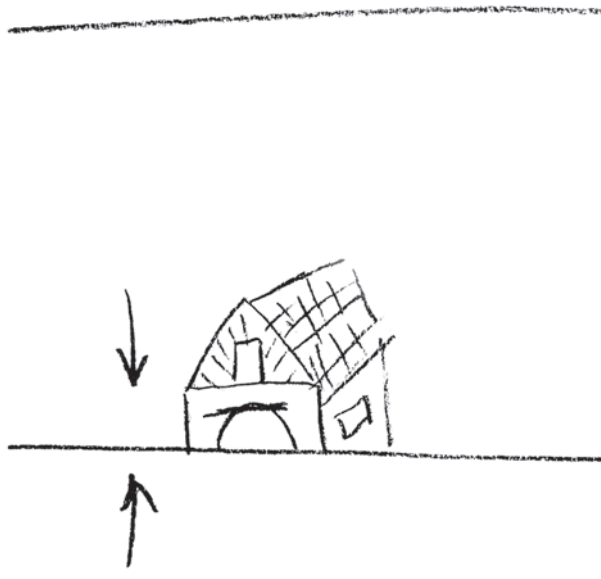
Sophie Ernst

H O M E



YSP

HOME

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HOME: *Architecture of Memory*

Sophie Ernst

YORKSHIRE
SCULPTURE
PARK

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Sophie Ernst, *HOME*, 2010. Notebook page. Photo: Sophie Ernst.

Sophie Ernst, *HOME*, 2009. Video sculpture. Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah. Photo: Plamen Galabov.
Sophie Ernst, *HOME* (Gulzar Haider), 2011. Acrylic model. Photo: Felix Krebs

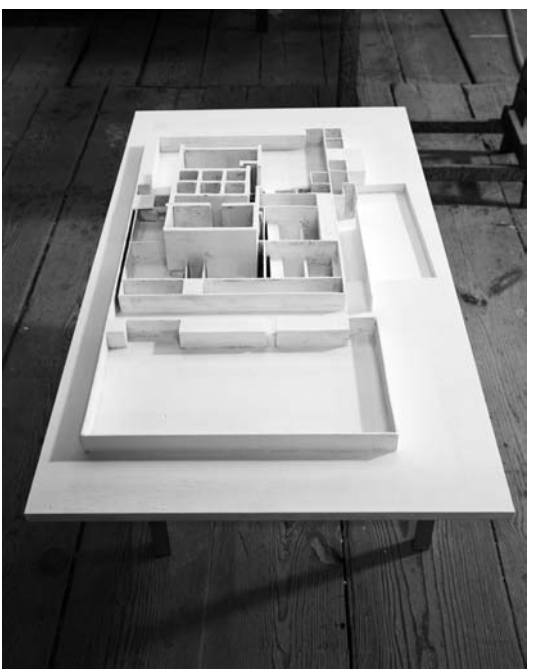
1 Architecture of memory: HOME *at Yorkshire Sculpture Park*

Helen Pheby

I encountered *HOME* by Sophie Ernst at the Sharjah Biennial in 2009 whilst on a cultural exchange in the region, having just left Dubai and before travelling to Iraqi-Kurdistan. I was immediately drawn out of sculptural interest, to the way Ernst approaches video as a three-dimensional medium and animates form. I then became absorbed by its complexity as it is a work layered with meaning.

The desire to give life and movement to sculpture runs throughout the art form's history,[1] famously in the story of Pygmalion, and is an end goal achieved to some extent through the "conjunction of sculpture and animation as expressed in video", in the view of Dr Penelope Curtis.[2] Ernst's use of video and projection continues a long tradition of artists adapting technology as media. In the UK the Independent Group of artists, architects and theorists are acknowledged as pioneers of the creative application of new technology, demonstrated in their 1956 Whitechapel Gallery exhibition, "This is Tomorrow". The *Bauhaus*-inspired Basic Design teaching courses founded in the UK in the 1950s encouraged the exploration of new media in art education,[3] while the inclusion of the moving image in installation has been widely applied since Wolf Vostell incorporated a TV set in *Theatre is on the Street* (1958) and Robert Whitman combined structure and projection in *Small Cannon* (1960). Tony Oursler took advantage of smaller and more discreet projectors in 1992 to give personality to the inanimate in *The Watching* at Documenta IX.

Ernst describes herself as a sculptor first and foremost: "This so-called video art is a kind of sculpting, really – working with time and space, light and experience. *HOME* in a way is an experiment with how one can sculpt these elements."[4] Additionally her choice of media and references to architecture are loaded with cultural meaning. There are interesting correlations between *HOME* and Krzysztof Wodiczko's projections onto buildings, in which he explores the politics not only of individual structures but also of the built environment as a whole and its exclusion of the homeless. Manuel J. Borja-Villel traces the political and cultural relevance of Wodiczko's practice, with particular respect to the museum: "Based upon idealistic and romantic conceptions, many of modernity's postulates aimed at reaching utopia. This was especially so in the case of a good number of modern architects and city planners. There is no more perfect incarnation of a utopian space than the museum, where an undetermined number of objects are grouped together according to an internal logic that tends to blur any historical or geographical differences."[5]



Paper model, studio at Bildhauerwerkstatt, Berlin. Photo: André C. Bockholdt.

Although shown in a gallery setting, *HOME* is similarly bound within the associations of architecture and parallels Wodiczko's portrayal of the homeless as acephalous[6], or headless, and anonymous, as the interviewees' hands alone animate recollections of their former home. Ernst's construction of pure white, minimalist architectural models knowingly reflects the modernist ideals of a constructed utopia. As in life, these models become transformed through experience, revealing the inhabitants' lives within their walls; the structures are not merely exercises in form but the architecture of memory made manifest, with its inherent inconsistencies and imperfections. Ernst's models are the fabrication of the subjective, most likely inaccurate, but are symbolic of that person's memory of being at home in that place, which is an important distinction from remembering a place.

During the 2011 Jaume Plensa exhibition at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP), visitors were invited to document their perception of "home", using just three words. Overwhelmingly the responses were abstract rather than related to the fabric, and were dominated by ideas of safety, sanctuary, familiarity, comfort, family and security.[7]

I experienced *HOME* as a guest in an unfamiliar country and culture and, although my travelling was the result of opportunities gratefully received and with the security of a home to return to, I sensed the void that lies beyond each new step on an irreversible journey.

Besides being a complex exploration of the possibilities of video in three dimensions, *HOME* considers the relationship between the medium and the documentation of memory. Aamer Hussein comments on Intizar Husain's narrative that "[M]emory becomes fiction only because it is codified or becomes film; it is codified and recorded for ever. But once you have made that record, whether a mental record, or a written or visual one, you then tend to return to the record rather than to the facts behind it."[8]

The thoughtful and thought-provoking aspects of *HOME* are considered further by the contributors to this publication. Above all, I was keen to work with Sophie Ernst as *HOME* fits so well with the ideals of YSP as a space for the presentation, appreciation and understanding of sculpture, in all its forms. We are committed to sharing practice of the highest quality and that draws attention to the human repercussions of global events, particularly those in which

the UK shares a historic responsibility. *HOME* immediately put me in mind of the "Shared Horizon" programme at YSP, through which we work with young people seeking asylum in the UK and with whom Sophie Ernst and Taha Mehmood will develop a new commission during the presentation of *HOME*. YSP considers art to be a common language through which to better understand our shared humanity. It is by working with artists such as Sophie Ernst that we aspire to present extraordinary art and socially relevant practice.

I am grateful to all those who have helped to curate *HOME* at YSP, including Green Cardamom, London, Eidotech, Berlin and YSP staff. Valle Walkley's sensitive design and extensive commitment have created this beautiful and significant publication, with wonderful photographs of the *HOME* installations by Felix Krebs and thoughtful texts by Taha Mehmood and Iftikhar Dadi. We are indebted to the Mondriaan Foundation, Amsterdam, for their generous sponsorship of the project and to the Dutch Embassy for their support. Above all, I would like to thank Sophie Ernst for recognizing in our intentions the shared integrity of her own and for agreeing to present the first major UK exhibition of *HOME* at Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

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Archaeology of lost spaces

II

Iftikhar Dadi

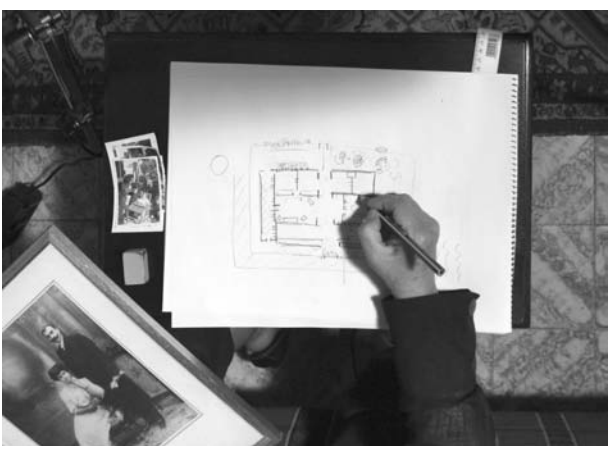
Over the last decade, Sophie Ernst has actively engaged with the question of personal and collective memories in the postcolonial nation-state formation. Of German parentage, Ernst grew up in the Netherlands, and has developed her practice through an extended process of personal exploration and travel in the Middle East and South Asia. The artist has worked out a focused formal practice, by deploying the projected image onto sculptural and three dimensional artefacts, which evokes a rich set of dialectical conflations – between stasis and narrative, between the real and the virtual, and between the muteness of the present contrasted against buried memory and hidden beliefs of intellectuals and ordinary people from marginalized communities. She continues her peripatetic practice, travelling back and forth from a number of locations in Europe, the Middle East and South Asia, and actively engaging with collaborators.

Postcolonial and subaltern studies have identified the question of the effective production of self-knowledge as a central problem in the predicament of those without access to power. Neocolonial power dynamics of various forms – including from within one's own national communities – perpetuate this in the absence in the public sphere of the concerns of those without epistemological privilege. Access to self-representation is sometimes viewed as a mere placebo for political and economic justice, but it should be evident that articulation of voice and presence remains key to any adequate reckoning of the social conditions of many communities in South Asia and the Middle East that have resulted from catastrophic upheavals during the twentieth century. Central also to the contemporary postcolonial world of nation-states is the degree and multiple registers of violence, borne physically and psychically –

Indian family of the Bene Israel community with Waqf guard in front of the Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem, circa 1900. Family album of Livana Daniel, Kiryat Shmuel. *(overleaf)*

but largely silently – by individuals and communities. By a sensitive rendering of this memory in virtual and material artistic form, Ernst provides a platform for articulation, which is the first step towards any settlement of an injured self's account with the damaged present.

HOME is an extended work in progress, and is based on a substantial process of collaboration between the artist and her interviewees. Many other sympathetic collaborators have enabled the realization of elements of this project by providing translation and technical services, as well as by providing theoretical and historical context in a wider intellectual landscape. *HOME* focuses on three important regions: remainders of the *Partition* of South Asia in 1947; the reconfiguration of Iraqi society during the mid-twentieth century, which led to the exodus of Iraqi Jews; and the displacement of Palestinians by Israelis, who were



Conversation between Vera Tamari and her sister, Tania Nasir, Birzeit, 2008. Video still (*upper*), production still (*lower*). Images: Ahmad Malki, Sophie Ernst.

themselves dislocated refugees from the crisis of the nation-state in Europe and elsewhere.

Over the years, Ernst has worked in a *kibbutz*, travelled to Ramallah and Jerusalem, taught for several years in Lahore, Pakistan, exhibited in India, and all the while interviewed artists and writers, amassing a rich set of archives in transcripts and in audio and video formats. The *HOME* project can now be thought of in several registers: an oral history archive; a personal biography of intellectuals; an act of translation across visual media; and the larger questions this body of work continues to evoke, preventing any sense of easy closure of historical injuries lodged in memory that continue to have real effects. In this sense, the open-ended inquiry enabled by *HOME* has a structural analogy to the nature of its material – memories do not remain safely in the past but overflow as existential dilemmas into the present, just as *HOME* cannot be circumscribed by one location or in particular material forms.

However, at specific junctures, the artist provides a focused and angular vision into the archive; these articulations are produced either as tabletop-size architectural models upon which the drawings of a remembered home are projected, or as larger installations in which the viewer's body is implicated. In either case, the video projection is active, composed of an ongoing drawing of a remembered house plan, or of projected views of streets in which the viewer's body intervenes. In the video, an open-ended narrative emerges, which is constantly punctuated and interrupted by the presence of body fragments and memory aides. In this sense, remembrance of personal affect by those interviewed overflows the architectural enclosures.

The works in *HOME* that are realized as tabletop installations consist of an architectural model of a home. Usually it is the floor plan of a house along with its environs (such as a garden), which the artist renders in a plain, white, neutral architectural building material such as cardboard, MDF or acrylic. The model consists of walls of various heights but the roof is often omitted. The artist constructs the model, based directly on the drawings that are created, either by the interviewees themselves, or by consulting their older relatives. It is important to note here that the executors of the drawings are artists, architects, and scholars of urban life – each has a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between the

recollection and description of a lost space as lived experience, and its reduced rendition into a drawing, and then on to a bland and often impossible or unrealizable architectural plan. Indeed, many of Ernst's subjects are among the most accomplished artists and scholars of their generation and region. And as the physical model of the home seems to be missing a roof, the architectural model is an unstable object, shuttling uneasily between wanting to be realized as a finished model, or returning instead to a lost past by evoking the archaeological ruin of an ancient building that consists only of broken or partial foundations – a common practice in the reconstruction of ancient archaeological sites worldwide.

The transcription of the drawn floor plan into the three-dimensional architectural model is a translation produced by the artist. However, this translation is not detached from the original drawing, but remains in constant tension with it, as the drawing is projected onto the model as a video image. Indeed, even the act of drawing itself remains active and dynamic, since it is continually worked over by the interviewee; this process is punctuated throughout by their voice, by pointing at various aspects of the drawing, by folding or moving the paper, or by incorporating artefacts, such as photographs, that attest to the veracity of the drawing process in relation to memory, in order to find a secure ground for a place long lost. By contrast, the three-dimensional architectural model acts like a mute sponge, absorbing this overflow of affect through its detached and neutral materials.

Ernst and her collaborators map the loss and destruction of homes that have usually occurred in childhood or young adulthood as the result of the violence of modern historical transformations, rather than by normal processes of growth and decay, or due to personal family disputes. Although Ernst has focused on a very selected group of individuals, and has pointedly made no attempt to find a deliberate geopolitical balance – such as between those displaced to Pakistan and those to India – the very delimitation of her archive is the source of its greatest psychic power. No archive can possibly attempt to represent even a fraction of the enormity of losses that have been experienced in South Asia alone, where the Partition of 1947 rendered at least ten million people almost instantly homeless, commonly from neighbourhoods and areas they understood to be theirs for perpetuity. The toll is enormous

Conversation between Farida Batool and her mother, Silvi Khupshid Fareedi, Lahore, 2007. Production still. Photo: Sophie Ernst.

Conversation between Senan Abdelqader and Sami Michael, Haifa, 2008. Production still. Photo: Sophie Ernst.

Conversation between Bani Abidi and her mother, Abeeda S. Abidi, Karachi, 2008. Production still *(left)*. Conversation between Noa Zadka and her father, Isaac Zadka, Tel Aviv, 2008. Production still *(right)*. Photos: Sophie Ernst.

in many registers, from destruction of life and property to the very loss of belonging to a locale. These emotional costs are unacknowledged publicly (apart from a small number of "unofficial" works by writers and intellectuals), and yet exert a major, largely destructive, force on political and social relations between India and Pakistan, as well as in various communities of the Middle East.

Any reckoning of the effects of Partition that does not account for its emotional and psychic toll is incomplete, but loss of personal horizon and memory is itself not a calculable or bound matter. And yet this wounded and resilient memory can also serve as a kind of psychic ground for sympathetically resituating the self in relation to the losses others have also experienced. It is here that Ernst's selection of witnesses and mediators who possess a sophisticated artistic ability to render domestic space becomes significant. The various artefacts that comprise *HOME* thus effect a synecdochical or indexical relation to the enormity of displacements that have been experienced by millions in South Asia and the Middle East. But apart from representing the larger experience, *HOME* also possesses an effective and activating charge, transferring the stuff of memory into drawing, and from there to an even more concrete object – the three-dimensional model. However, the journey from memory to physicality, aided by the fragment of video narrative, also acknowledges that the past cannot be lived in its fullness, and that the world one faces today necessitates both remembrance and forgetting.

III

In search of *HOME*: *Conversations with Sophie Ernst, London, 2008–2011*

Taha Mehmood

Sophie had once given me a DVD copy of her film, *Paradise Lost*. She suggested, "It's like a precursor to *HOME*, watch it and let me know your thoughts." *Paradise Lost* was divided into different chapters; each chapter had a different story, each chapter represented a space. The film took me from "paradise" via the "storeroom", the "shrine" across the "border" to "paradise lost". Together these stories formed an interesting collage of narratives about spaces that are now lost to time. Her method of creating a narrative in *Paradise Lost* fascinated me because of its deceptive simplicity. When I saw the film, I was thinking about dreams and nightmares with respect to a housing policy. At that time I was thinking about the London Plan, and its impact on housing in the borough of Southwark. The Heygate Estate at Elephant and Castle was one of the biggest social housing dreams of the 1960s. It had become a "nightmare" now. Plans were underway to demolish it. Sophie was curious about housing policy and I was keen to know more about *HOME*. We decided to meet and exchange notes.

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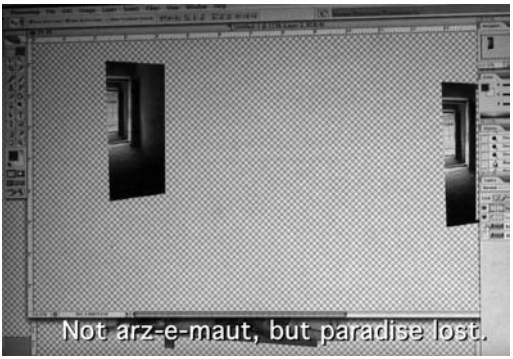


Sophie Ernst, *Paradise Lost*, 2007, documentary, HD video.

We met at a pub, where Sophie began to tell me about her work. "You see in the twentieth century many new nations were born. Each nation suggested an enclosed geography. Many people willingly left their homes in order to be part of a nation. Many were forced to leave their ancestral homes. I talk to people who want to share stories of their home. My work in a way is to collect memories of a place – a place which they don't own anymore except as an image in their minds. That place is, in fact, a non-place. How does one experience a non-place? How is it remembered? How does one articulate the memory of an experience of living in a place? These questions are important to my work."

To elaborate further, Sophie pulled out her laptop to show me a short video. The video was a visualization of her works, as they would eventually appear. I could see an image of an elaborate model of a building. This building had different sections and may have been built for a variety of uses. The image of the model started

rotating in a clockwise fashion. "These models will be made up of MDF," Sophie informed me. "When people are talking about a place, they are telling stories. And I listen. Usually, I ask a third person to have the conversation, and to draw sketches of the space as it is being described. Sometimes my interviewee talks and is drawing at the same time. I record the entire event with a video camera. Eventually, I project the interviews on three-dimensional models."

* * *

Sophie got interested in the concept of "looking" when studying with Jim Dine at the Summer Academy in Salzburg. What does it mean to look at something? What kind of relationship does art share with looking? Referring to a conversation she had with Jim Dine, Sophie remarked, "Art is essentially about observing. So maybe that's what I do – observe and nothing else. You tell me, can looking not be subversive?" Perhaps that's why *HOME* sometimes comes across in my mind as her way of "looking" at memory. What are the ways in which one can look at the memory of a space? Is remembering a way of looking? If it is, then what sort of obstacles do we face in looking at our past? I got some answers while listening to the stories of people Sophie had met while researching *HOME*.

When Intizar Husain talks about his *basti*, where he used to live, the memory of that space comes alive in his mind with the sights and sounds of *ikkay*, bullock carts and carriages. He says, "And one conveyance, which still impresses me and seems very royal, was the elephant ride. The elephant was a rare sight, to me it seems that the sight of an elephant overpowered the basti. So now I wonder, when did I really see the elephant? It was during Lord Ram's victory procession during the *Ramlila* season, when people had disappeared the elephant used to appear with a *tilak* painted on his forehead ... that image of the elephant is engraved in my mind and heart and I associate my basti, Dibai, with this image."

I observed that Intizar remembered several animals when accessing his memory of an intimate space. While listening to the conversation of Sami Said with his father, I noticed the story of the father's birth in a Palestinian village. He recalls a coloured bull while talking about his birth: "When I asked my father when was

I born he said you are the age of the coloured bull. He had a big coloured bull and they called him 'El Abrak' ... so he told me that it was the day the coloured bull was born. I asked him when that was. He said in the winter when it snowed, the big winter. Until now I don't know my birth date."

I think the most poignant story was told by Gulzar Haider, remembering the flight of his entire village during the Partition of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947: "Only one man died and it's a wonderful story how he died. He had a wife who was a tough woman and was very possessive about a particular cow. That cow had been left back at the village. She said, 'I won't let you into my room if you don't bring me back my cow.' So the poor guy went back alone. And now there was nobody there to identify him, to protect him, and of course they found out that he was a Muslim, and of course he got caught into all that ..."

Here, too, I came across an image of an animal, which seemed central to Gulzar's effort in remembering time, events and communal spaces. Why are images of animals evoked to remember a place? Is there some sort of connection? John Berger suggests: "Animals ... have magical functions, sometimes oracular, sometimes sacrificial. And the choice of a given species as magical ... was originally determined by the habits, proximity and 'invitation' of the animal in question." Magical functions are a part of magical representation. I started to wonder whether I could apply magical representation to understand the constant evocation of animals to access memories of a space. Why is Intizar's memory incised with the image of a grand elephant? Was he recalling a space that once nurtured a composite culture? Why did Sami's father remember a coloured bull? Was he referring to erstwhile oral cultures of a pastoral society? Why is the memory of a cow impressed in Gulzar's mind? What do these recurring images of animals tell us about collective memories of non-places of the twentieth century? Perhaps in the remnants of these memories we get a fragrance of a certain kind of space and society, which is hidden under a veil of history. A society that is no more visible. I wonder: is it because of our historical association with animals and magic that we find in the work of some artists a magical recurrence of images of animals?

* * *

Whenever I think about *HOME* now, the project seems to me like a carefully planned scheme in magical representation. In *HOME* memories of an intimate space acquire a contagion-like quality, where remembering comes in contact with retelling. Memories become magical objects. In *HOME* one clearly experiences this contagious flight of memory, as it keeps affecting all those that come into contact with it. An event, like the partition of a country, is impressed on the mind of a person. The memory of this event is registered in various clusters. To access a cluster one needs a key. A key acts as a contagion as it activates other sets of memories. For instance, Intizar sees an elephant, he remembers a Ramlila procession, which reminds him of his basti, Dibai. And from there on he accesses a range of sights and sounds or smells, which are linked to his home. Memory of an elephant magically pulls in other memories associated with it. The image of an elephant becomes the key in Intizar's mind to access clusters of other memories. When Sophie's interviewee recalls his memories and retells them, these memories flow out of his mouth like magical objects. I could only sense that this magical object shaped memory orally. Thereafter, a person interprets memories as a sketch. Sophie digitally records the making of these sketches. While recording, she frames all the sketches in a similar fashion. All frames have two hands with a pencil in one hand and a white drawing paper in the background. The process of recording itself is invisible. I could only "see" the memory of a person metamorphosed into a frame when it is projected onto a model of a space. When I "saw" the memory of Gulzar, it started to run along a sympathetic chain to such an extent that it appealed to me to revisit my own personal archive of intimate spaces.

* * *

I saw *HOME* for the first time at the Royal Geographic Society (RGS) in London. After the show we went to the Serpentine Gallery in nearby Hyde Park to grab a cup of coffee and talk about the work.

SOPHIE — You seem to have spent quite some time watching and listening to the piece, why don't you tell me your take on it.

TAHA — To begin with, you appear to be playing around a lot with the notion of time.

How?

Let me explain. We seem to be dealing with a lot of moments here. For instance, let's take Gulzar's story. There is the moment of recording marked by the watch on his hand, it is also the moment when he was accessing his memory, which in a way gestures to the moments when Gulzar's memory was made. Then there is the moment of projection, signified by the juxtaposition of images on the MDF board, and finally the moment of watching the installation.

You can say that. And what else?

There's space as well, isn't there? It becomes intriguing to take into consideration that one is at the RGS in London, looking at a lifeless model of a home in Punjab, as remembered by someone who is in a different space now. So in the end we are dealing with time-scapes, together with a range of spaces. It's about an intimate history of Partition, but there's a lot more going on there, isn't there?

Yeah! One can look at the history of Partition as only the very top layer of the work. It could be almost a pretext to deal with time and our experience of it. While at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam, I made a video work. It was a small piece that dealt with this shifting of time and time experiences. The work was very abstract and at the time I didn't know how to continue from that to the next work. The aesthetics is part of the work's content, maybe similar to how we experience music.

Experience music?

Yes. Bach or *ghazals* can be very disturbing because of their formal structure and how that translates into sound. I guess you would have to see the piece, I am really bad at describing my work.

You were trained as a sculptor, weren't you? So how come this shift from sculpting to making video art?

Yes, sculpting is always going to be my first love. I like tinkering with the idea of sculpting. This so-called video art is a kind of sculpting, really.

How?

You saw *HOME* and you spoke about time and space. We could also add light and experience to it, couldn't we?

Yes.

So can we not think that *HOME*, in a way, is an experiment with how one can sculpt elements like light and time, space and experience?

Perhaps.

I was tinkering with these elements here.

Tell me, how does tinkering work?

Tinkering is what one does in any craft. You practise and see how your practice evolves. It's like a *riyaaz*, really!

When did you start tinkering with sculpture?

It's almost a decade now. I was interested in thinking about projection as an aspect of sculpting.

Why projection?

I don't know. Maybe because projection is the soul of sculpting, I guess.

Why do you think so?

Look at all these objects here. Don't you think that these objects become objects of desire and

beauty, elegance and great value, because of projection of material and ideas in a particular way and not despite of it?

OK, but what are you doing when you are projecting?

I think I am interpreting, translating and mediating meaning from one form to another.

How did your practice, your riyaaz, with respect to projection, evolve?

It all began at the Rijksakademie ten years ago, and then I just kept on playing with the idea of projection and applying it in my work.

Can you give me an example?

It's no good describing visual works. You must see for yourself.

But one can try ...

OK, back in 1998 I did a work called *Lightwalking*, which was part of a series of experiments I did with light. It was a performance where I walked on light, quite literally, as an object one can sculpt. This was a play with the absurd or obviously impossible – an illusion. Magic too.

And you kept on with it?

I kept on with it, but it took me more time and a detour over performance to start looking at this idea again, light as material I can sculpt with. The piece I did at the Rijksakademie, *From Zero to One*, was an analysis of projected space. It was rather abstract and dealt with the process of art-making and the medium on a very fundamental level.

What happened then?

It took more time and a move to Pakistan to get ahead of this rather "self reflective" work.

When did you move to Pakistan?

Early 2000s. In Pakistan I did this series of sculptural projections, *Lovedolls*. I used plaster casts of Greek and Roman statues as projection screens. Later on they evolved into an installation called *Dying Gauls*.

What were the *Dying Gauls* about?

The *Dying Gauls* are interviews where young Lahori men describe a space (paradise). These interviews are projected onto the casts of Hellenist sculptures of dying Gauls. Later on, the project was continued in another piece.

Which was?

No Place like America.

How did you conceptualize *Dying Gauls*?

I think key to these works is that the video and the beam of light is used in a three-dimensional manner. So the video is not projected onto a foursquare screen – that is the frame through which we step into an imaginary world, like in the cinema hall. It is a reality, yet still unreal. So like *Lightwalking*, there is this exploration of the impossible or a contradiction.

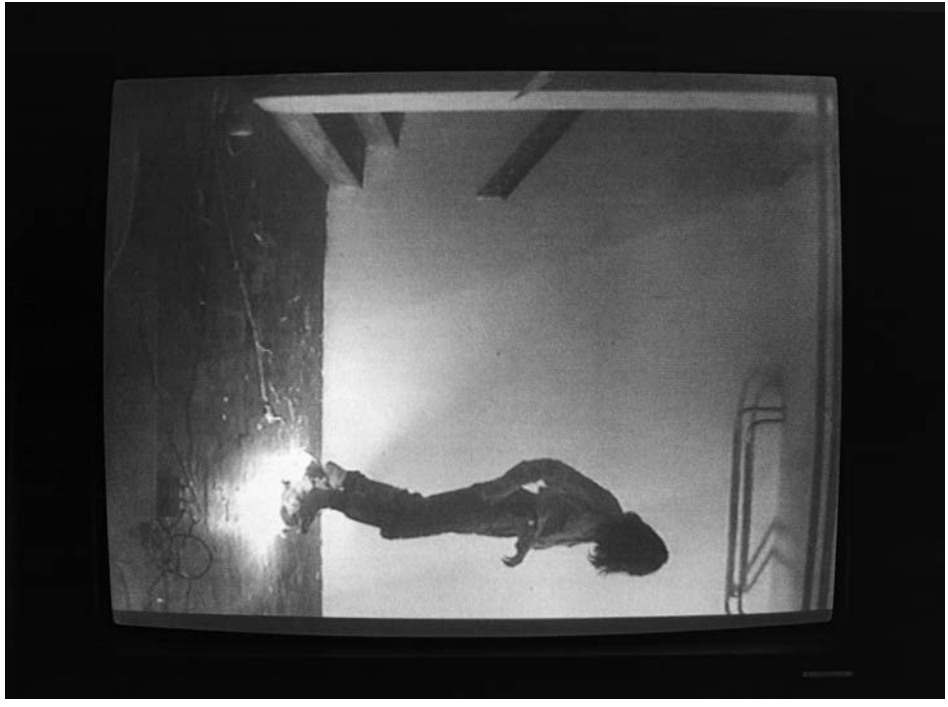
All this is still sculpture, isn't it? How did you start to bring in the idea of projection of architectonic space into your work?

I was coming to that. I did this work called *Jannat*, for which I projected an animation onto very large MDF letters. It's interesting, because with this I moved from the found object (the sculpture) to architecture-like constructions. *No Place like America* took that further. Here men describe spaces, places and homes they imagine in an environment that is more fiction than reality to them – the United States of America.

So *HOME*, in a way, evolved out of *No Place like America*?

Precisely. But both *No Place like America* and *HOME* are continuations of my tinkering with projection.

But here it is more about projection of space, isn't it?



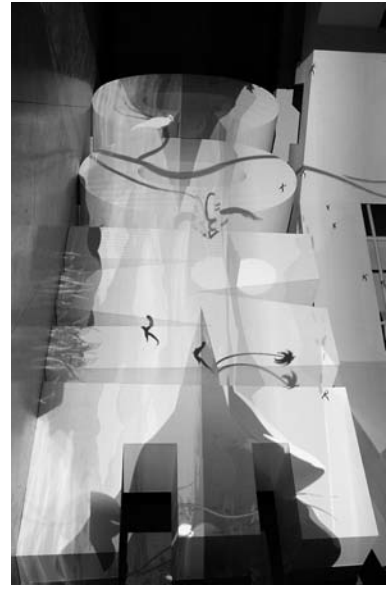
Sophie Ernst, *Lightwalking*, 1998. Performance documentation, VHS.
Academie Beeldende Kunsten, Maastricht. Photo: Sophie Ernst.

Sophie Ernst, *Apollo (Lovedolls)*, 2004. Video sculptures. Museum für Abgüsse Klassischer Bildwerke, München. Photo: Felix Krebs.

Sophie Ernst, *Dying Gauls*, 2007. Video sculptures. Chatterjee & Lal, Bombay *(upper)*: ShContemporary, Shanghai *(lower)*. Photos: Sophie Ernst.

Sophie Ernst, *No Place Like America*, 2008. Production still, Lahore *(left)*. Video sculpture. Pakistan Pavilion, Dubai *(right)*. Photos: Sophie Ernst.

Sophie Ernst, *Jannat*, 2006. Video sculpture. Alhamra Art Gallery, Lahore. Photo: Sophie Ernst.



Yes, in the sense that in my various explorations of projections of space, *HOME* is the most architectonic of these works, therefore maybe also the most elaborate sculptural effort on my part.

What kind of a space is projected in *HOME*?

I don't know, it's a utopia, really. A kind of a non-space.

HOME as utopia. That's nice.

* * *

When I took leave of Sophie that afternoon, I was thinking about Lewis Mumford's survey of utopias. Do utopias have a peculiar place in our lives? Maybe they do. Utopia, as Lewis Mumford would assert, is a subjective projection of our inner worlds. The impulse to imagine utopia comes from outside of everyday lived experiences. I found a mention of ideal spaces in the voices of people whom Sophie spoke with. Sophie's work *HOME* appeared to me like a sculpture made from non-spaces. I thought, in a way, *HOME* makes reference to utopias of escape, which people nurture inside their idolum. It is this utopia of escape that got magically illuminated when I saw *HOME*, especially at the moment when a projector started to throw light on a heterotopia made of white MDF. At that moment we can begin to get a sense of why *HOME* may be a carefully planned scheme in magical representation.

To me, *HOME* appears as an attempt to interpret dreams of an ideal land. It may also come across as an experiment in translating silences. Either way, dreams or silences are processes of a magical enterprise, aren't they? In *HOME* I got a glimpse of the lives of those minor but nevertheless critical worlds that do not figure in the ways in which we are usually asked to remember our collective utopias. Could one imagine *HOME* as a political work, because there are obvious political underpinnings to historical events like the Palestinian *Nakbah* and the Partition of the Indian Subcontinent? "What are your views on the idea of a nation state?" I once asked Sophie. **"Isn't a nation state a kind of utopia?"** she replied. Sophie's work *HOME* made me think, why is it that some of those who got through to the "land of the pure" still like to dream about a non-

space called home? And why those who dreamt about a promised land projected a nightmare onto the previous dwellers of that space?

Sami Said's father mentioned a dream of going back to his home where he could live like his memories. "I dreamt about a piece of land in my country and to re-live the memories. This was my ambition – to go back to my homeland." He still keeps a bottle filled with soil from home. He wants to be close to his dream. The "land of the pure" – why did the poet name his dream a land of the pure? Gaston Bachelard notes that space calls for action. But before action magical thinking is at work. It ploughs and mows. Was our poet magically spreading the contagion of a land of the pure to all those who came into contact with it? The dream appears in the mind of the poet but magically disappears when people start to live that dream.

Zahir and *batin*, appearance and disappearance, connote magical properties. Following magic, I started to think about black magic, too. Black magic draws on assumed bad things. From the "land of the pure" to the "Promised Land", I could sense a complete spectrum of magical enterprises at work. Do people who live in a promised land practise a certain kind of black magic on those who used to live there before? We don't know the extent to which our lives are influenced by magical dreams of ideal spaces. But we do know that we are, as Michael Taussig tells us, driven by a magic of the state, a magic that tries to morph a heterogeneous mass into a singular whole and induces us to dream of an eternal life for our homeland. Maybe that is why all nation states have a common slogan: "Long live xxx!", and we can insert the name of our ideal non-space. Sophie's work *HOME* subverts the magical introjection of a kitschy dream, the utopian state, by bringing out the intimate dreams of non-spaces, which perhaps we all cherish.

* * *

"What is the place of home in your world?" Sophie often asked this question. In the voices of the people with whom she has spoken, home rarely appears as a nation. Sometimes it takes the form of a city, on a few occasions a house is remembered as a whole structure, but on most occasions there are memories of corners and trees, animals and doors, windows and stones, things, objects, courtyards or *barahdaris*, walls and beds, alleys and wells, gardens

and, most often, people. In all these cases a magical law of mimetic sympathy seems to be guiding them.

Memories, dreams and remembrance merge. *HOME* feels like a Proustian rendition of space. Liana, who grew up in Jerusalem, says, "This was my first house. I was born in it. And I considered it as my first house. When I miss Jerusalem I miss that house." Does that house appear in her memory as it actually was? Maybe not, but following Walter Benjamin, I am bound to consider *HOME* not as a description of a space as it was, but as the person who once lived there remembers that space. *HOME* postulates a link between experience and reality.

HOME is a registry of miniaturized worlds and worlds like miniatures. Liana miniaturizes Jerusalem by recalling the image of the house where she was born: "When I miss Jerusalem I miss that house." Intizar miniaturizes his basti, Dibai, by projecting the image of an elephant with tilak painted on his forehead: "That image of the elephant is engraved on my mind and heart and I associate my basti, Dibai, with this image." Sami's father presents a miniature of his village, by saying, "I remember very small things." He remembers an olive tree, "I remember how my parents put us under the olive tree. The olive of Abu Hammed." "Perhaps art is essentially about looking. So maybe that is what I want to do – look and nothing else." That's how Sophie had once put her interpretation of the work of an artist to me. In her looking, she magically canalizes a diversity of experiences into patterns and moulds that we could share with each other. *HOME* strives to put us on a common emotional plane, thereby deliberately making the arbitrary lines of control redundant.

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- Said, Sami and Shana'a, Saeed (2008), transcript of conversation, Birzeit.

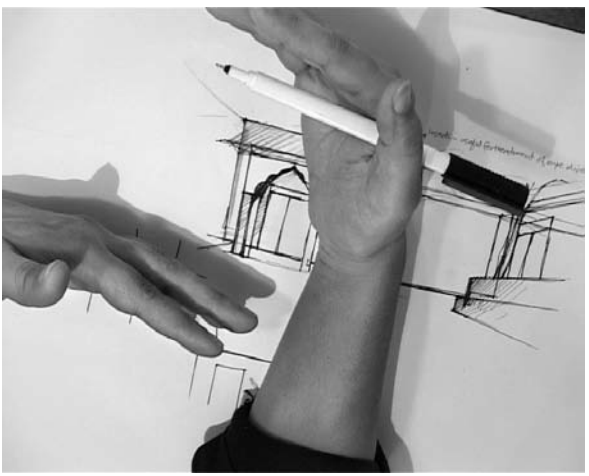
IV Why to remember, what to forget

Sophie Ernst

> Why should I always return to ... [my childhood in Palermo, in Adrogué, or in Montevideo]? It is a literary recourse; I could forget all that and keep on being, and all that would live within me although I do not name it.
>
> *Jorge Luis Borges*[1]

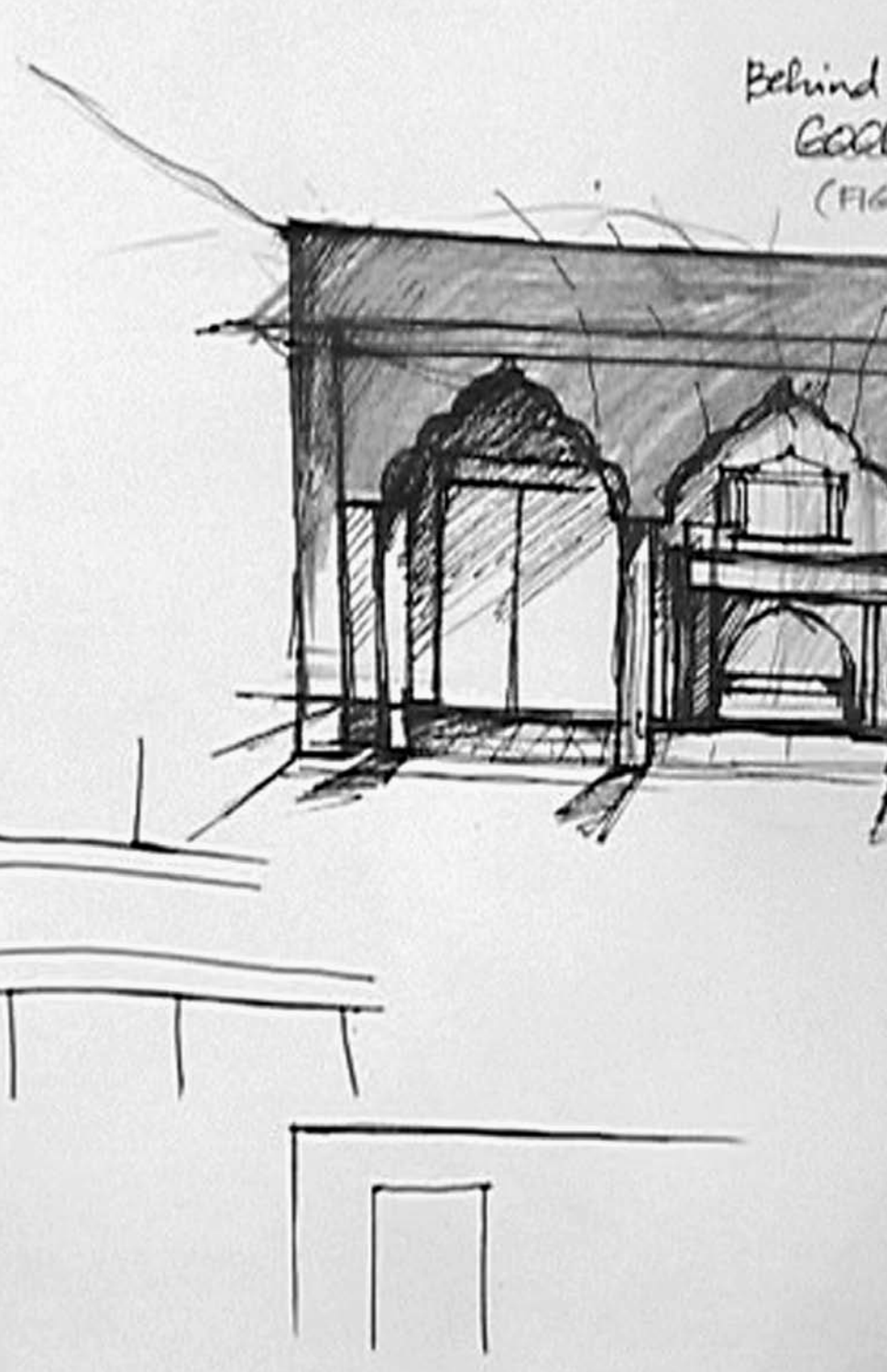
I did not grow up with the Indian Partition[2] or the Palestinian Nakbah.[3] The stories related to these events were not my stories. The first time I heard about Partition in detail must have been from my Pakistani friend Aisha when studying at Rijksakademie in 2001, in Amsterdam. She shared tales of her grandparents who, before Partition, had lived in a mansion as big as the former army barracks, which is now the Rijksakademie. The memory of her grandparents seemed to define her in some way, evoking vivid images of tiled floors and old aunts wearing fresh *motiya* flowers in their ears. In the years I lived in Pakistan (2003–2007), the idea of Partition became more tangible. Stories linked to places I visited. Places gained meaning. The stories made me look at the places differently.

I recorded the first conversation for the *HOME* project in 2006 in Islamabad: Mariam Suhail asked her grandfather to tell us about his childhood home in Old Delhi. He described it in detail and she drew beautifully. Over the course of six years I have approached numerous people, whom I met while teaching in Lahore, on a work trip to India or through a mention of a friend. Some names I found through in-depth research, others quite accidentally. Many people I approached declined out of various reasons, some agreed only after long dialogues, others I met for multiple recordings. In some cases I took the recordings of a conversation to another person



Mariam Suhail and her grandfather, Syed Wadood Ahmed Jilani, Islamabad, 2006. Video stills *(this page and overleaf)*. Images: Sophie Ernst.

who commented on it; we discussed what "home" meant, why places are remembered and how. For the recordings in Palestine and Israel I spent four intense months in the winters of 2008 and 2009 in Ramallah and Tel Aviv. What all conversations had in common was that I was fascinated by the artists' and writers' work and was genuinely curious about their ideas on memory and space. The meetings were often intimate and sometimes emotional. I hope to have done justice to the material that I so generously received.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Brick wall.

ER → Insects – useful for treatment of eye diseases

Storytelling

One aspect of *HOME* is about the question of how we remember, why we tell stories and what we choose to forget. There are many ways in which we are *dastangos* – storytellers. Stories can take the form of sculptures, or come to us in delicate lines of a drawing. The stories here bring together some of the conversations I have had over the last six years with artists and writers about their work and their memories of lost places.

For instance, during our conversation, Vera Tamari, a Ramallah artist, started drawing a stamp-size floor plan of a house in Jaffa. After one hour of erasing and enlarging the drawing, she felt touched and happy: she had lost the house of her grandparents during the Nakbah, but she had revisited it on paper. The drawing of the home became some proof of its existence. For me the drawings of the *HOME* project are documents of how we articulate the locations of our memory as stories.

Memory and nation

Houses are containers for memory. However, when houses are remembered in a collective nostalgic way, intimate experiences may become a sentimentally charged political tool. It is not always simply a private affair, memory can become a claim to place. When I met Salim Tamari in Ramallah, he explained how memories of everyday routines were lost as a result of the Nakbah. Nostalgia becomes the enemy of personal memories, it is a cause of forgetting. He writes elsewhere: "This search for 'normalcy' is viewed as the problem of a culture that has finally shifted from attempting to focus on an 'exemplary homeland' to coming to grips with a 'flesh and blood' homeland – that is to say, towards a shift from ideology to reality. This is a shift that requires the writer to depart from the illusions of a 'stolen homeland'." [4] This theme of routine and failed memory reappears during the conversations. Sami Said points out to his father how he grew up with the illusion of a stolen homeland. When he crosses the border and enters Israel, he is shocked to find out his enemy is not a "creature of darkness". He asks his father how he can reach his homeland – by memories and stories, or through facts and reality? For me, the question arises: are facts and realities not dependent on stories and memories? And whose stories become fact and why?

After seeing Zarina's work *Home is a Foreign Place*, I keenly wanted to record a conversation with her, but she declined and appeared to have strong reasons for it. She replied in an e-mail that 'Indian Muslims are still coping with the repercussions of the division of India and this is seldom acknowledged in discussions about Partition'.[5] I was persevering and we did speak two years later. In my mind, her works are an argument against (national) nostalgia; personal and ambivalent, but full of truth.

Zarina Hashmi talking to Sophie Ernst, Shanghai, 2007.
Photo: Kaif Ghaznavi.

Spatialization of experience

Notions like memory, identity and experience are instruments to articulate claims to space. Space is a fundamental resource and instruments for articulating claims to space share a deep relationship with any fight for space. The idea of shelter is an important issue in contemporary urban discourse. *HOME* takes up the idea of home and shelter by way of lived experience. Questions such as how does spatialization of experience transform claims to a space and what is the relationship between the idea of historical continuity and lived experience are key to how I approach my project. Over the years I have used the re-telling of experiences as stories to understand the various ambiguities embedded within claims to space. By being complex, ambivalent, contradictory and slippery, stories give us an opportunity to understand the various geographies of difference and similitude in a critical manner.

HOME in this sense is a reflection on local geographies. How do various social networks connect with each other through different levels of scale? Though deeply contested, the question of scale often enables me to gauge geographies. In the dialogues scale shifts idiosyncratically from descriptions of memories related to intimate personal spaces to regional and often national spaces. I try not to look at spaces from a set temporal category, but from the point of view of situations that people remember. *HOME* is an attempt to map space through memories. In this exercise I often find myself grappling with imaginary spatial worlds that are incoherent, inchoate and inconsistent, which is reflected in my installations. I construct the installations by juxtaposing imaginary spatial worlds with aural, visual and material elements.

HOME installations

The narrations I collect are used as raw material to sculpt, where stories are layered with drawings, drawings with projections, projections with objects and objects with space. The sculpture is a screen for stories, a screen that at the same time contradicts and amplifies, and makes narratives visible in their layers. The sculpture has the function of bringing the stories "back" into space and, as I walk past the projections listening to a story, it becomes like a physical experience – as if I've been there.

The stories of Partition and Nakbah were not my stories. Maybe my interest in these memories evolved from that image of motiya flower earrings at the army barracks in Amsterdam. I lent them my ear, and by retelling them again and again they have become a part of my history.

Organization of the material

The material of the *HOME* project presented here is divided into four sections. One part is made up of the photographic documentation of the *HOME* installations, which is spread throughout the book. "Reading" documentation of video installations is a tricky task, hence I have provided images of plain screens for the videos (the sculptures/models), video stills and details of the installations, as well as an overview.

The dialogues and conversations and commentaries to previous recordings I selected and edited are grouped into three

Sophie Ernst, *HOME*, 2010. Video sculptures. 401Contemporary, Berlin. Photo: Marcus Schneider.

Paper model, studio at Bildhauerwerkstatt, Berlin, 2008 *(upper)*. Photo: Sophie Ernst.
Sophie Ernst, *HOME*, 2010. Video sculptures. 401Contemporary, Berlin *(lower)*. Photo: Marcus Schneider.

sections, starting with one on storytelling, in which Aamer Hussein discusses why we tell stories; how our routes and roots, if not retold, will be forgotten. Intizar Husain speaks of the essence of memory, which, despite Rashid Rana's attempts, cannot be visualized. Kamila Shamsie points out how fiction, though not necessarily correct factually, can be full of truth, and how stories replace recollections of experiences in our mind. Storytelling through drawing is what Nikhil Chopra does. He describes a loss of continuity and the longing for a lifestyle connected to a space out of reach.

The second section looks at the political aspects of memory. Yazid Anani points out the historic and social context of architecture in memory. His comments relate to the dialogue between Sami Said and his father Saeed Shana'a. In this dialogue Sami articulates a shift in experience of space when confronted with a reality that clashes with the stories. Liana Badr sees architecture as a container for memories, which are monuments to a nation. Nazmi Al-Ju'beh's comments on Liana Badr's story highlight the clash between lived experience and old Jerusalem as a memory-museum. The last conversation in this section relates to the first dialogue of the third section. Salim Tamari speaks of how a break in continuity affects the memory of a people.

The third section explores the experience of (dis)continuity. Through drawing, Vera Tamari and Tania Nasir re-claim the memory of their grandparents' house. Zarina and Senan Abdelqader both articulate the complexities of shifting identities through invisible breaks in the continuity of a society. Gulzar Haider describes his experience of a sacral space, which may well form the basis for continuity of cultural heritage.

Not recorded in this book, Sami Michael proposed during my visit to him the formula of "one nation for one person". If we were to see each single individual as the denominator of a social group, could we dismiss all questions of belonging and identity?

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3 The Nakbah means literally "catastrophe", and refers to the displacement in 1948 of the Palestinian population.
4 Tamari, Salim (2008), "Bourgeois Nostalgia and the Abandoned City", in *Mountain against the Sea: Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 57–70.
5 Email to Hammad Nasar, 10 May 2007.

Sophie Ernst, *HOME*, 2012. Installation view at Bothy Gallery. Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield. Photo: Jonty Wilde.

Storytelling

One afternoon Patras and I picked up Intizar Husain from his house in the centre of Lahore and took him to Rashid Rana's studio on the outskirts of the city, towards Raiwind. Rashid Rana had suggested a *HOME* dialogue between Intizar Husain and himself. They started out sitting at Rashid's desk looking at a large computer screen, on which Rashid was browsing and piecing together hundreds of images of *Krishan Nagar*[1] that he had collected for one of his works. The aim was to simulate Meerut or Dibai according to Intizar Husain's description. The recording was interrupted again and again by electricity cuts. We ended up resettling to the sofa in the lounge, talking in the dark until the camera battery died down. What I recall most vividly from this conversation was Intizar's reluctance to link his memory to images as well as the strong image Intizar's memory created in my mind of a segregated space and, in particular, of Hindu and Muslim architecture.

A few years later I recorded several commentaries on the *HOME* conversations. When showing the clip of Intizar and Rashid to Aamer Hussein and, on a separate occasion, to Kamila Shamsie, the conversation soon centred on memory and stories in relation to artistic craft. Both pointed out an interesting twist. Although we tell or write stories because we remember, the process of noting down memory codifies it, and we eventually return to this record rather than to "the facts behind it," as Aamer Hussein puts it. Although Aamer suggests, "amnesia is a sin," there is no way around forgetting.

Kamila Shamsie ends with talking about craft, saying that it makes us look at "memory in a heightened poetic sense". Kamila seems to be interested in how the next generation will pick up memories. She suggests, for instance, that for a Pakistani born to Indian parents India is the ultimate fiction, not a place of nostalgia. I cannot pinpoint the place of nostalgia in Nikhil Chopra's thoughts, but talking to him made me question my own views on nostalgia and forgetfulness because he "deconstructs" nostalgia in his work in a way I have never attempted.

Nikhil Chopra is a fantastic draughtsman. During our conversation, a detailed landscape appeared within no time before my camera. Earlier we had looked at his photographic work from a

trip to Kashmir – black-and-white landscapes featuring him posing in a costume reminiscent of colonial times. Nostalgia for an imagined grander time is juxtaposed with critical reflection of how he was raised to conceive of (political) space in a way that ignored the reality of those being marginalized.

Nikhil Chopra drew the summer home his grandparents had owned in Kashmir, where his grandfather used to follow a daily routine. For Nikhil, the act of drawing seems to be a crucial link to the memories of his grandfather. Nikhil could not pick up the routines in that particular space. Is this break in continuity a reason why he feels a sense of romance has been lost? "The past is lost," says Kamila Shamsie. The question remains: what do we want to remember and how do we shape that memory?

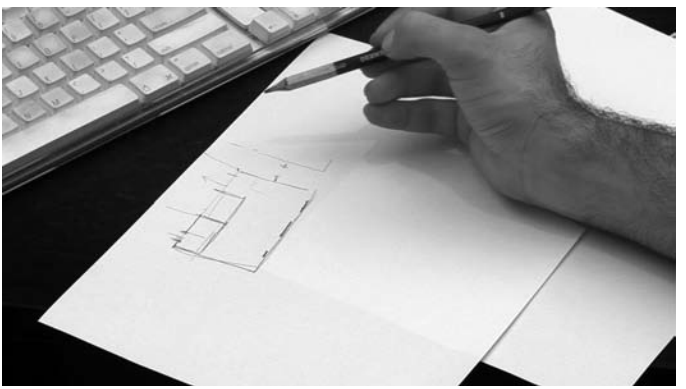
NOTES

1 Former Hindu neighbourhood of Lahore.

Like leaves in a flood

RASHID RANA/INTIZAR HUSAIN

(Recorded: Lahore, 2007)



Conversation between Rashid Rana and Intizar Husain, Lahore, 2007. Video still. Image: Asif Khan.

INTIZAR: I came here in the last months of 1947, perhaps in October or November – I was probably on the last train from Meerut. At that point rioting had subsided, though the danger was surely felt on the train. Trains were still being attacked, but the intensity wasn't the same. For me it was a spontaneous action, not a premeditated plan. Maybe it was a subconscious thing and was fated that way; I had to come even though I had no ideas or plans, I just came.

I had completed my education when this Partition incident happened. In Meerut such an atmosphere was created that suddenly people came out of their houses and palaces and headed towards Pakistan, in a surge-

like flood! When a big personality migrates, that is a big event. But I was like a leaf shed from a tree; like twigs and leaves flow along, I flowed on to Lahore and stayed there.

RASHID: ***The house where you lived, its map or the way it looked … do you remember any of that?***

INTIZAR: I can explain the map – the thing is I imagine the basti, but how should I articulate it? It's like reading a beautiful poem, and then you start verbalizing it in prose. So in actuality, it was an ordinary basti, like any other basti in the Subcontinent. Yet now that I look back, I realize that in all this time, since my childhood and adolescence there until now, I have been longing for it constantly. The image in my mind – that basti has greatly transformed. Now that I recount the basti, my imagination might have added to it.

I realize that the basti was most strange, it was eons away from the modernity we breathe in big cities. At that time modernity had begun, but there it was absent. No new conveyances – Ikkay, bull-carts, ***rath*****, these were the modes of conveyance. One conveyance that still seems very royal is the elephant ride. The elephant was a rare sight. To me, it seems that the elephant over-powered the basti! I'm wondering when I would have seen the elephant. When** ***Ram Chander ji's bara'at*** **left in the Ramlila season, when the processions left the elephant would appear. On its forehead were markings with** ***gerua*** **– entire patterns in which three portraits would be visible: Raja Ram Chander ji,** ***Laxman ji*****, and in the middle,** ***Sita ji*****. This association with**

Amnesia is a sin

AAMER HUSSEIN

(Recorded: London, 2011[1])

Purdah and modernity

I never had this clear sense of purdah separation, because it had all gone by the 1910s or 1920s. In the house that my mother grew up in I had no sense of there being a feminine or masculine space, but there must have been. The rooms in which the men entertained were furnished in a more Western style and the books you saw there were in English. Perhaps you would have had something like an animal skin. I just remember these very Victorian cabinets. The other places were meant to be the family quarters. They were traditional and open to the air. You had a sense of lightness there, which I always associated with tradition, while heaviness and Victorianness I always associated with colonial education and a colonial world.

Two tehzeeb

I know who is speaking, it's Intizar Husain *[chuckles]*. I could tell from the first line. Intizar Husain has got a particular way of evoking home. Let's continue and see what he has to say … *[listens to video clip]*

What does the elephant seem to represent to so many of them? Is it the past, is it tradition, or the incredible exotic nature of what has been lost? It seems to be the weight of the past – the monumental nature of the past. I have been on an elephant for a family wedding at the age of 13. I didn't find it terribly exciting, it was just something to do as a kid *[laughs]* – you just sit on top of

an elephant. What you are more worried about is that you are dressed up in these amazing brocade clothes and have strings of jewellery around your neck.

I think Intizar does make a very big rhetorical statement about *Muharram* one day and Ramlila the next, which is probably quite true for him.[2] As if there is an awareness that two different areas are being traversed. Going to the Ramlila means leaving home, as it were. But wasn't there a level at which home was a combination of the two cultures? I think that if you talk to my mother about it, it was an easy flow between one and the other. Later on when things were divided and lines were drawn, one began to see these as combinations of culture. Did one really separate them at that time as belonging to either culture, to one *tehzeeb* and another tehzeeb? Over there [in India], that sort of culture is very much in the house and part of everything, you have throw-away references to *Krishna* and *Radha*, which children don't even recognize as such. In my mother's very Muslim family, which comes from Kathiawar, a lot of the songs in their weddings are full of Hindu imagery. Sometimes we have a great time translating and seeing how much this imagery has seeped into everyday music and customs, and yet they wouldn't have considered themselves in any way syncretic.

Raja Inder, the king of fairies, is a Hindu god, but in Muslim folklore he is the king of fairies. I am sure children are still reading about him and if you talk to a vernacular-speaking child and ask who Raja Inder is, they would not know he is a Hindu god, they would say this is the king of fairyland, quite simply. Certainly, there is a syncretic

elephants has been engraved in my mind and heart, and I associate this with my basti, Dibai. Ram Chander ji's bara'at and all the Ramlila processions passed by my house. Beyond my house the Muslim neighbourhood ended and the world of Hindus began. Beyond that was an entire bazaar, Hindu houses and a *mandir*. When I imagine myself in my house, I feel as if I'm standing amidst two cultures. I still think that way. I think I am amidst two traditions, and from both I acquire something.

RASHID: ***We were looking for similar images [flips through images of Krishan Nagar on the computer]. You mentioned a courtyard and beneath the courtyard a banair. We have taken a few pictures of some houses, they might be really different to the image in your mind, or the way it was, but even if there's a one- or two-per cent resemblance we can change it.***

INTIZAR: No, this is not similar at all ...

RASHID: ***Not at all?***

(These images and overleaf): Houses in Krishan Nagar, Lahore, 2007. Photos: Studio of Rashid Rana.

INTIZAR: This is quite colourful. I can explain the plan of my house. The main gate, which opened into the street, had two stone *chaukis*. These platforms were made in blue – two chaukis on the main gate, one on the right and one on the left, elevated ones. When you entered, there was a *dheori*, a hallway, after that another dheori and a door in the middle; after that was the *sehen*, and right in front the *dallan* was visible, which is also called the veranda. That was the main seating area. Members of our household would sit there and guests would be seen sitting in the dallan. During the rainy season beds would be placed in

celebration of a figure who is ambiguously rooted.

I suppose you can look at it in two ways. You get one side saying that this [combination of two cultures] was an illusion, it was something that was constructed for a particular purpose. It had to do with the rise of nationalism and the sense of themselves as Indians (whatever else was to happen later). Some people say "Before that lie centuries of separation, different practices and a mosaic, rather than a melting pot." I think the second view tends to be quite blinkered and I don't think it takes into account the truth of the region. I'm surprised by the extent to which people have pretty clear recall when speaking about places they left behind within the Subcontinent.

Roots

Memory becomes fiction only because it is codified, or becomes film and is codified and recorded for ever. But once you have made that record, whether a mental record or a written or visual one, you tend to return to the record rather than to the facts behind it.

I wouldn't err on the side of saying that a lot of what is remembered is reasonably true factually, it has just got the colours of memory added to it. It is like taking a black-and-white photograph or a monochrome and putting in colours that are brighter than they actually were, but which are nevertheless an emotional record or reflection of the way those colours were. I don't think it is a desire to deceive, or a desire to make people feel that what was lost was greater than what it actually was. But the memory of that loss makes it greater. That is a bit of a paradox. More than anything it is a loss of traditional ways. Within one country that loss

of traditional ways is perhaps less radical or less disorienting than if you leave them behind in another country [India] that has acquired another political name.

When it comes to memory, Intizar Husain would be talking about the most conventional or classical paradise. He is trying to reclaim a land that in some odd way seems untainted by colonial colour. He said we had coexisted and this is how we continued and these were our narratives, so you'll hear about the *Mahabharat*, *Ramayana*, and you will hear about *Masnavi* or a *kissa*, *kahani*, *dastangoi*,[3] and so on, but you won't hear about the fact that he probably also had to study his Shakespeare and Hardy, that narrative has been erased. That, too, is something that I as a writer occasionally feel tempted to do. When I am producing a narrative of that time, from time to time I feel like wiping out the fact that there was this colonial interference, I look for niches where it did not exist, and you find those niches. You also find a lot where it did.

A metaphor that I was coming up with over and over again is my Western-educated *Nana*'s sitting room – having heavy furniture, cabinets and books in both languages – a lot of books were, in fact, orientalist works – *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* or *Simon Ockley*'s *The History of the Saracens*, that sort of thing. But in the rest of the house – my grandmother couldn't have given a toss about who the English were or what they did. This sitting room was a space which was not just not colonized, it wasn't neo-colonial either. It was a space allowing incursion of foreign stuff, because in order to be intellectually well equipped you were expected to know foreign stuff. I was wondering to what extent they were intellectuals,

the dallan to sleep on. It was difficult to sleep in the rooms during the rainy season – the dallan was the *markaz*, the centre.

RASHID: ***Was the dheori darkish, as you can see here? Or something like this?***

INTIZAR: These are very modern dheoris, it was wider, this is too narrow. I think there is no similarity with the houses you are showing me at all. Maybe it became something else in my imagination, gone too far off I think *[chuckles].*

RASHID: ***There must be some resemblance to the houses in Krishan Nagar ... maybe to the Hindu basti.***

INTIZAR: Yes, I've seen the houses in Krishan Nagar. When I came to this city first, I lived in Krishan Nagar. The houses there are built according to Hindu architecture. The

Hindu houses in our basti were more or less similar; the sehen was very tight and small, and if seen from above would seem very dark. The houses in Krishan Nagar are that type. Our sehen was vast and brightly lit. The Muslim style was apparent – there was a similar disparity in the mandirs and *masjids* there. Our masjid was very small, but there was a feeling of vastness there – open areas etc., and there was an apparent sense of tightness in the mandirs. These are the salient features of Muslim and Hindu architecture. Our roof was exactly level with theirs. I would stand on my roof, and from there could go onto a second roof and then to a third roof. These were roofs of Hindu houses. I used to leap over roof tops, and where these roofs ended the mandir would be visible in front.

The noise in our basti was the sounds of birds, of *khertaals* and *sungs* being played, of the *manjeera*, the noise of Ramlila or Muharram processions – *taashas* and *dhols* being drummed. Such sounds. None of the voices and sounds embedded in my heart and mind are new sounds, not the sounds of radio or television, which were much later inventions. Radio was probably there in Delhi. Even the sounds of motor cars or a train's whistle I never heard in my childhood. Very few kinds of sounds – they weren't that diverse. For example, when I think of *barsaat*, the voice of the *koel* seems to overwhelm the entire basti, or the sound of a peacock that cries from somewhere outside resonates through it. Traffic commotion is very new for me, it came later. This noise has its own standing, since it has been in our experience for some time now. This is clamorous noise in which I breathe now!

nationalist intellectuals, or cosmopolitan. Did they have a sense of nation? Yes, it was India and continued to be.

I think it is this generation that feels slightly disgruntled with any nation at all. The narratives, almost without exception, seem to imply each of these homes that were spoken of had a centuries-long history, certainly decades of history. But that cannot be the only narrative. Aren't there many of us in the Subcontinent today who can lay claim to roots that are very long and distant and deep and yet have moved around? That particular last flush of colonial times was a time when people moved a lot, leaving homes behind and settling elsewhere. So, on the one hand, there is post-Independence romanticism about roots and, on the other hand, the reality of that time; yes, people were rooted in places, but they often felt that several other places were equally theirs.

Routes

Remembering is the reason we write or tell stories: in my case it is a response to something I see, something I sense that has been left behind and has not been told. It has to be recorded otherwise it will disappear. Can I give you a tangible example? I remember going to see *Qurratulain Hyder* after having been to the *Jamia Millia* bookshop to buy some Urdu books. She said, "Have you read *Anis Kidwai*'s *Memoir of Partition*?" and I said, "No, I haven't." She said, "Have you heard of it?" "No, I haven't." You know, Urdu literature has these huge gaps in it, perhaps a narrative told in India is not conveyed to Pakistan in quite the same way. My brother-in-law, who is Delhi born and bred, had taken me to the *Purana Qila* and various other places,

but there was no narrative about anything except *Mughal* and post-Mughal history. Of course, Anis Kidwai's book is largely about the huge migrant camps that were set up there. I barely knew about it and had not been able to place it within a particular physical structure. That immediately triggered a story I wanted to write.

Qurratulain Hyder told me a story I did not know. It would have been very different had I not known the stories the way she told them to me. I think amnesia is a sin – that is probably what separates the person who wants to tell stories in any form at all and those who do not. I personally cannot know where I stand without knowing where I came from. That "I" becomes the "I" of a writer and becomes the eye of a writer as well. If that journey then becomes mythical, it is still a journey with more routes – R O U T E S – than the journey one thought one had followed. That is where history comes in. It is another version of the canonical narrative, it has more slip-pages, and those slippages are not just about leaving for one reason or another. It has to do with many complexities, with individual versions of history rather than standardized ones.

Where is the line between nostalgia and memory? I tend to see [a writer's] memory as not being nostalgic because, if you are trying to recreate, you are trying to immerse yourself in someone else's experience, but then find something within your own psyche that responds to something you do not consciously know but that you have to re-imagine and reconstruct for yourself. I have tried to find the links between my own experience and what has been passed on to me and to see the interface of it.

RASHID: ***So we've tried to make the dheori wider, does it have some resemblance to what you have in your mind?***

INTIZAR: I'm recalling the banair, the parapets of the house – they were high and some bird would come and sit, either a pigeon or an eagle, or monkeys would dawdle about – there were a lot of monkeys in our basti. When they broke in to our house, the monkeys would queue up on our parapet, like part of our clan!

RASHID: ***Yes, I've heard these stories from my father as well.***

INTIZAR: They weren't even afraid, they would come close, snatch a *roti* from children or the bowl on the *ghurra* and dash off – I'm eating food in the sehen and a monkey comes and takes off with the rotis in front of me *[chuckles]*.

There were certain things they enjoyed doing. The *dupatta* was their most beloved possession – they would take women's dupattas without any hesitation, and then they'd sit on the parapet and show off while tearing it into shreds!

***Ghurounchas* were also an important part of our sehen. Ghurras would be placed on these stands, with clean water, especially in summers. A *surahi* would be placed next to it. Occasionally you'd see a garland of motiya or *baila* flowers. That was a part of the sehen as well. Other than their obvious appearance, the dheori had a purpose – at that time there was no concept of women going to the bazaar to shop. Those were times of observing strict purdah. So when the hawkers came, they'd have all sorts of items**

you would buy: *gotta, kinary*, cloth like *lutha*, *mulmul*, or silks, all this while sitting on your doorstep. They'd keep coming, sit at the entrance and show their cloths inside.

RASHID: ***Maybe the entrance was somewhat similar to this one? Or maybe not, this one is quite different?***

Conversation between Rashid Rana and Intizar Husain, Lahore, 2007. Video still. Image: Asif Khan.

INTIZAR: Yes, these doors bear some resemblance to the doors I think of in my basti – we are seeing a very literal rendition of what it looked like.

RASHID: ***What would be a poetic rendition of the dheori?***

INTIZAR: The dheori was a *hud-e-fasil* between the outside and inside worlds, like a middle ground – in a proverbial sense an intermediate, meaning that the inside of the house was distanced from the

No sense of that

I live very close to Lord's cricket ground. The other day a young man came along, stood there and spoke to me in Hindi, *"Yeh log kaun hain?"*[4] They were the Queen's guards, I told him. *"Yahan pey Rani hain, England ki Rani hain?"*[5] He had come here to watch cricket. He is international and cosmopolitan, he can take a plane to go to a foreign country to watch cricket! I said to him, "Do you know that there was also a Rani called Victoria once upon a time, who supposedly ruled India?" He said, *"Nahi pata – kutch Nana batate the ke kutch tha uss zamane main."*[6] I asked him if he hadn't seen all the buildings and statues. He just laughed. So his narrative was a completely different one, he was probably just a young, semi-educated Indian, but had no sense of that. *"Yahan pey Rani hai?"*[7] I said, *"Malka,"*[8] and he said, *"Malka kya hoti hai?"*[9] So I said, *"Maharani acha London ki Maharani."*[10] He didn't know Queen Elizabeth II existed *[laughs]*, except on a stamp.

Nostalgia

The question that you have to ask yourself all the time is to what extent we become modern because of colonialism, and to what extent we become modern because of a reaction – an adverse reaction – to colonialism. And the truth lies squarely between the two. Possibly colonization allows you to see where you have been left behind, and on the other hand, anti-colonialism makes you realize that unless you study their ways and fight them from the inside you are not going to succeed. For me, the great nostalgia is what would we have been like – and I say "we" over here – had we been allowed to develop [without colonial impositions] like Japan or Thailand. What would have happened then?

NOTES

1 Recorded by Taha Mehmood.
2 Muharram is a Muslim (Shia) and Ramlila a Hindu religious festival.
3 Various Indian storytelling traditions.
4 *Who are these people?*
5 *Does England have a queen?*
6 *I don't know, my grandfather used to tell me there was something in those times.*
7 *Do they have a queen here?*
8 *Queen.*
9 *What is a Malka?*
10 *Queen. OK! London's queen.*

outside world because of the dheori.

RASHID: ***As you mentioned in the beginning, your mind is very imaginative, and whatever is in your mind cannot be visualized and maybe I cannot illustrate it precisely; but knowing that these things would be important for us, you might explain, even if…***

INTIZAR: For example, there was a small room, our grandmother used to say that Beecha lives there – some supernatural creature – like a witch! It was a dark room where all possessions were stacked up. They used to admonish us from going near it – we wouldn't go near it because we didn't know what was in there! The houses had certain mysterious rooms. Sometimes they would say that a snake came out of the *kothri*, the rooms for keeping rice. Our grandmother used to say that an old snake lived here who didn't disturb anyone. Since the floor was unpaved, there would be wave-like marks, so in my mind is the memory that we had lots of snakes in our house.

Along with that she used to say that beneath the house was treasure. A huge pot full of golden *ashrafis* was buried in the ground and would move, causing a clinking *chhannakna*. Grandmother used to say, "I heard the chhannakna of the ashrafis," and the pot had moved from one place to another. We weren't supposed to pay heed to that sound, because wealth asks for sacrifice and sometimes a voice beckons, "Take this wealth in place of your son, take these riches in place of your son." Those who got trapped in the voices saying, "There is wealth under your house, dig it out," for

no particular reason their son would die. I associate legends like these with the house.

RASHID: ***These are really interesting stories and I think they're beyond my capability of representation...***

INTIZAR: There is this proverb ...

RASHID: ***OK, so the hall you described earlier...***

INTIZAR: There was this *kungni* there, stray pigeons would come and sit on the ridge. My father used to tell us not to touch these pigeons, because they were dirty. My father would say that these pigeons were possessed, there is some *Syed Buzurg* and they are his followers.

RASHID: ***You spoke about the Hindu basti and your house in a very unique position, but what about the rest of the Muslim houses and all the other common legends? They all had Hindu roots?***

INTIZAR: Yes, of course, the influence of Hindu festivals – this was a practice amongst Muslims as well. About some trees ...

RASHID: ***So this has always been there ... you've taken it to another level.***

INTIZAR: It was said that there was this *imlee* tree in our neighbourhood, but there were no imlee growing on it! In the courtyard was a *neem* tree, it was said that they should wed!

***[chuckles]* Hence the neem was wed to the imlee tree, and my grandmother used**

Past is *lost*

KAMILA SHAMSIE/
TAHA MEHMOOD

(Recorded: London, 2011)

House and home

KAMILA: I have no sense of an ancestral home. My mother was three at Partition and half her family stayed on one side, the other half went. Every year she would go to visit Rampur. When she talks about this one house in Rampur, my Nani's house, it is with amazing vividness. Clearly, for her it is the idealized space and the idealized home. She says she still dreams about it, but to me it's a fiction. She went to visit two years ago, having not been there for a while and, of course, it's all quite different and crumbling. To her it's the lost past, but to me it's just the past, and, well, the past *is* lost.

It is interesting what that does generationally. If you grow up, as I did, in a house where there is this sense of the homes on the other side, you grow up very aware of this loss your parents, your grandparents, had, but it's an entirely abstract thing.

TAHA: *You say it's fiction – why do you think it's fiction?*

KAMILA: I don't think it's fiction, but I think of it in the way I would think of fiction, because I've heard of it through stories. I must have seen images of the house, still my memories of it are not of these images but of my mother talking about it. This way it enters the realm of story. Of course, when I say fiction it's with my own understanding of fiction as something containing truth.

You know, my earliest memories of Karachi are around the houses. *Makan* always seems to me to sound more cold than house. But house – you have a song like "A house is not a home without you"; behind that is the idea that a house is usually a home. I think the more theoretically engaged you get with the idea of home, you more you start to see a distinction. When you talk to people about home in everyday conversation you'll find the two words become synonymous. Why do we use home and house as synonyms?

TAHA: *Do we?*

KAMILA: Very often, like "I'm going home," "Where's your home?" "Karachi," "But where?", "Oh, you know, on this street." We understand it literally, certainly in everyday conversation. There are all the ways in which, metaphorically, we talk about the home as a private space. As soon as you leave the house, you leave home, you are entering into a more public arena where there is something about the *ghar*, which has to do with the intimacy of familiar life, is not there.

If you look at a house from the outside there is an awareness of it as someone else's home. You sometimes walk by and say, "Oh, I'd hate to live there," or it may seem like it is not letting in much light, or that there's something garish or forbidding about it and you think, "Oh, my God, what must it be like to live inside there?" I think it is very hard, once a house becomes inhabited, once you're aware of it as a space that's inhabited, to see it as just a structure. And you do start to collapse house/home, because even if you don't know anything about who is living there, the imagination starts working. You start to pick up clues about what you assume about people,

to say that after that there was an abundance of imlee in it, the tree flourished and became lush.

RASHID: ***Brilliant! I don't even have a picture of an imlee tree here, but this is most interesting. I will show you more images of the city.***

INTIZAR: All right, show.

RASHID: ***You told me earlier that there was a halwaai. Was the bazaar like this?***

INTIZAR: This seems very busy ... and these *Bata* sign boards!

RASHID: ***Yes, this a very modern bazaar, but we can change this a bit ...***

INTIZAR: There was a milk vendor's shop near our place – it had no resemblance to this. See, here they have air-coolers, but at that time they had *khus ki tatty*.

RASHID: ***They had what?***

INTIZAR: Khus ki tatty – curtains of *khus*. You know khus, it has a pleasant odour. In summer, panels of khus would be placed before rooms and water sprayed on it.

RASHID: ***This is the overall image that has formed in your mind, but is there any other vivid memory in your mind specially related to migration? What is the image you get of the time you left that place and migrated? Was there any emotional or touching moment for you when all of this was happening?***

INTIZAR: No, no emotional moment.

RASHID: ***So you didn't go back to see that house for the last time, the house where you spent your childhood?***

INTIZAR: At that point I didn't miss it, at that time I didn't think I was leaving forever. In my view, a lot of people didn't think they were leaving forever. The atmosphere was such that they had to leave, no one thought then that the country had become separated in a way that once we left it would be impossible to come back! In fact, some people even left the keys to their house with their neighbours.

When I realized that I had no longer any relationship with that land, that is when I started missing the house. That house kept coming in my dreams, I would dream that I was roaming about in the basti heading towards my home, but before I got there I would wake up. I am walking through lanes, but when I approach the house I wake up, I'm unable to reach it.

RASHID: ***You don't see your house, before you see the image of the house the dream ends?***

INTIZAR: For me, that basti, now that I've left, is paradise lost! Not *arz-e-maood*, but paradise lost.

RASHID: ***So you've come from paradise lost, to paradise promised!***

INTIZAR: Yes, to paradise promised, but the stage of paradise regained hasn't come.

because of the kind of house they have. How high are the walls? – basic – you start with that. Can you look inside at all? Is there obvious opulence to it? Where is it located? You're starting to create fictions around a place, about the people within it or the people who built it.

TAHA: *And what if you start to extrapolate that and to think of nations as house and home, what happens then?*

KAMILA: The nation always seems to be a much more flimsy and artificial construct, because the nation may try to pretend that it is the home or that it is a singular entity, but it never is. Perhaps the more you are within a nation the more you see the artificiality, and perhaps the more you are within a house the more you see the home in it. Possibly.

I think nations try very hard to create the sense of home, and in some way the success of a nation may depend on its ability to create that fiction very effectively – this is home to all you 190 million people!

Truth or fact

KAMILA: This guy – I think he's quite a poet: *"jab main peeche muur ke dekhta hoon…"* [1]

TAHA: *Intizar Husain.*

KAMILA: Intizar Husain! There you see – you can tell, it feels very writerly, there's almost a sense of not being surprised by what he is saying. This is someone who has thought it through. I didn't know it was Intizar Husain, but it felt very different because of the way he uses language. It is almost like a little essay or story.

The question you always have to ask with a writer is how much of this is their memory of the place and how much might be their memory of the last thing

they wrote about the place. Almost any writer will tell you that if they've ever used something even partly autobiographical in a piece of fiction they have written, later they are unable to recall what really happened and what was fiction. In some way memory gets overlaid by the thing you wrote, and you start to lose sense of which part you invented. Memory is always a kind of invention, but there was a point when you knew very clearly what you remembered and what you were filling in or making up when you were writing. As time goes by you lose that sense.

TAHA: *Why is it then when we hear an account we search for the truth?*

KAMILA: Truth or fact?

TAHA: *Are they different things?*

KAMILA: Totally different things. Fiction is full of truth. What he is saying is full of truth – it may not be fact. Truth is also about an emotional or psychological verity. The interesting thing about memory is what we choose to remember and how we choose to remember it. You can put lots of different memories together and be surprised by the extraordinary distinctions.

When I was researching *Burnt Shadows*, I read a lot of survivor testimonies of the night of 9 August, 1945, the day the bomb fell on Nagasaki. I also read a lot of historic accounts: at this time this happened, at this time the air-raid sirens went off. Those were quite well documented. When it came to people's memories, I got, "It was really sunny," knowing that it was really cloudy. Of course, it turns out that the day was both, it started sunny and then turned very cloudy. When they start talking about the weather it becomes about psychology. It was this beautiful clear day and then this awful thing happened, or it was this grey cloudy day, which was a kind of premonition. And you wouldn't say, "Oh, he's lying," or "We distrust him because he told us it was sunny when we know it was cloudy." He may not be factually accurate, but there is a truth coming out, which is also a truth about how memory works. To talk about factual accuracy with memory seems sort of pointless. Fact is far less interesting than truth, to begin with.

So the particular way Intizar Husain was talking about the place he lived in was already a little out of time. Modernity, which may have been there in other places, was absent. And you wonder, was this as true as he is saying or is he filtering memory in a heightened poetic sense? Not that I was distrusting what he was saying, but there was a sense of craft which made you focus less on the facts as facts. Something very important and essential is coming through in the way he is remembering, particularly how these two cultures made him and still make him. When I hear that, I hear a complaint against the state of Pakistan as it became, and the cultures it won't allow official space for. There are many things in your memory, what you choose to hold on to, what you choose to tell another person. That has a great deal to do with the present. Past and present is far more often a conversation about past and continuity, isn't it?

TAHA: *A contrast of experience of time, would you say?*

KAMILA: A contrast of experience of time – this was the world then, this is the world now. We are less interested in saying, "This was that way before, it still is that way." That strikes us less than the things that have changed.

I am struck by how incredibly familiar much of it sounds to me. When you grow up in Karachi, you hear these voices and stories all the time. My interest is in the next generation and their connection to these stories of their parents or grandparents, and to this space on the other side. Of course, if you grow up in Pakistan, India is the ultimate fiction. There is always this disconnect between the idealized space you hear your grandparents talking about, and the space of India. There is very little overlap between the two – we see them as two completely distinct stories. The first one is completely decimated, nothing remains of that nostalgic space of paradise lost. There's nothing of that.

NOTES

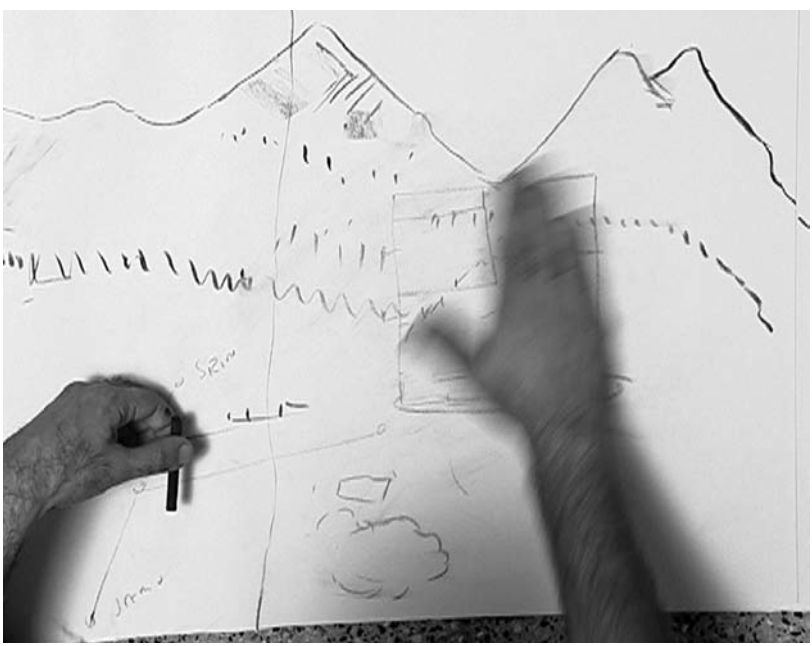
1 When I turn back and look.

The sense of romance has been lost

NIKHIL CHOPRA

(Recorded: Bombay, 2007)

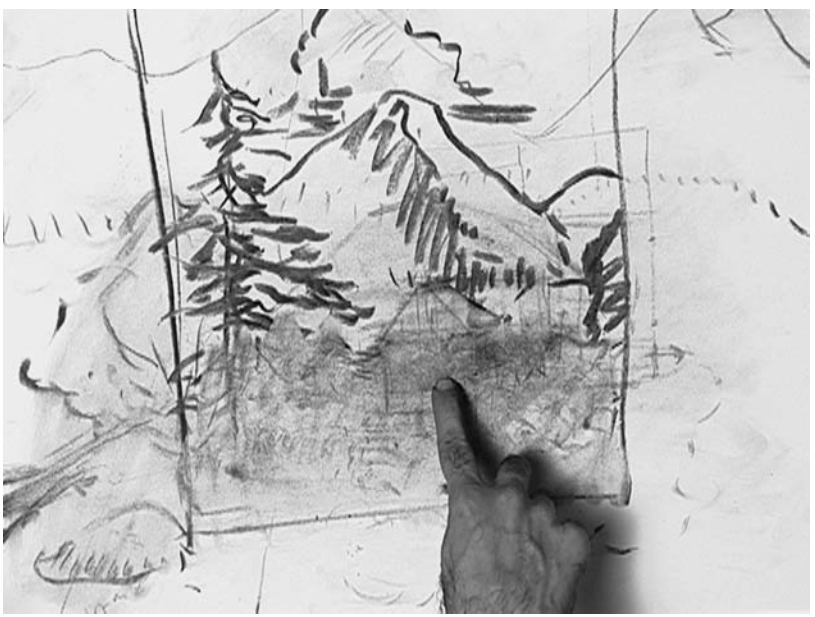
My family came to Kashmir in the mid-1800s. The *Maharaja* was recruiting a lot of Hindu executives to govern and run the state for him. At that point he was quite clear about how the state should be governed and, of course, there was no trust put in the local population. Naturally, naturally for him, he recruited a lot of people from Punjab. That was the time when my great-grandfather's father came.

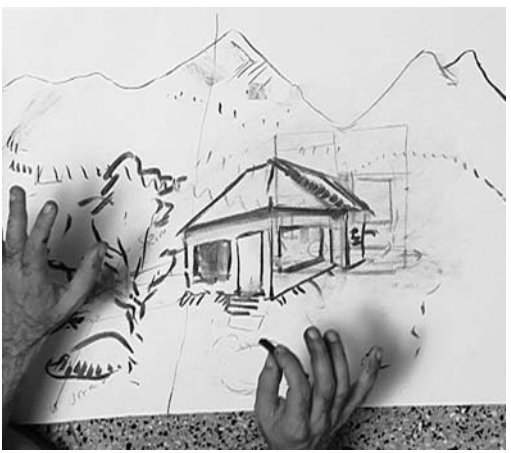


(This page and next pages): Conversation between Sophie Ernst and Nikhil Chopra, Bombay, 2007. Video stills. Images: Manu Anand.

They moved from Akhalghar, which is in Pakistan, in Punjab. And because they served the Maharaja they were able to educate their children, to send them abroad. My great-grandfather got trained as an engineer and came back to Kashmir to build roads.

There was this deep sense of belonging to Kashmir. These huts were called *Chopra* huts *[points at the drawing]*. You might ask someone in the market place where the Chopra huts were, or if you were writing a letter to me you would write to Nikhil Chopra, Chopra Huts, Pahalgam in Kashmir. It was like one's own little privileged piece of land, right on the river. There are not too many other houses on the river, you cannot build there because of regulations.





If we zoom in a little closer, this was the house. This was the main door, there was a little set of wooden staircases that went down, sort of sloped down. The house was on a mud plinth. This was the really lovely bathroom, we kids used to jump out of the window. You would find my grandfather in the morning – he would put his table and chair out, put on his transistor and sit with a mirror and shave out in the open. So as kids,

the first image we would wake up to in the morning seeing my grandfather take a shave, do his toilet jobs out in the open.

* * *

My grandfather would go out every day with his paint and bottles of poster colour. Every day at a certain time we knew he was going to go out and would only come back at lunch time, because he wanted that particular kind of light. It was like a ritual for him to step outside to do landscapes. He would draw the same mountain from the same viewpoint over and over and over again. These mountains. I was really fascinated. I mean, I never really saw him paint that much because by the time I was born, in the 1970s, he had already pretty much stopped painting.

It was his mark of originality that making any kind of work from a photograph is not original. When you are sitting in front of a subject and making it by looking at it, that is an original. He would only do landscapes, mountain-scapes. He did some in Shimla when my father was posted there. He did one cityscape of Hong Kong, but he always had this thing for the mountains. I think he was very sentimental about it. Even now, to have these six paintings in my house – it was very difficult for me to explain to him why I wanted these, and that I also have a very sentimental attachment to them.

* * *

Can I rub this off and just show you what the house looks like? I was thinking about a painting of his, which is why I am trying to

see *[works on the charcoal drawing]* ... Let's see – these mountains – all forest, this was thickly forested, I remember. Then, the house was situated here ...

In the summer time, we used to have a lot of dandelions, you know those? You blow them. We were a very privileged family, very *Sahib* kind of family, and everybody knew that the summer was coming and all the Sahibs would arrive. This was in the 1950s. Obviously, they had a car then. But in my grandparents' generation they would come here by bus because they could not afford a car. Everybody's circumstances changed completely in the 1950s and 1960s, soon after Independence. Before Independence they did not have this land. This is the home I associated with 1988–89, when the problems had started to grow and my grandparents were pressured by their Kashmiri neighbours to sell it to them for 60,000 rupees. My grandparents started to sense that there was tension in Srinagar. There were a lot of road blocks, there were a lot of *dharnas* and a lot of police on the street. They could tell, as shop keepers would make it obvious to them to leave and were not selling *sabjis*, and could be extremely rude, hiking up prices, not selling to them, people coming and stopping your car and banging on your bonnet and saying, "Turn around, turn around, go away, go away, go away."

In 2005, after many, many years, I went back to the place. Over here, where the tree is, is a huge amusement park, a horrid amusement park. These houses are now guest houses and if you look in through those windows you see nothing of what it used to be. There is an obnoxious tarred road that runs here. This is all fenced up, completely chain-link fenced. I remember no fence – horses and cows would come and graze. It has changed completely. That

amusement park is obnoxious – against all this lovely green and beautiful pristine mountain-scape you have all these ugly plasticy joy-ride things.

A lot of families left Kashmir in 1989. They left knowing they would not come back the next summer – it was quite obvious to the whole family. A couple of families went back, but most of them knew that this was it. There was a lot of tension, there were bombs going off in *Lal Chowk*, grenades being thrown. I still remember Baatch-uncle's house being burned. The whole top floor of my uncle's house was burnt by terrorists, or by people fighting for Kashmir. It was this beautiful old house in Srinagar. There were money threats made to my grandfather's brothers, armed men knocking on your door and saying, "Listen, you have to give us money for our cause, for Kashmir and for us to continue to fight." They obviously realized this was a very, very sketchy situation to be in.

* * *

I think my grandfather stopped painting before leaving Kashmir. He also kind of passed it on to me and said you have to get out there and draw what you see. So I would do a lot of those exercises and he would correct them, but would not paint himself. The actual memory that I had of the place started to fade, a little at a time. What became vivid to me were the pictures that hung on these walls ... *[Nikhil points at some frames on the wall]* these are some of those paintings he did. These became more and more vivid, I would even see these landscapes in my dreams. I would hear

the creaking of the door opening onto a sunny day. I would have dreams of the house, I would see my grandfather sitting and shaving out in the open, he never would shave inside the house.

Now I think about that position a lot ... You get out of the country, you go abroad, you study. You get all this education and in a way you go through a crisis with your own identity. You start to wonder how valid is this stance that you have been put through as a child. You question it – I have grown to question it.

I have idealized this idea of the most picturesque landscape. If you think about landscape painting as a child, you think about how your father opened up a book of *John Constable* and showed you big cumulus clouds collecting far on the horizon. So you have already developed that sense of romance. I think it is the culture of being Euro-centric and making an association between Europe and Kashmir. I remember it with much more romance now than my grandparents do. They have seen their time here, they have enjoyed every single leaf in this place, every blade of grass. But I feel in a way the sense of romance has been lost.

Memory and nation 2

One might see Nikhil Chopra's memories of Kashmir and Gulzar Haider's experience (in the last section) of the family shrine and his recollection of it as the root of a specific awareness, because it may have informed their practices as artist, academic or architect. With Sami Said awareness of memory of a space seems to create a conflict, unlike Nikhil or Gulzar who are able to construct a continuity of memory through fragments; for Sami, imagination of lost spaces and the reality of present ones seem to have little in common.

The conversation with Yazid Anani relates to the dialogue between Sami Said and his father Saeed Shana'a. There is, however, an interesting connection between Yazid's observations and Gulzar Haider's story. Both Gulzar Haider and Saeed Shana'a connect their memory of a family home to a sacral space which is of social and religious significance. Yazid looks more closely at why a shrine is of greater importance than, for instance, a childhood bedroom.

I met Yazid at Birzeit University during my first visit to Ramallah. I asked him to comment on the recording of Sami Said and his father. Yazid Anani, who never experienced exile himself, talked about political aspects of memory and place. By claiming a connection to the shrine, a family acquires a specific position in society and a community claims a rootedness in a particular place. Yazid Anani observed how sentimental memory is not relevant in the face of political reality, how the remains of a destroyed building does not, in his mind, relate to its history. He never lived with that rubble. Likewise for Sami, the reality of the situation he finds in the here and now is more important because of its relevance to his goals in life.

During my first weeks of research in the West Bank I met various people who declined to contribute to my project. I was not hiding that I had spent time in the past working at a Kibbutz in the Upper Galilee, a fact not seen favourably by everyone in Ramallah. When I first talked to Sami Said I was stunned by a remark of his: what is the solution to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? – Simple, let's do business with each other. Sami's remark suggested a disapproval of sentimentalities. Growing up with a selective memory of Palestine, the reality Sami Said found, when visiting Israel for the first time, raised questions about the relevance of stories and memories. And like Kamila Shamsie earlier, he questions

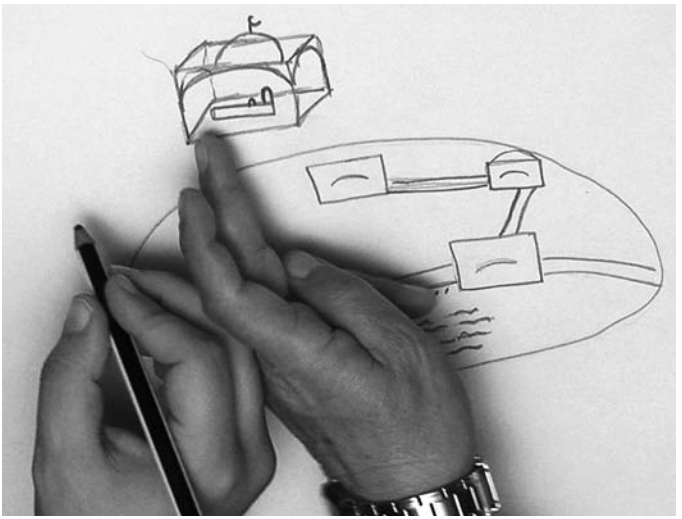
memory and stories in relation to facts. To Sami's generation, the second or third generation of exiled Palestinians, memory of place may hold a different value.

To Sami Said, as Yazid Anani pointed out, memory gets in the way of the contemporary life he wants to live. Quite differently, to a first generation emigrant like Liana Badr, memory and preservation of the space of memory (old Jerusalem) appears to be a political tool. Liana Badr describes two houses in Jerusalem: a *housh*, a traditional courtyard house in the walled city, and a modern family home in the new part of town. A recurring image is the window before which all of Jerusalem was spread out, "which owned the world." Her description of old Jerusalem is that of a utopian place, a dream connected to ancient history and *One Thousand and One Night* tales. She articulates how recalling the housh is not an individual reminiscence but a national memory, the memory of Palestine. When I played back Liana Badr's clip to Nazmi Al-Ju'beh a year later, he deconstructed the idea of the housh as a national memory. Nazmi Al-Ju'beh was also born in the old city of Jerusalem and his work at Riwaq deals with the preservation of Palestinian architectural heritage – the old city as a site of various religious festivals is a cultural location. But what role do the memories of a traditional old city life and the conservation of this image play in modern life? The city has become a living museum and life is lived elsewhere.

Ruins ... stones

SAMI SAID/SAEED SHANA'A

(Recorded: Birzeit, 2008)



Conversation between Sami Said and his father, Saeed Shana'a, Birzeit, 2008. Video stills. Images: Ahmad Malki.

SAMI: ***Where was the shrine in relation to the house?***

SAAED (father): The shrine? Here.

SAMI: ***The house was here, and here was the place of the shrine? The shrine was smaller than the house?***

SAAED: Yes, of course smaller.

SAMI: ***There was a path – right?***

SAAED: Yes, of course, not only to the house, but also to the village. And, of course, all around there is a boundary wall of stones. Cacti always grew through these boundary walls. In the garden there were figs, almond trees and *sindian* trees.

This is the shrine, like the shrine of *Abu Ammar*.[1] But his shrine is that of a politician, a revolutionary, while this one is for a religious man. Still, the shrine was built the same way as Abu Ammar's shrine. As you saw, a tomb with a roof. Do you see how? People used to sit underneath. He was well known and famous and people came to visit him like *Yassir Arafat*. After Abu Ammar passed away, people still came to visit him.

I phoned my uncle in Rusayfeh. I thought the *Sheikh* was Sheikh Muhyi Al Deen, but he told me, "No, he was Sheikh Abdallah – Sheikh Muhyi al Deen was buried in Cili." Sheikh Muhyi Al Deen is the father of Abdallah – Abdallah is the father of Muhyi Al Deen.

If you want to look at the order, they were our grandfathers. We are not only Shana'a's, we have four grandfathers: there are the Shana'a, the Janzeer, Sleet and there are the Subuh and Sabbah. I am telling you about the fourth or fifth grandfather. The part of my name I remember is Saeed Abdul Kareem Saeed Mustafa Shana'a.

SAMI: ***The shrine is a grave – like this – with a tombstone? Right? There is a cube inside? Right?***

SAAED: Like an umbrella.

SAMI: ***I am trying to imagine what the umbrella looks like.***

A lived landscape

YAZID ANANI

(Recorded: Al Tireh, Ramallah, 2009)

The shrine and house

The interesting thing is the relationship between the shrine and the house. It seems that his family had an important religious figure, actually two – father and son. The setting of the house within the surroundings is that of a place where people from other villages came together. In Palestine, and in the whole region, the shrines were landmarks in the village that people from other villages would come to when they had problems – a folkloric way of looking at the thing. For example, a pregnant woman, to protect her child, goes there and ties a coloured ribbon somewhere near the shrine to get its blessing. People would come regularly to visit the shrine. The house of the family takes its importance from being part of the setting, and from being related to the religious figure. This is the setting of the house.

I don't know if this is relevant: the phenomena of shrines occurred due to the campaign of Salah ad-Din, one of the Muslim leaders who came to free Palestine from the crusaders. He encouraged the building of mosques and shrines, and tried to initiate the idea of people visiting these shrines during certain seasons, so that when Christian pilgrims came to the Holy Land they found the whole landscape full with movement. It made the crusaders think there were so many people in Palestine they

would not easily conquer the place. They had to think twice about the landscape, because it was a lived landscape rather than empty.

With the Israelis it is very different. They try to un-root history, sometimes enforcing historical existence on the landscape by changing its current lived character and trying to excavate things. That is the difference between the two. I don't know if it is relevant.

Families

It's very interesting the way that he [Sami's father] relates his ancestor to the religious guy, his name is Sheikh Abdallah. He compares him with Abu Ammar, Yasser Arafat. He compares the shrine of Arafat in Ramallah with the shrine of his ancestor, saying it has the same importance but is in a different hierarchy. I like this kind of analogy between the religious Sheikh, Sheikh Abdallah, who is part of the family and part of the history of the community, and Arafat as an iconic figure for Palestinians and Israelis. I find it really funny.

It was really very important to know which family belonged to a place and therefore there was

SAAED: Draw it like a table with legs – draw a column from the bottom – like a house.

A dome, there were concrete seats around. You could sit around it.

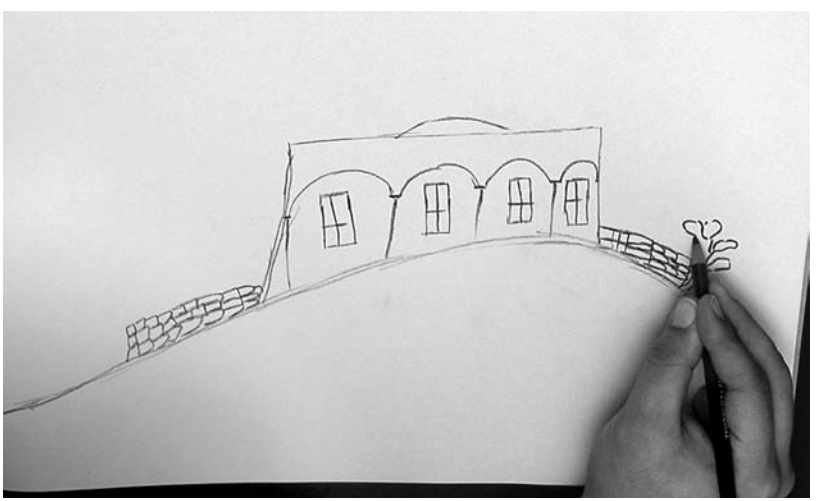
SAMI: ***What about the house? You told me the house was some 600 square metres. Can you remember the house from inside?***

SAAED: From inside? No. I remember fragments of when the migration happened. I can remember when we left the village. I was about one and a half.

SAMI: ***So you were not born on the way? I always thought ...***

SAAED: No, I was born there, in the village. When I asked my father when was I born, he said, "You are the age of the coloured bull." He owned a big bull – coloured. They called him "El Abrak". All birth certificates and ownership deeds of the land were with the *Mukhtar*, the village head, who was my grandfather Ahmed.

SAMI: ***[quietly] Everyone is Ahmed.***



SAAED: When my father left they were not holding any certificates, not even my birth certificate. So when I asked my father for the date of my birth in order to celebrate it he used to answer that it was the day the coloured bull was born.

SAMI: ***Your memories of the house, my grandfather's house and the land, all these stories, what do they mean to you?***

SAAED: These stories pushed me to miss my land and my country – wanting to go back and plough and plant the land and to relive those memories of my homeland.

SAMI: ***I went after Oslo[2] in 1995 and saw my grandfather's house. I entered with a permission from Jordan.***

SAAED: But what does it mean to you? I have been telling you that our village is Umm Al Shouf. They took you there, but I am certain it did not touch you like it touched me. You were not touched because you were not born there and did not live there. I was born there.

SAMI: ***Nothing touched me. You always used to tell me, "Our land, the town, the house, the land, they took it." When I reached it I had a strange feeling. I entered*** **[Israel]** ***from the bridge [King Hussein crossing/ Allenby bridge]. I now recall what I saw: well-dressed soldiers, they looked good. My aunt and her husband picked me up. We passed through excellent streets with good asphalt, good infrastructure, decent electricity, proper side walks, good cars. Sach. We went to Haifa and saw the***

a big emphasis on families, what they owned and their location in the village. I discovered when travelling through the villages that some villages were divided into north and south. The upper class, who collected the revenues, occupied the north of the village where they had big mansions and shrines, while the working classes, sometimes coming from the same family but from a different brother, worked as peasants on the land and occupied a different space in the village.

There is an actual spatial division between the different parts of the village, and it is interesting to see that Sami's father is trying to work out the setting. He seems to be emphasizing this division because he comes from that family, the religious family, an important family. The family has four parts: first *Shana'a*, which means "ugliness"; then *Shanseer*, "the chain"; *Sleet*, I have no idea what it means; and last, *Sabah*, which means "morning". These are four extended families from the original father.

Public–private spaces

The drawing is centred around the shrine. The father's connection with the house seems less. The shrine is the landmark through which they found themselves different from the other families around. I think the shrine is very important for him. He describes it really well.

In fact, the shrine is a public space, but on the other hand it is a private space for burial. Yet they provided services for people to come and visit, like water. And there are always places where people can rest. I like this idea of owning something privately and then turning it public, offering services for people to come. The family created a public space, which I

think is also the basis of community. The provision of services for the community is not only taken care of by a central administration, it is also offered in small public–private spaces by families.

The mosque would be another important public space in the village, because it also provided services. In the mosque, communal services, like water, sometimes food, would come from different families. It was not centrally administered, like we have nowadays – a local community and municipalities. For me the idea of disseminating public services is very interesting. The spatial process at that time was really organic, it was composed and constellated by the people themselves. And it worked, it worked quite well at that time.

A courtyard house

It is not a courtyard house. The house might have been built in the late *Ottoman* period because it has a sort of urbanity to it. It has six doors – one, two, three, four doors. There is

hospital, we saw the university which was a city in itself. There was no space for memories.

In Tunis they used to tell us there were orange orchards. Palestine is famous for its oranges, bordering Palestine from the north, from the south, from the east, from the west. No one told us what is inside Palestine now. Nobody made us aware of an established state that is called Israel – a country with universities, good education, good hospitals. It has good social security, better than in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon – no one told us. So when I return, I am shocked by the enemy. How strong! And all I own are memories and stories.

[Sami points at the drawing]

SAMI: ***What was left of the house? Could you erase all the things that were gone?***

SAAED: Stones – *yani*. *[speaks softly, erases the drawing]* Ruins ... stones. All the four corners – broken. All of it rubble.

SAMI: *No walls? Here the qanater – the arch.*

SAAED: Collapsed. The qanater – collapsed. All in ruins. Here are the qanater. Here is the cactus, around the house – cacti and almonds.

[Sami's father brings pictures of the collapsed house]

SAMI: *These pictures are cute! This one is outside. I remember there was sand inside. [Laughingly] Why did you ask for sand, what did you need the trab for? What was the use of it?*

SAAED: I wanted to see my land. I wanted a piece that smelled like our land, so I asked them for a bottle, and they sent it to me.

SAMI: *Don't you think this is too sentimental? I believe in my land and my country. But how am I supposed to reach it? Am I supposed to reach it by memories and stories? Or through facts and reality? This is the gap between emotions and reality. Here is my conflict.*

NOTES

1 **Abu Ammar is the honorific name for Yasser Arafat.**
2 **The Oslo accords between the PLO and the Israeli government took place in 1993. Post Oslo, a great number of Palestinians refugees returned to the West Bank.**

a big *liwan*. The liwan is the most important space in the house, because it is the place where the family gathers. Guests come and visit and they use the liwan for that. It is a central space around which all the rooms are spread. There are so many theories saying that the courtyard was transformed into a liwan, but I'm not really convinced. I don't believe it, because the use of a courtyard is so different. I don't really get how a courtyard outside was supposedly topped with a roof and suddenly it became a liwan. There is something wrong with that. For me a liwan is urban, it is a covered space, a room, not an open courtyard house. The kind of family that live here are either important people or have something to do with urban space, because they do not need the activities in the courtyard, activities like making *laban*, making yogurt and milk. I am not sure but, the development of the liwan came in modern times. The courtyard houses are for families. This house could only be for a smaller family, two or three families. I don't know the history of the family, therefore I cannot really tell.

A correct utopia

I wonder what kind of feeling both of them have while drawing something they have no connection with. They are drawing something they are not sure about.

[long pause]

It is funny how they are fighting about their connection to the village. From my knowledge, the father was displaced from the village where he barely lived. The experience is a collective image constructed from the place. So being part of that collective experience entitles him to be more connected to the village than his son. It's fantastic! I like it.

Now his son is saying, "But you always told me about the house, so I've also been informed about the house, and the land and the landscape." I think he is also entitled to have this kind of connection.

Here the son suddenly changes his mind. He says that he did not feel any connection, but then he tells his father, "You told me all of your life about the village, about the land, about the house and the shrine, and now when I went there to visit, I felt a strange feeling." Now he is really going back, there is a connection, but he cannot really explain it.

These people came from Tunis, and the way they perceived Palestine was definitely through the recollections of the older generation who had lived in this place and talked about the misery. When you are nostalgic about misery, you construct an image of the "other" as brutal. You think that the other is a creature of darkness. When the son crossed the bridge (Allenby bridge/King Hussein crossing), he was shocked that the Israeli soldiers were well dressed, they had this presentable image. He highlights a very important thing, which is the urbane image of Israel. He is using the word sach, which means "correct", and is referring to the Israeli landscape as correct, the streets are correct. It's really funny, because there is always a sort of relationship between the occupier and the occupied, the colonizer and the colonized. At a certain stage the colonized, or the occupied, wants to become the occupier. This kind of power relation exists. For Sami, what the occupier is doing is correct. He said that "When I saw this landscape, this modern landscape, I didn't have time to think about memory." I think this is also part of the shock he had from his own construction of Israel. The reality reflects his personal utopia of how he would like to live. This utopia is coming from Western ethics and aesthetics. This is very interesting.

Going back to the physical process, the physicality of his house is not relevant any more. The destruction of the house as part of the collective memory of an occupier occupying the land, and the consequential displacement of the family, is no longer interesting. For Sami, the shocking moment was the confrontation with the reality of Israel. So the house as a physical thing is not important, whereas Israel as a physical reality is very important because of its connection with his utopia.

Rubble

My problem when I see rubble is that I don't really relate to it, because I didn't live with it. If you were to tell me the form the rubble had, I wouldn't remember, because it's rubble. To me, it does not relate to the history of the building. Weird – I am wondering about Sami drawing something he has no connection with.

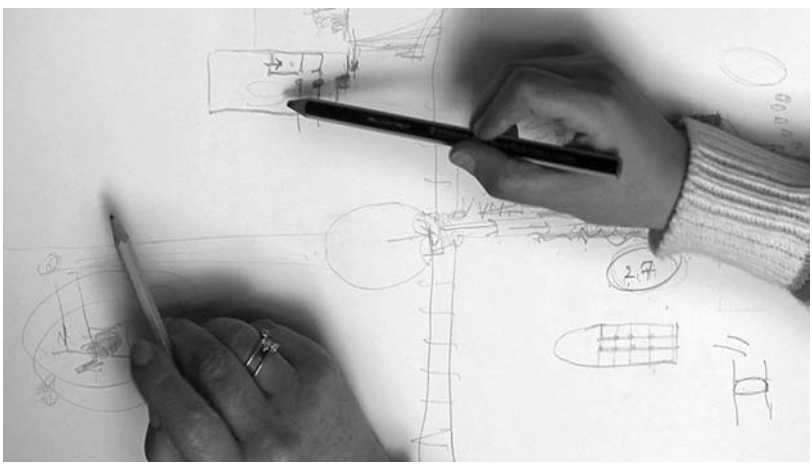
Everybody wants to feel a certain belonging to a place, an origin. I think the son realized, when debating with his father, that he was not equally connected to the place, suddenly he felt isolation, he had no connection with a place, an origin, an anchor. Then he started changing his mind – interesting!

A house for memory

LIANA BADR/RANA SHAKAA

(Recorded: Ramallah, 2008)

LIANA: I will tell you about Jerusalem. My memory is connected to two houses in Jerusalem. ***[Liana begins to draw]*** **We can part the page from the middle: this is old Jerusalem – the wall is here, and here – new Jerusalem.**



(This page and overleaf): Conversation between Rana Shakaa and Liana Badr, Ramallah, 2008. Video stills. Images: Ahmad Malki.

In reality I was born in the house that stands here in the new part of Jerusalem. The old house was for the family, it was for my aunt. It was owned by the *Al Husseini* family, *Haj Amin Al Husseini* used to live in one part of it. My aunt was married to

A living museum

NAZMI AL-JU'BEH/
SOPHIE ERNST

(Recorded: Al Bireh, 2009)

Windows and doors

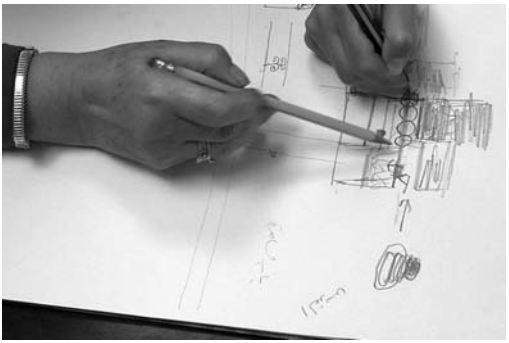
NAZMI: It is clear that space is the container of memories and memories are very selective. Some areas are restricted in human memory because of certain events or architectural elements. With most people who had any relationship to the old city of Jerusalem it is a fact that their memories are full of nostalgia and reminiscences, which are not always realistic. It seems that childhood memories select certain elements. These elements, especially in Jerusalem, are doors. Life in the old city of Jerusalem – private life in the old city – took place behind doors. Public spaces were mostly preserved for men, but all of the houses had courtyards inside where social life, especially female social life, took place.

The old city has so many smells. The smells are part of

unexplainable memories of childhood. Smells are connected to shops, small workshops and to human beings. Sometimes the smell relates to a person who was producing sweets, for instance, or dealing in spices. So the smell also relates to the human being and not only to the products and spaces.

Most of the houses in the old city are directly connected to the market, yet also disconnected through architectural elements, which protect the privacy of the living quarters. Again, the most fascinating element is the window. The window is an important element in an overly crowded city such as Jerusalem. It is the only element from which you look outside of your private space. So the window is opening your eyes, your vision. It is a visual connection to the rest of the city. Mostly the windows are not located on the first floor of the building, but rather on the second floor. And most of the windows are oriented towards the *Dome of the Rock*. The Dome of the Rock is the central visual point of the old city. The window gives a fascinating view. Before reaching the Dome of the Rock, your eyes go over tens and hundreds of stony domes, where you can see minarets and church towers; you can see reflections of different lights on the tops of the buildings. Therefore the window is not just opening to air and light, it is a visual link to the rest of the city. You can keep your privacy by sitting behind the window, but the whole world is opening up in front of your eyes.

The second important element is the door. It has a double meaning. It is the protection of your life, of your property, of your social life behind it, but it is also the door that leads you to public places, to social relationships, to all kinds of relationships. It is



someone from the family. We were always there in her house.

The new house is a wonderful house, it was built in a very strange way. In the 1920s in Jerusalem there was a famous architect called Al Turjman. That architect had also built what is now the Israeli War Museum, or something. The house is very traditional, when you enter the veranda and face the entrance you see two lions facing each other above the door. When I was small I considered it a toy. But when I grew up I recognized the shapes. All of this was coloured stained glass. And this was an old door of iron.

RANA: ***What connects you to this house? When remembering the house, you remember the people or the place?***

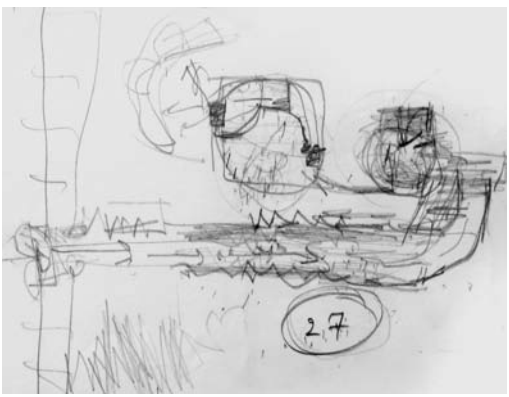
LIANA: I see the place. For one reason, I grew up with its taste – the architecture of this house.

The second house was in the old city of Jerusalem, close to Khan El Zeit market. All around it were old markets, and here was a wall, the big historical wall. This is the Damascus Gate and its historic market.

I used to enter the house from behind this wall. Right at the entrance of the garden there was a huge gate, just like the gates of cities – a massive gate. When they closed it, the whole court and the house was closed off – no more noises. When you enter the Damascus gate you hear songs of Khan El Zeit market: coffee shops, people sitting, vegetable stores, fruit sellers, sweets and raha. When we were children we would smell the sugar – *knafeh*. This whole area was full of perfumes.

There was a small stairway from this courtyard, we used to go up a stair, up to the house – my aunt's home. This is the house's door, you come into the salon from here and are able to see the entire city of old Jerusalem. You can see all the domes, the houses, the mosques. You can see the whole world of old Jerusalem from one window. What made this house different was the privacy. A private space, but from the window you can see everything – a window that owns a world.

We enter. Here was the door, this door



Drawing by Liana Badr of her childhood house in Jerusalem, Ramallah, 2008. *HOME* archive.

repeated in most recollections – door and window, window and door – and these are crucial elements in an overly crowded community like the old city.

Two houses

The house presented here is a typical old city house. We call it al housh, a housh is a house complex, originally one unit, but organically it grew across centuries, reflecting the social development of the family; every two or three decades a new unit was added. It is a very economical use of the space, as the space is so limited, so subdividing the units is typical old city architectural behaviour. At the end, after a few centuries, we called a house a complex, which has a shared open space for all the units, but each unit has its own, partly open space. So in the past very big extended families used to exploit all of the complex. Today, of course, it is no longer the case. In each unit you have a nuclear family.

There are two different houses here. One is a late nineteenth-century petit-bourgeois house, which opens itself more to the outside world than the old house. Late nineteenth-century houses have balconies, for instance, and big windows, which is not the case with traditional old city houses, which are closed up and open towards the inside of the house, and do not connect with the outside. Therefore this is, I suppose, a house with a red-tiled roof, which is a Mediterranean architectural development of around 1900.

The old house is a very organic building. The development began some five, six hundred years ago and grew rapidly. Some elements of it could be from a much earlier time, accumulating slowly in a fantastic way. Apart from the space where the family used to receive guests, the rest of the

house comprises very small cells. By cells, I mean 12, or 14 square metres, at most, sometimes only ten. Subdividing the house into small units was necessary to accommodate the growing family.

The body of memory

The houses of the old city reflect and hold memories of experiences. In the main streets of the old city a lot of activity took place. It was not just a space for selling and buying, where villagers presented their goods early in the morning, but also for religious festivals throughout the year. And all of these festivals are connected to social behaviour and events – food, clothes, visits or social interactions, different faces, different ethnic groups, different languages and cultures visiting the old city. All of this becomes part of the experience of the house.

So the house is not just a building, the house is a memory of the human beings who have inhabited it. Therefore you may be fascinated by architectural elements here and there, but we have to look for the meaning of these elements in a specific time – a specific shot, which fixed this window in my memory, related mostly to human beings.

It is clear that after 50 or 60 years of living away from the old city, it is very, very difficult to return and live there again. But nobody wants to give up their private memories and relation to the space. Sometimes people even do not want to destroy this by actually living in the old city again, which would become a terrible experience for somebody driving a car, who jumps from their house to work then to social and cultural events. This would be very difficult to manage in the old city. So they prefer to keep their memories and not corrupt them by life today in the old city.

was a strange wooden door. The key of the door was very heavy, its weight was around one kilo. When they would leave the house they used to give the key to someone, they were not able to take it with them.

You enter. You find a small corridor – there was a very small room on the side of it called "Al Makhda'". The word *Makhda* is a very old word, maybe from the *Mamlukis* or Arabians. It was a special small room for the head of the family, he used to live in this salon. The rest of the house was for the women. That's how life was in the past.

Another strange thing was the floor of the house. Here in the corridor it had many openings, small gaps covered with glass. I think they might have put in openings because the house on the lower level needed ventilation. They made these long openings to let the air in and, I thought of this once, maybe in the past they used to call each other. There were no telephones, so if there was no glass they could call each other through them.

The other house – in the new house we were all together but we were not able to see the city, there was no connection to the city. It was a single family unit. The old house is an extended family unit, and from the window you can see the city.

RANA: ***I feel that what connects you to the new house are the architectural details, and in the other house the life details.***

LIANA: **Maybe because the old house is very strange, it was a house of dreams. For me, it was like *Alf laylah wa-laylah*. When reading the stories of *One Thousand and One Nights*, I used to think that this was the house where such stories might have taken place.**

A HOUSE FOR MEMORY

RANA: ***Usually, when people talk about their memories, they stick to the family house and family gatherings. In your case my feeling is that you insist on dividing your memory into two parts, each with separate intimacy and values.***

LIANA: This house created my relation with public space, the other house created my relation with private space. I used to move between both of them, I was happy in both places. Each had its own privacy.

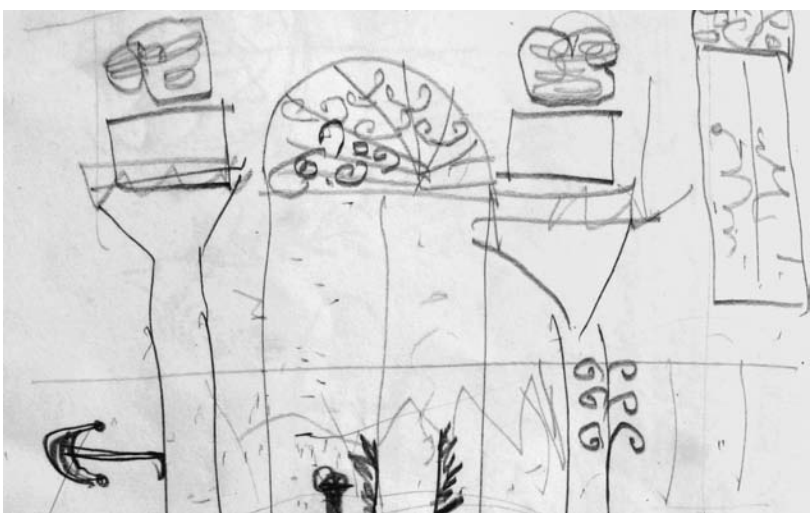
RANA: ***Did you want to keep it and recognize it as it was in your memories?***

LIANA: I stayed connected to the old house after we left in *1967*.[1] We were not able to return to Palestine. I lived 27 years outside of Palestine, I returned in 1994 after Oslo.[2] Even if I visit it now it will never be as it was. The people there are not the same. The children grew up and are living abroad now, and the woman who brought life to this house passed away. The function of the house has changed.

Frozen memory

SOPHIE: *What I find interesting about Liana's descriptions is that she juxtaposes these two houses, the house in West Jerusalem and the house in the old city, a modern home and a traditional house.*

NAZMI: In the late-nineteenth century the Palestinian petit-bourgeois arose, whose needs were totally different from common public needs. They needed more privacy, more space, and modern services, which they could not afford in most parts of the old city. Therefore the newly established neighbourhoods outside the city wall served mostly the petit-bourgeois. The old city remained the traditional, classical, conservative part of the city. Liana's memory jumps between the nostalgia of the old city, with all its cultural meanings (but remember, this is her later understanding of the old city), to where she spent her actual life, in a modern house outside the old city. She is a modern person, so a modern house can fulfil her aspirations, and the old house remained in her memory like a museum,



Drawing by Liana Badr of her childhood house in Jerusalem, Ramallah, 2008. *HOME* archive.

a living museum. A museum with human beings and with private memories. I do believe that most of those who left the old city and lived in the new parts continued to have a relationship with the old city – shopping, going to eat sweets, taking part in festivals and religious events and visiting the mosques and churches on holidays. Therefore their relationship never really ended but was totally different. It is nice to visit and to look at the old city, but to live – I want to live in a modern house. This trend became reality in the second half of the nineteenth century and hasn't stopped today.

SOPHIE: *Her nostalgia is related to the house in the old city, which wasn't lost. But when she draws a kind of symbolic image of loss, it is the grid of the balcony in West Jerusalem, in the new house, which they lost.*

NAZMI: Exactly. I could tell that her memories were mostly fixed to the old city house. It is because of her later understanding of the value of such a house in the centre of the old city of Jerusalem, which is not to be compared with houses outside the old city. But again, her actual life experience was outside not inside, therefore she keeps going back to the new house outside. She didn't really insist on saying that we lost that house in West Jerusalem, or that we have a special relationship to that house.

I don't know. Her memory is a little frozen in that house, while the house in the old city is still alive in her memory, in more detail than the modern house. Again, in the modern house you could see that the window played a major role. Maybe the garden and the endless open spaces in the modern house were important elements, whereas the view in the old city is always blocked here and there.

RANA: ***That's what I want to know: if the house was opened to you again, you will never be able to live in it or to see it as it was.***

LIANA: For me it is nostalgia now. The house is not empty, it is full – every side of this house reminds me of the past. Before, I used to live the future in this house, when my aunt was alive I used to live the present. Now it is the past.

If I enter it, it will be a place for nostalgia, not a place for living. I feel it is a public house now, a house for the memory of Palestine, not for my own memory.

NOTES

1 The Six-Day war.

2 The Oslo accords in 1993.

Spatialization of experience

Salim Tamari explains how Haifa became a "paradise lost" for people in the West Bank. We met on two occasions at his office in Ramallah. The first time we spoke about nostalgia and the danger of sentimentalizing memory. He observes that sentimental nostalgia is a response to the "ghettoized existence in Palestine". Apparently, Palestinian claims to space are deeply contested by the powers that be. A year later, I brought the clip of dialogue between the sisters Vera Tamari and Tania Nasir and asked him to comment on it. I was specially keen to understand one remark of Tania Nasir: "They robbed our memory." To me it seemed an impossibility. Salim Tamari explains how society in Haifa at the beginning of the last century may not have been devoid of problems, but there were projections for a future and that future was lost.

For Vera Tamari, Tania Nasir and Salim Tamari access to the family house is lost. To Tania Nasir, as she explains in the following conversation, this loss meant foremost a loss of continuity – a loss of the routine of ordinary life. When the two sisters drew the house of their grandparents in all its details, it appeared to give a physical presence to their memory. They started out with a tiny sketch, but after working on it for an hour they filled it with the details they thought they had long forgotten.

For Zarina the Partition did not immediately signify a loss of continuity like it did for Vera Tamari and Tania Nasir. She is an Indian who did not become a refugee during Partition; she consciously chose to stay while most of her family opted for a life in Pakistan. To me her descriptions of home links to the story of Senan Abdelqader. Both did not leave their "homes", but seemed to have experienced an almost invisible break in continuity. They were suddenly seen as the "other" by the society that formed around them.

When Zarina agreed to a meeting she was on an extended visit to her sister in Karachi. I came over from Berlin and we spent three afternoons talking about her father's house, her ideas about the effect Partition had on society and her work dealing with memory, divisions and mapping. My impression was that, to her, home is ambivalent and the language for speaking about it as an artist is highly intimate and personal.

A few months after meeting Zarina I travelled to Haifa. Together with Senan Abdelqader and Issa Freij (who filmed the conversation) we drove up from Jerusalem and visited Sami Michael in his apartment overlooking the city. I had expected it to be an interesting conversation between the two, both Arab and both Israeli citizens. And it was, but there was a sense of some things remaining unspoken, some issues too difficult to discuss without offending hospitality. To Senan Abdelqader remembering his family home is remembering the (Palestinian) community that surrounded it. To Sami Michael it appeared more about remembering a culture now lost, the centuries-old Mizrahi culture of Baghdad. His recollection of experiencing that space stood for a collective memory. Likewise, Gulzar Haider's description of his ancestor's shrine seemed to stand for a collective memory of a place of origin.

Gulzar Haider is Dean of the Architecture Department at the University in Lahore, where I taught for several years. I asked him to tell me about his family village in East Punjab and how he remembers the time of Partition. Like a true storyteller, in a half-hour monologue Gulzar Haider recollected his home in an almost anecdotal way. The only moment his narrative appeared to become intimate and personal was when he described the feeling of running his fingers over the carved stones and seeing light mingled with smoke in the tomb of his ancestor. In me, as a listener, it triggered an image that reflected a personal experience of a sacral space.

Building their memories in our memories

VERA TAMARI/TANIA NASIR

(Recorded: Birzeit, 2008)

Conversation between Vera Tamari and her sister, Tania Nasir, Birzeit, 2008. Video stills. Images: Ahmad Malki.

TANIA: I think this picture is very nice because it shows part of the veranda of the house. The veranda was facing the garden. I do remember because I was born in 1941. In this picture I was seven months old. Of course I don't remember that – I remember later visits. The last visit we made in 1947. The thing with memories – someone tells you about it, so you think you remember it. But I still remember some things in the house. I remember this veranda very well.

VERA: *How did the entrance look?*

TANIA: *[Tania draws]* **Here there is a hill downwards, here was the house, for sure. The gate was made of iron and small, we entered – the path was paved, small – I can't remember exactly how it was. Here is the house – you went out and there is the garden.**

VERA: *Draw the trees. How were the trees spread through the garden?*

TANIA: **Here was the jasmine and roses and some other plants. And from here, there was a door to the veranda, which is this.**

VERA: *This is the veranda. The floor looks like this – black and white caro.*[1]

TANIA: **Sorry, you must draw it yourself.**

VERA: *We entered the house here. Directly on the left there was grandfather's study. Do you remember? It was the library. There were icons on the wall, Mama told me. The first time we went back, I was waiting for her emotions. I waited to see exactly how she felt. All the time I was waiting to see.*

TANIA: **What were her feelings when she entered?**

VERA: *The place felt H'ourmi, it felt sacred. We entered the house filled with family history, and ceremonies. I felt I was entering a place that is not related to us now, yet at the same time is related to us.*

TANIA: *Fazzaha!* **These feelings will stay with us. This is what I want to**

A unique exile

SALIM TAMARI/
SOPHIE ERNST

(Recorded: Ramallah, 2009)

Access to house

SALIM: Here we have a middle-class family who were able to retain a rich collection of photographs and other paraphernalia from their childhood in Jaffa before *'48*. It is a unique case, actually, because it is a first-hand recollection of a memory that is not filtered through another generation. It is vivid, but it is also mediated by past events and by growing up outside Jaffa, on the other side of the border. Memories of what is documented in the photograph have been rejuvenated by actual visits to their abandoned house. The abandoned house is, of course, now occupied by Jewish immigrants who have transformed it, as we see. She is drawing the contours of the house that still exists, from memory.

It is interesting how the actual location of the furniture and the partitions of the rooms, which have changed now, allow her to relive the past much more vividly than if it was only from [objects] handed down by father and mother living in exile. It is a unique exile, it is an exile in a way more painful, because it has the element of continuity. You have physical access to the stolen house, but you cannot actually visit it. You can visit it only by grace of the occupier. And of course, the people who took it over are very nervous about these visits. People either engage in denial or they block the visitor. A lot of guilt is involved, especially if the people, like in the case of Jaffa, were

refugees from Bulgaria who experienced the *Holocaust*. Many were also from Morocco, who were simply economic immigrants to Israel. The older generation knows that these were stolen houses. Second and third generations probably do not, or have blocked it through state education, ideological [propaganda] and so on.

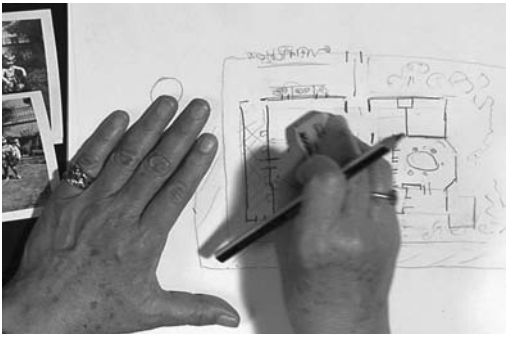
SOPHIE: *But in this case there are actually Palestinians living in the house.*

SALIM: Ah, in some cases. I'm not sure about this particular house. The Palestinians who remained in Jaffa were very, very few – two or three thousand in '48 out of a hundred thousand. Or they are people who came to work in the Jaffa-Tel Aviv area from Galilee. Then the question of guilt is modified by the fact that they themselves are Palestinians. But it does not remove the complexity of the situation, because at one point it was the home of other people, and they came and took it over with all their furniture. In some cases the food was still cooking on the stove when they came. It is a very disturbing phenomenon.

emphasize: we did not invent a story, this is part of our actual memory, which we still recall. I went back with my children, I brought them for something very important to me. I lived there and still remember the flowers of the fields, the orange fields, the roses – I had another home in addition to my house.

VERA: ***[Vera returns to the drawing] The bedrooms were here, Tania, and here was the piano.***

TANIA: Wait ... the salon is here.



VERA: *Tania – if I want to be accurate, the salon is here. I think the salon looks longish. Here the dining room, do you see? And here was the window to the garden, the bay window. Let me fix this ...*

TANIA: So when you are drawing the house your memory comes back?

VERA: *Yes ... it looks plausible now. Did you remember it in such detail before we started drawing?*

TANIA: I felt it. I knew it. The crime was not only grabbing and stealing the land, they attacked the most intimate parts – our memories and our emotional connection to our country. Unbelievable what they did – this crime. They are building their memories in our memories. I think this was the biggest Nakbah. We talk about land but there are many other things of value – the oral history formed the civilization and culture of the country, not only land and buildings.

[long pause]

But this is something I feel every day. I feel the loss that happened in these rooms.

VERA: *I am happy we were able to draw the house, I got to know that these rooms exist here – it became a reality for me. I used to know that there was a street but I didn't know where its borders were, now I know the whole house.*

[Tania leaves the room and comes back a bit later with an icon]

Robbed memory

The older sister is helping the younger sister, who is an artist, in contouring the house. This is very interesting for the innocent onlooker. It seems like two people engaged in remembering the spatial division of the parental or grandparental house. Actually, it is the excavation of theft, of something that has been robbed. And the reconstruction of the house that has been taken and lost, you don't have access to it.

In a way what you are doing, Sophie, is an original act of interpretation, it is also a challenge to memory and it makes vivid the layers and political [aspects] of loss and exile. What you're doing is very political, but it takes a different form than a narrative or a simple collection of old photographs, because it is a process of rebuilding, reconstructing.

What Tania is saying now is very unique, very important. She is talking about a conquest. Not in terms of taking the land and property but in terms of the collective memory of people's daily life. She is talking about the loss of memory and of the subjective experience of daily life as something of equal importance to the loss of property and buildings.

She is very moved by her act of reconstruction, she is drifting into tears. She is saying, "It is a living reality, I always thought of it in a very abstract way, but now it's a living reality."

SOPHIE: *Can I pause for a second? Could you translate from Arabic for me? What does Tania say? Losing the right to remember? — no. Someone took her memory?*

SALIM: They robbed the memory.

SOPHIE: *That would be impossible.*

SALIM: Well, it is robbing, in the sense that access to the articulation of what happened in daily life has been overwhelmed by the talk of loss. This kind of robbing. The actual political discourse overwhelms the existential discourse, if you like. That's how I understand it.

SOPHIE: *Could you explain this to me?*

SALIM: There are two things she is saying. One, they took the property, they took the land, hence the big loss. But also they robbed us of a normal life, which has now been reconstructed through the drawing – this physical draught of how life was. What they robbed was not only the physical property but the pattern of daily life, of mundane activities, which would still have been there if the exile had not taken place.

SOPHIE: *So, basically, it is a robbing of memories that could have been?*

SALIM: Yes. Remembrances are in your head so they cannot be robbed, but it is the memory of mundane living, the experience of daily living.

In this case it is an Arab family that is living in their house, so they were able to go in. In my case, I was not allowed into the house of my family. Unlike the story told by Tania and Vera, my family was reticent, my parents never talked about Jaffa. I went to Jaffa with my mother, my father had died earlier and she had only been back once before. She was so shocked by seeing her town in such squalid conditions, also having to confront herself with the experience of loss itself. She was not able to face it, she never went back. She talked a lot about life in Jaffa but not about the '48 experience, that was too painful for her.

This is the icon from my grandfather's house, right? It came to us from Jaffa.

TANIA: But I don't know how we got it. One of our relatives stayed in Jaffa after the war. She was able to visit all the houses that belonged to people like us and she took things as a memento from each house. Later she gave it to the owning families.

VERA: ***Does this box open, Tania? I guess not, maybe there is something inside we don't know about ... no, there is nothing.***

This might be from grandfather's room, Tania.

NOTES

1 chequered

She talked about some kind of paradise lost [before] '48, but she would not discuss the war itself and how they had left. I was therefore denied a discussion of the details that you see here. I was able to go there myself but, as I told you, I was not allowed to go in.

Nostalgia

SOPHIE: *Last time when we met you made a comment about problematic sentimental memory, do you remember?*

SALIM: I cannot remember what I told you, but I wrote about this phenomenon. There is a kind of projection of the present-day misery to the past, which becomes devoid of any contradiction, it becomes harmonious. I think "paradise lost" is a very good term because you create a glorious past of the city. I say this not to belittle the amount of loss that happened, but because there is a backward projection of freedom and emancipation that has been denied by the war and the consequences of the war. So there is an idealization and sentimentalization of the past as a contrast to the current conditions of fragmentation, loss, and, of course, the current ghettoized existence in Palestine. For the Palestinians who live in the occupied territories, who are not in exile as such because we are in Palestine, there is a projection that is almost mushy in its sentimentalism. There is also a complete lack of discussion of conflict or discrepancies, as if everybody was wealthy, had orange groves and lived an idyllic life. Which is far from the truth – there was poverty and marginalization. However, it was an organic society where people had hopes for a future, like any Mediterranean country, like Syria, Lebanon, Turkey or Egypt.

Orange groves

SOPHIE: *Is what you say that the memory of the place is different for someone from a bourgeois background than for someone from a peasant background? Is there another way of talking about lost place?*

SALIM: In Jaffa there were no peasants, there were farmers who worked as day labourers in the orange groves and lived on the periphery of the city. What happened is that in stories of exile the peasant narrative became dominant. If you look at the paintings of *Shammout* for example, who became the iconic painter of Palestinian exiles, he and his wife drew pictures as if Palestine was a peasant country. The orange groves and olive tree were iconic symbols of the country. And cities do not exist in their paintings. In Jaffa everybody had a *bajora*, an orange grove, including people who did not have a bajora, because people had access to these orange groves. The social differences are ironed out.

SOPHIE: *I showed the video of Vera and Tania to an Israeli art historian and she was really astonished. Seeing the photographs of the grandparents, and also seeing the jewellery of Tania and Vera, she expressed astonishment, because the image she had of Palestinian refugees was of very poor peasants, and this was not the story she was aware of. She said this looked very bourgeois, but the dominant story is the peasant story.*

SALIM: There are two explanations for this. One is that the Palestinians themselves presented their case as one of land – farming land, in the first instance. So the peasants in the refugee camps who lost their land became the symbol of Palestinian loss. Secondly, the Arabs the Israelis encountered after '48 did not include the bourgeoisie, because the bourgeoisie was expelled and the cities were depopulated. So the Palestinian Arabs that Israelis encountered were people who worked in their gardens, who washed their dishes, who collected their garbage and tilled the land they took over. It was an underclass and that is how they saw Palestinians. They must have thought, if these were the people who remained, then the others must be the same. They are shocked when they see Palestinian Arabs who are sophisticated academics. Of course, by the 1970s and 80s a new class of professionals grew among the Arab population in Israel. But Israelis thought that they had manufactured this class themselves and that such a class did not exist before. Again, there is a process of denial but it also reflects the reality.

Home is a foreign place

ZARINA

(Recorded: Karachi, 2008)

I know how to get to Aligarh, I know which flight to take and which *rickshaw* to take from the station. But I don't go there.

Conversations between Sophie Ernst and Zarina Hashmi, Karachi, 2008. Video stills. Images: Amir Hussain.

Knowing the route is not the story – I can map my house, every room, every pillar, every veranda. I recall them clearly. But I don't live there. I haven't lived there for 50 years. I started drawing home when I decided I was not going back. I decided it's not realistic for me to go back and make a home in India, because I had nothing to build a home on. But to keep the connection, I drew it. I drew the floor plan of the house and I wrote down directions to my house.

Our house was not burnt down and we were not forced to move. Personally, it has marked my life. That is what Partition did to us, not just to Muslims, but to all people affected by it, and most of us were.

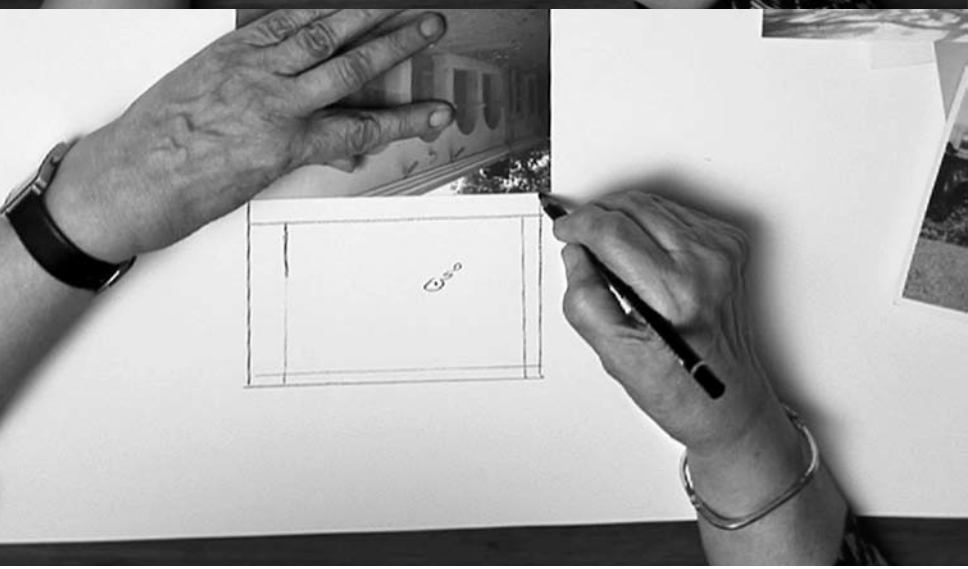
I do visit Pakistan, but because I was not born here, I didn't run a house here, I didn't go to school here, I don't have connections to the place. Recently, I was watching all the celebrations on television about the creation of Pakistan ... there is never an acknowledgement of what happened to Indian Muslims. They are still paying the price after 60 years. You don't have to go very far – Ahmedabad, Gujarat Jabalpur, Aligarh[1] – it continues. I don't live here – there [in India] – but there are millions of Muslims who live in India and call themselves at home.

When you contacted me for this project, I said you have to talk to people or interview people from both sides, to understand what they experienced. I think Indian Muslims are a big part of the equation because of the divisions of families, the breaking of ancestral connections, culture and language.

* * *

[Zarina picks up a photograph and reads from the back] "Khirki jisme jhaankh kar humne zindagi guzarna seekha"[2]* ... my sister looked out of this window ... *[points at the photograph]* and then this is also fallen apart ... and she wrote *[Zarina continues reading from the back], "Hum rehna waalain hain usse ujedre dayaar ke."[3]

***[Zarina describes the house]* Half of the house was for men, where my father had**



his very Western drawing room, his study, and there was one room for my grandfather. The back of the house, which you see in my floor plan, was the women's quarter – the purdah quarter, where we lived like regular Muslim ladies and sat on the floor which was covered with white sheets. Nobody could enter the house and look into the courtyard. A person would enter over the threshold and be announced, *"Purdah karlijie, go inside."* If he was bringing water or sprinkling the courtyard, all the women would sort of go away. It was a huge courtyard where we slept under the stars – I always say I dreamt my life under those stars.

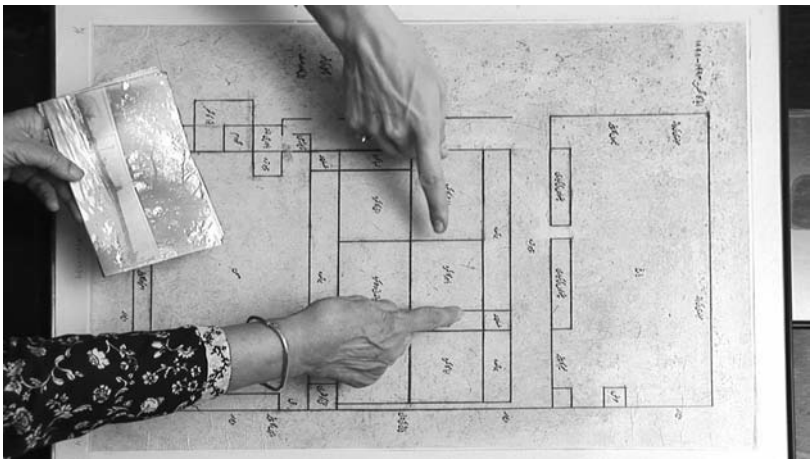
***[Zarina points at a photograph]* This is the end of the courtyard. This is the wall which I have often drawn. When I was little, it looked very high. It has been changed *[the picture she holds up is of her visit to the house in 2000],* it was not like this ... After that visit I closed the book. You know, houses are made of people, families, they are not made of bricks. Like the Palestinian poet *Darwish* who recently died, *Mahmoud* said, "I make houses in words," and I always say I make houses in lines.**

***[Zarina starts drawing]* So this is the sehen, this is the courtyard. There were what you call *kiaries*, and these are the servant quarters, which opened to the inside and the outside of the house, and then this is the veranda.**

This – what did I do? *[Zarina erases the line she just drew].* I think this was the *baramda*. I don't have to look at it, this I know. I think you can finish the drawing for me ...

This room was the *chandni-ka-kamra*, there was always a white sheet on

the floor. It was light with the white flooring, white everything. And this was the Western drawing room, which no one ever used, it was so ugly, I don't know where my father bought this furniture. We found it very alien. This is the *neem-ka-pedh*, the neem tree,



and in this corner here *[Zarina compares a photograph to the drawing of the floor plan of the house]* we had a tank with goldfish, it was a huge tank. A cake of soap fell into the tank once and all the fish died, so we made a little *machli-ki-kabar*, a graveyard for the fish.

I was born in this house, like my other two siblings. We all were born here and grew up in this house. And because my mother seldom ventured out on the other side, the so-called *baher-ka-kamra*, we stayed on this side of the house with her. My mother kept purdah and when she moved to Pakistan it slowly disappeared. I don't know where. I don't think she even travelled in a *burqa*. They took a train

from Aligarh, maybe she brought the burqa up to the station. I think it travelled, but it was packed somewhere. I don't think there was a discussion about it, it just happened.

Pakistan changed Muslim society a lot, especially the people who came from India. They left their values behind ... I remember when my father moved to Lahore and I went to visit him, I was shocked to see him go shopping. He went to a store to pick a few things. That side of my father I had never seen. I know he regretted the decision to move to Pakistan for the rest of his life. Somehow it hurt him a lot. I still don't know how because we don't talk about those things. You can always explain things, but I didn't ask him because I didn't want to hurt him.

* * *

There were rumours that Aligarh would be razed to the ground, it would be burnt. One night we heard some noise, we went out and far away we could see some villagers walking. Everybody collected in our house. We didn't know what to expect. We had never experienced violence, we were scared. Then nothing happened and everyone went home. So we didn't see any violence, except once after the Partition. We went through Darya Ganj – we could see dead bodies and there was the stench of rotting bodies. My sister says that she saw somebody on a bicycle with a sword – at that age you don't remember. But I do remember that stench and I do remember the dead bodies. It was my mother's bright idea that we should go to Pakistan for safety, at least until things settled down.

So for years I had a love-hate relationship with Aligarh. I would not go because I thought it had hurt me a lot, like Partition, like Pakistan. All these relationships in my life are very complicated. I don't know how to explain it. I see my sister who grew up in India, and sometimes during *Diwali* or *Raksha Bandhan* or *Holi* she is glued to the TV.[4] For her it is home, for me she is home and I am a home (and a country) which she lost.

Nobody in my family died, nobody lost too much property, but there are hidden hurts that stay with you. When you go back and if you are wearing a *shalwar kameez*, someone says, "Oh, you look like a Pakistani," or they ask, "Are you a Pakistani?" It is a Punjabi dress, it is not a Muslim dress, nor a Pakistani dress. It doesn't really matter, but I think I am very sensitive to it, because I feel almost every Muslim in India is identified as a Pakistan sympathizer. I find it very hurtful that someone can question my loyalty. But then I didn't know what was to come ...

NOTES

1 All locations of pogroms post-Partition.
2 We learnt to live life by looking through this window.
3 We are the dwellers of this wretched space.
4 Zarina refers to the three main Hindu festivals.

Biladi, biladi![1]

SENAN ABDELQADER/SAMI MICHAEL

(Recorded: Haifa, 2008)

SAMI: Do you want the first house?

SENAN: *I'm interested in making comparisons, when someone moves from one environment to another, how their memory "lives" this move. Like you said, today you are in what would be considered a modern apartment, in a political situation in Israel where you can see Akka from here. Maybe if I try to imagine the home you were born in.*

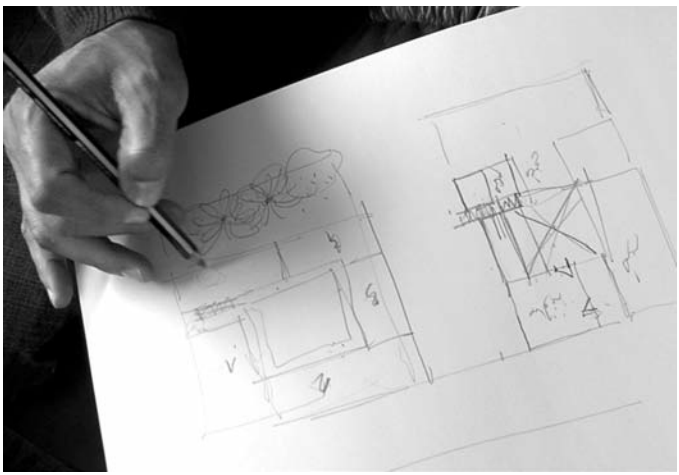
SAMI: The home I was born in is very old – the same house my grandfather and grandmother were born in. The most distinct thing about the house is it's traditional, in the sense that many families lived in it around an open courtyard. I was a child, so for me the number of people who lived in the house, not the sense of the house, was its essence.

SENAN: *I want to know from you, when you imagine the house, how you remember entering the house.*

SAMI: I imagine a street, very tight – a very tight alley three people couldn't go through together. I remember there was a window and people sitting there, like me

and you, could talk. They called this house Im *Jeddi*, or *Beit* Michael.

SENAN: ***OK, we've gone into the courtyard – what do you see? More than one room, or one room?***

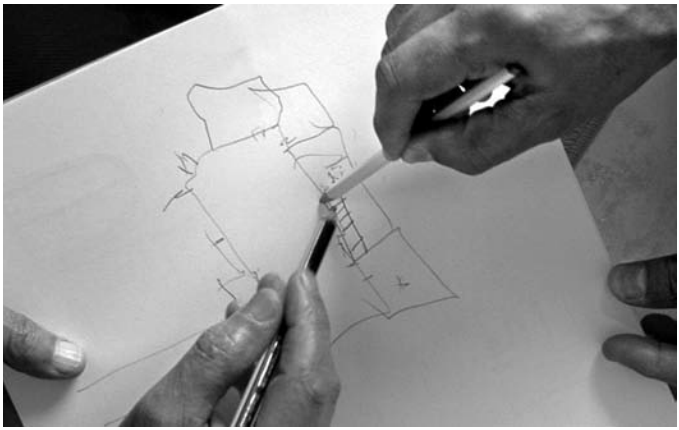


Conversation between Senan Abdelqader and Sami Michael, Haifa, 2008. Video stills. Images: Issa Freij.

SAMI: I see to the right an overhang, an open room for the courtyard. Like a sitting room for receiving people, for guests who would come from abroad. And this is furnished and has seating. There is one wall open to the courtyard. From there a door opens to face the rooms.

SENAN: ***The rooms are on the right or the left?***

SAMI: Give me the paper. This is an alley, this is the toilet, here, like this. And the sitting room is here. This is the courtyard that is open, you enter the courtyard like this and, like we said, this is toward the sitting room. From the sitting room there



is another room, as I remember. Here there are stairs that go down to the basement. Another family here, and another family here.

SENAN: ***In this first house there are four families, yes?***

SAMI: Maybe there was another family.

SENAN: ***So when you were eight years old, you moved to the second house.***

SAMI: The second house was all one family. It was on proper planned streets like German planning, all straight ***[mumbling]*****. Everyone has their own garden, house and door.**

I remember while riding my bicycle, singing ***Biladi Biladi, "My country, my country"*****– it was the most beautiful song. This is my land, my country – I have a feeling of historical depth, that I have existed in this place for 2500 years, before Christianity. This continuity gives historical depth to my existence here.**

SENAN: *How was such historical depth reflected in your feelings?*

SAMI: I was rich. I belonged to the middle class and I had the feeling that my ancestors had been here even before Islam, before Christianity, and we will live here forever. This feeling was deep within me, I did not see others as enemies or as a threat to my existence.

SENAN: *There's something here that catches my attention on the subject of building and architecture. My education is in architecture in Germany, but in the end my culture is originally Arab. That is the environment I grew up in, even though I was born during the Israeli period. While growing up I was affected by buildings around me. My father added to our building, it was modern in the Bauhaus style of Tel Aviv. He even used an Ashkenazi architect at that time. When I went to Europe to study architecture, all of the techniques, language and writings were Western. So I understand your move from Arab culture, plus your Jewish roots, religious and otherwise. However, to write in another language, which in practical terms is new, you need to create new tools.*

SAMI: I pull and take memories with me in writing. In my writing there are three strands: the Eastern, Iraqi strand; the strand of relationships between Arabs and Jews; and the strand of clashes between Eastern and Western Jews within Israel. These three topics are what interest me. There is no intellectual who can live at the linguistic and political border between two nations. Half of me is Arab, and half Israeli.

SENAN: *At what point did you go from writing in Arabic to Hebrew?*

SAMI: **I stopped writing in Arabic when I left the Communist Party. I had been disappointed in the Communists because of the corruption. I saw that people considered some of these books Israeli literature, and Israelis didn't read them because they considered them Arab literature. I felt it was possible to transfer from one language to another. I created new techniques in Hebrew, I entered Arabic expressions into the Hebrew language. It was as if I created a new language.**

SENAN: *Where is the Jewish between the two?*

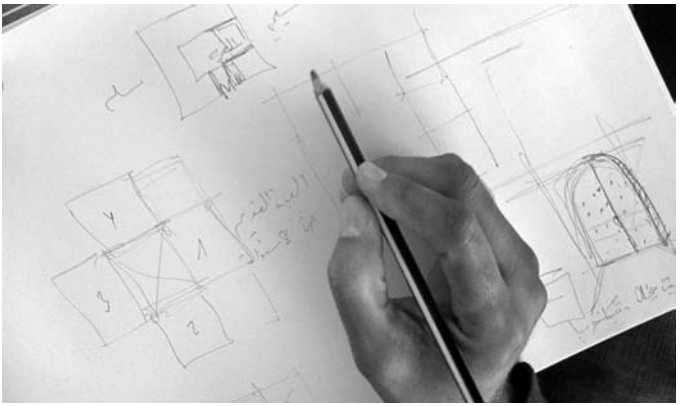
SAMI: **The Jewish [*inaudible*] that used to be with me in Iraq. For me, until today, [in terms of] my presence, my person and my thinking, I am living between two worlds.**

SENAN: *I want to ask you something, I hope it is not ... how do you interpret me as a Palestinian on the inside [living in Israel]?*

SAMI: **I always have a feeling that Eastern Israelis have enemies that are more obvious than those of Western Israelis. For you to prove that you are Israeli, you have to be an enemy of the Arabs. This is the sickness of all the Israeli settlers and new arrivals. I never walked down those paths, that new culture. *Tuzzz*, to hell with it!**

SENAN: *I want to get back to the subject of the house – I still don't understand. I'm going to ask you to specify how I can draw. This salon had its doors to the courtyard*?

SAMI: It had two doors, a door from here, and a door from here.



SENAN: ***The house you described here – this is something important, we started with this question today. You started with the topic of views – Haifa, seeing Akka. I think that the issue is not only the way you see things around you, the issue is your relation with origin. My childhood was all about neighbourhood – I lived in Al Taybeh in a housh, I was not aware of the views then, we did not have any view. Our house in Al Taybeh was in the old city, with a court at the centre surrounded by rooms. The most important thing was how we used to play as children in this housh.***

... but, for you, the first thing you talked about was the view, you didn't talk about the neighbours.

SAMI: I liked the view because it was Iraq.

SENAN: ***What is important for me to know, for example, as a father of a seventeen-year-old son Omar, and Sara, sixteen – I'm always asked for their identity cards. You passed this***

issue quickly by saying that you didn't interfere with identities. I can't imagine – for me this issue always worried me.

SAMI: I will answer in a simple way. I don't care about identities. What are identities?

SENAN: *Now, here you are speaking about something I see in a different way. I'm talking about a crisis we are living through nowadays. It consists of the issue of being open to the world as a whole from one side – our songs, our culture, our clothes, our food. You are not talking about these things from an Arabic point of view, nor as a Hebrew, nor even an American.*

SAMI: Yes – global.

SENAN: *But when I look at my sons and daughters, I notice they are more flexible in this issue – they don't have such difficulties. I'm not talking about the religious side of it, I know it is a complicated issue by itself.*

This is my question for you: have you never felt that your children were lost, that their connection to you was broken? How do you see this?

SAMI: For me as a father, it was important to teach my children that you are a human being and any other human is equal to you. There is no difference between East or West, Muslim or Christian, Palestinian or Israeli. See the human side, not the Arab or the Israeli.

NOTES

1 My country, my country

Places that belong to no one

GULZAR HAIDER

(Recorded: Lahore, 2007)

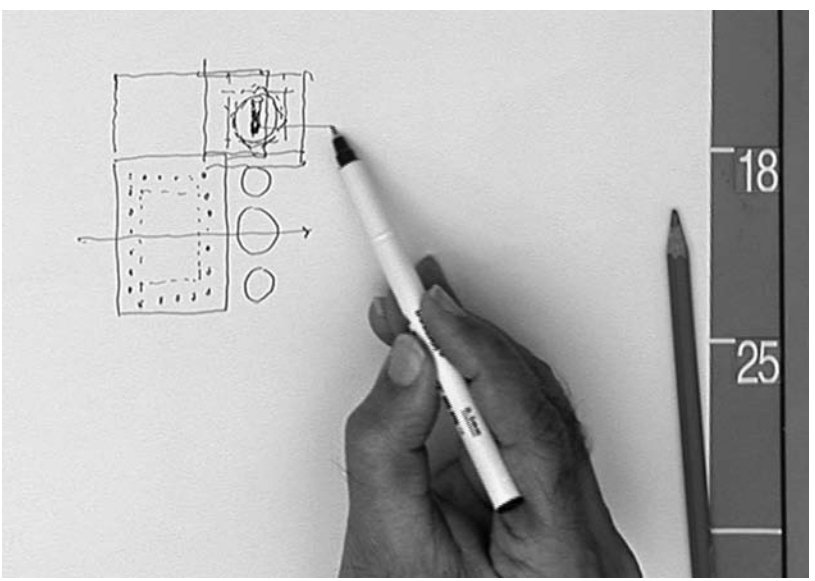
The history of the village is that it was the shrine of a saint who had come from Iraq, from the city of Baghdad – one of the descendants of Abdul Kader Al-Jillali. He was a famous *sufi* saint from the line of the Prophet through his grandson Hassan. He had come to India and settled in the early eighteenth century. These wandering mystics would always stay in places that belonged to no one. They would not be somebody's guests, they would not be a burden on anybody, but at night-time would camp at graveyards on the riverbanks. He happened to be camping at the place for the cremation of the Hindus, called *Shamshan* in the local language. A sign was given to him: he got up at dawn for his prayers and in his pitcher there was no more water. This was the sign that this is where he should stay. So he stayed there and started to preach about Islam and humanity, love and brotherhood and all that stuff. And by 1947 when the Partition happened, there was a large village.

One of the members of the court of the Mughal emperor, *Jahangir*, had become his disciple. So when he died, this minister built

an incredible shrine on his grave. And that shrine became a centre, a magnet for villagers from all around, even as far as Sindh and Baluchistan. The village was in northern India, close to the Kashmir border, in the district of Gurdaspur. And this village still thrives!

* * *

My earliest serious recollection of our village comes from, I would say, 1946–47. I was seven years old. We went to the wedding of one of my nieces, who was much older than I. And what I remember is ***[Gulzar starts drawing]*** **that there was a beautiful courtyard like this. Alongside are the colonnades. If I can recall, the columns are on all four sides and there is a courtyard open to the sky, like this. Here you have a dome, and there you have two smaller**



(This page and overleaf): Conversation between Sophie Ernst and Gulzar Haider, Lahore, 2007. Video stills. Images: Asif Khan.

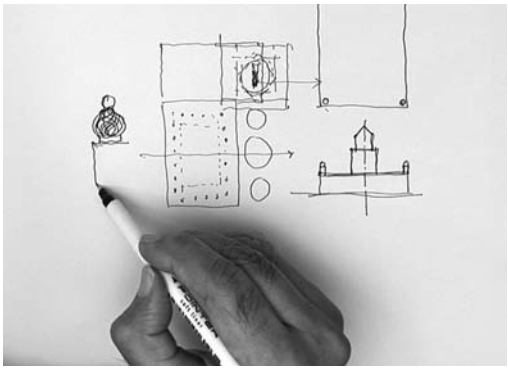
domes. This was the Mughal genre of a certain kind of space. The dotted line is for the open courtyard – open to the sky. These are all columns, there always seemed to be a lot of them and we would run around them playing in the shade.

This was the mosque, facing to the west, towards Mecca. I think it was not as simple a plan as this, but there was a tomb here, and there was a grave where he was – his grave. Let me now remember – his face must have been – let me draw this. Let's make layered drawings. There was a beautiful dome on top with his grave in the middle. This is an eight-sided dome. His body lies somewhere here, with his face turned towards Mecca. The body is at 90 degrees to the Mecca axis, the face turned to the right. That is what we had heard: on the day of judgement the body rises, testifying, "Yes, I was directed to you."

* * *

And this I remember was the chamber of mystery. Mystery in the sense that there was always some incense burning, there would be candles. The grave was on a platform like this. If this is the floor, what I remember very clearly is that on this platform were four objects. We would just hold them and wonder – they were beautifully carved little pieces, these four corner posts. Marble. They were like crossing spirals, like an onion – yes, I still remember that touch.

I still remember very clearly that the grave was covered with a very beautifully embroidered green cloth. This would be the upper part *[draws]*, with a bit of a gable. People would be sitting around the grave.



Somebody would be actually putting their head onto the grave. Resting their head talking to the *Baba*, saying, "My son is not doing well," or "Granddaughter is not well," "So and so is not getting a job," "Please." It's like an intercession – a prayer.

There were pigeons. I remember smoke. You would have these little flower pots sitting here, they would look like little vases with the incense burning. There would be smoke – I was too young to remember what the dome felt like. There was quite a bit of mystery because of the way that the light came in, and the smoke and pigeons inside the dome. Do you have any experience of the sound of pigeons? They make a wonderful sound, they are humming. They must have been sitting on a roof platform of some sort.

That is the memory of this particular precinct. And now, once we are outside the precinct, there were some other layers of what we call *musafir khana*'s. Musafir means the "traveller", musafir khana is a place for travellers. People who would come and visit the shrines would stay here for a few days and they would have chambers like this. There is a small tree here and a little

pond of water for performing ablutions. They would stay in these chambers for the few days they were visiting the shrine.

I was in Chandigarh last year, as part of an official visit, and I met a young woman. She complimented me on my Punjabi dialect, "You speak very good Punjabi." I said, "Well, I am from this region," and she said, "Where are you from?" I replied, "I am from Massanian." She just helplessly came forward and hugged me. And she said, "Oh, you are from Massan Sharif." Massan Sharif means that it is a sacred place.

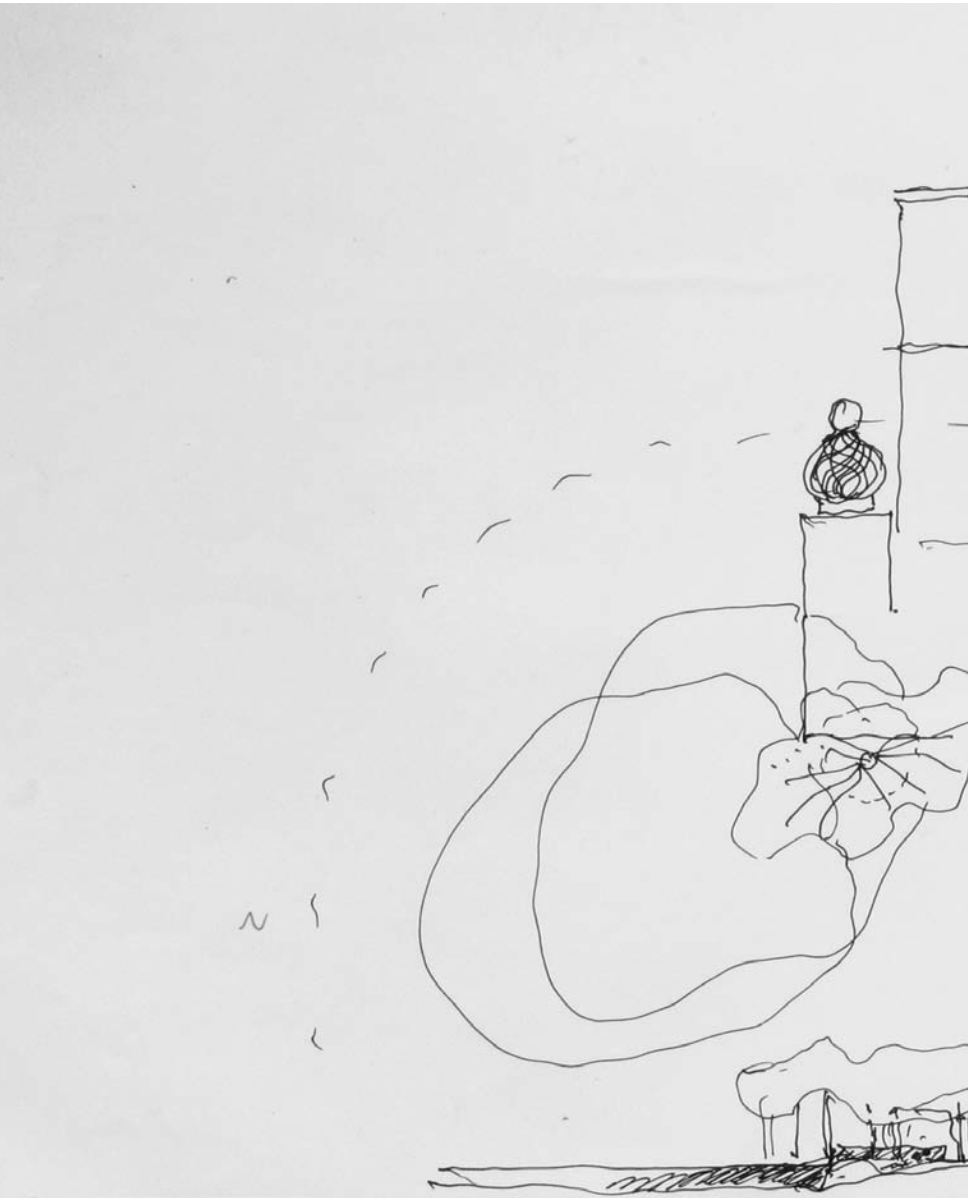
* * *

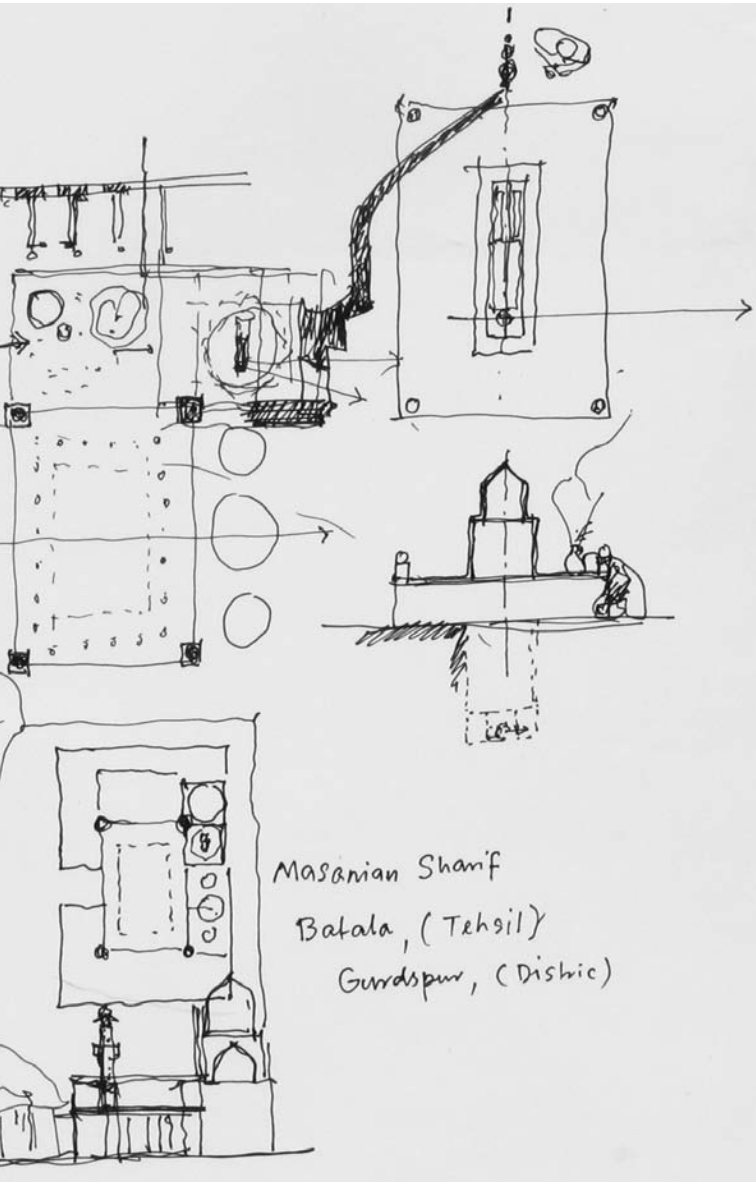
This particular world – this courtyard in front of the shrine was all the domain of the people: women, men, children, everybody, because you were visiting the saint. Women would not be wandering around this courtyard near the mosque. I don't recall if there was a separate door here that brought you into the courtyard and to the shrine, I forget now. By the way, the legend was that one of the *minaret*s had a *djinn* living in it, who was a servant of the saint. So we as children would be scared by our mother: "Don't be a bad boy because the djinn will come and do this." That was an additional mystery, a djinn living in one of these minarets. The door to that minaret was always closed.

* * *

The beauty of the story of the migration of our family is this. There were tons of massacres of refugees on both sides. In our case the entire village was escorted by the Sikhs, who were the enemies – they were

Drawing by Gulzar Haider of Masanian Sharif, Lahore, 2007. *HOME* archive. *(overleaf)*



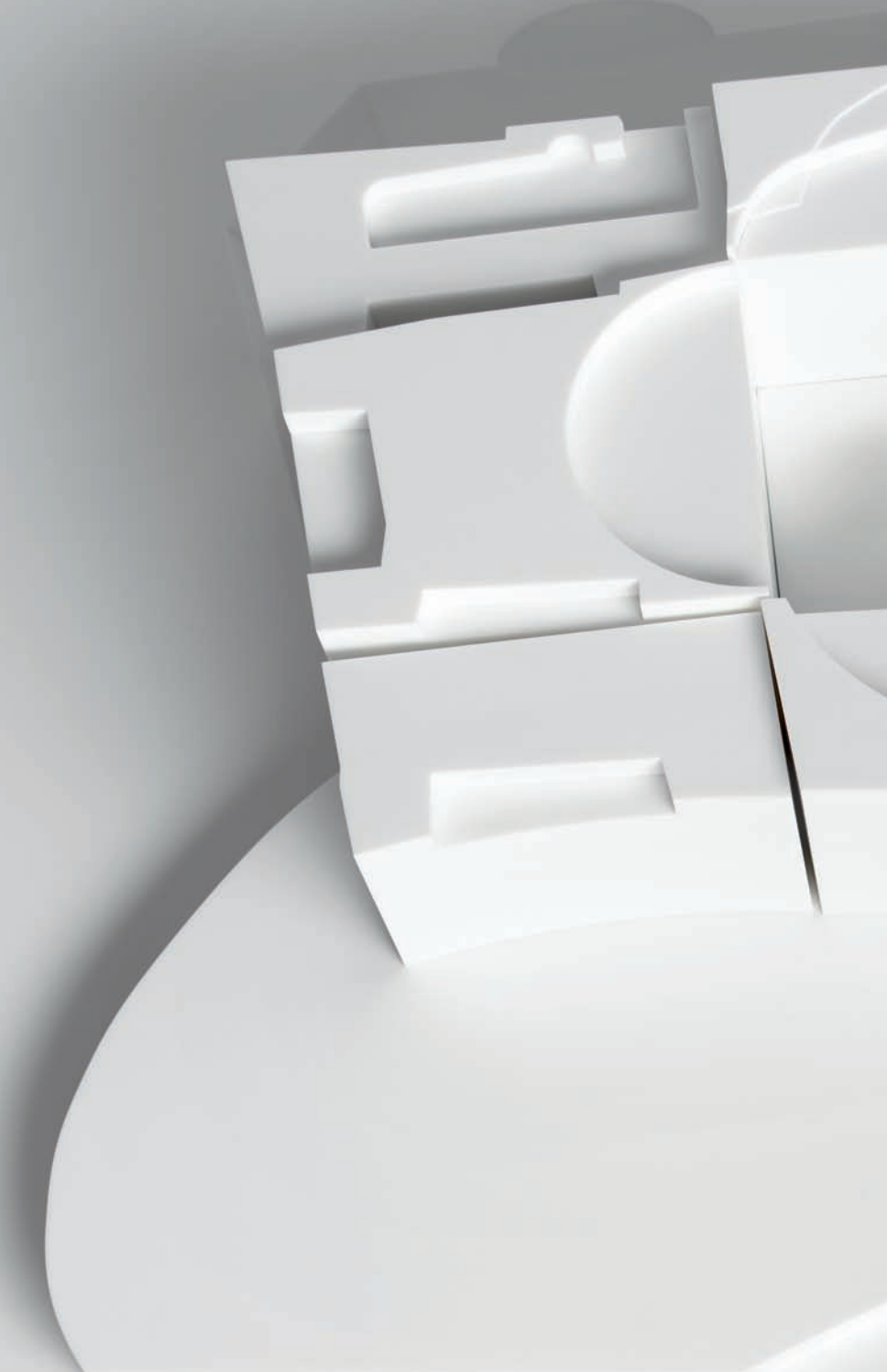


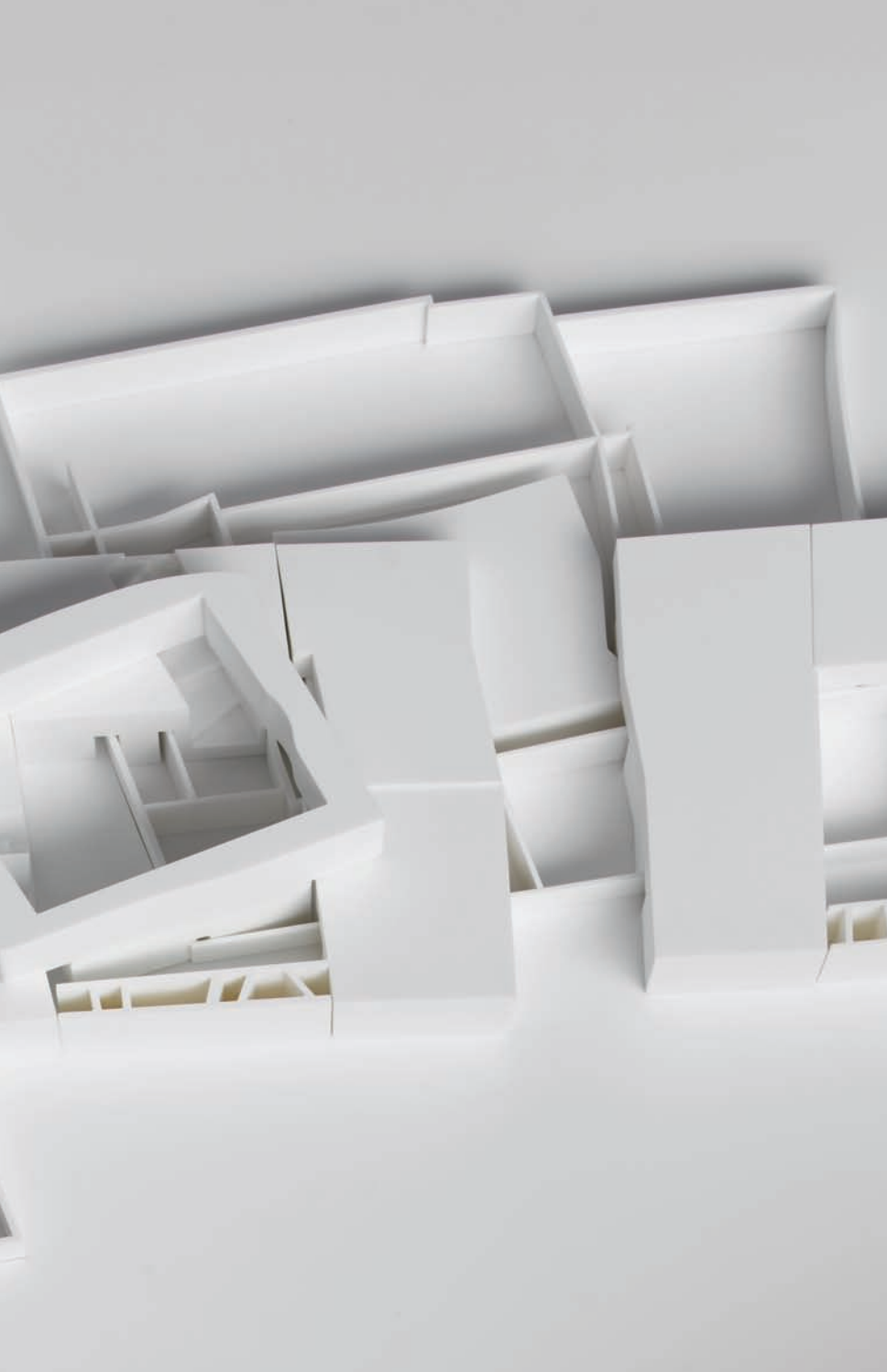
Masanian Sharif
Batala, (Tehsil)
Gurdspur, (Dishic)

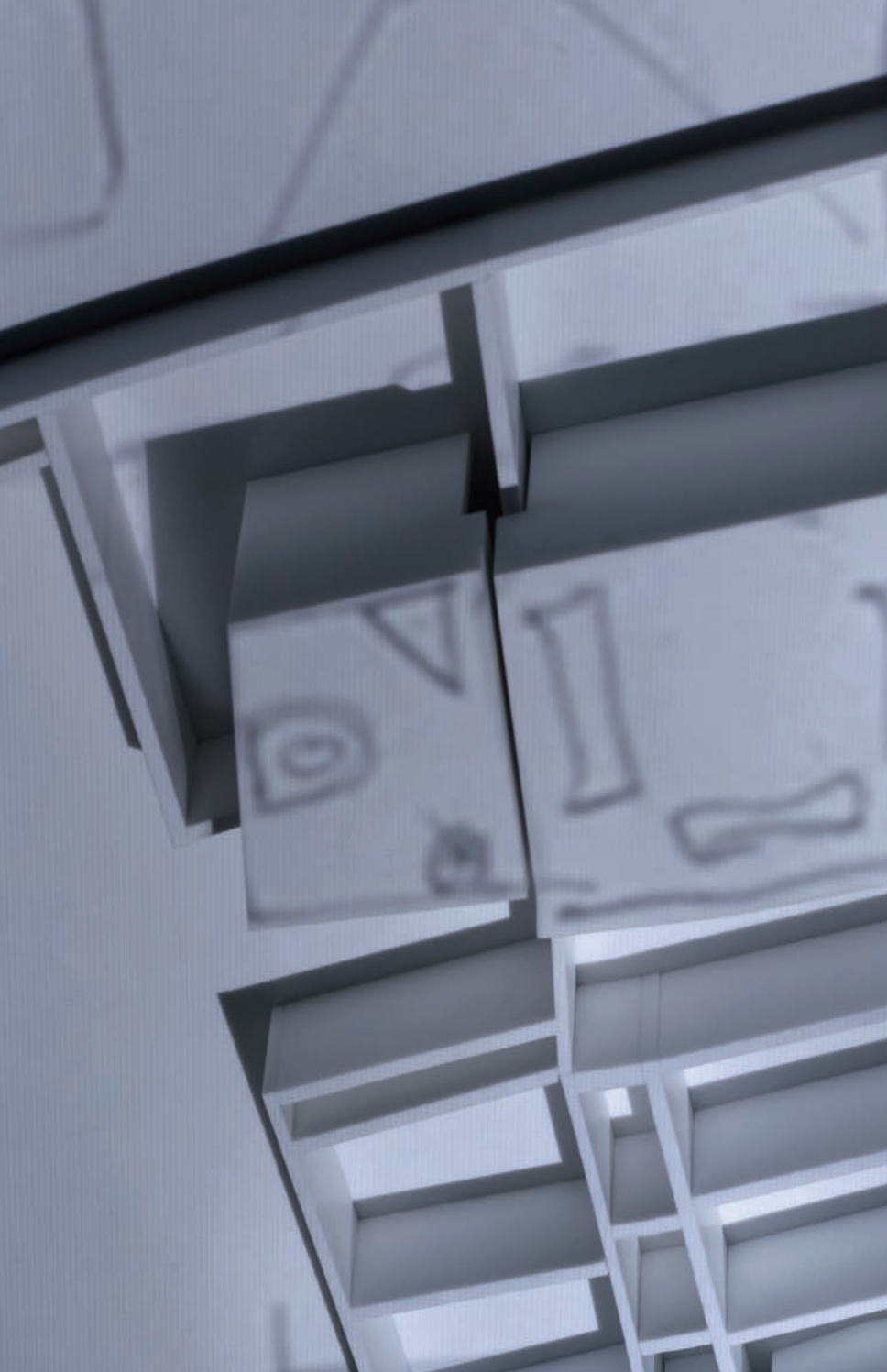
murdering some other village. But in this case, the children of the Baba were escorted by the Sikhs all the way, they brought us to the border. I mean, I was not part of that caravan. My elder sister-in-law was there. She was a young woman at the time and happened to be in the village. My brother was at this side – the village is near the border. At the border there was a very emotional scene, because they [the Sikhs] were seeing off their patron saint's children. They couldn't help it, because this was the only way of safe delivery across the border. Only one man died and it's a wonderful story how he died. He had a wife who was a tough woman and was very possessive about a particular cow that had been left at the village. She said, "I won't let you into my room if you don't bring me back my cow." I think he probably consoled her, "Your cow is coming with us." When she realised that the cow was not with them, she said, "You go back and bring that cow." So the poor guy went back alone. And now there was nobody there to identify him, to protect him, and of course they found out that he was a Muslim, and of course he got caught into all that – there were these tit-for-tat massacres on both sides and he just ... So the only person we lost during the migration of our village was that man.

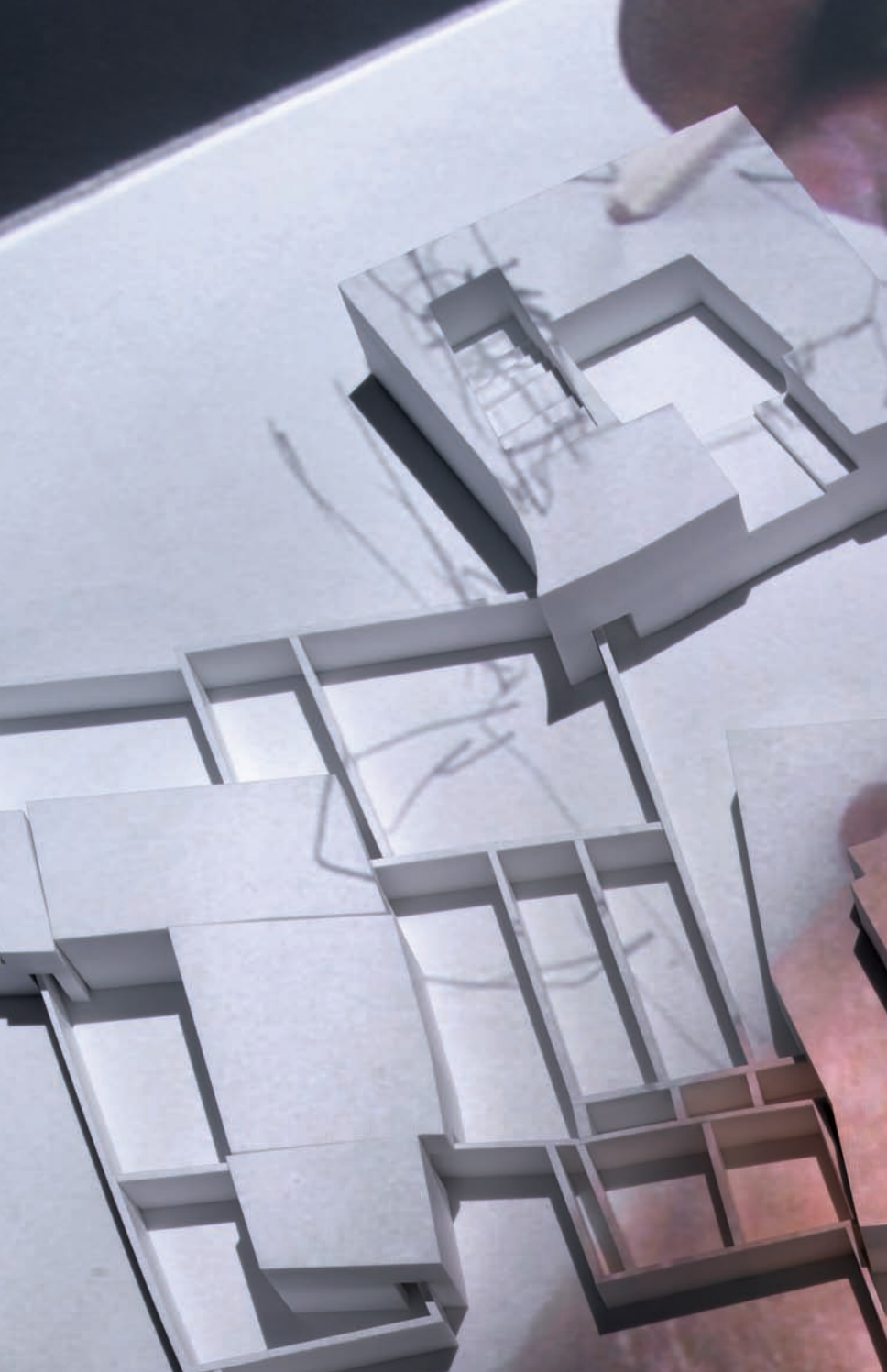
Colour plates

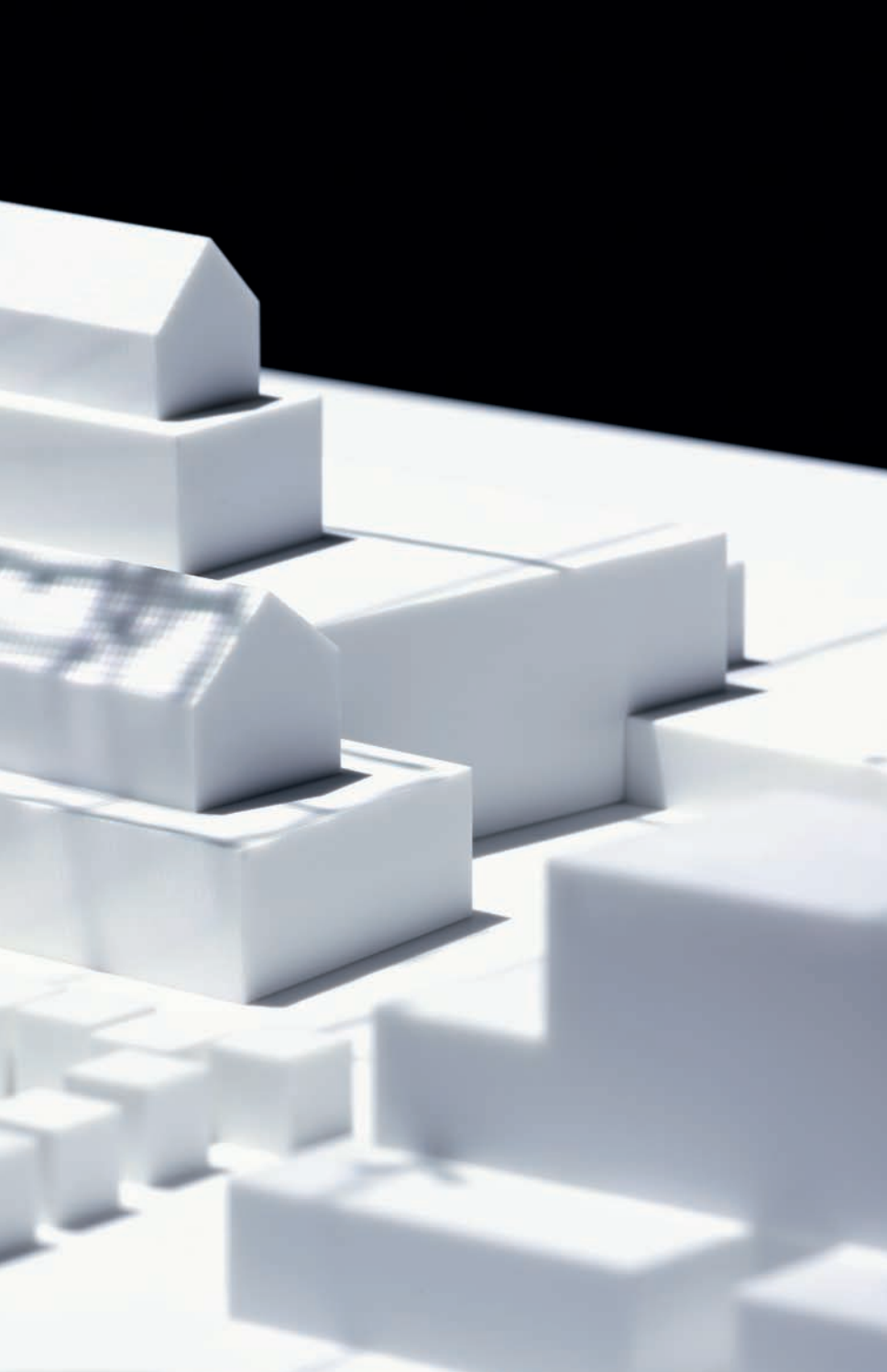
Sophie Ernst, *HOME*, 2011. Video sculptures. Photos: Felix Krebs. *(following)*

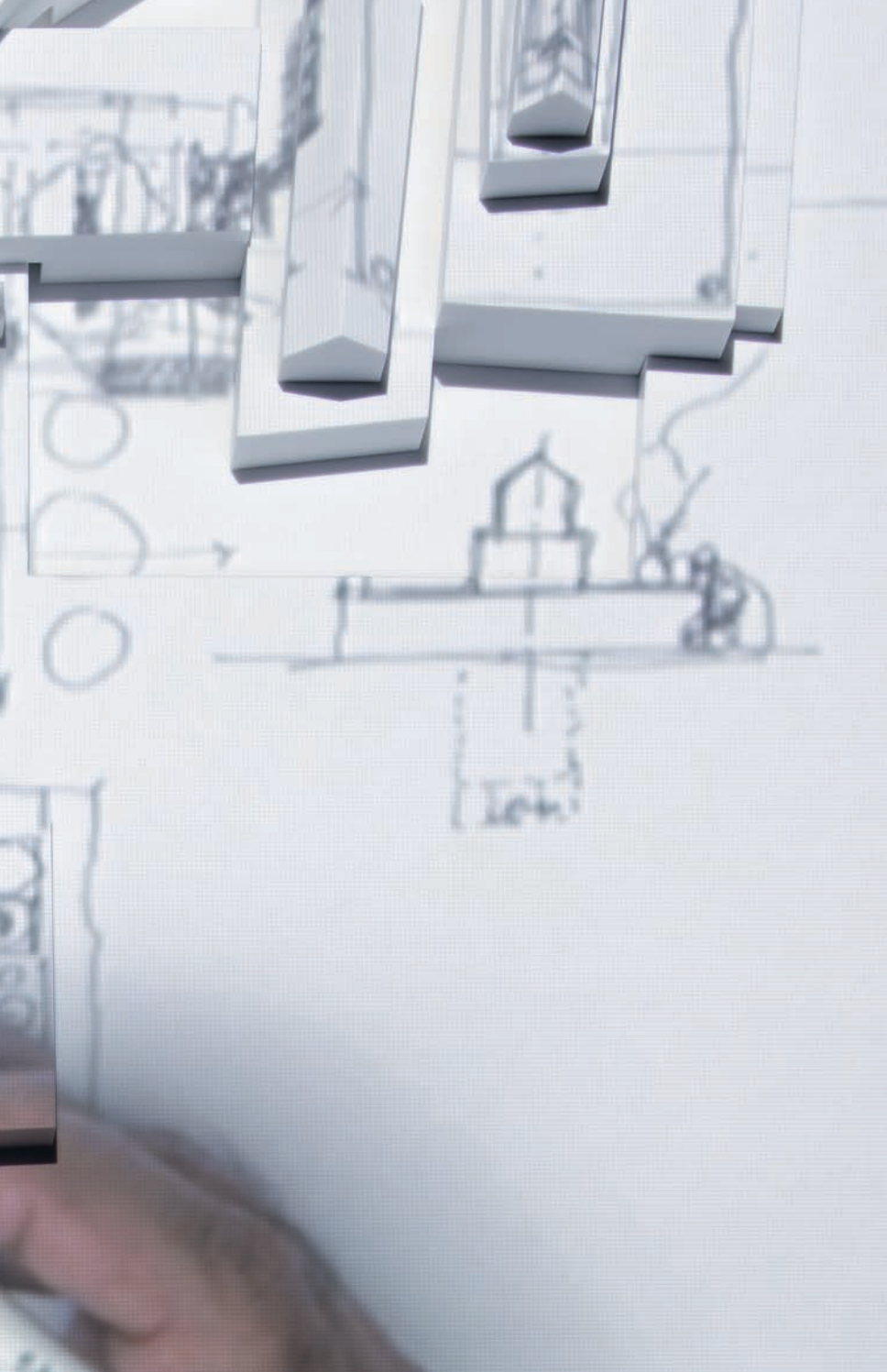


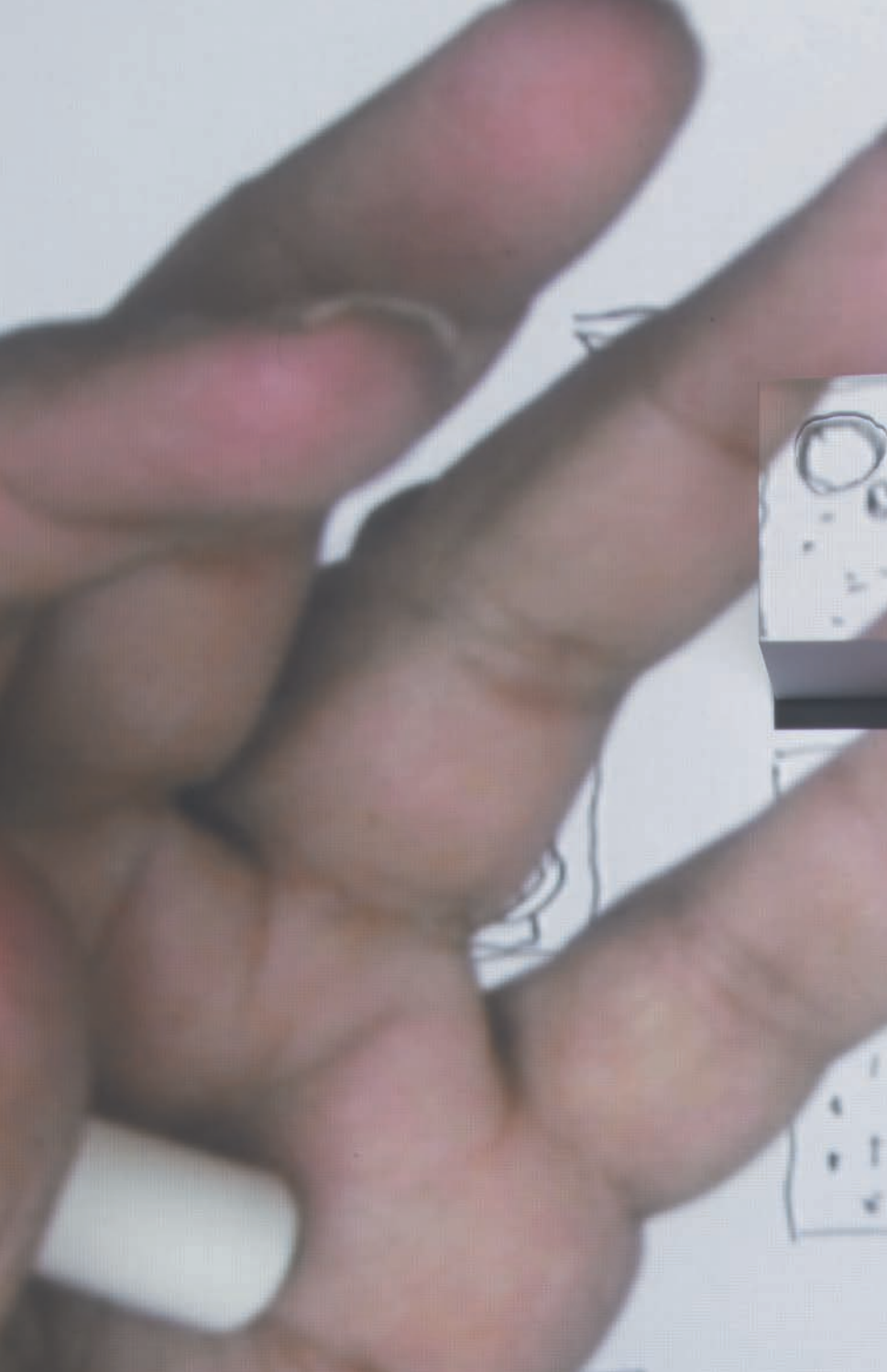












Glossary

'48: 1948 is the year of the Arab-Israeli war, known in Israel as the War of Independence, Palestinians refer to it as the Nakbah (see *Nakbah*)

1967: date of the so-called Six-Day war between Israel and Jordan, Egypt and Syria. After the war a large number of Palestinians were exiled. Many fled from the West Bank and Gaza to Jordan. Following the war, Jewish minorities in Arab countries were attacked and faced expulsion from their homelands

Abu Ammar: see *Arafat, Yasser*

Alf laylah wa-laylah *(ar.)*: *One Thousand and One Nights*

Al Husseini family: a prominent Jerusalemite family

Al Husseini, Haj Amin: (1895/7–1974) Grand Mufti of Jerusalem till '48, who held close ties with the Nazis. Died in Lebanon

Allenby bridge: also King Hussein crossing is the border crossing between Jordan and Israel

Arafat, Yasser: (1929–2004) leader of the Palestinian independence movement

Arz-e-maood *(ur.)*: promised land

Ashkenazi[m] *(hebr.)*: medieval name for Jewish communities along the Rhine, generally referring to European Jews

ashrafis *(ur.)*: gold coins

Baba *(ur.)*: father, an affectionate term used for a father figure, including a saint

baher-ka-kamra *(ur.)*: (lit) the room on the outside, a room to receive guests

baila *(ur.)*: jasmin flower

bajora *(ar.)*: orange grove

banair *(ur.)*: parapet, low wall

barahdari *(ur.)*: (lit.) space where one could place 12 mats, a space to socialize, meeting place

baramda *(ur.)*: veranda

barsaat *(ur.)*: rainy season, monsoon

basti *(ur.)*: hamlet or neighbourhood

batin *(ar.)*: the inner self. *Zahir* and *batin* – the apparent and the hidden

Bauhaus: Senan refers to the white city, the central Tel Aviv modernist architecture that was built by German immigrant architects in the 1930s

beit *(ar.)*: house

Biladi, biladi *(ar.)*: Sami may be referring to the song *Biladi, biladi, biladi* (My country, my country, my country) composed by Egyptian singer Sayed Darwish in 1923, which became the Egyptian national anthem. "Biladi, biladi" is also the beginning of the Palestinian national anthem

Burnt Shadows: a novel by Kamila Shamsie (2009)

burqa *(ur.)*: a loose, full-body veil

chandni-ka-kamra *(ur.)*: (lit.) a moonlit room, a room with white floor-sheets

chauki *(ur.)*: post

chhannakna *(ur.)*: loud jangling

Constable, John: (1776–1837) English romantic landscape painter

dallan *(ur.)*: large, long room with vaulted doors

Darwish, Mahmoud: (1941–2008) seen as the national poet of Palestine

dastango: storyteller, from Persian/Mughal tradition of courtly storytelling

dharna *(hind.)*: protest

dheori *(ur.)*: doorpost, hallway

dhol *(ur.)*: drum

Diwali *(hind.)*: Hindu festival of lights

djinn *(ur.)*: genie or spirit

Dome of the Rock: mosque on Al-Haram ash-Sharif or Temple Mount, built in the seventh century

dupatta *(ur.)*: long scarf worn by women, which can be worn over the head as a veil or draped over the shoulders

fazzaha! *(ar.)*: (exclamation) amazement

gerua *(hind.)*: pigment, brownish orange mud

ghar *(ur.)*: home

ghazal *(ur.)*: song in poetic form

ghurouncha *(ur.)*: wooden stand

ghurra *(ur.)*: earthen water vessel

gotta *(ur.)*: ribbon (metallic)

halwaai *(ur.)*: sweet-meat vendor

Holi *(hind.)*: Hindu festival of colours

Holocaust *(gr.)*: also called Shoah (Hebrew meaning catastrophe), was the killing of 6 million European Jews during World War II

h'ourmi *(ar.)*: sacred

housh *(ar.)*: courtyard house

hud-e-fasil *(ur.)*: intermediary

Hyder, Qurratulain: (1928–2007) influential Urdu writer who wrote *Aag ka Darya (River of Fire)*

ikkay *(ur.)*: animal-driven cart
imlee *(ur.)*: tamarind
Jahangir: (1569–1627) ruler of the Mughal Empire
Jamia Millia: Jamia Millia Islamia, university in Delhi established in 1920. Jamia means university, Millia means national
Jeddi *(ar.)*: grandfather
kahani *(ur.)*: story
khertaals *(ur.)*: castanets
khus ki tatty *(ur.)*: curtains of khus roots (vetiver) sprinkled with water to cool the house
kiaries *(ur.)*: fence, flowerbeds
kibbutz *(hebr.)*: Israeli village community organized as collective
Kidwai, Anis: (1906–1982) born in 1906 in Barabanki (Uttar Pradesh), Kidwai wrote an influential memoir about the time of Partition – *Azadi ki Chhao Mein* (*In Freedom's Shade*)
kinary *(ur.)*: laces
kissa *(ur.)*: anecdote
knafeh *(ar.)*: sweet vermicelli pastry
koel *(ur.)*: Asian cuckoo
kothri *(ur.)*: small store room
Krishan Nagar: neighbourhood of central Lahore named after Krishna Temple, predominantly Hindu before Partition
Krishna: avatar of the Hindu God Vishnu, seen as author of *Bhagavad Gita*
kungni *(ur.)*: ridge
laban *(ar.)*: yogurt
Lal Chowk: central city square in Srinagar, Kashmir
Laxman ji: brother and close companion of Lord Ram
liwan *(ar.)*: front hall or portal to a house, often open to the outside
lutha *(ur.)*: cotton
machli-ki-kabar *(ur.)*: the grave of a fish
Mahabharat: Indian epic
Maharaja *(hind.)*: king
Mahmoud: see *Darwish*
makan *(ur.)*: house
makhda' (ar.): partition, separate room
Malka *(ur.)*: Queen
Mamlukis: originally Turkic slave soldiers who were influential as a warrior class until the nineteenth century. They governed the Sultanate of Delhi and Egypt for centuries
mandir *(hind.)*: temple
manjeera *(ur.)*: percussion instrument
markaz *(ur.)*: centre
masjid *(ur.)*: mosque
Masnavi: six books of poetry written in the thirteenth century by Persian Sufi poet Jalal Al-Din Rumi
minaret *(ur.)*: tower
Mizrahi *(hebr.)*: from the Jewish communities of the East, among others, the Jewish community of Iraq
motiya *(ur.)*: jasmine flower
Mughal[s]: Central Asians who settled in India from the Middle Ages onwards, the Mughal Empire in the Indian Subcontinent from Babur (1526) till Bahadur Shah (1857)
Muharram *(ur.)*: first month in the Islamic calendar, Shia month of mourning
Mukhtar *(ar.)*: chosen, village head
mulmul *(ur.)*: muslin, fabric
musafir khana *(ur.)*: guesthouse
Nakbah *(ar.)*: catastrophe, refers to the Palestinian displacements of 1948
Nana *(ur.)*: maternal grandfather
Nani *(ur.)*: maternal grandmother
neem, neem-ka-pedh *(ur.)*: Indian lilac tree from the mahogany family
Ockley, Simon: (1678–1720) British orientalist
Oslo: refers to the Oslo accords between the PLO and Israeli government in 1993, post Oslo a great number of Palestinians refugees returned
Ottoman: (Turkish) Empire that lasted from 1299 to 1923
Partition: 1947 division of the Indian Subcontinent into the two states of India and Pakistan
Purana Qila: the old fort in Delhi
purdah *(ur.)*: segregation, a veil
purdah karlijie *(ur.)*: request to put on a veil
qanater *(ar.)*: arch
Radha: lover of Lord Krishna
raha *(ar.)*: sweet
Raja *(hind.)*: monarch
Raja Inder: Indra, Lord of heavens, Hindu mythology
Raja Ram Chander ji: Ramachandra, avatar of the Hindu god Vishnu
Raksha Bandhan *(hind.)*: Hindu festival which celebrates the relationship between brothers and sisters
Ramayana: Hindu epic
Ram Chander ji's bara'at *(hind.)*: wedding procession of Lord Ram
Ramlila *(hind.)*: re-enactment of the life of Lord Ram
Rani *(ur.)*: queen
rath *(ur.)*: cart, chariot
rickshaw *(ur.)*: three-wheeler taxi
riyaaz *(ur.)*: practice

roti *(ur.)*: flat bread
sabjis *(hind.)*: vegetables
sach *(ar.)*: correct, truth
Sahib *(ur.)*: (form of address) your Grace, sir
Salah ad-Din: Saladin (c. 1138–1193), Kurdish Sultan who opposed European crusaders
sehen *(ur.)*: courtyard
shalwar kameez *(ur.)*: traditional dress made up of baggy trousers and long shirt, common in Punjab
Shammout, Ismael: (1930–2006) Palestinian painter born in Lydda, exiled in 1948, famous for his work on the Nakbah
Shamshan *(hind.)*: cremation ground
Sheikh *(ar.)*: (lit.) elder, a political or religious leader
sindian *(ar.)*: oak tree
Sita ji: wife of Lord Ram
sufi *(ur.)*: Muslim mystic
sungs *(ur.)*: musical instrument
surahi *(ur.)*: pitcher
Syed Buzurg: old sage
taashas *(ur.)*: percussion instrument
tehzeeb *(ur.)*: culture
Teta *(ar.)*: grandmother
tilak *(hind.)*: mark worn on the forehead by Hindus symbolizing the third eye
trab *(ar.)*: sand
Tuma, Emil: (1919–1985) Palestinian political thinker and communist
tuzzz *(ar.)*: (exclamation) to hell with it!
yani *(ar.)*: (expression) well, I see
zahir *(ar.)*: the body (*zahir* and *batin* – the apparent and the hidden)

Caveat: the transcription of Arabic, Hebrew, Hindi and Urdu words used here have been done to the best of my knowledge but may at times be incorrect.

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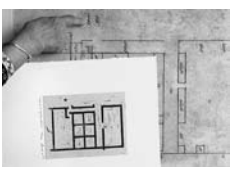

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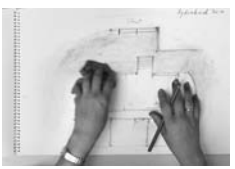

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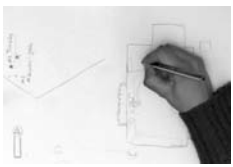

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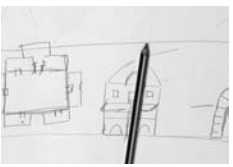

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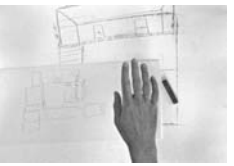

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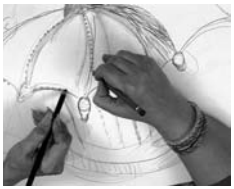
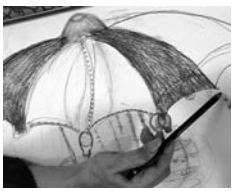
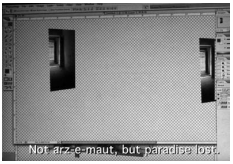




Chatri-walla Ghar



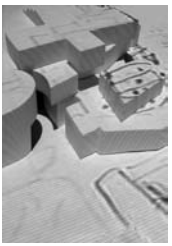
Paradise Lost

HOME (Gulzar)

HOME (Mariam)

HOME (Nalini)

HOME (Zarina)



HOME (Enas)

Chatri-walla Ghar
HDV video, 8:15 min, Karachi, 2007

Paradise Lost
Documentary HD video, 33:00 min, Lahore, 2007

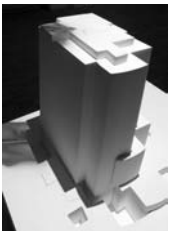
HOME (Gulzar)
Video sculpture, Lahore/ Berlin, 2008

HOME (Mariam)
Video sculpture, Islamabad/ Berlin, 2008

HOME (Nalini)
Video sculpture, Bombay/ Berlin, 2008

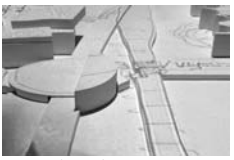
HOME (Zarina)
Video sculpture, Karachi/ Berlin, 2008

HOME (Enas)
Video sculpture, Ramallah/ Berlin, 2009



HOME (Ghada)

HOME (Vera)



HOME (Liana)

HOME (Nalini)

HOME (Sami)

HOME (Senan)

HOME (Intizar, Rashid/Aamer)

HOME (Ghada)
Video sculpture, Ramallah/Berlin, 2009

HOME (Liana)
Video sculpture, Ramallah/Berlin, 2009

HOME (Sami)
Video sculpture, Ramallah/Berlin, 2009

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HOME (Nalini)
Video sculpture
Bombay/Berlin, 2012

HOME (Intizar/Rashid, Aamer)
HDV video, Lahore/Berlin, 2012

Displays of *HOME*

2012

"HOME", Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield, UK
"Lines of Control", the Johnson Museum of Art, Ithaca, USA

2011

"Nieuwe Vragen/New Questions", Koninklijke Academie Beeldende Kunsten, Den Haag, NL
"Landscape//Place", Green Cardamom, Art Dubai, UAE
"Lines of Control", British Council, London, UK

2010

"HOME", Humboldt Universität, Berlin, D (solo show)
"Memento", 401Contemporary, Berlin, D

2009

"HOME" (Zarina), Babusch, Berlin, D (solo show)
"Monitoring", Dokfest, Kassel, D (awarded the Golden Cube)
Sharjah Biennial 9, Provisions, Sharjah, UAE
"How Nations are Made", Cartwright Hall, Bradford/Manor House, Ilkley, UK
"Lines of Control", VM Gallery, Karachi, PK
"Lines of Control", Green Cardamom, London, UK

2008

"DETOUR" – Third International Video Festival, Cairo, Egypt
"The Punjab: Moving Journeys", Royal Geographical Society, London, UK

2007

"Paradise Lost", Royal Geographical Society, London, UK
"paradise now", Chatterjee & Lal, Bombay, IN (solo show)

List of contributors and interlocutors

Senan Abdelqader
Senan Abdelqader was born in 1962 in Al Taybeh, a Palestinian village in the north of Israel, and works as an architect in Beit Safafa, south Jerusalem, and as head of in+Formal Research Unit at Bezalel University. Contested ideas of identity shape his work and teachings. The in+Formal research group studies informal urban architecture from a multi-disciplinary perspective, seeing these constructions as spatial manifestations of society that expose power relations between those in power and marginal groups.

Nazmi Al-Ju'beh
Nazmi Al-Ju'beh was born in 1955 in old Jerusalem and is a historian, archaeologist and co-director of Riwaq – Centre for Architectural Conservation. Riwaq is concerned with the documentation and conservation of Palestinian architectural heritage and develops projects aimed at community revitalization.

Yazid Anani
Yazid Anani was born in Ramallah in 1975, where he works as an architect and urban planner; he also teaches at the Department of Architecture at Birzeit University. His research interest is the relation between architecture and power in a colonial and postcolonial environment. He contributes to regional groups such as Decolonizing Architecture and Ramallah Syndrome and has (co-)curated several projects.

Liana Badr
Liana Badr was born in Jerusalem in 1950 and raised in Jericho. After being exiled in 1967, she moved from Beirut to Damascus and later to Tunis, before returning to Palestine in 1994. She is a novelist and filmmaker and runs the Cinema and Audiovisual Department at the Palestinian Ministry of Culture in Ramallah.

Nikhil Chopra
Born in 1974 in Calcutta, Nikhil Chopra is a performance artist whose work combines draughtsmanship, life art, installation and photography. Daily rituals play an important part in his practice, as well as personal and collective cultural history through which he examines questions of identity, the role of autobiography, sexuality and nostalgia. His performances are played out in the guise of semi-autobiographical characters such as Yog Raj Chitrakar. This character is loosely based on Nikhil Chopra's grandfather, Yog Raj Chopra, a landscape painter who spent much time painting in Kashmir.

Iftikhar Dadi
Iftikhar Dadi was born in 1961 in Karachi. He is an artist and art historian who teaches at the Department of History of Art and Visual Studies and chairs the Department of Art at Cornell University. Dadi's research examines art as a global and networked practice, particularly the contemporary art of South Asia, the Middle East and their diasporas. His writings, which are informed by theories of modernity, contemporaneity and postcolonialism, include the recent publication *Modernism and the Art of Muslim South Asia*. He also curated the exhibition "Unpacking Europe" at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, among others.

Sophie Ernst
Sophie Ernst was born in Munich in 1972 and grew up in Drenthe, in the northern Netherlands. She trained as an industrial mechanic with BMW before graduating from the Rijksakademie voor Beeldende Kunst in Amsterdam in 2000. Ernst worked as assistant professor at the Beaconhouse National University in Lahore for several years, where she started the *HOME* project. Over the last ten years she has investigated the notion of projection in relation to architecture, memory, culture, historical objects, urban spaces and identity. *HOME* is a long-term project that explores the notion of "ideal space" as a memory of the recent or distant past. In the first stage of the project, in 2006, she explored how artists, writers and filmmakers remembered the places they had left behind during the Partition of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947. In 2008 she extended the project to include architectural memories of Muslim, Christian and Jewish Arabs living in Palestine and Israel, and in 2009 she showed *HOME* as a video installation at the 9th Sharjah Biennial.

The same year, *HOME* was awarded the Golden Cube Award at the 26th Kassel Dokfest for best installation. Since 2009 Ernst has been working towards a PhD at Leiden University in the Netherlands.

Gulzar Haider
Born in what is now Pakistan some ten years before Partition, Gulzar Haider lived and taught for many years at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, where he established the Form Studies Unit. He is now professor emeritus at Carleton University and heads the Architecture Department at Beaconhouse National University, Lahore. He has contributed to Muslim architecture in North America, with buildings such as the mosque for the Islamic Society of North America in Plainfield, Indiana, and has written widely on architecture and culture, with a particular focus on Islamic heritage and its influence in the West.

Intizar Husain
Intizar Husain was born in 1923 in Dibai, Bulandshar, and migrated to Lahore in 1947. His short stories and novels centre around memory, nostalgia, migration and questions of identity, and articulate an acute critique of the current socio-political situation of his country.

Aamer Hussein
Aamer Hussein was born in Karachi in 1955. During childhood, he made regular visits to relatives in India with his family, and in 1970 moved to London. Hussein is a short-story writer and literary critic, with an interest in memory, migration and exile; he teaches creative writing at the University of Southampton.

Taha Mehmood
Born in 1978 in Hyderabad, Taha Mehmood is a media practitioner and researcher based in London, with interests in film, the politics of information and surveillance. His research focuses on spatial restructuring and identification practices.

Sami Michael
Sami Michael was born in Baghdad in 1926 to a family of merchants, and had to flee the city because of his political activism. Michael is a writer who started his literary career as columnist for Al Ittihad, an Arabic newspaper produced in Haifa. His novels are often set in Baghdad or Haifa and deal with the social, ethnic and political tensions of the region. He sees himself as having multiple identities, which include his Arab Iraqi origin and his current status as a secular Israeli.

Tania Nasir
Tania Nasir was born in Jerusalem in 1941. An art-historian and classical singer, she is engaged in promoting craft and cultural activities in Palestine and is co-author of the book, *Palestinian Embroidery: Fallahi Cross-Stitch*.

Helen Pheby
Helen Pheby was born in Wakefield in 1975 and is Curator at Yorkshire Sculpture Park. In addition to coordinating major exhibitions at YSP, she develops projects offsite and overseas. Her research interests lie in the relational understanding of artwork, context and audience.

Rashid Rana
Rashid Rana was born in 1968 in Lahore to parents who migrated from East Punjab to Pakistan during Partition. Rana's work can be situated in a postcolonial discourse. He is interested in duality as a formal concept and critiques constructs of identity and the influence of tradition and modernity on the (media) environment in urban Pakistan.

Sami Said
Sami Said was born in 1980 in Syria. He is one of the founders of Idiom Films in Ramallah and its lead film producer. His films and photographs document people and their living spaces in the West Bank, visualizing the connection that individuals nurture with their surroundings.

Rana Shakaa
Born in Jerusalem in 1985, Rana Shakaa is a Palestinian architect and urban designer who worked with the Riwaq team on rehabilitating old cities. She was project coordinator and architect of cultural preservation at Birzeit Municipality, and is currently enrolled in the Master of Urban Planning Program at the American University of Sharjah, UAE.

Kamila Shamsie
Born in 1973 in Karachi to a literary family, Kamila Shamsie is a novelist and the granddaughter of Begum Jahanara Habibullah. Her work interweaves history and personal life, using Karachi as a recurring location. In 2009 her book, *Burnt Shadows*, was published. She now lives in London.

Saeed Shana'a
Saeed Shana'a was born around 1946 into a family of farmers in Umm Al Shouf, near Haifa. He and his family migrated to Jordan. He joined the PLO and moved from Jordan, to Syria, Lebanon and later to Tunis. Following the Oslo accords in 1993, Shana'a returned to Palestine, where he now lives with his family in Birzeit. His son, Sami Said, is a filmmaker.

Salim Tamari
Salim Tamari was born in Jaffa in 1945 and fled the city with his family in 1948. He is director of the Institute of Jerusalem Studies and professor of sociology at Birzeit University, and has written on themes of urban culture, nostalgia, biography and social history in relation to Palestinian society. Publications include *Bourgeois Nostalgia and the Abandoned City* in *Mountain against the Sea, Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture* (2008). Tamari is the cousin of Vera Tamari and Tania Nasir.

Vera Tamari
Vera Tamari was born in Jerusalem in 1945, and is a visual artist and director of the Ethnographic and Art Museum at Birzeit University. Her work deals with personal and collective history and the political reality of her country.

Zarina
Zarina was born in 1937 in Aligarh, India, where she also studied. After receiving a degree in mathematics, she went on to study printmaking in India and abroad. Recurring themes in her work are perception and memory, home, the line, borders and language, as in the series *Home is a Foreign Place* (1999). Zarina lives and works in New York.

Credits

Concept
Sophie Ernst

Project advisors
Hammad Nasar, Nada Raza, Salma Tuqan

Many thanks for valuable conversations in *Amsterdam:* Özkan Golpinar and Moniek Toebosch. *Berlin:* Jamila Adeli, Nadja-Christina Schneider, and Polina Stroganova. *Bombay:* Mortimer Chatterjee and Tara Lal, Johan Pijnappel and Bina Sarkar Ellias. *Den Haag:* Robert Kluijver, Frans de Ruiter and Janneke Wesseling. *Karachi:* Naiza Khan, Faisal Qureshi and Mahroosh Haider Ali, the Raza Family and Adeela Suleman. *Lahore:* Naazish Ata-Ullah, Salima Hashmi, Aisha Khalid, Bharti Kher, Quddus Mirza, and Rashid Rana. *Leiden:* Iftikhar Dadi, Meta Knol and Kitty Zijlmans. *London:* Anita Dawood and Vandana Patel. *Ramallah:* Issa Freij, Ahmad Malki, the Shakaa Family and Tina Sherwell. *Sharjah:* Isabel Carlos and Jack Persekian. *Yorkshire Sculpture Park:* Helen Moore and Helen Pheby.

My deepest gratitude to the great many people who contributed in small or big ways to the realization of the *HOME* project and to my ever-supportive family.

Video production Bombay
Camera: Manu Anand
Camera assistant: Sheikh Akbar, Ahmed Sheikh, Javed Qureshi

Video production Haifa
Camera: Issa Freij

Video production Islamabad
Camera: Sophie Ernst

Video production Karachi
Game Over Productions
Production assistant: Ali Raza
Camera: Amir Hussain, Asif Khan, Ali Raza
Camera assistant: Imran Ahmad, Kamran Rabbani

Video production Lahore
Camera: Asif Khan
Production assistance: Patras

Video production Leipzig
Camera: Sophie Ernst
Assistance: Salla Vapaavuori, Saana Lattimaki

Video production London
Camera: Taha Mehmood

Video production Manchester
Camera: Ali Raza

Video production Ramallah
Idioms Films
Camera: Ahmad Malki

Video production Shufat Refugee Camp
Camera: Issa Freij

Video production Tel Aviv
Camera: Sophie Ernst

Translations
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Transcripts
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Voice-overs
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Installations/project development
André Bockholdt, Henrik Hilsbos, Detlef Jacobi, Masen Khattab, Karsten Kröger, Saana Lattimaki, Bernd Naguschewski, Rene Neuer, Hamlyn Terry, Salla Vapaavuori

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