

Ahlam Shibli

Phantom Home

28 May – 1 September 2013



The photographic work of Ahlam Shibli (Palestine, 1970) addresses the contradictory implications of the notion of home. The work deals with the loss of home and the fight against that loss, but also with restrictions and limitations that the idea of home imposes on the individuals. Examples of places where the problematic is encountered include the occupied Palestinian areas; monuments that commemorate members of the French Resistance against the Nazis together with French fighters in the colonial wars against peoples who demanded their own independence; the bodies of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders from Eastern societies; and the communities of children in Polish orphanages.

Death, Ahlam Shibli's latest photographic series especially conceived for this retrospective, shows how Palestinian society preserves the presence of the "martyrs"—in the artist's own words. *Death* contains a broad representation of the absent ones through photographs, posters, graves and graffiti displayed as a form of resistance.

The exhibition includes six of the photographic series produced by Ahlam Shibli during the last decade. Most of the works are accompanied by captions assigning each photograph to a specific time and place in an investigative process that often implies long empirical and conversational contact with the subjects in question.

Marta Gili
Carles Guerra
João Fernandes
Isabel Sousa Braga
Curators of the exhibition

All following texts accompanying the works are by Ahlam Shibli.



Untitled (*Self Portrait* nr. 7), Palestine, 2000

The body, primary home of the human being, can also become the target of repressive identity politics in the name of home. Exposed to violence and neglect, disenfranchised minorities may therefore choose to create conditions for their corporal existence that oppose the values and expectations of the majority.

■ *Self Portrait, Palestine, 2000*

Series of 18 photographs
Chromogenic prints

A journey of returning to the places that showed me who I am.



Untitled (*Eastern LGBT* nr. 13), International, 2004 / 2006

■ **Eastern LGBT, International, 2004 / 06**

From a series of 37 photographs

Gelatin silver prints; chromogenic prints

LGBT is an acronym signifying Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender.

The work depicts people from Eastern societies such as Pakistan, Palestine, Lebanon, Turkey, or Somalia, who left their places of birth because their original societies prevented them from living according to their sexual preferences, or to inhabit the gendered body in which they feel at home. In a foreign place, and sometimes only on weekends in a club, they seek conditions that allow them to be who they want to be.

The pictures of *Eastern LGBT* were taken in 2004 and 2006 in Zurich, Barcelona, Tel Aviv, and London.



Untitled (*Dom Dziecka. The house starves when you are away* nr. 4), Pologne, 2008

Dom Dziecka Trzemiętowo, 7.10.08, Tuesday afternoon
Gracjan Schmelter and Tomasz Brzadkowski posing for the camera with the sculpture in front of the entrance of the Children's Home.

■ **Dom Dziecka. The house starves when you are away, Pologne, 2008**

From a series of 35 photographs

Gelatin silver prints; chromogenic prints

Dom Dziecka (in English "children's home") is a series of photographs taken in 2008 at eleven orphanages in Poland. The work exposes the living conditions of children who haven't grown up in a family home, but in a foster institution.

During the day the children are hardly ever alone; physical relations between the children, even adolescent boys and girls, are often very close, without being necessarily sexual in character. The individual children seem to merge into a collective body, from which they withdraw only when going to sleep; the conventional family unit is turned into a children's society in which typical family relations are not only substituted but actually displaced to form a new and specific constellation.

Where the family home is missing, something else has developed. One boy, Dawid Redes from Dom Dziecka Na Zielonym Wzgórzu in Kisielany-Żmichy, said, "it's not a children's home, it's home."



Untitled (*Trackers* nr. 57), Palestine / Israel, 2005
Lakhich Army Base, Beit Gubrin

Joint commemorations of members of the French society who lost their lives in a war of liberation against a devastating aggression, and of members of the same society who, immediately after the Liberation, died in colonial wars against the independence of other peoples, are part of the "reason of State." For the Palestinians, confronted by an overwhelming colonial power, the state of emergency is the norm rather than the exception. Their own body has remained their only means of production. To fight against negation, the "wretched of the earth" are forced to invest their bodies to negate that which is dearest to them: their loyalty to their own people and, ultimately, their own lives.

■ **Trackers, Palestine / Israel, 2005**

From a series of 85 photographs
Gelatin silver prints; chromogenic prints

Trackers is a series of photographs taken in 2005 depicting Palestinians of Bedouin descent who served or are serving as volunteers in the Israeli Army. The project is concerned with the price a colonized minority is forced to pay to the majority of colonizers, perhaps to be accepted, perhaps to change its identity, perhaps to survive, or perhaps all this and more.



Untitled (*Trauma* nr. 15), Corrèze, France, 2008-09

Le Monteil, 25th June, 2008

Daniel Espinat in the barn where his group of Maquis trained and slept in July 1944.

■ **Trauma, Corrèze, France, 2008-09**

Series of 48 photographs

Gelatin silver prints; chromogenic prints

Taking as its starting point commemorations of the *Résistance* uprising against the Nazis in Tulle (Corrèze, France) and the occupation forces' murderous repercussions, events that lasted from June 7 to 9, 1944, *Trauma* is constructed around the fact that one and the same population, in certain cases even the same individuals, who resisted occupation by the Germans and suffered from their atrocities, waged, a few years later, colonial wars in Indochina and Algeria against peoples who, in their turn, claimed independence.

Early on June 9, 1944, the SS rounded up more than two thousand men from Tulle, aged sixteen to sixty, and later that day hanged ninety-nine of them from lamp posts and balconies. Another 149 men were deported to German concentration camps from where 101 never returned.

Memorials and ceremonies honor those who died in the First and Second World Wars: soldiers, fighters of the *Résistance*, and civilian victims of the Nazis, together with members of the French army who lost their lives in the colonial wars in Indochina and North Africa.

The images show various residents of Corrèze: former members of the *Résistance*, descendants of the hanged and deported from June 9, former French fighters in the colonial wars, *Pieds-Noirs*, as well as an Algerian collaborator, a man who was taken to France as a forced laborer from Indochina, a second generation Indochinese, a lady of Algerian descent who considers herself French, and recent immigrants from Algeria.

This work has been produced with the support of *Peuple et Culture Corrèze*.



Untitled (*Death* nr.33), Palestine, 2011–12

Balata Refugee Camp, February 16, 2012

Photos of the martyr Khalil Marshoud in the family living room being dusted by his sister. On the poster, a gift from the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, he is called the General Secretary of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades of Balata.

■ *Death, Palestine, 2011–12*

Series of 68 photographs

Chromogenic prints

I shall not return until I plant my paradise on earth or else reap a paradise from the sky or die or we all die together.
Ghassan Kanafani

This work is based on the demand for recognition that became apparent with the Second Intifada, the Palestinian uprising against the colonial power in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967. The Second Intifada lasted from 2000 to 2005 and claimed several thousand deaths on the Palestinian side.

Death exhibits some of the ways in which the ones who are absent become present again—"represented": Palestinian fighters, who fell in the course of their armed resistance against the Israeli incursions, and victims of the Israeli military killed under different circumstances (*Shaheed* and *Shaheeda*); militants who carried out attacks which they knew would lead to their death, among them the men and women who detonated explosives on their own bodies to assassinate Israelis (*Istishhadi* and *Istishhadiya*), and the prisoners. The former are dead, the latter are alive, jailed for a large part if not the rest of their lives.

The representations designate any person who lost his or her life as a result of the Israeli occupation of Palestine: a martyr.

Death focuses on a limited range of means representing the martyrs and the prisoners in the closed environment of Nablus, its region, and its refugee camps: posters and occasionally graffiti in the streets; paintings, photos, posters, and other memorabilia in the homes of the martyrs' families; the graves that bear inscriptions and are sometimes ornate with pictures and items of the deceased. One supplementary element representing the prisoners are their letters and diaries—personal if one ignores the prison authority's censorship. All of these are forms of representation originated by the families, friends, and the fighters' associations.

The question of death does not belong to the dead, but to those who remain alive. Ghassan Kanafani

This work has been co-produced with the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), the Jeu de Paume in Paris, and the Fundação de Serralves-Museu de Arte Contemporânea in Porto.

All texts accompanying the works are by Ahlam Shibli.



Untitled (*Death nr. 48*), Palestine, 2011–12

The Old City, al-Kasaba neighborhood, Nablus, February 5, 2012

In a vegetable shop, a poster showing the martyrs 'Abd al-Rahman Shinnawi, 'Amar al-'Anabousi and Basim Abu Sariyah from the Faris al-Leil (Knight of the Night) armed resistance groups which belong to al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. On the margins of the poster, a picture of the head of al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in Nablus, Naif Abu Sharkh. The poster carries a sticker showing a raised fist with the Palestinian colors and reading, "We want the occupation to lose. Boycott Tapuzina [an Israeli soft drink]. Palestinian National Initiative."

related events

Tuesday 28 May, 6pm

■ Young Visitors' Tuesday Tours

tour of the exhibition by a Jeu de Paume lecturer

Tuesday 28 May, 7pm

■ talk

around the work of Ahlam Shibli
by Esmail Nashif, anthropologist, and Ulrich Loock,
art historian and curator

Wednesday 29 May, 7pm

■ symposium

"Intimité territoriale et espace public"
[Territorial Intimacy and Public Space],
session 1 with Jean-François Chevrier,
around the work of Ahlam Shibli

■ publication

Ahlam Shibli. Phantom Home

Foreword by Carles Guerra, Marta Gili,

João Fernandes and Isabel Sousa Braga;

texts by Esmail Nashif, T.J. Demos and Ahlam Shibli
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Arte Contemporânea de Serralves / Hatje Cantz,

€39.80

Jeu de Paume – Concorde

exhibitions

28 May – 1 September 2013

■ **Lorna Simpson**

■ **Ahlam Shibli. Phantom Home**

■ Satellite Programme 6, **An Exhibition – An Event.**

Suite for Exhibition(s) and Publication(s),

Third Movement

until March 2014

■ **Virtual Space, Print Error: Publishing in the Digital Age**

<http://espacevirtuel.jeudepaume.org/>

forthcoming exhibitions

15 October 2013 – 26 January 2014

■ **Erwin Blumenfeld**

■ **Natacha Nisic. Echo**

■ Satellite Programme 6, **Suite for Exhibition(s) and Publication(s), Fourth Movement**

practical information

1, Place de la Concorde, 75008 Paris

access via the Tuileries Gardens, Rue de Rivoli entrance

www.jeudepaume.org

<http://lemagazine.jeudepaume.org>

information +33 (0)1 47 03 12 50

Tuesday (late opening) 11am–9pm

Wednesday to Sunday 11am–7pm

closed Monday

■ **exhibitions:** admission: €8.50; concessions: €5.50
free admission to the exhibitions of the Satellite Programme

Young Visitor's Tuesday: free admission for students and visitors under 26 every last Tuesday of the month from 5pm to 9pm

■ **guided tours and workshops:** free admission on presentation of the exhibition ticket of the day

Tours for individual visitors with guides from the Jeu de Paume

Wednesday and Saturday at 12.30pm

Family Tours

Saturday at 3.30pm

by reservation on +33 (0)1 47 03 12 41/rendezvousenfamille@jeudepaume.org

Young Visitors' Tuesday Tours

every last Tuesday of the month at 6pm

■ **talks:** free admission on a first-come, first-served basis

reservation required on infoauditorium@jeudepaume.org

■ **symposia:** €3 per session; free on presentation of exhibition ticket on a first-come, first-served basis

Jeu de Paume – Château de Tours

exhibition

22 June – 20 October 2013

■ **Bruno Réquillart. Poetics of form**

forthcoming exhibition

9 November 2013 – 1 June 2014

■ **Vivian Maier**

practical information

25 Avenue André-Malraux, 37000 Tours

information +33 (0)2 47 70 88 46

Tuesday to Friday 2pm–6pm

Saturday and Sunday 2.15pm–6pm

closed Monday

free admission

guided tours: Saturday at 3pm

This exhibition has been organized and co-produced by the Jeu de Paume, Paris, the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) and the Fundação de Serralves-Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto.

In partnership with:



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cover:

Untitled (Death nr. 3), Palestine, 2011–12

Rafediyah neighborhood, Street 15, Nablus, February 22, 2012

A demonstration in front of the Nablus Red Cross offices, organized by the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) in support of the hunger strike of Palestinians in Israeli administrative detention protesting their confinement. On April 17, a general hunger strike was announced which terminated on May 14 when the Israeli government agreed to remove solitary confinement, to allow family visits from the Gaza Strip, and to suspend administrative detention.

All photos: courtesy of the artist © Ahlam Shibli

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