

Film Screenings and Conversations

United States of Palestine-Israel: Here And Elsewhere

Saturday, September 10, 2011, 11:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

The New School, Theresa Lang Community and Student Center

55 West 13th Street, 2nd floor

Free admission

With a title lifted from Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville's film *Here and Elsewhere* (*Ici et Ailleurs*, 1976), this day of screenings presents contemporary and historical, documentary and fictional films to suggest correspondences in the contested land of Palestine/Israel. Curated by 2011-2013 Vera List Center Fellow Joshua Simon, the program proposes to view the conflict through the prism of "affinities" rather than "belonging" and "addition" rather than "opposition," and does so in a mixed program of film screenings and conversations. It is presented as one of two programs to accompany the publication of *United States of Palestine-Israel* (in the *Solution* series by Sternberg Press, 2011), a book of speculative scenarios for the region, edited by Simon.

Reaching beyond geographical borders and instead focusing on the word "and," the films present fictional stories about run-down places in Jaffa (Copti and Boukhary); speculation on the future Jewish-Arab State (Rosen and Atia); visions of Israel in Uganda, proposed by Ugandan dictator Idi Amin (when, at the beginning of Zionism, Uganda was considered for Jewish settlement); the landscapes of Jerusalem and the Dead Sea so familiar to both Palestinians and Israelis (*Struggle in Jerash*); and, finally, Godard's reading of the history of this place through cinema, and a reading of cinema and history through this place (*Ici et Ailleurs* and *Notre Musique*).

Program Schedule

• **Screening I. Short-reverse-shot**

11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Excerpts from *Local Angel*, Udi Aloni, dir. (Israel, 2002, 70 minutes)

Moved by the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11th, artist Udi Aloni returned to Israel to grapple with the concepts of sacrifice and the sacred embedded in the history of a much more ancient edifice - the Temple Mount, a Jewish touchstone on which now sits the Moslem Dome of the Rock. At the heart of the film is Udi's effort to understand the theological-political background he inherited from his mother, Shulamit Aloni, founder of the Israeli Civil Rights Movement and a leading peace activist. *Local Angel* includes wide-ranging discussions with Palestinian activist Hanan Ashrawi and chairman Yasir Arafat, which are further buttressed with the observations of leading Israeli and Palestinian scholars.

The Jewish-Arab State, Yossi Atia and Itamar Rose, dir. (Israel, 2007, 4:30 minutes)

Yossi and Itamar head to the Palestinian town of Taybeh, to ask its citizens about a future Jewish-Arab State. As a new unified citizenry, the identity of the "other" must be re-established with new scapegoats and enemies, those that everyone can hate together. They have Palestinians

draw a new flag and figure out if they will hate the Russians, the U.S., or lesbians the most in the new “Jewish Arabia.”

Notre Musique, Jean-Luc Godard, dir. (Switzerland/France, 2004, 80 minutes)

Echoing the eschatological journey of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, *Notre Musique* is a symphony in three movements – Hell, Purgatory and Paradise. As the camera wanders through post-war Sarajevo, Godard weaves together the recent history of the place with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a poetic meditation on war and reconciliation. The film includes a long conversation with Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008), among other writers and thinkers, who intermingle with fictional characters to discuss about history, art, and politics. The stories of Judith, a journalist from Tel Aviv, and Olga, a Russian Jew, provide a narrative thread to the film. While Judith seems drawn towards light, Olga is drawn to darkness. Their contrasting characters trace one of the many conflicting forces that Godard sets out to explore in the film: life and death, light and dark, reality and imagination, criminals and victims, positive and negative, good and bad. Our music.

• **Brunch**

12:30 – 1:00 p.m.

• **Screening II. Here And Elsewhere**

1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Ici et Ailleurs, Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville, dir. (France, 1976, 53 minutes)

Using footage from *Jusqu’à la victoire*, a 1970 pro-Palestinian film made by Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin as part of Dziga Vertov Group, *Here And Elsewhere* consists of three parts. The first part is composed of images they took in the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon before Black September. The second part of the film analyses chains of images, adding to the pictures of Palestine images of an average French family watching television. The third part returns to the images of the beginning; only now with two voices-over (JLG and AMM), who take the time to watch the images again. As film critic Serge Daney wrote in a lecture introducing the first US screening of the film in 1977, “for it’s in the nature of cinema (delay between the time of shooting and the time of projection) to be the art of here and elsewhere. What Godard says, very uncomfortably and very honestly, is that the true place of the filmmaker is in the AND. A hyphen only has value if it doesn’t confuse what it unites.”

• **Conversation I**

2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Sam Ishii-Gonzales and Joshua Simon

• **Screening III. The Uganda Proposal**

3:00 - 4:30 p.m.

General Idi Amin Dada: A Self Portrait, Barbet Schroeder, dir. (France/Switzerland, 1974, 90 minutes)

The end of the 19th century saw the birth of a Jewish national movement in Europe – Zionism. By the beginning of the 20th century, there was debate within this movement on what territory to claim for its nation state. The 1903-1905 plan for the settlement of European and Russian Jews in British Uganda is taught today under the Israeli state as “the other option” Zionism had for another homeland.

This 1974 documentary film by French director Barbet Schroeder, was made with the support and participation of its subject, the Ugandan dictator Idi Amin (who also composed the soundtrack). The film depicts Amin at the height of his power as the ruler of Uganda, showing him dancing, competing, holding a cabinet meeting and training his troops to fight against Israel.

• **Conversation II**

4:30 – 5:30 p.m.

Udi Aloni, Reem Fadda, and Joshua Simon

• **Screening IV. Affinities**

5:30 – 7:00 p.m.

Struggle in Jerash, Eileen Simpson and Ben White, dir. (Jordan, 2009, 63 minutes)

During a residency at Makan, Jordan, British artists Ben White and Eileen Simpson discovered the last surviving copy of the film *Struggle in Jerash*, one of the first “Jordanian” films. Directed by Wasif AlShaikh, and produced by a self-organised group of filmmakers originating from Palestine, the film was made in 1957 when Jerusalem and the Dead Sea were under Jordanian rule. In 2008, the artists travelled around the country, screening *Struggle in Jerash* and recording young Jordanians’ reactions to the film.

The Truth, Scandar Copti and Rabih Boukhary, dir. (Israel, 2003, 15 minutes)

Two Palestinians from Jaffa visit non-touristy sites in the city, recounting the “history” of the place as if they were tour guides. The text is a fictive narrative ostensibly anchored in that which is seen on the surface. Thus, for example, next to a deserted structure, a debate evolves over the Temple and the location of the Tables of the Covenant in the structure’s windows; in Jaffa’s old Muslim cemetery, al-Kazachana, the camera wanders between the gravestones and on the cliff overlooking the shore, while the background dialogue revolves around the nature of the dead buried there; and in a refuse dump by the beach a discussion takes place about the “vodka plant” growing in the Jabalyyah beach and the Donolo A alcohol factory. Jaffa Port, the cemetery, and the deserted building are ironically depicted by Copti and Buchari as sites of historical and mythical significance.

Participants

Udi Aloni is an Israeli/American writer and filmmaker whose work explores the discourse between art, theory, and action. His art projects have been presented in leading museums and galleries, including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and his films *Kashmir: Journey to Freedom* (2009), *Forgiveness* (2006), and *Local Angel* (2003) have been screened at the Berlin International Film Festival, among other venues. His book *What Does a Jew Want?: On Binationalism and Other Specters* is coming out this month at Columbia University Press. It is published shortly after the murder of his dear friend, Juliano Mer Khamis, director of The Freedom Theater in Jenin Refugee Camp, where Aloni helped him run the Cinema Department

Reem Fadda is Associate Curator of Middle Eastern Art, Abu Dhabi Project, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation. Between 2005 and 2007, Fadda was Director of the Palestinian Association for Contemporary Art (PACA) and worked as Academic Director to the International Academy of Art – Palestine, which she helped found in 2006. Previous curatorial projects include *Liminal Spaces*, a four-year long artistic and political project, which took place in Palestine, Israel and Germany; *Ramallah Syndrome*, showcased at the 53rd Venice Biennale; *Tarjama/Translation*, an ArteEast program presented at the Queens Museum & Herbert E. Johnson Museum; and the *3rd RIWAQ Biennale*, which she curated alongside Charles Esche in Ramallah.

Sam Ishii-Gonzales is Assistant Professor in the Department of Media Studies and Film at The New School where he teaches courses in media theory, aesthetics, and film production. He is the co-editor of two books on Alfred Hitchcock and has published essays on the work of Claire Denis, David Lynch, the painter Francis Bacon, and the philosopher Gilles Deleuze, among others. Two of his articles have recently been translated into Italian and Hungarian, respectively. He is developing a new book project provisionally entitled “Being and Performance: Non-Acting for the Cinema.”

Joshua Simon is a curator and writer based in Tel Aviv-Jaffa. He is the editor of the publication *United States of Palestine-Israel*, and 2011-2013 Vera List Center Fellow. Simon is the co-founding-editor of *Maayan Magazine for Poetry* and *The New & Bad Art Magazine*, and editor of *Maarvon – New Film Magazine*, all based in Tel Aviv-Jaffa. He has also co-edited the publications *Red: Poems of the Working Class* (May Day, 2007) and *The Aesthetics of Terror* (Charta, 2009). Recent curatorial projects include *ReCoCo – Life Under Representational Regimes* (co-curated with Siri Peyer, White Space, Zurich, and Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna, 2011), *The Unreadymade* (FormContent, London, 2010), *Internazionale!* (Left Bank, Israeli Communist Party Culture Club, Tel Aviv, 2008), and *Come to Israel, It's Hot and Wet and We Have The Humus!* (Storefront for Art and Architecture, New York, 2008).

Presented in collaboration with Artis–Contemporary Israeli Art Fund, and in conjunction with The New Museum’s *Repurposing the Kibbutz*, September 17, 3:00 p.m.