

ANIMALS' NIGHTMARE

The world is not being built for people; in fact, it seems that people are being forgotten.

We forget that people are beings that dream, believe, and feel.

Who want to be happy. Being able to dream is not seen as a right, but rather an unattainable extravagance.

And because time is universal, these questions are the same all over the world.

I want to go where things have been upside down for a long time. My research led me to the Middle East.

I wanted to know what moves an artist, a creator, from that part of the world. Where do they find the strength, what motivates someone who has lived with war from birth?

Are their concerns the same? They almost certainly are not.

I took the inspiration for my work from a chapter of Suad Amiry's novel Nothing to Lose But Your Life -

ANIMAL'S NIGHTMARE. Suad is a Palestinian architect; writer, artist and someone who resists.

In Nothing to Lose But Your Life she accompanies a group of people on their journey to work.

A journey that should take a few minutes but takes 18 hours. It is a portrait of the daily life of a Palestinian worker.

This trip that could take 18 minutes sometimes takes lives - the lives of workers on their way to work.

In one of the chapters in Suad's ANIMAL'S NIGHTMARE, animals go to Al Gore seeking justice.

We the members of the fauna and flora of Palestine before God call on Al Gore, and all nature lovers, to intervene on our behalf.

By constructing this monster[segregation wall], mankind has violated all international environmental conventions and caused unprecedented damage:

Destroyed our natural habitats

Blocked our natural paths above and below ground

Demolished our nesting places and trees, caves and sub-terrains, separated us from our loved ones on the other side of the wall.

Deprived us of our livelihoods and our grazing grounds

Resulting in the extinction of a few rare species

We the undersigned have talked prayed and begged God so many times.

He once sent a secret message that read: I apologize for not being able to address this very sensitive issue.

I can't do much about your suffering

in my Holy Land, at least not in this life cycle but perhaps in another.

His sorrowful words made many of us despair and commit suicide.

This exhibition is the result of both intense literary research and, above all, my own experience.

I went to the West Bank with a grant from the José Saramago Foundation and was there in June and July 2014

as the artist in residence at the Qattan Foundation in Ramallah. They were two difficult months for Palestine. More than 2100 people died in an attack on Gaza. Because I was there, because I was so close, I saw and felt it.

I experienced the harshness. The importance of solidarity.

I felt the pain of turning my back. I was certain the world is a small place.

Animals' Nightmare it is an exhibition about Palestine. It is an exhibition about resistance. It is a project about being an artist today and resisting. In my work, I have Suad's animals and people banging into the wall. The wall blocks them all.

The questions I asked are unanswerable: what pushes them on?

I thought I could answer that. I can't. I can't because I don't live in Palestine, I am not a Palestinian and because I will always be looking in from the outside. Nevertheless, the further I go in my work the closer I feel.

But closer doesn't mean being inside; it means I feel closer to knowing that I will always be an outsider.

I learned that from the outside, I could do something.

Alentejo, the Mediterranean, the olive trees, the heat, the people, the whole landscape seems to me so similar, so close to Palestine, that I felt I should unite them.

With this exhibition, I have brought a little of Palestine to Portugal.

Perhaps I can share a little of what is happening in Palestine today.

The exhibition is not intended to be any sort of political declaration. It is my declaration as an artist.

It is what I saw, what I felt; it is what I know how to do.

Joana Villaverde

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Music: Recorded with my iphone Nabeel Al Raei, Noor Al Raei, Jenin em July 2014

with the help from:



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for the opening :



& Abreu Calado