

ART @ BAINBRIDGE

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM

Colony / Dor Guez

December 10, 2022–February 12, 2023



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In photographs, installations, and video, the Jaffa-based artist Dor Guez transforms historical pictures of Jerusalem and its surroundings in order to explore the role photography has played in representing what was and is imagined of this place. His art is a form of storytelling and of narrating unwritten and overlooked histories. *Colony / Dor Guez* presents work that the artist created in response to the archives of the American Colony, a charitable Christian community established in Jerusalem in 1881 by American expats. In the early twentieth century, the American Colony produced and sold hundreds of photographic views of locations that, described in the Bible and bearing religious significance to Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike, came to be known as the Holy Land. Guez has mined the American Colony archives, selecting photographs that shed light on the multiple communities that draw connections between their identities and this region. He mirrors, juxtaposes, enlarges, and filters these images to reveal how they accrue meaning over time and offer shifting views of Jerusalem's past and present.

Guez was born in Jerusalem to a Palestinian family from Lydda on his mother's side and a family of Jewish immigrants from Tunisia on his father's. Educated as both an artist and a historian, Guez received his PhD from Tel Aviv University in 2014 and is a professor at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Tel Aviv, where he also serves as director of the master's program in fine arts.

Galleries 1 and 2 / *Lilies of the Field*

In *Lilies of the Field*, Guez explores flowers as stand-ins for religious sites of profound symbolic power. In the two pictures captioned “Mosque El-Aksa,” delicate pressed-flower arrangements conjure this site of spiritual significance. Built on an elevated point in the Old City of Jerusalem, the El-Aksa Mosque is adjacent to the Dome of the Rock and the Temple Mount, understood as the Prophet Muhammad’s point of departure for his night journey or the story of Abraham’s near-sacrifice of Isaac, depending on one’s faith. *Lilies of the Field #1, Bethlehem, Christmas Day* and *Lilies of the Field #4, Bethlehem, Grotto of the Nativity* conjure the day and place of Jesus’s birth. Through their design and presentation, botanical samples pressed into album pages take on the qualities of a reliquary, carrying the traces of a holy site through space and across time.

To create *Lilies of the Field*, Guez studied albums of pressed flowers and photographic views created by the American Colony between 1900 and 1914. Responding to the popularity of photographic albums during the nineteenth century, the American Colony placed hand-tinted landscape views on pages that face arrangements of pressed flora hand inscribed with captions. This format gave each album a loose narrative sequence and allowed viewers to imagine that they had seen the scenes, walked the land, and gathered the floral samples contained therein. Guez transforms the viewer’s relationship to and experience of this historical form, an example of which can be seen in Gallery 1. He makes radical shifts in scale and focuses our attention on evidence of time’s passage since the albums’ creation. In the small-scale images in these galleries, Guez digitally superimposes a photograph of carefully composed flora with a photograph of the faint yellow stain left by these aging plants on the thin sheet of waxed paper bound between the album’s pages to protect its materials. In the large-scale prints, the artist transforms the botanical stain into its complementary color—a deep blue that emulates a sun print (or cyanotype),

in which objects are placed on light-sensitive paper and exposed to the sun. Through his manipulation of the color and scale of the flowers in the American Colony albums, Guez upends the expectation of an accurate capture of history. The results are images that simultaneously register the past and document the passage of time.

Gallery 1



**Artist-designed vitrine with pressed-flower book,
Flowers and Views of the Holy Land, 1900**



***Lilies of the Field #1, Jerusalem,
Mosque El-Aksa*, 2019–20**

Inkjet print



***Lilies of the Field #4, Jerusalem,
Mosque El-Aksa*, 2019–20**

Chroma-luxe print

Gallery 2



***Lilies of the Field #1, Jerusalem,
Jews' Wailing Place, 2019–20***

Inkjet print



***Lilies of the Field #1, Jerusalem,
Mount Olives, 2019–20***

Inkjet print



***Lilies of the Field #1, Bethlehem,
Christmas Day, 2019–20***

Inkjet print



***Lilies of the Field #4, Jerusalem,
Rachel's Tomb, 2019–20***

Chroma-luxe print



***Lilies of the Field #4, Jerusalem,
Calvary Altar, 2019–20***

Chroma-luxe print



***Lilies of the Field #4, Bethlehem,
Grotto of the Nativity, 2019–20***

Chroma-luxe print



***Lilies of the Field #4, Jerusalem,
Mount Zion, 2019–20***

Chroma-luxe print



***Lilies of the Field #4, General View
of Nazareth, 2019–20***

Chroma-luxe print

Gallery 3 / *Locusts*

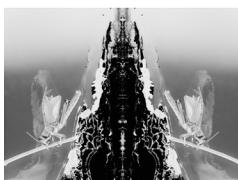
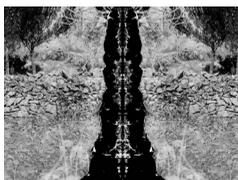
In *Locusts*, Guez presents a series of pictures taken by American Colony photographers to document the swarms of locusts that plagued Egypt, Syria, and Palestine from March to October 1915, consuming large areas of vegetation and decimating the region's agriculture. The American Colony documented the plague in hundreds of images, many of which were taken with a large-format camera on glass-plate negatives, a technique that recorded these scenes with a haunting degree of detail and resolution. In the 1970s, these negatives were exposed to water during a flood in Jerusalem, which abraded the edges of the emulsion and destroyed part of each image. Guez replicates each image at a 1:1 scale to the negatives in order to preserve the resolution, then creates a diptych of the duplicate and its mirror image. He produces the series as metallic prints that evoke the silvered surfaces of the glass-plate originals. The area of lost emulsion takes on the form of a Rorschach test, a mirrored-image abstraction intended to reveal one's personality or emotional state through subjective perception of the form. These traces of history—of one natural disaster, a flood, layered atop another, the locust plague—become impossible to separate.



**Artist-designed vitrine with stereoscopic viewer and stereo card, Underwood & Underwood
*Stereoview of Palestine, 1900***

Locusts, 2022

Fifteen inkjet prints on metallic rag paper



Gallery 4 / Colony

Colony is a three-channel video and sound installation that presents a parable of the encounter of different populations who are competing for resources and to survive on the same land. Guez weaves together photographs of the 1915 locust plague, including a selection of the glass-plate negatives featured in Gallery 3, and images from an exceptional hand-painted photographic album created by the American Colony for the Ottoman (1915) and British (1930) imperial authorities.

Narrated in Arabic with the cadence of an oral storyteller, the film recounts the events of the locust invasion in the context of multiple narratives and images: contests between species, biblical allegories of persistence, pictures of the ravaged landscape, portraits of individual grasshoppers, skies filled with swarms of locust colonies, and the plight of local Palestinian farmers attempting to eradicate the insects and preserve the land. *Colony* centers its narrative on the effect of individual creatures becoming a swarm and the subsequent transformation in their natural behaviors. The film describes the real consequences of the 1915 plague, but Guez is intentionally ambiguous about whether the bodies to which the narrator refers are those of the insects or of the humans who appear throughout the film. The artist calls on his audience to consider the ways that meaning is layered in photographic presentations of this place. Similarly, the title of this exhibition is layered: drawn from this film, from the American Colony as an entity that played a defining role in representing the Holy Land, and from both the history and the systems of colonialism as it continues to affect governance of Jerusalem and its environs.

Mitra Abbaspour
Haskell Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art

Colony, 2021

Three-channel video installation
duration: 13 minutes, 20 seconds



All works are © Dor Guez and are provided courtesy of the artist and Dvir Gallery, Paris / Brussels / Tel Aviv; Goodman Gallery, London / Johannesburg / Cape Town; and Carlier-Gebauer Gallery, Berlin / Madrid. All two-dimensional works are exhibition prints from the artist's collection. The stereoscopic viewer in Gallery 3 is from the Princeton University Art Museum collection.

Colony / Dor Guez is curated by Mitra Abbaspour, Haskell Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art.

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Art@Bainbridge is a gallery project of the Princeton University Art Museum, located in historic Bainbridge House in downtown Princeton. Please also visit Art on Hulfish, our new photo-forward gallery and programs space in Palmer Square, open daily. Our main building is under construction as we build a bold new Museum, designed by the architect Sir David Adjaye and anticipated to open in late 2024. Visit our website for online exhibitions, videos, live programs, and more.

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