



## WE DON'T WANT THIS SONG TO END

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presented by

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# WE DON'T WANT THIS SONG TO END

What is more unsettling to an occupier than an occupied people's relentless imagining of potential futures? Among the violence that manifests itself in events documented, circulated, and reiterated by media, there is another form of aggression in Palestine that lies in nonevents designed to fester angst, powerlessness, and invisibility. At the intersection of the tragic and absurd, laughter becomes an empowering collective sigh of relief. The subversive acts featured in this shorts program by Kamal Aljafari, Mona Benyamin, Noor Abed, Dina Mimi, and Razan AlSalah consider the power of humor, performance, imagination, and ultimately hope in the strive for liberation.

Program Curated by Zaina Bseiso

Runtime: 85 minutes

## **PROGRAM**

### *Moonscape* | **Mona Benyamin** | 2020 | 17'

*Moonscape* is a short film that takes the form of a music video for a ballad performed as a duet between a male and female singer in Arabic. The song traces the story of a man called Dennis M. Hope, who claimed ownership of the moon in 1980 and thus founded the Lunar Embassy—a company that sells land on a variety of planets and moons—and makes a connection between his story and that of the director, a young Palestinian woman living under the Israeli occupation who longs to end the misery of her people in any way possible.

The film's visuals are a hybrid of film noir and surrealist scenes from the Arab music industry, reenacted by the artist's parents who also play the roles of the singers in the film. It also includes found footage from the NASA archives, references to canonic films that influenced the art world and show representations of the moon, and screenshots of email correspondences with staff members of the Lunar Embassy, all of which explore the relationship between hope, nostalgia, and despair.

\*A moonscape is an area or vista of the lunar landscape (generally of the Earth's moon), or a visual representation of this, as in a painting. The term "moonscape" is also sometimes used metaphorically to refer to an area devastated or flattened by war, often by shelling.

### *Trouble in Paradise* | **Mona Benyamin** | 2018 | 9'

*Trouble in Paradise* is a dysfunctional sitcom that sets out to explore humor as a mechanism of coping with trauma, pain, and taboos in relation to the Nakba and the Israeli occupation. The film poses three sets of jokes—from the classical misogynistic genre to anti-jokes and culturally specific humor—in order to examine why Nakba jokes never fully evolved as a genre and entered the Palestinian mainstream.

The main protagonists of the film are the artist's parents who do not speak English and read the jokes from transliterated title cards. They have gone through the Nakba (1948) and the Naksa (1967) and have never shared their memories of these major events.

### *Paradiso, XXX, 108* | **Kamal Aljafari** | 2022 | 19'

"Nothing can be heard anymore; the roar of our plane absorbs every other sound. We are heading straight to the world's biggest display of soundproof fireworks, and soon we will drop our bombs."

*The eyes that never see* | **Dina Mimi** | 2021 | 12'

*The eyes that never see* is a short film that narrates the story of Ram(z)l, a lonely working class man who died twice. It exposes the obsession of a settler state that continuously excavates and digs the ground to find artifacts in order to trace history and create a new one. What is taken out is barely seen; rather, what is meant to be revealed only serves to further the myths sustaining colonial occupation. Ram(z)l was renamed as soon as his first body died, to die again in Jerusalem, under a dusty ground while digging for artifacts of the 6,000-year-old ancient city.

*Canada Park* | **Razan AlSalah** | 2020 | 8'

I walk on snow to fall onto the desert. I find myself on unceded indigenous territory in so called Canada, an exile unable to return to Palestine. I trespass the colonial border as a digital specter floating through Ayalon-Canada Park, transplanted over three Palestinian villages razed by the Israeli Defense Forces in 1967.

*Canada Park* is an experimental video poem exploring the politics of dis/appearance of Palestine as narrativized, mapped and imaged in Google Street View and early 20th century colonial landscape photography of the 'Holy Land,' namely at the site of the village of Imwas, which is theologically conflated with Emmaus, a village cited in the bible. Imwas is erased and Emmaus marked a religious tourist site in the park, a self-fulfilled scriptural and algorithmic prophecy.

The park is located between what is commonly known as No Man's Land and Jerusalem. The film explores this absurd space of suspension in order to create a counter mythology of this place against the religious, geopolitical, and capitalist forces that actuated their imaginings on Palestine's people and land by reinserting the few images documenting the March of Return to Latrun that took place on June 16, 2007. Imwas is not erased. It is buried underground, an undercommons, an elsewhere here, where colonialism no longer makes sense.

*our songs were ready for all wars to come* | **Noor Abed** | 2021 | 20'

Choreographed scenes based on documented folktales from Palestine, *our songs were ready for all the wars to come* aims to create a new aesthetic form to re-awaken latent stories based around water wells and their connection to communal rituals around notions of disappearance, mourning, and death. The work explores the critical stance of 'folklore' as a source of knowledge, and its possible connection to alternative social and representational models in Palestine. How can 'folklore' become a common emancipatory tool for people to use to overturn dominant discourses, reclaim their history and their land, and rewrite reality as they know it?

Captured through mediums of film and sound, situated stories are archived and represented, creating a context that explores the capacity of social formation, and the possibility of recalling a memory that is capable of decentralizing images of fixity: a memory that is liberated from monuments.

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

**Mona Benyamin** (b.1997) is a Palestinian visual artist and filmmaker based in Haifa. In her works, she explores intergenerational outlooks on hope, trauma, and questions of identity. Her recent video works have been screened—among others—at MoMA, Another Gaze, Sheffield DocFest, and Columbia University.

**Kamal Aljafari** is a Palestinian filmmaker. He attended the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne and now lives in Berlin, Germany. He has taught filmmaking at The New School in New York and the Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie, Berlin. He was also a Film Study Center Radcliffe Fellow at Harvard University. In 2021 Olhar de Cinema – Curitiba International Film Festival in Brazil devoted its Focus Section to his work. His most recent work, *Paradiso, XXXI, 108*, premiered at Corti d'Autore at the Locarno Film Festival 2022. He is currently completing *A Fidai* Film and preparing a fiction film to be shot in Jaffa.

**Dina Mimi** (born 1994, Palestine) is an artist who lives and works between Jerusalem and Amsterdam. Her practice encompasses video, sound, performance, and text, and examines the body/space in Palestine. Her current research is concerned with death in the public sphere, as well as notions of visibility and invisibility between archaeology and the object, and the museum and death. Dina obtained her Bachelor's degree from Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem in 2016, and her MFA degree in Art in the Public Sphere from ECAV-École Cantonale d'Art du Valais in Switzerland in 2018. She is currently a resident of Des Ateliers in Amsterdam.

Based in Tio'tia:ke/Montreal, **Razan AlSalah** is a Palestinian artist and teacher investigating the material aesthetics of dis/appearance of places and people in colonial image worlds. Her work has shown at community-based and international film festivals & galleries including Art of the Real, Prismatic Ground, RIDM, HotDocs, Yebisu, Melbourne, Glasgow and Beirut International, Sharjah Film Forum, IZK Institute for Contemporary Art and Sursok Museum. AlSalah co-directs the Feminist Media Studio with Krista Lynes and teaches film and media arts at the Communication Studies department at Concordia University.

**Noor Abed** (b. 1988 Jerusalem) works at the intersection of performance, media, and film. Through a process of image making, her works create situations where social possibilities are both rehearsed and performed. Abed attended the Whitney Independent Study Program in New York in 2015-16, and the Home Workspace Program (HWP) at Ashkal Alwan, Beirut 2016-17. She received her BA from the International Academy of Arts in Palestine and a MFA from the California Institute of the Arts, Los Angeles.

## ABOUT THE CURATOR

Zaina Beseio is a filmmaker and curator working primarily in documentary and experimental cinema. Her interests revolve around diasporic relations to land, hope and potentialities. She explores Return as a notion that conflates and contracts sounds, images and ways of existing in the world. Recently, she joined the programming team at the Points North Institute/Camden International Film Festival. She is also a 2022 Sundance Humanities Sustainability fellow. Her work has screened at Curtas Vila do Conde, Guanajuato, RIDM, DokLeipzig and Ajyal Film Festival, among others. She is co-founder of Bahía Colectiva, a community of filmmakers that collaborate in practice and curation. She received her Master's degree in Film and Video from the California Institute of the Arts. Her practice mainly traverses among Palestine, Egypt, Cuba, Mexico, and the US.

*The Jack H. Skirball Series was organized by Bérénice Reynaud and Eduardo Thomas.*



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