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Intermediate Structures: Hybridity and Non-Convergence in Contemporary Palestinian Art

(Five Case Studies)

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, a substantial body of scholarship has examined modern and contemporary Palestinian art through concepts such as trauma, collective memory, displacement, exile, and political visibility. Kamal Boullata provided one of the first comprehensive historical studies of modern Palestinian art, demonstrating that its development was shaped by colonialism, exile, and historical rupture. He argues that Palestinian modernism was reformulated through ongoing engagement with the tension between place, memory, and national identity in the aftermath of the Nakba (Boullata, 2009; see also Fisher, 2010, pp. 482-486). According to Boullata, Palestinian art does not develop as a linear continuum; instead, it unfolds through rupture, dispersal, and the reconfiguration of visual traditions under conditions of displacement and cultural destruction.

Tina Sherwell contends that contemporary Palestinian art is articulated within a fragmented geography and under complex institutional conditions, and that the question of location - local, citizen, or diasporic - is a central component of curatorial and critical discourse (Sherwell, 2003, pp. 8-10). Nada Shabout demonstrates that twentieth-century Arab modernism was not simply an imitation of European models, but a process of shaping a local modern aesthetic through negotiation between regional visual traditions and international modernist languages (Shabout, 2007, pp. 6-9). While these studies situate Palestinian art within historical conditions of rupture and

displacement, they leave open a further question: how are these conditions inscribed in the visual structure of the artwork itself? Addressing this question requires a shift from historiography to an analysis of regimes of visibility.

In the Israeli-Palestinian context, Gil Z. Hochberg emphasizes that the conflict should not be assumed as self-evident; instead, its production must be examined through the distribution of visibility and the politicization of vision. In Visual Occupations, she proposes focusing on the distribution of the visual and the denaturalization of vision - that is, the political construction of what can be seen, who is visible, and under what conditions (Hochberg, 2015, p. 5). She argues that regimes of vision produce hierarchies of disappearance and hypervisibility, shaping the framing of the conflict itself (Hochberg, 2015, p. 75).

Within Israeli scholarship, a complementary discussion has emerged around mechanisms of categorization, visibility, and exclusion. Ariella Azoulay argues that the subject's appearance in the image is not merely a matter of representation, but a political event occurring within what she calls the "civil contract of photography," which defines relations of responsibility among the photographed subject, the photographer, and the viewer (Azoulay, 2008). In this framework, visibility constitutes a site of civic claim and a distribution of responsibility. Oren Yiftachel describes the Israeli regime as an "ethnocracy," a system in which territorial and ethnic control intersect, producing enduring civic hierarchies (Yiftachel, 2000, p. 91). Yehouda Shenhav emphasizes that national and ethnic categories are neither natural nor self-evident, but are produced through historical and political processes that shape the boundaries of belonging and recognition (Shenhav, 2003). These approaches situate visibility within a concrete institutional and social structure in which Palestinian art is both produced and interpreted.

However, while these frameworks emphasize the political and institutional conditions of appearance, they remain primarily focused on representation. The question of how

historical and identitarian tensions are inscribed as principles of formal organization within the artwork itself often remains marginal: how time is structured, how the body is stabilized or destabilized, how material bears the trace of rupture, and how identity is not merely represented but embodied within a compositional structure.

W. J. T. Mitchell proposed shifting the discussion from what images represent to the more provocative question, "What do pictures want?" - that is, how we attribute agency and imagined life to them within an intersubjective relation between viewer and image (Mitchell, 2005, pp. 28-34). Nicholas Mirzoeff defines visuality as a technology of power that determines "what is there to see" and who is authorized to see it (Mirzoeff, 2011, pp. 2-5), while Jacques Rancière describes the "distribution of the sensible" as a configuration that organizes spaces, times, and forms of activity, and defines the conditions of possibility for the political (Rancière, 2004, pp. 12-14). If visibility is structured through a political distribution of the sensible, then identity, as it operates within it, cannot be understood as stable or unified.

In this context, the need becomes more urgent for a concept that can theorize identity under conditions of translation and instability. The concept of hybridity has held a central place in postcolonial discourse as a way to theorize identity under conditions of contact and subordination. Homi K. Bhabha describes hybridity as an ambivalent process of cultural translation that destabilizes the fixity of origin and identity, and as a "Third Space" where meaning is produced through ongoing negotiation (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 37-39, 211-212). Stuart Hall emphasizes that cultural identity is both being and becoming - a continuous process shaped within history and relations of power (Hall, 1990, pp. 225-227).

However, the concept of hybridity has also faced sustained critique. Aijaz Ahmad warned against aestheticizing cultural ambiguity when it is detached from material structures of power (Ahmad, 1992, pp. 276-290), while Robert J. C. Young cautioned against its transformation into an overarching metaphor lacking grounding in concrete

historical and institutional contexts (Young, 1995, pp. 26-30). Awareness of these critiques necessitates caution: hybridity is not a promise of reconciliation, but may instead designate a tense condition operating within ongoing asymmetry.

In the Israeli-Palestinian context, characterized by what Patrick Wolfe defined as "a structure, not an event" - the ongoing logic of settler colonialism (Wolfe, 2006, p. 388)- asymmetry is not a condition of the past but an enduring reality that continues to shape the field of art. Palestinian artists working within Israeli and international contexts are often subject to prior representational expectations: to be "political," "testimonial," or "ethnic." Against this background, the question becomes more acute: can one identify in their work a formal structure that does not exhaust itself in representational statements, but instead operates as a deeper aesthetic logic?

This article argues that in the work of five contemporary Palestinian artists, a recurring structure of non-convergence emerges - a visual configuration in which categories neither merge into unity nor fully disintegrate. Hybridity is defined not as a declaration of cultural plurality, but as a principle of visual organization characterized by three complementary conditions: unresolved tension between categories, a material or formal operation of translation, and the impossibility of full convergence.

The article examines the work of Ahmad Haliwah, Samah Shihadeh, Raida Adon, Bashir Abu Rabia, and Mayyada Masri across different media: digital animation, charcoal drawing, performative video, layered painting, and material-archival practice. Despite differences in medium, a shared logic emerges: movement that resists stabilization, a body that opens without collapsing, rupture that remains unresolved, and material in a continual state of disassembly and reassembly. This non-convergence is not presented as an essentialist generalization, but as an analytical criterion for identifying an in-between structure under conditions of asymmetry.

The article makes two main contributions: first, it presents an interpretation of contemporary Palestinian art that avoids reducing it to models of trauma or resistance;

second, it expands the concept of hybridity by moving from an abstract cultural definition to the identification of concrete visual criteria. The study aims to position Palestinian art not only as a field of political representation, but also as an aesthetic domain where cultural tension is not resolved or settled, but embodied as an ongoing organizing principle.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Visual Culture and Regimes of Visibility

Visual culture studies, which emerged in the 1990s as a distinct interdisciplinary field, aimed to expand the concept of the image beyond its understanding as an autonomous aesthetic object and to situate it within a socio-political framework of visibility (Foster, 1988; Mirzoeff, 1999, pp. 1-12). Within what W. J. T. Mitchell termed the "pictorial turn," images were understood not merely as representations of reality, but as active nodes of power, language, and desire (Mitchell, 1994, pp. 11-16). In What Do Pictures Want?, Mitchell further develops this position by proposing a shift from the question of what images represent to the more provocative question, "What do pictures want?" - that is, how we attribute to them agency, desire, and imagined life within an intersubjective relation between viewer and image (Mitchell, 2005, pp. 28-34). In this sense, the image is not a passive entity but an active cultural practice involved in producing meaning and structuring power relations.

Nicholas Mirzoeff defines visuality not as visibility itself, but as a technology of power - a historically and politically constituted authority that determines "what is there to see" and who is authorized to see it. In The Right to Look, he offers a genealogy of colonial regimes of vision and formulates the "right to look" as a political act of resistance to the regulation of vision by sovereignty and state power (Mirzoeff, 2011, pp. 2-5). Vision, therefore, is not a neutral sensory experience, but an institutionalized practice that organizes hierarchies of visibility and disappearance.

Jacques Rancière introduces the concept of the "distribution of the sensible" to describe the configuration that determines what is visible and what is not, what is heard as speech and what is perceived as noise, and who is authorized to participate in the shared space. This distribution organizes spaces, times, and forms of activity, thereby defining the conditions of possibility for the political (Rancière, 2004, pp. 12-14). In this sense, the aesthetic is not a domain separate from the political, but its mode of organization.

In the Israeli scholarly context, Ariella Azoulay proposes understanding the image as a site of civic and political relations, rather than merely as an aesthetic object. In The Civil Contract of Photography, she argues that the appearance of a person in an image situates them within a framework of mutual responsibility among the photographed subject, the photographer, and the viewer, and that visibility itself constitutes a condition of citizenship and political claim (Azoulay, 2008, pp. 19-27). Azoulay extends the discussion of regimes of visibility toward the concept of participation, emphasizing that the image does not merely reflect power relations but actively organizes them.

These approaches place the image at the center of relations of visibility and power, emphasizing that the visible is not a natural given but the result of a political and epistemic organization of the sensible. However, despite their contributions to understanding regimes of vision and structures of authority, much work in visual culture tends to focus on the ideological, institutional, or discursive dimensions of the image, and less on how historical and identitarian tensions are inscribed as concrete principles of formal organization within specific works of art. As Mieke Bal has noted, there is often a tension between expanding the field of analysis toward broader cultural contexts and maintaining close attention to the careful reading of form itself (Bal, 2003, pp. 7-15). This gap between the analysis of regimes of visibility and the analysis of internal visual structures is the point of departure for the present discussion.

The concept of a "regime of visibility" in this article refers to the institutional, curatorial, and categorical framework that determines the conditions under which artworks are interpreted within a given field. This does not imply that artists operate outside these mechanisms; instead, their work is shaped and understood within a preexisting system of expectations, which can sometimes result in a reductive ethnic or political framing. In this context, the discussion examines how formal structures - composition, material, time, and space - can embody identitarian tension not only in representation, but also in aesthetic organization itself.

2.2 Hybridity as Visual Structure

The concept of hybridity holds a central place in postcolonial discourse, especially in the work of Homi K. Bhabha, who defines it as a product of colonial ambivalence and as an in-between space where meaning is produced through translation and negotiation between cultural positions (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 37-39). In this context, Bhabha introduces the concept of the Third Space of enunciation as a site where cultural authority does not originate from a pure source or stable identity, but emerges through an ongoing process of difference, mimicry, and displacement (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 211-212). Hybridity, therefore, is not a harmonious blend of traditions, but an ambivalent condition that destabilizes claims to cultural purity and essentialist identity. Bhabha's discussion of mimicry further highlights that colonial imitation creates a fissure in the authority of the original and undermines its stability (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 85-92).

However, Bhabha's analysis is primarily situated at the discursive level - within relations of signification, representation, and identity - and less at the level of the concrete visual structure of the image. Robert J. C. Young points to the complex biological and colonial history associated with the concept, as well as the tension between its critical potential and the risk of romanticizing cultural mixture (Young, 1995, pp. 26-30). Aijaz Ahmad argues that focusing on cultural ambiguity may detach the discussion from material structures of power and concrete political economy

(Ahmad, 1992, pp. 276-290). These critiques require conceptual caution: hybridity is not a promise of reconciliation, but an indication of tension operating within ongoing asymmetry.

This article proposes shifting the focus of discussion from the identitarian level to the visual-formal level. Instead of asking who the hybrid subject is, it examines how a hybrid image is organized: how tension manifests within the aesthetic structure, and how cultural instability is embedded as a compositional and material principle.

For the purposes of this article, hybridity functions as an analytical working concept rather than a comprehensive description of a cultural condition. It does not aim to formulate a universal theory of hybridity, but serves as an interpretive tool for identifying concrete visual structures in the case studies discussed. Accordingly, hybridity is defined as a principle of visual organization characterized by three complementary dimensions: friction between different systems of signification or visual traditions within the same image-space; formal non-coalescence that prevents the image from stabilizing as a unified whole; and the transformation of tension into a visible component of the aesthetic structure, rather than a transitional stage toward synthesis.

If, in Bhabha's work, the Third Space denotes an ambivalent site of meaning production at the discursive level (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 211-212), the approach proposed here seeks to transpose it to the level of visual organization. In the case studies examined, hybridity is not merely representational ambiguity but a structural logic: compositional non-convergence, sustained material tension, and a suspension that does not resolve into unity. The Third Space thus becomes not only a symbolic site of translation, but a visual mechanism operating within the image itself.

2.3 The Context of Structural Asymmetry

The Israeli-Palestinian context offers unique conditions for examining hybridity. Unlike postcolonial situations where formal colonial sovereignty has ended, an

ongoing structure of territorial control persists here alongside formal citizenship. This structure creates continuous tension between civic belonging and ethnic affiliation, generating a space where identities are simultaneously recognized and excluded. Oren Yiftachel describes this structure as an "ethnocracy" - a regime based on an ethnic logic that prioritizes a dominant group and produces differentiated civic hierarchies (Yiftachel, 2000, pp. 78-105).

This framework helps explain the specific form of governance in Israel/Palestine; however, the deeper logic driving it is more fully understood through the concept of settler colonialism. Patrick Wolfe defined settler colonialism not as a singular historical event but as "a structure, not an event" - an ongoing logic of organizing space and population aimed at replacement rather than mere domination (Wolfe, 2006, p. 388). According to Wolfe, settler colonialism operates through continuous mechanisms of territorial, legal, and demographic regulation, and persists even after modern state institutions are consolidated.

Lorenzo Veracini emphasizes that settler colonialism is characterized by normalization and internalization - not only through physical separation, but through the creation of a social order that presents itself as natural and transparent (Veracini, 2010, pp. 3-7). In this framework, asymmetry is not limited to economic or legal disparities, but is embedded in the organization of public space and in the distribution of the sensible - determining who is seen and heard as a political subject and who remains outside the shared space (Rancière, 2004).

In the Israeli-Palestinian context, Gil Z. Hochberg argues that the conflict should not be seen as a stable or self-evident fact, but as produced and framed through regimes of vision that construct hierarchies of hypervisibility and disappearance (Hochberg, 2015, pp. 5, 75). Visibility is not simply a matter of representation, but a mechanism that determines who appears as a legitimate political subject and who remains marginalized. Structural asymmetry manifests at the visual level: in unequal access to

institutional resources and in the curatorial framing of Palestinian art as a distinct ethnic category (Shenhav, 2003, pp. 95-103).

This is not just a matter of differences in funding or legal recognition, but of a structure of visibility that shapes the modes of appearance and interpretation of the artwork. In this sense, the art field operates as part of a broader distribution of the sensible, in Rancière's terms (Rancière, 2004, pp. 12-14), where the boundaries of the possible, the visible, and the audible are determined.

However, this article does not attempt to provide a comprehensive historical analysis of the mechanisms of settler colonialism or the full range of power structures within the art field. Its aim is more limited and focused: to argue that these conditions of asymmetry form a necessary framework for understanding how hybridity is articulated as a formal structure. In this context, hybridity is not simply the result of cultural encounters between traditions, but a visual response to structural conditions of positioning, framing, and exclusion. It is manifested not as a direct statement of dual identity, but as a principle of aesthetic organization in which tension is neither resolved nor unified.

2.4 Level of Analysis and Methodological Position

The article analyzes images and individual artworks, examining composition, materiality, time, and medium. It does not attempt a broad sociological analysis of the art field as a whole. Each work is also considered in relation to its display and framing conditions, maintaining the tension between formal and institutional levels.

Combining formal and discursive analysis aims to avoid pure formalism, which separates the artwork from its context, and ideological readings that erase its visual specificity. The proposed theoretical framework serves as an analytical tool to examine how hybridity functions within the image itself and within institutional regimes of visibility that shape its interpretation.

2.5 Methodology: Visual Analysis, Discursive Reading, and Intermedial Comparison

This study uses a qualitative methodology that integrates three complementary dimensions: formal visual analysis of artworks, discursive reading of in-depth interviews with the artists, and intermedial comparison. This approach is directly derived from the research question, which aims to examine hybridity both as a formal structure within the image and as a concept articulated and framed within a cultural and institutional field.

The choice of a qualitative methodology is based on the assumption that visual meaning cannot be quantified, but emerges through relations of form, materiality, time, and context. The analysis does not rely solely on intuitive interpretation, but seeks to establish consistent criteria for identifying manifestations of hybridity.

2.6 Formal Visual Analysis

The study centers on a systematic visual analysis of the artworks. The analysis draws from both art history and visual culture traditions, combining formal analysis with attention to context. The unit of analysis is the individual artwork as presented to the public.

The analysis addresses the following components:

• composition and structure;

• spatial organization and depth;

• treatment of the body (fragmentation, wholeness, distortion, positioning);

• materiality and medium;

• light and shadow relations;

• rhythm and movement (in animation and video);

• relations of gaze between figure and viewer.

These components are examined in direct relation to the research question: whether and how tension is generated between different systems of signification within the

same image structure. Hybridity is identified where consistent formal non-coalescence is present, rather than by identifying a single cultural motif.

An intermedial approach allows examination of how technological and material conditions generate different possibilities for friction, disassembly, and reassembly, without presupposing hybridity as a uniform or essential property.

2.7 In-Depth Interviews: Discursive Reading

During the study, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with the five artists and used as a secondary source for the analysis. Their purpose is not to confirm the visual interpretation, but to examine how concepts such as multiplicity, rupture, translation, and positioning within the field are articulated - or remain absent - in the artists' own discourse.

The discursive reading focuses on both the content and structure of the discourse: which concepts are employed, which identity categories are adopted or rejected, and where tensions arise between self-articulation and artistic practice.

No assumption is made of a complete correspondence between the artist's intention and the meaning of the work. Gaps between discourse and visual structure are treated as significant research findings, as they may indicate tension between subjective positioning and formal operations.

2.8 Intermedial Comparison

This study examines five artists working in various media, selected as case studies to explore hybridity under diverse material and technological conditions. This is not a representative sample of Palestinian art in Israel, but a deliberate selection of in-depth case studies for qualitative comparison.

The intermedial comparison investigates whether hybridity appears as a recurring pattern across media or is reconfigured in response to different material and technological conditions. The comparison does not aim to unify the cases within an

essentialist framework, but aims to reveal both continuities and differences in formal structure.

2.9 Methodological Limitations

This study does not include a quantitative analysis of the art field and does not aim to present a comprehensive historical account of Palestinian artistic production in Israel. The selection of case studies may reflect a tendency toward works where formal tension is more apparent and does not preclude the existence of other practices that may operate differently.

However, it is this qualitative, in-depth engagement with selected cases that enables the proposal of a detailed analytical model - one that may be tested, expanded, or challenged in future research.

3. Ahmad Haliwah: Digital Animation as Hybridity of Excess, the Urban, and Non-Convergence

Ahmad Haliwah's works belong to the field of contemporary digital animation, but they do not simply depend on movement or visual fantasy. At first glance, a dense composition appears: the figures are centered yet unstable, their contours sharp and sometimes exaggerated, while the predominantly urban background is compressed into an almost flattened surface. There is no clear hierarchy between foreground and background; the entire space is active and saturated with energy, subjecting the figure to constant visual overload. This arrangement creates a situation in which the body is not "placed" in a neutral environment, but exists in continuous tension with the surrounding space. In this context, Henri Lefebvre's conception of space as an active social product that organizes relations of power and movement, rather than a passive backdrop, comes to mind (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 26-38). The city in Haliwah's works functions similarly: not as a background, but as an intensive mechanism generating constant friction.

The body in these works does not operate as a closed anatomical unit. It elongates, distorts, swells, and sometimes duplicates itself. More importantly, these transformations do not result in re-stabilization or a return to an original form. There is no "true form" to which the body returns. According to the theoretical model proposed above, what emerges is a consistent formal non-coalescence: change is not a transitional phase but a continuous condition. Animation, as a medium based on a sequence of digital frames, allows for the constant disruption of continuity. As Lev Manovich notes, digital media is organized modularly, so each unit can be modified and recombined without losing its autonomy (Manovich, 2001, pp. 30-33). This modularity creates the potential for structural non-convergence, where movement does not converge into synthesis but is organized as a sequence of differences. Thomas Lamarre further emphasizes that in animation, the gap between frames - the animetic interval - produces inherent instability between states (Lamarre, 2009, pp. 6-9).

In Haliwah's works, this interval is not hidden but intensified: each frame destabilizes the previous one, and movement itself becomes a mechanism of destabilization. In an interview, Haliwah states that for him, "style as substance" means style is the substance itself. This statement helps us understand stylistic excess not as ornament, but as a principle of organization. The neon colors, sharp contrasts, graphic multiplicity, and aesthetics drawn from contemporary pop culture are not superficial, but mechanisms that produce deliberate visual overload. This aesthetic can be interpreted through Sianne Ngai's concept of the "zany" - an aesthetic of intensity and constant movement, where effort is exposed as part of the experience (Ngai, 2012, pp. 28-35). The digital body in Haliwah's work does not fracture through a single traumatic event, but disassembles into shifting sequences, combining elements of the grotesque, fashion, and pop. Mikhail Bakhtin described the grotesque body as open, expanding, and exceeding its own boundaries (Bakhtin, 1984, pp. 26-30); similarly, the body here is neither sealed nor autonomous, but exists in a continuous process of expansion and transformation.

The urban space, which Haliwah identifies as a central source of inspiration, plays a crucial role in organizing the image. The city is not a passive background but a space saturated with artificial lighting, detail, and structural density. The contrast between luminosity and grime, between refined aesthetics and crude elements, creates a space that is neither idyllic nor tragic. This is an in-between space - neither a clearly defined cultural center nor a clearly demarcated margin. The figures neither fully assimilate into the city nor remain entirely foreign; they inhabit it as a form of naturalized exception. What emerges is a hybridity that does not manifest as an identitarian resolution, but as a mode of existence that does not seek purification or closure.

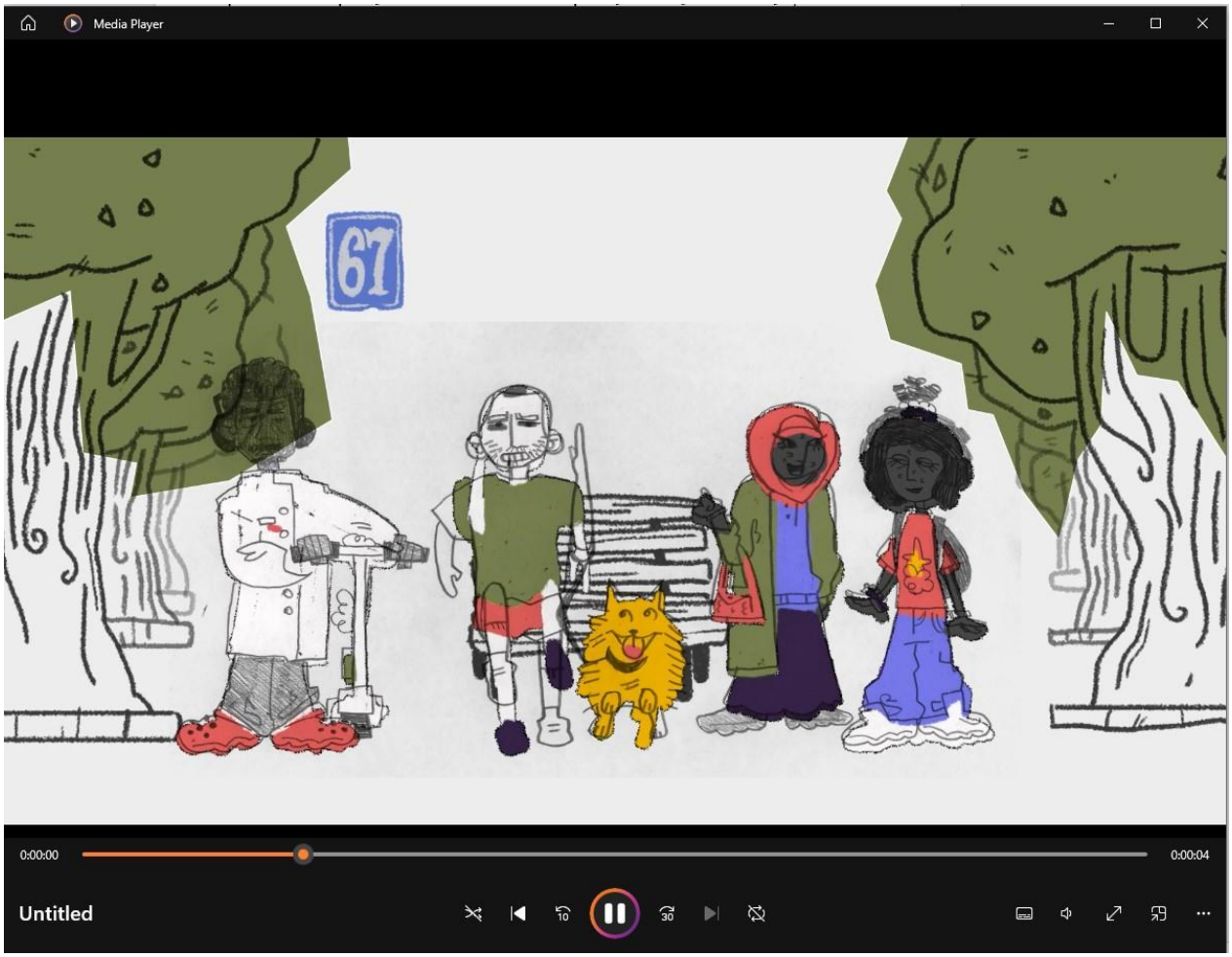
In the interview, Haliwah describes the experience of being "the only Arab" in a queer space and "the only queer" in an Arab space. This sense of singularity is not conveyed through direct verbal statements, but is visually organized through duplication and the repeated appearance of the same figure within a single frame. This approach recalls José Esteban Muñoz's concept of disidentification, which describes a practice in which a minoritarian subject neither fully identifies with dominant discourse nor wholly rejects it, but operates within it through displacement and distortion (Muñoz, 1999, pp. 4-12). In Haliwah's work, duplication is not merely decorative but functions as a spatial mechanism that counters isolation through internal multiplicity. Instead of presenting a singular subject subjected to an external gaze, the work creates a configuration in which multiplicity exists without a clear hierarchy between an "original" instance and its "secondary" manifestations. Hybridity thus appears not as a fusion of elements, but as their simultaneous coexistence.

In the Israeli context, as Yehouda Shenhav (2003) demonstrates, ethnic and national identity categories are not simply descriptive of social differences; they function as active classificatory mechanisms that produce subjects through rigid binary distinctions - Jew/Arab, Mizrahi/Ashkenazi - and subordinate them to predefined fields of belonging. These categories do not reflect a preexisting identity but instead constitute it through practices of inclusion and exclusion.

Against this background, the strategy of duplication and the absence of an original in Haliwah's work is not just an expression of multiple identities, but an operation that undermines the very demand for an original, stable, and coherent identity. In this sense, his practice resonates with Muñoz's concept of disidentification, while remaining grounded in the local classificatory regime identified by Shenhav.

The temporality of animation also contributes to this structure. Unlike a linear narrative that leads toward resolution, the works present a sequence of shifting states that do not converge into a decisive outcome. Movement itself becomes the condition. In this context, one may recall Jack Halberstam's notion of queer time, which emphasizes temporalities not oriented toward normative development or a teleology of completion (Halberstam, 2005, pp. 1-21). In Haliwah's work, identity is not depicted as a developmental process moving toward synthesis, but as an ongoing process of becoming. One may thus speak of temporal hybridity: a condition in which resolution is repeatedly deferred, and the tension between elements is sustained as part of the aesthetic organization.

It is important to emphasize that Haliwah does not present a theory of hybridity in his discourse. He discusses estrangement, urban inspiration, and an intuitive creative impulse. The gap between this articulation and the formal complexity of the works is a significant research finding. Hybridity does not function as a slogan here, but emerges as an organizing principle operating beyond conscious formulation. Excess, exaggeration, and stylistic friction generate a structure that not converges into unity nor offers reconciliation. Digital animation in Haliwah's work emerges not as a neutral medium, but as a space where the multiplicity of identities is sustained in continuous movement and non-convergence, rather than resolved.



Ahmad Haliwah, 2025, *Untitled* (still from a digital animation).

4. Samah Shihadeh: Charcoal Drawing as an Anatomical In-Between Space

Samah Shihadeh's charcoal drawings are not simply a technical exercise within the realist tradition, but a material choice that creates an in-between space - anatomical, spatial, and identitarian. Charcoal, as a black, raw, and friable medium, shifts between precise tonal definition and powdery diffusion. This dual quality enables the body to appear both precise and indeterminate. As Rosalind Krauss has observed regarding drawing, the line is not just a means of delineation but an event of appearance and disappearance - a movement between presence and trace (Krauss, 1999, pp. 16-19). In Shihadeh's work, the material itself embodies a tension between presence and

absence - a tension she describes in an interview as inseparable from her geographical and social positioning.

Drawing can be understood as the trace of movement - the result of a line unfolding in space and time. As Tim Ingold suggests, lines are not static marks but paths of living movement, traces of ongoing activity (Ingold, 2007, pp. 39-45). In this context, Ido Cohen argues that Shihadeh's charcoal drawings mark a shift from the hyperrealism of her earlier work toward a more abstract visual language, while still maintaining the presence of the figure. This movement is not merely stylistic but structural: the drawing oscillates between technical control and material disintegration, between a bounded and distinct body and one that opens up and blurs its own limits.

In Cloudhead (2022), the body is depicted with near-academic precision: the garment is defined by complex tonal gradations, the shoulders are stable, and the hands rest calmly. Instead of a head, a soft, dispersing cloud appears, its edges dissolving into the white background. There is no violent severing of the neck; the transition is gradual and subtle. This subtlety produces a radical hybridity: the locus of consciousness and identity - the head - is not cut off but dissipates. The body remains standing, seemingly stable, yet its center dissolves. Hybridity here is not merely symbolic; it occurs at the level of formal organization, through the relationship between precise line and diffused blur, between a closed anatomical structure and an airy, unbounded mass. In this context, one may recall Georges Didi-Huberman's analysis of the image as a site of internal rupture, in which appearance itself carries the trace of its own disappearance (Didi-Huberman, 2005, pp. 148-153).

In Rebirth (2022), leaves envelop the figure's face, replacing the hair that would typically frame it. There is no abrupt substitution; instead, a gradual fusion occurs: the face remains clearly visible, yet it is surrounded by and absorbed into dense foliage. The charcoal highlights the texture of the leaves with almost obsessive detail, while

the skin is rendered with a smoother, more delicate tonality. The result is a state in which body and vegetation do not collide but coexist within one another. This can be interpreted through Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming - a process that is not a complete transformation into something else, but an ongoing movement of becoming-other without fully merging with it (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, pp. 272-280). Biological hybridity is not depicted here as a grotesque aberration, but as an organic continuity - a boundary that gradually dissolves through absorption.

In Untitled (2017), where the head is replaced by a rooster, there is no dramatic rupture. The female body remains stable, the garment flows in soft lines, and the junction between the neck and the bird's body appears almost natural. Hybridity operates here through normalization: the non-human is quietly absorbed rather than intruding as a violent element. The boundary between the human and the animal opens without being torn. Mikhail Bakhtin described the grotesque body as an open body that exceeds the closed and the complete (Bakhtin, 1984, pp. 26-30); yet in Shihadeh's work, this excess is neither carnivalesque nor noisy, but restrained and precise. The body does not explode outward but expands in a controlled manner.

A similar logic appears in Splitting (2022), where the figure lies on a bed and the body seems to open or divide. The rupture is not depicted as a theatrical severing: the bed is shown in precise perspective, the sheets are soft, and the body rests in an almost meditative stillness. The splitting unfolds as a gradual exposure, without blood or excessive drama. Hybridity here is not between cultures or symbols, but between wholeness and disintegration - a condition in which the body is simultaneously whole and fragmented, stable yet internally unsettled. Non-convergence is not a momentary event but a continuous condition. This may be understood as a formal articulation of what Maurice Merleau-Ponty termed the "reversibility" of the body - its being simultaneously subject and object, interior and exterior (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, pp. 130-135).

The space around the figures is almost empty. The whiteness of the paper is not neutral; it creates an active field of suspension. Without a horizon line or defined spatial context, the body appears suspended between ground and sky. Emptiness here is not a void, but a form of tension.

The gaze plays a central role. In The Observer (2020), the figure looks directly at the viewer, while a rooster stands behind her. This direct gaze unsettles the power relations of viewing: the figure is not merely an object of the gaze but a subject who returns it. In other works, the eyes are closed and the body turns inward. The oscillation between returning the gaze and inward withdrawal creates a hybridity in relations of vision - between exposure and control, between visibility and withdrawal. Shihadeh presents a body that simultaneously carries layers of personal and collective memory, without anchoring them in a direct narrative of trauma or a clearly identifiable political event. Hybridity in her work is not expressed through distinct national iconography, but is embodied as an internal tension within the anatomy itself - as a fissure, intersection, and overlap between layers that do not coalesce into a stable identity. This space is not "in-between" as a compromise between opposites, but functions as a field where different strata remain side by side without resolving into sharply differentiated forms. In this sense, her work may be read in light of Haviva Pedaya's discussion of the "theologico-political unconscious," in which theological and political dimensions continue to operate as deep forces within the body and consciousness, without stabilizing into an ordered, dichotomous structure (Pedaya, 2011).

In this context, the choice of precise monochromatic drawing - a deliberate engagement with the Western realist tradition - gains additional significance. It functions as a double move: on one hand, it affirms skill and technical control; on the other, it destabilizes the notion of the subject as a complete and closed unit. The gradual tonal transitions and the use of a continuous range of grays do not create sharp

boundaries between parts of the body, but instead form a continuous material field. In this way, identity emerges not through binary oppositions of inside/outside or self/other, but through an in-between space that dissolves clear distinctions.

In the context of a Palestinian artist working within the Israeli art field, this choice can be seen as a complex position: engaging with a universal artistic language while using it to present a body that resists being reduced to a single definition. Here, hybridity functions not as an explicit ideological statement, but as a consistent formal stance: the body does not break, yet it is not whole. It opens, merges, splits - and remains standing.

Charcoal drawing in Shihadeh's work emerges as an anatomical in-between space. Through gradual blurring, active emptiness, and splitting that is never absolute, the body becomes a site where identity is not resolved but persists in a state of continuous tension. Hybridity is not a dramatic gesture or an external movement, but a slow internal process of opening and suspension - a subtle operation within a charged field of forces.

If, in Shihadeh's work, hybridity occurs within the anatomy itself - through blurring, opening, and gradual splitting within monochromatic drawing - then in Raida Adon's work, the locus of hybridity shifts from the inner body to the body positioned in space. While Shihadeh works within an almost context-free white ground, Adon places the body within an open landscape, empty architecture, or a charged territory. The transition between the two artists is not merely a shift between media, but between two models of hybridity: one intimate and anatomical, the other performative and spatial.

Samah Shihadeh, 2022, ***Cloudhead***, charcoal on paper, 50 × 70 cm.

5. Raida Adon: Hybridity as a Third Space of Bearing and Deferred Memory

Raida Adon's works present a model of hybridity that is not conveyed through overt stylistic mixture or dramatic formal transformation, but through a continuous structure of territorial and temporal in-betweenness. Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity describes the "Third Space" as a site where meaning arises through translation and ambivalence, rather than stable synthesis (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 37-39, 211-212). Identities in this space do not merge or dissolve, but remain in a state of unresolved

tension. In Adon's work, this tension takes on a distinct visual form: the body is present in space, yet not anchored within it.

The spaces in her work serve as allegorical stages: saturated red earth, cracked yellow desert, frozen blue skies, or a dark night with a moon hanging above a still landscape. The perspective is shallow, the horizon nearly closed. At the center stands a female figure - seated, carrying, lying, or being stitched - yet she is almost never engaged in action. She waits, holds, bears. Hybridity here is not a rapid movement between identities, but a sustained bearing of tension.

In a work where a road sign marks the division between "Israel," "Palestine," and "Syria," two women sit on a bench in a fissured desert. Their feet are bare, and their bodies lean slightly forward. Above them, the sign rises, cutting through the sky and establishing a structure of decision. Yet the figures neither choose nor rise. They remain beneath the junction, in a zone that is not a destination but a threshold. In this way, Bhabha's in-between is realized as a mode of existence that neither converges into a single identity nor stabilizes within a closed sovereignty (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 1-2). Hybridity here is not a celebratory multiplicity, but a prolonged dwelling at an unresolved crossroads.

This prolonged dwelling may also be read as an ethical position. In a 2023 interview, Adon remarked: "People want me to identify with only one side, and I do not think that will happen… I do not want anyone to take away my humanity." The refusal to rise from the bench is therefore not indifference or withdrawal, but resistance to the logic of binary resolution. The figures sit beneath a sign that points toward separate sovereignties, yet refuse to align themselves with any one of them. In this way, the act of sitting becomes a gesture of inhabiting the Third Space - not as an absence of position, but as an insistence on human complexity that cannot be reduced to a single identification.

The suitcase, recurring in many of her works, further intensifies this condition. It is stacked or carried, but almost never opened. In another work, a figure carries a suitcase

in a red desert, while railway tracks curve and split behind her in an impossible configuration. The track does not lead forward along a clear line; it bends upward into the air, as a possibility that is never realized. In this context, one may recall Stuart Hall's distinction between being and becoming (Hall, 1990, pp. 225-227); yet in Adon's work, becoming is not a process of progression, but a deferred becoming that repeatedly returns to the threshold.

The space is also layered with history. This can be understood in light of Yehouda Shenhav's analysis, which argues that national categories such as "Jew" and "Arab" are produced through mechanisms of classification and exclusion, and do not form a homogeneous unity (Shenhav, 2003, pp. 95-103). Adon translates this tension into allegory: fissured earth, leaning houses, broken tracks. There is no stable ground to stand on, yet there is no disappearance. The body remains.

Another central motif is the red thread. In one work, two women sit facing each other, holding a taut thread stretched between them; the thread emerges from their bodies and extends across the space. In another work, one figure stitches the body of another while airplanes circle overhead and the sky reddens. The stitches are visible; the wound does not disappear. The act of mending is not an erasure but a holding of the rupture. In this sense, one may recall Nicholas Mirzoeff's argument that visibility is a site of struggle within hierarchical regimes of vision (Mirzoeff, 2011, pp. 2-5): the exposed seam demands presence within a charged visual field.

Time in her work also functions as an in-between space. There is no linear narrative leading to resolution. In a piece where a body lies on a bed of cacti under a blue night sky, connected by a red thread to another body, the scene is suspended between life and death. The moon hangs above, and the cacti support the body like a memory that does not let go. This condition may be interpreted through Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory (Hirsch, 2012, pp. 5-9): a form of memory that persists as an ongoing affective imprint rather than as direct recollection. In Adon's work, the past is not a closed narrative but an active layer of the "almost."

Airplanes, soldiers at the margins, and trains place the figure within a history marked by violence; yet the female body is not absorbed into a clear national allegory. At times it appears pale and vulnerable, at times scarred, at times its hair merges with barren trees. In this context, one may recall that regimes of visibility create hierarchies of disappearance and hypervisibility (Hochberg, 2015); yet in Adon's work, the body is not an allegorical hero but a bearer of ongoing rupture.

In contrast to readings that view hybridity as a harmonious synthesis, Adon proposes hybridity as a prolonged dwelling within a fissure. As Robert J. C. Young cautions (Young, 1995, pp. 26-30), hybridity should not be seen as a simple cultural resolution. In Adon's work, it is a fragile yet persistent mode of existence: a boat on dry land, a heart held in a hand, a house swaying on a red hill. Hybridity is not a solution but a condition.

Compared to Ahmad Haliwah, where hybridity destabilizes the boundaries of the digital frame, and to Samah Shihadeh, where it occurs within the anatomy itself, in Adon's work it is situated in the relations between body and landscape. The body undergoes minimal transformation; the tension unfolds in the surrounding space. The Third Space is not a fleeting moment of transition but an ongoing mode of existence - bearing weight, holding a thread, sitting at an unresolved crossroads.

Raida Adon**,** *Where To?,* 2021, watercolor on canvas paper, 60 × 85 cm, courtesy of the artist.

6. Bashir Abu-Rabia: Painting as Layered Non-Convergence-Between Body, Landscape, and Material

Reading Bashir Abu-Rabia's work requires a long-term perspective. What emerges is not a linear progression from figuration to abstraction, but a sustained engagement with the question of image stabilization. Over five decades, a continuous organizational principle persists: the image is constructed, fissured, and reconstructed, never reaching a stable unity.

In early works such as Family (1970), recognizable figuration appears: two figures stand before a schematic desert landscape. Even here, structural instability is evident. The figures are flat, almost geometric, and the landscape consists of horizontal bands of color that traverse the surface. There is no illusionistic perspectival depth; both the

body and the landscape are organized according to the same planar logic. The figure is not "placed within" the landscape but is constituted by the same formal configuration. From the outset, a tension arises between subject and space that prevents the subject from stabilizing as autonomous.

In My Uncle (1974), this tension becomes more pronounced. The figure is more detailed, yet diagonal brushstrokes cut across both the face and the background. The diagonal is not merely an expressive gesture; it acts as an organizing force that destabilizes the body. The form is not presented as a closed whole, but as an internal field of forces acting against itself. In this sense, the painting may be understood in terms of what Gilles Deleuze called a "diagram" - a structure in which force is not external to the image but traverses it and shapes it from within (Deleuze, 2003, pp. 35-42). The body is not destroyed, but it is held in a state of continuous distortion.

The transition into the 2000s does not mark a move toward pure abstraction, but rather an intensification of structural tension. In Figure with a Wolf (2006), the body is elongated into an almost totemic form and split by a dark vertical axis. Human and animal share the same dense, reddish field of color. There is neither full fusion nor absolute separation; the two categories inhabit the same space without converging. The central axis does not produce harmonious symmetry but instead emphasizes an internal division. What emerges here is a hybridity that is not merely symbolic but compositional: the categories themselves - human and animal - lose their stability without merging

In works such as Abstract (2010), the role of the line becomes more pronounced. The thick black line delineates areas of color, yet also cuts across the body, inserting the boundary into the image itself. The boundary does not separate inside from outside; it operates at the core of the form. Thus, the line functions as a double mechanism: stabilizing and destabilizing simultaneously.

Layering also embodies a complex temporality. Color covers color but does not fully erase it; earlier traces emerge through the surface. Layering is not a technique of

correction but a sustained condition of in-betweenness. The image carries the memory of its erasures as part of its structure. In this context, one may recall Georges Didi-

Huberman's analysis of the image as a site where appearance itself bears the trace of its disappearance (Didi-Huberman, 2005, pp. 148-153). In Abu-Rabia's work, erasure is not an end but another layer within the structure.

In The Illuminated Side (2016), the human profile serves as a contour within which autonomous formal activity unfolds. Light and shadow do not create illusionistic volume but instead divide the surface into opposing zones. The face does not "represent" a stable inner identity; it functions as a field of internal division. In Merleau-Ponty's terms, the body is not a closed entity but a space where inside and outside, seeing and being seen, are intertwined in a reversible relation (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, pp. 130-135). Here, the subject does not disintegrate, nor does it stabilize as a unified whole.

In later works such as Tuareg (2022), Black Horse (2023), and Double Shadow (2024), non-convergence becomes more pronounced. The figure remains identifiable yet is cut by diagonal brushstrokes; the horse appears as a fleeting flash within a storm of color; partial symmetry produces a doubling that does not unify. The central axis does not unify but instead replicates the image as a fragmented echo.

Over five decades, it becomes evident that this is not a periodic stylistic fluctuation but a consistent organizing principle. From early geometric flattening to contrast-saturated color fragmentation, the image approaches convergence but stops just short of full stabilization. The painting does not move toward formal resolution; instead, it maintains an active tension between body and landscape, figuration and abstraction, and material and memory.

According to the model proposed in this article, three dimensions of visual hybridity can be identified in Abu-Rabia's work:

- Friction between systems of signification - body and landscape, human and animal, figuration and abstraction coexist within the same space without converging.

- Consistent formal non-convergence - line, axis, and layering create an image that does not stabilize as a harmonious whole.
- Visibility of tension itself - the fissure, the cut, and the trace are not concealed but remain present as integral components of the structure.

Hybridity in Abu-Rabia's work is not a direct allegory of dual identity or an explicit symbolic mixture. It operates at the level of the material structure of the painting itself. The body does not disintegrate, nor does it close in on itself; the landscape is not merely a background, nor is it an autonomous subject. The image is held in a sustained state of non-convergence - as a visual organization in which identity is neither resolved nor erased, but persists as an active and ongoing tension.

Bashir Abu-Rabia, 2006, *Man with a Wolf,* oil on canvas, 100 × 140 cm

7. Mayyada Masri: Material Translation as an Archaeology of Belonging

Mayyada Masri's work in the late 1990s and early 2000s centers on a consistent material process in which the support itself becomes a charged site of action. While hybridity in other artists' work often appears as tension between images or as formal rupture, in Masri's work it occurs primarily within the material itself. The leaf, the thread, the ceramic, and the recycled paper are not neutral means of representation but physical entities undergoing processes of disassembly and reconfiguration.

In the catalogue بين الدوالي (Bein al-Dawali), the working process is described as a sequence of experiments involving drying, tearing, staining, perforating, gluing, and reconstruction. This sequence is not merely technical; it embodies a temporality embedded within the surface. The leaf, once part of a living biological cycle, is uprooted from the plant, dried, and adhered as a support - yet it retains its veins, creases, and fragility. It ceases to be "nature" in its organic sense, yet does not become a smooth pictorial ground. It exists in an in-between state: a biological remnant transformed into the substrate of an image.

The concept of the "remnant" here is not merely metaphorical. As Jacques Derrida suggests in his discussion of the trace and the archive, the archive does not preserve a pure origin but operates through transformation and traces (Derrida, 1996, pp. 9-11). In Masri's work, the leaf does not retain its original identity, yet it is not erased; it carries its past as part of a new structure. The material itself becomes an archive.

In works such as Perforated Memory (1998), an apparently ordered geometric composition is evident - a grid of squares marked by dark lines. Yet these lines are not simply drawn; they are stitches that penetrate the support. The thread does not trace a form on the surface but physically punctures it. Each stitch leaves a hole, and each hole is a minute wound in the dried leaf. Joining is simultaneously an act of penetration.

Here, it becomes clear that mending does not eliminate rupture but establishes it as a prior condition. "Perforated" memory is not a metaphor but a precise material

condition: memory is embodied in actual punctures, frayed edges, and a surface that bears the traces of injury. In this sense, layering is not a representation of memory but memory itself as accumulated material - a structure in which the present rests upon remnants of the past that do not disappear.

The linguistic dimension in her work enriches the material process rather than shifting it to an abstract symbolic plane. In the work Iqra (1999), the Arabic word is not presented as an inscription separate from the background but is embedded within layers of leaves and threads. The letters are stitched or drawn as part of the texture itself. Reading becomes a bodily engagement with the surface, tracing each stitch and fiber, rather than a distanced intellectual act. The text is not above the material - it is woven into it.

While in Bhabha's work hybridity occurs within a discursive space of translation and ambivalence (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 37-39, 211-212), in Masri's work translation is material. The shift is not only between languages but also between media: from textile to painting, from nature to an artistic surface. The enlarged stitch is detached from its original function and becomes a semi-autonomous formal structure. Translation is not a faithful reproduction of an origin but a process that highlights the gap. In this sense, hybridity is not a harmonious synthesis but a preservation of the gap between origin and new form (Young, 1995, pp. 26-30).

In I Am the Earth (2000), the procedural principle is preserved. Recycled paper and grapevine bark form a dark, layered surface that is almost geological. The work does not represent earth; it functions as ground. The layers do not erase each other but persist as a sequence that does not merge into a unified surface. In this sense, archaeology is understood not as a metaphor but as a structural principle: layers accumulate without being fully absorbed into one another (Foucault, 1972, pp. 138-140).

In works involving broken ceramics such as We Waited a Long Time and Walls, the tile - traditionally a symbol of domesticity and stability - is shattered and reassembled,

with the cracks remaining visible. The rupture is not concealed but emphasized as a formal element. The home is not restored as a whole; it persists as a wholeness that does not return. In Derrida's terms, the past is not fully present but appears as a specter that continues to haunt the present (Derrida, 1994, pp. xix-xx). Hybridity here is not fusion but coexistence with the trace.

According to the model proposed in this article, three dimensions of visual hybridity can be identified in Masri's work:

• Friction between material categories: nature and support, text and textile, home and rupture.

• Structural non-convergence: layering, stitching, and cracking prevent the stabilization of a unified surface.

• Visibility of tension: the hole, the tear, and the crack are not concealed but emphasized as integral components of the aesthetic organization.

In Masri's work, hybridity is procedural rather than iconographic. It does not appear as an image of dual identity but as an ongoing material process of disassembly and reassembly. The leaf is both nature and support; the thread is both line and penetration; the word is both text and hole; the ceramic form is both home and rupture. The material does not represent identity - it carries it as a trace.

The concept of "hybridity" has become a central tool in postcolonial discourse for understanding identity in situations of contact, subordination, and cultural translation. In Homi K. Bhabha's work, it refers to a "Third Space" where distinctions between original and copy, ruler and ruled, and purity and contamination are destabilized. However, later critiques have highlighted the risk of aestheticizing power relations: when real conflict is presented as a creative space of in-betweenness, structural violence may be obscured within a discourse of multiplicity and mutual enrichment.

In the context of Palestinian art in Israel, this risk is especially pronounced. Artists work within a hierarchical and asymmetrical cultural and institutional field. Therefore, this study does not use hybridity as a declaration of cultural plurality or as a promise

of symbolic liberation, but instead examines it as a visual structure formed under conditions of unresolved tension.

The main contribution of this study is to distinguish between hybridity as a complex identity and hybridity as a formal structure. Cultural complexity alone does not suffice to identify an in-between structure within a work. For this purpose, a more restrictive definition is proposed, based on three cumulative conditions:

- an unresolved tension between systems of signification or visual categories (e.g., body/landscape, material/memory, movement/stasis);
- a material, intermedial, or formal act of translation between visual languages;
- the impossibility of full convergence-neither toward a pure origin nor toward harmonious assimilation within a dominant field.

This definition aims to differentiate between general aesthetic instability and an intermediate structure functioning within materially and politically charged conditions.

The analysis of the five artists shows that hybridity is expressed not primarily through an iconography of dual identity, but through the organization of the image itself. In Ahmad Haliwah's animations, the body refuses to stabilize, multiplying and distorting; in Samah Shihadeh's charcoal drawings, the anatomy opens but does not collapse; in Raida Adon's video works, time stretches and the body inhabits a space that fails to provide stable grounding; in Bashir Abu-Rabia's paintings, layers of color and incision blur the distinction between body and landscape; and in Mayyada Masri's works, the leaf, the ceramic, and the stitch embody an ongoing process of disassembly and reassembly.

Despite differences in medium, all these cases share a structure that neither allows a return to a pure origin nor offers a harmonious synthesis. Hybridity here is not a solution but a tense and sustained condition - an in-between mode of existence within

a regime of visibility that does not permit full stabilization, yet does not erase presence.

At the same time, hybridity does not encompass the entirety of these works. Trauma, personal memory, conscious modernist choices, and material inquiry cannot be reduced to this concept. It functions here as a central analytical lens, but not an exclusive one.

A critical question arises: is this simply a continuation of modernist traditions of formal fragmentation? The answer depends on the distinction between formalist rupture and an in-between structure produced under conditions of asymmetry. Modernist fragmentation may emphasize materiality or medium specificity; by contrast, in the cases discussed here, all three conditions are simultaneously present - unresolved tension, acts of translation, and a historically specific, politically charged positional context. Non-convergence, therefore, is not a stylistic effect but an organizing principle tied to an actual field of power.

This is not a matter of projecting politics onto form, but of identifying the ways in which historically specific conditions of positionality are inscribed as sustained formal organization. What is proposed here is a measured expansion of the concept of hybridity: a shift from an abstract cultural definition toward the identification of concrete visual criteria, while maintaining awareness of the asymmetry within which they emerge.

The central contribution of this study is not only a new interpretation of contemporary Palestinian art, but also a reconfiguration of the concept of hybridity itself. While postcolonial discourse has primarily grounded hybridity in questions of identity, cultural translation, and discursive ambivalence, this study shifts the focus to the structural-aesthetic level. Instead of viewing hybridity as a description of a cultural condition or a declaration of multiplicity, it is reconceptualized here as a concrete principle of visual organization, identifiable through clear formal criteria: unresolved

tension between categories, acts of intermedial or material translation, and the impossibility of full convergence.

A critical question arises: is this simply a continuation of modernist traditions of formal fragmentation? The answer depends on distinguishing between formalist rupture and an in-between structure produced under conditions of asymmetry. Modernist fragmentation may emphasize materiality or medium specificity; by contrast, in the cases discussed here, all three conditions are simultaneously present - unresolved tension, acts of translation, and a historically specific, politically charged positional context. Non-convergence, therefore, is not a stylistic effect but an organizing principle tied to an actual field of power.

This is not about projecting politics onto form, but about identifying how historically specific conditions of positionality are inscribed as sustained formal organization. What is proposed here is a measured expansion of the concept of hybridity: a shift from an abstract cultural definition to the identification of concrete visual criteria, while maintaining awareness of the asymmetry in which they emerge.

This approach enables a distinction between general cultural stratification and an in-between structure produced under conditions of structural asymmetry. Rather than relying solely on the metaphor of the "Third Space," the study identifies how in-betweenness is inscribed in time, material, composition, and body-space relations. Hybridity thus ceases to function as an abstract description of identity and becomes a tool for formal analysis.

This contribution extends beyond the Israeli-Palestinian context. The proposed framework can be applied to the analysis of artistic practices in other Indigenous, postcolonial, or diasporic contexts where sustained asymmetry exists between a dominant field and a situated subject. In this sense, the study aims not only to deepen the discussion of contemporary Palestinian art, but also to offer a theoretical model with broader applicability within visual culture studies.

Mayyada Masri, 1998. *Sayyidat al-Ard*, mallow leaves paper, grapevine stem, threads, and watercolor, 20 × 70 cm.

A Typology of In-Between Structures: Five Forms of Visual Hybridity

The analysis of the case studies shows that, although each artist works in a different medium, a shared principle of non-convergence appears across their works. However, this non-convergence manifests differently depending on material and technological

conditions. Therefore, the following typology of five distinct forms of visual hybridity is proposed:

• Haliwah - Dynamic non-convergence: Animation creates continuous instability; the body distorts and multiplies without returning to a stable form. Each frame destabilizes the previous one, and movement prevents stabilization.

• Shihadeh - Anatomical non-convergence: Charcoal drawing presents a precise body that opens from within - sharp line alongside blur, wholeness alongside disintegration. The tension unfolds within the anatomy.

• Adon - Spatio-temporal non-convergence: The body exists in a charged landscape that fails to provide grounding. Time stretches without progressing toward resolution. Hybridity is embodied as a sustained condition of in-betweenness.

• Abu-Rabia - Layered non-convergence: Layers of color and incision simultaneously construct and erase. Body and landscape no longer function as separate categories; the image carries the memory of its own erasures.

• Masri - Procedural non-convergence: Material processes of disassembly and reassembly - leaf, stitch, ceramic - preserve the trace of rupture within the act of translation. Repair does not eliminate the tear but makes it visible.

The typology does not suggest a shared essence but rather a structural logic. The presence of the principle of non-convergence in digital animation, monochromatic drawing, video, oil painting, and material-based practice indicates an underlying pattern instead of a localized stylistic effect.

Conclusion

This study examines how hybridity appears in contemporary Palestinian art in Israel as a principle of visual organization. Instead of viewing it as a metaphor for cultural multiplicity, it proposes an analytical framework that identifies an in-between structure through three cumulative conditions: unresolved tension, acts of translation, and the impossibility of full convergence.

The intermedial comparison shows that, although this structure is reformulated within each medium, the principle of non-convergence recurs consistently. Thus, the discussion of hybridity moves from the domain of identity to the structural-aesthetic plane, offering a reading of Palestinian art that does not reduce it to national or biographical representation, but instead traces how relations of power are inscribed in the organization of time, material, body, and space.

Hybridity is proposed not as an essence or a totalizing explanation, but as a focused interpretive lens. Its contribution lies not in articulating a new identity, but in identifying a mode of organization in which tension is neither resolved nor dissolved, but sustained as an ongoing aesthetic condition.

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