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## AN INTERVIEW WITH ARIELLA AZOULAY

*On the exhibition "Everything Could Be Seen"  
at the Um El Fahem Art Gallery*

*Joshua Simon*

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Ariella Azoulay curated the exhibition "Everything Could Be Seen" at the Um El Fahem Art Gallery (re-opened in a new space in March 2004, and directed by Said Abu-Shakra). In continuation of her scholarly explorations of the concept of citizenship, Azoulay writes in the catalogue: "The exhibition presents a series of images that have been conceived, collected, classified, created or processed out of the continuing everyday reality of the State of Israel's 'temporary' suzerainty over three-and-a-half million Palestinians."

- J. S. You call the exhibition "Everything Could Be Seen," and these days we commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre – where everything could be seen, broadcast live, but it made no real difference.
- A. A. There is no naive belief here that if everything is seen, the wrongdoing would cease. The gaze is not omnipotent. But the conclusion that the gaze is limited and conditioned does not eliminate the important role it plays in producing the horror, a role that is, at times, crucial. In the exhibition I ask how come the Israeli victimization of the Palestinian population is visible, practically on the surface, and yet people fail to see it? The conditions of the gaze in general, and in Israel in particular, are highly corrupt. On the one hand, horror has been transformed into a commodity as part of the process of globalization; on the other – the ongoing Occupation has persistently corrupted both the field of vision and the civil apparatuses.
- J. S. The essay in the exhibition catalogue is provocative, to my mind, because of the notion of responsibility arising from the text. At the conclusion you

write: “The apparently politically correct demand that the Palestinians’ struggle be managed by the Palestinians themselves [...] neutralizes some of the énoncés of horror and contributes to the perpetuation of the distinction between occupier and occupied, in a way that blinds one from seeing that what we’ve got here is a common civilian struggle against a ruling power that abandons some of those under its rule.” Are you not worried that this stand that “speaks in the name of the other” might be deemed reactionary?

- A. A. The fantasy of the “authentic voice,” alongside the imperative that the repressed must represent themselves, perpetuate the Palestinians and Israelis as two sides, in a manner that serves the occupation regime. Fear of any hint of erasing the difference between yourself and the Palestinian only perpetuates the discussion of the occupation in terms of two sides, fixating the border issue as the main question – a question whose solution alone can change the situation. I think that the acceptance of the territorial issue as central, which is manifested in the preoccupation with the border, divisions, and settlements, exacts too high a toll – namely, acceptance of the fact that the Palestinians are non-citizens. I don’t speak in the name of the “other,” but rather in the name of the citizenship institution that enables me to interfere in the manner in which myself and others are governed.