

Inas Halabi's *We No Longer Prefer Mountains* (2022).

Creating an Artistic Counternarrative within the Druze Community in Israel/Palestine through Oral History and Fukeiron Methodologies

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The article looks at the research methods that lie behind the film *We No Longer Prefer Mountains* (2022) by Palestinian artist Inas Halabi. It represents a counternarrative of the identity and political issues of the Druze community living in Israel, achieved from within through an immersive glimpse. The aim is to analyse the way the visual artist relies on specific methodologies (which are contextualized within the field of Palestinian studies) to build an alternative perspective on Druze history. On one side, the paper considers oral history as it is practiced in the film: a method to write history from below, to highlight the interconnections of individual and collective stories, and to exhibit forms of *sumud* (resistance) in everyday life. On the other, it focuses on *fukeiron*, a method of filming the landscape applied by Halabi to expose symbols of colonial control hidden in both natural and urban environments. Overall, the article thinks about the role that the artist can play and the way she can contribute to a militant and decolonial research from her particular position and application of specific methodologies.

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INTRODUCTION

The film *We No Longer Prefer Mountain* (2022) by Palestinian artist Inas Halabi aims to provide an alternative perspective on the history of the Druze community in Israel. It seeks to challenge a dominant narrative about the community that has developed over time by giving voice to its members and presenting an anti-hegemonic viewpoint. To accomplish this, the artist works as a researcher, gathering data and operating similarly to other academics who have studied the same subject, as we shall see. Therefore, the primary goal of this article is to analyze the research methodologies utilized in Halabi's work. Two methods will be explored in particular: oral history, which allows the artist to give voice to Druze stories, and *fukeiron*, which enables the artist to explore the territory and highlights connections with those stories.

The artist is not experimenting with these methodologies for the first time in her 2022 film. Indeed, she has previously employed similar methods in order to shed light on lesser-known stories about Palestine. Indeed, despite living abroad for several years, she remains committed to addressing issues related to her country of origin, where she was born in 1988. For example, she



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even has a side activity in Amsterdam, where she currently resides: a ceramic studio called 'Turabi', which means 'my soil' in Arabic. Here she creates pieces with decorations inspired by traditional Palestinian embroidery patterns called "tatreez". Each creation tells and embodies a story of a place or historical fact, revealing her passion for storytelling.

The artist has previously used oral history as a narrative technique in other projects. One such project is *Mnemosyne* (2016), a video work consisting of interviews with 17 members of a Palestinian family, in which the family members tell their version of a family story, specifically how their grandfather received a scar on his forehead. Through storytelling, this project reflects on the importance of voice in the preservation of individual and collective memory. Moreover, Halabi also explores the position of the artist-historian, learning how to handle and communicate stories other than her own. She discovers the potential of rewriting history from below, and the responsibility that comes with being an artist who works as a researcher, collecting and reorganizing data to present a counternarrative.

Halabi has consistently supported the exploration of alternative narratives with inspections of the Palestinian territory. Landscape representations develop in parallel with storytelling, lending her stories credibility. This approach is evident in the film *We No Longer Prefer Mountains*, as well as in her previous works. In *We Have Always Known the Wind's Direction* (2019-20), for example, the artist collaborates with specialized scientists to investigate the possible burial of nuclear waste and its persistent radiation effects in the West Bank, thus linking an oral aspect to a visual one.

THE DRUZE COMMUNITY IN ISRAEL

We No Longer Prefer Mountains explores the current living conditions of the Druze community in Israel, examining both its past and present. The Druze are a small minority in Israel and have played an ambivalent role in the country's history, that reflects Israeli colonial enterprise. Halabi's movie elaborates on the dilemmas that continue to plague them, including identity issues, the writing of history, mandatory conscription in the Israeli army, the relationship to their land, and the ongoing confiscation and occupation of their territory.

To understand the current situation facing the Druze in Israel, it is first necessary to look at how this has developed historically. The scholar Lisa Hajjar (2000) writes that since the beginning of the colonization of Palestine, Zionist forces believed that the Druzes, whom they considered a "non-Muslim" community, would make "a good ally" and from early on they attempted to "alienate Druze (and Christian) Palestinians from (Sunni) Muslims". Historically, this strategy has been largely, but not entirely, successful. Already during the

1936-1939 Palestinian uprising¹ and during the 1948 war² the Druze community split, with some opting for neutrality, some showing solidarity with the fellow Palestinians and fighting alongside them, and others supporting the Zionist forces. These different behaviors are evident in many studies, such as the oral histories conducted by scholars Diana Allan and Rosemary Sayigh (1996)³.

Lisa Hajjar writes that "after 1948, state building in Israel included the construction of a distinct Israeli Druze identity". This meant adopting policies that would supposedly integrate the Druze into Israeli society: the army played here a pivotal role. Since 1956, Druze men have been required to enlist in the army upon reaching the age of majority⁴. The participation of Druze men in the IDF (Israeli Defence Forces) has shaped and influenced the entire community throughout the decades. Moreover, many studies show how their participation is symbolic of the Israeli strategy of *divide et impera*. Haim Bresheeth-Žabner, a scholar who served in the IDF as a youth, writes: "The Druze and Circassians serve in the most vicious IDF units such as the Border Guard and treat Palestinians in the West Bank brutally, reflecting Israel's divide and rule policy" (2020, 71).

Bresheeth-Žabner goes on to point out that after the Nation-State Bill was passed by the Knesset (Israeli parliament) in July 2018, there was much controversy and protest within the portion of the Druze community that is loyal to the IDF and the country. The law consolidated the so-called Basic Laws of Israel, quasi-constitutional laws of the State, which define Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people. Such a definition explicitly excludes all of the other communities that live in the territory and defines them as second-class citizens. Many Druze soldiers felt betrayed, while many observers ironically referred to them in their new situation as "honorary Jews", strategically used and weaponized. This definition marked a parallel to "honorary whites", an unofficial status in South Africa's apartheid regime to designate non-whites who were granted some of the privileges of whites⁵.

On the whole, the Druze community living in Israeli territory today lives a constant debate and search for identity. In the world of visual arts, there is a direct expression of this quest. Artists such as Jafra Abu Zoulouf or Fatma

1 The 1936 Arab Revolt was a popular uprising against the British administration, that asked independence and protested against the promise of the British to the Zionist organization to grant it the land and a state, contradicting previous promises of a future independent Arab country.

2 In 1948, after the failure of the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine, a war broke out, opposing a military coalition of Arab states and the Zionist forces, which were finally victorious.

3 Rosemary Sayigh writes: "In some cases, Druze villagers were generous and hospitable to the refugees, but more often it was their cool reception that gave fleeing villagers their first taste of what it would mean to be homeless and stateless". (2007, 91)

4 They are the only non-Jews in Israel to do so, together with the Circassian minoritarian community. Only Druze males join the army, while conscription for Jewish Israelis apply regardless the gender.

5 <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/2018-07-29/ty-article-opinion/.premium/the-south-african-model-make-israels-druze-honorary-jews/0000017f-dc8c-d3a5-af7f-feae3b290000>

Shanan use their work to express contemporary issues related to Druze culture. In particular, Abu Zoulouf, who was born in Daliat El Carmel (a place very much present in Halabi's film), reflects through her artistic practice on the difficulties of identifying as a Palestinian Druze in the Israeli context. Halabi's film delves into this context. It aims to shed light on the real conditions of the Druze in Israeli territory and to debunk the myth of a "privileged minority". To this end, she gives a direct voice to the Druze, showing their desire for self-determination and identity expression, and for using history as a liberating tool.

THE USE OF ORAL HISTORY IN HALABI'S FILM

In order to create a counternarrative, the first major research methodology on which *We No Longer Prefer Mountains* relies is oral history. Historian Lynn Abrams defines it as "a practical method for obtaining information about the past by means of conducting an interview" (as quoted in Thompson 2017, 132). Indeed, Halabi's film evolves through interviews with several members of the Druze community, who tell their individual stories, reflect on collective history, or illustrate specific struggles of their land.

Halabi's historiography challenges from below dominant Israeli narratives about the Druze community. This approach is reminiscent of Walter Mignolo's concept of "subalternization of knowledge" or "border thinking", which involves "absorbing and displacing hegemonic forms of knowledge into the perspective of the subaltern group" (2000, 12), in this case, the Druze. Her interviews uncover silenced voices and difficult family stories that complicate the narrative of the idyllic relationship between the Druze and the Israeli state. They also reclaim the right to self-determination and liberation from colonial power.

The interviews are set in daily-life surroundings, typically in domestic environments. This aligns with historian Alessandro Portelli's definition of oral history's task: "to search out the memories in the private, enclosed spaces of houses and kitchens – to connect them to history and in turn force history to listen to them" (as quoted in Rabah 2020, 21). They are presented as spontaneous events, capturing routine aspects of everyday life and avoiding a pre-designed televisual framework.

Halabi's work joins a growing trend among academics who are taking a similar approach to rewriting Druze history. One such example is the historian Makram Rabah, who has also made extensive use of oral history in his work. His publication titled *Conflict on Mount Lebanon: The Druze, the Maronites and Collective Memory* focuses on the historical conflict between the Druze and Maronite communities in the Mount Lebanon area. It also provides a general history of the Druze community as a contextual background.

Rabah discusses the birth of the Druze faith as a "heterodox offshoot of Isma'ili Islam" (2020, 36). This origin has historically posed a problem for members of

the Druze community, who may or may not identify as Muslim⁶, a theme also present in Halabi's film. Rabah analyses how over the centuries "the Druze, as a community, do not rely on written sources to learn about their past or to propagate their group identity. They primarily employ communal structures, as well as socioreligious elements to facilitate their group's memory formation process" (2020, 96), and quotes the few ancient historians that provide a partial view of the group's history (Salih bin Yahya's *Tārīkh Bayrūt* and Ibn Sabat's *idq al-Akhbār*).

Moreover, he emphasizes how oral history has played a crucial role in transmitting information:

The lack of written sources has forced the Druze to rely heavily on oral tradition to preserve the socio-political legacy of their ancestors. Much of the stories of Druze lineage, valour and supposed religious persecution are perpetuated through oral traditions which, at least for the Druze, carry equal or greater weight than written sources (Rabah 2020, 97).

Therefore, Rabah has decided to continue this tradition and utilize oral history as a methodology for his historiographical research.

Inas Halabi aligns with this approach. In fact, her film equally provides evidence through oral history to clarify some previously unclear historical aspects. However, if Halabi, an artist, and Rabah, a historian, share similar approaches in producing research data, their end products differ significantly. Halabi's output is an artistic essay-film, a video artwork that does not conform to the conventions of academic writing. Strict storytelling rules are not necessary to it for delivering its message, as is the case with university publications. By working visually and more freely, the artist can shape the viewer's experience as desired.

According to scholar Aline Caillet (2014, 94), a film that is based on a collection of interviews can create a "living archive" capable of recording stories that have no other archival record. This is the case in *We No Longer Prefer Mountains*. However, Halabi's interviews do not only present stories; the complex visual aspect is also a fundamental component of the artist's work. In fact, she presents the interviewees in a series of portraits, effectively creating a portrait gallery. She not only credits the words but also investigates their context and truthfulness by connecting them with the territory and traditions of the Druze

⁶ Druze community was born around XI century in Egypt, during the Fatimid caliphate of al-Hākīm bi-amrī llāh. He was a much controversial figure, full of peculiar religious beliefs, and thought he was a new Messiah. Among the theologians who refused this idea, the was Al-Darazi (from whom comes the term "Druze"). Around him and other preachers of Ismaili muslim origins, the Druze faith was born. They call themselves Ahl al-Tawhīd (People of Unitarianism) or al-Muwa'idūn (Unitarians), and have ever since struggled to identify as Muslim or not. Through the centuries, Druzes spread around the Levant region, and in the countries born after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the consequences of European colonialism (mainly Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel/Palestine). This has brought to the emergence of autonomous and sometimes disconnected communities in the different nations. (Campanini 2017)

community. In doing so, she takes on the role of an ethnographer, as we shall see.

Visually, the interviews in the film depict individuals without the use of subtitles, which is unusual in standard television documentaries. This shows a specific choice on the part of the artist. As a result, the interviewees' names, ages, and professions are not revealed. The artist is present on the screen only once. In all other instances, the interviewee is alone in front of the camera. This film establishes a metaphorical dialogue between the featured individuals and the viewers, who observe the scenes as if the questions originated from their perspective. Halabi acts as a mediator between the reality of the interviewees and that of the spectators. She creates a participative and affective dimension that extends to them. This dimension is characterized by a palpable trust that leads to the sharing of personal views, anecdotes, and objects that contain difficult memories by several members of the Druze community.

THE INTERVIEWS IN HALABI'S FILM

We No Longer Prefer Mountains presents fragmented interviews, resulting in a disjointed narrative. The interviews exclusively feature Druzes, with no input from Israeli. The latter only make brief appearances in scenes of everyday activities, such as walking a dog. Despite their infrequent appearances, they remain an omnipresent but ghostly entity, only recurring in the oral accounts. Contrapositions and contradictions are exclusive to the Druze community, and the film provides a platform for the various positions within it. Thus, the movie amplifies the voices of a frequently marginalized group, with a particular focus on critical perspectives within it. However, it does not strive for neutrality like a typical television production. While emphasizing historical facts through its research methodologies, it implicitly advocates for a militant and well-positioned viewpoint.

The initial interviewee is an elderly man who provides the viewer with valuable insights into Druze history. He maintains that the true origins of the Druze religion are rooted in Islam: "We celebrate exactly as Muslims do because we belong to Islam". He goes on to describe how the Druze people began living in mountainous regions as a means of escaping persecution in Egypt, and how their villages resemble typical Arab villages. Moreover, he introduces discusses identity issues faced by the Druze community in Israel: "What is very unfortunate is that today since around 50 years the Druze in Palestine are no longer (considered) to be Arab. They were separated via the educational system. A distinct circle was created for them. [...] They monitor us more than they monitor the Christians and Muslims". Finally, he comments on the ethnicity law (the Nation-State bill), which he believes may perpetuate the status of non-Jewish citizens as second-class.

The interview is conducted at the interviewee's residence, primarily in the living room. A soft light contours the setting, which includes photographs and small art pieces that provide insight into the owner's identity and personal

history. A particular focus is put on an old photograph of his maternal grandfather encircled by flowers, which tells the story of his family, native of Southern Lebanon from where they keep the accent in Arabic.

During the tour of a hill on Mount Carmel, we meet the second man who was interviewed while accompanying the artist. Halabi is not visible on the screen: she holds the camera from her point of view, which allows the viewer to become immersed in the scene. The man explains that the trees around, mostly pines, are not indigenous to the land like oaks or cedars, but were brought there by European Jewish settlers. After visiting the cemetery, the man discusses how the Israeli army controls the burial of former Druze militaries regardless of the circumstances of their death. They then proceed to his house, where he searches his personal archive for documents to support his story. He shares his experience of refusing military conscription and subsequently being imprisoned for two years in his youth. Finally, he reflects on the Israeli state's control over Druze education and its monitoring through recurring visits and presentations organized by the IDF.

A third man is interviewed near a water spring in the area of Umm al Shuqaf, which is a key resource for the Druze villages on Mount Carmel. He explains the history of Druze land confiscation by the Israeli state as follows: "I can share a detail with you: the state of Israel has confiscated more land from the Druze than all the Arabs living here. Look at the absurd contradiction here: Druzes who serve in the Israeli army and are loyal to the State, have their land confiscated the most". Moreover, he describes the strategy of converting land into national parks to prevent its use by the indigenous population. This procedure has been extensively studied in the field of Palestinian studies. In her research on landscape art in Palestinian art history, art historian Tina Sherwell analyzes it and writes: "The ruins of many destroyed Palestinian villages have consequently been covered over with new buildings or have been planted over with trees and transformed into public parks" (2003, 25). Implicitly therefore, Halabi's shots of the hills seem to seek out these same ghosts of the past, without finding them, leaving room for the spectators' imagination.

After presenting such viewpoints, Halabi's film also gives space to a contradictory perspective. The artist visits a Druze/Israeli courthouse to meet with a judge who will have a very different political view, one that justifies Druze participation in the IDF as the best strategy for self-defence, given their minority status. Before he speaks, he is seated in the courtroom. Halabi films him from below: the frame and its angle visually represent the authoritarian position the man is trying to take and incorporate into his message. He argues that the Druze, being a minority wherever they reside, must adhere to the rules of their host country in order to survive. In Israel, he believes that they must join the IDF to protect their community and even fight against their Druze brethren from other nations in the event of war. He states: "Druze living under Israel will be loyal to the State and serve its army".

The position presented in this interview differs greatly from those presented in other interviews and from the position of the Urfud activist group, which Halabi also depicts. Urfud provides support to Druze youth who choose not

to join the IDF when they reach the age of enlistment, even if it means risking imprisonment. The artist documents one of their meetings, during which they discuss recent events in Palestine, particularly those related to Sheikh Jerrah⁷. They are considering the possibility of focusing their discussions with young people on this topic and informing them that if they enlist, they may be asked to evict Palestinians.

The artist especially focuses on one of the activists, Maysan. She follows her and interviews her mother to learn more about her the group's activity. This interview stands out from the others because Halabi is present on screen. Maysan's mother and Halabi are seated across from each other at the kitchen table in the family's home. An arch-like opening in the wall frames the subjects, contributing to the shot's almost perfect symmetry. The composition presents the two individuals in a horizontal and non-hierarchical relationship, which is markedly different from the courtroom setting where the judge holds a monologue instead of engaging in a dialogue. The viewer witnesses a discussion in an intimate space and perceives the atmosphere of trust and care that fosters the moment of sharing delicate information. The artist puts the woman at ease while stating that she wants to listen to a 'mother's' perspective, which is often ignored.

The woman tells Halabi about the challenges Maysan faces because she identifies as a Druze Palestinian, as opposed to the many Druze who call themselves Zionists. She describes the threats they have received through anonymous phone calls, and how these have failed to deter her daughter's activism. Additionally, she expresses her relief that her other son has refused mandatory conscription.

In a second part of the interview, we see the woman while she is preparing *mh'ammār* (a traditional stuffed bread) for a meeting of Urfud's activists. She talks about it and explains the emotional bond that connects her to this recipe, that was passed down from generation to generation in her family. She says: "You asked me how I learned to make *mh'ammār* and what this food means to me. When I see *mh'ammār*, I remember my mother. This food really lives within me. It's such a big part of who I am". Throughout the interview, the artist manages to put the woman at ease. The artist records not only her words but also her habits, which are a reflection of the traditions and customs of the Druze community. Her work mirrors what scholar Edward Said referred to as a "native point of view". This term describes "a continuing, protracted, and sustained adversarial resistance to the discipline and the praxis of anthropology (as representative of 'outside' power) itself, anthropology not as textuality but as an often-direct agent of political dominance" (2012, 299). Indeed, Halabi does not present herself in her work as an external observer, which could imply a political dominance. Instead, she positions herself as an ally and participant in the struggle to preserve Druze traditions and identity through an act of resistance,

⁷ Sheikh Jarrah is a neighborhood in East Jerusalem which has gained much visibility both locally and internationally in recent years for the violent evictions of Palestinian families from their homes made by the Israeli government and army.

or *sumud*⁸, expressed in this case through food, cooking, and communal eating.

One additional important aspect to mention in Halabi's oral history research is a radio program that is occasionally broadcast during the movie. The program is an open mic show aimed at discussing a possible strike in Israel by the Palestinian community to protest against the daily discrimination it suffers. The program serves as a tool to amplify silenced stories, much like the accompanying music. It provides a platform for the Palestinian community to express themselves and discuss ways to send a message against oppression. This is a further demonstration of how the artist created a safe space in the film where people felt comfortable sharing their ideas, perspectives, and difficult stories with the audience.

FUKEIRON: RESEARCH PRACTICES IN THE LANDSCAPE

Beyond private and intimate spaces, with their individual family histories and domestic rituals, *We No Longer Prefer Mountains* also includes landscape and public spaces. The oral history methodology and landscape portrayal complement each other, as the recorded stories find visual representation and evidence in the accompanying images. The artist was inspired by a precise methodology for her landscape shots: the *fukeiron*. *Fukeiron*, translatable as "theory of landscape" or "landscape theory", is "a film discourse that emerged at the end of the 1960s in Japan" (Furuhata 2007, 345). There is a 60-year gap between the original contest and the use of some of its dictates by the Palestinian artist. Despite this, there are some intriguing similarities between Halabi's film and the *fukeiron* originals.

Matsuda Masao, Masao Adachi, Hara Masataka, and photographer Nakahira Takuma are among the main theorists of the *fukeiron* discourse. Their practice is situated within a specific period of transformation in post-war Japan, during which the economy and society underwent significant changes, such as the "economic shift from industrial to postindustrial consumer capitalism" (Furuhata 2007, 347). Additionally, it is connected to the transformations in the Japanese left and new considerations of "political resistance and subjectivity" (Furuhata 2007, 347). In this context, scholar Yuriko Furuhata notes that directors who followed the precepts of *fukeiron* opted to depict state repression not through scenes of violence, such as police brutality, but by focusing on the landscape as an "embodiment of the governing power of the state" (2013, 137). In his words (Furuhata, 2013, 139): "these *fūkeiron* critics turned their focus away from the spectacle of violence to the underlying conditions of such violence", opting for a new imagery that would "radically reimagine state power at a time when images

⁸ Scholar Hoda El Shakry describes *sumud* as follows: "generally understood as a mode of non-violent protest or resistance, *sumud* often carries the connotation of everyday survival, endurance, and resilience" (2021, 4).

of police violence and militant protests were saturating the mass media and limiting the political imagination of the public". Commenting on films like *A.K.A. Serial Killer* (Masao Adachi, 1975) or *The Man Who Left His Will on Film* (Nagisa Ōshima, 1970), Furuhta writes that "by focusing on eventless landscapes", these movies "reorient our attention, directing it away from spectacular sights of physical conflict and dramatic action toward nonspectacular elements of the urban environment" (Furuhata, 2013, 139).

Halabi's film fits into a completely different context than the original *fukeiron*'s, but it still highlights some interesting continuities. The study of the landscape is situated within a political context of oppression and occupation, which is intensified by the law of ethnicity. These changes and intensification of the oppression also affect the left, similarly to the Japanese context. This is evident in the activities of the Urfud group, an explicitly leftist group, which seeks to respond to the escalation of Israeli occupation policies. However, like the original *fukeiron* films, Halabi refrains from depicting violence on her screen, even though it would be easy to accompany the stories, such as those about what happens in Sheikh Jarrah, with graphic images that are constantly prevalent throughout Palestine.

Similar to the Japanese films, the camera is turned towards seemingly "eventless landscapes". However, these landscapes are not truly without events, as they conceal signs of political power and continuous control. Art historian W.J.T. Mitchell (2002, 17) describes such signs as "semiotic features of landscape" in his study on the relationship between landscape art and imperialism. Halabi brings these features to light while transitioning between natural and urban landscapes.

Regarding the former, the artist focuses on the landscape surrounding Mount Carmel, where the majority of the Druze villages is located. The artist captures footage of unpaved roads, trails, trees, and hills. In the background, we hear stories of Palestinian villages destroyed and covered with vegetation. The movie provides visual evidence to these stories by showing the same vegetation. The screen displays a mountain that is often referred to as a historical refuge by interviewees. It has now become a symbol of a new insurrection by a resisting part of the Druze community. The landscape also shows clear signs of Israeli occupation, including markers indicating a military zone or national park, both of which signify land confiscation. These markers are accompanied by various fences and barriers, all of which are documented in Halabi's film.

The artist's camera also seeks out signs of political power that are explicitly present in the urban landscape. In the streets of Druze villages, in addition to various posters advertising careers in the Israeli army, a special attention is given to Israeli flags, which are prominently displayed. The flags can be seen near houses, shops, and in the middle of roundabouts. They are often placed next to the colorful Druze flag. They stand as the most powerful symbol of the on-going colonizing process, which entails the expropriation of the land and the divide-et-impera strategy. They even penetrate religious sites. The movie shows one such example with the shrine of Nabi Shueyb ("prophet Shueyb"), an important pilgrimage place for Druze people. Flags and banners with the Israeli

colors as shown in the movie circle the temple, and representing the difficult and controversial situation of the Druze community in the country. According to an interviewee, the Druze military once used it for their oath ritual towards the IDF and the Israeli state. Additionally, we hear before 1948, when the borders with neighboring countries were open, Druzes from the region used to go there during religious holidays.

To create such representations of the landscape, Halabi employs various strategies in the film. On the one hand, she often walks through the land holding the camera with her hand, which occasionally results in shaky shots. The lens serves as the artist's and spectators' eye likewise, allowing the latter to relive the artist's journey. She walks and captures panoramic shots, with long sequences, sometimes slow, in both day and night light, aiming to include as many details as possible. On the other hand, some scenes are framed from a car window, providing an alternative speed to the exploration. This film's mixed use of landscape framing is reminiscent of classic fukeiron films, such as Masao Adachi's film *AKA Serial Killer*. Like Halabi's movie, *AKA Serial Killer* interweaves static scenes with panoramic shots taken from a car, giving a unique perspective on urban landscapes, roads, and the signs that populate them.

WE NO LONGER PREFER MOUNTAINS IN THE TRADITION OF PALESTINIAN LANDSCAPE ART

In addition to the continuity with fukeiron, Halabi's film also draws from the tradition of Palestinian landscape art. When discussing landscape representation in the Palestinian context, one of the most authoritative sources is the writings of scholar Tina Sherwell. She writes that starting from 1948 "landscape came to dominate Palestinian art, as it was conceived as the locus of Palestinian identity" (2001, 164). In her studies, Sherwell has extensively explored the representation of villages, which is also a prominent element in Halabi's film. She delves into the origins of this subject by examining the work of some pioneers of modern Palestinian art and the history of the "representations of the village found in popular images" that also influence them (2003, 148). Here, she explains, the villages "are generalized and are not usually depictions of any specific locale" (2003, 149). She goes on to write that "the generalized images come to stand for every village and, by analogy, Palestine", thus providing "a way of imaging the nation - Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community'" (Ibidem). Therefore, she finds and describes these characteristics in the work of artists such as Nabil Anani, Taleb Dweik, or Sliman Mansour. Halabi's film marks a difference with this tradition of the representation of urban landscapes. With the use of the camera, which refers to a type of ethnography "from a native point of view", she immerses herself in the reality of the Druze villages, not reproducing that representation "from a distance" and "free from the influence of the modern

landscape of Israel", as Sherwell (2003, 152) writes when describing the work of artists Khalil Rayan and Ibrahim Hijazi. Halabi explores the current reality in the villages, highlighting both the Druze-Palestinian identity and the effects of Israeli occupation. This is in line with Ariella Azoulay's study on the Nakba and the transformation of Palestinian villages after 1948, which refers to the "différend" (2001, 15) — a term borrowed from philosopher Jean-François Lyotard — to describe the gap between these two elements. For this reason, her representations are closer to the recent series of paintings by the Palestinian artist Khaled Hourani titled *Unnatural landscape* (2020), where the Palestinian landscapes, with its traditional features, are disrupted by elements such as the apartheid's walls and the watch towers.

Halabi's representation does not have a nostalgic character, lost in time. It fits into the present, looks at traditions and the territory as something alive. The landscape becomes a "practiced space", to use an expression of the philosopher Michel de Certeau (1984, 124), or a "site activated by movements, actions, narratives and signs" (Mitchell 2002, 265). The daily rituals that Halabi films, from a walk to taking care of the pomegranate fields, become ways for the Druzes to practice an identity that does not give up, that resists the authority of the Israeli occupation "who expect them to dance at Independence Day celebrations in the forests that had been planted on the ruins of their villages", to use Azoulay's words again (2011, 17). The artist herself participates in these strategies of being in the landscape. She hikes, travels around both by foot and by cars, recording her actions in long sequences. She actively engages in the reclamation of the territory and involves the viewer in this process through point-of-view shooting.

CONCLUSIONS

As observed in the analysis, Inas Halabi's film *We No Longer Prefer Mountains* presents a different viewpoint on the Druze community living in Israel. It challenges the dominant narrative that portrays the community as unconditionally loyal to the state and its army. Using the methodology of oral history, the artist collected data on the origins and historical development of the Druze in the territory by interviewing various community members in different villages on Mount Carmel. This work is in continuity with that of scholars such as Lisa Hajjar or Makram Rabah who have also studied the topic, demonstrating Halabi's aptitude as an artist-researcher.

The artist takes a historiographical approach from a non-hegemonic perspective, giving voice to various members of the Druze community who oppose a particular type of historical framing that they have experienced. While she gives space to conflicting voices within the community, she also delves into the activity of a group of activists like Urfud, who work to mobilize the community in resistance to occupation and oppression.

Using the second methodology, inspired by the fukeiron theory of landscape that originated in Japan in the late 1960s, the artist searches for signs of Israeli

oppression in the landscape, thus confirming what was heard in her stories. Similar to the Japanese directors of the past, her aim is to study the presence of authoritarian power in the natural environment without reproducing the scenes of violence that saturate the Palestinians' present, which remain present only in stories. The seemingly "eventless landscape" bears witness to this violence. Additionally, it fits into the history and tradition of landscape art in the Palestinian context. The landscape is depicted as a space that is utilized and activated by its inhabitants in their daily lives, serving as a form of resistance. The artist actively participates in this struggle, positioning herself as an ally and contributor to the Druze struggle.

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