

# ARTIST OF THE MONTH

## Tanya Habjouqa

### Documenting Unusual Forms of Resistance



"When war, colonialism, or extreme political violence become the scaffolding of everyday life, photojournalism emerges as the most prevalent document recording the enormity of the prevailing conditions.

... Without this work, we would not be able to imagine the vastness of the system of control the Israeli military uses to discipline Palestinians; ... the moment of conflict, of violent collision, of loss, would remain anemically verbal. That so frequently the occupied Palestinian territories are subjected to curfews and closures, to enforced invisibility behind walls and detention centers and security zones, reinforces the necessity of making politics visible through images and news items.... But photojournalism, though necessary, is not sufficient. We also need imagery that captures the poetry of everyday life... We need the fleeting wash of pleasure to color our memories in the interstices of devastation, ruination, and grief. We need to remember laughter too, the exhilaration of evanescent triumphs, fugitive joys. We need to remember

*A family in Gaza City enjoys a picnic on the beach, one of the few options left to most families in Gaza unable to escape the siege, 2009.*



*A young lady, from Zataara village, finds a quiet corner in the mountains to practice yoga. Some of the Yoga practitioners say they try to access one popular spot with Roman ruins that Israeli settlers try to intimidate Palestinians from visiting. They call it, "inner resistance".*

people embodied in their flesh and not just reflected through the lens of news, or prejudice, or stereotype. We need supple bodies, bodies bent in joy, or in work, or expanded at rest, but not dead and bloodied."

These excerpts from the introduction to Tanya Habjouqa's book *Occupied Pleasures*, written by Dr. Laleh Khalili, professor at SOAS, London, eloquently

describe the work of Tanya Habjouqa.

With a background in anthropology and an MA in political communications and Mideast politics, Tanya Habjouqa is an award-winning photographer, journalist, and educator whose work explores issues related to gender, representations of otherness, dispossession, and human rights. Born to a Circassian-Jordanian father and an American mother, Habjouqa

*The Palestinian Girl Scouts of Ramallah at band practice.*

*Faiza (symbols) and her family left Gaza after Israeli military incursions of last summer. Her family said 'enough'. Founded in 1912, the scouts are a long respected Palestinian institution and their charter "accepts all diversity of Palestinians, to promote values in creating a better world." The girls were on cusp of making their own rock and roll all girl band.*







Gazan body builders jovially strike poses after a workout, 2013.

was raised in Texas. Having spent her summers in Jordan, she moved there as a teenager at the time of the 1991 Gulf war. In an interview with Nina Rothe, she remembers, “I [had been] a rebellious Texas teen. Within days ... I was a teen in Jordan, witnessing outrage and a sense of injustice and street protests against war. And, before the internet and satellite, because of proximity I had access to four countries’ news framing of that war. Distinctly, absurdly different.”

In the same interview, she speaks about the deep responsibility she feels when she creates work and sends it out into the world. “How am I framing the people whose story I tell? Will they recognize themselves in it? Am I being respectful? Simultaneously, am I being critical? Am I telling this in a way that can capture the attention of the “West” and give them a second look?”

Tanya Habjouqa’s *Occupied Pleasures*

*West Bank: After grueling traffic at the Qalandia checkpoint, a young man enjoys a cigarette in his car as traffic finally clears on the last evening of Ramadan. He is bringing home a sheep for the upcoming Eid celebration. He named the sheep Morsi, referring to the recently-deposed president of Egypt at that time, 2013.*



Sabah Abu Ghanem, 14, waits for a wave on a slow surf day. Gaza, 2013

includes original poetry by Najwan Darwish and is listed among the top 100 photo books of 2015 by both *Time Magazine* and *Smithsonian*. Her inspiration came while working on a series that documented women in Gaza in 2009. Looking for a woman who had come through a tunnel to marry, she only found the husband, an utter romantic, telling her, “There she was in her white dress in the dark, with dust crumbling in her hair. She was terrified and trembling

and it was like a Bollywood movie; I ran to her and kissed her.” The idea for her new book was born when he somberly added, “Despite this occupation, we will always find a way to live and love. And maybe even laugh.” The result is a nuanced, multi-dimensional portrayal of humanity’s ability to find pleasure – in itself a form of resistance – in the face of trying circumstances, rather than in their absence.

*A woman in Gaza, without a travel permit, passes through the silent dark of an underground tunnel on her way to a party in Egypt, carrying a bouquet of flowers, 2013.*

