

PERMANENT TEMPORARINESS

SANDI HILAL AND ALESSANDRO PETTI

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ARTGALLERY



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SANDI HILAL AND ALESSANDRO PETTI

Curated by Salwa Mikdadi
and Bana Kattan

The Concrete Tent, 2015
Photo: Anna Sara for *Campus in Camps*



PERMANENT TEMPORARINESS

This mid-career retrospective exhibition of works by the artists and architects Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti covers their research and art produced over the last fifteen years. The curatorial premise for *Permanent Temporariness* questions the state of 'refugeeness,' a condition meant to be temporary, but that can become a permanent state of being. The artists examine temporariness, giving agency to refugees, both Palestinians under occupation and others, through alternative modes of articulating refugeeness at a time when the voice of the refugee is easily drowned in a sea of victimhood and alienation. As a result of political and natural calamities, there are currently over 70 million forcibly displaced people around the world. At the same time, globalization resulted in the movement of large numbers of professionals and a labor force from their native 'home' to temporary work locations, a move that subsequently turned into a life of permanent temporariness. This condition in the Gulf countries is referred to by the novelist Deepak Unnikrishnan as 'Temporary People,' living in between two homes, one an unattainable dream and another an economic necessity. Living more years away from home than at home imposes conditions and initiates new realities that characterize permanent temporariness. The artists examine this condition, focusing on Palestinian refugees, and on the recent waves of refugees from other nations.¹

The artists' work lies between conceptual speculation and an artistic practice that is based on spatial interventions in art, architecture, discourse, public research, and communal learning. Through research, publication, performance, video, film, photography, and interventions, the artists examine the relation between politics and architecture.

¹ Palestinian refugees are one of the largest and the longest-lasting refugee populations in the world (an ongoing displacement since 1948) and according to UNRWA there are more than 5 million Palestinian refugees with one-third still living in refugee camps.

Hilal and Petti's art practice is fundamentally collaborative, as the work in this exhibition testifies. They adopted this approach early in their career, establishing a collaborative residency in 2007, along with Eyal Weizman: the Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency (DAAR), in Beit Sahour, Palestine. Since then hundreds of resident artists, architects and other collaborators have worked on a variety of projects that aim "... to find and utilize cracks and loopholes within existing colonial systems of separation and control [which] include built structures, infrastructure, land ownerships, and legal systems."² The *Common Assembly* installation in the main gallery is an example of such a project.

In another interdisciplinary collaboration, *The Book of Exile*, an Emirati calligrapher inscribes the collected narratives of Palestinian refugees. As in the *Refugee Heritage* photo project, their art is mediated through a series of on-going conversations that migrates between continents, from Palestine, to North and South America, Europe, and now in the UAE at NYU Abu Dhabi. Community engagement and collaboration is also at the heart of *Mujawarah / The Tree School*. This project is based on *Campus in Camps*, an ongoing, non-hierarchical learning initiative where *Mujawarah* is the sharing of knowledge steeped in the social, intellectual, and spiritual experience of the participants. Sharing and collaboration are key to all the artists' projects, which in turn are related conceptually and/or in practice. For example, *The Concrete Tent* installation was one of the sites for *Campus in Camps* that led to *The Tree School* installation, activated internationally and now at NYUAD.

In 2016, Hilal and Petti initiated a discourse on 'refugeeness' as a state of being with a history and a heritage, both tangible and intangible, that should be explored, documented, interpreted, and officially

² <http://www.decolonizing.ps/site/notes-on-extraterritoriality/> Accessed Jan 15, 2018.

inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The same proposition could apply to refugees from Iraq, Syria, Somalia, and the Rohingya or WWII European refugees.

Hilal and Petti, along with their collaborators – teams of academics, architects, heritage specialist, and refugee camp committees – prepared the UNESCO nomination dossier as a DAAR proposal to inscribe the Palestinian Dheisheh Refugee Camp, located south of Bethlehem, as a World Heritage Site. They included in the dossier the first four required support documents on Identification, Description, Justification, and Conservation. Response to the *Refugee Heritage* dossier and discussions on its efficacy continue to take place inside Palestinian refugee camps and internationally. A similar discussion will take place in conjunction with this exhibition at NYU Abu Dhabi.

In the *Permanent Temporariness* exhibition, *Refugee Heritage* is represented with eighteen colored photographs taken at night, documenting the Dheisheh Refugee Camp's architecture. The alleys are devoid of people, intentionally reinforcing the archival. The visitors maneuver around the large light boxes walking a path that recalls the narrow alleys typical of refugee camps. For several generations, these alleys and the communities that surround them have contributed to the identity and memories of their residents. In one of the interviews documented by DAAR, refugees from Dheisheh Camp described it as the place where memories are made and that for Palestinians "memories are their homeland." For others who left the camp, "living outside the camp was like living in a hotel." Thus, for many Palestinians the temporary appearance of the camp represented "a living archive of displacement, a marker of dispossession."³

³ From a conversation between Ahmad and Qussay, two refugees who grew up but no longer live in Dheisheh: <http://www.decolonizing.ps/site/i-identification/> Accessed Jan 10, 2018.

In their practice Hilal and Petti have demonstrated a remarkable determination to pursue a subject that has been limited to the domain of international humanitarian agencies for seventy years. Both artists are engaged with refugee camps in the occupied territories, and now with Syrian refugees in Sweden. Until recently, Hilal headed UNRWA's camp development program while conducting research with Petti on the spatial politics of these camps. Over the last fifteen years the artists have initiated and collaborated with inhabitants of the refugee camps and others on projects that encourage multiple perspectives, an egalitarian pedagogy through sharing life experiences. They also initiated research through the DAAR Residencies, and conducted dozens of theoretical and pedagogical discourses that examine refugeeeness, displacement, migration and memory. They continue to study the decolonization of the architecture of urban spaces under occupation, and civic representation and identity in the absence of a nation state.

Their speculation on these subjects, among others, engage their audiences with the process of decolonization of discourse, examining the re-conceptualization of refugee camps as sites for justice and the potentiality of refugee heritage as an agent for political change.

Salwa Mikdadi
Bana Kattan

The Concrete Tent, 2015
Photo: Anna Sara for *Campus in Camps*



REFUGEE HERITAGE

A series of photo lightboxes, shown for the first time at New York University Abu Dhabi, make up part of the dossier nomination of Dheisheh Refugee Camp as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In 2016, Hilal and Petti commissioned the Italian photographer Luca Capuano, the same photographer whom UNESCO had commissioned to document forty-four sites in Italy inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. He was asked to document Dheisheh Refugee Camp with the same respect, care, and search for monumentality used when photographing historical centers like Venice or Rome.

The artists start from an understanding that refugee camps are places rich with stories narrated through the urban fabric. Historically, refugee camps have been dismissed by states, non-governmental organizations and by refugee communities themselves, in fear that the recognition of these histories of exile could undermine the refugees' right of return to their home country. For over two years the implications for Dheisheh's UNESCO nomination were discussed by organizations and individuals, politicians and conservation experts, activists, governmental and non-governmental representatives, and proximate residents.

Members of the camps expressed strong concerns that the nomination would change the status quo, in addition to undermining their legal right of return. Still, they expressed their desire to see refugee history acknowledged, and to bring the right of return discussion back to the center of the political debate. The end goal of the project is not UNESCO's approval, but to start a needed conversation about the permanent temporariness of camps, and the connection between rights and space.

Capuano's eighteen life-sized photos on lightboxes make up an alley-like path to mimic the encounters and blockades one discovers while walking in the camp. The artists have included one image taken in Italy from Capuano's UNESCO project, encouraging the visitor to consider the aesthetic values as well as the similarities and differences between the informality of historical towns and refugee camps.



Refugee Heritage is a project by DAAR: Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti in collaboration with Sandy Rishmawi, Elsa Koehler, Isshaq Al Barbary, Mais Musleh. It was produced in consultation with *Campus in Camps*, Dheisheh Camp Popular Committee, Finiq Cultural Center, Ibdaa Cultural Center, Riwaq Center for Architectural Conservation and Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation in Bethlehem. Special thanks to the Odah and Al Saifi families.

The Foundation for Art Initiatives and the 5th Riwaq Biennial provided the initial support for the development of *Refugee Heritage*. The lightbox installation is commissioned by NYU Abu Dhabi.

The *Refugee Heritage* project was first presented in 2016 as text in e-flux's publishing web platform e-flux.com/architecture/refugee-heritage.

Photos: Luca Capuano

COMMON ASSEMBLY

The *Common Assembly* installation refers to the borderline that runs through a building that was originally designed to house the Palestinian Parliament. Today, the building – never completed – stands on the property of Al Quds University in Abu-Dis, a suburb of Jerusalem. The abandoned structure is a relic of the euphoria of the post-Oslo Accord (1993), which promised the establishment of a Palestinian State with the status of East Jerusalem postponed. The subsequent failure of the Oslo Accord to reach a peaceful settlement led to the second Intifada “uprising” followed by the construction of the separation wall a few meters from the building. All of this led to the abandonment of the Palestinian Parliament building project.

Common Assembly was inspired by the discovery that the Israeli-imposed Jerusalem border line passes through the building, hence the building sits on three political zones: Israel expropriated territory, Palestinian-controlled territory, and a narrow strip the width of which is the thickness of the border line as drawn on the map. In 2011, DAAR was granted access to the building. The artists had noted how people marked the re-appropriation of the public spaces by the act of cleaning, during the Arab Spring. Inspired by this re-appropriation, the artists re-enacted history by cleaning the dust covering the border line in the

parliament building. The video recording of this reenactment is on display in the gallery. Traversing the length of the gallery, *Common Assembly* is a reproduction of the exact width of the border line inside the Parliament building along with the bare concrete stepping platforms it crosses. Video interviews with Palestinians living in Palestine and in exile surround *Common Assembly*.

DAAR describe these lines of colonial separations as “territorial cracks” that could potentially be inhabited and that, “it is possible to start seeing in these spaces the coming together of a community beyond the nation-state.” It is within this state of limbo or ‘permanent temporariness’ that DAAR invites the viewer to consider the potential for alternative forms of political participation and action for exiled communities. *Common Assembly* raises critical questions regarding the political participation of a dispersed population as well as the tradition of active engagement in the *Common as Masha’* and its extraterritorial common interpretation within the refugee camps. There, the “common” is the shared history of displacement in the absence of private property. In distinction from the state-controlled private and public, for Palestinians, private ownership is constantly challenged and the collective land is owned by the occupying state.



Common Assembly is a project by DAAR: Alessandro Petti, Sandi Hilal, Eyal Weizman with Nicola Perugini and in collaboration with Yazeed Anani, Nishat Awan, Ghassan Bannoura, Benoit Burquel, Suzy Harris-Brandts, Runa Johannssen, Cressida Kocienski, Lejla Odobasic, Carina Ottino, Elizabeth Paden, Sameena Sitabkhan, and Amy Zion. Special thanks to Ghiath Nasser.

Common Assembly was presented for the first time in 2011 at The Centre d'art in Neuchâtel, and later in 2012 at Nottingham Contemporary, and at The James Gallery, City University of New York, in 2015 The Asia Art Biennial in Taiwan, and in 2016 at BAK in Utrecht.

Photo: Carina Ottimo

MUJAWARA / THE TREE SCHOOL

The Tree School or *Mujawara*, which means “neighborliness,” is both an installation and a pedagogical artistic practice. It is based on the artists’ initiative for the decolonization of learning, where participants gather around the tree for experiential, communal learning. All participants contribute to learning in a non-hierarchical common space that encourages free and critical discourse among participants. *Mujawara* is based on the principles of *Campus in Camps*, an experimental university that Hilal and Petti established in Dheisheh Refugee Camp, Bethlehem in 2012. The practice integrates institutionalized forms of knowledge production with the marginalized forms of learning that are rooted in the living experience of communities, thus, blurring the distinction between theory and practice. Based on long-term engagements, site visits, and shared research, the participants contribute to a “collective dictionary” of critical essays on key words selected by participants related to their environment and daily life in the refugee camp.

Mujawara was originally initiated by Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti together with Brazilian-based art collective Grupo Contrafilé as part of the 31st Biennial de São Paulo, Brazil (2015).

The book placed on each seat under the tree is the product of a collaborative effort made by the Quilombola, the freed descendants of Afro-Brazilian slaves, and refugee communities (the book is also presented in Arabic at NYUAD). The project draws on analogies and differences between Palestinian refugee camps and the Brazilian “quilombo,” communities established by run-away slaves in 17th-century colonial Brazil, that today encompass large areas that are spaces of refuge for the disenfranchised. The collaboration initiated a South-to-South dialogue, rarely witnessed at this level. *Mujawara* in Brazil brought together two worlds that share concerns around social justice and equality. The dialogue that followed examined relationships between land, exile and community. *Mujawara* is an on-going program that continues to seek new modalities for learning. In Brazil the participants gathered around the Baobab tree (one of the world’s oldest tree brought to Brazil from Africa). For the NYU Abu Dhabi exhibition, the artists selected the Ghaf tree, an indigenous tree in the UAE, often considered the national tree of the Emirates, as a symbol for the tree of knowledge. NYUAD students will gather around the Ghaf tree to participate in this innovative community learning; sharing knowledge through personal and group experience.



Mujawara / The Tree School is a project by Sandi Hilal, Alessandro Petti, and Grupo Contrafilé.

The project was first exhibited in 2014, on the occasion of the 31st Biennial de São Paulo, a second iteration in 2015, Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art in Porto, and in 2017, Sharjah Biennial Act II, Beirut.

***The Tree School* book credits:**

Campus in Camps: Sandi Hilal, Alessandro Petti, Ahmad Al Lahham, Isshaq Issa Barbary, David Kostenwein, Daniela Sanjinés. **Grupo Contrafilé:** Cibele Lucena, Jerusa Messina, Joana Zatz Mussi, Peetssa, Rafael Leona, with Walter Solon. **With the contribution of:** Arthur de Oliveira Neto, Deysi Ferreira, Eugênio Lima, Floriana Breyer,

Geandre Tomazoni, Giuliana Racco, Joelson F. de Oliveira, Lia Zatz, Pedro Cesarino, Shourideh Molavi, Solange Brito Santos, TC Silva.

The first iteration of *Mujawara* was made possible in part by the Foundation for Arts Initiatives.

Photo: TC Silva

RAMALLAH SYNDROME

Ramallah Syndrome invites the viewer to reflect on the failure of the peace agreements to create a long-term resolution for the Palestinians, as they continue to dream of a normal existence, an unattainable condition under military occupation. In this work, the artists point to the delusion of the potentiality of establishing a Palestinian sovereign state under the Israeli colonial regime, as a 'hallucination of normality.'

Ramallah Syndrome is the result of a series of informal discussions that artists had with friends and invited guests, among them curators, architects, artists, and ordinary citizens, to examine the rise of Ramallah and not Jerusalem as the de facto capital of a future Palestinian State. The debate considers the consequences of the perpetual presence of a colonial regime in Palestine accompanied by the fantasy of the possible coexistence of occupation and freedom. In the process, the debate revealed the underpinnings of what the artists have called "the Ramallah syndrome": the normalization of occupation, normalization of an abnormal state of suffering, house demolitions, displacement and the confiscation of Palestinian land for the expansion of Israeli settlements. Conditions in the Palestinian territories are such that people are forced to live day-to-day.

The sound installation, produced in collaboration with the artists Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abourahme, captured and reworked these discussions picking up snippets of the conversations and mixing them with ambient and electronic music.

Visitors entering the dark, padded room are forced to concentrate on ten-minutes of audio, as if eavesdropping on a heated conversation that is communicated to the listener in interrupted sequences highlighting several interlocutors' speeches. This audio composition creates a multiplicity that is the nature of the debate itself. Sentences are interrupted with sound from engines of a tractor, or heart-beats mixed with music. The visitors need to concentrate in order to piece together the words to listen to the opposing opinions on the political situation, which remains relevant today for Ramallah as well as other cities. Hilal and Petti envision the art of conversation as a space that continues to expand indefinitely, offering the public and the participants a discourse on the potentialities of an imposed situation.



Ramallah Syndrome was initiated by Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti in collaboration with Nasser Abourahme, Yazeed Anani, Reem Fadda, Yazan Khalili, Laura Ribeiro, and Omar Jabary-Salamanca.

The sound Installation is by Ruanne Abou-Rahme and Basel Abbas.

Ramallah Syndrome was first commissioned by *Palestine c/o Venice* for the first Palestinian exhibition at the Venice Biennial (the 53rd edition, 2009), curated by Salwa Mikdadi. Different iterations of the project took place in 2009 for the *Jerusalem Show* and in 2010 for the *Cities* exhibition in Ramallah organized by the Birzeit University Museum.

THE BOOK OF EXILE

The Book of Exile presents assembled stories of refugee life in Palestinian camps since the *Nakba*¹ in 1948. The visitor is invited to the library of New York University Abu Dhabi to witness the Emirati calligrapher, Mohamed bin Yehya, copying this book, thus upholding the long-held tradition of preserving and communicating knowledge from the Arab and Islamic civilizations to the rest of the world.

The texts contained in the book were authored by multiple participants, including residents of the Dheisheh, Arroub, Ayda, Beit Jebrin, and Fawwar refugee camps in occupied Palestine. The stories of exile derive from everyday experience, observations, and interactions within the refugee community. The book depicts the camp as a distinctive space of knowledge production, a source of social and political interventions, and spatial reconfigurations, in contrast to the stereotypes that have long described refugee camps as sites of poverty and repression. These stories express the vital culture that has emerged in exile in spite of the population's suffering and deprivation. *The Book of Exile* also asserts the refusal of refugees to be victims of stereotypes and allows them to claim their right to make and write their history.

¹ Nakba ("catastrophe" in Arabic) refers to the 1948 expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland.

The NYU Abu Dhabi edition of this project is made possible by the sponsorship of the NYU Abu Dhabi Library.



The Book of Exile is a project by Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti with texts by *Campus in Camps* participants Marwa Allaham, Qussay Abu Aker, Alaa Al Homouz, Saleh Khannah, Shadi Ramadan, Ahmad Lahham, Aysar Dawoud, Bisan Al Jaffarri, Nedaa Hamouz, Naba Al Assi, Mohammed Abu Alia, Ibrahim Jawabreh, Ayat Al Turshan, Murad Owdah, and Munir Fashi.

The first book was produced in 2016 on the occasion of the 6th edition of the Marrakech Biennial by the calligrapher Abdelghani Ouida, and reenacted by the Palestinian calligrapher Saher Kabi for Qalandiya International 2016.

For this exhibition, the Emirati calligrapher Mohamed bin Yehya will be present in the NYUAD Library for a limited period until the book is complete.

Photo: Saad Alami

THE CONCRETE TENT

This installation takes the form of the temporary refugee tent, but is solidified in concrete, a material noted for its permanence. It thus embodies the paradox of permanent temporariness. Located on the threshold of the campus border (behind the university's East Cafeteria) it welcomes visitors and gatherings from both worlds.

The artists originally conceived and built this installation in the Dheisheh refugee camp, south of Bethlehem, as a gathering space for *Campus in Camps*, an experimental pedagogical program that Hilal and Petti founded in 2012. Today *The Concrete Tent* in Dheisheh refugee camp is used by youth as a meeting point, negotiators from the camp use it for peace resolution meetings among families, social and cultural events take place there, and newlyweds have found the tent to be a good place for taking their wedding pictures.

For Hilal and Petti, the re-creation of a tent made of concrete is not only an attempt to preserve the cultural and symbolic importance of this archetype for the narration of the *Nakba* (the expulsion of Palestinians from their communities in 1948), but is also a way to reframe the urgency of the right of return. Palestinian refugee camps, after more than

seven decades of existence, are no longer made of fragile structures, they are complex urban and social environments that challenge the common notion of what constitutes a refugee camp. *The Concrete Tent* enables the viewer to experience this paradox of permanent temporariness and reflect upon the present political condition of exile for so many populations.

At New York University Abu Dhabi, *The Concrete Tent* speaks to the permanent temporariness of the newfound home of our campus for our students. It is also relevant to the many long-term residents of the city of Abu Dhabi and to the transient nature of the traditional Bedouin culture of the UAE.

The Concrete Tent is a project by DAAR: Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti with architects and artists-in-residence Haneen Abo Khiran, Lucia Disluci, Nathan Witt, Dalia Abu Hashish, Lucia Maffei, Margo Van Den Berge, Eduardo Cassina, Liva Dudareva, Arne Carpentier, Nick Axel, and Jacob Burns.



This project was born out from the conversations with *Campus in Camps*' participants: Marwa Allaham, Qussay Abu Aker, Alaa Al Homouz, Saleh Khannah, Shadi Ramadan, Ahmad Lahham, Aysar Dawoud, Bisan Al Jaffarri, Nedaa Hamouz, Naba Al Assi, Mohammed Abu Alia, Ibrahim Jawabreh, Ayat Al Turshan,

Murad Owdah, Mohamad Al Saifi, Yazan Al Jo'aidi, Hussam Al Masri, Muhammad Al Lahham, Dyala Fararja, Adam Fararja, Naseem, Zakoot, Tariq Ramadan, Bara'a Alian, Reem Ramadan, Basil Al Lahham, Tala Ramadan, Bara'a Abed Al Nabi, Wijdan Naif, Ghazal Al Masri, Dana Ramadan, Khalil Albana, and Abed Zahran.

The Dheisheh edition of *The Concrete Tent* was supported by a grant from the Prince Claus Fund.

Photo: Anna Sara for *Campus in Camps*

AL MADHAFAH / THE LIVING ROOM

Al Madhafah is a new performance created by Sandi Hilal, based on her experience conducting fieldwork for the Public Art Agency with Syrian refugees in the city of Boden, Sweden, in November 2016. The performance is inspired by a story about a Syrian refugee couple, Yasmeeen and Ibrahim, and the importance of their living room to their welfare in a refugee camp.

Yasmeeen and her family intend for their Syrian living room in Sweden to become a space where diverse people can gather. The act of hosting enables them to go beyond being passive guests of a refugee camp, to become active hosts. In this powerful claim to what Hilal calls “the right to host,” the living room opens the possibility for refugees like Yasmeeen and Ibrahim to combine their lost life in Syria with their new life in Sweden. Hilal further explains the significance of the living room saying:

In Arab culture, the living room is the part of the house that opens itself to guests, foreigners, or outsiders. It functions as a transitional space and a passage between the domestic and the public. The living room is always ready to host unexpected guests. It is the most ornamented section of the house, never in disorder, and often prepared

with fruit, nuts, or black coffee ready to be offered to guests that might surprise the residents at any time. Notably, even in refugee camps, where space is extremely scarce, the living room remains the most important part of the house, representing a dignified place regardless of the precarious condition of the rest of the house... In a foreign country, access to public space is a challenge for refugees as they are expected to constantly perform the role of the “perfect guest” in order to be accepted. Turning private spaces, such as the living room, into social and political arenas, is often a response to a limitation of political agency in the public realm.¹

The performance will take place during the exhibition’s opening week, whereby Hilal (a temporary guest herself at New York University Abu Dhabi) will host invited visitors at her apartment space on campus.

¹ <https://www.bard.edu/ccs/events/the-keith-haring-lecture-in-art-and-activism-given-by-sandi-hilal/>
Accessed January 29, 2018.



Al Madhafah is a project by DAAR: Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti in collaboration with Yasmeeen Mahmoud, Ibrahim Muhammad Haj Abdulla, and Ayat Al-Turshan.

A network of various living rooms are activated in Boden, Sweden with support from the Public Art Agency Sweden, and in Stockholm by the Arab Fund for Art and Culture (AFAC), and in Fawwar Refugee Camp in the West Bank.

Photo: Luca Capuano

THE ARTISTS

Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti

Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti have developed a research-project based artistic practice that is both theoretically ambitious and practically engaged in the struggle for justice and equality. In 2012, they founded *Campus in Camps*, an experimental educational program hosted in Dheisheh Refugee Camp in Bethlehem with the aims to overcome conventional educational structures by creating a space for critical and grounded knowledge production (www.campusincamps.ps). In 2007 with Eyal Weizman they founded DAAR (Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency) in Beit Sahour, Palestine, with the aim to combine an architectural studio and an art residency able to gathered architects, artists, activists, urbanists, film-makers, and curators to work collectively on the subjects of politics and architecture (www.decolonizing.ps).

Sandi Hilal was the head of the Infrastructure and Camp Improvement Program in the UNRWA West Bank (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) from 2008 to 2014. During this time, Hilal realized several interventions in southern refugee camps, among them a square in Fawaar Refugee

camp, as materialization of women's claim to the public space. In the last years, commissioned by the Swedish Public Art Agency, she has been working with refugee communities living in city of Boden in northern Sweden, and she has activated with the support of AFAC the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture and the Moderna Museet "spaces for hospitality" in the city of Stockholm with the aim to regain "the right to host."

Alessandro Petti is professor of Architecture and Social Justice at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm and was a Loeb Fellow at Harvard University (2016 – 2017). Hilal and Petti co-authored with Eyal Weizman the book *Architecture after Revolution* (2013) an invitation to rethink today's struggles for justice and equality not only from the historical perspective of revolution, but also from that of a continued struggle for decolonization.

In Hilal and Petti's practice, contemporary art exhibitions are at the same time a site of display, material production, research and political imagination.

They have participated in various international exhibitions, among them the Biennale di Venezia (2003-2008-2009-2013-2015), Istanbul Biennial (2009), Home Works Beirut (2010), Bienal de São Paulo (2014), the Asian Art Biennial (2015), Marrakesh Biennial (2016), and Qalandia International (2016). The latter aimed to investigate and act upon the formation of different social, political and spatial relation between people, state and territory beyond the liberal notion of citizenship. The practical implications of these conceptual and artistic interventions have been tested more concretely with architectural interventions in refugee camps. In 2014 the Shu'fat School for Girls designed by Sandi Hilal, Alessandro Petti, and Livia Minoja, opened its doors to 1,000 students, teachers and local organizations as an expression of dignity and strength of the refugee community living in overcrowded refugee camps. Further, in 2015 these practices led to the construction of *The Concrete Tent* in the garden of the Al Finiq Cultural Center in Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem, a pavilion that embodies the contradiction of the permanent temporariness of Palestinian refugees.

Hilal and Petti have received several awards, among them the Keith Haring Fellowship in Art and Activism at Bard College, Loeb Fellowship Harvard University, Price Claus Prize for Architecture, shortlisted for Visible Award, the Curry Stone Design Price, the New School's Vera List Center Prize for Art and Politics, the Anni and Heinrich Sussmann Artist Award, the Chrnikov Prize and recipient of the Foundation for Art initiatives grant.



Photo: Carlo Favero

THE CURATORS

Salwa Mikdadi

*Associate Professor Practice of Art History,
NYU Abu Dhabi*

Mikdadi specializes in the history of modern and contemporary art of the Arab world. Prior to joining the NYUAD, Mikdadi worked at Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority where she established the professional development program for museum professionals including a customized executive program (2012 – 2014) and was a lecturer at the Paris-Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi in the postgraduate program, History of Art and Museum Studies (2010 – May 2014). Mikdadi was the Executive Director of the Arts and Culture Program at the Emirates Foundation in Abu Dhabi (2009 – 2012).

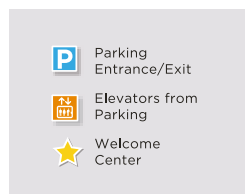
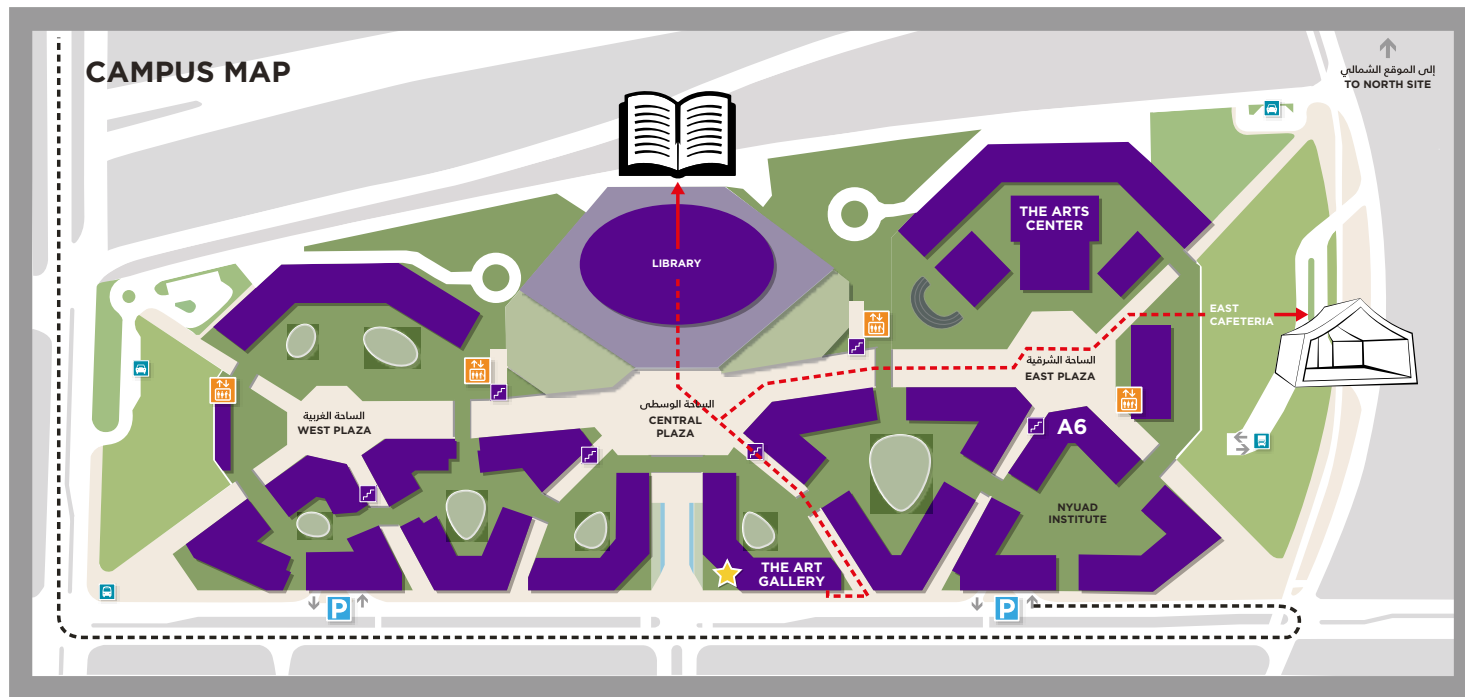
She wrote the reference guide on the history of the twentieth-century art of West Asia, North Africa and

Egypt for the Metropolitan Museum of Art Timeline web pages. She is the author and co-editor of several publications, among them: *Cities and Legends: Elias Zayat, New Visions: Arab Contemporary Art of the 21st Century* (co-editor), *Palestine c/o Venice*, *In/Visible: Arab American Artists*, *Rhythm and Form: Visual Reflections on Arabic Poetry and Forces of Change*. Mikdadi curated several exhibitions including the first Palestinian collateral exhibition at the Venice Biennial in 2009, and the major survey exhibition *Forces of Change* (1994). She was the co-founder and director of the Cultural & Visual Arts Resource/ICWA, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the study and exhibit of the art of the Arab world in the United States (1988 – 2006).

Bana Kattan

Curator, NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery

Kattan's recent curatorial projects include *Invisible Threads: Technology and its Discontents* (co-curated with Scott Fitzgerald), featured work by 15 artists ranging from Ai Weiwei to Monira Al Qadiri, and *But We Cannot See Them: Tracing a UAE Art Community, 1988 – 2008* (with curator Maya Allison), both at NYU Abu Dhabi Art Gallery. During Kattan's graduate work at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, she worked with the Performance Department at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and the Curatorial Department of the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Project in New York. She also worked as a project manager for artist Michael Rakowitz. Kattan was one of the 2015 recipients of the Getty-CAA International Program Grants. She was born and raised in Abu Dhabi, UAE.



Permanent Temporariness Artworks around campus



الخيمة الاسمنتية
خلف الكافيتيريا الشرقية
The Book of Exile
at NYUAD Library



كتاب المنفى
في مكتبة الجامعة
The Concrete Tent
behind East Cafeteria

رواق الفن NYUAD ARTGALLERY

The NYUAD Art Gallery is open from 12–8pm
during exhibitions, Monday through Saturday.
Admission is free and open to the public.

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www.nyuad-artgallery.org

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من الساعة ١٢-٨ مساءً. الدخول مجاني ومفتوح للجميع.

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