

## **Indirect Artworks Related to the Separation Wall in Occupied Palestine: Analytical Study**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Israeli occupation in Palestine led to a huge wall being built to separate the West Bank from other Palestinian territories, causing devastating consequences on the life of Palestinians in all aspects. As a means of resistance against the occupation and the destruction of the wall, Palestinian artists depict various images of different genre of art on the wall. Several foreign artists also participate in the demonstration to show their solidarity with the Palestinians and to display the Palestinians' sufferings to the world. These works of art are called 'direct artwork'. Many Palestinian, Arab and foreign artists have produced similar artwork, but not directly on the separation wall; such artwork is called 'indirect artwork'. This paper aims to analyse several examples of artwork that were displayed in the period from 2002 to 2015. These examples were selected because they participated in international exhibitions and competitions and were awarded prizes and high ratings. Some of them use visual and printed media. This article combines the works produced using different media in a single study to discuss their collective contribution to the Palestinian cause. The analytical approach was utilised to analyse the selected artworks. The analyses indicated that the indirect artistic works make a significant contribution to the Palestinian resistance against the occupation in general and the construction of the separation wall in particular. The artists have creatively presented their work, which mimic

the separation wall by showing the wall in its real and original grey colour, shape and size. The indirect artistic works send political messages through the lens of culture and modernisation.

*Keywords:* Indirect artwork, Israeli occupation, separation wall

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## INTRODUCTION

The Zionist movement with the help of foreign countries in the United Nations invaded and occupied Palestine in 1948. Since then, the Palestinians have been witnessing and living in unbelievable and unbearable suffering caused by this brutal occupation. The Israeli occupation has used all types of cruel measure against the Palestinians including killing and arresting people, bombing and demolishing houses, uprooting trees, closing academic institutions, imposing blockades, restricting the Palestinians' movement in their land and depriving them of their basic human rights. In 2002, the occupation caused a huge wall (extending over 772 km) to be built to separate the West Bank from the other parts of Palestine. The wall is made up of a variety of different components, including fences, ditches, razor wire, groomed sand paths, an electronic monitoring system, patrol roads and a buffer zone. It consists of 8-9-metre high concrete slab segments that are connected to a wall. The wall has been referred to as a 'separation' or 'apartheid wall' because it has segregated the Palestinians socially, economically and geographically, and increased the Palestinians' suffering in all aspects of life. One of the responses to the construction of this separation wall was the production of artwork as a show of non-violent resistance against the wall undertaken by Palestinians and foreigners. Artwork depicted directly on the wall include drawings, graffiti, photography,

video, installation art, performing arts and sculpture. Such supportive artwork is also produced indirectly i.e. it is not displayed on the wall.

The separation wall in occupied Palestine has become an artistic space for foreign and local artists to express their opinions. The artwork depicted on the wall has received tremendous attention in various parts of the world. It has been observed that the artwork has increased as a means of resistance against Israeli occupation in general and the construction of the wall in particular. Nevertheless, Palestinians, including critics and artists have called for the wall not to be beautified or decorated with art. They have also demanded that the wall be kept in its obnoxious military nature so as to retain the people's spirit and determination to demolish and remove it. Some Palestinians have washed off some of the drawings on the wall, believing that such drawings are not useful to the Palestinian cause and that they may even humiliate the Palestinian people as some of the artwork does not relate to Palestinian heritage. This has kept many Palestinian and Arab artists from displaying their artwork on the wall to avoid criticism or objections, believing that their art, although not depicted or displayed directly on the wall, can still adequately serve the Palestinian cause. As a result, various works of art on the theme of the separation wall are not displayed on the wall (i.e. not directly on the wall). Such works are called 'indirect artwork' related to the separation wall.

There are other reasons for the production of such indirect artwork. First, Palestinian artists residing outside Palestine who are not able to come into occupied Palestine have produced artwork addressing the separation wall in solidarity with the Palestinian people and as a way to demonstrate the sufferings of the Palestinian people under the occupation. Second, some artists believe that through their indirect artwork, they are able to convey the message of occupation and suffering more effectively. Third, the occupation forces removed some artwork that presented a real challenge to the occupation; this indicated to Palestinian artists and the people that the artwork remaining on the wall was questionable, supporting the claim that the artwork on the wall helped to beautify the wall. Fourth, Palestinian and Arab artists strove to create awareness among the international community of the consequences of the wall and the sufferings the Palestinians were experiencing as a result of the occupation in an effort to gather support against the occupation and the separation wall.

To sum up, the existence of this direct and indirect artwork has become a controversial issue among Palestinians. Do they really serve the Palestinian cause in resisting the occupation? Or do they actually romanticise the separation by beautifying and decorating the wall? These significant issues have not been thoroughly investigated by researchers. In a previous paper, artwork depicted or displayed directly on the separation wall was examined and analysed to identify their underlying

meaning and implications. Therefore, this paper addressed and critically analysed the indirect artwork that is not displayed directly on the separation wall.

### **Problem of Study**

The Zionist occupation in Palestine represents all types of war, terrorism, oppression and violation against the Palestinian people which has resulted in fear, suffering and instability in all aspects of life. This situation has also seriously influenced innovation in the arts used as a means of resistance against the occupation and people's attitudes towards it. A good example of such art is the artwork depicted on the separation wall in Palestine. The source of controversy over this artwork are the people who may not understand the purpose of the artwork, and who might therefore be provoked by the content of the artwork for ethical, ideological, cultural or political reasons. The Palestinians may perceive the content or topic of the works as not being related to the Palestinian cause and the works themselves as only a means of beautifying and decorating the ugly separation wall. Thus, many Palestinian artists have resorted to indirect artwork such as drawings, photography, videos, performing arts and carvings that depict the negative consequences of the wall on Palestinians. Studies on such works are sparse, prompting this paper to address and critically analyse such works to evaluate their contribution to the Palestinian cause. This paper also contributes by highlighting this issue and by shedding light on the

indirect artwork and its importance, which is not any less than that of the direct artwork, by including them in the literature that often discusses the direct artwork and the controversy whether these works resist or enhance the separation wall. However, indirect artwork is not included in this controversy. The content analysis approach was utilised to analyse the selected artworks.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of selected examples of indirect artwork related to the separation wall in occupied Palestine is presented in this section. Pictures of the works have been used to support the analysis.

### Drawing and Photography Arts

Figures 1 and 2 are paintings of the separation wall by the Palestinian artist, Sulaiman Mansur, who participated in a Rivia Gallery exhibition in Damascus. The

paintings show Palestinians having to face daily humiliation. The artist used tores and unclear vision and cement walls that block light and air to tell his story. These works visualise the reality in Palestine and the sufferings of the Palestinian people under occupation. They display the checkpoints, barriers and the separation wall as graves that harshly restrict the Palestinians' movement in their lands, as if they were living in prisons. These works show what the artist Mansur experienced in his daily life under the occupation. He was repeatedly detained due to his anti-occupation artwork. Israeli interrogators tried to convince Mansur to draw flowers instead, but he never did (Suweileh, 2010). This is clear evidence of the contribution of these works to resisting the occupation.

Figure 3 is a painting by the Palestinian artist, Hani Za`rab, who participated in the Standby Series in France in 2008. This painting is entitled "The Waiting". It

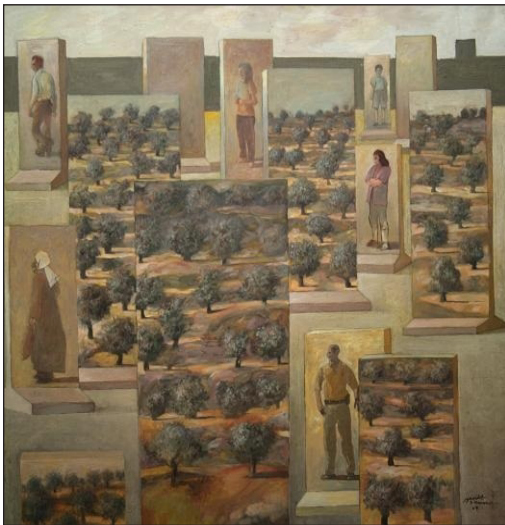


Figure 1. Checkpoints



Figure 2. Life under the occupation

shows a Palestinian lying on the ground looking at two high black and grey adjacent walls in the background. He is lying on the ground with his hands intersected at the back of his head, and one of his legs is straightened while the other is folded. He is lying down near a deep cliff that could be a table made of solid wood. He represents the Palestinian who is deprived of his land and is exiled from his people because of the separation wall. However, he still entertains the hope that someone will arise to rescue him from the situation. This painting has been analysed and interpreted in various ways, either generally or politically. For example, the critic, Kunaib, suggested that the observer seemed comfortable and relaxed in his reclining position, but in reality, no enjoyment can be possible in such an ugly and tough environment. He can feel no real comfort. He may just be unable to leave as he is imprisoned and helpless having attempted to cross the two walls. The picture depicts the position of an imprisoned person (Kaneib, 2010). This drawing successfully reflects the Palestinians' suffering due to the separation wall, although at the same time, they are still waiting hopefully for the wall to be torn down.

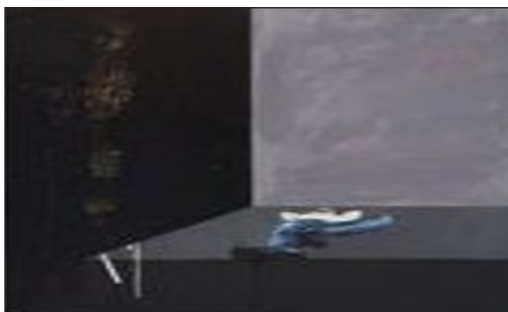


Figure 3. Waiting

Figure 4 is a photograph by the Palestinian artist, Nuwai Jubur. This photograph shows olive tree roots and branches with green leaves penetrating the separation wall. This indicates and declares new life for and a return to Palestine despite the misery and sorrow of the people. While this artwork shows the creativity of the artist, at the same time, it serves the Palestinian cause by addressing the real and ugly nature of the separation wall and the determination of the Palestinians to taste new life. The roots are a challenge to the wall; it is as if they are saying to the wall, "No matter how high and strong you are, you will be unable to remove my roots from my homeland."



Figure 4. Olive tree roots

Figure 5 is a photograph of a young Palestinian man throwing stones over the high separation wall on the Israeli soldiers who are guarding the Israeli settlements built on the Palestinian-seized lands. The artist captures the continuation of the resistance against the Zionist occupation no matter the height of the wall; the wall cannot prevent the Palestinians from resisting the occupation. Yousuf Razqah, the Palestinian

Minister of Media, believed that such photographic artwork is able to combine both content and beauty, helping to present

meaning directly and effectively to viewers. Indeed, a picture is worth a thousand words.



Figure 5. Throwing stones

### Video Art

Figure 6 shows a clip of a video shown at the Ayyaam Hall in London that was produced by the Palestinian artist, Khaled Jarraar. It is a live show of the sufferings of one

Palestinian family whose members were separated by the separation wall. An old lady is bending down and extending her fingers to reach out and touch the fingers of her daughter as the daughter's fingers appeared



Figure 6. Her daughter

beneath the wall as the two try to talk to one another despite the wall. They are also passing pictures to each other under the wall. This is the only way they can communicate with each other. Here, the separation wall represents humiliation, oppression and domination of the Palestinian people. It is also a barrier that separates family members. The work reflects on and documents the suffering of the Palestinian people because of the separation wall (Bu `Ali, 2013).

Figure 7 is a clip from a video, "Checkpoint" by the Palestinian artist, Sharif Wakid. He shows the sufferings of the Palestinian people at many Israeli checkpoints. The artist addresses the issue of the Israeli checkpoints from the perspective of the world of fashion. In the video, men wearing dresses walk in queue one after another on a platform accompanied by music playing in the background. The zips, openings, head covers and buttons on their clothes make reference to the issue of life under occupation. Parts of the men's body (bottom of the back, chest and stomach) may be seen through the openings and gaps in the clothing made of silk or cotton. The ordinary cloth and raw material of the clothing mimic the most advanced fashion styles. Next to the show platform, there are still and static images of Palestinian men raising their shirts, cloaks and coats one after another at the Israeli checkpoints. The checkpoints show two contradicting worlds, the elegant world of fashion and the world of forced stripping contemplated through the concepts of the science of beauty, body, humiliation, censorship and freedom. The clothing is

designed to resemble the daily routine of Israeli soldiers making the Palestinians hang their clothes as they are scared of the individual Palestinian's body .



Figure 7. Checkpoint

### Performing Arts

Figure 8 represents an indirect work of the performing arts genre entitled "*Al-Taswiyah*" ("Compromise") by the Palestinian artist, Steve Sabella. This work was presented in an exhibition named "*Mahki, Makhfi and Mu`aad*" ("Spoken, Hidden and Repeated") in Qatar, the capital city of Doha. The artist sought to explain the status of the Palestinian people reached as a result of the compromise between the Israelis and the Palestinians that was not in favour of the Palestinians as the occupying state did not implement any of the agreed resolutions. On the contrary, the occupying state built a separation wall that caused demographic an imbalance in Jerusalem and the Palestinian territories that were occupied in 1948 in favour of the Israelis. In this work, the artist intends to reflect this reality of the 1:6 ration by having one photograph of a Palestinian man (himself, naked) hanging on one wall while on the opposite wall are six individual

photographs of six Israelis, naked (Sabella, 2011). This confrontation highlights the imbalanced ratio of Palestinians and Israelis caused by the separation wall. This brave representation may be strange in the context of the Arab world, where traditional artwork is appreciated. It also suggests the potential

for change by including a range of meanings for two opposing views i.e. the appearance and function and the vision and realisation (Al-abtah, 2010). According to Russian researcher, Moscovitz (2007), drawings related to the separation wall reflected the cultural identity of Arabs in Palestine.



Figure 8. Al-Taswiyah

### Sculpture

Palestinian artists believe that sculpture can be more influential in delivering the message of the suffering of the Palestinians to the international community. They also believe that the end of the separation wall is more practically represented through sculpture as it is not directly depicted on the separation wall. It is not also seen as a means of beautifying or decorating the separation wall compared with other types of art that can be depicted on the wall itself. Examples of these works of sculpture are discussed as follows.

Figure 9 is a sculpture of a rugby ball by the Palestinian artist, Khaaled Jarraar. This sculpture consists of concrete materials secretly engraved by the artist's own hands

using a chisel on the separation wall. It refers to a rugby ball that Palestinian children abandoned beside the separation wall because they were afraid of the occupation soldiers positioned at the towers of the separation wall. The artist, by manipulating the multipurpose concrete materials, strives to provoke dialogue about land possession and liberation and to document the sufferings of life in Palestine. The restrictions imposed on the Palestinians serve as fuel for such artistic works, producing narratives of political meanings expressed through images of culture and modernised life (Imraan, 2012).

Figure 10 is a sandglass using sand taken from parts of the separation wall made by the Palestinian artist, Magd Abdul Hamid.



He cut off some parts of the separation wall and ground it and placed it in the top half of a sandglass, declaring an end to the separation wall in time. Every single grain of sand drops from the top to the bottom half of the sandglass, indicating that the time for the demolition of the wall is nearing; this is an explicit call for the destruction of the wall. Some may think this is wishful thinking and that the artist's effort is too insignificant to have any real effect, but the depiction carries great weight as psychologically, it provides immense moral support for resistance to the wall. It is a dream that survives with the passing of time, day after day, and as the grains of sand fall, the time for the end of the wall comes closer. Furthermore, the artist may want to indicate that this is his way of getting rid of the wall and he encourages other Palestinians to look for other ways to bring down the wall.

Figure 11 shows a sculpture done on marble entitled as "*Jidaar fi Ra'sik*" ("Wall on Your Head") by the Palestinian artist, Ahmed Kana`aan. It displays the head of a Palestinian lady, symbolising the Palestinian land, with a wall on it. Palestinian women carry heavy loads on their heads, then set them down when they are tired. This sculpture indicates the absolute rejection of the oppressive siege caused by the separation wall. The wall carried by the woman on her head will not last forever, but will drop and eventually fade. The Palestinians do not possess the tools for getting rid of the occupiers at the moment and do not have the support to do so, but a day will come when the occupation will be defeated.



Figure 9. A rugby ball



Figure 10. Sandglass



Figure 11. Wall on your head.

### Installation Art that Represents the Separation Wall

Some artwork that represents the separation wall done by artists have come from various places outside Palestine to show the solidarity of the artists with the Palestinians (Yaqeen,

2012). Their rejection of the separation wall too shows their role in focussing on the sufferings of the Palestinians and supporting them. Some Arab artists have excelled in building objects that portray the separation wall in terms of physical and moral aspects and they strive to deliver their message to the international community, as seen in Figure 12 below.

The artistic work “Cutting Edge” in Figure 12 displayed in the Castillo de Rivol Museum in Italy was made by the Saudi artist, Ibrahim Abu Mismaar. It incarnates the separation wall in occupied Palestine. The artist tried to make sure that his work would reach a great number of people around the world to let them know the effects of the wall on the life of the Palestinians. He also

focussed on showing the tiny details of the wall to reflect its reality. The work was based on a marble base of 3 cm in height and 150 cm in width; a total of 67 blade cutters were used to symbolise the number of villages and cities the wall separated from one another. The cutters are painted in the same colour as the wall. Abu Mismaar also made chips and circles in his work so that the work would resemble the actual wall (Imraan, 2012). Abu Mismaar had stated that he presented the concrete wall as blades to connote the function of the wall, which had cut through cities and Palestinian villages in the West Bank, turning them into compartments isolated from their surroundings (Imraan, 2012).



Figure 12. Cutting edge

Figure 13 shows the Lebanese artist, Waleed `Awni's, work displayed at the 10<sup>th</sup> Binali in Cairo. This work represents the separation wall in occupied Palestine. The artist tried to show evidence of terrorism by the Zionist state through the destruction of

humans and land caused by the wall. The artist left vast spaces on the structure without any drawings for viewers to participate in the artistic work by drawing and writing their thoughts and feelings about the obnoxious wall. The artist was able to present the

reality experienced by the Palestinian people as a result of the existence of the separation wall, as he portrayed the wall as it actually is in structure, colour and height,

depicting the misery of the Palestinians. The work includes a tree cut in half by the wall (Waleed, 2006).



Figure 13. Structure of separation wall.

Brazilian artist of Palestinian origin, Sami Mussa, when he returned to his Palestinian home, expressed his feelings in the artistic work shown in Figure 14. Sami highlighted the fact that resistance was the ideal solution for ending the occupation and bringing down the wall by presenting a hole in the wall from which the head of

a Palestinian resistance fighter is thrust. His message is that there is no option but to resist the occupation and the wall, and to completely free the Palestinian land, indicated by the free end of the cloak that dangles beneath the head drawing the map of Palestine.



Figure 14. The hole

## CONCLUSION

Indirect artwork plays a vital role in depicting resistance art that speaks out against occupation in general in the West Bank and the construction of the separation wall in particular. Indirect artwork represents the reality of Palestinian life and the suffering of the people due to the occupation and devastating consequences of having the separation wall. The artists have creatively presented their message through art that represents the separation by portraying the wall in its real and original grey colour, shape and size. Indirect artistic works bring forth political messages through the lens of culture and the forces of modernisation, helping to rally international public opinion in confronting the arrogance of the occupation and the wall and to exert pressure on the occupiers. Indirect artwork also echo the demand for freedom and the establishment of a Palestinian state.

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