

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Untitled 10 from For My Father series, 2015, Archival Print, Edition of 5, 100 x 150 cm

RULA HALAWANI

For My Father

23 March - 30 June 2020

Due to the current situation and the evolving outbreak of COVID-19, to protect your health and ours, Ayyam Gallery is canceling all events.

Therefore we have decided to postpone Rula Halawani's latest exhibition *For You Mother* and are exhibiting her *For My Father* series instead alongside Safwan Dahoul's latest body of work *The Awakening*.

The gallery is temporarily closed until further notice. The vernissage scheduled for the 23rd is thus canceled. To enjoy a virtual tour please visit alserkal.online and contact info@ayyamgallery.com for further information.

About the exhibition

Widely respected for her experimental approach to documentary photography, Halawani's *For My Father* series details the Israeli occupation of Palestine from the vantage point of fading recollection. Creating a photographic record in remembrance of her late father, Halawani revisits several sites throughout historic Palestine, specifically the scenery that shaped her childhood memories.

In the ghostly images of the series, the rolling hills, seashore, and traditional neighborhoods of the artist's youth are distorted through the lens of her camera as she struggles to identify what was once familiar. Invading industry now defines the horizon. Abandoned homes are shown in a gradual process of deterioration, overgrown with weeds that sprout from crumbling facades. Once popular beaches now host solitary figures whose silhouettes are fogged at the edges as though slowly disappearing with the diminishing sand and sea.

In a letter to her father that accompanies the series, Halawani describes the transformed environments with disbelief and apparent melancholy, acknowledging the disappearance of the serene settings that were integral to her familial experiences. This somber mood is reflected in the artist's infrared photography as an opaque film that blankets each site in addition to intensified contrasts between ominous shadows and vivid areas of light.

The subjectivity of Halawani's attachment to each setting also surfaces in the various angles of the photographs and the few moments of clarity that manifest as minor sections of blurred scenes. Resulting from a specific photographic technique, this visual effect situates Halawani at a material distance, forcibly removed from her subject matter. With the formal innovation of the series the feelings of loss that she describes to her father mirror the transitory nature of life and the sense of alienation that is experienced by Palestinians as families continue to be internally and externally displaced.

Artist Statement

"Dear Baba,

My life's journey began with your words 'I hope you will have better days than mine, if Palestine is not liberated, all Arab countries will be devastated for the sake of Israel.'

But your life's journey came to a close with different words: 'When life is about to end, its whole journey feels like a short visit that we made somewhere, and now we are returning.' Not many people can properly understand the significance of this short visit.

It has been years since I have communicated with you, Father. I recently returned to and traveled across our Palestine; to its borders and to the same places we visited together when I was a child. The landscape has changed so much. Do you remember when we stood together looking across a certain border and I told you that I would feel safer and freer on the other side? As I stand again at this border after so many years, I do not feel safe on either side, and I am still not free.

Do you remember the places that we went to with my siblings? They were filled with people who were familiar to us from all over Palestine. It's so different now; new people have occupied these spaces, and my childhood memories of the pure sand merging with sea, embracing the blue skies, have disappeared.

The Palestine that I knew is gone.

Returning to these places, I now feel like a stranger in my own home. Truly, after so many years, I still do not know. Rest in peace now, baba. You are always with me."

About the artist

As a native of occupied East Jerusalem, Rula Halawani began her artistic career by registering the difficulties of living under a protracted political conflict. Halawani's early works capture the many aspects of this reality, from the tedious moments of attempting to perform daily tasks under the restrictions of military occupation to the cyclical onset of violent siege that transforms Palestinian neighbourhoods, towns, and cities into overnight war zones.

After several years of photographing the stark imagery that defines the everyday lives of Palestinians, Halawani increasingly focused on the spatial implications of the occupation by documenting its built environments and structures: the meticulous system of architecture that serves as one of its central mechanisms. Recently, she has turned her lens towards the traces of lives and history that can still be found in often overlooked details, whether in the material culture of Palestinian society or the transformed landscapes of her childhood.

Born in 1964, Rula Halawani holds a Bachelor of Art degree in Advanced Photography from the University of Saskatchewan in Canada (1989); and a Master of Art degree in Photographic Studies from the University of Westminster, London (2001). Halawani is based in Jerusalem, where, in addition to her artistic practice, she was the founding director and an associate professor of the Photography program at Birzeit University.

Halawani's exhibitions include the Venice Biennale (2019); Palestinian Museum, Birzeit (2019, 2017); American University Museum, Washington DC, USA (2018); Canadian War Museum, Ottawa (2017); Mediterranean Women Forum, Jerez del la Frontera, Cádiz (2017); The Hagop Kevorkian Center, New York (2016), National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington DC (2016); Ayyam Gallery, Beirut (2016); Ayyam Gallery, 12 Alserkal Avenue, Dubai (2016); Selma Feriani Gallery, London (2013, 2010); Al Hoash Gallery, Jerusalem (2009); and Botanique Museum, Brussels. Halawani has featured in recent collective exhibitions at the Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno, Valencia (2017); Metropolitan State University, Denver (2017); Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburg (2015); MART Museum, Rovereto (2014); FotoFest Biennial, Houston (2014); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2012); and BOZAR, Palace for Fine Arts, Brussels (2011).

Halawani's photographs are housed in the international collections of the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Institut Valencia d'Art Modern, Valencia; Nadour Collection, Germany; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; The British Museum; London, The Khalid Shoman Foundation, Amman; and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, among others. Palestine (2008), the artist's first monograph, was published by La Lettre Volée, Brussels in conjunction with her mid career retrospective at the Botanique Museum. In 2016, Halawani received a residency fellowship at the Camargo Foundation in Cassis, France.

About Ayyam Gallery

Founded in 2006, Ayyam Gallery is a leading arts organization that manages the careers of diverse established and emerging artists. Blue-chip art space in Dubai, a series of collaborative projects in the United States, Europe, Africa, and Asia, and a multinational non-profit arts program have furthered the gallery's mandate of expanding the parameters of international art. With its widely respected multilingual publishing division and a custodianship program that manages the estates of pioneering artists, Ayyam Gallery has also contributed to recent efforts that document underrepresented facets of global art history.

Exhibition Facts

Exhibitions Dates: 23 March - 30 June 2020

Regular Hours: Sun - Thur : 10 am - 6 pm

Location: Ayyam Gallery, B11, Alserkal Avenue, Street 8, Al Quoz 1, Dubai

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