

Nena News  
"BIR ZEIT: PALESTINE STATION"  
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**English Translation of the article is below.**  
**BIR ZEIT: PALESTINE STATION**

Bir Zeit, Ramallah, 02 October 2010 - was held in the village of Bir Zeit, the second edition of the international workshop organized by Al-Mahatta Gallery. Al-Mahatta means "station" and the name comes from the gallery space, a former underground car park at the center of Ramallah in management entrusted to a collective of young artists who are engaged since 2008 in various exhibition projects, education and awareness of the local community the visual arts. Al-Mahatta was also featured for the implementation of public art in and for the involvement of several European organizations in its activities, including residences of foreign artists. The experience of Bir Zeit is allowed accession to the Triangle Arts Trust, a global network of workshops for young artists welcomed by non-profit organizations active in contemporary art. In the Near East, the network includes - in addition to Al-Mahatta - including the artist run space Makan AIWA based in Amman and Beirut.

Twenty young artists Palestinians, Americans, Africans, South Americans and Europeans have therefore worked in a group dynamic participating in various activities of local knowledge and local contemporary art, interact with the community and create projects related to the context. Last year the first edition of the workshop met a changing reality, the village of Bir Zeit in full Riwaq intervention for the rehabilitation of urban and architectural heritage of Palestine. The plan includes the restoration of the historic center of fifty villages in the West Bank into a state of abandonment and reintegration of the population. The artists had therefore stressed the need for reclaiming memory that is causing the strong socio-cultural imbalance of Palestine.

So the Anglo-Saxon Douglas Laing had hit the old mill with the projection of a panoramic video taken from the central water tank at Bir Zeit - which dominates the surrounding area as the Israeli settlements and checkpoints are raised above the territory - and the while reviving the site with a performance by drummers from the village, almost creating a counter-movement, a chorus of voices underground - from an original and symbolic - to spread an eco conscience and rebellion.

The American artist of Jewish origin David Greg Harth had put his safety in the hands of the villagers, who were invited to hold him back with a rope and prevent him from falling into a ravine. The responsibility of his own life was entrusted to the unknown Palestinians. It was a demonstration of absolute trust of the Palestinians beyond the stereotypes associated with his Jewish upbringing and Western education.

Always in direct relation with the local community, the golano Salama Safadi had installed new street signs in which Israeli Arab names of places are now Hebrew names transliterated into Arabic. Scope of work was to make the residents of West Bank Palestinians share the problems experienced by the 1948 and the daily humiliations that they submit a racist regime. But the initiative has been misunderstood and the furious reaction of the citizens has sparked a real riot, the signs have been undermined by violence and the police intervened and seized the work that is still "in prison."

This year the presentation of the work took place in the old town largely restored. The Turkish Sevil Yaylali worked with residents of the small refugee camp at Bir Zeit. The project started on the idea of children who have themselves made of recycled materials on site. This is a "box of dreams" contains texts on their dreams or objects that symbolize them. The artist - engaged in interactive projects - says that the meeting with the Palestinians could not rule out the exchange with the inhabitants, of which it intended to offer a positive outlook on reality despite the extremely harsh living condition.

**Tom Bogaert**, Belgian currently based in Amman, but has conducted research on Israeli settlements. Playing on homonyms of the settlement of Ariel and the popular soap, he installed an old house in a Palestinian construction of pieces of soap boxes in question on an expanse of fragrant white powder. The effect is all the more ironic and aroused the hilarity of the Palestinians who have taken a parody of an invader who builds artificial paradises on what has been looted and destroyed.

Jeremy Hutchison has focused on the limits of mobility in Palestine and has created a performance at Al Manara Square in Ramallah, where a car repeats the circular tour around the monument's central square. The artist presents his work thus: "A Palestinian is a drive through Ramallah. But going forward continues to gather at the starting point. The poor man simply can not move."

Artists: Laura Arena, Benedikt Partenheimer, Ramzi Hazboun, Rafael tondi, Dirar exploration, Edward Salem, Jeremy Hutchinson, Sundus Abdel Hadi, Sevil Yaylali, Mohammad Abdel Karim, Maisa Azaiza, is Saheen, Tom Bogaert, Khaled Jarrar, Anja De Klerk, Shadi Al Hareem, Johanna von Den Driesch, Malin Lennstom, Mo'en Hassouneh, Mohammad Abu Afefa.

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