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Palestinian Wildlife Series (Video performance and discussion)

Palestinian Wildlife Series is a video performance created from a nature documentary on African animals, shot directly from a television set in Palestine. Through its use of appropriated media, it reflects on issues of displacement, territory and authenticity in relation to its subject. Incorporating research findings on tree and plant life during the Occupation, Palestinian Wildlife Series reflects on the human and inhuman in a country which lost three quarters of its indigenous human population to displacement in a single year (1948) and ninety percent of its indigenous trees in the years preceding and following. Searching for strategies to address the gravity of this history and the ways in which it interrupts and dislodges European and American notions of “humanism”, Palestinian Wildlife Series re-imagines African animals in relation to Palestine, and considers the shared realities of plant and animal life under continued threat of extinction. Drawing on post-colonial theory, this artistic-research considers hierarchies in human behavior which affect Others; who and what is caged and monitored; questions of media representation and anthropomorphism. Using embodied and haptic visuality as entry points, Palestinian Wildlife Series is a participatory performance event in moving image for the ways in which, quoting feminist film theorist Laura U. Marks, “the viewer is free to draw upon her own reserves of memory as she participates in the creation of the object on screen.” It considers the digital in relation to tactility, complicating notions of “the body” with questions of interaction; what qualifies as a body and when?

Rania Khalil is an Egyptian American artist working with moving image and performance. Her creative work has been seen in such places as The Judson Church, Ontological-Hysteric Theater and LaMama Galleria, New York City, as well as Townhouse Gallery Cairo, PSi Copenhagen, Centre for Practice as Research, Finland and Al Ma'mal Contemporary Art Foundation, Jerusalem. A doctoral candidate in artistic research at the Theatre Academy in Helsinki, she investigates embodied and post-colonial aspects of Memory through her practice in moving image. She is presently based between Cairo, Helsinki and Brooklyn, New York.