

The Palestinian Museum Launches Rafat Asad's Exhibition *Residential Block*, Another Component of its Artistic Demonstration for Gaza

Today, the Palestinian Museum announced the launch of *Residential Block*, a solo exhibition by the artist Rafat Asad. This exhibition is included in the Museum's *This is Not an Exhibition* artistic demonstration launched in February 2024. These efforts are taking place in the context of our ongoing strenuous efforts to mobilise cultural initiatives for the sake of our Palestinian people, as those in Gaza are still living under the immense burden of a genocidal war that, through fiery exterminatory violence, is consuming their lives, their human and cultural capabilities, and the means for their survival. More than ever, supporting their *sumood* (steadfastness) is our collective responsibility, especially while we Palestinians in the West Bank are living with the threat of a surge in settler violence.

Through this exhibition, Asad attempts to comment on the feasibility of action as a continuous endeavour in light of the ongoing war on the Gaza Strip, during which the occupation has committed all forms of killing, destruction, and horrific atrocities. He does so at a time when our actions as Faraway People have been restricted to closely observing death, counting its victims, and listening to the cries of the bereaved on a cold night.

The exhibition includes four groups of the artist's works, produced over different periods: "White Phosphorus" (2009), "Gaza Hello" (2012), "Unnatural Landscape" (2012), and "Residential Block" (2024). Together the collections address several issues affecting the lives of Palestinians in Gaza. These include the stifling effect of the blockade and siege on the daily life of its residents, including limiting the quantities of fuel allowed to enter and the consequent hours-long power outages that leave Gaza in suffocating darkness, isolating the Palestinians there (meta)physically. This is evident in the occupation's war machine targeting the communications network to sever the last remaining thread between us and our people in Gaza. Another theme explored is the occupation's unnatural use of cement, transforming it from a material from which we build our homes into a murderous material turning ceilings into rubble on people's heads.

For his part, Rafat Asad says "With this last war on Gaza, I found myself disoriented and unable to do anything in the face of this genocidal violence. As time passed,

and as we confined ourselves to sitting in front of the television and absorbing the intense news of the destruction of entire residential blocks, I felt compelled to return to the studio and do something in response. I began to link the idea of grey, a gloomy and nebulous colour, to death in Gaza.”

This exhibition is one of a series of individual exhibitions that the Palestinian Museum is implementing for Palestinian artists whose documentation of war is a driving theme of their oeuvre.

The Palestinian Museum – Non-Governmental Association supports an open and vibrant Palestinian culture locally and internationally. The Museum presents and contributes to new narratives on Palestinian history, culture, and society from a new perspective. It also offers spaces for creative ventures, educational programmes, and innovative research. The Palestinian Museum is Swiss-registered with a branch in Palestine.

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