

Emily Jacir: Europa

30 September 2015 – 3 January 2016, Galleries 1, 8 & Victor Petitgas Gallery (Gallery 9)

Media View: Tuesday 29 September, 10am – Midday

The Whitechapel Gallery presents the first UK survey of artist **Emily Jacir** this autumn. Bringing together almost two decades of sculpture, film, drawings, large-scale installations and photography, *Emily Jacir: Europa* focuses on Jacir's multifaceted relationship to Europe, Italy and the Mediterranean in particular.

Known for her poignant works of art that are as poetic as they are political and biographical, Emily Jacir explores various histories of migration, resistance and exchange. Books, libraries, etymology and the act of translation are also key themes in many of her works.

A highlight of the Whitechapel Gallery show is the UK premiere of *Material for a film* (2004-ongoing), winner of a Golden Lion at the 2007 Venice Biennale. This large-scale, immersive installation is based on the life of Palestinian writer Wael Zuaiter who was assassinated near his home in Rome, Italy, by Israeli Mossad agents in 1972. Jacir reimagines chapters of Zuaiter's life through materials unearthed by the artist including family photographs, correspondence and documents relating to his assassination. Jacir's own photographs, writings, sound works and interviews she conducted form the central component of the project and present her journey to find Wael through the traces he left behind. In bringing together these materials on Zuaiter's life and her own research, the artist draws attention to the efforts of the intellectuals who endeavoured to bring international attention to the Palestinian cause.

Jacir's atmospheric short film *Lydda Airport* (2009) is set in the mid – late 1930s and is inspired by a story told to Jacir by Salim Tamari whose father recounted waiting at the airport (now known as Ben Gurion) to greet and welcome aviator Amelia Earhart who never arrived. It also tells the tale of 'Hannibal', an Imperial Airways plane that later vanished without a trace while flying over the Gulf of Oman en route from Jask, Iran to Sharjah, UAE on March 1, 1940. Jacir herself appears in the work, which is informed by personal accounts and historic records.

stazione, (2008-2009) was a public intervention for Palestine c/o Venice, Palestine's participation in the 2009 Venice Biennale. Jacir translated the names of each vaporetto station along Route 1 on the Grand Canal into Arabic, and proposed to place them alongside the existing Italian signs to create a bilingual transportation route through the city. The ambition of the work was to put the water bus stop stations in direct dialogue with the surrounding architecture and linking elements of Venice's shared heritage with the Arab world. The project was never realised as it was cancelled by the Venetian authorities, however, the photographs and plans are presented in this exhibition.

Presented in a dedicated gallery is the video installation *ENTRY DENIED (a concert in Jerusalem)*, (2003). Austrian nationals Marwan Abado, Franz Hautzinger and Peter Rosmanith were due to perform concerts in East Jerusalem and Bethlehem in July 2002. However, the musicians were unable to

Press Release

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go ahead with the concerts after Marwan Abado, who is of Palestinian origin, was denied entry at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport for 'security reasons'. Jacir invited the musicians to perform the concert exactly as it was to have taken place but in an empty theatre in Vienna.

Other works on show include *6 June 1967*, (1998); *Change/Exchange*, (1998); *Untitled (June)*, (1998); *from Paris to Riyadh (drawings for my mother) – Novembre 1977* (1998 – 2001); *linz diary*, (2003); *Nothing Will Happen (eight normal Saturdays in Linz)*, (2003); *embrace*, (2005); *ex libris*, (2010-2012) and *Tal al Zaatar project*, (2014).

Notes for Editors

- Emily Jacir solo exhibitions include: Darat il Funun (2014), Beirut Art Center (2010), Guggenheim Museum, New York (2009); Kunstmuseum, St. Gallen (2008); The Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centre, Ramallah (2004); and the O-K Center for Contemporary Art, Linz, Austria (2003). Her work has been included in group exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA); Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin; dOCUMENTA (13) (2012); Venice Biennale (2005, 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2013); 29th Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil (2010); 15th Biennale of Sydney (2006); Sharjah Biennial 7 (2005); Whitney Biennial (2004); and the 8th Istanbul Biennial (2003). In 2003 O.K. Books published *belongings*, a monograph on a selection of Jacir's work, and a second monograph was published by Verlag Fur Moderne Kunst Nurnberg (2008) with her book *ex libris* published in 2012 by Buchhandlung Walther König, Köln. Jacir is the recipient of several awards, including a Golden Lion at the 52nd Venice Biennale (2007); a Prince Claus Award (2007); the Hugo Boss Prize (2008); the Herb Alpert Award (2011); and the Rome Prize (2015). She is a professor at the International Academy of Art Palestine in Ramallah (2006 – present) and is on the faculty of Bard MFA, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY. She has curated several Arab and Palestinian film seasons for New York city with Alwan for the Arts (between 1999 – 2002), conceived and co-curated the first Palestine International Video Festival in Ramallah in 2002 with John Menick, and curated the selection of shorts *Palestinian Revolution Cinema (1968 - 1982)* which toured in 2007. She lives and works around the Mediterranean.
- For over a century the Whitechapel Gallery has premiered world class artists from modern masters such as Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Frida Kahlo to contemporaries such as Sophie Calle, Lucian Freud, Gilbert & George and Mark Wallinger. With beautiful galleries, exhibitions, artist commissions, collection displays, historic archives, education resources, inspiring art courses, dining room and bookshop, the Gallery is open all year round, so there is always something free to see. It is a touchstone for contemporary art internationally, plays a central role in London's cultural landscape and is pivotal to the continued growth of the world's most vibrant contemporary art quarter.
- *Emily Jacir: Europa* is the first major survey of the artist in the UK and will travel to IMMA (Irish Museum of Modern Art), Dublin, Ireland in November 2016. The Whitechapel Gallery exhibition (30 September 2015 – 3 January 2016) is curated by Omar Kholeif, Curator, Whitechapel Gallery with Habda Rashid, Assistant Curator, Whitechapel Gallery.
- The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue co-published with Prestel. The catalogue includes essays by Whitechapel Gallery Curator Omar Kholeif as well as commissioned texts by Jean Fisher (art critic), Lorenzo Fusi (Artistic Director of the International Contemporary Art Prize), Graziella Parati (Professor at Dartmouth College) and Nikos Papastergiadis (Professor at the University of Melbourne). £24.99

- *Emily Jacir: Europa* has been generously supported by the Emily Jacir Exhibition Circle and those who wish to remain anonymous.

Visitor Information

Opening times: Tuesday – Sunday, 11am – 6pm, Thursdays, 11am – 9pm. Free entry.
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