IMMA
GALLERY 3
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ELTIQA مَجْمُوعَةُ اِلْتِقَاء

HOW TO WORK TOGETHER ?؟ كيف نعمل معا

A COLLECTIVE ARTISTIC PRACTICE FROM GAZA تجربة فنية جماعية من غزة

With artists Mohamed Abusal, Abdel Raouf Al-Ajouri, Mohammed Al-Hawajri, Raed Issa, Dina Matar, Sohail Salem

Curated by The Question of Funding

Content Guidance

This exhibition contains material that some visitors may find distressing.

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Eltiqa: How to Work Together?

The Exhibition, the Timeline, the Stories

Eltiqa (Arabic for "encounter") is an artist collective from Gaza City established in 2002. For over twenty years, they have developed artistic practices together while mentoring and supporting younger generations of artists in Gaza. The agile, creative and community-oriented nature of their artistic practice and economic model has helped the group sustain itself through years of political, economic and cultural struggles. As the genocide unfolds before our eyes, and Gaza is being systematically destroyed, this exhibition tells the story of a community that has managed to overcome years of oppression. This exhibition, and a forthcoming publication, are part of a longer collaboration between Eltiqa and the curatorial collective The Question of Funding.

Eltiqa: How to Work Together? includes a selection of Eltiqa's artworks collected from various locations around the world. An annotated timeline traces the formation of the collective and how it sustained itself over time. It also brings together life-changing events and moments from the members' personal lives, showing how these different aspects overlapped and influenced one another.

Through anecdotes from Eltiqa and artistic research conducted by The Question of Funding, the narratives presented here highlight different aspects of Eltiqa's practice and how these intersect political, social, economic, and personal histories. This is juxtaposed with the aesthetics of their varied artistic practices, which are produced in one of the most impossible environments in the world, before, as well as during, the current genocide.

The artworks on view arrived at this exhibition from different places and times. Some were produced and exhibited years ago, remaining in the trust of institutions and individuals due to the difficulty of their returning to Gaza, some works were carried out of Gaza with members of the collective who were able to leave in the early days of the genocide, while other works were recently produced and smuggled out of Gaza in various ways as an act of preservation. This gathering of works points to a network of solidarity, and is an act of anti-dispersal and reunion, during this time of forced dispersal. Some members of the collective remain in Gaza in constant forced displacement, while others are newly exiled abroad.

As Gaza is being systematically destroyed, the Eltiqa collective tells the story of a community that has managed to overcome years of oppression. The anecdotes and timeline are filled with the everyday practices of how to work collectively in Gaza, how to creatively overcome a siege, how to practice transvestment and alternative institution building while also having a sense of humour that grows out of resilience. It is a model from which to learn from.

Eltiqa exemplifies what the author and academic Hanan Toukan describes in her 2021 publication *The Politics of Art* as the dual role of art: as a site of resistance and as a product of its socio-political context. The collective's efforts to maintain the Eltiqa Gallery amidst economic shortages, blockades and massacres embody the political function of cultural spaces. As Toukan suggests, such spaces function as arenas for social experimentation, counter-histories, and critical interventions within global and local hegemonies. Over the years, as the anecdotes show, the collective has managed to transvest the resources it has received, creating a common pot of resources and sustaining collective organising despite the conditions imposed by the donors.

It is important that the paintings made by the artists in the collective are not understood as their only creative work, not that their aesthetic value should not be appreciated, but there is also an immaterial social and relational value that was produced around the work. In some of the stories, the members of Eltiqa tell us how the fact that the art space was located in the commercial part of the city was disorienting for the neighboring shopkeepers; out of curiosity they visited it often, and some began to exchange painting advice for discounts on groceries, producing a different value system; instead of art entering the market, art changes the market exchange logic; it produces an alternative relationality in a market, instead of the market exchange logic entering the art space.

The collective was forced to produce its own infrastructure in the vacuum of the art infrastructure in Gaza. However, they had to rely on the economic infrastructure that has governed the Palestinian territories since the Oslo Accords; the donor economy, whether international aid money or individual philanthropic funding. However, the same Israeli settler-colonial siege that has enveloped Gaza for years, making it difficult to build and sustain an artistic infrastructure, also allowed the collective to maintain its autonomy from its funders through the divisive physicality of the siege. This practice extended to their refusal to change the form of their NGO registration with the local authorities in Gaza, at times hiding the street sign of their art space. This resilience and insistence on making art as they chose is also aesthetically

traceable; the sizes of the paintings are determined by the sizes that could pass through the arduous borders and checkpoints. This still does not deter them from making large scale works; through a polyptych. The collective has always found ways to circumvent restrictions, and even to turn those restrictions to their own advantage through collective work.

Making Art in the Time of Genocide

The challenge of making this exhibition while the genocide continues to unfold is a daunting one. The physical feasibility of doing so is only made possible by the fact that some members of Eltiqa were able to flee from Gaza and that artworks were already dispersed geographically through solidarity networks or recently salvaged during the genocide. The question of whether exhibiting art from Gaza now serves to normalise the ongoing genocide remains for us a dilemma. Today, it appears that we are left with two options: to either spend our days gazing at the genocide, or to look away from it. One of the members of Eltiqa, Sohail Salem, recounted how, after experiencing a challenging time in North Gaza, he arrived in the southern region and found his phone filled with messages from friends worldwide, inquiring about his well-being and the events that had unfolded. Salem grappled with his memory and his desire to remember and recount the traumatic events. After encouragement from friends, Salem started sketching relentlessly in his notebooks.

It is when one knows that there are witnesses, that one starts documenting, making, drawing. This urge for others to know of what he went through and witnessed in Gaza, is what compelled Salem to draw. The possibility of an audience, produces the archive of an experience. However, this act is not without its ambiguities. As reflected in Mohammed Al-Hawajri's allusion to "pounding on the walls of the water tank," the artist draws parallels to Ghassan Kanafani's novella *Men in the Sun* (1963). In this story, the men, despite their persistent knocking on the water tank from within, remain unheard and ultimately succumb to a slow and torturous death. If the artist is the one pounding, then we, the audience, become responsible for listening to their sound. Perhaps that which compels the artist to make the work should compel us to show it, not only in the hope but in the belief that, one day, it will stand as evidence to achieve justice in light of unspeakable injustice.

Different forms of censorship have emerged in the context of the ongoing genocide in Gaza. These include the restriction of the right to speech and protest. However, the longer the genocide is enacted, a more subtle and convoluted form takes shape, a form of iconoclasm. The protracted, quotidian acts of genocidal violence committed by Israel in Gaza have turned into what writer and scholar Tareq Baconi names "the abject of our time", borrowing from philosopher Julia Kristeva's definition of the abject as "all that is disgusting, repulsive, ugly, unfit to be in proper society, exceptional, subhuman." The profound and disconcerting nature of this violence produces a pain and disgust in us about humanity in general, about our very selves, causing us to look away. However, confronting this censorship and abjectification of Gaza through the ethical compulsion to speak truth to power has produced a substantial body of culture all over the world. In an interview with novelist Salman Rushdie from 1986, the academic, critic and activist Edward Said discusses the unmaking of hegemonic institutionalised narratives through the repeated telling of stories by the underdog. He speaks about how while the hegemonic Israeli narrative is firmly entrenched within institutional frameworks, the Palestinians cannot sustain the narrative about their cause unless it is repeatedly recounted by everyone; "if it is not continually narrated, it will inevitably vanish."

– The Question of Funding, 2025/26

This exhibition *Eltiqa: How to Work Together?* consists of a selection of more than 60 artworks produced by Eltiqa members from 2002 to 2025. The artworks are two-dimensional works that range in media from small sketches on notebooks, to drawings created from found materials to large scale paintings, and photographs. While some artists, such as Dina Matar, portray colourful depictions and motifs celebrating Palestinian life and resistance, other artists such as Raed Issa, depict more sombre aspects of the reality in Gaza.

An extensive timeline from 1948 to 2026 is included, covering major events in Palestine in addition to key moments in the lives and careers of Eltiqa members and the Eltiqa Gallery in Gaza. This timeline is illustrated using archival images from the artists. These materials, together with a series of anecdotes showcasing oral histories, are dispersed throughout the exhibition space rather than presented chronologically.

About the Artists

Mohammed Al-Hawajri (b.1976, Gaza) was born in the Bureij Refugee Camp in the Gaza Strip in 1976. In 2002, Al-Hawajri co-founded Eltiqa and has been a driving force in establishing the group's exhibition and education programming. He is also one of the founders of the Fine Art Programme in the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. Al-Hawajri's work primarily consists of painting, which often appears vivid and animated despite the sombre subject matter which points to the haunting quality of life under siege in Gaza. He is married to Dina Matar, another member of the Eltiqa group. Al-Hawajri is currently based in Sharjah, where he lives with his wife and children.

Raed Issa (b.1975, Gaza) was born in the Bureij Refugee Camp in Gaza City. Issa is a key figure in Gaza's contemporary art scene, a co-founder of the Fine Art Program at the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, and a founding member of the Eltiqa group. His practice explores themes of vulnerability, loss and bereavement of living under siege and war. Issa's works are embedded with the collective trauma of Palestinians expelled from the villages and towns of Palestine. Currently, he is based in Marseille.

Dina Matar's (b. 1985, Gaza) paintings often incorporate bright colours and idyllic scenes of Palestinian life. Matar weaves traditional motifs and ornamentation throughout her paintings to signal the perseverance and resistance of Palestinian people. Her subjects are often female-centred, and represent the celebration and struggle of Palestinian women. Matar joined Eltiqa in 2004. She is married to Mohammed Al-Hawajri, another member of the Eltiqa group, and is currently based in Sharjah where she lives with her husband and children.

Mohamed Abusal (b. 1976, Gaza) is a contemporary artist and founding member of Eltiqa whose works address reality in the besieged Gaza Strip, and offer imaginative interventions and prospects for transformation in his homeland. His acclaimed works include: A Metro in Gaza (2012), a series of images and installations that envision options of installing a better transportation system in the Gaza Strip linking Gaza to Jerusalem, and Shambar (2013), which explores how Gazans deal with continuous electricity cuts, and create makeshift lighting for different purposes. Currently, he is based in Marseille.

Abdel Raouf Al-Ajouri (b.1977, Gaza) was born in the Jabalia Refugee Camp of Gaza. Al-Ajouri is a founding member of Eltiqa and has been an influential figure in building the art ecology of Gaza. He supported the establishment of the Fine Arts Program of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society in Gaza. In 2009, Al-Ajouri received his BA in Fine Arts from Al-Aqsa University. Al-Ajouri's paintings exhibit a distinct style of abstract figuration that accentuates the enduring spirit of people from Palestine. Al-Ajouri is still based in Gaza.

Sohail Salem (b. 1974, Gaza) is a co-founder and member of Eltiqa. Salem received his BA in Fine Arts from Al-Aqsa University in 1999, and a few years later in 2002, with his efforts Eltiqa launched their platform. Salem's practice, particularly in recent years, can be described as agile and reactive, often incorporating conventional materials available to him. His work addresses the traumas of war from a first-hand perspective of his encounters in Gaza. Salem is still based in Gaza.

About the Curator

The Question of Funding (QoF) started through decentralised conversations in Ramallah, Palestine, where a large community of artists and cultural practitioners were frustrated with working and critiquing the monoculture produced by years of conditional international funding. The individuals, coming themselves from different NGOs, formed a collective to find affirmative ways to confront this culture of constant funding crises. They have worked collectively on grassroot economics in different ways. Through developing *dayra* in Palestine, a currency, or an economic medium, they make use of available resources through trust systems within small communities based on blockchain technologies. The collective collaborated with storytellers, designers, and illustrators in the Arab region, producing four children's books, published by Koenig Books, on issues related to labor, communal resources, and value. In Kassel for documenta fifteen, QoF extended the invitation to Eltiqa, a twenty-year-old artist collective from Gaza and presented their paintings within a matrix of a timeline and research material as a model for economic and artistic resilience.

The Question of Funding members, curators for this exhibition:

Yazan Khalili is a Researcher, Visual Artist, Cultural Producer. He works in and out of Palestine, currently based in Amsterdam, Netherlands, where he is a PhD candidate at Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA), University of Amsterdam. His research for this exhibition is part of his PhD work within IMAGINART – Imagining Institutions Otherwise: Art, Politics, and State Transformation, financed by the Dutch Research Council (NWO). In 2020 he co-founded Radio Alhara, and in 2019 he co-founded The Question of Funding collective.

Lara Khaldi is from Jerusalem, Palestine and currently based between Amsterdam and Jerusalem. She is the director of the contemporary art space de Appel. She was part of the curatorial team of documenta 15, and the head of the Media Studies Program at Alquds Bard College, Jerusalem, and a tutor in the Disarming Design MA program at Sandberg Institute, 2020-2022.

Public Programme

Living Canvas at IMMA
Thursday 29 October - Wednesday 11 November 2026
In parallel with the exhibition, a selection of film and moving image works, guest curated by The Question of Funding, will be screened on Living Canvas at IMMA, Europe's largest digital art screen on the grounds of IMMA.

Living Canvas at IMMA runs daily from Monday to Sunday from 9.30am to 6.30pm.

The IMMA Shop
A range of publications suggested by our partners Art Jameel and The Question of Funding are available to purchase at The IMMA Shop for the duration of the exhibition. Titles include Ungrounding: The Architecture of Genocide, by Eyal Weizman; Enter Ghost by Isabella Hammad; and I Am Still Alive: Dispatches from Gaza by Mahmoud M Al-Shaer.

For enquiries, please contact the IMMA Shop, visit imma.ie, or speak with a member of our Visitor Engagement Team.

Acknowledgements

Eltiqa Artists
Mohamed Abusal, Abdel Raouf Al-Ajouri, Mohammed Al-Hawajri, Raed Issa, Dina Matar, Sohail Salem

Curated by The Question of Funding
This exhibition and its forthcoming publication, co-published by Art Jameel and Sharjah Art Foundation (SAF) with support from the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC), are part of a long-term collaboration between Eltiqa and the curatorial collective The Question of Funding. The Question of Funding is a collective of artists and cultural producers from Palestine and beyond. It researches the economic structures of art and aims to produce new economic models for cultural production.

The exhibition is a collaboration with Art Jameel and tours to IMMA from Jameel Arts Centre, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

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Front cover: exhibition title design by Dina Al Khatib.

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