Interrogating Architectural Evidence: Eyal Weizman and Rafi Segal's Exhibition for the Israeli Association of United Architects

Interrogar la evidencia arquitectónica: la exposición de Eyal Weizman y Rafi Segal para la Asociación Israelí de Arquitectos Unidos

investigación – Michael Moynihan

Ahstract

In 2002, Eyal Weizman and Rafi Segal organized an exhibition that was banned just before opening, its 5,000 printed catalogs destroyed. These curators intended to exhibit evidence of Israeli architects' complicity with violations of international law and human rights. First, this paper examines reciprocities between architectural media displayed in an exhibition space and the way evidence is exhibited in a legal context. Second, the strategies of attributing meaning to architecture in this exhibition are compared to nineteenth century international expositions and panoramas.

Keywords: media, representation, evidence, testimony, international law, international expositions, panorama, forensic architecture

Resumen

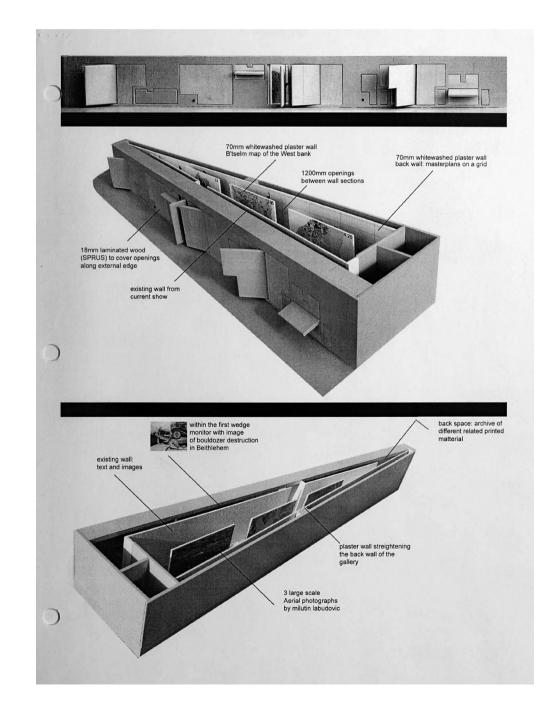
En 2002, Eyal Weizman y Rafi Segal organizaron una exposición para la Asociación Israelí de Arquitectos Unidos. Antes de su inauguración, la exposición fue cancelada y sus 5,000 catálogos impresos fueron destruidos. Los curadores querían exhibir evidencia de la complicidad de los arquitectos israelíes con violaciones a los derechos humanos y las leyes internacionales durante la ocupación de Cisjordania. En este contexto, el presente artículo se pregunta en primer lugar cuál es la diferencia entre exhibir arquitectura en un museo y exhibir evidencias en un contexto legal. En segundo lugar, compara las estrategias de mostrar la arquitectura en esta exposición con las exposiciones mundiales del siglo XIX y los edificios panorama.

Palabras clave: medios, representación, prueba, testimonio, ley internacional, exposiciones mundiales, panorama, arquitectura forense

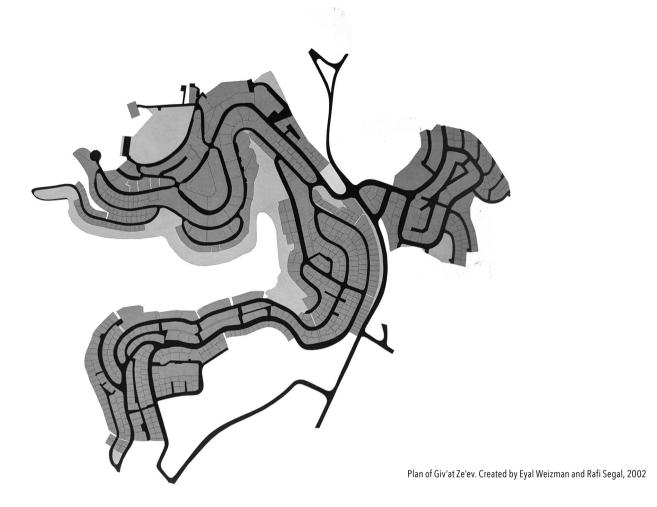
04

In 2001, Eyal Weizman and Rafi Segal won a competition to represent the Israeli Association of United Architects (IAUA) at the 21st UIA World Congress in Berlin. Over the next eleven months, they cataloged, classified and historicized the politics of the Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, paying specific attention to how professional architects and planners participated. In the planned exhibition, *The Politics of Israeli Architecture*, they intended to display a series of maps, planimetric drawings and aerial photographs. The Israeli settlements were named weapons of civilian occupation and the architects and planners whose designs were complicit in helping achieve Israel's political goals were said to be guilty of violating international law and basic human rights.

After submitting the presentation boards, a steering committee canceled funding for the exhibition, its 5,000 printed catalogs were destroyed and the curators were threatened both professionally and legally. According to Weizman and Segal, "the strategic use of territory in the exercise of state power is well established...But merely posing the question of the responsibility and culpability of Israeli architects and planners within the context of the conflict, and especially in the construction of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank, led to the exhibition being banned by the same body of architects that commissioned it, the IAUA."²



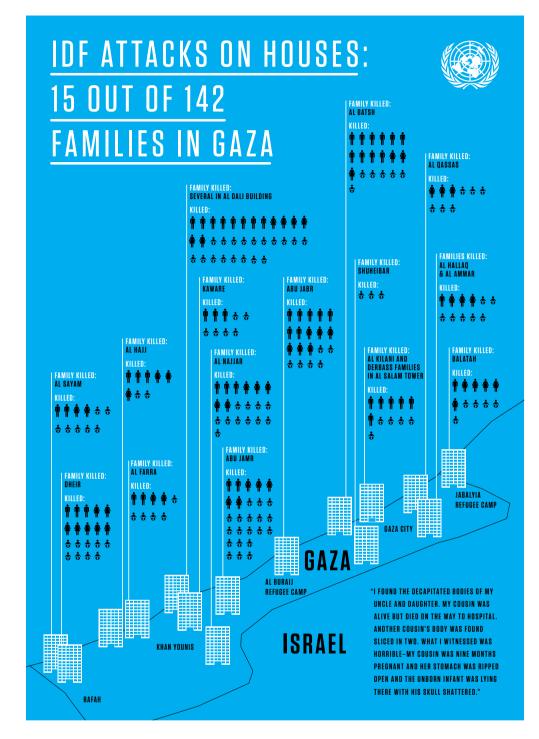
3D model of exhibition project with annotated details. Storefront for Art and Architecture, 2003



This exhibition, of course, was not a court of law; however, there are reciprocities between architectural media displayed in an exhibition space and the way evidence is exhibited in a legal context. In a courtroom — just as in a museum — the prosecutor does not recreate the crime in real time and space, but instead relies on the display of indices, representations, objects and testimonies. It is not a bloody glove presented in a courtroom, but a link between the blood of the victim and the hand of the murderer. Meaning, in other words, is not held in a single displayed object, but produced through a polycentric network of objects and media. The exhibition organized by Weizman and Segal traces the connections between architects and the settlements, showing that architects are not just professionals working for a client, nor are they passive actors in history, but that their technical expertise instead facilitates the needs and pressures of the modern Zionist project. Because this exhibition was curated for an audience of international professional architects, the agenda of the exhibition, in addition to bringing international awareness to Israel's settlements, was to call attention to the responsibility and public character of architects. This is emphasized by Sharon Rotbard in the preface to the catalog: "The politics of Israeli architecture is the politics of any architecture."

However, in the process of attributing a demonstratable connection between an architect's drawings — that is, the abstracted, codified architectural language for organizing space and territory — to strategic and political agendas, architecture must be understood and displayed as a complex register of history, memory and identity.

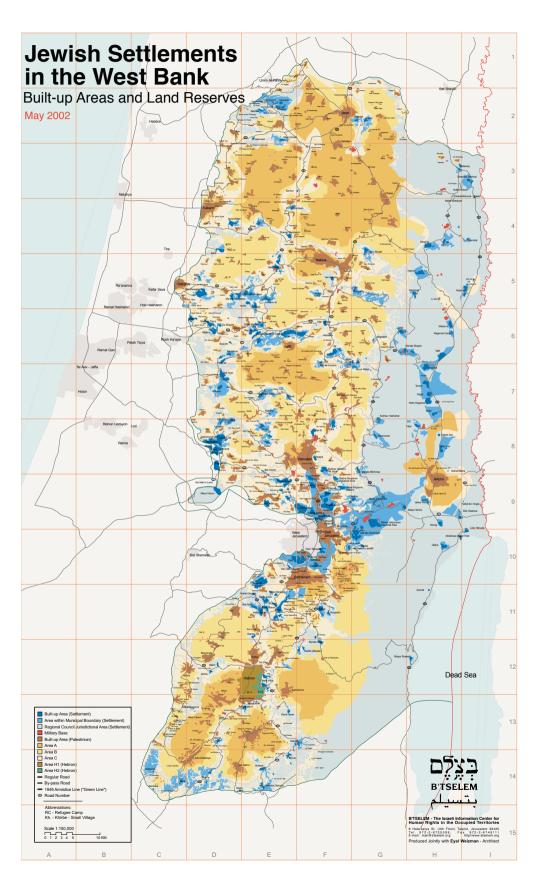
In 2002, this exhibition was part of a larger cultural shift. In the past three decades, there has been an increase in the use of architectural evidence exhibited in a legal context, particularly in cases dealing with the violation of international humanitarian law. According to Weizman, this is at the requests of the courts, which, after a series of tribunals investigating the genocides in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, generally moved away from human testimony and towards medical data and forensic evidence. Weizman's recent work has shifted towards the use of the materials, structure and form of architecture as evidence in the court of law. He now serves as the director of Forensic Architecture, an EU-funded research project that conducts studies on a wide variety of scales, from microscopic transformations in the skins of buildings to the composition of piles of rubble. In this way, architecture is understood as a complex register of recent



historical events and the building is presented as "objective proof," exhibitable in the court of law. As Weizman says, "The difference between a witness and a piece of evidence is that evidence is presented, while a witness is interrogated."

As mentioned by Weizman and Segal, what stood out about their exhibition was the suggestion of the guilt and responsibility of architects. Typically, when architectural evidence is exhibited, it is because of its destruction rather than its construction. For example, in a report published by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the destruction of 160,000 homes, involving the death or displacement of thousands of families, was important to the investigation into violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the context of the military operations during the 2014 Israel-Gaza war. In an infographic titled "IDF Attacks on Houses," created to supplement the report, the destruction of homes was linked to the lives of civilians, something which had not been used in previous court rulings. This infographic was an attempt to delegitimize the

IDF Attacks on Houses, infographic created to supplement the Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2015



80

Jewish Settlements in the West Bank. Created by B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories and Eyal Weizman, 2002

claims of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) regarding their targeting of civilian homes. In this case, the IDF stated that the homes were concealing tunnels, which shifted the meaning of the destroyed houses from places where innocent people lived to a potential threat to Israel. Under previous court rulings, this harm to civilian property had been argued as being "proportionate" to the potential risk these homes pose to the Israeli military. When the Israeli forces say they are targeting buildings, rather than humans, the lives lost are understood only as collateral damage caused during normal military practices.

In the book Violence Taking Place: The Architecture of the Kosovo Conflict, Andrew Herscher wrote about his experience working with Andras Riedlmayer on a Hague Tribunal investigation in Kosovo in 1999.8 The goal of this investigation was to trace the deliberate and systematic destruction of mosques to the former president of Serbia, Slobodan Milošević. For Herscher, the use of architectural evidence in legal terms only allows for a limited understanding of architecture. First, he says, "the tribunal's axis of interpretation always leads to the question of authorial responsibility," and second, "the tribunal sees violence as an instrument apprehended by subjects who know what they're doing and why they're doing it." This assumption, he continues, is "denied by any rigorous way of understanding subjectivity and identity." As described by Herscher, architecture, both in its construction and destruction, is a complex ensemble of memory, identity and subjectivity. Within the interpretive context of the law, this complexity is often reduced to a single objective meaning - in Herscher's words, "what was in dispute in Kosovo was not what architecture is but who destroyed it."9

In these tribunals, there is little debate about the particularities of displaying architecture, the complexities of architectural representation or the paradox of reenacting the architectural experience outside of its context. In scholarship focused on architectural exhibitions, these complexities have been well established. As Barry Bergdoll said in a recent anthology, "Nearly every lecture on the architectural museum or the architectural exhibition begins by rehearsing the truism that architecture can only be exhibited through simulacra, substitute objects or representations." ¹⁰ Similarly, as Jean-Louis Cohen said in conversation with Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois, "Exhibiting architecture is a matter of showing indices of something which, when the work is built, is out there."11 Both Cohen and Bergdoll argue that the exhibition of architecture is a unique problem, unlike the exhibition of sculpture, painting and film, because architecture in its built form is already on display and any act of trying to display architecture in an exhibition space (with few exceptions) can only occur through secondary (presumably inferior) forms of representation. To elaborate on this observation, Cohen used two French translations of the English word 'work.' The first was ouvrage, referring to the "real" built work, the thing outside of the exhibition space — in the case of Weizman and Segal's exhibition, the infrastructure, roads and red roof tiles of the Israeli settlements — and the second oeuvre, referring to the project, the idea or the intellectual work. When Weizman and Segal intended to exhibit the Israeli settlements as evidence in a legal context, this distinction between work/ ouvrage and work/oeuvre lost its specificity: below, it will be shown how these categories were coexistent, codependent and mutually defining.

The most prominent feature of the exhibition was the map created by Eyal Weizman with B'Tselem, also known as the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. At the time of the exhibition, this map was an up-to-date record of the settlement project. In the exhibition, the settlements on the map were linked to a chronological narrative showing the history of architecture's role in developing strategies for building the settlements. According to Weizman and Segal, this civilian occupation of the West Bank began as horizontal expansion, as visible on a map, and transitioned into a vertical, sectional strategy in the 1980s that utilizes the topography of the land.

In addition to the larger map, there was a set of smaller maps made by Ilan Potash to represent different moments throughout the history of the occupation (Zionist demands at the 1919 peace conference, the 1947 UN partition plan, the Allon Plan for Israeli withdrawal following 1967, etc.). Below each was a corresponding diagram depicting the Jewish settlements at roughly the same historic moment, represented as dots intended to visually diagram the growth and distribution of settlements as they correlate to the moving international border. Highlighting these points on a map was not a rhetorical strategy retroactively imposed by curators of an exhibition, but the primary motive for the early expansion of the Jewish presence in Palestine during the British Mandate. Even in the earliest examples of pioneering agricultural settlements, the settlers defined them as "settlement points" rather than towns or villages. This term, according to Sharon Rotbard, "hints at the fact that the 'point' on the map was more important than the 'settlement' itself:"12

This impulse for expansion was amplified and codified in the 1950s under the direction of Arieh Sharon, a Bauhaus graduate. His master plan established many of the urban planning strategies still

bitácora arquitectura + número 44 noviembre 2019 + marzo 2020



Na'hliel, Ramallah region. Milutin Labudovic. Peace Now, 2002

used today and attempted to direct new immigrants away from the coast and large cities with government incentives and the construction of new settlements.¹³ After the Six-Day War in 1967, Israel seized 40 per cent of the West Bank, primarily barren hilltops and mountain peaks, through a manipulative use of the Ottoman land law of 1858, which allowed for the state to take possession of land that had not been farmed or worked in the previous three years. 14 To visually display this historical arc — from horizontal land acquisition to vertical landscape domination — maps and planimetric drawings were accompanied by aerial photographs of mountain settlements taken by Milutin Labudovic. Instead of walls or fences, these later settlements, which were built on the seized mountaintops, relied on the power of vision and the infrastructure of the towns to control the valleys below. Most importantly, these settlements were often strategically located near Palestinian cities. The people living in them would provide close territorial surveillance of the Palestinian people below, blurring the lines between civilians and the military and disciplining Israeli citizens to act as guards and Palestinians as prisoners. 15

The actual built reality of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank (the ouvrage) — the curving roads which act as defensive structures, the infrastructure used to control the movement of people, the rings of houses which tactically use Israeli living rooms to surveil the valleys below, the physical domination of the landscape, the performative displays of Zionist ideology — these are the most significant violations of human rights imposed on the Palestinian people. However, in the interpretive context of the law, the function of these settlements holds no proof of guilt or innocence. What makes these settlements illegal, as defined by international humanitarian law, is that their physical built location violates a specific, understandable boundary as represented on a map. An international tribunal cannot try Zionist ideology, just as it cannot try capitalism. Instead, a court requires a violation of the law to be traced to a specific author. In this legal context, the representation of the built reality (a point on a map) is more important in proving guilt than the physical reality of the object itself, even if this representation relies exclusively on the physical object to derive its significance. In this case, the planimetric drawings of settlements

included by the curators are not indices of a built reality, but the link that connects the violation of the law to authorial responsibility (i.e., the architect who drew the plans).

In 2003, Weizman and Segal's exhibition was reorganized and presented at two separate galleries: first at New York's Storefront for Art and Architecture and then as part of the *Territories* exhibition at Berlin's kw Institute for Contemporary Art. Unlike the original exhibition, neither of these were curated solely for an audience of professional architects and a larger emphasis was placed on the aerial photographs of mountain settlements.

At Storefront, the exhibition was organized to bring awareness to the original's cancellation and coincided with the publication of the censored catalog. The images were hung at eye level and annotated with numbers to be "read," in Weizman's words, "like an aerial reconnaissance document." The planimetric drawings, maps and other information were located beneath the photographs and on adjacent walls. A few months later, at the kw Institute, the aerial images were made life-sized: stretched from floor to ceiling, creating a fictionalized panoramic view across three walls of the enormous gallery. The center of the exhibition was left empty, allowing visitors to walk into the open gallery and look outwards to the occupied West Bank.

These two types of displays – the panorama and reconnaissance photos – show two different strategies for displaying the meaning of architectural work. In the canceled exhibition and at Storefront, the fragmented display of architectural media is isolated, abstracted and brought into view as a matrix of indices, representations and objects. In doing this, the curators challenge the assumption that architecture is a static symbol; instead, the links between the media are where meaning is produced, consumed and able to be debated in a public forum. In the latter, the visitor of the exhibition is given only a single view. In this panorama, the photographs foreground the Israeli settlements perched triumphantly on the mountaintops, with Palestinian cities off in the distance or showing them within isolated, pastoral surroundings. In the former, these act as evidence of the vertical dominance described by Weizman, and in the latter, they depict the rhetorical strategy used by the Israeli government to encourage young families to move to these settlements—their terraced olive orchards and stone buildings, the return to the biblical land.

In the nineteenth century, panoramic paintings and photographs became supplements to travel education and mass entertainment. These exhibitions were often held in buildings built for this purpose, designed to showcase the panoramic view, recreating the experience of visiting faraway lands.¹⁷ The exhibition at the kw Institute, reminiscent of one of these panorama buildings, was intended to exhibit how Israeli settlers "turned topography into scenography, forming an exegetical landscape with a mesh of scriptural signification that must be extracted from the panorama and 'read' rather



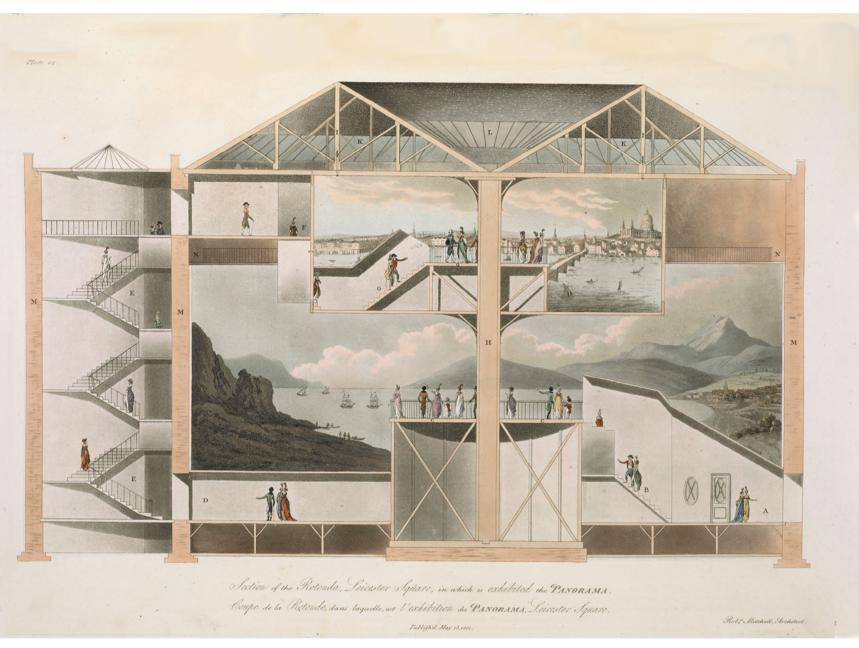
Exhibition image at the KW Institute, Storefront for Art and Architecture, 2003

Exhibition Image at the KW Institute, Storefront for Art and Architecture, 2003

than merely be 'seen.' "Within this panorama, however, lies a cruel paradox," Weizman and Segal say, "the very thing that renders the landscape 'biblical' or 'pastoral,' its traditional inhabitation and cultivation in terraces, olive orchards, stone buildings and the presence of livestock, is produced by the Palestinians, who the Jewish settlers came to replace." 18

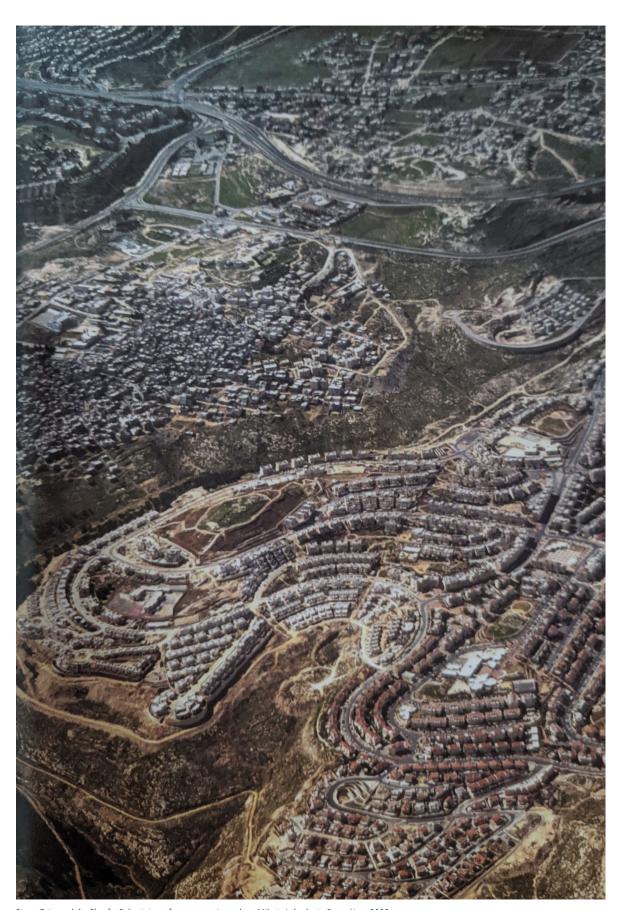
This interest in presenting geography and cities in a single, legible image is central to nineteenth century assumptions about the way architectural meaning could symbolize and visually define national, regional and local identities. This idea was central to debates on the connections between architectural style and the nation-state in Germany and England or, for example, the new awareness of the meaning of public symbols and the potential of planned public spaces that emerged during the French Revolution.¹⁹ In the context of nineteenth century international exhibitions, this tendency can

be seen in the architectural reconstructions, narrations and exhibitions that showcased the technological advancements of industrialized countries. Nations outside of Europe, however, such as Islamic countries, were presented, as Zeynep Celik has said, "frozen in an ambiguous and distant past...incapable of change and advancement." This attribution of meaning to objects was not just true in full-scale architectural representation, but also in the way Islamic goods at the exhibitions were simultaneously seen as both educational objects and commodities ("part museum...part bazaar"), which not only suggests that Islamic culture is already complete and knowable (read: not developing), but, as Mark Crinson has said, "popularized a certain kind of knowledge about the Orient...by saying that reality elsewhere was already understood and objectified, and therefore could easily be comprehended by the exhibition visitor." ²¹

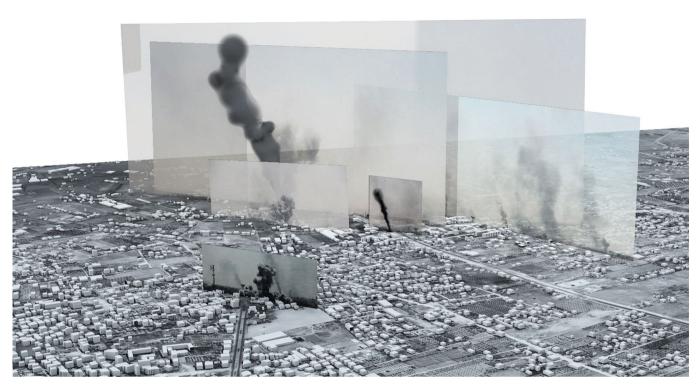


Section of the Rotunda, Leicester Square. Robert Mitchell, 1801

The Zionist image of ancient Israel, whose roots are visible in the exhibition's panorama, is one in which Europeans imagined Palestine as a static landscape. This idea emerged in nineteenth century biblical studies and is part of the discourse of orientalism.²² According to Edward Said, the depiction of Palestine by the Zionists was "either empty (as in the Zionist slogan, 'a land without people for a people without land') or neglected by the nomads and peasants who facelessly lived on it."²³ In reconstructing the image of this biblical landscape through a panorama, however, one risks reproducing this discourse of power. In Weizman and Segal's exhibition, any human presence is assumed only through the depiction of buildings and landscapes, which is emphasized by the lack of any human testimony, most specifically the lack of Palestinian voices.²⁴ However, some visual presence of the huge populations of Palestinian cities, even if only reduced to faceless buildings off in the distance, is important in terms of displaying the falseness of these claims, particularly when there has been so much effort to construct artificial memories with actual settlements to write the inhabitants out of history and wipe them off the map.



Pisgat Ze'ev and the Shuafat Palestinian refugee camp, Jerusalem. Milutin Labudovic. Peace Now, 2002



Forensic Architecture, photographs and videos arranged in a 3D model to tell the story of one of the heaviest days of bombardment in the 2014 Israel-Gaza war. The Image-Complex, Rafah:

016

Weizman's recent work as the director of Forensic Architecture has combined the two curatorial strategies discussed in this paper. This research uses fragmentary media such as images and video clips to create digital models and simulations of real-time events. For example, in a project titled "Hannibal in Rafah," the research team reconstructed the entire day of August 1, known as Black Friday, the deadliest day in the 2014 Israel-Gaza war. Considering minute details such as the movement of clouds and the length of building shadows, 7,000 images, sound clips and videos were combined to create a panoramic view of the entire day. Given this recent work, the exhibition canceled by the Israeli Association of United Architects in 2002 should not be seen as a byproduct of a larger cultural shift in which courts have requested forensic and medical data, but, instead, this exhibition was an early testing ground for adapting architectural languages and methods in ways that would allow for the nature and possibilities of architectural evidence and expertise to be reimagined for the needs of humans rights organizations, prosecutors in international tribunals, journalists and the relatives of victims.

Notes

- 1. A year later, after the exhibition was banned, Verso and Babel published an edited version of the original catalog. See Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman, A Civilian Occupation: The Politics of Israeli Architecture (London: Verso, 2003).
- 2. Rafi Segal, Eyal Weizman, "Introduction," A Civilian Occupation, 20.
- 3. Sharon Rotbard, "Preface," A Civilian Occupation, 16.
- Eyal Weizman and Andrew Herscher, "Conversation: Architecture, Violence, Evidence," Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism 8-1 (Summer 2011): 120-21, doi:10.5749/futuante.8.1.0111.
- For a discussion of this work, see Eyal Weizman and Andrew Herscher, "Conversation: Architecture, Violence, Evidence." See also Eyal Weizman and Tina Di Carlo, "Dying to Speak: Forensic Spatiality," Log 20 (Fall 2010): 125-31.
- 6. Eyal Weizman and Andrew Herscher, "Conversation: Architecture, Violence, Evidence," 123.
- 7. A/HRC/29/52, Human Rights Council, Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict, para. 574. In this report, 2 251 Palestinians were said to have been killed during the 51-day conflict. This figure includes 1,462 Palestinian civilians, including 299 women and 551 children. These deaths were caused by 6,000 airstrikes and approximately 50,000 tank and artillery shells, which damaged 160,000 homes, killing or displacing thousands of families. In these same 51 days, six Israeli civilians and 67 soldiers were killed.
- 8. See Andrew Herscher, Violence Taking Place: The Architecture of the Kosovo Conflict (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).
- Eyal Weizman and Andrew Herscher, "Conversation: Architecture, Violence, Evidence," 113.
- Berry Bergdoll, "Out of Site/In Plain View: On the Origins and Actuality of the Architecture Exhibition," in Eeva-liisa Pelkonen, ed., Exhibiting Architecture: A Paradox? (New Haven: Yale School of Architecture, 2015), 13.
- 11. Yve-Alain Bois, Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss and Jean-Louis Cohen, "A Conversation with Jean-Louis Cohen," October 89 (1999), 6, doi:10.2307/779136.
- 12. Sharon Rotbard, "Wall and Tower," A Civilian Occupation, 48.
- 13. Zvi Efrat, "The Plan," A Civilian Occupation, 59-79.
- 14. Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman, "The Mountain," A Civilian Occupation, 82.
- 15. Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman, "The Mountain," A Civilian Occupation, 86.
- 16. Eyal Weizman, email to Sarah Herda, January 6, 2003. Found in Storefront for Art and Architecture, National Historical Publications and Records Commission.
- 17. Dietrich Neumann, "Instead of the Grand Tour: Travel Replacement in the Nineteenth Century," *Perspecta* 41 (2008): 47-53.
- 18. Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman, "The Mountain," A Civilian Occupation, 92.
- 19. Heinrich Hübsch, In What Style Should We Build?: The German Debate on Architectural Style (Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities,
- 20. Zeynep Çelik, Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at the Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 56.
- Mark Crinson, Empire Building: Orientalism and Victorian Architecture (New York: Routledge, 1996), 64.
- Edward W. Said, "Invention, Memory, and Place," Critical Inquiry 26-2 (Winter 2000), 185. See also Edward W. Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).
- 23. Edward W. Said, "Invention, Memory, and Place," 187.
- This criticism of there being no Palestinian voices included in the catalog has been made by Yosef Jabareen. See Yosef Jabareen, *The Arab Studies Journal* 14-2 (Fall 2006), 140.

References

- Bergdoll, Berry. "Out of Site/In Plain View: On the Origins and Actuality of the Architecture Exhibition." In Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen, ed. Exhibiting Architecture: A Paradox?

 New Haven: Yale School of Architecture, 2015.
- Bois, Yve-Alain, Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss and Jean-Louis Cohen. "A Conversation with Jean-Louis Cohen." *October* 89 (1999): 3-18. doi:10.2307/779136.
- Çelik, Zeynep. Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at the Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Crinson, Mark. Empire Building: Orientalism and Victorian Architecture. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Herscher, Andrew. Violence Taking Place: The Architecture of the Kosovo Conflict. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.

 Hübsch, Heinrich. In What Style Should We Build?: The German Debate on Architectural
- Style. Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1992. Jabareen, Yosef. "Review of A Civilian Occupation." *The Arab Studies Journal* 14-2 (Fall
- 2006): 137-141.

 Neumann, Dietrich. "Instead of the Grand Tour: Travel Replacement in the Nineteenth Century." *Perspecta* 41 (2008): 47-53.
- Said, Edward W. Orientalism. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.
- Segal, Rafi and Eyal Weizman. A Civilian Occupation: The Politics of Israeli Architecture. London: Verso. 2003.
- Weizman, Eyal and Andrew Herscher. "Conversation: Architecture, Violence, Evidence." Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism 8-1 (Summer 2011): 111-123. doi:10.5749/futuante.8.1.0111.
- Weizman, Eyal and Tina Di Carlo. "Dying to Speak: Forensic Spatiality." Log 20 (Fall 2010): 125-31.

Michael Moynihan

PhD Candidate in the History of Architecture,

Cornell University

017

Master of Arts in Architectural History, Bartlett School of Architecture,

University College, London

mm2858@cornell.edu