

# KHALED JARRAR

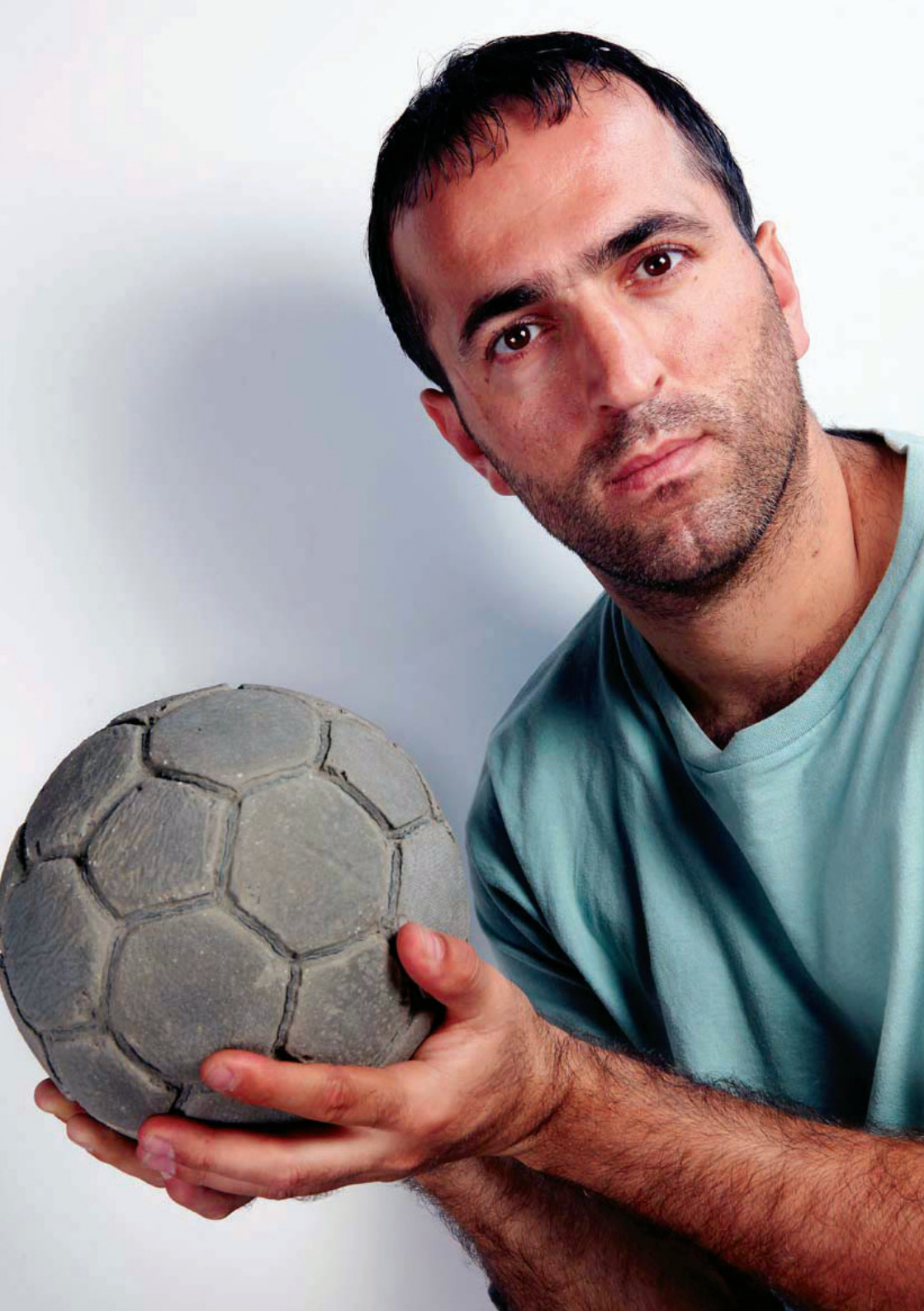




# WHOLE IN THE WALL

KHALED JARRAR

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Palestinian artist Khaled Jarrar works with photography, video, and performance to interrogate the problematic situation in his native country, particularly the question of recognition of the State of Palestine and the militaristic discourse around this. He uses his artistic practice as a means of thinking about questions of conflict, nationhood, home and belonging. The notion of state authority is a recurring concern: his project 'Live and Work in Palestine' (2011-ongoing) saw the artist design a seemingly official Palestinian passport stamp which was then offered to tourists arriving in Palestine. Jarrar has also shown resistance to what he considers an act of oppression through his series of cement soccer balls, formed from material cut from the Israeli-built barrier separating the West Bank from Israel. In addition, Jarrar is an award-winning filmmaker whose recent documentary, *The Infiltrators* (2012), won several accolades at the 9th Dubai International Film Festival.

Born in Jenin in 1976, Khaled Jarrar lives and works in Ramallah, Palestine. He completed his education in Interior Design at the Palestine Polytechnic University in 1996, then graduating from the International Academy of Art-Palestine with a BA in Visual Arts in 2011. Jarrar rose to prominence with his 2007 exhibition, *At the Checkpoint*, which was placed in full view of the Israeli soldiers at Howarra & Qalandia checkpoint. Recent solo exhibitions include the NEWTOPIA: The State of Human Rights Contemporary Arts Exhibition in Mechelen and Brussels (2012); Galerie Polaris, Paris (2012); Al-Mahatta Gallery, Ramallah (2009); Al-Mahatta Gallery, Ramallah (2007); International Academy of Art Palestine, Ramallah (2007). Recent group exhibitions include: 7th Berlin Biennale (2012); *It's Time We Got To Know Each Other*, 52nd October Salon, Belgrade (2011); *The Jerusalem Show*, Jerusalem (2010); London Film Festival, London (2010); and the Instant Video Festival, Marseille (2009).



## CEMENTING UNITY

Palestinian visual artist Khaled Jarrar has gained international acclaim for his provocative artistic projects which highlight the plight of the Palestinians and present new forms of resistance against the Occupation.

‘At the Checkpoint’, a series of photographs captured by Jarrar at the Huwara and Qalandia military blockades in 2006 and 2007, were exhibited on the fences facing these same blockades and Israeli soldiers. Though inescapably political, Jarrar insists these images demonstrate a mere reflection of Palestinian daily life and the conditions at the military blockades. With its images of the young and old, ‘At the Checkpoint’ conveyed the lack of necessity for the torment and humiliation caused by this border process.

His 2012 project ‘Live and Work in Palestine’ involved the creation of a national stamp and a global performance of stamping the State of Palestine into over six hundred and fifty passports, which began at the West Bank’s Qalandia checkpoint and Ramallah bus station. Composed of the Palestinian Sunbird and flowering jasmine surrounded by the words ‘State of Palestine’ in English and Arabic, Jarrar’s stamp simultaneously highlights the statelessness of Palestine and the authority implied in a symbol, and places control over immigration and welcoming people to their lands back into the hands of Palestinians.

Regardless of media used, Khaled Jarrar presents a coherent theme throughout his oeuvre; all works revolve around the current socio-political state of Palestine and stories of life in the shadow of the wall. His new exhibition ‘Whole in the Wall’, combines photography, sculpture, installation, and video to thoroughly investigate and reflect the affect of the Separation Wall in daily life.

Upon entering the gallery space, visitors are confronted with a concrete wall representing the Apartheid Wall, a 700 kilometre partition constructed by the State of Israel that divides the West Bank from Israel. Spanning the height and length of the gallery, this claustrophobic barricade is only penetrable by climbing through a map-of-Palestine-shaped opening.

While the immediate confrontation with this wall highlights the daily experience of division and border control endured by Palestinians and sets an initial divisionary tone for the exhibition, Khaled Jarrar's 'upcycled' artworks ultimately create a sense of unity.

By recycling and re-contextualizing the concrete wall, Jarrar elevates this demeaning symbol of oppression and humiliation. As the artist states, "a source of separation can become a source of unity", and the unity created is not one of political unity but that of humanity.

Though Jarrar is categorically against beautifying the wall and recalls a story of an old man who confronted Banksy while he was placing his street art on the West Bank side telling him go home and not make the wall he hates beautiful, Jarrar too is creating beautiful works of art from the wall. The key, though, is that his artworks are created from its destruction; every piece he creates chips away at the wall, leaving gaping sections as a testament to his opposition.

With chisel and hammer, Khaled Jarrar tirelessly chips away at the 8 metre high Separation Wall. Acknowledging the danger involved in this act, Jarrar works quickly to collect enough fragments of concrete to become the base medium of his sculptures. Jarrar then pulverizes these wall stones into a fine sand and mixes it into a fresh cement mixture he fills into various moulds. His sculptural moulds incorporate sports equipment, internationally symbolic characters, and nature.

Stemming from a story of a football pitch for Palestinian children destroyed by the erection of the Separation Wall, Jarrar was inspired to create a series of sporting sculptures with the concrete taken from the wall to re-employ this divisionary object in an integrative manner.

The sculptures of sports equipment, a basketball, football, volleyball, football cleats, and table tennis racket, all signify team sports. Though competitive sports involve two opposing teams, they are unified in their necessity of the other as the game does not exist without the participation of each side. As Jarrar states, "The wall is a source of separation that I wish will fall eventually, but the ball unites people."

The subsequent loss of countless children's footballs over the Separation Wall's edge further inspired the artist to create Badminton, an experimental film in which Jarrar engages in a badminton game over the wall's edge with British artist Jeremy Hutchison, competing from the Israeli side. Each player is displayed side by side, demonstrating the vast difference in finishing of the West Bank and Israeli wall sides.

A photograph of a small tree protruding through a crevice in the Apartheid Wall is the clear inspiration for Jarrar's olive tree sculptures. A tree burrowing through concrete is a testament to strength and will in the face of adversity, and the artist presents this image as a metaphor for the Palestinian people who are confronted daily with the obstacles this wall presents.

Jarrar employs olive trees for their significance to the Palestinian people, traditional symbology, and to emphasize their widespread destruction when the wall was erected. Cherished not only for their economic importance, olive trees are draught resistant and able to thrive for thousands of years under poor conditions, symbolizing the Palestinian spirit.





Half olive tree, half concrete, the sculptures reveal the impediments on growth, nature, and peace as a result of the wall. Extending the proverbial olive branch, Jarrar cleverly accentuates the role the Apartheid Wall has in hindering the hand of friendship and peace. Yet as a tree can grow from beneath concrete, the hope for unity and a free Palestine is retained in these sculptures.

Perhaps most poignant of his sculptures is the reproduction of Buddy Bear, the international symbol for tolerance and peace among nations first exhibited at the site of the fallen Berlin Wall in 2001. Subsequently toured around the world and representing 140 different nations, United Buddy Bear's 2007 exhibition in Jerusalem included a Palestinian bear on equal footing with all the other bears for the first time. Reproducing this with concrete from the Apartheid Wall, Jarrar emphasizes the hypocrisy of his homeland being considered a nation in Jerusalem while this wall stands and Occupation endures, and the wider irony of holding an exhibition of tolerance in an occupied city.

As a Palestinian living in the occupied West Bank, Khaled Jarrar finds liberation through art. With concepts of resistance, freedom, and peace in works revolving around the Apartheid Wall, the artist delivers a simple message by successfully conveying the stories of his fellow Palestinians. By re-appropriating its very building materials, Jarrar illustrates that the demolition of the wall can make larger strides towards peace than the concrete barrier. His artworks lead the viewer to reconsider the illegal partition and the many ways the unsightly concrete wall can be reconstituted to benefit the people, such as in the construction of schools and hospitals. As he says, "People are trying to live and survive and this wall will not stop anything...It's not just about Palestine and Israel, it's also about really basic issues - the need for life."





*“The perception of a vertical object can shape the possibilities for its use in traditional ways that emphasize its functional definition as ‘standing in space’, which will still keep emphasizing its purpose of standing there. What I want to redefine with my new series of work is the functional definition of ‘The Wall’, which has originally been built to separate humans. By moving the wall from its original place and presenting it as a project within an artistic environment, I create a different, new function for it. The perception will be changed and will have a valuable meaning that drives us to question the wall’s present status and that shows the importance of seeing it from another perspective. Working on the functional possibilities may give us the ability to exceed the problem.”*

Khaled Jarrar

‘Upcycle the Wall’







*Concrete*  
2012  
Experimental Film  
Length: 2 minutes



*Basketball*  
2012  
Reconstituted Concrete from the Apartheid Wall  
29 cm diameter  
Edition of 7





2012  
Reconstituted Concrete from the Apartheid Wall  
20 cm diameter  
Edition of 7



*Football*  
2012  
Reconstituted Concrete from the Apartheid Wall  
22 cm diameter  
Edition of 7



*Football Shoes*  
2012  
Reconstituted Concrete from the Apartheid Wall  
27 x 10 x 15 cm  
Edition of 7



*Discus Throw*  
2013  
Reconstituted Concrete from the Apartheid Wall  
20 x 3.5 cm  
Edition of 7





*Ping Pong Rackets & Ball*  
 2013  
 Reconstituted Concrete from the Apartheid Wall  
 24 x 15 cm each  
 Edition of 7



*Buddy Bear*  
 2013  
 Reconstituted Concrete from the Apartheid Wall  
 100 x 60 x 40 cm  
 Edition of 7



*Olive Tree Branch*  
2013  
Reconstituted Concrete from the Apartheid Wall & Olive Tree  
34 x 15 x 13 cm



*Olive Tree Branch*  
(detail)





*Olive Tree Stump*  
2013  
Reconstituted Concrete from the Apartheid Wall & Olive Tree  
70 x 40 x 27 cm



*Olive Tree Stump*  
(detail)





*Untitled*  
2013  
C-Print Diasec Mounting  
140 x 210 cm  
Edition of 5



## WHOLE IN THE WALL

Khaled Jarrar met an elderly woman at the wall on one of her many trips to visit her daughter. Though they were separated by the concrete structure, a small hole enabled them to see each other from a distance.

Like so many other villages whose lands were divided when the wall was erected, this woman and her daughter were cut from each other and forced to live on either side. The wall completely surrounded her daughter's home, leaving her as a Palestinian living in Israel with limited ability to travel and no way to relocate her home.

With the recent passing of the elderly woman, Jarrar remembers her long visits to the wall and explores what lies just beyond the curtain in 'Whole in the Wall'.



From the series, 'Whole in the Wall'  
2013  
Archival Print on Cotton Paper  
76 x 100 cm  
Edition of 5



From the series, 'Whole in the Wall'  
2013  
Archival Print on Cotton Paper  
76 x 100 cm  
Edition of 5





From the series, 'Whole in the Wall'  
2013  
Archival Print on Cotton Paper  
76 x 100 cm  
Edition of 5



From the series, 'Whole in the Wall'  
2013  
Archival Print on Cotton Paper  
76 x 100 cm  
Edition of 5





From the series, 'Whole in the Wall'  
2013  
Archival Print on Cotton Paper  
76 x 100 cm  
Edition of 5

## JOURNEY 110

In this short art piece, we see ordinary men and women placing plastic bags over their feet, pulling their clothes up to their knees, clutching their children to their chests, and setting off down a 110 metre tunnel of sewage.

This surreal and saddening sight is not staged. Jarrar's short film is shot in one of the few 'routes' through which Palestinians try to enter Jerusalem from parts of the West Bank. Filmed during the month of Ramadan in a sewage culvert beneath Beit Hanina (a Palestinian neighborhood of Jerusalem divided by walls and checkpoints), Journey 110 is visually haunted by half invisible bodies wading through fetid darkness to reach a distant light at its end.

Jarrar reflects on a resonance with the so-called 'Journey of Light' associated with near-death experiences and its well known leitmotif in film. It is described as floating upwards in intense darkness towards a beautiful demulcent light at the end of a tunnel. As a plot device it is most commonly described as a passageway to heaven or 'the other side' for dead or ghostly characters, while living characters urge ghostly characters to 'cross over' or 'go towards the light'. In Jarrar's film, it is the passage through this 110 metres that distinguishes the ghosts from the angels.





*Journey 110*  
2009  
Experimental Film  
Length: 12.27 minutes

# Ayyam Gallery

Founded by collectors and cousins Khaled and Hisham Samawi in Damascus in 2006, Ayyam Gallery sought to nurture Syria's burgeoning and dynamic contemporary art scene through landmark non-profit initiatives such as the Shabab Ayyam Project, an incubator for emerging artists. Expansion into Beirut and Dubai enabled Ayyam Gallery to broaden its scope from the promotion of work by Syrian artists to those from the wider Middle East region. In doing so, Ayyam Gallery has established itself as one of the foremost exponents of Middle Eastern contemporary art to the international community.

Today, Ayyam Gallery is recognized as a leading cultural voice in the region, representing a roster of Arab and Iranian artists with an international profile and museum presence. A number of non-commercial exhibitions, as well as the launch of Ayyam Publishing, Ayyam Editions, and The Young Collectors Auction, have further succeeded in showcasing the work of Middle Eastern artists with the aim of educating a wider audience about the art of this significant region. Ayyam Gallery Damascus currently functions as a studio and creative haven for artists who remain in the war-torn city. In early 2013, Ayyam Gallery launched new spaces in London and Jeddah.





