

The Museum of the Contemporary and the Ethnographic Department

Lea Mauas, Diego Rotman (Sala-manca Group)

"During my visit to the modest Buenos Aires home of the Oxter family, a lower-middle class family, I discovered, on a wall of the living room, Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa. It was my first visit to the Museum of the Contemporary." (João Delgado)

The Museum of the Contemporary (MofC) was founded by the Sala-Manca Group in December 2009 at the first location of the Mamuta Art and Reseach Center in Ein Kerem, at the home of the late Polish-Jewish artist Daniela Passal. The house had previously been declared an abandoned Arab property, but prior to that, as the artists discovered in the course of their research, it had been the home of the Palestinian scholar Issa Manoun. The first exhibition

¹ Daniela Pesal (b.1931, Poland – d.2005, Israel) immigrated to Israel in 1950 and studied art at the New Bezalel in Jerusalem. In 1989, she established the "Al-Dan Forum for Creation" at her home. After her death, her home was left to the Jerusalem Foundation to serve as a creative center for artists. In 2012-2009, the building, which is owned by the Jerusalem Foundation and the estate of the artist, served as the home of the Sala-Manca Group, which operated it as the "Mamuta Art and Media Center at Daniela Passal's house."

² Absentee's Property Law 5710-1950 was enacted in Israel in 1950. "The primary purpose of this law", as Nir Hason put it, "was to enable use of lands belonging to Arabs who left Israel voluntarily or forcedly during the War of Independence." After the Six-Day War in 1967, which saw the extension of Jerusalem's municipal boundaries, Palestinians with assets in Jerusalem suddenly found themselves considered "absentee" owners, even though they had not gone anywhere. Sometimes they were living only a few hundred meters away, but this was now considered outside the new Jerusalem city limits and officially in the West Bank. They found their property confiscated only because Israel drew the new municipal border between them and their property, making them no longer residents of Jerusalem—though they never left their homes. Read more: https://bit.ly/34vxhLE. Accessed February 2020.



 ${\color{red} \blacktriangle}$ "The Skin I Live In", Sala-manca, gouche on existing walls, 2012.

dealt with the Museum as an institution, the local historiography of the village of Ein Kerem, and the history of the museum space. The MofC also developed a digital storage room of exhibitions that cannot be viewed on the web but are offered as downloads.³ Each exhibition is available as a "package for printing, presentation, or re-exhibition," depending on the physical and economic limitations of the institution acquiring the download.³

The MofC not only related and responded to the structure in which it was housed, but it also corresponded with the Israel Museum that also dealt with or responded to the space in which it resided, albeit in a different way. In his essay "On Remembrances and Forgettings at Museums in the Holy City and of the Holy City in Museums" – an essay that was never published though it was partially cited in the catalog for the opening of the Museum of the Contemporary – Arturo Maure (one of João Delgado's heteronyms) wrote:

"If, according to the plans of architect [Alfred] Mansfeld, The Israel Museum's design was inspired by the Arab village and was constructed on top of the ruins of the village of Sheikh Bader, and the Museum of the Contemporary is itself an Arab house located in the village [of Ein Kerem], which became a memorial to the Arab village, then The Israel Museum is a souvenir of the Museum of the Contemporary."

Architect Zvi Efrat, a member of the group charged with renovating The

³ The Storage room features complete exhibitions that are available for download, which underwent a process of digitization so as to preserve the full quality after they have been downloaded in their respective formats (video, sound, photography, text, etc.). After they have been downloaded, the exhibitions could be displayed in the venues available to the secondary curators (those who chose to download the exhibitions) and the conditions they have at their disposal. In this way, the same exhibition could be displayed simultaneously by agents of completely dissimilar nature and financial means. Since the exhibition will be displayed differently, it will also convey cultural and curatorial perceptions that reflect not only the perception of the exhibition's curators, but also those of the secondary curators displaying it.

Israel Museum in 2013, asserted that the perception of the Palestinian village of Malha, the source of Alfred Mansfeld's inspiration in designing the museum, became an origin myth that provided The Israel Museum with a dimension of authenticity.⁴ The materialization of the Palestinian village's image in the architectural design of The Israel Museum reflects the paradox in the process of structuring a local, indigenous national identity, which is one subject of interest to the Museum of the Contemporary and the Ethnographic Department operating in it.

The native Hebrew identity – a sort of hybrid consisting of Jewish-Bedouin and Jewish-Palestinian components – was, according to Yael Zerubavel, one of the most common identity options available to the Jewish settlers during the time of the yishuv, the pre-state Jewish presence. Arabs and Bedouins expressed the connection to nature and the land and were therefore seen as the embodiment of the Biblical Jew, the antithesis of the image of the weak, passive, wandering exilic Jew.⁵ Performing the native by wearing the kufiyah head-covering and the so-called Biblical sandals and riding horses, and by extension by constructing a museum of a national status with meta-Palestinian architecture, were ways to shape and portray the native Hebrew identity.

In its first location, the MofC dealt with the concepts of home, temporariness, the museum's space, and their own ability or inability to express and inhabit a local hybrid identity. These topics continue to be central in different projects developed by the MofC (as seen in the Eternal Sukkah, the Paradise Inn Hotel, the Deller Sukkah).

⁴ See Zvi Efrat "Land Marks: The Emblematic Architecture of the Israel Museum and the Shrine of the Book (draft)": http://efrat-kowalsky.co.il/files/the-architecture-of-the-israel-museum.pdf. Accessed December 2014.

⁵ Yael Zerubavel, "Memory, the Rebirth of the Native, and the 'Hebrew Bedouin' Identity" Social Research 75/1 (2008): 315–352.

The Ethnographic Department of the Museum of the Contemporary opened on December 31, 2014, in the basement of the former leprosarium in the Talbiyeh quarter of Jerusalem, now known as Hansen House. The Ethnographic Department of the MofC deals with the seam between an art museum and an ethnographic museum and between visual art and popular art, and with the tensions among originals, recreations, copies, and reimaginings, the key aspects of the curatorial thinking that has informed the Museum of the Contemporary since its inception.

From the Leprosarium Jesus Hilfe to Hansen's House

The Leprosarium Jesus Hilfe ("Jesus' Help"), founded as an isolated refuge for lepers, was established in 1867 by the German Protestant Moravian community in Jerusalem. For twenty years, it was housed in a building located on what is now Agron Street. In 1887, the leprosarium moved to a new building designed by Conrad Schick in the Talbiyeh neighborhood.

"High walls enclose and hide the structure built in a secluded locale, far from the walls of the Old City. The public's fascination with the place generated countless stories about the goings-on inside," reads the informational page about the historical exhibition presented in the former hospital. Until 1948, most of the patients were Arab Muslims, while the nurses were Christian. Tawfiq Canaan, a Palestinian Christian, was the chief physician from 1919 until 1948. In charge of all medical and research issues as well as external relations, Dr. Canaan would visit the leprosarium once a week.

Once the State of Israel was established, Dr. Canaan either left Jerusalem of his own volition or was expelled from the city. According to Salim Tamri, Dr. Canaan took the Arab patients out of the hospital and moved with them to Silwan, where they remained until he eventually set up a leper hospital north of Ramallah. According to the records of the Moravian nurses Johanna Larsen and Ida Ressel, they led fifteen patients to Silwan in 1953 and stayed

SETTLING IN.

of the Scal committee were present, with numerous guests from the English, German, and Artab Protestant regregabets Aroug those from the Temple Colory of nated about a quarter of a mile searce to the city than our Hour, was Architect Sandel, who had superateoised its erection. At the close of the response service we were invosted with the presence of Ha Excelercy Reput Puchs, the Governor of

The Dalicabory Service, held in the hall where the patients now gather for worders, was commenced with a bytter and the reading of Luke v. 12-14, and Mattheways, 31-40. As Provident of the committee. Paster School gave the opening address from Paulin

CON 8: 'Our help in the Name of the Lord. Who made heaven and earth" 'Jesus' Help' that is the same of the house and the motto of all who dwell therea.

" In ferrent prayer he bescught the Lord to take the 'Home' into His represal cure, to endow those in charge of it with wisdom, love, courage, and perseverance, to solace and allersate the misery of the potents with the balm of Dirine consolations, and to bless all kind supporters of this work of mercy.

"After the opening ceremony opportunity was given to the goests. to walk cound the Home and inspect its coomy, cheerful, and airy apartments and comfortable arrangements The building, which is two story's high moleces a vard, in which there is a buge distern for collecting and storing water for the ass of the numerous inmates. The south end of the Home contains the spartments for the officials, i.e., the 'Horse father' and his family, and the nurses. Next to these, but separated by covered corridors, are the wards for the temale patients. In the part of the building facing the west are the hitches, the store-

rooms, etc. The male patients occupy the northern portion of the block, and in the rasterethere are one or two neck wards. The dwellingrooms for male and female patients are separated by the thipd. The bathrooms and wash-kitchen are on the ground flore. The wash kitchen and bakehouse for the officials are in an out-house. All through the establishment there is convenient communication by means of covered corndors and stairs. A beautiful flight of steps leads up to the front door on the south note. A large parden in front of the house, though not yet in good order, promises to prove a describle secreation ground for our patients, as well as to prostde such light tasks as they

After six months the Superintendent writes; Settling in our new house has found so much work for me that it has been almost impossible to get to letter writing. The garden, for instance, has demanded more time and trouble than might be imagined. Yet you will have no difficulty in conceiving what a wilderness of rocks and stones it presented, when you remember that building has been going on here for three years, and that the stone have been quarried in the immediate neighbourhood. This had left holes and pits here and there, which had to be filled up if the patients, lame, blind, and crippled as so many of them are, shall walk there with any



THE STAFF OF THE LEPER HOME. Standag-Solte Gertrubt Gerner, Pictor Nielson, Dr. Cannan, Stoter Margarde Babbalt, Search-Solter Ma Reuel, Solter Oppoint Norgand (Matrim), Siefer Johanna Lared,

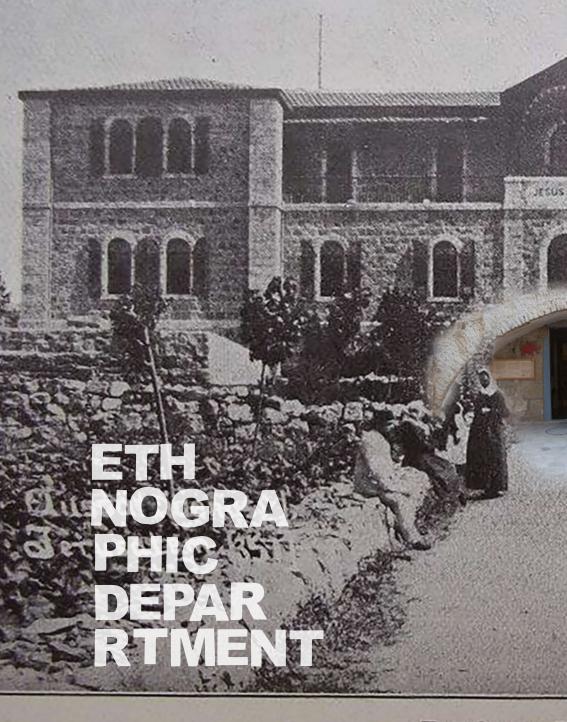
safety. Now, thank God, the garden, which is so important a part of our institution, has been levelled to a great extent. It is also planted in some degree, but there is a lack of trees to give shade. I brought some of the smaller ones from our old garden, but it will be years before these afford sufficient protection from the herce rays of our summer sun. This winter will plant some fig and mulberry trees which flourish here and give a good shade."

THE HOME TO-DAY.

The promise of fifty years ago has been fulfilled: the garden has been levelled and terraced and planted. The lepers bask in the sunny courtyard of on the grass in their garden; they sit and talk beceast with them until the leprosarium north of Ramallah opened on June 12, 1960. Either way, the fact that the leper population in the hospital switched from Muslim majority to Jewish majority was a political phenomenon, packing a metaphoric punch in terms of the politics of segregation.⁶

In 1950, the Jewish National Fund bought the leprosarium and transferred its administration to the Israeli Health Ministry. Its name, Leprosarium Jesus Hilfe, was changed to Hansen Government Hospital, in honour of the Norwegian physician who identified the leprosy-causing bacterium. Once antibiotic treatment became available and its success rate increased in the second half of the twentieth century, most of the patients were gradually released. The in-patient wing closed in 2000; the hospital continued to operate as an out-patient clinic until the hospital's final closure in 2009, the year that the Israeli government decided to transfer the building's ownership to the Jerusalem municipality for renovations in preparation for turning it into a cultural center. When the site opened at the end of 2013, it again changed its name to be known simply as Hansen House, as if the spirit of science replaced that of Jesus. Today, Hansen House is an art, design, and technology campus, revealing to visitors one of the most beautiful buildings in the city as well as its mysterious past. The campus houses the Master's program of the Bezalel School for Art and Design, exhibition spaces, screening rooms, the offices of the online cultural journal Erev Rav, Mamuta Art and Research Center, and the Museum of the Contemporary.

⁶ "The separation of Arab and Jewish lepers in the Talbieh Leprosarium, during the war of 1948, marked those defining moments in the annals of Jerusalem and the Arab-Israeli conflict. In its absurdity, the event encapsulated the depth of the process of ethnic exclusion and demonization after decades of conflict between Jews and Arabs, settlers and natives." Salim Tamari, "Lepers, Lunatics, and Saints: The Nativist Ethnography of Tawfiq Canaan and His Circle, in Mountain Against the Sea: Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 93-112.





IOME, JERUSALEM.