



Untitled 3, For Your Mother part II series, 2022, Archival Print, Edition of 5, 78 x 100 cm

RULA HALAWANI

For You Mother

11 January - 23 February 2023

Ayyam Gallery is pleased to present *For You Mother*, a solo exhibition featuring Rula Halawani's most recent body of work. The presentation will include chapter I and II of this series. Please join us on January 11th for the vernissage from 6 to 9 pm.

About the exhibition

"When I finished the *For My Father* series, I showed it to my Mother, told her that it was in honor of my Baba, and asked if she liked it. She replied: "Yes, of course, darling, I like it very much!" Then she asked, "Rula, are you going to make a series for me when I leave this universe?" I said: "Do not mention death, Mama. I will honor you now while you are still with us." — Rula Halawani.

The *For You Mother* series is split into two parts, the first chapter, which was worked on in 2018-2020, and the second, which was completed in 2022 after Rula was chosen as a recipient of the 2021 Sheikh Saoud Al Thani Project Award in partnership with the Qatar Foundation. Chapter I of the series reflects and depicts Rula's Mother, Asma's, words, while the second is an homage to her teachings, beliefs, and lifestyle.

Rula is left questioning mother, motherland, and mother nature. Reconnecting with her childhood activities, Rula examines how the Palestinian landscape and natural environment have changed. In an effort to not only revive souls and spirits but also wildflowers and ancient stone chains' *Salasel'*, the people and natural environment that disappeared and still disappear.

Chapter I comprises eleven photomontages, a marriage between archival images of Palestinian families before the 1948 mass diaspora and the Palestinian landscape captured through Rula's lens. Chapter II is the result of treated and damaged photographic negatives.

Artist Statement

As I grew into adulthood, Mother's words echoed with me. "Even when we die and leave this world, our spirits remain, floating in the skies of our county, Palestine." Mother referred to the tragedies that befell Palestine, the 1948 war - the Nakba, and the June war of 1967. I didn't understand what she meant for a long time, but while devoting this project to her, I understood after visualizing her thoughts and feelings through my experimentations.

Throughout my conversations with Mama, she spoke about how Palestine has lost its beauty. We've lost the unison and tranquillity. The settlements and their constructions have altered and deteriorated the traditional Palestinian landscape. The suburbs and cities no longer fuse with the mountainous terrains and plans of the Palestinian landscape. This took me back to my early years; while my Mother taught in a suburban village outside of Jerusalem, most springs, my Mother would take my siblings and me to the villages after school or on weekends to have picnics.

Palestinian wildlife always held a dear and near place in Mother's heart. Talking to us about the different wildflowers and herbs, Anemones, Blue Iris, Chamomile, Sage, and Thyme, explaining that one shouldn't pick them unnecessarily and that one should respect the environment and nature. These memories brought me to Part II of the series, the vanishing wildlife is an omen to the disappearing Palestinian landscape post-1948.

I was hoping to discuss the developments of this project with my Mother, but as the series progressed, my

Mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Unfortunately, her disease is aggressive, and she is now completely paralyzed. I never gave up on our discussions and kept showing her the series' progress. She looks and listens but keeps silent, just like the souls in my photographs; they too are silent witnesses to the changes in the landscape, refusing to leave the skies of our beloved Palestine."

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: 11 January - 23 February 2023

Regular Hours: Monday - Friday : 10 am - 7 pm

Saturday: 12 - 6 pm

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

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