology of art, politics is absent from the subject index.

discussions of space and place. Specifically, I contend that both anthropology and art are practices of place making, that is, of making space meaningful. In other words, by "transforming difference into discourse" (Marcus and Myers 1995, 34-35), both are engaged in place making and thus can be considered cultural practices with political implications. The recent historical conjuncture at which anthropology recognizes its close relationship to contemporary art is a period marked by their mutual concern with the politics of space and place. From the boundaries of fieldwork and culture in anthropology to the site, location and public/community as political interventions in contemporary art, it is a period in which both practices are responding to the effects of globalization and how these spatial concerns have left the givenness of place, "the natural property of a spatially localized people" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997a, 3), unstable and problematic. On the one hand, anthropology finds itself struggling with the question of place and its relation to the spatial dimensions of globalization in terms of power and global capital (Gupta and Ferguson 1997a; Escobar 2001). On the other, for many contemporary art historians, theorists and artists, especially those working in the 1990s and early 2000s, the idea of culture as a site of difference becomes a dominant theme (Foster 1996; Papastergiadis 2010). As art historian Anne Ring Petersen (2012, 198) has described, the issue of cultural identity or difference as an object of art practices appeared in the 1980s, at a time when the exclusion of artists of non-Western origin came under attack, leading to both the critique of institutional attitudes and the adoption of multicultural policies within art institutions and curatorial practices.[82] Thus, for contemporary art, the mid-80s

[82] It is widely considered among art historians that the preeminent historical moment of this

and early 90s is a period in which the social and political relevance of art is critiqued and extended beyond the frames of the gallery and museum through such practices as site-specificity and installation art (Kwon 2002). It is also at this time that the appropriation of so-called "anthropological" methods (i.e., ethnographic fieldwork) by many artists reaches a high point in the effort to underline the constitutive role of place and the everyday within contemporary art practice (Papastergiadis 2010, 15; Foster 1996).[83]

With these issues in mind, the first section of this chapter examines the claim that culture is the shared object of anthropology and contemporary art. Specifically, I look at the spatial moorings underlying the idea of culture as a "site" of difference and contestation. I argue that this spatial conception of culture leads to an understanding of anthropology and art as practices of place making. In the second part I take up the problem of place in anthropology, providing an overview of the criticisms of place as projecting a bounded, fixed and exclusionary conception of culture versus the mobility, circulation and hybridity of contemporary life. In the third section I explore the recent "return of place" in anthropological research and how these are efforts to mediate the

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arrival was the 1989 exhibition in Paris, "Magiciens de la terre": "For the first time ever, art from non-Western countries was set in an historical framework" (Konijn 1992, 29). For art critic Rasheed Araeen (2000), the exhibition largely set the agenda for the inclusion of other artists (i.e., non-Western) in the contemporary art scene thereafter. Going further, art historian Julian Stallabrass (2004) argues however that the exploration of diversity, difference, and hybridity dates from the end of the Second World War and the establishment of New York as the centre of the art world.

[83] In a somewhat more acerbic assessment of this turn to anthropology, for art critic Hal Foster the "ethnographic turn" within contemporary art in the late 1980s was effectively premised on the valorization of cultural alterity (read: difference) as the new exploited proletariat; that is, "the cultural and/or ethnic other in whose name the artist often struggles (Foster 1995, 302). It is significant that Foster's essay (albeit an abridged version), "The Artist as Ethnographer" appears in Marcus and Myers' (1995) *The Traffic in Culture*, conveniently adding a critical art historical legitimacy to their central claim. For an important critique of Foster's essay, see Rampley (2001).

tension between the deterritorialization of culture and the attachments of culture to place; that is, how place making, in particular, is a strategy for contesting the power relations of a spatially interconnected world. In the final part of the chapter, I look to anthropology and art as practices of place making and ask whether the continued adherence to culture as the site of identity/difference has not led to an over-emphasis on the question of identity politics. Turning to my fieldwork, I contend that this adherence to identity politics has its limits and must be rethought the object of further analysis and criticism. Thus, I ask, is there a way to rethink place making without identity? Put differently, is it possible to conceive of the affinity between anthropology and art as cultural practices that are not unavoidably bound to assertions of identity and difference? An attempt to answer this question will be the task of the next chapter.

Culture and Contemporary Life

As Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1992, 13) have pointed out in their reading of *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (Marcus and Fischer 1986), the notion of cultural critique put forward in that work depends on a "spatialized understanding of cultural difference that needs to be problematized". The notion of cultural critique that it attempts to reclaim for anthropology, in short, rests on an "already existing world of many different, distinct 'cultures,'" which are so positioned as to gain critical insight into each (see

Marcus and Fischer 1986, 117). The problem, Gupta and Ferguson (1992, 14) note, is the following:

> The fundamental conception of cultural critique as a relation between "different societies" ends up, perhaps against the authors' intentions, spatializing cultural difference in familiar ways, as ethnography becomes … a link between an unproblematized "home" and "abroad." The anthropological relation is not simply with people who are different, but with a "different society," "a different culture," and this, inevitably, a relation between "here" and "there".

The presupposition of the project of cultural critique is that differences are starting points, thus implicitly sustaining a vision of pre-given cultures occupying separate places. What Gupta and Ferguson problematize is the ahistorical assumption underlying this project and how it effectively effaces the historical construction of differences (Ibid., 16). The point, they argue, is to understand how "differences are produced and maintained in a field of power relations in a world always already spatially interconnected" (Ibid., 17). As they argue, "enforced difference becomes part and parcel of a global system of domination" (Ibid.). Indeed, such a conception of cultural difference carries the risk of "nativizing" the other through a bounding and fixing of the "Other" in place (see Appadurai 1988b). This process, which will be explored further below, detracts from the significance of difference as a historical product and process that "differentiates the world as it connects it" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 16).[84]

[84] Matti Bunzl (2004) has recently made a similar argument for a historical appreciation of cultural difference, though his criticisms go much further than Gupta and Ferguson. As he states: "While articulated as criticisms of Malinowskian fieldwork, such positions [e.g. Gupta and Ferguson (1997b) and Clifford (1997)] reaffirm foundational aspects of the paradigm they deplore,

If my aim is to engage the spatial approach to culture and the problems therein, I should clarify that my concern is not to suggest that Marcus and Myers' conceptualization of cultural difference holds to the idea that the people anthropologists study are sedentary or inescapably rooted to particular places; rather, it is to underline their recognition of the unmooring of culture and place. This point comes through most clearly in the emphasis they put upon "contemporary life." Significantly, contemporary life for Marcus and Myers is the critical juncture at which art and anthropology come together and occupy a shared space. For Marcus and Myers it is arguably the peculiarity of contemporary life that makes the present affinity between art and anthropology noteworthy. Indeed, it is not as if art and anthropology haven't crossed before, one need only recall the historical conjunctions between anthropology and art noted in Clifford's (1988) *Predicament of Culture* and Marcus and Fischer's (1986) accounts of the avant-garde in *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* for a historical account of previous crossings and collaborations. What is contemporary life? And how does their understanding of contemporary life lead to a spatial consideration of culture? Moreover, how does it allow them to "conceptualize cultural difference without invoking the orthodox idea of 'culture' [i.e., place-bound]" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 19).

Unlike engagements between art and anthropology in the early twentieth century, the vagaries of contemporary life present an entirely unprecedented set of circumstances and conditions; for anthropology it is a globalizing world "where new metaphors of

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sustaining the ethnographic hierarchy of Self and Other at the very moment they attempt to transcend it" (Bunzl 2004, 436).

mobility (diaspora, displacement, traveling, deterritorialization, border crossing, hybridity, nomadology) are privileged in explanations of culture and identity" (Escobar 2001, 146). In conceptual and theoretical terms, these changes have pushed anthropologists away from the fixity, givenness or naturalness of place toward a wider view of the spatial relations of power beyond the boundaries of the local. In contemporary life, culture and place have become uncoupled, with culture deterritorialized, the consequence of which Marcus and Myers (1995) described earlier as being the "interpenetration of cultures." For the ever mobile contemporary artist, increasingly attentive to the experiences of being in a particular place, globalization has been similarly understood in terms of the deterritorialization of culture and general rootlessness, and likewise has incurred the awareness that the experience of culture no longer happens in isolation of wider global relations (Papastergiadis 2010, 17; 8). With culture, once attached to a particular place and location, now uprooted and embroiled in the flows of the global, tropes of placelessness or "non-lieux" (Augé 1992) have become the essential features of contemporary life. If place exists, it is something made in the process of giving meaning to space (Cresswell 2004; Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003); in other words, it is the localized effect of global power relations (Gupta and Ferguson 1992).

There is, however, a peculiar tension between space and place in contemporary life. As has been pointed out by a number of anthropologists, the paradox of contemporary life is that the increase in mobility and transnationality, an unprecedented

acceleration in deterritorialization (Appadurai 1988b; Harvey 1990),[85] has not curtailed the desire for the attachment to a particular place in the world (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 10; Olwig 1997, 17; Bauman 2000; Escobar 2001, 140; White 2002). Similarly, as Papastergiadis (2010, 8) notes with respect to contemporary art, "[artistic] practices are increasingly defined by the dual desire for mobility and attachment to place". Contemporary artists, by exploring practices that are sited, conceived or presented in or for a particular place, seek to draw attention to the everyday and its particularities with a critical view of its process of production. As art theorist Miwon Kwon (2002, 8) argues, with a slight twist, one of the aims of contemporary art is to "counter both the nostalgic desire for a retrieval of rooted, place-bound identities on the one hand, and the antinostalgic embrace of a nomadic fluidity of subjectivity, identity, and spatiality on the other".[86]

It is here that we begin to discern a tension between space and place, a tension that, I will argue, underlies object of culture in art and anthropology. Despite culture being decoupled from place, there is a recognition that it still retains a localized dimension or site. As suggested in the above discussion of contemporary life, in which place and the local are the effects of global relations of power, the assumption that culture be tied to a particular place, even through historical elision, is unsustainable. Yet, this is not to suggest that we should abandon place, or that space and place are not

[85] Appadurai (1988a, 16) defines the "problem of place" in anthropology as "the problem of culturally defined places to which ethnographies refer". I will elaborate this point below.
[86] Kwon (1997, 109) also states that in the context of site-specific art: "[D]espite the proliferation of discursive sites and 'fictional' selves, the phantom of a site as an actual place remains, and our psychic, habitual attachments to places regularly return as they continue to inform our sense of identity".

related. People do continue to assert their attachment and belonging to a particular place; it is precisely this making of place that merits our attention, especially the relationship between space and the continued desire for an attachment to place understood as "the process whereby a space achieves a distinctive *identity* as a place" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 4; original emphasis). As Hastrup and Olwig have similarly stated, the point is not to take "local cultures for granted… but to explore the siting of culture as a dynamic process of self-understanding" (1997, 3). Most importantly, however, following Gupta and Ferguson (1992, 11), "the urgent task is to politicize this uncontestable observation." To understand this process whereby space becomes place is, in other words, to understand how the bond between culture and place is established *historically* as part of a spatial distribution of hierarchical power relations (see also Harvey 1993, 21). This being the case, I want to extend Marcus and Myers' claim that culture is the shared object of contemporary art and anthropology, by adding to it the process by which culture becomes attached to place. The affinity between at and anthropology, in other words, is that both are practices of place making. To be sure, it is as practices of place making that both processes are deeply political.

If, however, the isomorphism of culture and place are to be avoided, as has been argued in anthropology and contemporary art theory, a reconsideration of place must be undertaken.

The Problem of Place

I would like to begin this discussion of the problem of place in anthropology in a slightly roundabout manner, by briefly rehearsing what is undoubtedly a commonplace for most anthropologists: the unraveling of the culture concept since the 1980s.[87] For many, the "writing culture" debate spurred a radical critique in anthropology, a rethinking of its practices and the retooling of its ways of knowing.[88] It started more or less with the central contention that alongside participant observation, ethnography was also a matter of writing and therefore must be considered more closely (Clifford 1986). The point, in other words, was how a critical attention to writing or the making of texts would reveal more closely the dynamics of power with fieldwork practice. I will not here review the often widely divergent ensemble of texts that make up *Writing Culture*; instead I want to focus on how this attention to writing opened an avenue for the critique of the culture concept that immediately followed.

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[87] The following discussion of the problem of place in anthropology will be centered on a body of literature from between the 1980s and early 2000s. This period is significant insofar as it is the height of the theoretical debate surrounding space and place in anthropology (specifically U.S. anthropology). This is not to suggest that the debate has gone silent, but it is surely less prominent.

[88] In this context I am referring to George E. Marcus and James Clifford's (1986) *Writing Culture*. Also see Marcus and Cushman (1982) and Geertz (1988). It should be noted, however, that this critique, emerging at the time of the neo-liberalization of the American academy, was a culmination, or better, consolidation and pacification of earlier critiques, e.g. Hymes (1972); Asad (1973); see also White (2012). As Gupta and Ferguson (1997b, 24) rightly suggest, the radicalism of these earlier critiques more or less failed on account of their implicit adherence to "conventional conception of the relation of anthropologist to 'the field'". I will return to the issue of the field and fieldwork below.

The disclosure that the reality anthropologists often depicted in their writing was partial and far from transparent led to a more probing examination into how the ethnographic text itself was being constructed.[89] Borrowing the tools of literary criticism popular at the time, the debate on writing focused on the rhetorical techniques invoked in the representation of other cultures, such as the disappearance of the author/anthropologist once the *mise-en-scène* had been established (Clifford 1986). This critique of writing dispelled the illusion of textual transparency and ethnographic authority, and brought to the foreground what is now referred to as the "politics of representation" in anthropology (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Marcus and Fischer 1986; Clifford 1988).[90] In the years that followed the publication of *Writing Culture* other anthropologists continued to critically explore the rhetorical techniques within ethnographic writing, from various experimental approaches that borrowed from art and fiction (Marcus and Fischer 1986; Clifford 1988) to the phenomenon of fieldnotes (Sanjek 1990), dialogical anthropology (Tedlock and Mannheim 1995), and other critical forms of knowledge production (Fabian 1991).[91] One particular line of inquiry, and the one that interests me here, was directed at what was called "ethnographic holism"; the way in

[89] A similar point is made, much earlier, by Johannes Fabian in his *Time and the Other*. Here Fabian (1983, 74-76) discusses how "folk", ", primitive" and "savage" were all categories in the making of the object of anthropology that were temporal operators or relations, devices for that served time-distancing effects (to this list should be added "culture" – see McGrane [1989]).

[90] The "politics of representation," though rarely explicitly defined, refers to the dynamics of power relations within the process of representational practices, such as ethnography. The conflation of politics and power, common in English speaking social scientific discourse (Glick-Schiller 1997, 1-2), will be problematized in the following chapter.

[91] For Johannes Fabian representation is not about the mirroring of the field or another culture in the ethnographic text (i.e., an indexical relationship), but a process of knowledge production that happens through conversation and confrontation, which is then re-presented in the ethnographic text (see Fabian 1991).

which the ethnographic text became a closed form built around the idea that culture itself was by its nature a whole. As Robert Thornton (1988, 285) described the problem:

> Unlike the zoologist who describes the mollusc before him, the ethnographer must imagine the "whole" that is society, and convey this imagination of wholeness to his reader, along with descriptions of places seen, speech heard, persons met. The description of wholes, however, is "description without place… a sight indifferent to the eye." For this the ethnography needs a special kind of rhetorical technique.

For Thornton, then, the representation of society or culture as a whole is, or at least was, a prerequisite of anthropology, even if such an undertaking was not empirically attainable. The image of wholeness, Thornton maintains, gives ethnography its apparent closure (Ibid., 286) and is thus one of the keys for understanding how ethnography "works." The wholeness of a society or culture is an ethnographic trope, the ulterior image "against which description makes sense," what holds the story of the anthropologist together. Not being directly accessible to anthropologist or informant, it is the work of imagination. Thornton goes to great pains to ensure the reader that these textual imaginations of social and cultural wholes are not reality: there is a difference between a cognitive construct and a social entity (Ibid., 293). To wit, they are wholes without place, reifications of autonomous and regulatory entities (Bourdieu 1977, 26-27). Undoubtedly, the idea that cultures are akin to texts, a notion promulgated by Geertz, fostered and encouraged this conception.[92]

[92] Thornton (1988, 291) suggests that there is a "mistaken analogy with the text whose parts – namely chapters, titles, subheadings, paragraphs, and so on – are truly constitutive of the textual whole". It should also be noted that Geertz's analogy is not that culture is a text, as is often wrongly claimed (e.g. Augé 1992, 49; Rees 2008, 11), but rather an ensemble of texts: "The culture

Here the idea of culture as a unified, internally coherent and spatially bound whole (the negation of intracultural diversity and variation) was revealed to be no more than a rhetorical device, an imagined reality conveyed by the ethnographic text, a fiction of the anthropological imagination. As Stephen Tyler (1986, 132) announced in his contribution to *Writing Culture*:

> We know that these textual transcendentals, these invocations of holism, of functionally integrated systems are literary tropes, the vehicles that carry imagination from the part to the whole, the concrete to the abstract, and knowing them for what they are, whether mechanismic or organismic, makes us suspect the rational order they promise.

Yet, the wholeness of a society or culture as presented in ethnography goes further than these rhetorical strategies astutely outlined by Thornton, Tyler and others: the idea of wholeness is tacit to the practice of fieldwork, to the "field" itself as a bounded space and localizing strategy (Fardon 1990). In fact, the critical insight of the *Writing Culture* debate was the imbrication of culture and the field, how each depended on the other in a sort of recursive manner. Yet, for all of this, the idea of the field and fieldwork merited little to no attention in the writing culture debate, somehow falling outside of the purview of critical eyes. As Gupta and Ferguson (1997b, 2) query:

> But what of "the field" itself, the place where the distinctive work of "fieldwork" may be done, that taken-for-granted space in which an "Other" culture or society lies waiting to be observed and written? This mysterious space – not the "what" of anthropology but the "where" – has been left to common sense, beyond and below the threshold of reflexivity.

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of a people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles…" (Geertz 1973, 452; see White 2012, 76). Geertz's influence on those involved in *Writing Culture* was considerable, albeit often mutually antagonistic.

As Gupta and Ferguson suggest, the ideas of the field and fieldwork have for too long been left unexamined, despite their centrality within anthropological practice. Instead, the idea of fieldwork has remained shrouded as a *rite de passage*, consequently garnering little if any critical attention, all the while strategically functioning as a disciplinary boundary. Rather than seeing these separately, they argue, it has become necessary to think how they are related, how the "field" of fieldwork and the "field" of anthropology, far from being neutral spaces, are "politically and epistemologically intertwined" (Ibid., 3).

To put into question the "field" of fieldwork is therefore to draw into question the disciplinary field of anthropology and its identity. To put it differently, a critical interrogation of the field of fieldwork as an epistemological a priori and a methodological device, insofar as it is also what distinguishes and differentiates anthropology from other related disciplines, such as sociology, political science, history, etc., unavoidably brings into relief the borders of the field of anthropology. Indeed, if the field of fieldwork were to be undermined and potentially effaced, what would distinguish anthropology from these other disciplines?[93] In turn, I argue that this intertwining of the field of fieldwork and the field of anthropology as a discipline, in which putting the former into question necessarily implicates the latter, is precisely where the focus on writing and the rhetoric of holism risks masking the deeper relationship between the "field" of fieldwork and the concept of

[93] As Gupta and Ferguson (1997b, 2) note, the difference between anthropology and similarly related social sciences is not the topics studies, e.g., "primitive" societies and cultures, as much as it is "the distinctive method anthropologists employ, namely fieldwork based on participant observation". As we will see in the next section, it is the appropriation of fieldwork in contemporary art practice that initially led to discussions of the affinity between anthropology and art, first in the 1960s and 1970s and again in the 1980s.

culture. In other words, it is in the "field" (as both a concept and location) that the conjuncture or isomorphism of culture and place emerges.

By evoking the "field" of fieldwork as its badge and boundary, anthropology, *qua* scientific discipline, is obligated to unambiguously define the location of this field, its margins and limits. In so doing, however, it must therefore also define its object as identical with said field. This problem has been cogently presented by Appadurai (1988b) in his essay, "Putting Hierarchy in its Place," in which he argues that, as a location for the anthropological project, the field as place has often come to be synonymous with the people that inhabit it, those "Other" cultures and societies, what he elsewhere refers to as the production of locality; (see also Appadurai 1996a). Fieldwork, at least traditionally, is such a production, a process of bounding culture to a particular place, whereby the "there" of the field implies that "different cultures are separate places" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997b, 35). The anthropological production of place, as Appadurai (1988b, 37) explains, is, in effect, an incarceration, a process in which the native and cultural Other is simultaneously confined spatially and ideologically, located in a geographical place and by "what they know, feel, and believe". As Appadurai quips, even if the native were to move to another place, "it is usually flight, escape, to another equally confining place" (Ibid.) – we might here think of the immigrant to the West who often is imprisoned by their culture, whether or not they so choose.[94]

[94] It is arguably always the Other who must learn to struggle between the modern world and their traditions, as if these were easily discernable and separable worlds. A whole literature on transculturation, hybridity, métissage, etc. is built around this presumption and is often the lot assigned the postcolonial. As I will discuss later, over much of the twentieth-century it was also

But is place simply the imagined space of the anthropological project, an unfortunate imprisoning of the Other out of methodological and epistemological necessity? To be sure, if this were the extent of the problem with place, no more than an anthropological problem, it would easily be put aside, aspersions defused and culture liberated from place. This would look to be what Appadurai suggests in his critique of the anthropological conflation of field and place (1988b, 38-39; see also Rosaldo 1989, 45). But, as Margaret Rodman contends, anthropologists do not hold the patent on place-making (1992, 641; see also Malkki 1992); anthropological thought is but a reflection, part and parcel of modernity, of colonialism, of nationalism. The idea of place as signifying the natural attachment and rootedness of a people to a particular geographic location or area, a primordial belonging is, according to Augé, the "concrete and symbolic construction of space" that emerges from the demands of negotiating collective identity (Augé 1992, 51). Indeed, *pace* Appadurai and Thornton, Augé appears to suggest that the anthropological emplacement of culture does not fully ensue out of methodological or epistemological necessity, but rather in the "convergence of the indigenous population's semi-fantasy with the ethnologist's illusion" (Augé 1992, 47). Hence, if the problem is not wholly anthropological, leaving behind the isomorphism of culture and place (and identity) is not so easily achieved.[95]

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the Other that had culture, a point alluded to by Appadurai (1988b, 37) when he notes that the "anthropologist rarely thinks of himself as a native of some place."

[95] By the late 1980s there was a spate of ethnographic and other studies on how nations and their corresponding cultures were historically constructed, with often racist and exclusionary overtones (cf. Bhabha 1990; Handler 1989; White 2006b). These works were building on such historical studies as *The Invention of Tradition* by Ranger and Hobsbawm (1983) and Benedict

In retrospect it is clear that the challenges to the notion of the field as a metaphor of place in anthropological thinking would not have occurred were it not for the appreciation that culture had become dispersed and unfixed from any particular geographical location. When Lila Abu-Lughod asked, for instance, that anthropologists "write against culture," proposing the Foucauldian notion of discourse instead, she was underscoring the localizing tactics implicit in the concept, how boundedness, both spatially and ideologically, negates "movement, travel, geographic interaction… as well as history itself" (Abu-Lughod 1991, 146). As she notes:

> Anthropologists are increasingly concerned with national and transnational connections of people, cultural forms, media, techniques, and commodities. They study the articulation of world and international politics with the situations of people living in particular communities. All these projects, which involve a shift in gaze to include phenomena of connection, expose the inadequacies of the culture concept and the elusiveness of the entities designated by the term cultures (Ibid., 149).

For Abu-Lughod then, it is against the backdrop of contemporary life that the attachment of culture to place, a defined and immutable geographic site or location bounded in space and time, is rendered a problematic and potentially violent concept for anthropological practice. As she states, we live in a world of national and transnational connections, of multiple and global connections, and it is the anthropologist that must

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Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983). By the mid-1980s it had become manifestly clear that nation, culture and community had lost their unassailable status as given facts, becoming generally understood as constructed or made, albeit no less real. The effect was not only the unmooring or detachment of culture from place within anthropology, but also more generally the realization of the radical constructedness of both.

catch up to this new reality, of which culture is inadequate. In a more critical tone, Anna Tsing (2000, 338) writes:

> Culture, specificity, and place making have conventionally been the domain of the discipline of anthropology, particularly as practiced in the United States. Because these kinds of issues are so often missing from discussions of the global, the stakes are particularly high in seeing their incorporation into global questions in anthropology. Yet, it is not these issues that first chaperoned globalism into U.S. anthropology. Instead, the charisma of the global was introduced to forward a disciplinary transition away from an overzealous nonreflective localism.

For many anthropologists the world of circulation and connections of people and cultural forms is not a harbinger for the loss of culture as a concept, but more narrowly its detachment from place, that rigid and fixed geographical space inculcated in the method and epistemology of anthropology itself. Indeed, to paraphrase Marcus and Myers (1995, 31), it is because cultures are deterritorialized, circulate and are thoroughly embedded in world-system institutions that there has been a disruption of the category of the field. Yet, with this "charisma of the global" and new concepts of spatiality and metaphors of circulation, mobility and movement, not to mention the fashioning of multi-sited ethnography to accommodate this newly anointed reality (Marcus 1995), "place has dropped out of sight" (Escobar 2001).[96]

The dropping out of sight of place was an inevitable dimension of the triumph of postmodern discourse in anthropology at the end of the 1990s and the over-valorization of fluid, mobile and hybrid identities. Yet, this logic of the "postmodern" in

[96] Obviously place did not entirely drop out of sight, as I have so far suggested. Escobar's point, I would contend, is that place had become relegated to a secondary concern with respect to issues of space and spatiality. This point will be developed below.

anthropological thinking in the 1990s is also the very logic of capitalism and neo-liberalism.[97] As Hardt and Negri (2000, 150) point out:

> Many of the concepts dear to postmodernists and postcolonialists find a perfect correspondence in the current ideology of corporate capital and the world market. The ideology of the world market has always been the anti-foundationalist and anti-essentialist discourse par excellence. Circulation, mobility, diversity, and mixture are its very conditions of possibility. Trade brings differences together and the more the merrier! Differences (of commodities, populations, cultures, and so forth) seem to multiply infinitely in the world market, which attacks nothing more violently than fixed boundaries: it overwhelms any binary division with its infinite multiplicities.

The celebration of cultural difference, especially once it entered the mobility of the global and contemporary world to mix, hybridize and circulate was a reinforcement of identity in the name of the state and the market.[98] Ironically, parallel to this demand for cultural difference is the disappearance of place in anthropology. Place has come to designate the fixed boundary, the binary of inside and outside, the anathema of the spatial logics of mobility and circulation of identities and differences, and their commodification and consumption. Place, in other words, was, and still is to a great extent, the bad side of identity politics for many anthropologists insofar as it fails to allow for mixing and circulation, the cornerstones of contemporary life and, coincidentally, but unfortunately for some, neoliberalism. Even when understood as something made and constructed (i.e.,

[97] As art historian Julian Stallabrass (2004, 78) has put it, postmodernism, far from being exposition of a utopia/dystopia became a "flat description of an existing reality".

[98] As Tsing (2000, 337) states: "In part, the acceptability of circulation rhetoric among liberal and leftist social scientists derives from a self-conscious rejection of the Marxist emphasis on capitalist production and its consequent deemphasis on market exchange and consumption. … A focus on circulation shows us the movement of people, things, ideas, or institutions, but it does not show us how this movement depends on defining tracks and grounds or scales and units of agency".

as “place-making”), a degree of suspicion continues to surround place. This is not to say that assertions of place-based identifications are benign and without problem. Yet, despite its dangerous reputation, how might the assertion of place and place-making also be understood as a critical gesture which destabilizes the hegemonies of cultural difference?

The Return of Place

As the discussion of the disentanglement of culture and place proceeded throughout the early 1990s, with emphasis assuredly on the mobility and hybridity of global cultural products and symbols, a less audible cohort of anthropologists, geographers and philosophers vigorously sought to affirm the importance of place in the globalized world (cf. Feld and Basso 1996; Harvey 1993; Malkki 1992; Massey 1994; Olwig and Hastrup 1997). Reflecting on the fate of place in the contemporary world, the philosopher Edward Casey (1996, 18), in his opening contribution to Feld and Basso’s *Senses of Place*, asserts, “To live is to live locally, and to know is first of all to know the places one is in”.[99] Such a generalized appreciation of place, with clear delineated ontological grounds,[100] focuses

[99] Importantly, Casey (1996) writes against most anthropological debates surrounding the relationship of space and place when he asserts that place is primary, universal, general and space is in fact derived from place. This claim goes against the anthropological idea that people transform a preexisting, empty and absolute space into place (Ibid., 230; see also Low and Lawrence-Zuñiga 2003, 17).

[100] One of the most recognizable ontological arguments for place comes from Heidegger and his discussion of dwelling, a spiritual unity between humanity and its environment (1971). In Heidegger’s account, rootedness is an experience of authenticity and the construction of place

on how people continue to make sense of their local worlds and the experience of the everyday: it is an effort to reclaim place from its perception as a vulgarization of identity. As Rodman writes in response to Appadurai, "it is time to recognize that place, like voices, are local and multiple" (Rodman 1992, 643). The thrust is not to reassert a return to place as the primordial attachment to a geographic location with nationalist and exclusionary undertones, but instead to appreciate how people "make place" and the continuing significance it holds. That is, how cultural difference is not merely a global phenomenon but a locally enabled process of belonging in the contemporary global world. As Escobar (2001, 47; original emphasis) argues:

> People continue to *construct* some sort of boundaries around their places, however permeable, and to be grounded in local socio-cultural practices, no matter how changing and hybridized those grounds and practices might turn out to be. To capture the place specificity of the production of place and culture thus becomes the other side of the necessary reconceptualization of culture deterritorialized and transnationally produced.

The point for Escobar is not to revive "pure place against global space," place as the other of space, but rather to understand their relationship, how place is to "a significant extent produced by spatial logics" (Ibid., 147). In other words, the objective is not to ignore the deterritorialization of culture, its disjuncture from place, but to examine how these spatial logics are "countermeasured" in local situations of place-making. In Escobar's particular case it is a matter of how black and indigenous communities in the Pacific region of Colombia have become central players in the making of the Pacific as place

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the recovering of these roots. His malaise comes from the encroachment of the modern world (technology, rationalism, mass production, etc.).

through “a process of ethnicization of identity in close connection with ecological and alternative development strategies” (Escobar 2001, 160). Comparably, for Olwig (1997, 33), in her ethnographic study of Nevis, an island in the West Indies, it is how a community that has become highly mobile in a globalized world, has, at the same time, continued to produce a place or cultural site of belonging and attachment. For Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, George Bisharat (1997, 217) claims, the social identities that were part of the spontaneous attachment to place that preceded exile in 1948 are being transformed by a younger generation who do not share this experience as “attempts to reconcretize their connection to the land”. These are just a few examples from within anthropology that attempt to return to give a central role to the question of place in the contemporary world, without discrediting or ignoring recent writings and considerations of spatiality and the global. Indeed, echoing Foucault (1986), space is not neutral but a grid of hierarchical power relations. Nor, I would argue, are these accounts putting forward an idea of culture as a “place-bound” (versus place-based) identity, thereby “disguising and suppressing inequalities and oppressions that are internal to place” (Dirlik 2000, 166). On the contrary, what each of these studies highlights is that the process of place making is deeply political.

The problem is that the erasure of place in anthropological thinking, Escobar (2001, 155) asserts, has produced an asymmetry between the global and the local (as degrees of scale), where the “global is associated with space, capital, history and agency, while the local, conversely, is linked to place, labor and tradition – as well as with women,

minorities, the poor and, one might add, local cultures". From a temporal perspective, the global is the compression of time and space (Harvey 1990), while the local is allochronic, a place in the past (Fabian 1983).[101] There are two reasons for this conception of the relationship between space and place. First, space is given a hierarchical priority due to its all-pervasiveness. The point here is that space is positioned as dominant and prior to place, an all-pervasive factor in place-making itself, even if place is conceived as a mitigation of such spatial logics. Second, and underlying the first, space is often considered as more or less neutral when compared to place. In other words, given the ubiquity of space, its all-pervasiveness, space is largely considered to be more or less ontologically neutral: cultures and identities emerge from the space of the global and power relations that are unequal, but rarely is this space itself historicized or culturalized. The question, Escobar asks (2001, 156), is how to conceptualize place and the local without them being derivative of space.

This question is a key concern of Escobar's (2001) work in the Pacific region of Colombia. His analysis is centered on the significance of territory as a political strategy of localization, where place is conceived as a critique of power and the spatial logics of capitalism. As one of the most important rainforests in the world, and richest in terms of biodiversity, capital investment in the Pacific region of Colombia has undoubtedly been historically significant in constructing this region as a place; yet, Escobar argues, it cannot

[101] Fabian (1983, 32) defines allochronism as the denial of coevalness in anthropology, what he describes as "a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse" (Ibid., 31; original emphasis).

fully explain it. The efforts of these communities were coupled with the discourse of "biodiversity" that links local and global networks as sites for cultural, political and ecological action.[102] The strategies of subaltern communities and social movements of localization, which include both place-based strategies that emphasize and mobilize the attachment to territory and culture, and "glocal" strategies in which communities and social movements participate in biodiversity networks, point to how place becomes the location of cultural politics. Thus, instead of viewing politics in terms of the supralevels of capital, and thus derivative of the spatial, Escobar maintains that politics is located in place (Ibid., 156): "To construct place as project, [is] to turn place-based imaginaries into a radical critique of power" (Ibid., 157).[103]

In formulating place making as a practice of resistance, Escobar addresses Gupta and Ferguson's appeal for politicizing this process. Specifically, in politicizing the "uncontestable observation" of place being space made meaningful, Escobar's research on place making as a form of strategic resistance to spatial relations of power directly addresses the questions: "… how are spatial meanings established? Who has the power to make places of spaces? Who contests this? What is at stake?" (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992, 11). In so doing he also points to how culture is to retain its critical function, its potential as an emancipatory resource. From a temporal point of view, it is a creation that has no specific temporal logic; manifesting itself as a heterotopia, a form of resistance

[102] For a general defense of such identity-based movements of resistance, see Clifford (2000). For account of social movements and the politics of place, see Nash (2004, 177-186).
[103] In making this argument, Escobar (2001, 156) cites Lefebvre's notion of place as a "form of lived and grounded space and the reappropriation of which must be part of any radical political agenda against capitalism and spaceless and timeless globalization".

and freedom, it is a culture that is a heterochronic, a breaking with given modes of time (Foucault 1986).[104] By attaching itself to place, in other words, culture is not asserted as a primordial identity, but instead is a critical resource in the resistance to spatio-temporal deterritorialization. It is the difference between culture as place-based against culture as place-bound.

Conclusions

So far I have only made passing reference to the questions of culture and place in contemporary art, mostly in notes adjoined to my discussions of these issues in anthropology. This was neither accidental nor without reason. At first glance, many theorists and historians of contemporary art would generally appear to be in accord with the many positions in anthropology, which is to say, the originary separateness of cultures and the dominance of space versus place (e.g. Papastergiadis 2010). Yet, examining more closely the critical writings on site-specific art, a dominant movement in contemporary art over the last 40 years, paints a different picture. In fact it is in site specificity that the problem of place emerges and is transformed.

Site specificity, or site-specific art, emerged for the most part in the late 1960s and early 1970s as reaction against the "uncontaminated and pure idealist space" of Modernism (Kwon 1997, 86). It sought to displace these immutable ideals through the

[104] There has been a tendency to read Foucault's heterotopias as "counterplaces." This reading is not incorrect, but it does cover over his point that these heterotopias are also sites of social order, power and control, e.g., asylums, prisons, etc. See Foucault (1986).

critical examination of the gallery and museum space, specifically through those spaces uncontained by the gallery or museum, such as the banality of the everyday and the materiality of the landscape.[105] It also sought to redress the relationship of art with the spectator by demanding their presence and thus "rendering one conscious of one's body within this ambience" (Meyer 2000, 26). The effect was that the "site" or location was to become part of the experience of the work itself. As Richard Serra famously stated, "[t]o remove the work is to destroy the work" (quoted in Kwon 2004, 12).[106] The aim of site-specific art was to engage the "aural, spatial, visual, and environmental planes of perception and interpretation" (Suderburg 2000, 2) in order to engage directly the realm of the social, a reality often ignored by dominant modernist art discourse in its opposition of life and art (Kwon 1997, 91).[107] For the first generation of site-specific artists, the site

[105] The "everyday" is where contemporary art practices begin to make their first forays into anthropology and other social sciences, specifically by bringing into relief the relationship of culture and place. While the everyday did not enter widely into contemporary art discourse until the early 1990s, already in 1975 artist and theorist Joseph Kosuth, seeking more experimental modes of artistic practice, talks about how methods of anthropology, in allowing for cultural fluency, give access to the everyday, the banal and the quotidian, showing the common ground of experience and, more politically, giving voice to those silenced (Kosuth 1991). As Kosuth underlines, however, unlike anthropology, art is engaged and thus seeks to transform the world: art is praxis, a commitment to engage the everyday to transform it. Interestingly, Kosuth acknowledges his indebtedness to the more "engaged" (i.e. political) and alternative Marxist tradition in anthropology represented by Stanley Diamond and Bob Scholte, both of whose work he was exposed to during his studies at the New School for Social Research, New York (Kosuth 1991, 117-124).

[106] The context of Serra's comment is the removal of his 120-feet steel sculpture, Tilted Arc, which was "commissioned and designed" for the Federal Plaza in New York. It was complete in 1981 and removed 1989 due to numerous complaints from the people in the area of it being an eyesore, among other reasons. Serra's response is widely cited by both art theorists and historians as quintessential of the idea of site-specificity that emerged in the 60s, but was critiqued heavily throughout the 70s and 80s.

[107] As art critic Douglas Crimp (1993, 17) states: "The idealism of modernist art, in which the art object in and of itself was seen to have a fixed and transhistorical meaning, determined by the

was an actual location, something grounded and tangible, as Serra's quote testifies. However, throughout the 1970s the relationship between site-specificity and location slowly unraveled, leaving the art object without any immediate relationship to a fixed location. There was a "dematerialization" of art object, a de-emphasis on uniqueness, permanence, decorative attractiveness (Lippard 1997) and a subsequent move toward the notion of the site as a discursive realm. In other words, the "site" in site specificity is detached from place and becomes a discursive site, a site concerned with social issues such as race, gender, class, cultural difference, etc., while at the same time functioning as an avenue to resist the institutional and market forces of commodification of the art object. James Meyer (2000: 24-25) refers to this as a shift to a "functional" notion of site specificity versus a "literal" notion:

> The literal site … is in situ; it is an actual location, a singular place. … In contrast the functional site may or may not incorporate a physical place. It certainly does not privilege this place. Instead it is a process, an operation occurring between sites, a mapping of institutional and textual filiations and the bodies that move between them (the artist's above all) … On the contrary, the functional work refuses the intransigence of literal site specificity. It is a temporary thing, a movement, a chain of meanings and imbricated histories: a place marked and swiftly abandoned.

The dematerialization of the art object within site-specific art now relies on an reconfiguration of site or place as discourse, its sitings/placings and installations structured in moving through space, a nomadic narrative with the artist ever more mobile, a sort of ethnographer moving between biennales re-siting (re-installing) his or her art

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object's placelessness, it's belonging in no particular place. … Site specificity opposed that idealism – and unveiled the material system it obscured – by its refusal of circulatory mobility, its belongingness to a specific site".

object. As Kwon (1997, 95) observes, "[c]onsequently, although the site of action or intervention (physical) and the site effects/reception (discursive) are conceived to be continuous, they are nonetheless pulled apart. Put differently, there is no longer an indexical relationship between the grounded physical place and discursive narrative, their breach marking the renewed criticality of art practices in resisting institutional and market forces of commodification (Ibid., 95). At the same time, these artists often work in collaboration with the audience in the conceptualization and production of their works, allowing them to bridge life and art, to "penetrate the socio-political organization of contemporary life with greater impact and meaning" (Ibid., 95), the other impetus of site-specificity. Thus, from one point of view, contemporary site-specific art revels in the nomadic artist, curator and other art workers: it is the celebration of the transnational and diasporic cultural worker. Here the nomadic artist has usurped the nomadic art object of modernism. Yet, from another point of view, such a conception of the artist as nomad affirms the logic of global capital. As Kwon (Ibid., 96) asks:

> While site-specific art once defied commodification by insisting on immobility, it now seems to espouse fluid mobility nomadism for the same purpose. But curiously, the nomadic principle also defines capital and power in our time. Is the unhinging of site specificity, then, a form of resistance to the ideological establishment of art or a capitulation to the logic of capitalist expansion?

Kwon's question brings us to the heart of the problem of this chapter, noted earlier, namely the tension between space and place. There is an ambivalence regarding the relationship of space and place in site specific art practice and theory: while

acknowledging the continued importance of place in site-specific practices *and* the liberties proffered by the notion of space, a number of artists and theorists remain highly suspicious of both, the former for its potential nostalgic retrieval, the latter for its illusions of freedom (Ibid., 109). Kwon especially is adamant about the dangers of reiterating a notion of place that would recall the worst forms of violence and exclusion, yet seems equally critical of the celebration of the artist as nomad, both in terms of its capitulation to capitalist logics and for its reinstatement of the autonomy of the work of art and the status of authorship, each the explicit objects of attack in the inception of site specificity in the late 60s and early 70s. Yet, the trouble with Kwon's account is that the notion of place remains uncritical. Although willing to acknowledge that site has become unhinged from place, her analysis is unable to propose a more critical model for the notion of place, of how it too has become destabilized in the wake of globalization.

Such a critical approach to place is explored in a recent study of site-specific art by art theorist Judith Rugg (2010) who offers an alternative model of site-specific practices and their relation to place. Rugg argues that the temporary nature of site-specific works, their ephemeral and time dependent nature, as they move across different contexts or sites, become sites of contestation. As she states:

> As sites of contestation, site-specific art can offer an incongruence and antagonism to this fabricated space [i.e., spatial order] and show its inherent instabilities, rent by processes of estrangement, alienation and loss. … The potential of contemporary site-specific art to disrupt the certainties governing the consumption of space manufactured by its regulating discourses reveal the power relations and exclusions within hegemonic terms of constructed utopias. … In the fissures between various forms of spatial ordering, relationships between art and space can

> introduce ambivalence where the hidden, suppressed, forgotten and the surrogate are made visible (Ibid., 177-178).

With clear echoes of Escobar (2001), Rugg proposes that those sites produced in site-specific art are critical places for the contestation of the spatial hierarchies of contemporary life. To be sure, the sites of site-specific art, in troubling sedimented configurations of public space, are forms of contestation. There are two points to be made at this juncture. First, in a moment of clear nostalgia, Rugg seems to lament that spatial hierarchies have left place, as source of identity, "a site of anguish and disquiet." Through forced displacement, she notes, the experience of place for many people has been upset and destabililized. The implication is that site-specific art practices, by making these spaces meaningful, are efforts to contest this experience.

The second, though less conspicuous, point is Rugg's (2010) framing of the disruptive acts of site-specific art as "taking place." For example:

> The artist's intention to appear as if transposed from the street outside (namely as a homeless person), collapsed various paradoxes of a view of the homeless that have become imbibed within cities. A private and intimate activity (sleep) *taking place* within the public and exposed space of was 'normalized' through paradigmatic assumptions of a fixed category of being (homelessness) (Ibid., 165; my emphasis).

This seemingly innocuous notion of art "taking place" is pivotal, I argue, insofar as it points to how and where art is contesting and disrupting dominant spatial configurations. It underlines how the contestation to which Rugg refers (as well as others such as Kwon 2002 and Kaye 2000) with regards to site-specific art is place based, not place bound. In other words, it points to how art is engaged in place making.

Rugg (2010) and Escobar's (2001) plea for place-based acts of contestation are undoubtedly appealing, but more importantly they make it possible to elaborate Marcus and Myers' (1995) conception of the affinity between anthropology and art. Specifically, I would argue that what anthropology and art share is a concern for how culture becomes associated with particular places, that is, how processes by which difference is made meaningful are place-based acts of contestation. When Marcus and Myers talk about the transformation of difference into discourse, it is precisely this process of place making that is at work.[108] In other words, anthropology and art are those sites of place making in which culture, difference and identity are made meaningful for thought and action. From this angle their conception of culture is historically situated by being located and sited, giving further depth and clarity to the notion of culture as the shared object of these two practices.

I want to raise an objection, however, to an underlying conceit with this conception of the affinity between anthropology and art, and to which I have alluded to above: If we take culture to be a site of difference and contestation, a site which both anthropology and art occupy, are we not also assuming that identity and art (not to

[108] Myers' (1995) contribution to the volume is important in this regard as he discusses the production of culture in Aboriginal acrylic painting and the right to place that is at work in these cultural acts: "The painters *presume* their own cultural discourse: they expect that those who see the paintings will recognize in them the assertion and demonstration of the ontological link between the painter, his/her Dreaming, the design, and the place represented. […] Clearly, the available meanings to Aborigines for this activity are many. To summarize briefly, they include painting as a source of income, painting as a source of cultural respect, painting as a meaningful activity defined by its relationship to indigenous values (in the context of self-determination), and also painting as an assertion of personal ad sociopolitical identity expressed in rights to place" (Ibid., 66; see also Myers 2002).

mention anthropology) are intimately bound up with one another? In so far as culture is a site of difference and contestation, a matter of place making, it is inevitably a site of identity politics. Yet, as will be recalled from above, cultural difference/identity is precisely that which is celebrated and sought by the spatial logics of capital and global spatiality (though not limited to these, as my previous chapter demonstrated in the case of Palestinians in Israel living under a colonial state). In other words, is there a way to imagine the politics of place without identity and difference? In short, is Harvey right in his conclusion that place remains torn between being a force of resistance against global capitalism and an exclusionary identity politics (Harvey 1993)? Taking my cue from these critical assessments of place and their limitations, in the following chapter I will consider an alternative conception of the relationship between culture and place that retains politics as its central concern but avoids the reiteration of identity that plagues most thinking about this relationship.

Nardeen Srouji: Deferral

Sitting one afternoon in Sudfeh restaurant in Nazareth with Nardeen, an artist, and Mary, the owner of the restaurant,[109] talking about Palestinian art, the subject of discussion turned to the difficulties of being a Palestinian artist in Israel: "Look, if you want to be an artist here," Mary answered, "you must accept that there's not support, nothing from the state, nothing from the community. The problem is we [Palestinians] don't appreciate art, at least not for what it is. If you want to get support from the community, if you want them to come see and buy art, you can't try to convince them about it being an investment. You need to show them how seeing and buying art is about social status." This seemed to me a cynical comment, but perhaps not entirely unjustified. Over and over again I heard stories from artists and curators how the Palestinian community in Israel had no interest in buying art, too often the excuse of Islam and issues of figurative representation being dragged out to provide an underlying explanation. But what Mary and Nardeen were telling me was different; this wasn't about religious taboos but social distinction à la Bourdieu (1979). As our discussion continued, Mary explained how in recent years, mainly since the 1990s and the availability of satellite television, this perception has slowly started to shift as more and more people are learning about the popularity and "star" quality of Western artists. To make sure I didn't get the wrong idea, that this shift was far from being in any way widespread, she repeated her point that it's

[109] Sudfeh is a well-known restaurant in Nazareth with an adjacent gallery space for young and upcoming Palestinian artists. The owner, Mary, has long been involved in the arts scene in Nazareth, from being an art collector to supporting local artists through the gallery.

impossible to sell the Palestinian public art as art or as an investment. One needs to approach art as a sign of class. When I talked about this again with Nardeen months later she agreed with my recounting of the discussion but cautioned me to not be too critical of Palestinian society: “It’s not just that, people here are not buying art because we are trying to survive; it [art] is not something we can always value living as we do in this place.”

Not long after I saw exactly what Mary was trying to explain about art as sign of social distinction. A few days later Nardeen invited me to join her and her family for a performance of music from Abdel Halim Hafez in Nazareth. When we arrived at the concert hall the lobby was full of people shaking hands, taking photos, and all dressed very well for the evening. This all seemed normal, even predictable, but when the show started I was surprised to see people continuing to talk and many on their phones, almost entirely oblivious of the concert taking place in front of them. At the end everyone clapped in appreciation, got up and continued back to the lobby to continue socializing. When we later returned to the home of Nardeen’s family, I expressed my bewilderment: “No one really seemed to be listening to the music, or even seem all that interested. They seemed to be more focused on meeting and talking.” My bemusement got a chuckle from everyone. “That’s the way it is, people go to these things to be seen, to let everyone see they are cultured,” replied Nardeen’s father. As Nardeen warned some months later, while this attitude does exist, “we’re talking about Nazareth here.” Given this perception

of art, how would someone who wants to be an artist be perceived, and what if they are a woman?

Earlier that day, prior to the concert, Nardeen had invited me to meet her parents at their home. As we made our way through the windy streets of Nazareth, I asked Nardeen how her parents felt about her becoming an artist: “They weren’t too happy when I first told them, but they also know I’m stubborn and will do what I want anyway.” “What about your extended family, and even the society here?” I inquired. Nardeen didn’t hesitate: “They don’t accept a woman being independent, and especially being an artist, which is fine for a man. They expect a woman to do the proper thing: get married, have children and take care of the family. Although by this time we had arrived at her family’s home, I was still curious how her parents felt and how they were finally convinced to let her go to art school and be an artist. As we sat down with her mother and father, all of us introducing ourselves and finally me telling them about my research, I saw an opportunity to go directly to the source for my question. Turning to her father, I indelicately asked, my full intention being to put him in an awkward position: “How did you feel when Nardeen told you she wanted to go to art school and be an artist?” “Yes, I was fine with it, sure,” he replied matter of factly. Nardeen’s mother instantly started to shake her head in disapproval and retorted, “No, you weren’t so fine with it!” “Well, okay, I worried,” her father admitted, “I worried about how she was going to have money and make a living.” “Did you not worry about what your neighbors and family and the society might think too?” I asked, trying to provoke a bit more. This time her mother replied: “Of course it was

unheard of for a woman to want to be an artist, there's people who talk, everyone talks, but this was what Nardeen wanted so we supported her." Not to be left out, her father added, "We very much support her, we even have one of her paintings in our living room." Nardeen would always tell me how liberal her family was compared to most families in Nazareth, how she would have never had such opportunities or such support were it not for her family.

Soon after Nardeen and I met she had told me about an installation she had wanted to do a few years ago: a small girl's room whose walls were covered in the word "shame" [Arabic: *3aib*]: "You don't understand, people love to talk here, especially about women who don't do the proper thing – keep quiet, find a man, get married, have children. Every time I see my aunts, they always ask me when I'm getting married. In their eyes, because I'm not, and because I'm an artist, they are worried for me: 'why is Nardeen not married, what is she doing with her life…'" There's no doubt that in the late 1990s, when she chose to go to art school and become an artist, the idea of a young woman from Nazareth taking this kind of path was viewed as unconventional. If the idea of going to art school was relatively unheard of for many Palestinians in Israel, let alone a woman, Nardeen wasn't dissuaded, but as I learned, this meant also being critical of her own society.

One of the first works Nardeen showed to me was a lithograph series she created in 2004 entitled "Sabr" [Patience] (Figure 16), a series of 7 lithograph prints. When we talked about the work, about the clear symbolism running throughout the series, she told

me it was a time of personal difficulty when she created it and that: “I just made it, without thinking about what it meant – it [the process] was more intuitive.” What she did tell me is that it is a series about the coming of age of a young woman, of leaving the innocence of her youth behind. But looking at the prints in the series, I couldn’t help but notice the faceless figures either in the forefront or background of half of the prints. “Who are these figures?” I asked. Smiling, she said, “they are the society, the people watching.” “But it’s not clear whether they are looking inward toward you in the image or toward us, the spectators?” I replied. “Both,” Nardeen answered. “I see,” I said. At that point it also struck me that the figures also look like cacti, the kind you see all around the landscape, and once used to demarcate borders between village properties, and which today Palestinians will often point to as a sign of a former Palestinian village since erased. I asked Nardeen if this play between faceless figures and cacti was intentional, to which she replied, “Think about what the words are for cactus and patience in Arabic.” Although I was aware the words for patience and cactus were the same, I hadn’t made the connection in her work until Nardeen pointed it out, and with it the Palestinian proverb: *sabr as-sabbr* (“the patience of the cactus”).[110] While what happened within the center of these images, most notably a person throwing herself down a well – undoubtedly a strong

[110] The cactus is one of three key symbols within Palestinian culture, the other two being the orange and the olive tree. According to Boullata, the cactus is also the key symbol within the transition of Palestinian icon painting to the birth of a national art in the 1930s (see Boullata 2009: 186). Losing some its symbolic capital following the creation of Israel, the cactus again became a major symbol within Palestinian painting again in the 1980s and 1990s through the work of Walid Abu Shaqra and ‘Asim Abu Shaqra. As was pointed out to me by friend Hatim Kanaaneh, the prickly cactus is not native to Palestine but was imported roughly 300 years ago from the Americas (see also King 2008).

reference to Jacob's Well from the Bible – I was struck by the metaphor of these faceless figures as cacti and how it functioned as a symbol not only of patience but of perseverance, the perseverance of a woman coming of age in a society that kept her under constant surveillance. Having become close friends, time and again I watched Nardeen refuse to change her path and to tenaciously hold to her goals and what she wanted from life, all in the face of enormous pressures from family and society. Yet there was still the question of these faceless figures or cacti turning their gaze toward viewer. What did they want of us, the spectators?

Reluctant to talk much about this particular aspect within her prints, "ah, that is for you to figure out!" I was fortunate enough that for roughly a month the series was on exhibit at Elika, a local café in Haifa with frequent exhibitions and film screenings from Palestinian artists. During this time I would often sit with friends and others and ask them what they thought of the black and white prints by Nardeen, did they notice the symbolic elements, did they get a sense that this was about a woman coming of age, what about the faceless figures in the foreground and there resemblance with cacti? Interestingly, most of the reactions I got had to do with the faceless figures or cacti running along the bottom of the borders of the prints and their ambiguous status: "It's almost as if we [the spectators] are being stared at, like they are creating a boundary between us and what is happening inside," said one person. "Well, as figures we don't really know who they are looking at, but as cactus plants they are there to remind us about the patience we need with all the changes going on," a friend mused. I was intrigued, "What changes?" "The

changes of the person in the painting, losing their childhood – do you see the swing and then the uprooted tree? These are the changes we as Palestinians have had to face for over 60 years, the loss of our land and our way of life. To be patient is to be steadfast [Arabic: *summud*]!" she replied. "But don't you also see this as a critique of your own society?" I asked. "How so?" she replied. "These figures in the front watching her to make sure she behaves and does the right thing, isn't she trying to tell us that they are oppressive?" I asked. "Sure, it is hard here as a woman, all the social pressure, and the cactus tell us we have to be patient, things are changing for women but it is slow." I was still curious, "But as faceless figures, what about the fact that they are also looking at us as spectators?" My friend looked longingly again at the prints, "It's hard to say, maybe we too are being watched, or maybe told to stay out of what is happening." Regardless of the meaning of this outward gaze, it was inescapable that as spectators we were somehow involved. Later I was reminded of what Fatima, a schoolteacher from Arrabeh, told me about the cacti along the road as we walked between Arrabeh, Deir Hanna and Sakhnin as part of Land Day: "As fences between different villages, or between orchards, they were not the property of either village, but shared between them, so anyone could pick their fruit."[111]

Nardeen hasn't continued in the visual arts, but instead in recent years has moved into theatre and cinema as a set and costume designer. The last time I met with her we

[111] This communal aspect of the cactus is a point also made by Abufarha (2008: 347), but in his account the sharing of the *sabr* is limited to the members of the village: "For the members of the community as a whole (normally residents of a village), picking the saber is acceptable. However, this shared ownership stops at the boundaries of the village, such that people from neighboring villages cannot come to pick from another village's orchard."

discussed this change: “It is very hard to make it in the art world here, and while I like it and I want to keep creating and with theatre and film I get to keep that part of creating.” “And what about being a woman in the theatre and film world?” I asked. “Listen,” she replied, “It is still a man’s world. You remember my series, ‘Patience’? Things don’t change here; my work was trying to be critical of how this patience is also a refusal to change, a sort of stubbornness.” As I thought about what Nardeen told me, it struck me that maybe those figures looking back at us, the spectators, are indeed symbols of patience and perseverance, but they are also signs of intransigence: Looking back outward, they are telling us to stay out and not to intervene.

Figure 16: Nardeen Srouji, *Sabr* (Patience), 2004

Figure 16: Nardeen Srouji, *Sabr* (Patience), 2004

Figure 17: Nardeen Srouji, *E7teqan* (Congestion), 2012

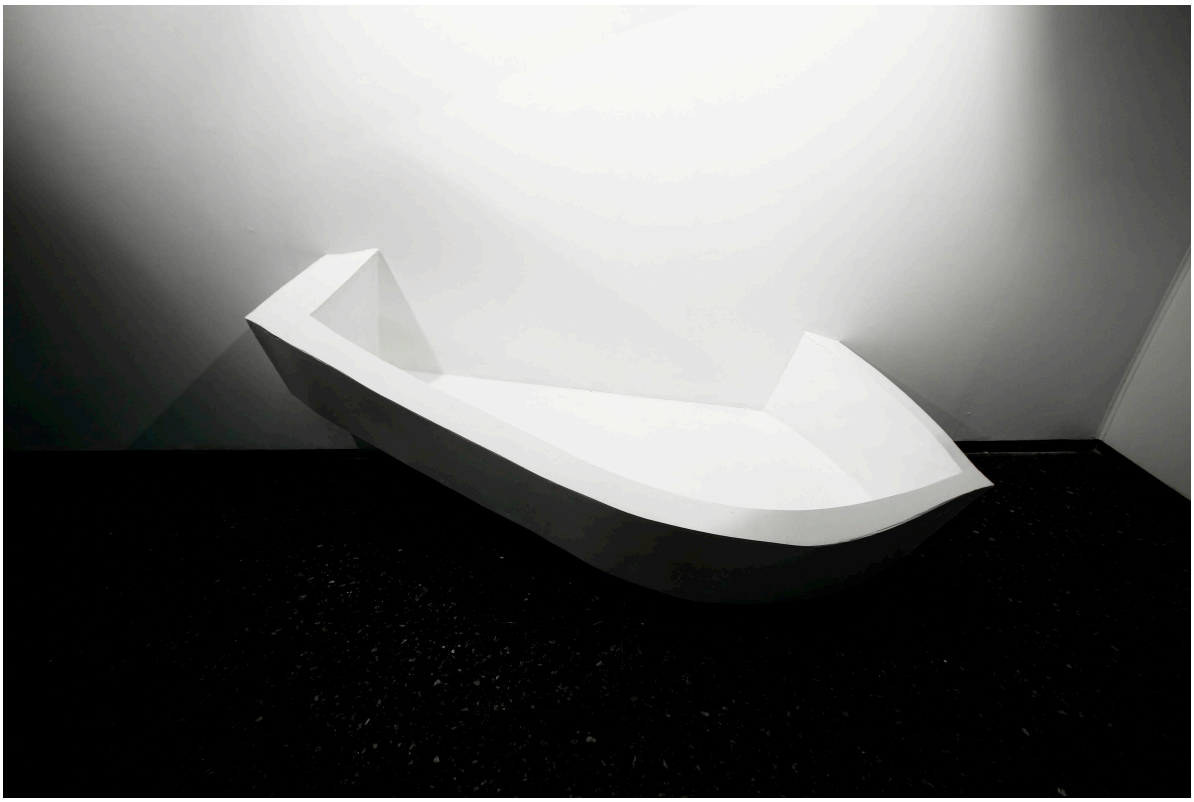

Figure 18: Nardeen Srouji, *Untitled*, 2012

Chapter 4: Art and Politics; or, the Place of Art

> "Il y a de la politique quand il y a un lieu et des formes pour la rencontre entre deux processus hétérogènes." (Rancière 1995, 53).[112]

Introduction: Art and Identity

As discussed in the previous chapter, Marcus and Myers (1995) assert that anthropology and art have come to occupy a shared space, namely, culture as a site of difference and contestation. This site is where anthropology and art track, represent, and perform the effects of difference, transforming into discourse what I elaborated as a practice of place making. Leaving anthropology aside for the moment, unerpinning to Marcus and Myers' assertion is the idea that art is about the expression of identity. This is an idea widely shared in anthropology, where discussions of art, Western and non-Western, are predominately framed in terms of claims about the specificity of culture and the relationship between culture and art (see Lippard 1990; Phillips and Steiner 1999; Schneider 2006; Myers 1991, 2002). Significantly, the idea of art as an expression of identity has permitted anthropology, as well as other social sciences, to attach to art a political content. In other words, identity allows art to be understood as a form of cultural politics, or better, cultural activism (Ginsburg 1997). To be sure, this political conjuncture

[112] "Politics occurs when there is a place and a way for two heterogeneous processes to meet" (Rancière 1999, 30).

of art and identity is not unfounded. In colonial and postcolonial situations, present and past, in which local identities have been marginalized and repressed, art has emerged as "a form of social action in uncertain discursive spaces" (Myers 1994, 693) and as a strategy for "self-representation and self-identification" (Phillips and Steiner 1999, 4). According to Jeremy MacClancy (1997, 2):

> Many peoples, bent on self-determination and unhappy with the way they are represented by others, wish to represent themselves to others and art is one of the most powerful media by which to do so. … Further, if the degree of structural difference between societies is being steadily eroded by the seemingly uncheckable advance of global capitalism, then art becomes, partially by default, a key means of proclaiming cultural difference.

Given these claims, the politics of art would seem to be especially germane where claims over identities are at stake. As a manifestation of the agency of marginalized people, art is uniquely positioned as "a site of struggle, where identities are created, where subjects are interpellated, where hegemonies can be challenged" (Kondo 1997, 4). Thus, in contrast to the Kantian idea of aesthetics as "disinterested judgment of natural beauty and art separate from economic and moral concerns" (Mahon 2000, 478), in underlining its political message, anthropologists are seeking to reconnect art to everyday social life. Art, in other words, is not a mere supplement to social life, "but a major and integral part of the transaction which engenders political behaviour" (Edelman 1995, 2).

Is the conjuncture of art and identity, in reconnecting art with everyday social life and thereby allowing for an understanding of art as a practice of politics, to suggest that art is always already political insofar as it is inseparable from the social world of which it

is part? To what degree are art and politics inseparable? As Maureen Mahon (2000) rightly cautions, despite the imperative and necessity of reconnecting art to everyday social life, we must avoid collapsing art and politics. As she argues, anthropologists need to retain a sensitivity to the aesthetic, that is, "the creative and artistic choices, preoccupations, and goals that inform their work" (Ibid., 479).

Following Wendy Brown (2005), I propose that the relationship between art and politics can generally be understood in anthropology from one of two positions. First, insofar as everyday social life is organized by power relations (à la Foucault), art, being a part of this world, is therefore always political. Second, art is political to the degree that it is a practice for "negotiating the power and values of enduring collectivities" (2005, 75). The first view, in linking power and politics, renders all art political, whereas the second limits its scope to those conflicts between already existing groups and identities. Anthropologists, I contend, participate in both these lines of argumentation, even sometimes blending the two. By considering all art to be enmeshed in power relations, the first relationship renders everything political and thus there is little point in stating that art is political – if everything is political then nothing is political (Rancière 1999, 32; see Nancy 2002). The effect is a collapsing of art and politics, leading to what Mahon calls "art as ideology," which results from assuming that politics and power relations are synonymous. In the second line of argumentation, by posing the relationship in terms of given identities, art loses all specificity, becoming merely a matter of contestation or the articulation of identity, in other words a politics of representation. More troubling,

however, is that both these lines of argumentation seem to have pre-determined the answer as to what makes art political, which, as I will discuss below, is a position that tends to render art secondary to politics.

If we are to think the relationship between art and politics, it is clear that, on the one hand, if power relations are not a condition for the appearance of politics, is not to say power relations are not present. In the understanding put forth here, politics is not the exercise of power. On the other, so long as the politics of art remains bound to expressions of identity (which is not to say that identity related issues are not involved), the significance of art will be diluted. If art is merely (or even primarily) about identity, why would it be more "political" than other forms of identity making?[113] To this end, I will propose in the following a shift in the discussion of the relationship of art and politics by suggesting that art is political when it becomes a place for the disruption and reconfiguration of norms, orders and identities. From this point of view, art is political to the extent that it is an interruption of the order of domination.

As I asked at the end of the previous chapter, what happens when imposed identities are contested but no identity claims are asserted in response to this contestation? Is it possible to continue to think about place making without assertions of identity? Following this line of thinking, does art have to be about identity in order to be political? Coming back to the ethnographic context of this thesis, identity for the Palestinian minority in Israel is deeply bound up with spatial practices of ordering such

[113] Throughout the discussions regarding the significance of art in the expression of identity and cultural difference there is little consideration of why this is so. What makes art particular and, as MacClancy (1997, 2) states, "by default a key means of proclaiming cultural difference"?

that to engage in identity claims is risky because it can lead to incarceration.[114] For artists this has not meant that their work is not political. On the contrary, this situation demanded going beyond given frameworks and expectations about the relationship between art and politics.

This chapter will explore a definition of the relationship between art and politics that resists both the idea that art is always political and that art is political because it expresses identity. I will offer an alternative theoretical framework to these two claims by looking to the critical philosophy of Jacques Rancière. Rancière's theoretically innovative approach to the relationship between art and politics proposes that what makes art political is the distance it takes from established orders, its disruption or suspension of identities and their reconfiguration. His rethinking of the relationship between art and politics is different from much of the received wisdom in the fields of philosophy, art history and cultural studies (Tanke 2010), and is therefore worth considering in greater detail. In this chapter I will look at the way that he renders the relationship between art and politics, but also the different reactions to his work. While anthropologists and art theorists tend to express a certain discomfort with his theory, contemporary artists

[114] This is not to suggest that Palestinian identity is not an issue or is something denied. A number of the artists I worked with were adamant that however much their work was not about asserting a particular identity, this did not mean that there was not a Palestinianness to their work, but they refused to identify it. This will be examined more closely in the following chapter.

working in various post-colonial settings seem to be energized by the implications of his model.[115]

The first section of the chapter will explore Rancière's re-writing of the idea of politics, a fundamental step in understanding his writings on art and aesthetics. The second part of the chapter will then examine his conception of aesthetics and art, with a focus on what makes art political. Finally, I will return to the questions I have set out in the introduction to the chapter in order to address various phenomena concerning art, politics and place.

What is Politics?

As Rancière asks in the foreword to his book *La Mésentente*, "qu'y a-t-il de spécifique à penser sous le nom de politique?" (1995, 15).[116] Is it merely synonymous with the exercise of power, as is often assumed in much American social and political thought (see Glick-Schiller 1997)? Put differently, can we say that where there is power there is politics? Or, is politics strictly a matter of governmental practices, which is to say, politics as policy and governance, laws, etc.? Given what is at stake with these different concepts and terms, conceptual clarity is paramount. Below I will put forward the idea, following the writings of Jacques Rancière, that politics is what emerges when the logic of the police meets the

[115] I have in mind here two specific events in which Jacques Rancière participated in the Arab world: Homeworks III: A Forum on Cultural Practices, Lebanon 2005; Art Practice and Research in North Africa and the Middle East, Morrocco 2012.
[116] "...what can be thought of specifically as politics?" (Rancière 1999, xiii)

logic of equality. It is the meeting of these two logics or worlds that politics, as the affirmation and verification of equality, takes place. Given the complexity of these propositions it is important to begin by spelling out briefly the assumptions and implications that they carry with them. To use Rancière's (1995, 56) example:

> Une grève n'est pas politique quand elle demande des reformes plutôt que des améliorations ou s'en prend aux rapports d'autorité plutôt qu'à l'insuffisance des salaires. Elle l'est quand elle refigure les rapports qui déterminent le lieu du travail dans son rapport à la communauté. La ménage a pu devenir un lieu politique, non par le simple fait que s'y exercent des rapports de pouvoir mais parce qu'il s'est trouvé argumenté dans un litige sur la capacité des femmes à la communauté.[117]

In this statement Rancière refutes the premise that politics is simply a matter of governance, policies and laws, those measures taken to be the building blocks of the existing social order. He also argues that when the social political order is contested, either through resistance or through an adjustment of its rules and laws, this also is not politics. Rather, Rancière argues, politics takes place when a dispute regarding a people's capacities emerges in such a way that it disrupts the organization of the community in the name of the equality of anyone with everyone. In other words, politics is not the mere exercise of power, nor is it a matter of demanding reforms or better working conditions. Neither is it the contestation of representations, interests and values in so far as these elements say something about our identity. Politics, according to Rancière, is the

[117] "A strike is not political when it calls for reforms rather than a better deal or when it attacks the relationships of authority rather than the inadequacy of wages. It is political when it reconfigures the relationships that determine the workplace in its relation to the community. The domestic household has been turned into a political space not through the simple fact that power relationships are at work in it but because it was the subject of argument in a dispute over the capacity of women in the community" (Rancière 1999, 32-33).

disruption of the established social order and its reconfiguration in the appearing of the part of those without part (*la part des sans-part*). In the above example, for instance, the domestic space of the home becomes the place of politics insofar as it allows for the dispute (*litige)* over the capacities of women in the community. Here roles and positions assigned are displaced, thereby allowing for new capacities through the reconfiguration of the relations between the domestic space of the home and the more public space of the community. As a part of the community, women emerge as those without part in contesting their assigned roles of domestic workers, that is, a distribution that designates their capacities and limits the roles they can occupy. Thus, when Rancière (1981), in *La nuit des Prolétaires*, writes about the nineteenth-century working class who write poetry at night, wishing for a life of bourgeois comfort, the point is not that these workers were writing poetry but that they have surpassed the roles and functions to which they were assigned, the time-bound demands of labour, giving rise to the possibility of living other lives.

To the degree that Rancière's conception of politics, as a meeting of two logics, goes against what we usually call politics, some initial clarifications are in order. Let me turn, therefore, to his distinction between politics and the police (*la police*). In *Mésentente: Politique et philosophie*, Rancière (1995, 51; original emphasis) makes the following claim:

> On appelle généralement du nom de politique l'ensemble des processus par lesquels s'opèrent l'agrégation et le consentement des collectivités, l'organisation des pouvoirs, la distribution des places et fonctions et les systèmes de légitimation de cette distribution. Je propose de donner un

> autre nom à cette distribution et au système de ces légitimations. Je propose de l'appeler *police*.[118]

In renaming what is typically thought of as politics as the police, it is important to keep in mind that Rancière is not using this term in a limited or pejorative sense, as in the image of pepper-spray wielding forces of law and order. On the contrary, appropriating the term from Michel Foucault's writings on the mode of government in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (e.g. Foucault 2004; Rancière 1995, 51),[119] the police for Rancière refers to an "ordre du visible et du dicible qui fait que telle activité est visible et que telle autre ne l'est pas, que telle parole est entendue comme du discours et telle autre comme du bruit" (Rancière 1995, 52).[120] Taken broadly as a condition of possibility or *a priori* laws (albeit contingent), the police is considered by Rancière to be largely neutral and not therefore equivalent to strategies of control, repression, domination or even an order of powers. As a "*dispositif social*" (Ibid., 51), it is primarily a logic of inequality, a partitioning of the sensible that creates hierarchical relationships in society:

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[118] "Politics is generally seen as the set of procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems for legitimizing this distribution. I propose to give this system of distribution and legitimization another name. I propose to call it *the police*" (Rancière 1999, 28; original emphasis).

[119] As Samuel Chambers (2011, 306) explains: "In order to stress the broad nature of this concept of *la police* Rancière (uncharacteristically) emphasizes the link between his use of police and Foucault's work. Foucault argues: first, to the extent that any police order determines hierarchical relationships between human beings, 'the police includes everything'; second to the extent that it sets up a relationship between 'men and things' the police order also constitutes a material order".

[120] "…it is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise" (Rancière 1999, 29). Importantly, this order is not simply a discursive one, but a spatial configuration, a mapping of bodies into their proper places, roles and functions, a point that will be explored in more detail later. In his later writings, particularly on aesthetics, Rancière will refer to the police as a distribution of the sensible (*le partage du sensible*), the general laws that determine what can be seen, heard, thought, said, done – in general the capacities of bodies.

> La police n'est pas une fonction sociale mais une constitution symbolique du social. L'essence de la police n'est pas la répression, pas même le contrôle sur le vivant. Son essence est un certain partage du sensible. On appellera partage du sensible la loi généralement implicite qui définit les formes de l'avoir-part en définissant d'abord les modes perceptifs dans lesquels ils s'inscrivent (Rancière 1998a, 240).[121]

Reconfiguring our understanding of politics as the police, Rancière thereby retains the notion of politics for those acts of contestation or *dissensus* with the police order. That is, politics happens when bodies are shifted from their assigned place, making the invisible visible and the inaudible audible: "La politique? Elle fait voir ce qui n'avait pas lieu d'être vu, fait entendre un discours là où seul le bruit avait son lieu, fait entendre comme discours ce qui n'était pas entendu que comme bruit" (Rancière 1995, 53).[122] Here politics is a disruption of the police order (*celle qui rompt*), a disidentification with its spatial and temporal ordering of bodies.[123]

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[121] "The police is not a social function but a symbolic constitution of the social. The essence of the police lies neither in repression, nor even in the control over the living. Its essence lies in a certain way of dividing up the sensible. I call "distribution of the sensible" a generally implicit law that defines the forms of par*t*aking by first defining the modes of perception in which they are inscribed" (Rancière 2010a, 36).

[122] "It makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise; it makes understood as discourse what was once only heard as noise" (Rancière 1999, 30).

[123] Rancière is not the only one to use this notion of disidentification. Most notably, Judith Butler (1993) defines disidentification as a central component of identity formation, being part of a relation of identification and counter-identification and a form of misrecognition. Her question centers on the politicization of disidentification. Rancière's definition, as I will clarify in this chapter, is more radical than Butler's and does not contain any component of identity formation or subjectivity. Rather, politics is disidentification. A similar definition to Rancière is found in Munoz (1999, 97) who asserts that "disidentification is a "third term that resists the binary of identification and counter-identification". Likewise, for Munoz disidentification is a process of politicization.

It would be a mistake to understand politics as simply opposed to the police order, as a completely separate and distinct logic that seeks its elimination.[124] Politics, as the meeting of two logics, is the reconfiguration of the sensible in the name of equality; an action (or practical experimentation) that runs up against the police logic in the name of the equality of anyone with everyone. For Rancière (1995, 57):

> Aucune chose n'est en elle-même politique car la politique n'existe que par un principe qui ne lui pas propre, l'égalité. Le statut de ce « principe » doit être précisé. L'égalité n'est pas un donné que la politique mettre en application, une essence que la loi incarne ni un but qu'elle se propose d'atteindre. Elle n'est qu'une présupposition qui doit être discernée dans les pratiques qui la mettent en œuvre.[125]

I want to unpack this understanding of the relationship of politics with equality as it is elaborated in the work of Rancière before turning to a more detailed discussion of politics as disruption and reconfiguration. To appreciate this aspect of politics it is first necessary to elaborate the notion of equality as the presupposition of politics. What is this equality being affirmed and presupposed?

The most fully developed discussion of equality is to be found in Rancière's (1991) re-counting of the story of the schoolteacher Joseph Jacotot in *The Ignorant*

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[124] For Rancière, the police logic, or the social hierarchical state-based order, as fully closed and without supplement is impossible (see the discussion of hegemony from Laclau and Mouffe 1985). There is never a total closure of the police logic, but always an excess or supplement through which politics emerges. It is in this sense that the givens of the police order are polemical and permeable and thus the object of contestation.

[125] "Nothing is political in itself for the political only happens by means of a principle that does not belong to it: equality. The status of this 'principle' needs to be specified. Equality is not a given that politics then presses into service, an essence embodied in the law or a goal politics sets itself the task of attaining. It is a mere assumption that needs to be discerned within the practices implementing it" (Rancière 1999, 33).

Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation. At the period of the Restoration in France, Jacotot was exiled to the Belgium during which time he undertook to teach French to Flemish speaking students, whose language he himself did not know. In the process of realizing that his pupils were capable of learning French by themselves, a process not unlike learning a mother tongue, he developed the idea of a universal education premised on the principle that all people are equally intelligent and that the problem in education is therefore not the transmission of knowledge, but to "reveal an intelligence to itself" (Ibid., 28). All Jacotot had with him was a bilingual copy of Fénelon's *Les Aventures de Télémaque*, which he asked his students to read and write a paper on, in French. Surprised by the quality of the work of his students, Jacotot concluded that there is an equality of intelligences and that the obstacle for students is not a matter of "a lack of instruction, but the belief in the inferiority of their intelligence" (Ibid., 39).

Taking his cue from Jacotot, the claim Rancière makes concerning equality is that it is a "point of departure, a *supposition* to maintain in every circumstance" (Ibid., 138); that is, the supposition of the equality of all speaking beings. In the discussion of the equality of intelligences, Rancière (Ibid., 27) notes that it is not the equality of manifestations of intelligence that is the issue (i.e., knowledge or skills), but rather the equality, or non-hierarchy, of *intellectual capacity.* In this sense, equality is not something that can be observed or measured, and neither can it be considered a goal or future state (see also Ibid., 46), but is rather, in political terms, a human quality or potential. Rancière makes the crucial point that equality must therefore be approached as it is practiced and

verified; that is, it has no value in itself but only in its effects or what he calls its "practical experimentations".

Importantly, the principle of the "equality of all speaking beings" does not make equality an ontological principle. Precisely because its value is tied to its verification and practice, in itself equality is empty and without content. This point is clarified by Rancière when he states: "Elle n'est pas une valeur que l'on invoque mais un universel qui doit être présupposé, vérifié et démontré en chaque cas" (1998a, 116).[126] There are two points to clarify at this juncture. First, at a primary level, equality is a presupposition to the degree that it is the condition for understanding between two or more people. Put simply, in order for me to understand you, and vice-versa, we must both first assume our equality *qua* speaking beings (versus beings who produce only noise). In the terms of Rancière (1995, 37):

> Il y a de l'ordre dans la société parce que les uns commandent et les autres obéissent. Mais pour obéir à une ordre deux choses au moins sont requises : il faut comprendre l'ordre et il faut comprendre qu'il faut lui obéir. Et pour faire cela, il faut déjà être l'égal de celui qui vous commande.[127]

Those who claim a hierarchical position within the sensible order and, further, attempt to naturalize this position, must first assume that those who are inferior, who are in fact told and taught that they are inferior (stupid, poor, strangers), must first understand what he

[126] "Equality is not a value to which on appeals; it is a universal that must be [presupposed], verified, and demonstrated in each case" (Rancière 1992, 60; translation modified).
[127] "There is order in society because some people command and others obey, but in order to obey an order at least two things are required: you must understand the order and you must understand that you must obey it. And to do that, you must already be the equal of the person who is ordering you" (Rancière 1999, 16).

or she is saying. Yet, in order to be understood, those claiming a position of superiority must presume the equality of all speaking beings, thus contradicting the police order and exposing the contingency of any social hierarchy.

The second point is that the meeting of the logic of the police order and the logic of equality is not an opposition of two separate and pure spheres. The logic of equality, whose value and content is tied to its verification and demonstration, emerges only in the contestation of the twisting and wringing by the police order, that is, the twisting of equality as inequality, as the above case of equal speaking beings attests. Thus, the meeting of these two logics does not constitute a third space or ground, an ontological foundation, and thus they are not wholly external to each other.[128] As Rancière (2003, 6) emphatically states, "there is no place outside of the police". As Samuel Chambers (2011, 317; original emphasis) explains:

> *[P]olitics and police meet within the police order itself*. Politics goes on in the only place it can go on: within the social formation where it occurs, i.e., *within the space of the police order*. … [P]olitics is that which *opposes* the terms of the police order but does so *within* its terms.

It is in this sense that equality is not an ontological principle, but rather a presupposition that must be demonstrated and verified in each case. If there is no politics without the presupposition of equality, this also therefore means that politics is the demonstration of equality. Indeed, without the supposition of equality, the force of action directed against

[128] Here I am referring to the idea of the "political difference" in which *la politique* is distinguished from *le politique*, or politics/the political (see Marchart [2007] for a historiography of this difference). Rancière's conception of politics (*la politique*) does not follow this entrenched model of thinking, which posits *le politique* as a "pure" ground outside of politics (*la politique*), but instead is a thinking of politics as "impure" (see Chambers 2011).

the police order becomes quickly recuperated and defused. It is only in its oppositional logic (and paradoxical) to the police order (as an order of inequality) that politics happens, or takes place. To understand and appreciate how this verification takes place from within the police order, it is necessary to consider how the police order twists or wrings the equality it must always presuppose.

Equality is the source of politics to the degree that in its verification and practice it exposes a "wrong" (*tort*) between the parts of society or community, a miscounting that establishes and sustains inequality and hierarchy. From the word *tordre*, which denotes a twisting and wringing, Rancière wants to infuse this notion with the idea that there is a twisting and wringing of a primordial equality on which inequality relies. For Rancière (1998a, 113; original emphasis): "Au lieu de dire que toute police dénie l'égalité, nous dirons que toute police *fait tort* à l'égalité".[129] The "wrong" that ties equality to politics, and which is the basis for the verification of equality, therefore, is not simply the contestation of competing views over interests (i.e., the wages of workers). Rather, it is a miscount that exposes a hierarchical distribution of roles, functions, identities and places that is not natural but radically contingent, an inequality that rests in equality.

Politics names these wrongs and, by making them visible, disrupts the police order or distribution of the sensible, about who gets to speak and make demands. In other words, in giving appearance to these wrongs, politics introduces the part of those without part as a new part of the community, with new capacities that are not yet fixed,

[129] "Thus, instead of arguing that [police] *denies* equality, I shall say that [police] *wrongs* equality, and I shall take the political the place where the verification of equality is obliged to turn into the handling of the wrong" (Rancière 1992, 58-59; original emphasis, translation modified).

determined or identified. It is therefore through the exposing of a wrong that politics finds its place within the police logic, and, through the verification and demonstration of equality, disrupts its logic. Having laid out Rancière's conception of politics and its relation to the social order and to equality, I want to now turn to another important dimension, specifically, what it means to disrupt and reconfigure the sensible order of the police logic. This aspect of Rancière's thought is central to his notion of politics and therefore merits further explication.

The Political Subject and the Place of Politics

Having "located" politics within the police logic and, at the same time, as a manifestation of equality not identical to this logic, how exactly does politics work? If politics is not a sphere separate from and uncontaminated by the sensible order, but wholly a part of that order, how is politics then also a disruption of that order?[130]

It might be tempting to connect the argument Rancière has provided for rethinking politics along the lines of a politics of recognition.[131] While there are clearly

[130] The common English translation of *le partage du sensible* is division or distribution of the sensible. For Rancière the sensible has a double connotation, meaning both that which can be sensed (i.e., the senses) and that which makes sense or is meaningful: "Le sensible, c'est du sens distribué : du sens mis en rapport avec le sens, du visible qui est articulé en dicible, qui est interprété, évalué, etc." ["[t]he sensible is distributed meaning, meaning brought into relation with one of the senses, the visible articulated as the sayable, interpreted, evaluated, etc."] (Rancière 2009a, 159; my translation).

[131] The politics of recognition, or ethics of recognition, emerged as a debate in social and political philosophy in the early 1990s with Charles Taylor's (1992) *Multiculturalism and the "Politics of Recognition*" and was developed by the proponents of critical theory influenced by the Frankfurt

some affinities, closer investigation reveals fundamental differences between the two that make the comparison unsustainable and call attention to how politics "takes place" for Rancière. If Rancière's principal concern is the denial of recognition of those dominated, in an essay on this very issue Jean-Philippe Deranty (2003) asks, to what degree does this effort dovetail with the recent writings on the struggle for recognition?[132] I will not rehearse all the arguments put forward by Deranty, which cover a range of philosophical issues and debates. Instead, I wish simply to outline his central claim, namely that recognition is a struggle for the formation of a full identity, be it personal, social or cultural. As such, for the proponents of recognition, such as Axel Honneth, the core argument is about the contribution of these unrecognized identities to the social order, the community from which they are being excluded (Ibid., 151).

Deranty points out that the model of recognition as put forth by Honneth, which is premised on the Habermasian model of communicative rationality, is problematic because it assumes as given pre-existing subjects and identities as participants in this struggle. As Deranty (Ibid., 147) states:

> The very contested object of political conflict is precisely the existence of a situation of speech and the identity of the valid participants in that situation. The fight of the dominated individuals consists in appearing as worthy speakers and in making the situation of speech visible.

School, such as Jürgen Habermas, Axel Honneth, Nancy Fraser, Seyla Benhabib, among others. The foundation of this discussion is Hegel's theory of intersubjectivity and recognition. For a critical discussion of these issues see Fabian (1999).

[132] Deranty's principal interlocutor here is Axel Honneth, generally considered to be the *doyen* of the Frankfurt School, following Jürgen Habermas. His writings have largely centered on the moral grounds of the struggle for recognition within contemporary deliberative democracies, especially in the context of debates around multiculturalism. See Honneth (1996).

The point Deranty is making is not that there are no identities at play in politics, but rather that it is precisely these identities that are at issue. In other words, those subjects engaged in politics do not do so on account of their identity, as an affirmation of difference, but instead because of how these identities are always already bound up with the police logic. Again, the thrust of politics is the verification of equality that has been twisted and wrung by the police order through the distribution of roles, functions, identities and places: politics works explicitly against such identities by disrupting those configurations of who can speak based on the hierarchical ordering of the social. As Deranty (Ibid., 151-152) notes:

> Ultimately, this recognition only achieves the conservation of a social order that is structurally based on inequality. By focusing on the subjects' identity and by defining identities in strict social intersubjective terms, the ethics of recognition turn out to be a kind of sociologism that is unable to provide the theoretical basis for a radical critique of the social system.

The givenness of identity as difference within the model of recognition, thus framed as an intersubjective moment, cannot account for politics as the disruption of this order, which Rancière claims is the hallmark of politics.[133] If Rancière is to add anything to the debate on recognition, it is precisely in demonstrating how the "promise of identity" is precisely the wile by which the police logic maintains a hierarchy and a social structure of inequality. As a disruption of the police logic through equality, politics is the suspension of the social order and its assigning of identities through a process of disidentification

[133] Here it is useful to distinguish between intersubjectivity as an ethical or moral principle and intersubjectivity as an epistemological claim (see Fabian 1991). The latter would follow more closely with Rancière's arguments as it suggests a condition of possibility of communication and knowledge rather than a stance to be taken with regard to other (given) subjects.

(*désidentification*). It is only in the appearance of bodies and capacities not identified in the police order through which politics takes place as a process of political subjectivation: the emergence of a subject of politics that has "…aucune forme de « culture », d'*ethos* collectif qui prendrait voix" (Rancière 1995, 61).[134] As Rancière explains: "Un sujet politique ce n'est pas un groupe qui 'prend conscience' de lui-même, se donne une voix, impose son poids dans la société" (1995, 65).[135] Thus, in taking the givenness of identities as its starting point, whether personal, social or cultural, the ethics of recognition reproduces the consensual order of the police, its hierarchies and exclusions, and, in so doing, is always in danger of becoming a form of depolitcization. The ethics of recognition, put bluntly, opposes politics by claiming that there is no part of those without part: only those already implicated in the logics of identity as existing subjects are countable. But who is this subject of politics if it is not to be given within existing regimes of identification?

Politics, writes Rancière (1995, 59), is a mode of subjectivation. That is, politics, in breaking with the police order is a process in which a political subject emerges through a series of acts not identifiable within the given sensible order. As the verification of equality, politics is a process of subjectivation in which there is a disruption of the police logic and its regimes of identification. It is a process that disrupts the sensible order by putting forth the voice and name of a political subject: an "impossible identification"

[134] "…political subjectification, as I have tried to show elsewhere, is in no way a form of 'culture', of some collective ethos capable of finding a voice" (Rancière 1999, 36).
[135] "A political subject is not a group that 'becomes aware' of itself, finds its voice, imposes its weight on society" (Rancière 1999, 40).

(Rancière 1998a, 213) not only because it falls outside of the purview of the sensible order, but also because it refuses any specific identification based on proper identities – personal, social or cultural. In summary, politics occurs as *dissensus*, as disruption and disidentification, through the manifestation of bodies and capacities not contained by the police order:

> C'est un croisement d'identités reposant sur un croisement de noms : des noms qui lient le nom d'un groupe ou d'une classe au nom de ce qui est hors-compte, qui lient un être à un non-être ou à être-à-venir. Ce réseau a une propriété remarquable : il comporte toujours une identification impossible, un identification qui ne peut être incarnée par ceux ou celles qui l'énoncent. « Nous sommes les damnés de la terre » est le type de phrase qu'aucun damné de la terre ne prononcera jamais (1998a, 119-120).[136]

This process of subjectivation evidently needs to be distinguished from those accounts that define this process as one in which the subject is constituted through the internalization of dominant scientific discourses or norms of behaviour (e.g., early Foucault).[137] For Rancière, the process of political subjectivation is an integral part of

[136] "It is a crossing of identities relying on a crossing of names: names that link the name of a group or a class to the name of no group or no class, a being to a nonbeing or a not-yet-being. This network has a noticeable property: it always involves an impossible identification, an identification that cannot be embodied by he or she who utters it. 'We are the wretched of the earth' is the kind of sentence that no wretched of the world would ever utter" (Rancière 1992, 61).

[137] This conception of subjectivation is most visible in the early writings of Foucault (1976). In his later writings, particularly on the ethics of the self and the aesthetics of existence, there is an adjustment of this model toward a conception in which the subject is both constituted and constitutes itself. Yet, for Rancière, Foucault is not interested in a theory of subjectivation: "[N]ulle part, il ne considère une sphère spécifique d'actes que l'on pourrait nommer actes de subjectivation politique. Je ne pense pas qu'il se soit jamais intéressé à définir une théorie de la subjectivation politique au sens où je l'entends, celui d'une reconfiguration polémique des données communes. Ce qui l'intéresse, ce n'est pas le commun polémique, c'est le gouvernement de soi et des autres" (Rancière 2008a, 32) For an approximation of this point in English, see Rancière (2010b, 93).

politics and without which there is no subject of which to speak. It is the creation of a "class" that belongs to no on one in particular, and thus potentially to everyone. To clarify, there are two moments in the process of subjectivation. As noted, there is a moment of dis-identification with the assigned identities, roles and functions of the police logic (or sensible order) through a disruption of the naturalness of that order: "Une subjectivation politique redécoupe le champ d'expérience qui donnait à chacun son identité avec sa part" (Rancière 1995, 65).[138] This first moment is largely negative and critical in tone insofar as it is a rejection of the given order. The second moment is the emergence of a political subject or subjectivities from the excess of those parts already identified by the community. These political subjectivities belong to no one in particular. They are subjectivities that are not determined or claimed by any person or group, but enable individuals and groups to exceed policed identities. Rancière (1995, 60) refers to these political subjectivities as "a multiple":

> La subjectivation politique produit un multiple qui n'était pas donné dans la constitution policière de la communauté, un multiple dont le compte se pose comme contradictoire avec la logique policière.[139]

The multiple produced in political subjectivation is without identity in the proper sense, that is, it is of an order wholly other, a "discours de l'autre" (Rancière 1998a, 212) in

[138] "Political subjectification redefines the field of experience that gave to each their identity with their lot" (Rancière 1999, 40).
[139] "Political subjectification produces a multiple that was not given in the police constitution of the community, a multiple whose count poses itself a contradictory in terms of police logic" (Rancière 1999, 36).

relation to the police order;[140] that which the latter attempts to deny and depoliticize: "C'est la formulation d'un *un* qui n'est pas un *soi* mais la relation d'un *soi* à un autre" (Ibid., 118).[141] The subject of political subjectivation is not, however, created *ex nihilo*, says Rancière, but rather through the disidentification with the givenness of roles in the police logic. The multiple, for instance, the people (i.e., the *demos*), appears in the reconfiguration of the sensible, "l'arrachement à la naturalité d'une place" (Rancière 1995, 60).[142] He gives the following examples of such political subjects:

> « Femme » en politique est le sujet d'expérience – le sujet dénaturé, défeminisé – qui mesure l'écart entre une part reconnue – celle de la complémentarité sexuelle – et une absence du part. « Ouvrier » ou mieux « prolétaire » est de même le sujet qui mesure l'écart entre la part du travail comme fonction social et l'absence de part de ceux qui l'exécutent dans le définition du commun de la communauté (1995, 60).[143]

These examples are vivid historical instances of the part of those without part, particular instances of bodies and capacities that disrupted given police logics. Moreover, the

[140] "a discourse of the other"(Rancière 1998b, 29).
[141] "It is the formation of a one that is not a self but is the relation of a self to an other" (Rancière 1992, 60).
[142] "...removal from the naturalness of a place…" (Rancière 1999, 36).
[143] "In politics 'woman' is the subject of experience – the denatured, defeminized subject – that measures the gap between an acknowledged part (that of sexual complementarity) and a having no part. 'Worker' or better still 'proletarian' is similarly the subject that measures the gap between the part of work as social function and the having no part of those who carry it out within the definition of the common of the community" (Rancière 1999, 36). Another important example of political subjectivity Rancière frequently refers to is: "Nous sommes tous des juifs allemands", the slogan of May 1968: "[I]ls mettaient en pleine clarté l'écart de la subjectivation politique, définie dans le nœud d'une énonciation logique et d'une manifestation esthétique, avec toute identification" (1995, 90). "[W]hen demonstrators in the Paris of 1968 declared… 'We are all German Jews,' they exposed for all to see the gap between political subjectification – defined in the nexus of a logical utterance and an aesthetic manifestation – and any kind of identification" (Rancière 1999, 59).

appearance and announcement of these "impossible identifications" are the emergence of political subjects, modes of political subjectivation that refigure the *partage du sensible*, working against the logic of the police and its claims that there is no part of those without part: "La politique est l'art des déductions tordue et des identités croisées" (Rancière 1995, 188).[144]

As we have seen, the logic of the police is an ordering of bodies, identities, functions, roles, capacities, a sensible order that determines what can be seen, heard, thought, said, done. It is an order that claims to be without supplement. In its attempt to render absent and invisible, to disavow the part without part, or the supplement, to neutralize politics itself, the logic of the police is the order of consensus, an accounting of community based on "des groupes effectifs définis par les différences dans la naissance, les fonctions, les places et les intérêts qui constituent le corps social, à l'exclusion de tout supplément" (Rancière 1998a, 239).[145] It is on this 'accounting' of the community in which: "La police est un partage du sensible dont le principe est l'absence de vide et de supplément" (Ibid., 240).[146] The police, in other words, is the elimination of politics, or *dissensus*. Thus, it is in exposing the miscount of community, its incompleteness, that the part of those without part opposes the consensus of the sensible order. But how do these demonstrations of a miscount take place? How does the part of those without part emerge? Where does the process of political subjectivation take place?

[144] "Politics is the art of warped deductions and mixed identities" (Rancière 1999, 139).
[145] "…actual groups defined by differences in birth, and by the different functions, places and interests that make up the social body to the exclusion of every supplement" (Rancière 2010a, 36)
[146] "The essence of the police lies in a partition of the sensible that is characterized by the absence of void and of supplement…" (Rancière 2010a, 36).

Throughout my discussion of Rancière's conception of politics I have hinted, both through my own words and those of Rancière, that politics is something that takes place: "Il y a de la politique quand il y a un lieu et des formes pour la rencontre entre deux processus hétérogènes" (Rancière 1995, 53).[147] Thus far in my analysis I have not described the lieu, the place of this encounter (*un lieu de rencontre*). To begin, Rancière is disinclined to define the proper place of politics, as he does not want to necessarily attach it to any material conditions – i.e., politics can only happen in such and such place, etc. Yet, despite this reticence he continually refers to the place of politics, to politics as a *taking place*. Indeed, there is a significant but underappreciated spatial dimension to Rancière's thinking of politics that is crucial for understanding his conception of politics, as we will see in the next section on the politics of aesthetics. In a talk entitled, "The Thinking of Dissensus: Politics and Aesthetics" Rancière (2003, 6-7) responds to inquiries regarding the spatial metaphors in his work:

> […T]he issue of space has to be thought of in terms of distribution [*partage*]: distribution of places, boundaries of what is in or out, central or peripheral, visible or invisible. It is related to what I call the distribution of the sensible [*partage du sensible*]. By this I mean the way in which the abstract and arbitrary forms of symbolization of hierarchy are embodied as perceptive givens, in which a social destination is anticipated by the evidence of a perceptive universe, of a way of being, saying and seeing. This distribution is a certain framing of time and space.

Throughout his conception of politics Rancière refers to the police or *partage du sensible* as a matter of knowing your place: the worker, women, immigrants are all obliged and

[147] "Politics occurs when there is a place and a way for two heterogeneous processes to meet" (Rancière 1999, 30).

expected to know their place in terms of the functions, roles and identities ascribed to them. Politics, as we saw, is when the worker refuses to know his or her place. It is in the refusal to follow "their place" that the process of disidentification occurs. As Rancière (2000, 13-14) says, *la politique*:

> C'est un découpage des temps et des espaces, du visible et de l'invisible, de la parole et du bruit qui définit à la fois le lieu et l'enjeu de la politique comme forme d'expérience. La politique porte sur ce qu'on voit et ce qu'on peut en dire, sur qui à la compétence pour voir et la qualité pour dire, sur les propriétés des espaces et les possibles du temps.[148]

In this short passage is the idea that politics is the fissure or disruption of those possibilities of time (e.g., the time of labour) and properties of spaces (e.g., the factory) assigned and configured within sensible order of the police logic. Further, it tells us that this fissure or disruption defines the place (*lieu*) and stakes (*enjeu*) of politics as a form of experience. While there is a clear aesthetic quality to this configuration of sensibility, a "système des formes *a priori* déterminent ce qui se donne à ressentir" (2000, 13).[149]

The spatial qualities of Rancière's rethinking gives politics an aesthetic dimension, or what he refers to as the aesthetics of politics. The police order is an aesthetic configuration in the sense that it is a particular configuration or distribution of the

[148] "It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noice that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience. Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time" (Rancière 2004a, 14).

[149] "…the system of a priori forms determining what presents itself to sense experience" (Rancière 2004a, 13). Here Rancière (2000, 13) makes reference to Kant's idea of aesthetics, later revisited by Foucault, as the structural system organizing sensible experience. Not a pre-Kantian notion, as is often wrongly assumed, it is the transcendental aesthetic, or what Kant (1855) refers to as the principles of a priori sensibility, as found in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (A21, B36).

sensible, of what can be seen, thought, heard, said, done. It is a distribution with a distinctive spatial quality, an ordering of bodies in particular places according to particular roles and capacities. Thus, when workers rupture their assigned temporal and spatial roles, it is through the reconfiguration of temporal and spatial capacities – using their nights when they should be sleeping to write poetry. It is in this sense that politics takes place.

The Politics of Aesthetics

For Rancière, not surprisingly, art is one of the areas where politics takes place. Indeed, one of the key functions of art is to manifest a place (*un lieu*) where it reconfigures the relationships between bodies, spaces and time. I now wish to consider the consistencies between Rancière's conceptualization of politics and what can be called, for lack of better terminology, the politics of contemporary art. In assuming a consistency between his conceptualization of politics and the characterization of the politics of contemporary art, my task will be to identify a politics of art by way of moving from the aesthetics of politics to the politics of aesthetics. While equality plays a central role in the politics of aesthetics, the workings of the politics of art is not entirely identical to workings of politics outlined above, even if both give site to politics as disruption, disidentification and reconfiguration.

So far we have seen how Rancière's conception of politics has an aesthetic dimension in the notion of the *partage du sensible*. This aesthetic dimension of politics,

following Kant, is premised on the idea that politics refers to what can be seen, heard, thought, said, done. Time and space are political to the degree that they define forms of subjectivity and modes of political participation, of who can be seen and heard. Politics begins, therefore, with the disruption of these times and spaces. This aesthetic dimension of politics is manifest in Rancière's (2005, 14) study of resistance among nineteenth-century workers in France:

> I showed that at the core of the emancipation of the workers was an aesthetic revolution. And the core of that revolution was the issue of time. The Platonic statement, affirming that workers had no time to do two things at the same time, had to be taken as a definition of the worker in terms of a distribution of the sensible: the worker is he who has no time to do anything but his own work. Consequently, the heart of the 'revolution' was the partition of time. In order to reframe the space-time of their 'occupation,' the workers had to invalidate the most common partition of time: the partition according to which workers would work during the day and sleep during the night. It was the conquest of the night for doing something else than sleeping. That basic overturning involved a whole reconfiguration of the partition of experience. It involved a process of dis-identification, another relation to speech, visibility and so on.

Clearly Rancière's concept of aesthetics, as a configuration of space-time, goes against the more commonplace notion of aesthetics being a matter of the philosophy of art and the beautiful, which then gets caught up in justifying or undermining the separation of art from the necessities of life (i.e., the everyday).[150] For Rancière, conversely, aesthetics designates a particular relationship between art and life, a paradoxical form that asserts

[150] For Rancière, modernism and postmodernism are two sides of the same coin. Modernism constructs narratives around the autonomy of art, while postmodernism seeks to undo these narratives. The trouble, as we will see, is that both misunderstand the paradox at the heart of aesthetics, which posits that: "… l'art est de l'art pour autant qu'il est aussi de non-art, autre chose que de l'art" (Rancière, 2004b, 53). "…art is art insofar as it is also non-art, or is something other than art" (Rancière 2009b, 36).

both the autonomy of art *and* its intermingling with the everyday – art and non-art: "L'esthétique, elle, est la pensée du désordre nouveau" (Rancière 2004b, 23).[151] For Rancière, as we will see, it is this disorder that is the foundation of the political capacities of art.

To understand Rancière's conception of aesthetics (2000, 16), which is but one of what he refers to as the three regimes of art, it is necessary to first examine each of these regimes, or *partages du sensible*, namely, the ethical, representative and aesthetic. With these three regimes, he explains:

> On a là trois formes de partage du sensible structurant la manière dont des arts peuvent être perçus et pensées comme arts *et* comme formes d'inscription du sens de la communauté. Ces formes définissent la manière dont des œuvres ou performances « font de la politique », quel que soient par ailleurs les intentions qui y président, les modes d'insertion sociaux des artistes ou la façon dont les formes artistiques réfléchissent les structures ou les mouvements sociaux.[152]

Following Foucault's archaeological method, Rancière establishes these three regimes or *epistèmes* of art as the transcendental conditions that determine what is visible in art, as well as what counts as art itself. To read these three regimes as rigid and separate historical periodizations would, however, be wrong:

[151] "Aesthetics is the thought of a new disorder" (Rancière 2009b, 13).
[152] "Here we have three forms of distributing the sensible that structure the manner in which the arts can be perceived and thought of as forms of art *and* as forms that inscribe a sense of community: the surface of 'depicted' signs, the split reality of the theater, the rhythm of a dancing chorus. These forms define the way in which works of art or performances are 'involved in politics,' whatever may otherwise be the guiding intentions, artists' social modes of integration, or the manner in which artistic forms reflect social structures or movements" (Rancière 2004a, 14).

> I would say that my approach is a bit similar to Foucault's. It retains the principle from the Kantian transcendental that replaces the dogmatism of truth with the search for the conditions of possibility. … I differ from Foucault insofar as his archaeology seems to me to follow a schema of historical necessity according to which, beyond a certain chasm, something is no longer thinkable. … I thus try at one and the same time to historicize the transcendental and to de-historicize these systems of conditions of possibility (Rancière 2004c, 50).

Each regime, in other words, has a historical period in which it is dominant, but that does not preclude the possibility of these regimes coinciding; there is not a strict chronological relation between these regimes – they are metahistorical categories (Deranty 2010, 119). So what are these three regimes? The first one is what Rancière, in reference to Plato, calls the ethical regime of art. This regime plays the least important role in Rancière's argument so I will only describe it briefly. The ethical regime is founded on the idea that artistic representation is judged by its truthfulness to an ideal model. Whether a tree or the character of heroes in a story, the accuracy of representation and its truthfulness to the idea has a moral or ethical imperative insofar as it impacts of ethos of the community:

> … par la manière dont les images du poème donnent au enfants et aux spectateurs citoyens un certaine éducation et s'inscrivent dans le partage des occupations de la cité. C'est en ce sens que je parle de régime éthique des images. Il s'agit dans ce régime de savoir en quoi la manière d'être des images concerne l'*ethos*, la manière d'être des individus et des collectivités (Rancière 2000, 28; original emphasis).[153]

[153] "…by the way in which the poem's images provide the spectator, both children and adult citizens, with a certain education and fit in with the distribution of the city's occupations. It is in this sense that I speak of an ethical regime of images. In this regime, it is a matter of knowing in what way images' mode of being affects the *ethos*, the mode of being of individuals and communities" (Rancière 2004a, 21; original emphasis).

Here art is not so much art as we understand it today; there is no art as such, but arts or modes of making. Put differently, there is no separation of art and politics. If the ethical regime would seem to be prior to the other two regimes, this is not to suggest that it is not still at work, as is evidenced in the question of how films or literature impart a moral message for their audiences or for example what goes under the banner of "engaged" or "political" art.

The second regime is the domain of representative art and is a break with the ethical regime. In the representative regime, derived from Aristotle's *Poetics*, the aim is to separate art from the moral community. Its principal mode is mimesis, that is, the manner of representing actions framed as a logical consequence of words and deeds:

> Le principe mimétique n'est pas en son fond un principe normatif disant que l'art doit faire des copies ressemblant à leurs modèles. Il est d'abord un principe pragmatique qui isole, dans le domaine général des arts (des manières de faire), certains art particuliers qui exécutent des choses spécifiques, à savoir des imitations. Ces imitations sont soustraites à la fois à la vérification ordinaire des produits des arts par leur usage et à la législation de la vérité sur les discours et les images (Rancière 2000, 28-29).[154]

The representative regime, unlike the ethical regime, does not demand a truthfulness between image and idea in the name of morality and the ethos of the community, but instead presents a narrative between the two in which a specific and certain order is to be

[154] "The mimetic principle is not at its core a normative principle stating that art must make copies resembling their models. It is first of all a pragmatic principle that isolates, within the general domain of arts (ways of doing and making), certain particular forms of art that produce specific entities called imitations. These imitations are extricated, at once and the same time, from the ordinary control of artistic products by their use and from the legislative reign of truth over discourses and images" (Rancière 2004a, 21).

maintained between the sensible object and its meaning. It is judged not by the same standards as non-representational practices, such as the products of labour, but rather in its capacity to imitate a codified set of conventions and norms. Premised on the logic of action, of cause and effect, the point here is for the story to represent an order or hierarchy of society. It is, in other words, "la hiérarchie des genres selon la dignité de leurs sujets" (2000, 31).[155] In short, a given subject has a specific mode of representation. Such examples include paintings of mythological, religious and historical events (e.g., French *classicisme*, *belles lettres*, *beaux arts*).

The third regime of art, or the aesthetic regime is radical rupture of the representative regime to the degree that it undoes the causation and hierarchy within representation (Rancière 2008b). There is no longer the question of the appropriateness of the artwork to its subject, since the conventions and norms that guide and determine the representative regime are suspended and disrupted. Unlike the ethical regime and the representative regime, therefore, the aesthetic regime undoes any determination between *poiesis* (the manner of making) and *aisthesis* (the effect it produces). While still intimately linked, their relationship is indeterminate and must be worked out case by case:

> Le régime esthétique des arts est celui qui proprement identifie l'art au singulier et délie cet art de toute règle spécifique, de toute hiérarchie des sujets, des genres et des arts. Mais il le fait en faisant voler en éclats la barrière mimétique qui distinguait les manières de faire et séparait ses règles de l'ordre des occupations sociales. Il affirme l'absolue singularité de

[155] "…the hierarchy of genres according to the dignity of their subject matter" (Rancière 2004a, 22)

> l'art et détruit en même temps tout critère pragmatique de cette singularité (Rancière 2000, 32-33).[156]

Taking art as its object, whereby the arts become art, the aesthetic regime asserts that there are no pre-existing rules for presenting the world and its objects, subjects and situations; nor are there any pre-existing rules for distinguishing art from the world. In the aesthetic regime any object can potentially become a work of art, from the everyday to the commodity, and, further, any activity can potentially give rise to a work of art (e.g., Beuys' statement that everyone is an artist). The aesthetic regime is thus the rupture of sense and sense, a suspension of "a form of sensory experience and an interpretation which makes sense of it" (Rancière 2009d, 275). It is art that opens a new relationship between *poiesis* and *aisthesis* that is without rule or norm, that allows for an equality between the world and its objects, subjects and situations by suspending any determinate relationship between appearance and reality, form and material, activity and passivity, understanding and sensitivity. Moreover, it is in this equality that art within the aesthetic regime offers a promise of emancipation, a new way of life (Rancière 2004b).

As I discussed above, equality is central to Rancière's conception of politics. Not surprisingly, this notion is also central to Rancière's conception of an aesthetic regime of art. Here he puts forth a two-fold idea of equality within the aesthetic regime. On the one hand, there is an equality of subjects, objects, situations that can be taken up within the

[156] "The aesthetic regime of the arts is the regime that strictly identifies art in the singular and frees it from any specific rule, from any hierarchy of the arts, subject matter, and genres. Yet it does so by destroying the mimetic barrier that distinguished ways of doing and making affiliated with art from other ways of doing and making, a barrier that separated its rules from the order of social occupations. The aesthetic regime asserts the absolute singularity of art and, at the same time, destroys any pragmatic criterion for isolating this singularity (Rancière 2004a, 23).

artwork, which is to say, anything can become the subject of art; on the other, and as a consequence, there is a "free play" between sensibility and cognition. To the degree that anything and everything can become the subject, object or situation of art, their organization and presentation within the work itself is not necessarily hierarchical or predetermined. In breaking from the representative regime, the aesthetic regime suspends any and all determinate relationships between cause and effect, and form and content; with the rules for determining what can be represented fallen away, under the aesthetic regime there is an indifference or equality in subjects, objects and situations (Rancière 2004b). From Marcel Duchamp's *Fontaine* to Santiago Sierra's controversial performance/installations and Rirkrit Tiravanija's participatory installations for sharing and cooking meals, anything (and anyone) can become the subject of art within the aesthetic regime.[157] The result, which leads to the second instance of equality, is that the presentation of such subjects, objects and situations are also non-hierarchical; that is, within the work itself there is no prescription for how they are to be arranged on account that there was no hierarchy in their appropriation. Here the juxtaposition of heterogeneous elements, for instance as in collage, is an instance of such a non-hierarchical presentation in which any predetermined meaning is necessarily suspended

[157] Santiago Sierra is a Spanish artist whose work to date has involved hiring workers (sex workers, etc.) to perform tasks within the gallery museum space. Taken by many critics to be exploitive, his work raises important questions about the nature of labour on contemporary capital society. Rirkrit Tiravanija is an Argentinean artist living in New York City and whose work revolves around creating installations where he and audience members cook and eat together in space of the museum. His work builds on the ideas elaborated by Nicholas Bourriaud in his *Esthétique relationelle* (1998). I will return to Bourriaud's relational aesthetics below.

(Rancière 2004b).[158] One of the consequences for Rancière, then, is that art that seeks to determine in advance how it ought to be interpreted, whether through the presentation of a moral fable of representative art or through didactic presentations of where art "teaches" the spectator, forecloses politics (Ibid., 65).[159] According to Rancière, only art that holds open its own indeterminacy, its heterogeneity, this equality of objects, subjects and situations, can manifest an emancipatory politics: the pure identification of art with life is the end of art, while the pure autonomy of aesthetics is no politics.

This two-fold dimension of aesthetic equality is clearly critical for understanding the relationship between politics and art put forward by Rancière, and more significantly, why not all art is political. Further, it is also the basis for how art maintains its promise of a new life while asserting its autonomy. To fully appreciate this politics of art is to understand how the aesthetic regime of art is a founded on the tension between art and

[158] Rancière (2004b, 67-68): "Le collage peut se réaliser comme pure rencontre des hétérogènes, attestant en bloc de l'incompatibilité de deux mondes. … Mais la politique du collage trouve son point d'équilibre là où elle peut combiner les deux rapports et jouer sur la ligne d'indiscernabilité entre la force de lisibilité du sens et la force d'étrangeté de non-sens". "Collage can be realized as the pure encounter between heterogeneous elements attesting *en bloc* to the incompatibility of two worlds. … But the politics of collage has a balancing point in that it can combine the two relations and play on the line of indiscernibility between the force of sense's legibility and the force of non-sense's strangeness" (Rancière 2009b, 47).

[159] As Rancière (2004b, 65) states: "L'art critique, dans sa formule le plus générale, se propose de donner conscience des mécanismes de la domination pour changer le spectateur en acteur conscient de la transformation du monde. On connaît bien le dilemme qui pèse sur ce projet. … Les exploités ont rarement eu besoin qu'on leur explique les lois de l'exploitation. Car ce n'est pas l'incompréhension de l'état de choses existant qui nourrit la soumission chez les dominés, mais le manque de confiance en leur propre capacité de la transformer." "In its most general expression, critical art is a type of art that sets out to build awareness of the mechanisms of domination to turn the spectator into a conscious agent of world transformation. The quandary that plagues the project is well known. … The exploited rarely require an explanation of the laws of exploitation. The dominated do not remain in subordination because they misunderstand the existing state of affairs but because they lack confidence in their capacity to transform it" (Rancière 2009b, 45).

non-art, between the autonomy of art and its attachment to everyday social life, which is to say, its disorder.

Originating roughly at the end of the eighteenth-century, the aesthetic regime of art as defined by Rancière carries within it a fundamental paradox, or disorder, when it comes to its emancipatory claims. It claims to be both emancipatory by promising a new way of life to the community, yet at the same time it asserts its autonomy from life, that is, its separateness from society and politics. Indeed, the promise of a new life offered by the aesthetic regime is conditional upon its autonomy:

> La politique de l'art dans le régime esthétique de l'art, ou plutôt sa métapolitique, est déterminée par ce paradoxe fondateur : dans ce régime, l'art est de l'art pour autant qu'il est aussi du non-art, autre choses que de l'art. ... Il y a une contradiction originaire et sans cesse à l'œuvre. La solitude de l'œuvre porte une promesse d'émancipation. Mais l'accomplissement de la promesse, c'est la suppression de l'art comme réalité séparée, sa transformation en une forme de vie (Rancière 2004b, 53).[160]

Art is art only insofar as it promises to impact life; yet, at the same time, art claims to be separate from life. For art to fulfill its emancipatory promise, in other words, it must cease to be art and become part of everyday social life, or politics itself. But, at the same time, to be art it must also remain separate or autonomous from everyday social life. *Pace* modernism and postmodernism, the former embracing the autonomy of art and the latter the end of aesthetic autonomy, for Rancière this paradox between the autonomy and

[160] "The politics of art in the aesthetic regime of art, or rather its metapolitics, is determined by its founding paradox: art is art insofar as it is also non-art, or is something other than art. … There is a contradiction that is originary and unceasingly at work. The work's solitude carries a promise of emancipation. But the fulfillment of that promise amounts to the elimination of art as a separate reality, its transformation into a form of life" (Rancière 2009b, 36).

heteronomy of art is the very definition of aesthetics. And, rather than attempt to resolve this paradox, Rancière embraces it as the "grounds" for a politics of art; aesthetics is the name of the relationship between art and non-art, between art and life.

At one time, a politics of art is contingent upon its refusal of and distance (*écart*) from everyday social life, from the *partage du sensible*. As a suspension of bodies and capacities (and their relations), as well as cause and effect, form and content, it creates a gap between sense and meaning by neutralizing any and all predetermined forms of everyday life. It thereby opens a heterotopia, a space of otherness or in-betweeness, what Rancière refers to as a *discours de l'autre* or *entre-deux*. In these spaces where accepted and given meanings are suspended and neutralized, everyday social life is presented with a counterworld. Very often it is a counterworld founded on equality: an equality of subjects, objects, situations whose presentation promise a new life while asserting their autonomy from life.

Thus, the equality within the aesthetic regime of art, evidently, is not identical to the equality verified in politics discussed earlier. This is not to say they are not comparable and even similar at times, only that they offer different ideas in terms of politics. To begin, art is not political in the same way that a strike or demonstration is political. Rather, art is political to the degree that it maintains the tension in the paradox between its autonomy and heteronomy. Put differently, the distance art maintains from everyday life is the condition of its reconfiguration of that life. Thus, while both art and politics are disruptions, ruptures, disidentifications and reconfigurations of the sensible

order, the politics of art, in presenting a counterworld, is what Rancière calls a metapolitics (2004b). This counterworld, in other words, is the metapolitics of a sensory community. It is the bringing together of equality and bodies; modes of speaking, hearing, thinking, doing, being that present the possibility of new relationships with the sensible world. The politics of art, then, is a manner of doing politics. In his discussion of literature, Rancière (2004d, 10) puts it as follows:

> The syntagma "politics of literature" means that literature "does" politics as literature – there is a specific link between politics as a definite way of doing and literature as a definite practice of writing.

Art, in this sense, is a sensible instantiation of equality: "Le libre jeu – ou la neutralisation – esthétique définit un mode d'expérience inédit, porteur d'une nouvelle forme d'universalité et d'égalité sensibles" (Rancière 2004b, 133).[161]

The Taking Place of Art

As I discussed at the beginning of the chapter, there is a commonly held belief among anthropologists, as well as many others in the humanities and social sciences, that art offers a voice to the marginalized and oppressed by which to contest their exclusion and misrepresentation, and assert their identity and/or difference. Yet, as I hope to have suggested, to reduce the politics of art to the assertion of identity would be to revert back to the "identity politics" of the police logic, an act which runs the risk of depoliticizing art

[161] "Aesthetic free play – or neutralization – defines a novel mode of experience that bears within it a new form of 'sensible' universality and equality" (Rancière 2009b, 99).

in the process: It is to deny art its own politics by inscribing it within the narrative of an already constituted politics (Rancière 2004c).[162] The counterworld that emerges within aesthetic art is the taking place of politics, the emergence of a polemical place distinct from the spatio-temporal world of the police logic. It is a fictional world founded on the equality of anyone and everything, and must be seen as a figurative and poetic configuration. It is here that place re-emerges without identity, outside of the police order or *partage du sensible*.

The first half of this chapter demonstrates that the police logic or *partage du sensible* has clear and distinct spatial dimensions throughout Rancière's writings.[163] From *La Mésentente*, in which the police logic is understood as an ordering of bodies and capacities that assigns people to particular places and roles, functions and identities, throughout his writings on art, Rancière continues to refer to these spatial dimensions of the police logic or *partage du sensible*. Looking more closely, in identifying its wholeness

[162] Here Rancière (2004c, 60) is discussing the idea of "committed art": "An artist can be committed, but what does it mean to say that his [sic] art is committed? Commitment is not a category of art".

[163] The following is deeply indebted to the essay by Mustapha Dikeç (2005), "Space, Politics and the Political," which encouraged me to re-read Rancière's *La Mésentente* with particular attention to his shifting uses of "*espace*," "*lieu*" and "*place*". In the English translation of this book, *Disagreement*, the use of place (*lieu*) is largely absent from many passages. Compare, for example, this crucial passage: "Pour qu'un chose soit politique, il faut qu'il donne lieu à la rencontre de la logique policière et de la logique égalitaire, laquelle n'est jamais préconstituée" (Rancière 1995, 56) with: "For a thing to be political, it must give rise to a meeting of police logic and egalitarian logic that is never set up in advance" (Rancière 1999, 32). While this translation is not wrong, the frequency and significance of *lieu*, especially in these same pages (11 times on pages 56-57), arguably merits a more subtle consideration of its significance in Rancière's conception of politics: in other words, "*donne lieu*" can also be read as 'giving place to'. As I will show, there are clearer and less contentious instances where lieu/place is crucial to Rancière's politics. As Dikeç (2005) notes, Rancière carefully distinguishes between *espace*, *lieu* and *place* throughout *La Mésentente*.

and closure, the police logic or *partage du sensible* seeks for each part to have its proper place (*place*). As Dikeç (2005, 181) puts it:

> The space of the police is space as emptiness, as stasis, a fixed and inert "container" geometrically divisible into discrete and mutually exclusive parts, the sum of which gives the count that is equal to the "whole" to be governed. It is, in spatial terms, the embodiment of geometrical reason, of administrative rationality, inviolable and sharply partitioned. It spatially articulates identities (logic of identification) and distributes them to their proper places (logic of the proper), and this displaces, through placement, the disruption of politics through an exhaustive ordering of space.

This wholeness and closure may be composed of individuals, social groups with particular interests, or communities provided with recognition of their identities. It is a relatively tolerant whole so long as each individual, group and community is properly placed, that is, cognizant of their functions, roles, capacities. Politics, as I have argued in this chapter, is the disidentification with this temporal and spatial partition of bodies and capacities, but also its reconfiguration and the appearance of new capacities. For politics to emerge, there has to be a meeting of two logics, the police logic and the logic of equality. Yet we must not forget that, politics is not external to the police logic, and is not separate from the spatial distribution of proper places. Rather, this reconfiguration emerges within the spatial logic of the police order. According to Rancière (1995, 56):

> La politique agit sur la police. Elle agit dans des lieux et avec des mots qui leur sont communs, quitte à refigurer ces lieux et à changer le statut de ces mots. Ce qui est habituellement posé comme le lieu du politique, à savoir l'ensemble des institutions de l'État, n'est précisément pas un lieu

> homogène. Sa configuration est déterminée par un état des rapports entre la logique politique et la logique policière.[164]

If the place (lieu) of politics is a contested and heterogeneous place, the meeting of two logics or two worlds that determine its configuration, then it follows that there is no pure space of politics, as there is no full closure of the police logic. As a reconfiguration of the spatial order, however, politics does not act *in* the spatial order of the police – the lack of separation is not to suggest their identity, but an in-between (*un entre-deux*; Rancière 1998a, 119) of those identities assigned by the spatial logic of the police order: "intervalles construits entre des identités, entre des lieux et des places" (Rancière 1995, 186).[165] Yet, as the disruption and reconfiguration of the spatial order of the police, these intervals are the taking place of politics, the making of space into a place for addressing a wrong and demonstrating equality. It is a place that has no proper place, and one that cannot be determined in advance. This is not a literal place, as in a square or public meeting hall – these would be determinations of places for politics and thus the erasure of politics. Rather, place here is a functional space, an indeterminate space that emerges

[164] "Politics acts on the police. It acts in the places and with the words that are common to both, even if it means reshaping those places and changing the status of those words. What is usually posited as the space of politics, meaning the set of state institutions, is precisely not a homogeneous place. Its configuration is determined by the state of relations between political logic and police logic" (Rancière 1999, 33).

[165] "Intervals constructed between identities, between spaces and places" (Rancière 1999, 137). Dikeç (2005) points out that this enmeshing of the police and politics permits Rancière to avoid attributing to politics an ontological status, which, as will be recalled, is the issue with the idea of a "political difference" (*la/le politique*).

in those intervals in-between identities. As Rancière (1998a, 241) states, “Le travail essential de la politique est la configuration de son propre espace”.[166]

By presenting a counterworld, or metapolitics of a sensory community, political art is the disruption of the self-evident of the sensible world by allowing us to see the world differently:

> L’art n’est pas politique d’abord par les messages et les sentiments qu’il transmet sur l’ordre du monde. Il n’est pas politique non plus par la manière dont il représente les structures de la société, les conflits ou les identités des groupes sociaux. Il est politique par l’écart même qu’il prend par rapport à ces fonctions, par le type de temps et d’espace qu’il institue, par la manière dont il découpe ce temps et peuple cet espace (Rancière 2004, 37).[167]

Concluding Remarks

In the following chapter I will explore the arguments outlined by Rancière in the context of my fieldwork research with Palestinian artists in Israel. Importantly, my turn to Rancière and the framework he offered was undertaken during my fieldwork as I was faced by the refusal of these artists to have their work interpreted in terms of identity politics. Being completely unacquainted with his writings prior to my fieldwork, my

[166] “The essential work of politics is the configuration of its own space” (Rancière 2010a, 37).
[167] “Art is not, in the first instance, political because of the messages and sentiments it conveys concerning the state of the world. Neither is it political because of the manner in which it might choose to represent society’s structures or social groups, their conflicts or identities. It is political because of the very distance it takes with respect to these functions, because of the type of space and time that it institutes, and the manner in which it frames this time and peoples this space” (Rancière 2009b, 23).

reading of Rancière developed alongside my conversations with these artists, some of whom, I quickly discovered, were already familiar with his work. Even those who were not familiar with him or his work, as I shared with them the ideas he was outlining there was a near immediate approval and a rapport was established, with a couple of the artists asking me to share with them his books and articles. As such, there was often a degree of co-theorizing (or co-philosophy to use the term of Paul Radin) taking place within my fieldwork, with conversations often centered on a number of key points within Rancière's arguments. This "collaborative" process inevitably led me to approach his writings with particular questions and problems in mind, with my returning to these artists to further develop their relevance and limits (see Strohm 2012). As the next chapter will demonstrate, there was a strong resonance between this theoretical framework and the works of these artists. If my attempt to rethink the politics of contemporary art of Palestinian artists in Israel goes beyond accepted models, both in terms of anthropology as well as Palestinian discourse on politics, it is done with the hope that my interpretations of their practices and works allows for the taking place of politics they are staging.

Sharif Waked: Rupture

Before starting my research I had read about Sharif Waked and his work, how the Guggenheim had recently purchased his piece, *To be continued…*, (Figure 19) and how he was emerging as an eminent Palestinian artist on the international art scene. When I started my fieldwork I was unaware, however, that he lived in Haifa, indeed in the same neighborhood as myself. My friend Riyad, who worked at Elika, a well-known café in the area, and who knows Sharif, told me he often passed by in the evenings, usually to have a couple beers, and that he'd let me know the next time he was there so I could come by to meet him. I asked Riyad to in the meantime let him know about me and that I'd be interesting in meeting and talking with him. Not shortly thereafter Riyad told me he talked with Sharif, but that he was reticent about meeting with me: "He said he doesn't like interviews," Riyad said. "But did you tell him I'm an anthropologist, not a journalist?" It seems Riyad had told him as much, and it mattered little. At that point Riyad and I conspired to have me run into Sharif when he was at the café. There seemed no other way he was going to meet me, and it seemed to me regrettable to have him living in the area and not be part of my research. And given his reticence for interviews, I knew I had to prepare myself.

Some weeks later Riyad gave me a call: "Come, he's here." I quickly grabbed my coat and headed out the door, unfortunately forgetting my notebook in the rush, which was probably for the better. When I arrived at Elika Sharif was sitting at the bar, a beer in

hand. As I took a seat adjacent to him and ordered a beer, Riyad introduced us. Sharif already seemed to have an idea of who I was, and did not appear all that surprised I had conveniently shown up. We greeted each other and, before I had a chance to ask him about his work, he immediately launched into asking me what my research was about, not something that I was unaccustomed to (everyone new to the neighborhood went through a vetting process, a sort of process of identification regarding one's allegiances and affiliations). Our conversation then took a more indirect path, my avoiding any outward indications that I was interviewing him, he, understandably, seeming to want to avoid any customary or conventional question and answer session; he was, after all, out for a beer, to relax. As we talked, there was a moment in our conversation that stuck out, something I kept recalling for days and months after. After telling me about his work recently being acquired by the Guggenheim in New York City, I asked Sharif how it was labeled: "Sharif Waked: Palestinian? Palestinian Israeli? Arab Israeli? Israeli?" Sharif paused and very matter-of-factly answered, "I don't know; it doesn't matter."

Sharif and I had met a few times over the next year, mostly over a beer and each time him promising to invite me to his home to see his work. Nearly a year after our first meeting, with some not-so-subtle prodding on the part of friends, Sharif finally did invite me to his apartment to look and talk about his work. Joined by his wife Sherene, we talked about art, Rancière, other Palestinian artists living and working in Israel, about why his work was different from many of these artists, and most importantly, about how I should not get caught up with questions of identity when looking at contemporary

Palestinian art. As we talked about other artists, including those with whom I had been working, Sharif was unforgiving in his comments about their work. As we discussed many of these artists he noted that there work remained unsophisticated and too literal in their politics. Showing him Michael's painting *Fragile* (Figure 12) he was unimpressed and said that, while he respected him as a painter, the work itself was boring and obvious. When I then asked him about the difficulties Palestinian artists face in Israel, both in terms of exposure and funding, he was even less forgiving by suggesting that if they were good enough this would not be a problem: "No one is stuck here, you have to get your work abroad, it's a global art world now." When I asked him more precisely about the difficulties for artists in Israel, particularly in terms of funding and support, he replied, ever so slightly exasperated: "We [Palestinians] can't blame everything on Israel."

Finally he asked if I wanted to see his work, to which I enthusiastically replied, "of course!" He promptly sat me down at the side of the room in front of his computer and put on *Chic Point*, a video installation from 2003 (Figure 20). This was followed by *To be continued…* (2009), then a series of shorter pieces, some finished, others still in progress, including the mesmerizing *Beace Brocess* (2010; Figure 23). What captured my interest that afternoon was *To be continued…*, a piece that was bought by the Guggenheim, and which we discussed the first time we met. It is also a piece that, as of late, has started to garner significant attention. As Sharif started the video he gave me only a couple details, the two key elements of the video, specifically the narration being *1001 Arabian Nights* and the video being looped. As I watched it I was admittedly unsure what to look at: I

listened to the story being told, I looked closely at our story-teller, the person sitting before me reading *1001 Arabian Nights*, trying to imagine what it would be like to see this installation in a museum such as the Guggenheim in New York City. At one point, after watching for about 10 minutes, Sharif passed nearby to let me know that the video lasts 41:33, and again reiterating that it will loop, after which I slowly became self-conscious sitting there watching a video as he and his wife went about their day.

In the end I didn't watch the entire video, and yet despite this I left that day with a vivid impression of the impasse between the visual and the audible. More than that was the temporal suspension, not just in this work, but in all of Sharif's works, from his video installations to his prints. Having watched not only this video work but also three others, including an in-progress work, *Beace Brocess*, I was struck and curious by the prominence given to time throughout his work. In what is becoming an extensive body of work, the question of time is deployed in various manners, each inviting a timelessness, whether through the slow unfolding within *Jericho First* (Figure 21; 22), *Chic Point* with a checkpoint turned into a fashion run way (Figure 20), *Beace Brocess*, a looped blue and white video that transforms Arafat and Barak shaking hands into them dancing in a circle that never ends (Figure 23), or *To be continued…* (Figure 19). For all his emphasis on time, however, I was never able to get much time with Sharif.

That particular afternoon with Sharif was the longest and most extensive time we had spent together and he was unusually more open and talkative than usual. That said, he often would never answer my questions, instead changing the subject or not

responding at all. Fortunately he and I have stayed in touch and he has shared with me copies of his video works and in return I have shared with him the texts I've written in which I discuss his work. He hasn't responded to these in general, but when I do give more precise comments he will acknowledge them, often thanking me for pointing out something he hadn't seen. He seems more interested in seeing how his work is discussed than in offering an "authorial" voice.

As I slowly discovered during my fieldwork, between those times of seeing Sharif and trying to pin him down for another meeting, was that he was quite actively involved in the Palestinian community. I found out about this through mutual friends working at Adalah, who happened to also point out that he did all their graphic design work for all of their publications. He was also involved as artistic consultant and designer in Elia Suleiman's, *The Time that Remains: Chronicle of a Present Absentee*.

Of all the artists with whom I worked, Sharif was the only "present absentee," born in Nazareth to parents who were refugees from Saffuriyya. He never mentioned this to me, nor for that matter much else about his past. As I thought about his and his family's status as present absentees, about the area of Nazareth in which they settled, how he was out of time and out of place, a story he shares with Elia Suleiman also from the same area of Nazareth and a present absentee as well, the issue of time, expressed most often in repetitions and silences. My conversations with Sharif are to be continued.

Figure 19: Sharif Waked, *To be continued…*, 2009

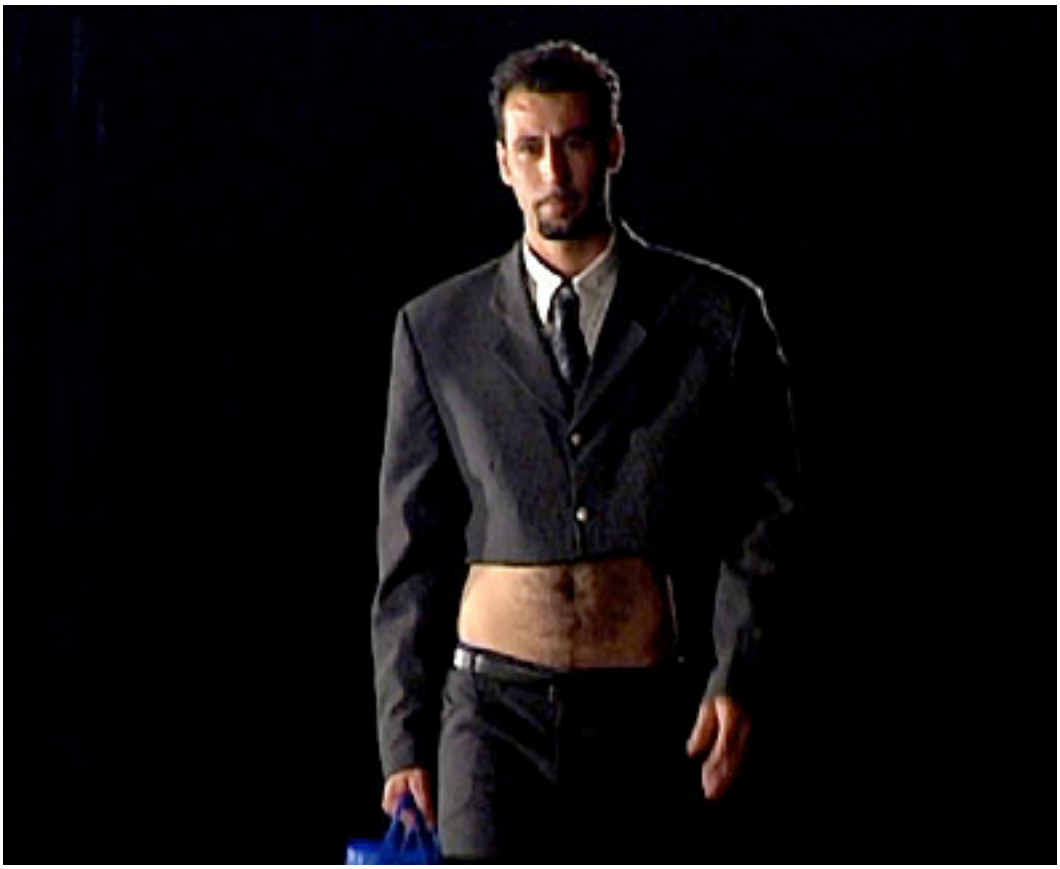

Figure 20: Sharif Waked, *Chic Point*, 2003

Figure 20: Sharif Waked, *Chic Point*, 2003

Figure 21: Sharif Waked, *Jericho First*, 2002

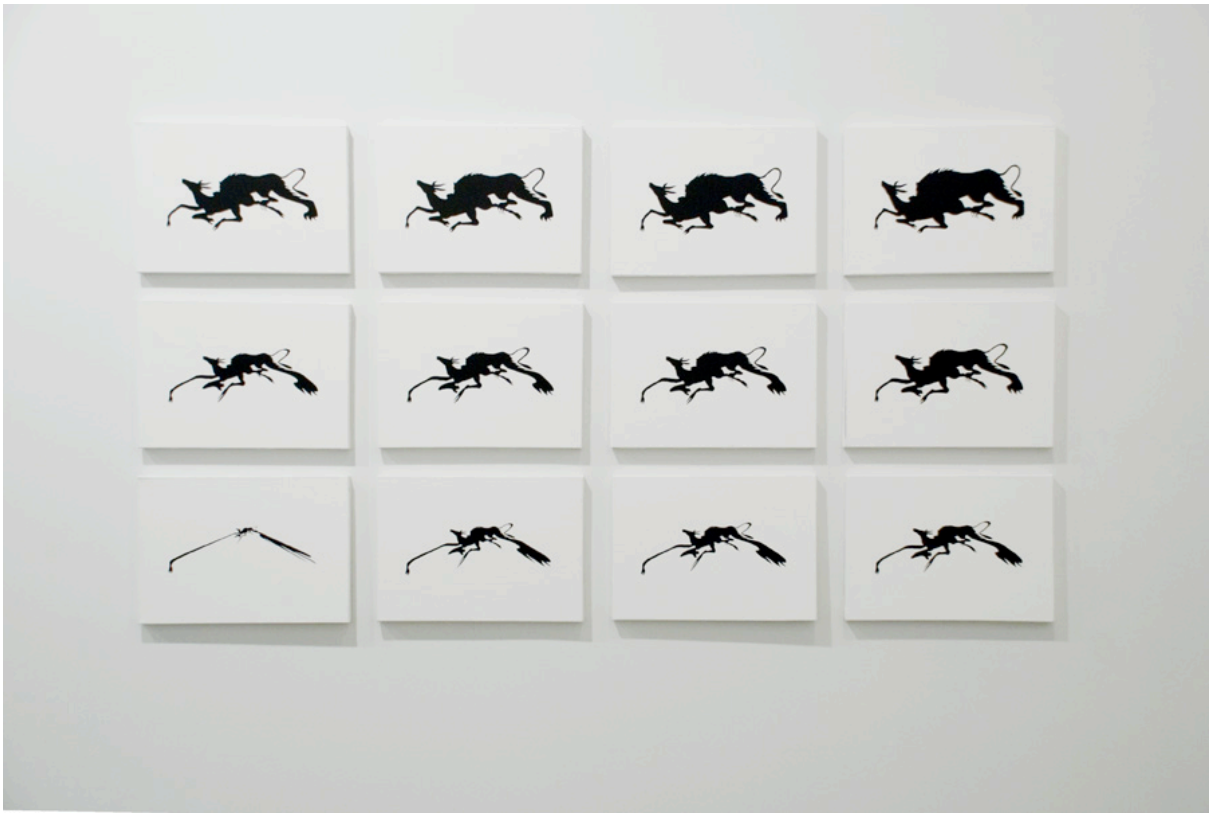

Figure 22: Sharif Waked, *Jericho First*

Figure 23: Sharif Waked, *Beace Brocess*, 2010

Chapter 5: The Politics of Palestinian Art in Israel

> "In the eyes of Jews I'm an Arab, in the eyes of the Muslims I'm a Christian, and Christians are not really Arabs." -Michael Halak

The Temptations of Identity

Some months before I had left the field, during a conversation with Michael, he told me about an exhibition being organized on his work at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. The exhibition was to be part of the prestigious Rappaport Prize he had won as young Israeli artist of 2011.[168] He told me the curator would be preparing a text for the show and that he would send me a copy as soon as he received it. About a year later he sent me a copy of the catalogue text, a proof version that awaited his approval.

As I read the text that accompanied the catalogue, entitled *Michael Halak: Faces and Landscapes*, I was surprised and encouraged to see that many of the ideas presented in the catalogue were similar to those in my own research. Yet, there was also something troubling about the interpretation of Michael's work as put forth by the curator of the exhibit, Efrat Livny. From my conversations with Michael I sensed that he too was uncomfortable with certain aspects of this text, which seemed torn between wanting to

[168] The Rappaport Prize, in the name of Ruth and Baruch Rappaport, is an annual award for recognizing two artists, one for an established painter and one for a young painter. The prize includes a money award and an exhibition at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art and accompanying catalogue. As the media reported, Michael was the first "Arab-Israeli" to have won the prize. The exhibition opened 16 March 2012 and ran until 25 August 2012.

reaffirm Michael's art as a manifestation of his identity and the need to acknowledge his art as an act of disidentification. It seems she was struggling to find a vocabulary that would capture or give a sense to Michael's own refusal of identification but inescapably she was pulled back to the idea of art as a statement about his identity. Situating his work within the idea of what she refers to as the "present-absent," and with reference to Rancière, Livny (2012, viii) writes:

> The anger of being silenced is thus redefined by means of a new division: the existence "in-between" ceases to shape a bi-furcated identity, and allows for a simultaneous experience of identification and disidentification, of belonging and not-belonging. The subjective presence in these paintings is not shaped by the figure's identity as an Israeli, Palestinian, Arab, or Christian but rather by its simultaneous definition as Israeli and non-Israeli, Palestinian and non-Palestinian, Arab and non-Arab, Christian and non-Christian. In this manner it ceases to represent multiple, competing identities, and ruptures the hierarchical structure within which they are organized.

According to Livny, then, Halak's work is an act of identification and disidentification, both a matter of identity and a non-identity that is exposed through the dialectic of presence and absence. Intriguingly, her reference to the category of the "present absentee" is crucial to her analysis of Michael's work. Livny has transformed the term, I would even say, mistranslated it. In referring to David Grossman's book *Sleeping on a Wire*, which is the title for the English translation of the original book in Hebrew, נוכחים נפקדים (*Nokhekhim Nifkadim* or *Present Absentees*), she not only translates it as "present absent" ("which may be translated as…") but also claims it to be a "paraphrase" of the "term absent-present, which was coined in the 1950s in Israel" (Livny 2012, vii). This particular

rendering (and mistranslation) is not only present in the English translation of the trilingual catalogue, but also in the original Hebrew and the Arabic translation. In an effort to frame Michael's work as a paradox of present and absent, Livny drops the "ee" from absentee.

This slight maneuver might not seem to be significant at first glance, a mere matter of grammar, but I would argue that this grammatical maneuver allows Livny to set up her argument around the play between identification and disidentification, identity and non-identity, and finally Palestinians in Israel as present and absent. It is a grammatical decision, moreover, that effectively depolitcizes and dehistoricizes the category of "present absentee." This is exactly what Livny does in her discussion of the painting by Michael, in which two men, their backs turned toward the spectator, are seen urinating on a cactus shrub, a cultural motif for Palestinians that was appropriated by Jewish Israel society as symbol of the "Sabra" or New Jew (Abufarha 2008). As Livny (2012, xi-xii) explains:

> Neither of these young men is characterized by any attributes that reveal their ethnic or national identity; they are almost identically dressed in jeans and white t-shirts, and are both wearing sunglasses. The choice to depict them urinating on the prickly-pear plants acquires a double meaning; on the one hand, it may be read as an attempt to strip this plant of its symbolic Israeli-Palestinian charge, to ridicule it – and perhaps also to deride the national identities it represents and to express a sense of revulsion towards them. At the same time, this act alludes to the manner in which animals, and especially members of the feline family, commonly define their territory and establish their control over, and connection to, a specific place. In either case, it seems that when Halak chooses to situate his figures in a local landscape, his paintings become even more noticeably charged with the central tension that shapes both his life and his work – the question of the connection between man and place, and related concerns regarding

> presence and absence, identification disidentification, witnessing and silencing, memory and intentionally imposed oblivion.

Here Livny acknowledges that their identities are unknown, that to determine these figures is impossible. Yet, she then proceeds to interpret the piece in terms of identity politics by reinserting the play between identification and disidentification, presence and absence. Is it possible that there is no identity at work in this work of art? What would it look like to interpret this same work without reverting to questions of identification?

This particular permutation of "present absentee" is also visible in a recent article by Sunaina Maira and Magid Shihade, "Hip Hop from '48 Palestine: Youth, Music and the Present/Absent." As with Livny, Maira and Shihade (2012, 5) interpret the colonial category of present absentee as "present/absent," with the addition of a slash between the two to underline the "constant shifting" between them. The aim of the authors is to use the category of present absentee in order to capture the liminal condition of Palestinians in Israel: "This state of exception has had ongoing implications for how '48 Palestinians inhabit, think through, and challenge their present/absence" (Ibid., 5). In their eyes, hip-hop, as a form of embodied political critique, represents a concrete means of challenging the injustice brought on by the presence/absence of Palestinians. Thus, for Maira and Shihade, the category of the present absentee is positioned as a state of presence/absence within which all Palestinians in Israel live and struggle against, and hip-hop is seen as a tool for combatting this problem. I would argue, however, that like Livny, their reliance on identity as a justification for equality only tends to further depoliticize a category which is, in Rancière's terms, a *place where politics takes place*.

While I agree with the idea of thinking through the present absentee more broadly, as a concept for making sense of the social and political condition of Palestinians in Israel at large, I think there is reason to be concerned about the use of models that reduce the work of art as an affirmation or manifestation of identity, even if they call attention to the multiple nature of identities that Palestinian artists feel compelled to claim.

There is no doubt that Palestinians in Israel are living in a regime of presence/absence, but this should not, I would argue, be conflated with the category of the present absentee. Maira and Shihade's (2012) argument is that hip-hop among the Palestinians in Israel, primarily through its lyrics, reasserts the presence of a Palestinian identity against its absence and invisibility, both in Israel and in the Palestinian community further abroad. This form of resistance criticizes those narratives and policies of the Israeli state that claim it to be democratic and inclusive by countering with an alienated Palestinian identity whose objective is to reconnect those Palestinians inside Israel with Palestinians "outside," in the Occupied Territories and the diaspora. What makes these acts political, according to this logic, is the assertion of a particular identity, a difference. As I have argued, this assertion of difference is precisely what depoliticizes the situation of Palestinians in Israel, since identity politics is always in danger of being recuperated by the social that Rancière refers to as the "logic of the police". In short, identity claims remain within the logic of the given sensible order by being that which is countable and recognizable, precisely the means by which the state sustains what is seeable, sayable, doable, thinkable. The trouble here, as with Livny, is a broader

disciplinary tendency that stretches across anthropology, cultural studies and art criticism; it is the inescapable trap of identity politics within our practices and theories, an unspoken fear that without identity claims politics will disappear.

I would contend that the political moment within the hip hop of Palestinians in Israel is not in the identity being asserted but rather the taking place of the hip hop performance as spectacle, an act prior to any form of identification. For instance, when hip-hop groups such as DAM perform on Israeli television, it is their "appearing" within a society and public culture from which they are absent that politics begins to take place, much more so than what is being said. It is the appearing of a figure that is out of time and out of place by which the fabric of the sensible order is ruptured. Without wanting to belittle the work of DAM and other hip-hop artists who are speaking out about the Palestinian cause, the lyrics within their songs tell most Palestinians about a situation with which they are intimately aware. Indeed, when I would talk about Palestinian hip hop with friends among the artistic community, they all laughed and told me that the lyrical content of their music is completely obvious and nothing which Palestinians in Israel, and arguably most Jewish Israelis, find particularly new. As Nardeen once told me: "They are not telling us anything we don't already know."

From the hip hop of DAM, who take on capacities that they were not supposed to possess, to Michael's paintings where identities are not given, what emerges is the appearing of a figure that is disruptive. It is at this juncture that the appropriation of the figure of the present absentee, a figure out of place and out of time par excellence, is most

visible. In other words, the political potential within the category of the present absentee – an appropriation of a colonial name as a form of political subjectivity – is subverted and juxtaposed to the regime of identification that sustains the order of Israeli society, its *partage du sensible*. My aim now is to understand this process by which the category of the present absentee is being appropriated and how this process entails an enactment of an impossible identification, a heterology that denies given categories and roles.

The present absentee is a compound of an adjective (present) and a noun (absentee), specifically an attributive adjective and a proper noun. To start, the absentee refers to a person or persons who were *required* and *expected* to be present in a specific place but were not. It does not refer to a state or condition but to a *person* or *people* that were *out of place*. The attributive adjective "present" then qualifies and defines this noun, this person or people. As an attributive adjective "present" refers to a temporality, an existing or occurring now of those persons not in their place. It is important to remember that this temporal period is quite specific, between the UN date of partition and the establishment of the state. Again, this is not "present" as in here and now, but present at a designated time. In qualifying the absentee *qua* person or people, the attributive adjective "present" further delimits these people within a specific period of time. The present absentee describes a person or people that were not in those places required or expected *during* a definite time period. The effect of the attributive adjective "present" is that it excludes anything coming before or after. Falling under this designation, no claims

to property, home or land could be made even with proof of ownership, such as a deed or title. To be “in time” would have meant being in the right place, given their inability to be in their required or expected place, these people had no claim to their land, either past or present.

The following section of this chapter will delve further into this notion of the present absentee as a polemical and political gesture, how this colonial category is being appropriated by Palestinian artists in Israel as a figure of political subjectivity, as an impossible identification that ruptures the sensible order. The next section will continue this exploration by turning to a selection of works from the artists with whom I worked and how these works can be seen as acts of disruption of the sensible order. While my aim here is largely descriptive, I will also be providing an analysis of these works, both as art objects and as political gestures. In the subsequent section I will then consider how these sensible disruptions can be seen as the *taking place of politics*, that is, how they rupture, suspend, and interrupt various aspects of the spatial and temporary configuration of Israeli society. In the final section I will return to the idea of the appropriation of the category of the present absentee as an act of political subjectivation in which an “impossible identification” becomes the condition for reimagining the common and being-in-common.

The Figure of the Present Absentee

One cool afternoon in February 2011 I was sitting with friends at Elika where many Palestinian writers, actors, artists and intellectuals would spend their time. The conversation that afternoon covered a wide variety of topics, but as usual it eventually gravitated toward matters having to do with politics. At one point, after the group began teasing the one person in the group from Nazareth, the conversation turned to those people from Saffuriyya. A village that was completely destroyed and cleansed in 1948, most of the community of Saffuriyya fled to Lebanon, while those who stayed settled on the edges of Nazareth in the overcrowded Safafri quarter, only a few kilometres from their village. Those who remained were forbidden from returning to their village and were henceforth identified by the Israeli government as "present absentees," internally displaced persons (IDPs). Palestinians in Israel generally referred to these people as refugees (Arabic: *laji'een*) or exiles/displaced (Arabic: *mub'ad*) or estranged (Arabic: *ghurba*), those who were physically present but legally absent in relation to their homes and lands at the time of the establishment of the state of Israel.[169]

While I was aware of the story of Saffuriyya and the historical and political background of the "present absentee," as the conversation continued I was caught off-guard by my friend Adi's proclamation, in English—"we are all present absentees"—which was immediately affirmed by nearly everyone at the table: "sahh" (right, true). This struck

[169] Following its destruction in 1949, the village was planted over in pine trees and renamed Tzippori; in the present official history of the village no mention is made of its Arab or modern history – official history jumps from the Roman and Byzantine period, with a brief mention of the Crusades, to the present, without a word about Ottoman or Arab periods.

me as a provocative statement insofar as the present absentee category was typically reserved specifically for those Palestinians that were internally displaced and forbidden to return to their villages after 1948, but none of the people sitting around the table were personally affected by this status. Indeed, the emergence of the present absentee as a political issue since the late 1990s as part of a larger discussion of the refugee problem (Jamal 2011) underlined the significance of their plight, thus appropriating this category for all Palestinians therefore struck me as odd. And yet, Adi wasn't merely being flippant; his statement was intended as a performance of a particular political gesture. In addition, he was fully aware of force of the ideological statement "we are all…". In other words, his speech act was not merely a novel utterance, but also a political gesture.[170] What did it mean to appropriate this category and generalize it to all Palestinians in Israel? Moreover, isn't it possible that this appropriation would run the risk of belittling the struggle of those legally classified as present absentees? Finally, what did it mean to make this claim neither in Arabic nor in Hebrew, but in English, a third language for Palestinians in Israel?[171]

[170] It later occurred to me that Adi was making an implicit reference to the uprisings in Egypt and the declaration, "We are all Khaled Saïd."

[171] As was pointed out to me by Sawsan Zaher, a lawyer at Adalah, the notion of "present absentee" is rarely if ever used in spoken Arabic outside it being a legal term, and often in quotation: hadereen 'aebeen. As noted above, either refugee (Arabic: *laji'een*) or exiles/displaced (Arabic: *mub'ad*) or estrangement (Arabic: *ghurba*) are the words used by Palestinians in Israel when discussing the present absentee. Hence Adi's switch to English, not even Hebrew, is significant not only in terms of is talking to me but to a table of Arabic, Hebrew and English speakers. As I will show, this choice of register is central to the overturning of this category as a polemical or political gesture.

As discussed in chapter 1, the demands of present absentees in Israel that emerged over the last 20 years centered on giving visibility to IDPs, a group that has been neglected in various peace talks and discussions of the Palestinian refugee question more broadly. As such it has become the cornerstone of the demand for collective rights of a national indigenous minority. In Adi's proclamation there is surely an allusion to this emergence of the present absentee as somehow related to the Palestinians in Israel, also to the fact that the plight of the internal refugees is not limited to them but is a situation that confronts all Palestinians. In appropriating this category, in overturning it, however, it is not in order to explain or define a condition but to mark an event of political subjectivation.

So far I have claimed that the category of the present absentee is an irreducible utterance. As such it is impossible to divide the two words in this unit and to transform it into a play of presence and absence, even though this play clearly reflects a certain aspect of contemporary Palestinian experience. The logic of the category of the present absentee has the hallmarks of what Giorgio Agamben (1998) has referred to as an "inclusive exclusion." For Agamben the original exclusion of bare life from political life has become a logic of "inclusive exclusion" or what he also refers to as the "ban." The exclusion of "bare life," a state of being stripped of any legal quality, is, according to Agamben (1998, 23), at the same time, an inclusion: the excluded is part of the space of the polis itself:

> He who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but rather *abandoned* by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside,

> become indistinguishable. It is literally impossible to say whether the one who has been banned is outside or inside the juridical order.

This is the basis of Agamben's conception of biopolitics, which he sees as constitutive of the political sphere itself. Indeed, for Agamben (1998, 68) the state of exception is the very horizon of political existence in modern life (the rule of modernity): "we are all virtually *homines sacri*". Agamben (2000) reasons that only politics conceived as a means without end, of potential beings not founded on identity, can overcome the violence of this inclusive exclusion (see Agamben 1993). While this framework is surely relevant to understanding the present absentee as a historical and political category, what precisely constitutes these "potential beings" and how their presence might signal a new age of a non-juridical politics remains underdeveloped.[172] More significantly, however, by framing the rule of modernity in terms of the bare life of a normalized state of exception, Agamben has arguably precluded the possibility of politics as dissensus. The limitations encountered here are addressed by considering the question of what happens when categories of actors not designated by the status of present absentee appropriate this category for aesthetic or political purposes. It is here that a politics as dissensus takes form.

The performative force of the affirmation "we are all present absentees," by creating an equivalency between the present absentee and the *we*, dislocates the specificity of the category of the present absentee, releasing it from designated order of

[172] For a consideration of the limitations of Agamben's thought for thinking politics, see e.g. Bailey (2009), Laclau (2009) and Selmeczi (2012).

the state and its regime of identification.[173] By aligning itself with a name that cannot be appropriated, the gesture reveals an impossible identification. The *we* are not present absentees but the anyone and everyone. This means that the appropriation of the present absentee, as that which cannot be appropriated, is an impropriety. It is a polemical gesture in which a political subject appears.

The *we* is such that anyone and everyone are now seen as present absentees, what might be better put as the impossibility of inclusiveness (of including all people). To be sure, when I pressed Adi that day to specify what he meant by this *we*, he said: "Hada. Kull wahad" (Anyone. Everyone). As I have suggested, the impropriety of appropriating a category that is in-appropriable makes it into an impossible identification. Thus, this alignment also entails that the present absentee assigns to the *we* a property by identifying it. If the present absentee is out of place and out of time, then the *we* that stands for it is also out of place and time. As Rancière (1999, 59) puts it: "Neither the *we* or the identity assigned to it, nor the apposition of the two defines a subject". In other words, the identity assigned to the *we* is an impossible identification. The appropriation of this category through the affirmation "we are all present absentees" thus overturns the colonial category by opening a gap between the two, between a designated identity and

[173] One of the first uses of this phrasing, "we are all…" was in May 1968 in Paris. As one of the leaders of the student movement at the time, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, was attacked by opponents on the basis of his being a German Jew and barred from re-entering France after a brief absence. In his defense, student protesters took up the ideological slogan "Nous sommes tous des Juifs allemands" ("We are all German Jews"). In an anonymous writing published at the time, Maurice Blanchot referred to these events follows: "Never has this been previously said anywhere, never at any time: it was an inaugural moment of speech, opening and overturning borders, opening, overthrowing the future" (Blanchot cited in Hill 1997, 219). (See also chapter 3.)

anyone and everyone. By aligning and equating a people out of place and out of time with an unspecified and indeterminate anyone and everyone, this affirmation becomes a disruptive political gesture, and, as we will see, a verification of equality.

The act of appropriating this colonial category through the affirmation, “we are all present absentees,” can be seen, following Rancière, as an event of political subjectivation. It is an argumentative demonstration of a wrong by those who have no part (*part sans-part*). In being appropriated by Palestinians in Israel who are not legally present absentees, a collective body is formed with the *anyone* and *everyone* of the “we.” But there is more to this affirmation as a process or event of political subjectivation; political subjectivation further demands a taking place, a staging of the affirmation “we are all present absentees.” The argumentative and polemical affirmation also entails the transformation of the space of the regime of identification of the present absentee into a space for the appearing of a political subject.

Appearing

The polemical gesture of affirming “we are all present absentees” is but the first step in the process of political subjectivation. Another key factor in this process is that of appearing or making visible. Here politics as appearance and visibility counters the interpellation of the police that says: “Move along! There is nothing to see here!”

(Rancière 2010a, 37). The aim of the police logic is to dismantle the taking place of politics as appearing and visibility by returning bodies to their proper places and capacities.

The process of political subjectivation in Rancière has a distinctive theatrical quality: "… je pense que la politique a toujours plus ou moins la forme d'une constitution d'un théâtre" (Rancière 2004, 4).[174] When he refers to politics as the "affirmation of a capacity for appearance" (Rancière and Hallward 2003, 202), there is a clear sense that this space is the taking place of politics: "The essential work of politics is the configuration of its own space" (Rancière 2010a, 37). While such acts can take the form of demonstrations, strikes, occupations, or the space of art itself, the aim is principally a claim to visibility (taken broadly to include being seen and heard). As Peter Hallward (2006, 118) has provocatively argued: "Peopled by multiple voices, the theatre is likewise the privileged site of a more general displacement – a place for the out-of-place".

Following this idea, I want to now focus more closely on the work by the artists so far discussed in the vignettes as "stagings" or "appearings" of a political subject, or, more broadly, the taking place of politics. To do this, I have chosen several works from each artist and how they can be viewed as processes of political subjectivation by aligning with the figure of the present absentee as an impossible identification. To view these works in this manner requires us to look at how they are spaces or stagings of the polemical

[174] Rancière's metaphor of politics as a form of theatre needs to be distinguished from the work of Guy Debord (1967). For Debord, the theatre is the separation of the spectator from the work, and thus the task is to eradicate this separation whereby the theatre becomes a form of life of the community (Rancière 2008b). Debord's concern is that theatre has come to be a social relation mediated by images, and not in a good way. In this sense, Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* should be considered in the same vein as Nicholas Bourriaud's relational aesthetics (1989). It is precisely this separation or distance that Rancière claims is pivotal for politics to take place.

utterance “we are all present absentees.” It is then through these stagings that politics takes place and acts of disidentification are at work. My analysis will follow what I see as the key tropes within works of each of these artists: suspension; interruption; distancing; deferral; rupture.

Disidentifications

Suspension

I want to start with a work from Michael that I first saw when he and I met (Figure 14). This is not Michael’s most recent work, and arguably not his most provocative, but it does offer an initial stage for thinking about what I have referred to as a polemical gesture. On a white surface sit three green apples, forming a triangle. With one apple at the top left of the tableau, half of it out of the frame, the two others are placed below it, moving downward from left to right, both in full view, each in contact with the other. Below the three green apples, further down and nearly at the bottom right corner, and out of contact with them, is a single cherry placed below and in line with the middle of the two bottom apples, its stem still intact. Looking more closely, the top apple in the right upward corner has a small white oval decal in a downward angle with the number 48 followed by a blue line. In this otherwise anonymous still life, the decal undoubtedly meant to signify the state of Israel and the year of its establishment.

From the top left corner is the principal light source, creating a shadow on the bottom right of the objects. The immediate effect is a daunting posture, the three large apples seemingly moving downward from left to right as if they were about to overtake and push the lone small cherry into a corner, literally the bottom right edge of the frame. In principle, a still life is not about the movement of objects but a non-hierarchical study of inanimate objects that are part of everyday life. Yet, in a sense, Michael's painting both reinscribes a hierarchy and, at the same time, undoes it. The position of the apples descending from the top left, reinforced by the direction of light behind them, establishes a sense of movement in which the apple is dominant, assertive and overpowering. The cherry is outnumbered, outsized and cornered. A hierarchy has been clearly established.

At the same time, as Michael revealed in our conversations, neither of these fruits are native to the land of Palestine/Israel. Both are foreign, apples being first imported and cultivated in the 1950s by Ashkenazi immigrants, and cherries, a staple of classic Syrian and Persian cuisine, and found natively only in il-Julan (the Occupied Golan), being cultivated since the 1980s. Being non-native, the result is that a natural hierarchy of belonging between the two is contingent and thus unsustainable. That is, if both are foreign to the land, neither has a demonstrable right to the land. The fact that these elements cannot be placed in a hierarchical relation, something that is not immediately obvious to the viewer, overturns the more visible hierarchical effect described above. In this way, through their suspension these elements are now out of place, an effect reinforced by the white surface that serves as a background. Indeed, were it not for the

blue and white 48 decal attached to the most top left apple, which is itself half hidden, we would not know where we are in terms of time or place. But what is this place other than a suspension of any given place? If the apples are dependent on the decal to establish their identity, the staging of these elements puts them out of place.

A similar play of suspension is found across Michael's works. In Figure 13 we again see three apples, this time in a glass vase within and surrounded by an orange/red box. In their particular placement the apples are suspended, the containment of the glass vessel the only means for their remaining united. Yet, this is an inherently fragile unification insofar as the glass vase is breakable, hence the box within which to further contain and protect them. It is a box whose colors signify a state of emergency, an orange/red line that surrounds something without ground, without a firm and definite place. Again in Figure 12, *Fragile*, we see another suspension, this time that of the Blue ID carried by all Israelis. This ID is here attached with masking tape to a shipping box, thereby forcibly removing it from its context and putting it in motion, undermining its determinate location. Further, by remaining closed, its content unavailable to the spectator, its specific identity is put on hold or temporally suspended; we have to wait to know what is inside. This same trope is at work in Figure 11, *Wadi el Salib*, an old Arab quarter of Haifa that is now, in its fragmentation, presented on a plain brown backdrop, a spatial and temporal dislocation and suspension. Finally in Figure 15, *Landscape*, there is another suspension through a series of memories written on paper and attached to a wall whose concrete grain and texture is indeterminate: is it the separation wall, the walls of homes built in camps, the

vertical additions to homes? It is a memorandum written on small piece of paper that had been kept in a pocket, maybe shirt pocket, and unfolded and suspended, again with masking tape, to a surface that is unidentifiable. A final point, though no less important, is the ubiquitous use of masking tape by Michael to achieve some of these suspensions. As a popular adhesive for artists to mask areas not to be painted and easily removable without leaving a sticky residue, Michael transforms its function by leaving it in the work itself and attaching to it the role of holding things out of place and out of time. In other words, what was once supposed to contain the paint of the artist is now what supports the suspensions within the works.

Interruption

Living and working in Tel Aviv has earned Durar Bacri an unfavorable reputation. One curator I talked with dismissed his work as uninteresting and insignificant. This reaction to Durar and his work stems from the perception that a Palestinian Arab living and working in Tel Aviv, the main Jewish city of Israel, contaminates his work and diminishes its impact. I sat with this curator shortly after she made these comments and showed her Durar's work, which she admitted to not knowing very well. As we looked and talked about a number of his paintings her attitude started to slowly change. At first glance Durar's paintings seem to convey little to the spectator: The landscapes, portraits and self-portraits are outwardly nothing remarkable. This initial reaction, however, can easily

miss the subtlety within Durar's work; its understated but trenchant interruption of the spatial order of Israeli society.

One of the first paintings that most struck me from Durar is the piece entitled *Self-portrait with Goat* (Figure 7). In what is clearly a nod to the classical Orientalist painting genre, this work is a landscape with what appears to be an Arab man alongside a goat. The landscape is rocky, not unlike that found across the central and northern areas of Palestine/Israel. Just to the left of center in the background is an olive tree, the only tree in the frame. Surrounding it are bushes and rocks, and in the foreground an open area of earth. The sunlight coming from the right side suggests either the end of day or its beginning. Standing directly in front of the tree is a young man in blue jeans and a red t-shirt, a trimmed beard with tightly coiffed hair. Standing directly in front of this young man, facing away from the spectator, at forefront of the painting, closest to the spectator, is a goat. The young man, his body turned slightly to the right, hands in his pockets, is gazing downward and to the side toward a goat. His body and facial expression are relaxed but suggest a gaze of suspicion and doubt. Yet, although the body of the goat is aligned directly in front of the young man, the goat is looking elsewhere, away from the young man.

The subtle play of elements within the painting work on multiple levels. The young man is not the figure we are expecting or is required in an Orientalist-genre painting. He is dressed inappropriately. Instead of an old man in a *galabia* (traditional Arab robe-like garment) and *kuffiyeh*, the spectator is presented with a young man in modern dress. But

this isn't any modern dress; his jeans, belt and t-shirt are all from the Israeli retail chain, Crocker (the emblem on the belt is the visible evidence). As I have noted already, this is a chain that had a policy of not hiring Arabs, yet it was not unheard of for many Palestinian Arabs to wear their clothing. The inappropriateness of this young man's attire is further reinforced by his standing directly in front of the spectator's view of the olive tree. In classical orientalist painting the Arab figure is often presented as alongside and as part of the landscape, thus reinforcing their traditional-ness or lack of contemporaneity.[175] The effect of the young man blocking the spectator's view, in addition to his attire, is the interruption of the spatial field with which the Arab is assigned, that is, where he or she is expected and required to be.

It would be remiss of me to not discuss the tension at the center of the painting between the young man and the goat. While the previously mentioned elements are fundamental to the structure of the painting, its mise-en-scène, the ambivalent relationship between the young man and the goat, by being the focal point, requires some commentary. It is typical in the analysis of art works to start with the subjects, objects or situations that are center and front in a work. The trouble is that these elements are not separate from that place made in the work itself. We, the spectators, are not sure of what is happening, what has happened, what will happen. There is a tension between the two: a young man looking down at the goat in what appears to be a gaze of contempt and disgust, or perhaps it is a playful exchange, the sharing of an inside joke, or perhaps it is a misunderstanding? The surrounding structure of the painting – the young

[175] I want to thank Kirsten Scheid for pointing out this aspect within this painting.

man inappropriately dressed and standing in the wrong place – offers hints for justifying each of these explanations, thus the possibility of interpretive closure is precluded. The play between the place created in the painting, a place where elements are out of place, and the relationship between the young man and the goat are indeterminable.

The interruption of space and the play of foreground and background is again found in Durar's painting *South Tel Aviv, looking from the roof, Lewinsky St.* (Figure 10). Here an innocuous looking street view of Tel Aviv quietly places an Arabic-style arch in the middle of the painting. In the background is the city, sunlight behind it. As Durar pointed out, this sunlight gives the impression that the city is slowly overtaking the neighbourhood in which he lives. Again, in *Self-portrait* (Figure 9) we see Durar at work, in the middle of painting another view of Tel Aviv. Here the Palestinian Arab painter is making place while simultaneously breaking the continuity of the city as a Jewish space. In *Acre's marina* (Figure 8) the spectator is presented with Akka but devoid of those elements that would identify it. While Durar was commissioned to do this work specifically without any religious symbols, once he had finished the painting he admitted to me how proud he was with the result. He had made a place without identity, interrupting any spatial configuration in a town in an accelerated process of Judaization.

Distancing

Maisa's work was always an enigma to me, and this mysterious aspect of her work kept me coming back to it and our conversations again and again. If Maisa never said much

about her work, neither did her work easily reveal itself. As I noted in my vignette on Maisa, the work that challenged me the most was the view of a town with white lines (Figure 1). In a series of subdued browns, greens, greys, yellows and a bit of white, this painting presents a view of typical overcrowded town, not unlike what I saw throughout Nazareth. Homes are here built one on top another, each a different size, a different colour, a different shape. For the most part windows have their shades down. Electric and telephone lines and poles are scattered chaotically across the homes, on top of them, cutting in front at various angles as if to suggest a single thread running between. If the detail at the center are of work is meticulous, the edges of the canvas are unfinished with the town appearing to disappear into a small white band surrounding the work. The bottom is even more pronouncedly diffused, as if unfinished and unsure of its location. It is a chaotic image, much like the reality it depicts. But unlike Michael and Durar, Maisa is not a realist or hyperrealist; there is an impressionist quality to this painting. And again unlike Michael and Durar, there is no source of light, no dimensionality that would give a layer of depth to this view. There are no shaded areas, no shadows, no lights. If this were all there was to this painting there would still be much to say, much to think about. The town view that Maisa has painted was not unfamiliar to me during my fieldwork, its style very much in line with art students.

Yet, what is most striking and disturbing in this painting are the four white lines that overlay the image and run vertically at equidistance from one another. Unlike the edges of the painting, which have a chaotic feel to them, these four lines, which adjoin

with the white edges, are clean and precise. They are incontrovertibly the cleanest lines in all of this painting. I've accepted that these lines have no determinate meaning, but instead must be approached from the sensible effect they create. In this painting we are presented with a place, though considering its faded edges and lack of dimensionality, it appears to be a place out of place. With the addition of these overlayed crisp white lines our view is sensibly disturbed: the spectator's vision is fractured, blocked, disintegrated, split. The lines disrupt by segregating, dissociating and distancing the spectator. They are lines whose content is empty, without content, without meaning. In this way, there effect is sensible, without a narratability. But there is more to these lines. They give the image behind a depth and dimensionality. The lines are not perfectly straight lines from top to bottom; rather these are lines that seem to bulge in the middle and even come out of the canvas, as if the town behind is pushing them toward us. In this sense they give a sense of a space behind, albeit a space that is contained and separated from the viewer.

Interestingly, Maisa made two paintings of this town view, one with the lines and one without. The one without the white lines almost never appears in galleries or exhibitions. But all those I talked with about the painting with the lines, none could articulate what it was that affected them. What they did say, however, is they felt it separated and distanced them from the image of the town. A variation of this sense of separation and distance is visible in Maisa's portrait work as well. In Figure 2, a series of small sketches in pencil and charcoal, a series of bodies in various positions are depicted, and yet none have a face or any other identifiable trait. If and when the spectator does

see a face or head, it is nondescript: without eyes, without a mouth, without any features. The repetition of these identity-less figures, their distance from us, is all the most disturbing not only by their sheer repetition, but in the demand upon the spectator to inspect them from up close. When I first saw this series at Azad I found myself, along with others, standing centimeters from the work, inspecting each image, each no more than a few 4-5 centimeters in height, each personage in them in a lightest grey. This trope is apparent in Figure 3, with a similar sensible affect being produced. Even though we can see clearly a young man, he is neither in color nor well-defined. Indeed, the *kuffiyeh* around his neck, the only thing in the painting in color, is far more discernible. It is as if we, the spectators, are being kept at a distance from this person, with his identity being kept unclear and even unsure.

If Maisa's work requires that the spectator work harder to understand what is being presented in her works, whether by demanding that we approach the canvas up close or struggle to see past white lines, at the same time she undermines our efforts by continually refusing us entry. Put differently, the closer we get to Maisa's works the further and more distant we find ourselves from them and any determinate meanings and identities; the closer we look for something identifiable the greater the distance.

Deferral

When I had first met Nardeen she had stepped away from doing art and was focused on making sets and costumes for theatre and film. She and I had often talked about the

artists I was meeting and she frequently expressed her desire to return to art, but hadn't yet felt ready. In spring of 2012 she sent me a number of photos of a piece she had just completed and was exhibiting at the Bet Hagefen gallery in Haifa, entitled *Ehtiqan* (Figure 17). I was impressed. After nearly eight years Nardeen had returned to her art practice with an installation that was formidable and profound. The piece is an installation comprising a large and oversized reflective metal funnel suspended above a small brown glass bottle. The material of the funnel gives the work a distinctive industrial quality: an oversized metal construction of multiple individual pieces held together by welding, rivets and screws. The top half of the funnel is a large cone at least a meter in width at the top, while the bottom half is a narrower and longer nozzle type shape that tapers to a small opening of only a few centimeters. Below is a small brown glass bottle that sits on the floor, a round and symmetrical receptacle with a short neck and a slightly lipped opening at the top. Placed carefully underneath the large and daunting funnel, centered precisely at its end with only a few centimeters separating them, this small brown glass bottle seems somehow impervious to its threat.

At first glance there is an obvious and glaring disproportion between the funnel and the bottle, an inconceivable relationship in which whatever could be contained and moved through the funnel would clearly never fit in the bottle. The title of the piece reveals this particular relationship: *Ehtiqan* means congestion, blockage, obstruction, oppression. As Nardeen told me, this word has a strong political resonance in Palestine, and can both refer to the object of the funnel and these various political meanings.

Looking at the piece it quickly becomes obvious that its very size and height leave the spectator in the dark as to what is or could be in the body of the funnel. Even the small brown bottle is empty, disclosing none of the secrets of the contents above it. As spectators, we cannot see over the top and into the funnel, nor can we look in from the small opening at the bottom. Moreover, if the opacity of the metal casing conceals its contents, or lack of contents, it also deftly reflects a slightly distorted image of a spectator back onto us. Being left on the outside, we only see ourselves.

There is a disturbing untimeliness to this work. We are left waiting. Waiting to know what is in the funnel, what is being congested, what is being oppressed, blocked, obstructed, as it moves through this invisible space. Similarly, we do not know what is causing the congestion, obstruction, blockage, oppression either. This deferral is indefinite, the piece creating a place for such an event but it never taking place. And how will whatever is meant to go within this funnel ever pass through it? On the other hand, the very structure of the piece, the disproportion of its elements, means that a blockage, obstruction, oppression, congestion will have already arrived. But where? When? We do not know and cannot know.

This trope of deferral is again visible in another recent work of Nardeen (Figure 18). Here a boat glossed in white is suspended in a gallery wall, part in the wall, part out. The boat is suspended in time, neither coming nor going. The angle of the boat, leaning downward from left to right, its position in the wall having it just hovering over the floor, readily reveals to the spectator an empty deck, a boat without passengers, without any

objects to divulge its occupant's identities. Indeed, unlike *Ehtiqan*, there is nothing hidden from the spectator. But is it supposed to be the boat of Palestinians fleeing in 1948? Or, is it the boat of Jewish immigrants arriving? Glazed in white, with little texture or detail, the visual effect is an abstraction or ghost like appearance that defers and resists signification. This same attention to time is a theme explored in Nardeen's earlier work too. In her series, *Sabr* (Patience), with rows of cactus/human like figures placed between the events of a young woman coming of age and the spectator, she has created a private and intimate place that is also shrouded by the multiple layers of spectators. As in her other works, the events taking place are stayed; there is a waiting and even untimeliness that impedes any fixing of meaning and determinate identity. If the spectator is given access to this place, we are also asked to be patient.

Rupture

I want to now look more closely at a video installation from Sharif, the first piece from Sharif that I saw. Entitled, *To Be Continued…* (Figure 19), at first glance, the video visually presents an almost typical martyr video of a suicide bomber: The backdrop in calligraphy, a passage from the *Qu'ran*, verse 78 from Sourat al-Hajj, while in the foreground a gun lying across the table with a young man (Saleh Bacri) seated facing us. His clothes are unremarkable: a greenish cap and a black sweatshirt with a green army-type vest over it. Our protagonist's presentation is unaffected, a near monotone and steady reading of a

classic Orientalist text, *1001 Arabian Nights*, with the occasional pauses.[176] There are the occasional fade-outs, mostly between the stories, and on a number of occasions the camera zooms in for a few minutes and then back to its original position. In addition, there are a few times when our narrator stops reading and looks directly at the spectator, a short pause after which he returns to his story. On the surface is an obvious contradiction: the would-be suicide bomber preparing his final testimony, to be released after his mission has been accomplished, a document. As would be the case, we, the spectators, are now the witnesses. But this very act, the sure end of this young man, his finality and the finality of the video itself, is delayed and even suspended, not only by the rhetorical force of the story he has chosen to recount, but also in the looping of the video itself. The narrator, our protagonist, has become Scheherazade, and the viewers, the spectators, have become the King.

Over the months that followed my visit to Sharif's and my viewing of *To be continued…*, I continued to think back to the video and it's juxtaposition of two heterogeneous elements: a document of the final testimony of a suicide bomber alongside the fictional re-telling of a story without end. This juxtaposition was, of course, intentional, but to what effect? The suicide bomber who is saved through the re-counting of a story without end, whose conclusion must always be suspended for another time? A rhetorical gesture reinforced through the looping of the video. It was tempting to think of

[176] Following Said (1978), I refer to *1001 Arabian Nights* as a classic Orientalist text due to its historical status in the West or Occident (through its multiple translations) as representative of the "mysterious and magical world of the East" (see Bouagada 2011). Interestingly, it is also been argued that, despite being picked up by a handful of Arab writers over the years, these stories were long considered vulgar and of "small literary value" in the Arab world (Knipp 1974).

Sharif's video in the context of suicide bombers and all of the various ideas associated with their image in the West, especially when one considers that the audience for this piece is the Western spectator. Was the juxtaposition with *1001 Nights*, therefore, a message telling us that even those taking up the martyr operations were reluctant agents and would do anything to suspend their fate? Contrary to the image of the suicide bomber as a brainwashed religious fanatic, as is portrayed in the Western media, are we the spectators confronted with an agent, a person unwilling to blindly follow? This would seem to be one reading, an entirely justifiable interpretation of Sharif's video in line with the elements with which we are presented, and echoes of the movie *Paradise Now*. And who knows, maybe this was precisely Sharif's intention. It seems to me, however, that such an interpretation is pernicious, a case of what Jessica Winegar (657, 2005) has referred to as the humanity game, or, "art as evidence of humanity". Here we enter into a story, all too familiar, in which the Arab, against all odds, can productively contribute to humanity.

Some months ago I had another opportunity to view Sharif's video when he agreed to send me a copy. As I watched the video again, without interruption, without any pauses, I found myself brought into its juxtaposition of worlds, a world of documentary, i.e., the martyr video genre, and a world of fiction, i.e., *Arabian Nights*. To be sure, the artwork as an event, by bringing together these two worlds, effectively establishes a proximity between these heterogeneous elements, and in so doing created a particular affect upon me, an experience of defamiliarization. As I continued to watch the work I

found myself forgetting about the visual context, the martyr testimony, the document with its assigned identities, and instead was pulled into the recounting (and re-appropriation) of the first book of the *Arabian Nights* and the multiple embedded narratives (a Russian doll) in which each story is a suspension, each conclusion delayed and suspended. This temporal estrangement had the effect of rupturing the spatial context represented in the documentary message, and oddly fictionalizing it as well.

All of the works I saw from Sharif play on this temporality and its spatial complement. In *Chic Point* (Figure 20), the checkpoints in Palestine are transformed into a fashion runway, the effect of which is a rupture of the spatial and temporal coordinates of these militarized spaces. In *Jericho*, a site-specific installation (Figure 21), Sharif takes an image from a floor mosaic, a lion attacking a gazelle, and over 18 individual images and one wall mural, abstracts these two figures into one. Starting with a red on white background image of a lion attacking a gazelle, by the time the spectator reaches the last of the individual images they have become one large an unidentifiable red mass (another version of this work was done in black with the two animals morphing into a line, Figure 22). Throughout his works this temporal and spatial rupture is played out in various figures and forms, each time transporting the spectator into another world.

The Cause of the Other

So far I have suggested that the process of political subjectivation, which is to say the emergence of a subject of politics, can be understood to require three aspects: a polemical argument, a staging and a disidentification. It is important to note here that these three aspects are not chronological; there is not a linear temporal movement between a polemical statement, a staging and disidentification. Each of these three aspects of political subjectivation can be prior or concurrent. My distinction is thus merely heuristic, a way of breaking down this process in order to better understand and explain how it works. So far I have presented the polemical argument at work in the statement, "we are all present absentees." Through a close reading of the art works from several artists I have further looked at the staging of this polemical argument by focusing on a selection of tropes within their work. Now I will turn to the last aspect of the process of political subjectivation, the act of disidentification.

Across the works considered there is a disavowal of identity through the staging of being out of place and out of time. It is here that the paradoxical alignment of Palestinians in Israel with the present absentee takes place. The process of disidentification, as demonstrated by these artists, removes bodies from their prescribed roles and assigned capacities, the spatio-temporal locales to which they have been designated. For Michael it is a matter of suspending various objects from their proper time and place such that their arrangement becomes removed from any hierarchical ordering. In the case of Durar this process is one of interrupting the spatial and temporal

configuration of the given visible order by realigning bodies and what can be seen. In contrast to the proximity that is achieved within the work of Michael and Durar, Maisa forces the spectator to remain at a distance, thus accentuating the detachment of people and places from their assumed locales. Focusing on the temporal, Nardeen's installations and prints undo time and leave the spectator in a state of waiting, a deferral of anything and everything given. Finally, Sharif's video work and site-specific installations circle around the play of time and space to the point that the viewer is drawn into a world in which both are ruptured.

Through these different tropes, each of these artists aligns themselves with the present absentee through an act of disidentification.[177] None of them affirm an identity, a place and time, but instead their works all create a place in which to demonstrate out of place-ness and out of time-ness, of not being in the required and expected place at a required and expected time. This *taking of place* establishes a relationship between those included and those excluded, between those who were still in their homes and on their property in 1948 and those who were not, without prescribing any given group identity. Across these works is thus a taking place of politics, a process of making visible what had been excluded from the perceptual (Rancière 2004f).

At its core, the process of political subjectivation is an impossible identification with the cause of the other (see Rancière 1998a). For Palestinians in Israel this other is the present absentee, those whom the state has counted and deemed out of place and out of

[177] As I noted earlier, this alignment was my own interpretation, the various dimensions of which I shared with these artists throughout our conversations about the tropes within their works, and with which they agreed.

time. If Palestinians in Israel, through their citizenship, have access to certain rights as citizens, even if these rights are often curtailed and restricted through discrimination and segregation, the present absentee, as the minority within the minority, are those who are invisible and in many ways kept from visibility. Thus, by employing a series of aesthetic tropes as acts of disidentification with the state and its categories, names, expectations, these artists are aligning themselves with the present absentee as a political gesture.

An impossible identification is two-fold: in not being inhabitable by a defined group or person, it first permits the subject to extend beyond itself; second, it creates new forms of subjectivity in the excess of the already identifiable community; a communality that belongs to no one and everyone. In aligning their practices with the present absentee, Palestinian artists in Israel are inverting a category of the state that was meant to exclude. This act of solidarity renders the colonial category of the present absentee an impossible identification. If we are all present absentees, the category and its exclusions are rendered meaningless, and the category is no longer able to contain those designated by its terms and conditions. The identity of the present absentee, in other words, is opposed by a political subjectivity that belongs to no one group or person, but to anyone and everyone. The other side of this, of course, is that those Palestinian artists in Israel aligning themselves with the present absentee are also contesting their own identification as citizens according to a juridical status defined by the state. In taking on an impossible identification, these artists and others are refusing their allocated

identifications within the state and their designation as “Israeli Arabs” within a democracy that claims to speak in their name.

The forms of political subjectivity that “take place” within and across these works are now an excess that foster new forms of commonality or being-in-common. With the colonial category inverted and turned inside out, with the relationship of those included and excluded undone, the possibility of a community of equals, an equality of anyone with everyone, emerges. This is not a community with an identity, whether group-based or culture-based; it is a community that is the manifestation of a wrong or miscount. As I have argued, throughout the literature on the present absentee there is considerable disparity and disagreement as to how many fell into this category when it was established, and neither is there any agreement as to how many are today present absentees. The counting was always already a miscount. The exposing of this miscount or wrong is thus a demonstration and verification of equality without reverting to identity, to those given categories and names that enable the appearance that everything and everyone has been properly counted.

In its aesthetic form, this equality is demonstrated in the counterworld or aesthetic community that takes place in and through works of art. The taking place of politics in art is a demonstration of an aesthetic subject/community that is separate from a world governed by the names, identities, and categories imposed by the state. Indeed, the figure of the present absentee as a political subject does not pre-exist its subjectivation; it is the advent of a subject indiscernible to the accounting of the state. In

this sense, art is not political because it *represents* a pre-existing group, but instead because it is a disidentification that creates a place for those unaccounted and miscounted, a place of aesthetic equality.

The analysis presented above demonstrates a relationship between art and politics that is not necessarily tied to identity claims. It establishes that politics in the case of Palestinian artists in Israel is a form of disidentification, specifically through the alignment with an impossible identification with the category of the present absentee. The central tropes found within the works of these artists are disruptive aesthetic forms, a taking place of politics between art and non-art, between given identities, with new forms of commonality and an affirmation of a radical and anarchic equality of anyone with everyone. What do such aesthetic practices offer in terms of the struggle of Palestinians in Israel for civil and political equality? How does this aesthetic community offer the promise emancipation to a society riddled with deep ethnic and religious divisions? If these artists and their works are the noise of democracy, is there hope for a state for all its citizens?

Conclusions

A couple days before my first meeting with Durar, a friend met me at Elika to show me the most recent issue of *The New Yorker*. Silently he opened it to a photo of “Self-Potrait with a Goat” by Durar hanging on an office wall, a somber older man in a striped dress shirt

and black pants standing in front of it. The title of the article was “The Dissenters: Haaretz prides itself on being the conscience of Israel. Does it have a future?” by David Remnick.[178] This is one his paintings that most impressed me and that we talked about when we first met. When I met Durar a couple days later I showed him the article and asked him how Amos Schocken had come to have this painting in his office. Durar told me he had bought it a few years before and that Amos often buys his work, and that they have been good friends for some time. When I asked Durar if he bought other Palestinian artists work or just his, he told me to visit the Haaretz office to see. I did not just want to go to the Haaretz office, however, I wanted to meet Amos Schocken. With Durar’s assistance, within the week I had a meeting scheduled with Amos at his office.

When I met with Amos a few weeks later, I had to first go through the public entrance to Haaretz, on Schocken Street in Tel Aviv. Through the main entrance there was a corridor with a reception area at the end. On the walls were artworks covering most of the available space. As I slowly made my way to the reception area I stopped to look at some of the works of art, which were signed by a mix of Jewish and Palestinian artists (his collection so far only includes those Palestinian artists living and working in Israel). At the reception I was met by Amos, who told me he would be with me in about thirty minutes and that I should walk through the offices to see the art while waiting. The space is a veritable art gallery. Every imaginable space is adorned with a piece of art, from the walls in the individual offices and the hallways to the passages leading to the washrooms and parking garage. The art itself is made up of paintings with a mix of styles and subjects,

[178] 28 February 2011 (http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/02/28/110228fa_fact_remnick)

including portraiture, disfigured maps and anti-war collages. Mixed in with these I saw works by a number of the artists I had met and worked with – Michael, Durar, Mahmoud – as well as others I had heard about, but never met. After having explored for about half an hour, I sat down outside Amos' office to take notes, also taking the chance to ask his secretary what she thought of all the art. Do people here really look at the art? Do they ask questions? What does she think about this art? She told me about how people generally enjoyed having the art around, many often taking time to see new works Amos acquires. They can also request to have a piece in their office changed, she explained, something Amos was apparently quite proud of sharing with everyone.

Amos started focusing on collecting Palestinian art around twenty years ago. It began with Ibrahim Nubani (see Zohar 2011), he told me, in order to help the artist financially and to help him get his first exhibit. One of his conditions for buying art, at least early on, was that purchases remain confidential: "This did not work. I always buy more than one work; it helps me see the context in the development of the artist." In the case of Durar he has developed a paternal relationship with the artist (patron-client relationship with the artist?): "Durar is unable to deal with everyday responsibilities." With Mahmoud Kaiss he was intrigued to see a very young talent and interested in helping him get into art school. Amos explained that he did not buy Palestinian art as an investment, which is typically why people buy art; he did not see this type of art as something that would appreciate in value. Instead, the reasons he gave for collecting were primarily political: "[Palestinian] artists are not fully appreciated and are

underrepresented. There is an opportunity being lost to appreciate how Arab Israelis [sic] want to be Israelis, part of society."

If Amos saw art as a means to embrace and integrate the "Arab minority" into Israeli society—an opportunity he felt was being squandered—in the same breath he was unwilling to discuss the politics within this art. I asked him about Durar's painting, a tableau of 2 x 2.5 meters hanging on the wall next to us. I described to him what I saw, the figure in front of the tree, the Crocker-brand clothing, the ambivalent relationship with the goat. Nonplussed, he said he does not see the work as having any particular political message: "I tend to keep personal political opinions of artists separate from the art. For example, recently Ibrahim Nubani approached me, angry with what is going on [politically], but I put it aside and the following day he asked me to buy more of his work." Not satisfied with this response, I pushed Amos on the matter of politics; I wanted to know why he was ignoring the political within the art works. It seemed to me that he was prepared to embrace politics when it was coming from Jewish Israeli artists but not Palestinians. At this point Amos reiterated that Israel has a chance to embrace and integrate the Arab minority but is failing to do so. This was the politics that mattered to him. As I was leaving my interview with Amos I asked him about the organization of the works. Who chooses them? Who decides on the hanging? Does he have a curator? "I do," he replied. "I'll send you her name and phone number." About a week later I got a message from him with the name and number of his curator: Efrat Livny. [179]

[179] The curator of Michael Halak's show, "Faces and landscapes" (see chapter 5).

As arguably one of the most important collectors of Palestinian art in Israel, Amos has been a pivotal figure in raising awareness about Palestinian art among the Israeli public. Indeed, his efforts go well beyond the purchasing of art and the support of individual artists; he has been active in organizing and raising money for exhibitions, promoting artists such as Ibrahim Nubani and Michael Halak and in his own terms contributing to the integration of the Arab minority. There is little doubt that Amos intends to give visibility to these artists and to Palestinians in Israel in general. But at the core of Amos' reasoning is the firm belief that "Arab Israelis" not only need to be integrated into Israeli society, but that they *want to be* integrated into Israeli society. This claim runs counter to everything I was told by the artists with whom I worked. It also contradicts the assertion by these artists that they are not Israelis and do not want to be Israelis. What these artists expressed to me, both in our conversations and through their work, was not a desire to be integrated within Israeli society, but rather to be visible, seen, heard.

Many of the artists with whom I worked, the curators and cultural workers that I came into contact with, believe that art is a "universal language" which they can use to show Israelis and the world what is happening with the Palestinian struggle. They consciously use "contemporary art of the West" because, as a global phenomenon, it can more easily be "read" by a broader audience. As I often heard, it offers a more sophisticated way to express their struggle and show their presence in the world. At the same time, most acknowledged that it can be used in a cynical way, as a form of

propaganda for Israel to present itself to the world as democratic and tolerant. Still, even if the state is playing a game, contemporary Palestinian art is clearly an opportunity for Palestinians to be seen and heard. And even if the state has manipulated artists in this manner, with the possible negative consequences of increased divisions among Palestinian artists in Israel, there might still be some advantages to this situation. As Michael stressed, this fragmentation can be seen as a good thing since it allowed individual artists to be free from the restrictions of past ideologies. Indeed, it was this freedom that permitted these artists to explore their practices as forms of place making that did not revert to more classical modes of representations of place dominant throughout the history of Palestinian art (Boullata 2009).

The primary aim of this thesis was to explain how Palestinian artists in Israel were making a place through acts of disidentification, becoming visible without marking or inscribing this visibility within received categories of cultural and religious identity. These artists did not aim to assert a counter-identity against the dominant Israeli identity, but in claiming an impossible identification in the figure of the present absentee sought to disrupt and reconfigure the spatiotemporal order of Israeli society by demonstrating new ways of seeing, thinking, talking, hearing, and acting. As such, artists were not demanding integration into a particular sensible order. Nor were they seeking to become Israelis. Rather, they demanded a transformation of this order that would make it possible to achieve an equality of anyone with everyone.

It is here that cultural production, far from being secondary to the struggle of Palestinians for civil and political equality, is deeply political, making up the noise that is democracy itself. As the Palestinian activists in Israel struggle to change the laws that continue to keep Palestinians in the position of second-class citizens, not fully equal, Palestinian artists are asserting and verifying their equality through artistic practices and particular works of art: “We don’t ask for our equality,” my friend Bilal told me in the beginning of my fieldwork, “we are already equal.” This announcement was reaffirmed throughout my fieldwork, and it is this affirmation that makes Palestinian art in Israel political.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

After laying out the background for this research in chapter one, chapter two of this thesis describes the sensible world within which Palestinian artists in Israel work and live, a particular spatiotemporal order following the Zionist ideology of Israel as a Jewish state. Developing this focus on space, chapter three examines the spatial moorings underlying the idea of culture as a “site” of difference and contestation in the contemporary anthropology of art, arguing that this spatial conception of culture leads to an understanding of the affinity between anthropology and art as practices of place making. Chapter four turns to the relationship between art and identity by rethinking how politics, as a verification of equality, is a disruption of the sensible order. It then explores how this

notion of politics is related to art and to the idea of aesthetic equality. Chapter five inquires into the notion of the present absentee as a political gesture by seeing how this category has been appropriated by Palestinian artists in Israel. Here I focus on a series of tropes within the works of these artists as instances of this alignment and how these can be understood as instances of the "taking place" of politics.

Inevitably this project has left certain stones unturned, certain areas uninvestigated, and certain avenues unexplored. As with any such undertaking, this research was necessarily limited, due to limitations having to do with resources and time. I want to mention three areas where this research might be further developed. These aspects are not only weaknesses within the present project, but can be seen as areas to be taken up scholars working on Palestinian art and society in the future.

The first area concerns the reception of Palestinian art in Israel. While my conversation with Amos Schocken was moving in this direction, it came too late in the fieldwork to be explored more fully. In many ways, the methodological and conceptual complexity of reception studies makes this aspect one of the last great frontiers of ethnographic research (White and Yoka 2010). As I underlined at several points throughout the thesis, the spectator plays a crucial role in art. To be sure, without a spectator, the aesthetic experience is incomplete, indeed, unimaginable. As Rancière argues (2008b) in regard to art (with reference to his work on Jacotot), there is an equality between the spectator and the work of art, a non-hierarchical relation in which the spectator is not a passive recipient but active in making sense, or interpreting and

framing the artwork, much in the way that Barthes has made clear for literary theory. I would refer to Gell's notion of abduction (1998) as a way of approaching the spectator. Recalling Panagia, who suggests how sensible disruptions have a political force (2009), for Gell, abductions bring about a disruption between an inner state of mind (our preconceptions) and the outer world. Many of these ideas have been worked out in the context of art history and cultural analysis, but might be developed further with a more robust methodology of observation and ethnographic inquiry.

The second area for development would be the development of a broader ethnographic field within which to situate my research. The analysis presented in this thesis focused on artists living and working in Haifa, and in particular the Masada neighborhood, which although small has a disproportional representation in terms of the contemporary Palestinian arts scene within Israel. As I noted, this decision gave me access to artists on a near daily basis, including the spaces outside of their studios and in other aspects of the art worlds in which they lived. For these reasons I see this choice as a strength, but it was also a weakness as it excluded other important artists, many of whom I met but was not able to work with more closely. Specifically, Palestinian artists such as Jumana Abboud and Raeda Saadeh, both working in Jerusalem and both of whom I met, are both important and influential artists that I imagine would have much to add to the research on Palestinian artists living and working in Israel. There are also Palestinian arists in Tel Aviv/Jaffa area, such as Raafat Hattab and Selma and Salim. There is little question that the inclusion of these artists within this project would have strengthened

many of my arguments by showing a greater diversity of artistic practices among Palestinian artists in Israel. At the same time, those artists working in Jerusalem would have also posed a number of challenges and counterpoints.

This brings me to a third area of development for this research, namely some type of additional comparative study. In talking with those Palestinian artists working in Jerusalem I discovered that their artistic "community" was centered around Ramallah, and their art often reflected this association. Given the proximity between Jerusalem and Ramallah this was understandable, especially for those artists unable to move across checkpoints. Over the period of my fieldwork I had spent time in Ramallah, visiting galleries, art schools and attending exhibitions. It struck me that the art being made in the Occupied Territories was considerably different from those Palestinian artists inside Israel. This should not be a surprise as the social, historical and political issues facing Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are not the same as Palestinians in Israel. It was for this reason that I wanted to include Rana Bishara in this project as a Palestinian in Israel who decided to live and work in the Bethlehem area in the West Bank. A future project looking at these two art scenes (as well as art from refugees in neighboring Arab countries and the diaspora) would be an invaluable addition to the research on Palestinian art.

Limitations aside, this project attempts to open spaces for contemporary Palestinian artists who are often forgotten and overlooked. At some level this thesis set out to create a place for contemporary artists and to understand how they are engaging

the struggles facing Palestinians in Israel. This research is not intended to be representative of all Palestinian artists in Israel, nor of all Palestinians in Israel. My aim in working with these artists, an objective that became clear to me as my interactions with them intensified, was to explore the possibilities for rethinking the relationship between art and politics by challenging the sensible order of mainstream Israeli society. Progress toward these goals became possible through the critical analysis of what can only be termed an impossible identification, one that allowed for a disidentification that was both spatial and temporal. At the same time, this thesis also revealed limits to anthropological thinking about the homology between art and identity, in the process bringing into relief the place of politics contemporary artistic practice and cultural analysis.

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