



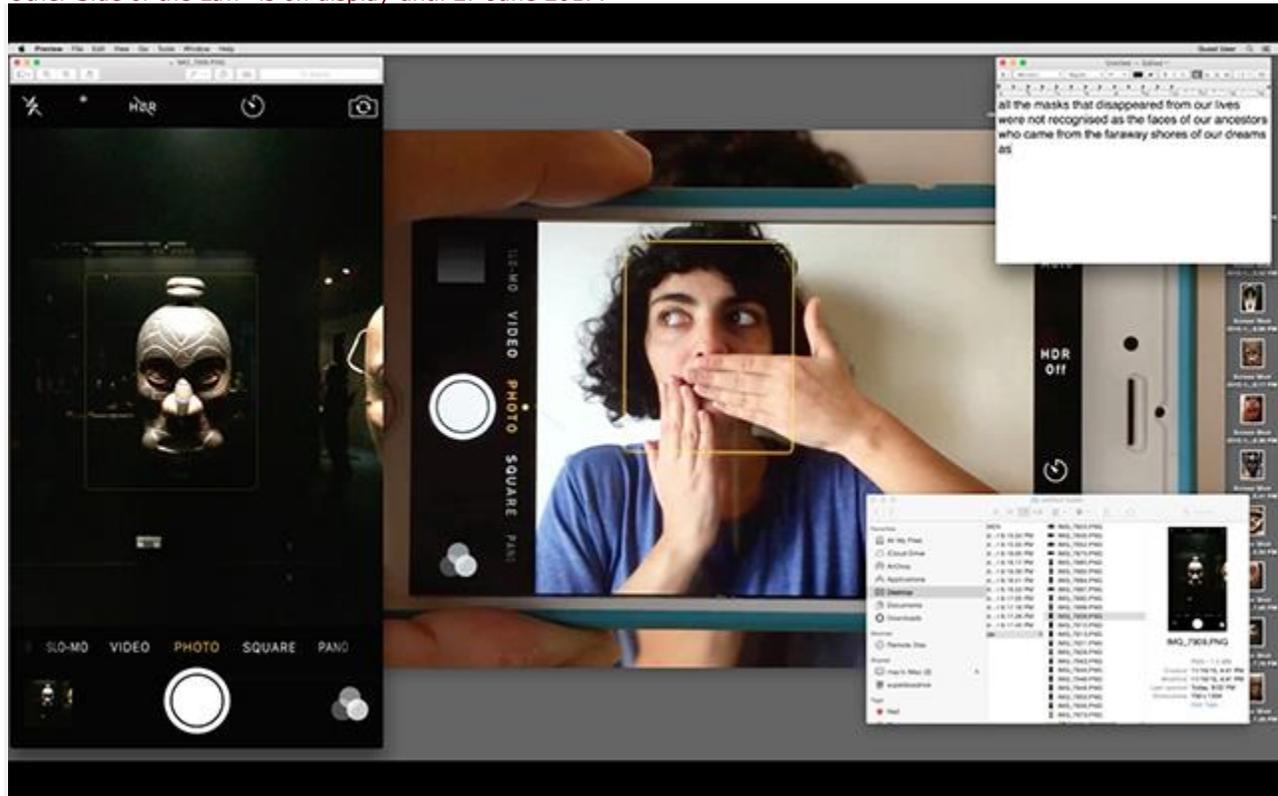
## “On the Other Side of the Law”: Palestinian artist Yazan Khalili at Lawrie Shabibi, Dubai

Posted on 30/05/2017

5 Votes

### Palestinian artist Yazan Khalili re-politicises conceptual art strategies at Lawrie Shabibi.

Palestinian artist Yazan Khalili presents newly commissioned works at Dubai-based gallery Lawrie Shabibi. “On the Other Side of the Law” is on display until 27 June 2017.



Yazan Khalili, 'Hiding Our Faces Like A Dancing Wind (Still 4)', 2016, video, 7min:30sec, mute. Image courtesy Lawrie Shabibi and the artist.

Palestinian artist **Yazan Khalili** is one of a cohort of politicised artists, architects and designers to emerge from Goldsmith University's Research Architecture Programme directed by rebel architect **Eyal Weizman** (other graduates include **Lawrence Abu Hamdan**). The works in his current exhibition at Dubai's **Lawrie Shabibi** Gallery bear the stamp of the school and the graduating student's impetus to intervene into universal

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discourse of human rights. The art projects by the Programme's pupils aim to educate audiences about the various techno-scientific manipulations of the law and justice system employed by authoritarian regimes. Using art to point to the failures of the legal system or the hypocrisy of humanitarian discourse is at the forefront of the Research Architecture art practices. **"On the Other Side of the Law"**, Yazan Khalili's first solo exhibition in Dubai, follows suit in visibilising the fine line between taking advantage of loop holes in the law and universal notions of justice in the highly contested contexts of settler colonialism. In a series of newly commissioned works, Khalili examines how the systems of law and notions of justice have been made extremely flexible to the point of dissolution by the use of high technology and manipulative public policies in certain contexts.



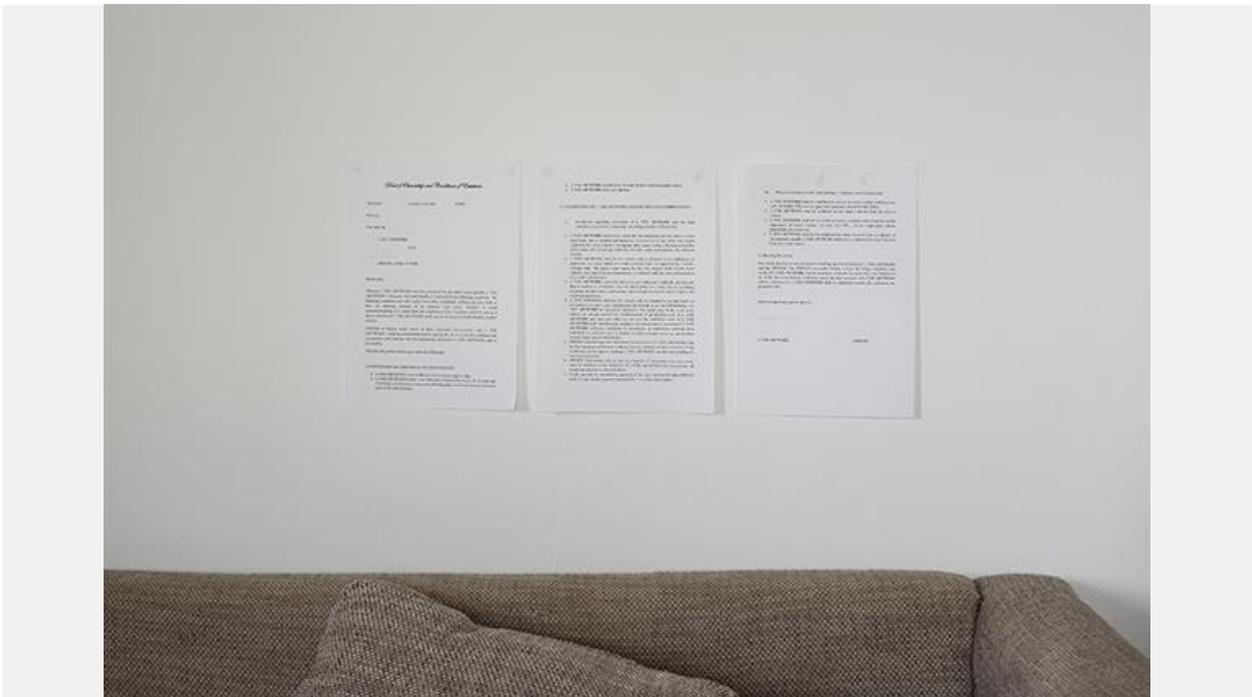
Yazan Khalili, 'Robbery in Area A', 2013-16, video still from three-channel video installation. Image courtesy Lawrie Shabibi and the artist.

For example, Khalili's three-channel video installation *Robbery in Area A* (2013-16) departs from a bank robbery that took place in Ramallah – a city that after the Oslo Accords agreement in 1993 became part of Area A. By dividing the West Bank into Areas A, B and C, the peace agreement allowed for a new economy to emerge and establish itself on banking systems, loans and neo-liberal structures. The video installation partly examines how geopolitics was exploited by thieves to plan the successful robbery.

In *Robbery in Area A*, Khalili points towards a whole series of cases – from the clearly defined criminal to others in which the criminal may be a state official – in which the colonial conflict in Palestine is being used by a number of individual, corporate and state agents for their own financial benefit. The work also explores how the division of neighbourhoods and land creates new conditions for action. Ultimately the viewer is unsure whether this "robbery" is an act of criminality or an act of resistance.



Installation view of Yazan Khalili's solo exhibition "On the Other Side of the Law", 2017. Image courtesy Lawrie Shabibi and the artist.



Yazan Khalili, 'I, The Artwork', 2016, photograph printed on photographic paper, 79.2 x 120 cm. Image courtesy Lawrie Shabibi and the artist.

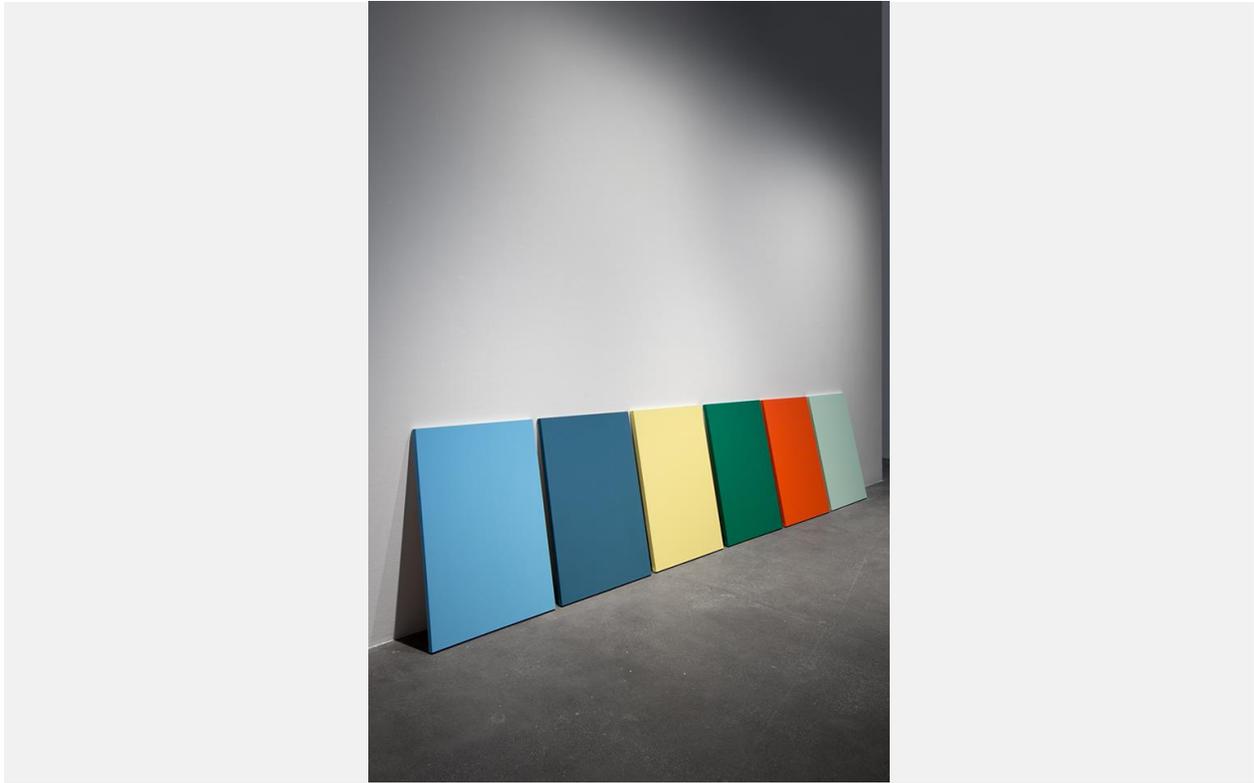
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In *I, The Artwork* (2016), Khalili turns his critical gaze towards the infrastructure of the art world in a work designed to make visible the nature of producing, buying and selling work. Concerned with the question of whether an artwork can dictate its own conditions of existence and exhibition, Khalili worked with a lawyer to draft a contract through which the artwork itself determines its "Deed of Ownership and Condition of Existence". With the phrase "I, The Artwork", Khalili vested the contract – exhibited as a photograph – with corporate personhood, assigning to it the moral rights usually held by an author. Viewers can reconstruct the deeper question that perhaps lies behind seemingly playful art world commentary. With *I, the Artwork* Khalili asks what the legal conditions for basic self-determination are – a question absolutely key to questions around Palestinian human and civil rights.



Yazan Khalili, 'Regarding Distance', 2010, diptych, 35 mm negative, 69 x 100 cm (each). Image courtesy Lawrie Shabibi and the artist.

In *Regarding Distance* (2010), a diptych of two photographs, Khalili explores the relationship between territory and its representation. One photo depicts a picture of the Dome of the Rock that is most commonly hung throughout Palestine (in this instance it hangs in a classroom) so that the image of Jerusalem reduces the whole city to that of the golden dome. The other shows a remote view of its golden dome seen from the only spot from where green ID card holders can see it with their bare eyes. Khalili confronts the reality of the situation for the post-second-Intifada generation who grew up without the possibility of ever visiting the city whilst at the same time experiencing it through a copied image.



Yazan Khalili, 'Apartheid Monochromes', 2017, acrylic on canvas, set of 6 canvases, 100 x 70 cm (each).  
Image courtesy Lawrie Shabibi and the artist.

In "On the Other Side of the Law", Khalili also makes cogent links and critiques of the relationship between global visuality in the art world and colonial systems of codification of nationality, class, race and gender. *Apartheid Monochromes* (2017) is a set of painted canvases that highlight the perversion of mandatory, state-issued identification cards and their bearing on the everyday lives of Palestinians. Introduced by Israel in 1949, the ID cards are classified into different colours that depend on the identity of their holder – itself based on a complex set of rules around birthplace and/or residence. Hence the colour of an ID card very much determines the political, economic and social life of its holder. The ID card becomes a low-tech means of dividing and monitoring enforced by the Israeli regime. The canvases reference Yves Klein's monochromes and come in the various exact colours of the ID cards bringing into focus divisions of identity, race, borders and citizenship.



Bruce Nauman, 'White Anger, Red Danger, Yellow Peril, Black Death', 1984, acrylic, pastel, pencil and collage on paper, 80 7/8 x 85 1/2 in. Gift of Mr and Mrs Lewis Manilow, 1985.52. © 2016 Bruce Nauman / Image courtesy Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

The work echoes early conceptual artworks, such as Bruce Nauman's 1984 sketch work *White Anger, Red Danger, Yellow Peril, Black Death*, in which the artist seeks to bring to the surface the unconscious associations between a given colour and a meaning. The work critiques the social and political construction of links between colour and meaning, especially, as the work explores, when that meaning may provoke strong emotions designed to maintain the social order.

By focusing on the ID card, and denaturalising its use of colour coding, Khalili grounds such abstract conceptual debates in a geo-political reality and links conceptual artists' critique of the links established between colour and meaning to current systems of codification of identity. This is what makes the Research Architecture graduates and others of their generation particularly interesting: they are rooting the global coherency of conceptual art strategies in local contexts, offering possible models for the repoliticisation of conceptual art.

**Rebecca Close**