

Steve Sabella premieres ***The Great March of Return***, a Monumental “Present-day Fresco” at the 2019 Gaza International Video Art Festival including 1000 Photos Taken by Five Journalists in Gaza Collaged with Images of Outer Space



Detail of *The Great March of Return* (2019)

The Gaza International Video Art Festival will present a new moving-image work by Berlin-based artist Steve Sabella (1975, Jerusalem, Palestine) titled *The Great March of Return* for the opening night on 11 Feb 2019.

The ten minute video features animated scenes and an original soundtrack titled ‘Gaza Suite’ by Ghazi Barakat. The images are details from a large photographic collage that will later be unveiled in an institutional exhibition in the form of a two meter diameter circle along with an art book publication.

Sabella’s work *No Man’s Land*, a 6 meter wide collage triptych, will also be included in a major international exhibition at The Palestinian Museum in Birzeit opening in April 2019.

Sabella is familiar with the Gaza Strip, having visited dozens of times as a commissioned photographer for the UN through 2007. In 2005 Sabella was the subject of a political kidnapping by Palestinians in Gaza and released at the end of the day, an impactful event recalled in his award-winning memoir *The Parachute Paradox* published by Kerber Verlag in 2016.

The Great March of Return is a collage including over one thousand photographs captured by five Palestinian journalists—Atieh Darwish, Mustafa Mohamad, Majdi Fathi, Mohammed Asad and Ashraf Amra—from Gaza of the crowds who have gathered every Friday since March 2018 to end the Israeli occupation. These images are contrasted with photos taken of outer space merging the hermetically sealed Strip with infinity, creating a monumental “present-day fresco” demonstrating a nation’s eternal fight for liberation. The work is a reality within reality, a journey to the beginning, to armageddon—unveiling a story, a struggle that extends to the beginning of time.

As Sabella writes, “Imagination is the ultimate tool to free the self, a power that can never be confined, only expanded. There are multiple realities hidden in images and Palestinians have infinite possibilities to discover their voyage to liberation.”

One’s ability to transform a story by telling it anew has been a continuous theme of Sabella’s art practice. For his 2014 series *38 Days of Re-Collection*, the artist stayed in a Palestinian home occupied by Israelis in Jerusalem since 1948, photographing every detail of the house and claiming his Right of Return. He printed these photos on fragments of paint peeled from the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem, the neighbourhood in which he was born and raised. Sabella’s daring installation *Settlement: Six Israelis & One Palestinian* (2010),

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commissioned by MATHAF: Arab Museum of Modern Art, places the viewer in a standoff: he photographed six life-size portraits of Israeli men, standing in front of a wall similar to Israel's concrete barrier, wearing only underwear. Opposite this row is a photograph of the artist himself. Finally, there is Sabella's monument-like glass sculpture *All That Remains: Wood shard collected from Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp on top of fragments with photographs taken in a Palestinian house occupied by Israelis in 1948*.

Steve Sabella is an award-winning artist, writer and public speaker based in Berlin using photography and photographic installation as his principal modes of expression. His work has been exhibited internationally and is held in collections including those of the British Museum in London, Institut de Monde Arabe in Paris and Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art in Doha. Sabella holds an MA in Photographic Studies from the University of Westminster and an MA in Art Business from Sotheby's Institute of Art, London. In 2008, he received the Ellen Auerbach Award from the Akademie der Künste Berlin, including the publication of his monograph covering 20 years of art.



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