



مكان المرأة العربية في النضال

An Arab Woman's Place Is In The Struggle



Film Makers

Annemarie Jacir



Jocelyne Saab



Arab Loutfi



Larissa Sansour



Mona Hatoum



Mary Jirmanus Saba



Nahed Awwad



Nina Menkes



Selma Baccar



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Paraphrasing Assata Shakur's dictum "a woman's place is in the struggle," this programme of films by and about women in the Middle East is meant to foreground their place on the frontlines of political struggles, past and present. Often faced with a dual form of oppression, within and without their societies, women in the Middle East have had to confront the orientalist paternalism that frames them as helpless victims to be rescued. The films in this programme are an antidote to this enduring stereotype, showcasing the many ways in which struggles have been articulated by Arab women against colonial occupation, patriarchal and economic exploitation. Unimpressed by the publicized promises of The West and its brand of duplicitous "freedom," the emancipatory projects and urges these films document and stage are not meant to legitimize one system over another, but to undermine the very structure of oppression altogether. Though concerned with specific forms of coercion, historically and geographically situated, these films evoke a will to generalized liberation that ultimately transcend their contingencies.

Giovanni Vimercati is a film critic and scholar.

A portrait of Annemarie Jacir, a woman with dark, curly hair, wearing a black top with a scalloped neckline. She is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a blurred, golden, geometric pattern.

Annemarie Jacir

Jacir has been working in independent cinema since 1998 and has written, directed and produced a number of award-winning films. Two of her films have premiered as Official Selections in Cannes, one in Berlin and in Venice, Locarno, Rotterdam, Toronto, and Telluride. All three of her feature films were selected as Palestine's Oscar Entry for Foreign Language Film. Her short film, *Like Twenty Impossibles* was the first Arab short film to ever be an official selection of the Cannes International Film Festival and went on to be a Student Academy Awards Finalist, winning more than 15 awards at International festivals including Best Film at the Palm Springs International Festival of Short Films, Chicago International Film Festival, Institute Du Monde Arabe Biennale, Mannheim-Heidelberg Film Festival, and IFP/New York. *Like Twenty Impossible* was named one of the ten best films of 2003 by Gavin Smith of *Film Comment Magazine*. In 2007, Jacir shot the first feature film by a Palestinian woman director, *Salt of this Sea*, the story of a working-class American woman whose parents were Palestinian refugees, making her first return to her family's homeland. Her second work to debut in the Cannes Film Festival, *Salt of this Sea* went on to win the FIPRESCI Critics Award and garnered fourteen other international awards including Best Film in Milan. The film was Palestine's submission to the 81st Academy Awards for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. It also received many other awards and nominations, including winning the Muhr Arab Award for Best Screenplay at the Dubai International Film Festival, a Cinema in Motion award at the 55th San Sebastian International Film Festival and a FIPRESCI award. *Salt of this Sea* starred poet Suheir Hammad alongside Saleh Bakri. Her second feature, *When I Saw You*, won Best Asian Film at the Berlinale, Best Arab Film in Abu Dhabi and Best Film in Amiens, Phoenix, and Olympia, and garnered a nomination at the Asian Pacific Screen Awards. Working in both fiction and documentary, other films include *Until When*, *A Few Crumbs for the Birds*, which she also shot as cinematographer, and the short film *A Post Oslo History*. In 2011, Chinese director Zhang Yimou selected her to be his first protégée as part of the Rolex Arts Initiative. Jacir also curates, actively promoting independent cinema in the region. Founder of Philistine Films, she collaborates as an editor, screenwriter and occasional producer with fellow filmmakers. Her 2017 film *Wajib* won or was nominated for 35 international awards, including Best Film in Mar Del Plata, Dubai, Locarno and Kerala, and a jury mention at the London Film Festival.

◆ An Explanation: And Then Burn the Ashes

◆ (2006,70Min)



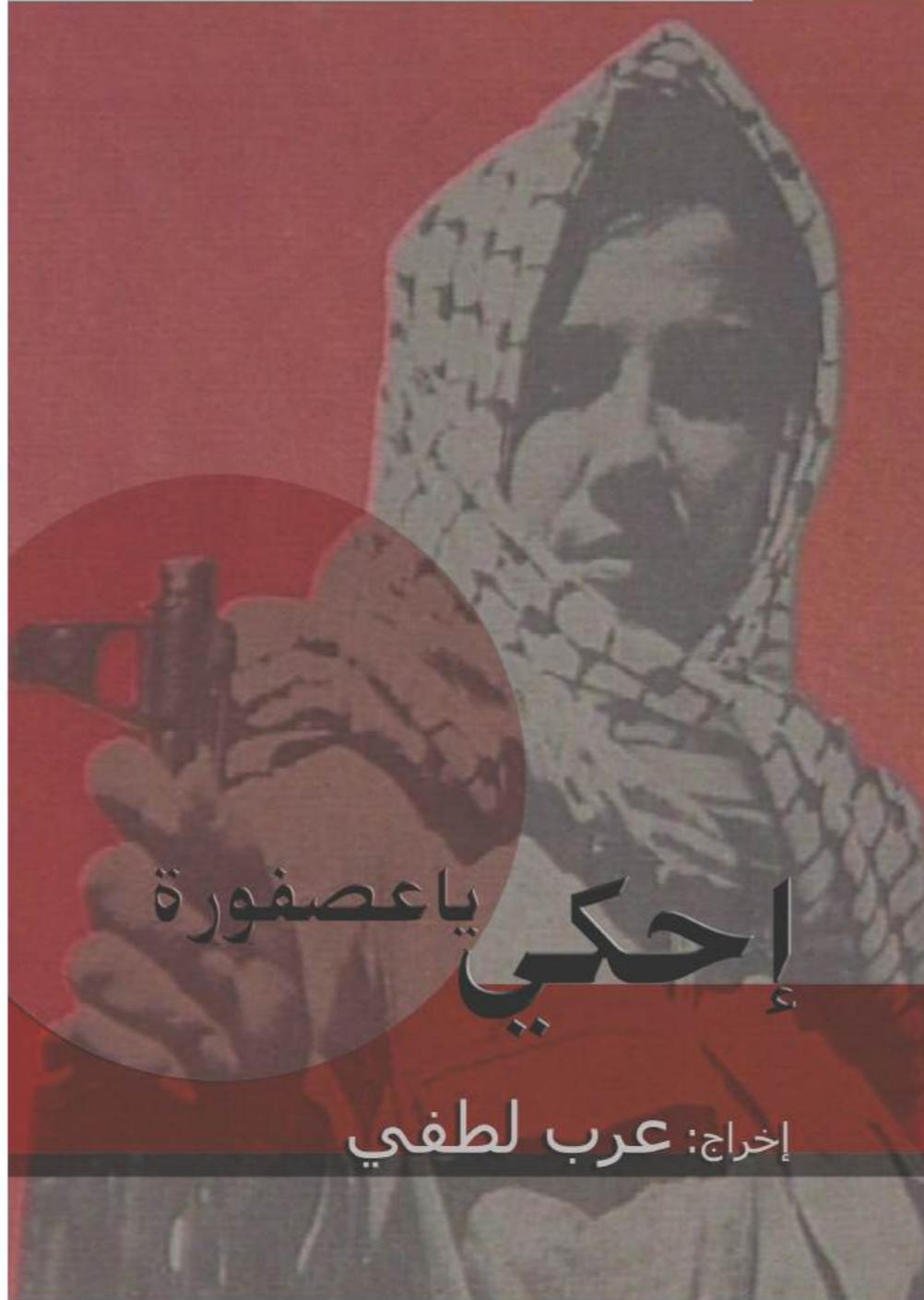
An architectural exploration of Columbia University in New York where buildings only reflect each other, space is restricted, objects concealed or only partially revealed. Small, hidden imperfections. Set against a montage of real phone messages received by Columbia University faculty, the viewer's imagination contributes to this portrait reflecting an atmosphere of American college campuses today.



Arab Loutfi

Arab Loutfi is a filmmaker, writer, and journalist. After working for many years on feature films with Mohammad Khan and Atef Altayeb, she moved into the field of documentary filmmaking. Her first documentary, *The Upper Gate*, was an intensely personal account about Sidon, her hometown, in which she wove a history of the city through the stories of its people. Her second film, *Jamila's Mirror*, dealt with the memories of Palestinian female guerrilla fighters, currently in their forties, who were involved in military operations during their teen years. Loutfi's subsequent works in filmmaking were *Seven Nights and a Dawn*, *Rango*, and *The Egyptian Wedding*. She later created the films *Short Visit*; *Stories from Gaza*; *Bird of Prudence*; *Playing with Democracy*; *Dark Room*, *Radiant Life*; *Tell Your Tale*, *Little Bird*; and *Over Their Dead Bodies*. In all her works, she attempts to show that by simply taking just two steps out of the world inhabited by the middle class and intellectuals, she can find a life in which people have their own music, cultural tastes, and passions. She has also sat as a jury member in many film festivals including the Dubai Film Festival, Al Jazeera Film Festival, Docudays Film Festival, Ismailia Film Festival, Documentarist Film Festival, Alexandria Short Film Festival, and others. She is an active member of the Arab Documentary Filmmakers Union, as well as the Egyptian Film Critics Union.

Tell Your Tale, Little
Bird by Arab Loutfi
(2007, 90 min)



Seven militant women (fedaiyat) of the revolutionary generation tell the story of the Palestinian resistance through accounts of their own lives. Cut from 35 hours of interviews with leaders of the armed struggle, the film presents an image of confident, unapologetic and proud feminine identity. Together, the memories of these women narrate the dream of a generation, yet unrealized. Tell Your Tale, Little Bird is a testament to the power of remembrance, positioning memory as an essential element of feminist struggle. The film reminds us that this oral tradition may carry recollection of past resistance, but it is in the very practice of retelling women's stories that the political act has persisted.



Jocelyne Saab

Jocelyne Saab was born in Beirut in 1948, the year of the Nakba, in a very mixed neighborhood of West Beirut, where Lebanese Muslims, Kurds, and Christians live side by side. In 1968, she entered university and discovered the reality of the Palestinian refugee camps. Despite her desire to make films, she studied economics and went into journalism. Thanks to France 3, she became a war reporter, sent to Gaddafi's Libya, Saddam Hussein's Iraq, but above all to Sinai and the Syrian Golan in 1973, during the October War that shook Israel and enabled Egypt to recover part of the territories occupied by the Israeli army since 1967. In 1974, she made *Palestinian Women* about the struggle of Palestinian women in Lebanon: very classical in form - Saab had finally learned to make images in the canons of French television - the film was nevertheless judged too militant and was censored. From then on, she decided to work on her own. Palestinian armed groups put their trust in her: she was the first journalist to document a Palestinian training camp, the first to practice suicide commandos. *The Rejection Front* (1975) was one of the scoops that propelled her career. She continued to cover the conflict until the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the siege of West Beirut, aimed at eliminating PLO leaders. Staying in Beirut during the siege, Jocelyne Saab directed *Beirut, my city* (1982), a political ode to life that documents the Israeli occupation of Beirut right up to the despair of the Palestinians' departure, which ended their presence. Arafat asked her to document his departure from Lebanon on the *Atlantis*, the boat that would take him to Greece: *The Ship of Exile* (1982) is the film-keeper of these images, and was the last documentary made in Beirut by the filmmaker. For her, the departure of the Palestinians from Lebanon marked the end of a world, at the cost, for all too costly, of utopia.

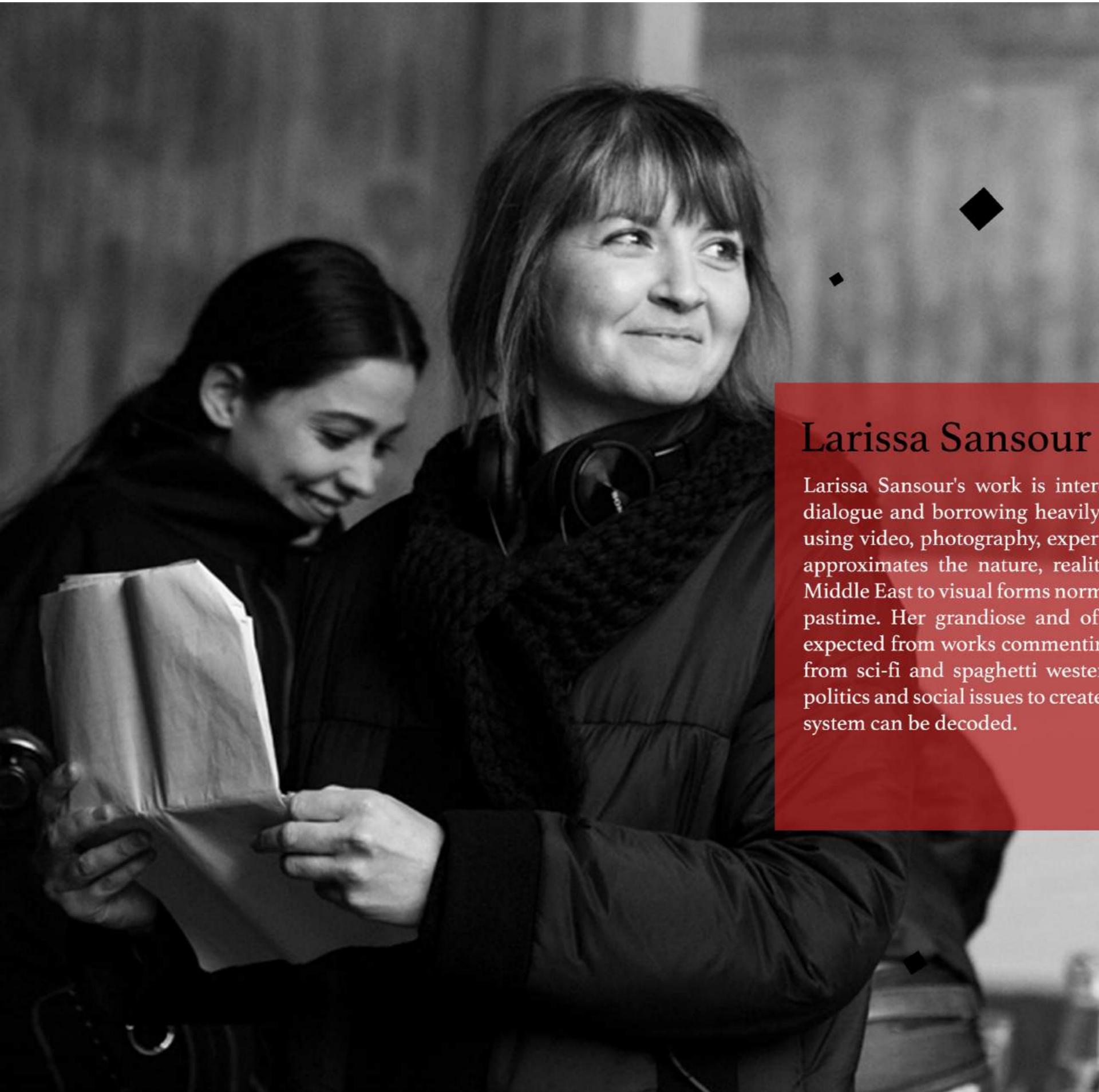


◆ Palestinian Women by
Jocelyne Saab
(1974, 10 min)



Palestinian women, the often-forgotten victims of the Israeli-Palestinian war, are here given a voice by Jocelyne Saab.





Larissa Sansour

Larissa Sansour's work is interdisciplinary, immersed in the current political dialogue and borrowing heavily from the language of film and pop culture. By using video, photography, experimental documentary and other new media she approximates the nature, reality and complexity of life in Palestine and the Middle East to visual forms normally associated with entertainment and televised pastime. Her grandiose and often humorous schemes clash with the gravity expected from works commenting on the region. References and details ranging from sci-fi and spaghetti westerns to horror films converge with Middle East politics and social issues to create intricate parallel universes in which a new value system can be decoded.

◆ Nation Estate by
Larissa Sansour
(2012, 10 min)



Nation Estate is a 9-minute sci-fi short film offering a clinically dystopian, yet humorous approach to the deadlock in the Middle East. With a mixture of computer generated imagery, live actors and arabesque electronica, Nation Estate explores a vertical solution to Palestinian statehood. In Sansour's film, Palestinians have their state in the form of a single skyscraper: the Nation Estate. One colossal high-rise houses the entire Palestinian population – now finally living the high life. Each city has its own floor: Jerusalem on the 13th floor, Ramallah on the 14th floor, Sansour's native Bethlehem on the 21st and so on. Intercity trips previously marred by checkpoints are now made by elevator. Aiming for a sense of belonging, the lobby of each floor reenacts iconic squares and landmarks. The story follows the female lead, played by Sansour herself, in a futuristic folklore suit returning home from a trip abroad and making her way through the lobby of the monstrous building – sponsored and sanctioned by the international community. Having passed the security checks, she takes the elevator to the Bethlehem floor and crosses Manger Square and Church of the Nativity on her way to her apartment where she prepares a plate of sci-fi tabouleh.



Mary Jirmanus Saba

Mary Jirmanus Saba is a geographer and artist who works across film, text, performance and political organizing to explore questions of labor, care and social movement in the Arab world and internationally. Mary is a member of UAW Labor for Palestine, the People's CDC, a founder of the mutual aid Frantz Fanon Cultural Fund and currently, a UC Presidential Postdoc in Film and Media at UC Santa Cruz. Her feature debut *A Feeling Greater Than Love* won the FIPRESCI Critics Prize at the 2017 Berlinale Forum. From 2006-2008, she co-produced the weekly broadcast television program *Vía Comunidad* with Collective Vientos del Sur in Ibarra Ecuador.



◆ A Labor Theory of Artistic Value
by Mary Jirmanus Saba
(2024, 20 min)



Mothers can do anything! A tired artist tries to find time to write a theoretical text exploring the intersections between the gendered reproductive labor that keeps the cultural space in motion, the colonial patriarchy, and the labor of motherhood.





Mona Hatoum

Mona Hatoum's poetic and political oeuvre is realised in a diverse and often unconventional range of media, including installation, sculpture, video, photography and works on paper. Hatoum first became widely known in the mid 1980s for a series of performance and video works that focused with great intensity on the body. In the 1990s her work moved increasingly towards large-scale installations and sculptures that aim to engage the viewer in conflicting emotions of desire and revulsion, fear and fascination. Hatoum has developed a language in which familiar, domestic everyday objects are often transformed into foreign, threatening and dangerous things. Hatoum was born into a Palestinian family in Beirut, Lebanon in 1952. While on a short visit to London in 1975 the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War prevented her from returning home. She has lived in London ever since.

Photo: Jens Ziehe



A series of still images unfold (one every 8 seconds), revealing the face of a woman in close-up, filling the screen. Two male hands repeatedly gag the woman and obscure parts of her face sometimes covering it completely. On the soundtrack repeated over and over again are the words "So much I want to say" spoken by a female voice.

◆ So much I want to say
by Mona Hatoum
(1983, 4min 41s)



Nahed Awwad

Nahed Awwad is a Palestinian independent filmmaker and a film curator based in Berlin. She has been working in Film and Television since 1997. Awwad was professionally trained in Canada, Qatar, and Belgium. In 2004 she got her film diploma from the European Film College in Denmark and has since released eight films, among them “25 km”, “Going for Ride?”, “5 Minutes from Home”, and “Gaza Calling”; all were meticulously researched. The ethos of Awwad’s filmmaking is to provide intimate access to the characters featured in her films. Audiences feel they know – and understand – the protagonists.



Going for a Ride was inspired by Palestinian artist Vera Tamari's installation of cars crushed by the Israeli Defense Force during invasions of Ramallah in 2002. She uses the destroyed cars as a metaphor for the freedom these cars once represented.

◆ Going for a Ride by Nahed Awwad (2003, 15 min)





Nina Menkes

Nina Menkes Considered a cinematic feminist pioneer and one of America's foremost independent filmmakers, Menkes has shown widely in major international film festivals including multiple premieres at Sundance, the Berlinale, Cannes, Rotterdam, Locarno, Toronto, La Cinematheque Francaise, British Film Institute, Whitney Museum of American Art and The New York Film Festival. Nina Menkes synthesizes inner dream-worlds with harsh, outer realities. She has been called "brilliant, one of the most provocative artists in film today" by the Los Angeles Times and her body of work was described as "controversial, intense and visually stunning" by Sight and Sound. Menkes has referred to herself as a witch, and Dennis Lim, writing in The New York Times, called her a "Cinematic Sorceress."



◆ The Great Sadness of Zohara by Nina Menkes
(1983, 40 min)



THE GREAT SADNESS OF ZOHARA was shot on location in Israel and North Africa. The film traces the solitary, mystical journey of a Jewish girl (Tinka Menkes), who leaves Jerusalem for Arab lands. The film was created entirely by the two sisters, who traveled alone, stayed in cheap hotels and used public transportation, completing the entire work for under \$7,000. ZOHARA won awards at the San Francisco and Houston International Film Festivals and was named “One of the Decade’s Best Films” by director Allison Anders.





Selma Baccar

Selma Baccar (born December 15, 1945) is a Tunisian filmmaker, producer and politician. She is considered the first woman to make a featured length film in Tunis. Baccar is known for creating manifestos through her films, centered around women's rights in Tunisia. Selma Baccar was born on December 15, 1945, in Tunis. Her family moved to Hammam-Lif when she was seven years old. Baccar was raised as a Muslim by her parents and has done the pilgrimage to Mecca with her family twice; however, Baccar identifies as agnostic. She began to study psychology in 1966 to 1968 in Lausanne, Switzerland. She relocated after 2 years to study film in Paris at Institut Français de Cinéma. She then became a member of the Tunisian Federation of Amateur Filmmakers (Fédération Tunisienne des Cinéastes Amateurs, FTCA), where she worked as an assistant director for a Tunisian television series.

◆ **Fatma 75 by Selma Baccar**
(1975, 60 min)

Banned in its country of origin until recently, *Fatma 75* is the first non-fiction film made by a Tunisian woman. It is a feminist essay film that uses the figure of a young woman, a university student, to embody and expand on the political histories of significant women in Maghrebi history. The protagonist is called Fatma as an ironic reference to the name French colonizers used to refer to Arab women. Director Selma Baccar combines fiction and re-enactment with interviews and archival material to vividly illustrate the intersecting histories of Tunisian independence and women's emancipation. Shown in a new digital restoration produced by Africa in Motion. The restored version of *Fatma 75* appears courtesy of Africa in Motion. *Fatma 75* was restored in 2017 by the Africa's Lost Classics project (initiated by Africa in Motion and University of Glasgow, funded through an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) grant). Thanks to Selma Baccar and Stefanie Van de Peer for their support.



An Arab Woman's Place Is In The Struggle

مكان المرأة العربية في النضال

Curated by Giovanni Vimercati
Realese Cryptofiction2024



أكتبت التيرابست لثلاث سنوات الآن في عددها الأخير. لا يمكن أن يوجد رجل واحد يبتعد عن حاضرتي كشيء متفاجيء غير متطابق لقيم الأريستوكراتيين. يصادفون خرافة أن الرخاء الطاهر معناه رضا الشعب والطمأنينة، وقد كانوا ما تأخر من هذه الانطرايات الاشارة بكرة لرمال وقد عرفنا اننا لنكون كمرصع الشرق في الأريب وعلى الرغم من هذه الانطرايات والحداديات، والاضراب، فليس هناك ما يفسد الانسان الى نفس الاضباب والحدت حتى لا ياتى كآفة ...

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Graphic Designer: Kimia Fathali

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