

**BROKEN, TAKEN,
ERASED, TALLIED**

JUMANA

MANNA



Broken, Taken, Erased, Tallied brings together recent film, sculpture and works on paper from Jumana Manna's multi-disciplinary practice to explore the paradoxical effects of preservation practices in agriculture, science, and the law.

In Manna's films and sculptures, food, plants and seeds are primary subjects. Her latest film *Foragers*, moves between documentary and fiction to chronicle confrontations between Palestinian pickers of the wild growing herbs "*akkoub and za'atar* and the Israeli Nature Protection Authority, which has deemed the plants endangered. The foragers' refusal and the punishments they face — large fines, police interrogations, and potential jail time — takes on an absurdist and comical tone. Following the plants and their pickers from the wild to the kitchen, and to their courtroom defenses, *Foragers* captures the joy and knowledge embodied in these traditions alongside

their resilience to the prohibitive law. By reframing the terms and constraints of preservation, the film raises key questions around the politics of extinction — namely who determines what gets to live on and how.

On view in the central space of Rialto6 is *Cache* (2019), a metal shelf with ceramic sculptures. These shapes are inspired by the remains of *khabyas*, structures for grain storage that were built into rural homes in the Levant, and have become obsolete with the advent of refrigeration. Positioned as fragments transported from their architectural context onto gridded metal shelves, this installation evokes urban infrastructures as well as storages facilities reminiscent of seed banks or museum vaults. *Cache* considers the transformation of system of storage and knowledge from cyclical practices of subsistence to centralised economies of capital growth.

The sculptural installations *Water Arms* (2018) and *Old Bread International II* (2023) resemble objects associated with residues, including ceramic drainpipes and rotting bread, connecting the built environment with the human body, labour and everyday life. The Water-Arm series propose bodies as infrastructure in an intentional dysfunctional and incomplete system, while *Old Bread* considers the web of guilt and generosity that arises from the excesses of urban life.

This installation mimics a common sight found in cities and towns across the Mediterranean: along ledges or beside trash bins, uneaten bread is laid out as an offering to be taken, consumed, or grow stale and rot. Acting from religious belief that bread is a signifier of life and therefore not to be wasted, the leftover bread is “gifted” to unknown receivers. By starting with the process of decay as a part of life, these work speaks of Manna’s interest in sites of

ruination and decomposition that fall outside conventional historical narratives of preservation.

In *The Cleaning Collages*, Manna renders imaginary landscapes from cut-up labels of home cleaning products, such as detergents, dishwashing soap, and window cleaners. Evoking bright and idealized depictions of nature, their compositions reference classical Western still-life and landscape paintings. They offer impoverished copies of the fantasies of purity often embedded in generic pastoral scenes.

Throughout the duration of the exhibition, there will be special screenings of the artist's films, which explore themes of preservation and archiving — of vernacular traditions (*A Magical Substance Flows Into Me*, 2016) and of seeds (*Wild Relatives*, 2018). In the latter, Manna delves into the Svalbard Global Seed Vault in the Arctic, known as doomsday vault, which serves as

long-term storage for duplicates of seeds to safeguard crop diversity. Following the outbreak of the revolution turned war in Syria, the local branch of this international agricultural research network was forced to relocate from Aleppo, Syria to the Bekaa Valley, in Lebanon, and to retrieve its back-up seeds from Svalbard to rejuvenate its stock. At the margins of these industrial preservation efforts, *Wild Relatives* redirects the viewer to grassroots efforts of seed saving and seed sharing, the unrecognised work of farmers-made-refugees and of the earth-worm, without which crops would not thrive.

In *A Magical Substance Flows Into Me* (2016) Manna traces the path of Robert Lachmann, a German-Jewish ethnomusicologist who left Germany with the rise of the Nazis and emigrated to Jerusalem. There, he sought to create an archive of “Oriental Music” at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and directed a radio show

for the Palestine Broadcasting Service, the state-owned broadcasting station of British-occupied Palestine. The show was short lived, lasting from November 1936 to April 1937. Lachmann's archives of musical diasporas representing the region's vernacular, sat uncomfortably with rising binaries. They still do, as Manna's film makes palpable by visiting Kurdish, Moroccan and Yemenite Jews (now Mizrahi Israelis), Palestinian Samaritans, Bedouins, Coptic Christians, Palestinian villagers and urbanites, inviting them to perform the genres of music Lachmann featured on his radio program. We hear of a Moroccan-Jewish grandmother who could never let go of the Arab identity, Israel forced her to relinquish. A Coptic priest blesses the artist and her crew. But the film does not gloss over contradictions. In the office of a Kurdish-Israeli musician whose day-job is land surveyor for the occupation we can see a "Table of Land Expropriation According to Plan 4558." Music

can transcend intractable difference. It can also just live with it. To say that “things are complex” is at times a banal utterance, at times a rhetoric dismissal, deployed to diminish calls for justice, reparations or at least a response. But things are indeed complex, though often not the things we are told so.

Through these films and the diverse works on view, Manna’s works explore the land and its rhythms as foundational to ways of life that also resist, evade, and transform hegemonic power structures. While considering the politics of witnessing and chronicling of events, the artist does not simply document the intersections of collective history and personal biography. Instead her films and make room for the speculative, the idiosyncratic and the theatrical to challenge or circumvent dominant narratives and ossified ideological tropes.

Biography:

Jumana Manna is a Palestinian artist and filmmaker based in Berlin and Jerusalem. Recent solo exhibitions include *Break, Take, Erase, Tally*, that toured to Kunsthall Stavanger and Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus from MoMA PS1, New York (2022–2024); *Preservation Paradox*, Madero Madrid (2022); *Sketch and Bread*, Balade Berlin-Charlottenburg, Villa Oppenheim, Berlin and *Thirty Plumbers in the Belly, M HKA* – Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp (2021); *Wild Relatives*, Tensta Kunsthall, Sweden (2020); *Jumana Manna*, Tabakalera, San Sebastian, Spain (2019); *Wild Relatives*, Jeu de Paume (2018); *A Magical Substance Flows Into Me*, Chisenhale Gallery, London (2015); and *Menace of Origins*, SculptureCenter, New York (2014). She has participated in numerous significant group exhibitions, biennales and film festivals, and her work is held in public and private collections including MoMA, New York; MCA Chicago;

Centre Pompidou, Paris; Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-On-Hudson; Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin; Carre d'art, Nîmes, France; National Museum of Norway, Oslo; and Sharjah Art Foundation, UAE.

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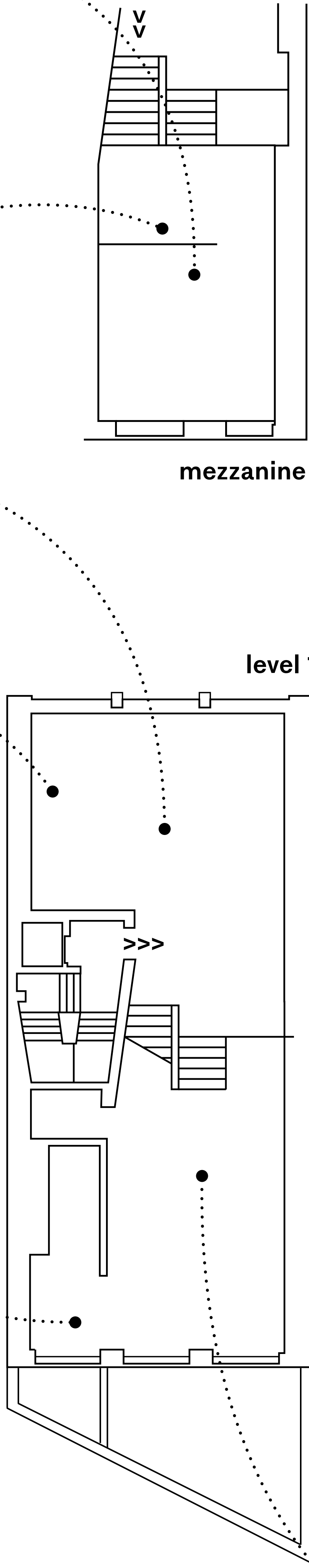
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mezzanine

level 1

1.
Cache
2019
Ceramics, tadelakt, aluminium shelving unit, steel grates
220.0 x 328.0 x 70.0 cm

2.
Water Arm (I and II)
2018
Ceramic, lime, metal grid

3.
Old Bread International II
2023
Ceramic, plastic bags, newspapers
Dimensions variable

4.
Still life with an Orange and a Vase
2023
Collage on paper from cleaning product labels
21.0 x 29.7 cm

5.
Still Life with a Bouquet of Flowers
2018
Collage on paper from cleaning product labels
29.7 x 21.0 cm

6.
Foragers
2022
2K video
64 min