

MUSEUM REVIEW

Mahmoud Darwish Museum

By Sameh Khader



"If the Olive trees knew the hands that planted them, their Oil would become Tears."

The Olive Tree, by Mahmoud Darwish

Mahmoud Darwish, the man and the poet, exuded the homeland; freedom became his subject and his angst. He assigned poetry and creativity their rightful place in defining the features of Palestinian national identity, culture, and aspirations.

The Mahmoud Darwish Museum was established as an expression of appreciation and dedication to the great poet from the Palestinian people and artists.

What distinguishes Mahmoud Darwish Museum from other museums?

Mahmoud Darwish's tomb is located between the museum and the Galilee Hall in an architectural masterpiece that combines tradition and modernity, reflecting the unique beauty of Palestine

and its history. Moreover, the museum features some of the poet's belongings, including original manuscripts, images of book-covers of poetry published in various languages, a desk that was with him in Paris, Amman, and Ramallah, a coffee pot and cup, a backgammon set, an inkwell and pens, awards and medals displayed on an Al-Birwa clay wall, and a collection of photos from various stages of his life.

Mahmoud Darwish's overwhelming presence can be felt in every corner of the museum, with his voice resounding through the space, and walls decorated with passages from his poetry written in embossed Arabic letters.

What is the profound message that the Mahmoud Darwish Museum intends to deliver to the world?

The museum seeks to safeguard Mahmoud Darwish's cultural, literary, and intellectual legacy, and promote

his noble values: the love he had for his homeland, his deep respect for human dignity, and his utter veneration of life. The museum also aims to reinforce his enlightened vision and authentic expression of the Palestinian cause, with all its humanitarian dimensions.

Various activities and events – artistic, cultural, literary and musical – are in place to connect the museum to the Arab and international world. The museum aims to develop the cultural scene in Palestine, thus providing an avenue for Palestinians to present their intellectual, literary, and artistic creations to the Palestinian public, and to give the Palestinian public an opportunity to see the most prominent intellectual and cultural productions of creative Arabs. The museum has already hosted many musicians, novelists, writers, painters and artists – Palestinians, other Arabs, and foreigners.

Museum activities

Wednesday cinema project: This is a joint project between the museum and the Shayeb Group. The project is based on screening distinctive, popularly acclaimed movies every Wednesday. It aims to enhance and promote cinema in Palestine, by making quality films a weekly habit for Palestinians.

Book launchings and signings: For example, *Beyond the Body*, by Palestinian poet Mervat Jooma, *Not Done with Life Yet*, by Palestinian poet Wafa Darwish.

Poetry evenings: For example, the Palestinian-French poetry evening entitled "Import and Export" in the presence of Palestinian poets Bashir Shalash, Zuhair Abu Chaib, and Ghassan Zaqtan, and French poets Jean Duff and Jean-Charles DePaul.

Art exhibitions: For example, *Realistic Shadows 2* by Palestinian artist Areej Lawen from Nazareth; a cartoon exhibition, *We Draw for Gaza* (which was attended by nearly 100 international cartoonists), in cooperation with Ramallah Municipality, to shed light on the brutal Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip and the impact of the recent war against Palestinian civilians, especially children.

Music concerts: For example, The Lovers of Sheikh Imam Troupe and Baladi Ensemble, in cooperation with the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music.

Cultural symposia: For example, "The End of Literature: Community and Resistance," with the Spanish author Fernando Ramperez Alcolea.

