

Saba Innab: How to Build Without a Land

How to Build Without a Land. Statement about her project referencing the Palestinian cause in particular, and human alienation in general.

Feb 2014



Photos

This ongoing project considers the relationship of construction and land to time, specifically to temporariness that gradually transforms - or deforms - into permanence. Referencing the Palestinian cause in particular, but also human alienation in general, the work recognizes the impossibility of construction without land as self-evident. However, imagining such a possibility may be an essential prerequisite to effecting long-due change in architecture and politics.

The project started in 2011 in parallel with my work as an architect in the reconstruction of Nahr el Bared Palestinian camp in the north of Lebanon. The camp was completely demolished after an armed conflict between the Lebanese army and an Islamist fundamentalist group called Fath al Islam in 2007. The idea of a camp reconstruction held a revolutionary dimension within, but it allowed for a redefinition of power relation by the Lebanese Government regarding Nahr el Bared and the Palestinian camps in Lebanon in general. Although "How to Build Without a Land" was initially triggered by Nahr el Bared Camp, it tries to rethink building and dwelling in temporariness and take it to another level.

The project is composed of text based elements that are moving between the poetic, the scientific and the hallucinatory, constructing together a spatial narrative. It explores variable notions of "building," whether by the physical construction of an object, or by building with language.

Deterritorialization is becoming a human condition, "the home is past, it no longer is." We build without understanding that building really belongs to dwelling, without understanding that we do not dwell because we build, but we build because we dwell.

Deterritorialization and alienation were enhanced by the rationality of modernity and its different forms of architecture. Little by little an unbridgeable gap grew between dwelling and modernity, and poetic dwelling is what is left. Departing from this idea many tried to rethink "building," some in a romantic and some in a humanistic way. Still others were in complete opposition, critical and extreme, believing that the only thing left for humanity was to start all over again.

Another level of deterritorialization appears when we live in temporariness, in refuge, in exile. Being landless. We realize that in the absence of this land, even the poetic dwelling is lost.

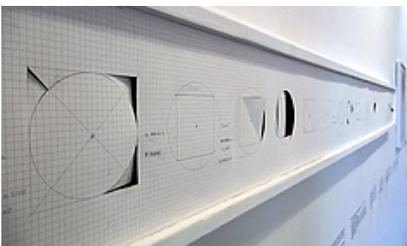
How do we dwell, and how do we build without a land?

How do we build temporariness when it is mutating constantly into a permanent state?

What becomes of building and dwelling between the imagined and the real and between the temporary and the permanent?

How do we build without a land?

Maybe the only thing left for architecture is to reveal the impossibility of poetical dwelling through empty signs and sublime uselessness. Could building without a land be a form of rejection to loss? If we dwell enough on building without a land, could this reveal a moment of true rejection to all forms of normalization, coping and numbness? The strongest moments of change are only recognizable in the absence of any reference to a better future.



» Photo pages with more information

Nafas