



**THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM**





**An Exhibition by Palestinian artists  
A Co-production of Palestine Museum US & Zenith Gallery**

**Zenith Gallery Sculpture Space  
1111 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W. Washington, D.C. 20004**

**September 28-November 21, 2020**

**Artists**

**Aileen Victor Abdo  
Karim Abu Shakra  
Maria Eugenia Akel  
Mohammed Al Haj  
Nahla Asia  
Sana Farah-Bishara  
Manal Deeb  
Israa Ahmad Frehat  
Samia Halaby  
Haya Ka'abneb**

**Reem Khader  
Samar Hussaini  
Sahar Kamhawi  
Solange Diaz Marcos  
Rania Matar  
Nameer Qassim  
Taqi Spateen  
Amal Sobeh  
Ruby Yunis**



# Curator's Statement

## THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

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Artists make their memories concrete, carrying images of their homeland with them into the diaspora, proudly sharing them with a global audience. This show is about present and remembered identity. Not only do these artists share common identification as Palestinians but they share, with many in America and around the world, identity as refugees and adoptees of another land. It is difficult for any immigrant to fit into a new land with new people. For Palestinians, it is even harder as they announce that they hearken from an ancient land, sharing a common identity that is often very different from the perception that others hold of them. The art of peaceful people inhabiting and remembering the beautiful land of their forefathers and foremothers, where women have led peaceful marches toward returning to the land where they were born, seeking restitution of human rights is represented in this show.

Much of the work is layered, or painted over, as the artists delve down to the original layer to discover and recover identity, a longing for the land, and for rights afforded other people. The roots of Solange Diaz Marcos' Tree of Life lead to branches above the earth. Manal Deeb's beautifully calligraphed verse refers not only to poetry but to the letters that make up the words, so carefully and artistically rendered.

The bronze and wood sculptures of Sana Farah Bishara and Mohammed Al Haj recall ancient materials, from the land where they are mined and grown; Palestinian artists using the fruits of their land to create the fruits of their labors. Samar Hussaini's sculpted thobs with Arabic writing on them showcase the newly creative ways that handicrafts become art. Samia Halaby's abstract paintings drawing on colors and traditions of which artists are not always consciously aware but that propel their work and define their vision are shown here. The land is always present, seen in Taqi Spateen's painting, A Beautiful Palestinian Day and Aileen Victor Abdo's Transcript of Land, with arched buildings recalling Islamic architecture and Amal Sobeh's Damascus Gate, with the everpresent mosque in the distance, and Israa Ahmad Frehat's vibrantly colored orange groves that show a joyous longing for the land remembered and experienced. Maria Eugenia Akel's stairs lead into the unknown with downed bodies watched over by a motherlike face. Haya Ka'abneh's Women of Palestine features blackbirds on shoulders, and everywhere, having flown and then settled.

Even the titles, Nahla Asia's "Immigration", Sana Farah Bishara's "Vision Looking Ahead", Samar Hussaini's "Resilient Legacy" refer to the hope and

expectation of one day's return, but of the reality that artists have left their homeland. "Enough", Nameer Qassim's dancing figure concedes "When you don't know what else to do, dance," as Brian Friel announced in Dancing at Lughnasa. When artists weep because they cannot return, and cry for those who remain, they make art. They still hope and are joyous. They dance.

Taken together, all of this work shares a common identity, and an insistence by these artists to define what that identity is. A longing for the land of their ancestors, an insistence on human rights and a new interpretation of Palestinian traditions, history and identities - a demand to be seen. The dream might be impossible, but art addresses the seemingly impossible. Artists dream, making art to express their feelings and dreams so all of us understand their visions and dream along with them, imagining a better world that includes us all with individual identities, liberties and social justice, recognized and understood.

**Nancy Nesvet**

# Director's Statement

THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

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Since I founded the museum on April 22, 2018, I have worked toward celebrating Palestinian cultural and artistic achievement and fulfilling my dream of bringing Palestinian artist's work to a US and global audience. Believing that many talented artists, writers, musicians and filmmakers have not attained the recognition in the world outside Palestine that they deserve, it is my honor and privilege to provide a space for their work, and to showcase the Palestinian experience, in Palestine and the diaspora, and to research and preserve Palestinian history. We have shown over 100 artists of many genres who have told the Palestinian story to the US and global audience through works of visual art, film, literature and mixed media and we are proud to serve as a cultural common ground for all Palestinians.

**Faisal Saleh** فيصل صالح



## SCULPTURE

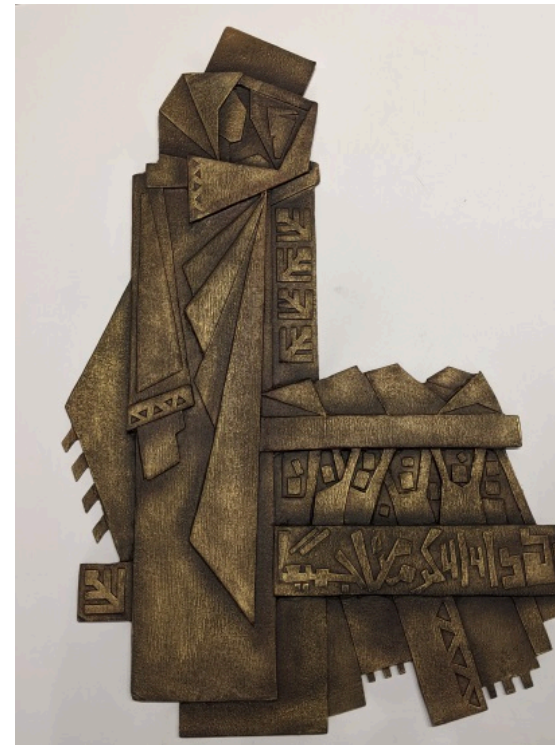
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### Mohammed Al Haj

Mohammed Al Haj is a young Gazan artist creating abstract, expressive and pop art portraits as well as relief sculpture and black and white graphics depicting the Arab and Palestinian spirit. Granted his BA in Fine Arts at Al Aqsa University in Gaza City, Palestine, his work has been featured in exhibitions and art festivals in and outside Palestine, including four solo exhibitions, in Jerusalem, Nazareth, Ramallah, Al Bireh, Amman, Jordan, and Gaza City. Using a unique technique overlaying wood relief sculpture with mixed media, his abstract sculptures look metallic, masquerading the materials of which they are made.



*Women's March and Struggle 1, Mixed Media on panel, 27" x 19" x 3"*



*March and Struggle 2, Mixed Media on panel, 27" x 20" x 3"*



*Women's March and Struggle 3, Mixed media on panel, 27" x 20" x 3"*



# SCULPTURE

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## Sana Farah-Bishara

Sana Farah-Bishara, born in Nazareth, lives and works in Haifa. She is currently considered to be one of the most promising artists who sculpt in bronze today and is one of the leading Arab women who specialize in this field. Her work revolves mainly around the woman's figure, and she is best known for her multi-pieces sculptures from which the viewer can compose a changing narrative and perspective. Her sculptures are installed in public places such as: Saint Charbel at the Maronite Church in Haifa, Industrial Park Nazareth and others. Sana's work has been exhibited both locally and internationally.



*Vision, Cast Bronze, Ed. 1/12, 30" x 30" x 25"*



*Contemplation, Cast Bronze, Ed. 5/12, 22" x 19" x 8"*



*Circle of Life, Cast Bronze, 20" x 13" x 12", Ed. 2/12*



## SCULPTURE

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### Samar Hussaini

Hussaini's work incorporates layers of symbols and cultural icons connected to her Palestinian heritage, writings of her father, Dr. Hatem Hussaini a political activist and leader who spoke about creating empathy and humanizing Palestinians in hopes that people would hear him and grow from that understanding; the Palestinian Keffiyeh a traditional Arab head covering which tells the history of farmer, freedom-fighter, and activist and is a symbol of freedom, hope, and a people's fight against repression, along with traditional Arab design motifs. Mixed media, charcoal, graphite, metal leaf, stitching, and acrylic paint on canvas reveals a personal narrative inviting the viewer to uncover the depths of an intricate and multi-challenged story.

Samar Hussaini is a Palestinian American Fine Artist and Graphic Designer, working, creating, and living outside of NYC in West Orange, NJ. After receiving a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Maryland, with a double major in Studio Art and Art History, Hussaini began her career with a 1993 art residency and solo exhibit at Darat El Fanun in Amman Jordan. After graduating from Pratt Institute with an MS in Communication Design, Hussaini's advertising work won awards including the Silver Award from DTC, the Gold Award from DTC, and Creative recognition from The One Show RX. Her artwork has been exhibited in group shows around NJ, NY, and DC, Along with



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- 1 Resilient Legacy, Mixed media acrylic on canvas on armature 28" x 20" x 14"  
2 Rise, Mixed media acrylic on canvas on armature, 62" x 42" x 42"  
3 Resilient Legacy 2, Mixed media acrylic on canvas on armature, 28" x 20" x 16"

her solo exhibit at Gallery Al-Quds in Washington DC she was chosen as the Maplewood Ideas Festival featured artist in 2017, received the Certificate of Recognition from BWAC Gallery in 2018, an Honorable Mention at the Maplewood Art Walk, 2019 and Innovative Fine Art Award during the 22nd Annual Open Exhibition at the Cathrine Lorillard Wolfe Art Club (NY) in 2019.



## WEARABLES

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### Samar Hussaini



*Link to Homeland, Hand Painted Wearable*



*Narrative of Belonging, Hand Painted Wearable*



*Wrapped in Color, Hand Painted Wearable*

The craft of the Thob, a Palestinian traditional dress, is notable for its cross-stitched embroidered designs and the practice associated with women's self-expression in their community. Samar has redesigned wearable representations reimagining the Thob as a mixed media collage on canvas, preserving the practice passed down from generation to generation while reinterpreting past traditions. Hussaini seeks to visualize the layered challenges and enriching distinction of being a Palestinian-American artist, at the same time striving to create thought-provoking ideas of dialogue and hope.



### Sahar Kamhawi

An award-winning Jordanian printmaker whose solo exhibitions at the Zara Centre in Amman, (2016) and 2012, 2007, and 2003-13 shows in Amman have won acclaim. Then she supervised fine arts at the Ministry of Education in Amman, Jordan. Sahar earned her BA and MFA at William Paterson College in New Jersey, and her BA from the faculty of Commerce in Alexandria, Egypt. As well as her art practice, she is a part-time lecturer at Jordan University.



*Urchins, Aquatint Etching on paper, 16" x 20" 2012*

### Rania Matar

Rania Matar, of Palestinian origin was born and raised in Lebanon, moving to the U.S. in 1984. As a Lebanese/Palestinian/American woman and mother, her cross-cultural experience and personal narrative inform her photography.

Matar's work has been widely published and exhibited in museums worldwide, including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Carnegie Museum of Art, National Museum of Women in the Arts, and more. It is part of the permanent collections of several museums, institutions and private collections. A mid-career retrospective of her work was recently on view at the Cleveland Museum of Art, at the Amon Carter Museum of American Art: In Her

Image: Photographs by Rania Matar and at the American University of Beirut Museum in An Image and Her Women.

She has received several grants and awards including a 2018 Guggenheim Fellowship, 2017 Mellon Foundation artist-in-residency grant at the Gund Gallery at Kenyon College, 2011, the Legacy Award at the Griffin Museum of Photography, 2011 and Massachusetts Cultural Council artist fellowships in 2007. In 2008 she was a finalist for the Foster Award at the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, with an accompanying solo exhibition.



*Samira, Archival pigment print, (ed. 6), image 28.8' x 36", paper size 36.8" x 44", framed, 2018*

She has published three books:

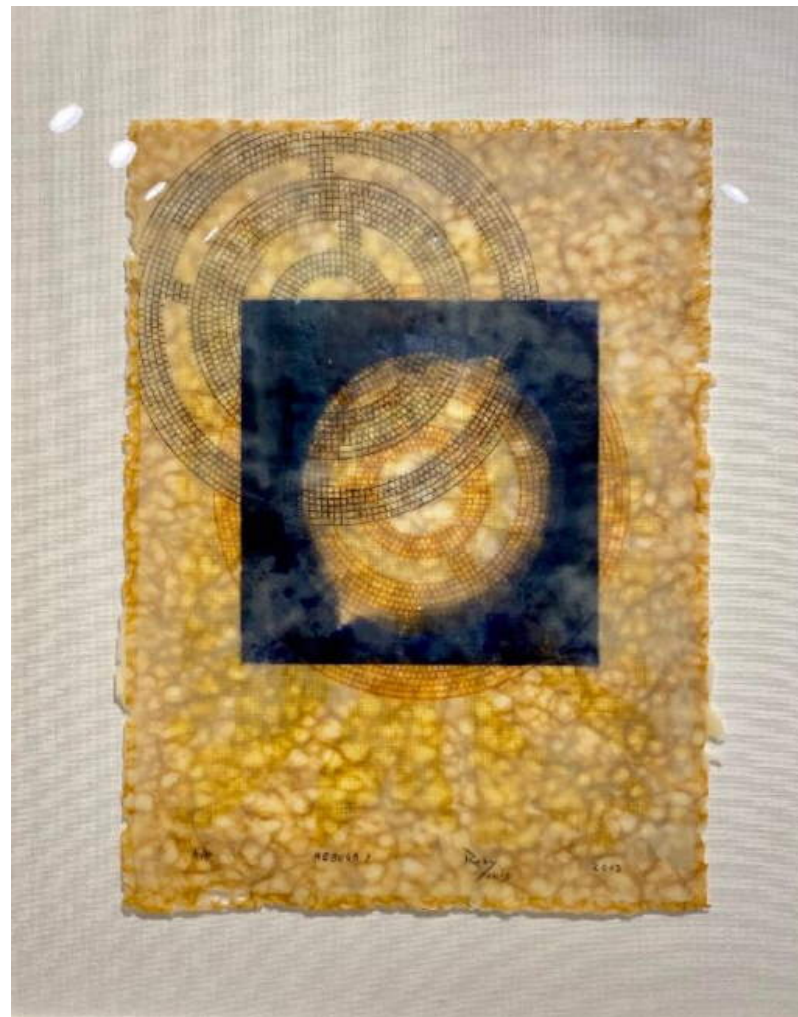
*L'Enfant-Femme*, 2016; *A Girl and Her Room*, 2012; *Ordinary Lives*, 2009, and currently serves as Associate Professor of photography at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design.



### Ruby Yunis

Descended from Bethlehem ancestors, Ruby Yunis lives in Chile. Exploring different styles and techniques from figurative to abstract, oil to pastel, mundane to sacred, she writes: "I have felt a strong attraction for risk and chance which hide unknown feelings that flow in water-color technique...where a just equilibrium between observation and meditation of nature spontaneously result from the colored water traveling over the paper."

Believing her paintings to be "the most honest portrait of my soul", she adds, "Through color I am able to communicate all that I live and feel unable to be transformed into words."



*Nebula, Solar etching and encaustic, 24" x 20"  
2012*



*Fractal II, Solar etching and encaustic, 24" x 20"  
2012*



## PAINTINGS

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### Aileen Abdo

Aileen Abdo graduated in 2011 with a BA in Visual Arts from the University of Jordan. Her art work has been showcased in several group exhibitions, and was bought and acknowledged by art enthusiasts and collectors. Due to a strong sense of belonging to my Palestinian heritage, I tend to reflect, in my art, the different feelings including, security, stability, loss and nostalgia. Those emotions show the complex reality of the Palestinian people around the world. In transcripts of land, the viewer will notice fragments of a land, appearing from the dark background. The vibrant colours and vigorous brush strokes are highly evident adding visual dynamics and contrast to the composition.



*Transcript of Land, Acrylic on cardboard framed, 28" x 40"*



### Karim Abu Shakra

Born in Umm al-Fahm in 1982, Karim Abu Shakra was raised in a family renowned for its passion for art and creativity. He was especially influenced by the artwork of his late uncle, Assem Abu Shakra, who continuously supported his passion for art and his talent. Abu Shakra's work is inspired by bits and pieces, and fragments of his childhood memories, which reflect his deep connection with nature and his surroundings. Abu Shakra's artworks can be considered as his autobiographies, as he himself notes: "I paint without thinking and without planning what I'm going to paint. The painting's theme stems from within me, but before I start painting I try to collect my memories.



*Cactus, Acrylic on canvas, 49" x 116"*

It's important to say that I observe meticulously each and every bud or rock around me, and I sometimes enter a meditative state; for example, when I stare at the Sabra leaf for hours. And when I paint I notice nothing but my painting. Each thing that I see - I do not paint until I feel it and it becomes a part of me, and all you see is a part of who I am."

Solo exhibitions include:

The Endurance of Cactus at Gallery One, Ramallah (2015);

Unity of Man Nature and Animal at Umm al-Fahm Art Gallery (2015);

Childhood Memories at Jaffa Salon of Palestine Art (2012);

Black and White at the Palestinian National Theatre, Jerusalem (2009)

### María Eugenia Akel

Since 1990 I have devoted myself professionally to painting, working in parallel as a design architect.

Since 1995, I have participated in training courses and workshops in different areas of painting, drawing and engraving, taking seminars delivered by the Catholic University and Adolfo Ibañez in Santiago. I also studied art in Germany and Spain and at art workshops by renowned artists, such as Alexander Sutulov (digital art), Pilar Dominguez (engraving), Concepción Balmes (painting), and maestro Eugenio Dittborn, with whom I studied Critical Work Workshop of Pictorial Creation for 2 years.

My current artistic research is marked by the interaction of different



*Untitled, Mixed media on canvas, 20" x 46"*

disciplines, using strategies of photographic and pictorial origin producing, as a result works with great lyrical and surreal content, where transparent layers of varied origins are mixed, combining scales and proportions, creating dreamlike atmospheres.

As my career as a visual artist has developed in Chile and abroad, I have participated in numerous collective, solo and individual exhibitions, as well

as Biennials and projects organized by local and international curators, as well as self-managed projects.

I have won gold medals at the Florence Biennale 2009 (4th place in Photography), and in the Biennials of Buenos Aires, 2010 (1st place), 2012 (1st place) and 2014 (Recognition Award). In previous years I have been selected in several competitions, earning prizes and honorable mentions.



## PAINTINGS

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### Nahla Asia

Nahla Assia is an artist, born in Tulkarem, occupied Palestine in 1966, now residing in Amman, Jordan.

A graduate of the Fine Arts Center in Jordan, she held her first solo exhibition in 2012 and the second exhibition, entitled *Nostalgia for Light*, in 2015.

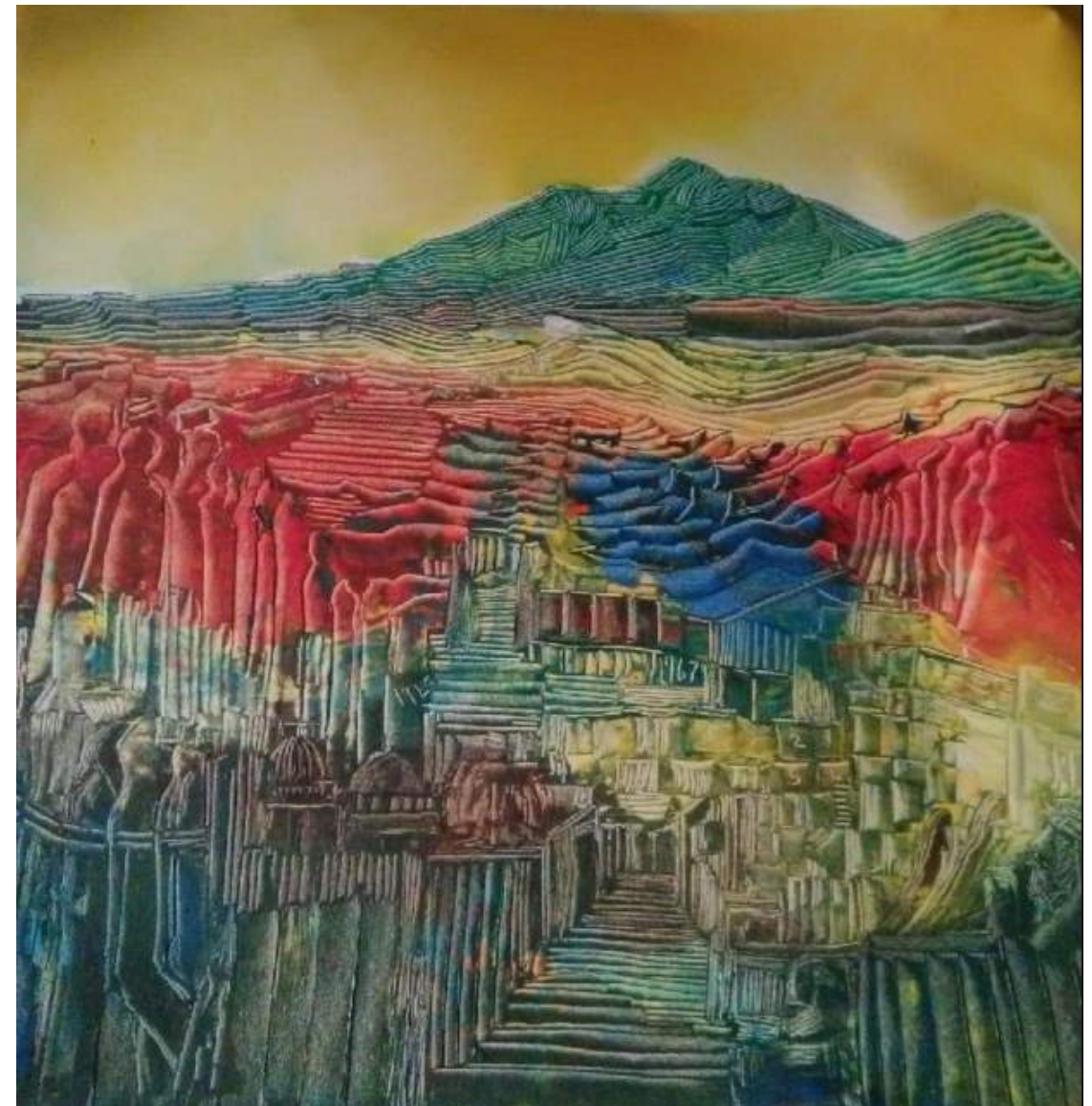
President of the Colors Association for Artistic Creativity

A member of the Jordanian Plastic Artists Association and a member of the Union of Fine Artists in Palestine, a member of the Jordanian Writers Association.

She is the recipient of several Arab awards in writing the short story, and the best work of art in 2014, she has

participated in many local and international exhibitions.

She exhibits with Jodar Artistry in Amman, Jordan.



*Immigration, Oil on canvas, 32" x 32"*

## PAINTINGS

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### Manal Deeb

I believe that memories are held within oneself; that is that memories comprise part of the self. In my artwork, I explore emotional and psychological connections that each of us has with memories that form our identity.

I have always been attracted to facial expressions, especially those of female faces. I use them as a basis for revealing the deeper and more spiritual dimension that comprises, in each of us, a mix of traditions and cultures that give meaning to humanity and the ways that human beings carry their own memories.

I place female faces in emotional tension to convey vibrant feelings. At the same time, I use color, calligraphy, and natural settings to

play up either the conflicting sentiments or the fluidity and harmony that define the self. Although different female faces repeat themselves in my paintings, those faces represent the same woman. My artistic approach helps the viewer understand that answers to all inquiries are found in one's eyes—the windows to the soul and to memories. Ultimately, it is our common humanity that grounds us: we are all the same, regardless of our differences.



*From There, Mixed Media on canvas, 22" x 18"*

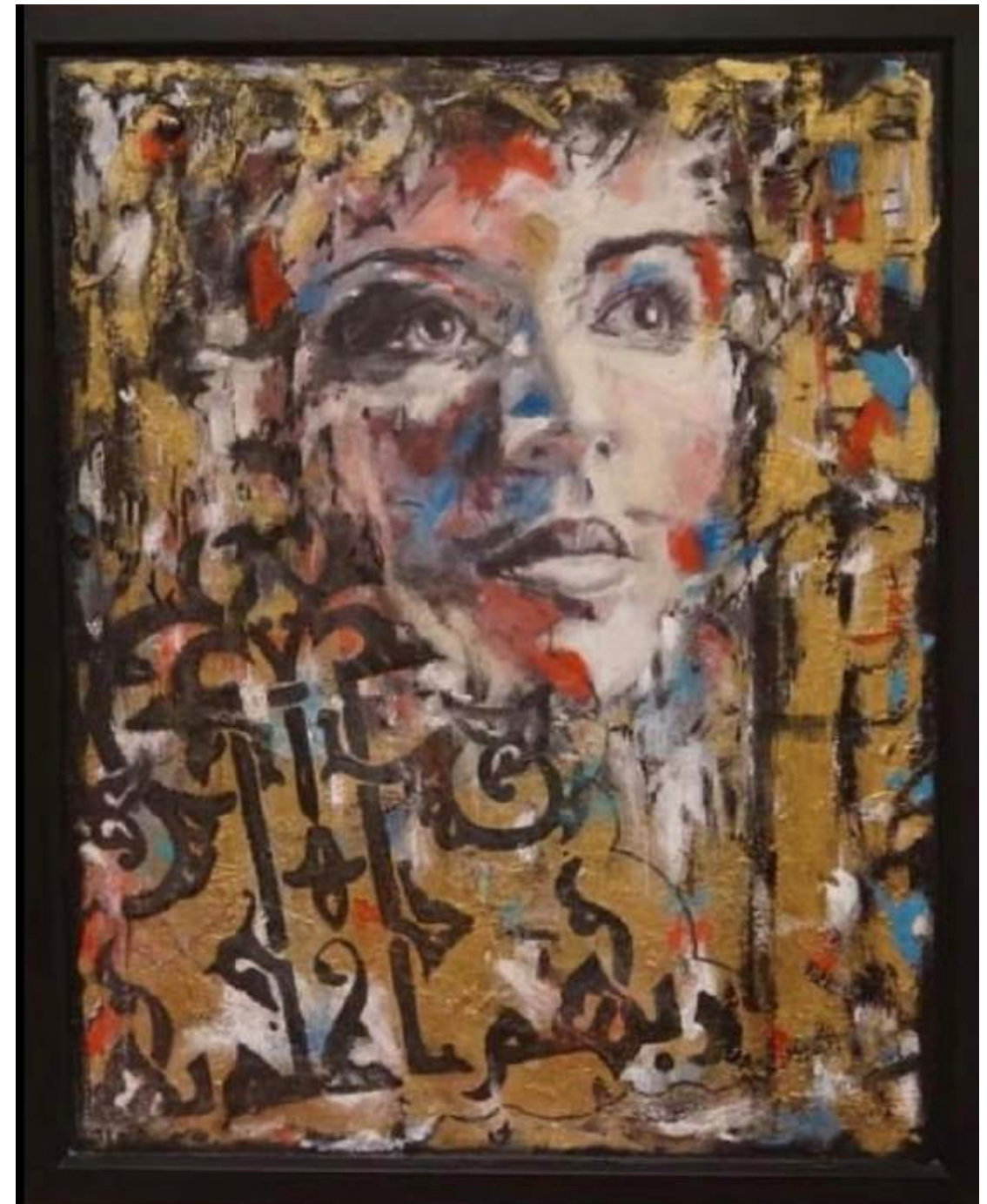


## PAINTINGS

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### **Manal Deeb**

I paint my female faces to reflect the emotions I feel when I look deeply into the meaning of a poem or a piece of music I am listening to. Colors and calligraphy allow me to enter the spiritual realm. By focusing on certain elements or on the forms and structure of Arabic calligraphy, I make manifest the beauty of the similarities between facial emotions and the curved and gentle movements of the lettering. My hope is that by raising such awareness, I foster in each viewer a certain level of respect and acceptance of my identity and my being.



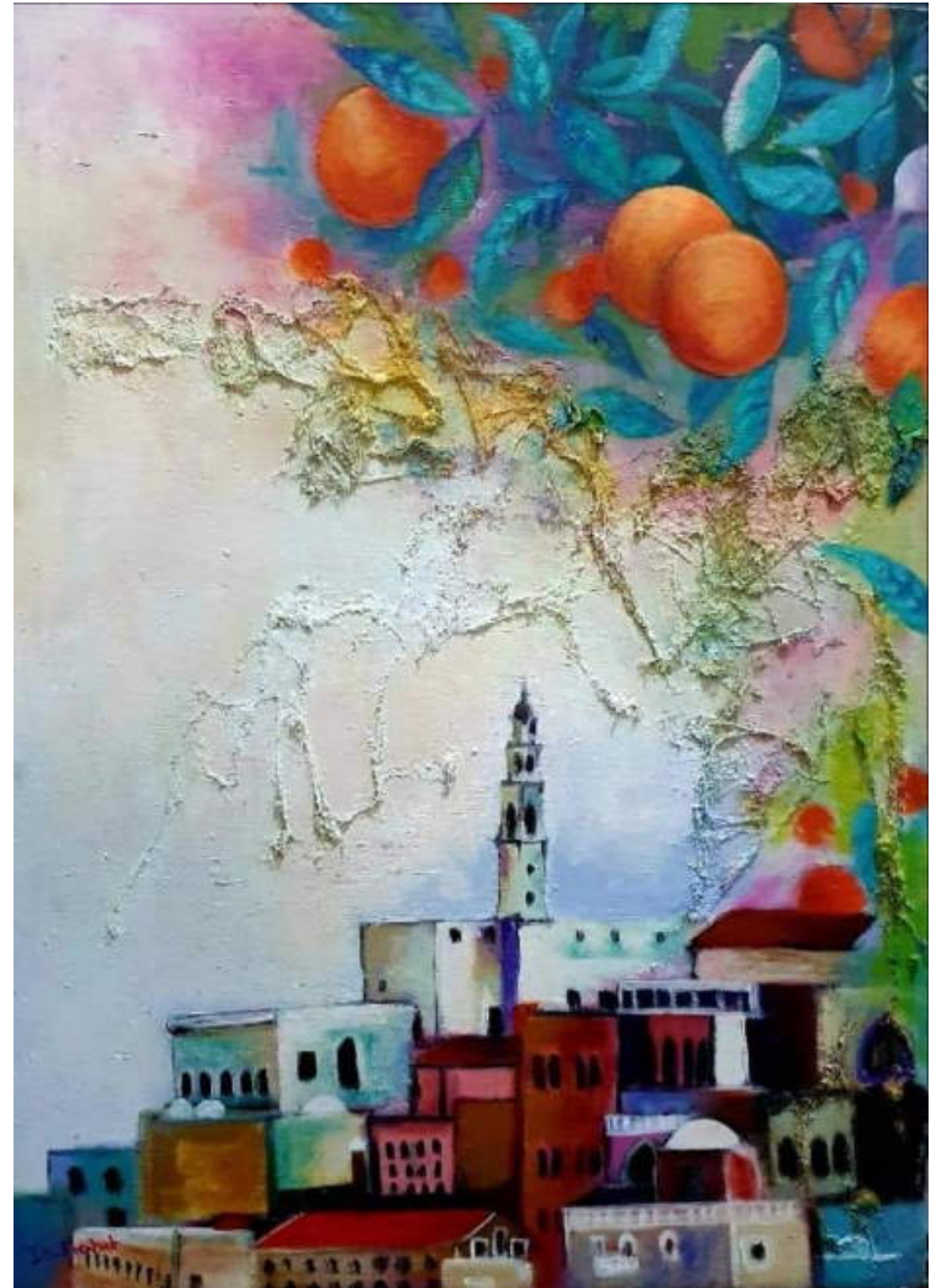
*Horizon, Mixed media on canvas, 30" x 24"*

## PAINTINGS

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### **Israa Ahmad Frehat**

Israa Ahmed Frehat was born in Nablus, Palestine in 1990 and later lived in Jenin where she graduated from high school. Moving to Ramallah in 2009 she attended Palestine Technical College and earned a diploma in contemporary arts in 2011, subsequently studying at the International Academy's visual arts program where she participated in local exhibitions in 2011-2014. Israa moved to Bethlehem, where she now resides since 2015 where she has participated in several local and international exhibitions, educational art workshops in schools and cooperative artistic activities between Ramallah and Bethlehem.



*Jaffa Oranges, Mixed media on canvas, 28" x 20"*



### Samia Halaby

Samia Halaby, now living in New York was born in Jerusalem during the British Mandate. Her family was forced from Jaffa in 1948. Recognized as one of the Arab world's leading contemporary painters, her work is in museum and private collections in the UAE, U.S., Europe, Asia and South America. She is an abstract painter who explored the media of programming computing machines. Halaby is the subject of several monographs and the author of three.

Outstanding among her books is her treatise in word and image about the Kafr Qasem Massacre.



*City Tree, Acrylic on canvas, 60" x 79"*

## PAINTINGS

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### Haya Ka'abneb

Born in Jordan in 1991 and lived in Palestine , Haya studied fine art at Al-Quds University. She participated in many group exhibitions in galleries in Palestine including Zawyeh and Almahata and the A.M Qattan Foundation and in a solo exhibition at the Walled Off Hotel in 2019. Her concern is women's issues in Palestine. She is constantly learning more about art and searching for ways to express herself through art. Her main technique is drawing on paper and using watercolors to express how hard life is for Palestinians.



*Women of Palestine, Acrylic on canvas, 47" x 63"*



## PAINTINGS

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### Reem Khader

Reem Khader's work is, in her words, "influenced by growing up in a region filled with conflict and cultural boundaries." She goes on to state, "I have always been captivated by art; but was terrified to take the first step into this fascinating world. With an academic background in science, I only began painting at a later stage in life and mourned the years I squandered. I slowly became aware that art is indeed a rare human creation that has the ability to capture the imagination along with capturing ourselves in the process. My work is inspired from and influenced by growing up in a region filled with conflict and cultural boundaries. I like to remain experimental and challenge myself in indulging in a variety of new subjects

and styles. I have a special passion and admiration for placing elements together to create cultivated pieces of art, and I have a deep love for texture. Therefore, my medium of choice is oil paints with expressive brushstrokes. For me texture conveys the physical and emotional energy of the subject and can add expressiveness to the painting. I feel that this pushes a painting into a three-dimensional state, giving the artist additional control over the play of light on the painting. "The object of art is not to reproduce reality, but to create a reality of the same intensity." Alberto Giacometti.



*The Girl with the Orange Scarf, Oil on canvas, 40" x 47" 2019*

2017- Co-Founder/Owner, The Arte Hub Gallery, Amman, Jordan

Exhibitions:

2017 : " Art Epidemic " , Media Rotana, Dubai, UAE

2017 : World Art Dubai , Dubai, UAE

2014 : " Color Reflections " , Zara Center, Amman, Jordan

## PAINTINGS

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### Solange Diaz Marcos

Born in Argentina in 1976 of Chilean parents, Solange Diaz Marcos was 4 months old when her family became political exiles in Switzerland, living there for 28 years. Her maternal grandfather, Jorge Marcos Jaque, was of Palestinian origin from Bethlehem.

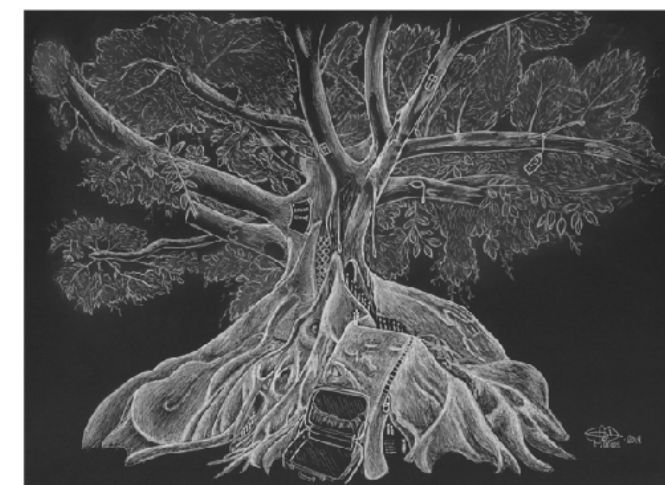
That powerful cultural mixture strongly influences her art. Solange is a feminist visual artist whose work is copyrighted and has been managed by Crealmagen Chile since 2019. Last October, she organized a Palestinian Cultural Day in Cafe de las Mujeres (Ñuñoa, Chile) on the occasion of Indigenous Peoples' Day, and also held the "Different yet all the same" Art Event at Huelen Art space (El



*Tree of Life I, white pencil on black paper, 8.3" x 11.7"*



*Tree of Life II, white pencil on black paper, 11.7" x 16.5"*



*Exile, white pencil on black paper 11.7" x 16.5"  
NFS*

Marroquí, Providencia, Chile). She participated in the exhibition "global feminist movements" at the Yellow Café (Leipzig, Germany) in March 2020. For International Women's Day 2020, she held an exhibition entitled "Women and Resistance" at Cafe de las Mujeres.

For all of the events that Solange organizes, all women artists are

invited: writers, poets, singers, actresses, musicians, dancers, the objective being that women empower each other, help each other, flourish and shine together without competing, making each exhibition a cultural event.



## PAINTINGS

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### Nameer Qassim

Born in Jerusalem in 1984. Nameer holds a BA in Fine Arts from Al-Quds University (2007). An art teacher and art workshops instructor for Children Nameer has participated in several group exhibitions as well as a charity dinner in Amman Jordan in 2004, whose proceeds were donated to students from Al Quds University. One of her pieces was presented as a gift to Queen Rania Al- Abdullah. She participated in the design and creation of the mural on the walls of Yabous Cultural Centre during the 2011 Jerusalem Festival. Her painting, Zagareed was featured in the Opening Ceremony of the Palestine Museum US in 2018. Participating in the UNESCO 2018



*Zaghareed, Acrylic on canvas, 47" x 32"*

sponsored International Painting Symposium in Prague, she earned the Master Class Award.

Her solo exhibitions include "Spontaneous- Character" supported by Yabous Cultural Center, the first exhibition project to introduce young Artists in Jerusalem (2012).



*Enough, Acrylic on canvas, 40" x 40"*

"DANCE" inspired from El-Funoun Troupe (2017).

"DANCE" Exhibition to be presented in Mahmoud Darwish Museum in collaboration with El-Funoun Dance Troupe and Popular Art Center / Ramallah.

## PAINTINGS

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### Taqi Spateen

Taqi Spateen is a realistic landscape artist born in Husan. His show, Holy Land (Zawyeh Gallery, Ramallah, 12 - 31 December 2015), provided a unique and very important perspective on the current state of the Palestinian countryside and environment and pays homage to the beautiful and extremely varied nature of the Palestinian landscape.

Stone terraces, vineyards and olive groves peppered with almond and apricot blossoms are often juxtaposed with the rugged terrain of the Hebron hills and the Jordan valley - brilliantly captured by Spateen. Critics have commented that his realist style comprises a harmonious,

balanced and timeless feel to many of his paintings.

Spateen's desire to study and practice art stemmed from his relationship with the land of his ancestors. His birthplace of Husan and nearby Battir are part of a phenomenal tract of land that is

considered by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site which is at risk. His work is a solid addition to the well-established genre of Palestinian landscape



*A Beautiful Palestinian Day, Acrylic on canvas, 14" x 18"*

painting with work identified by delicate strokes and near perfect depictions.



## PAINTINGS

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### Amal Sobeh

Amal Sobeh is a Jordanian artist and a member of the Jordanian Plastic Artist Association and earned a diploma from the Institute of Fine Arts. Amal has participated in many local and international exhibitions, in addition to her solo exhibition, "Colourful Secrets" in Jodar Gallery.

Amal writes that she paints to put life into her surroundings. "Art is what I believe will bring us together to live in harmony. I'm part of this natural world and my goal is to convey that painting enables me to spontaneously create flora in my paintings, connecting me to that natural world. My varicolored city scenes similarly reflect my wish for us to live in peace and love.



*Damascus Gate, By, Oil on canvas, 40" x 40"*

# Thank You

THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

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Thank you to our talented artists who contributed their work to make this exhibition possible.

To the Founder and Director of the Palestine Museum US, Faisal Saleh, for his unerring commitment to Palestinian artists.

To Margery Goldberg and Zenith Gallery for recognizing the talent and quality of the work of Palestinian artists displayed at The Impossible Dream, and for Zenith Gallery's cooperation in showing the art.

To Izzy Ionni and Suzanne Alessi, at Zenith Gallery for their work in making this show happen.

**Nancy Nesvet**





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