HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Text by Lotte Laub

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Les Rencontres d'Arles: *Gaza to America, Home Away from Home* by Taysir Batniji

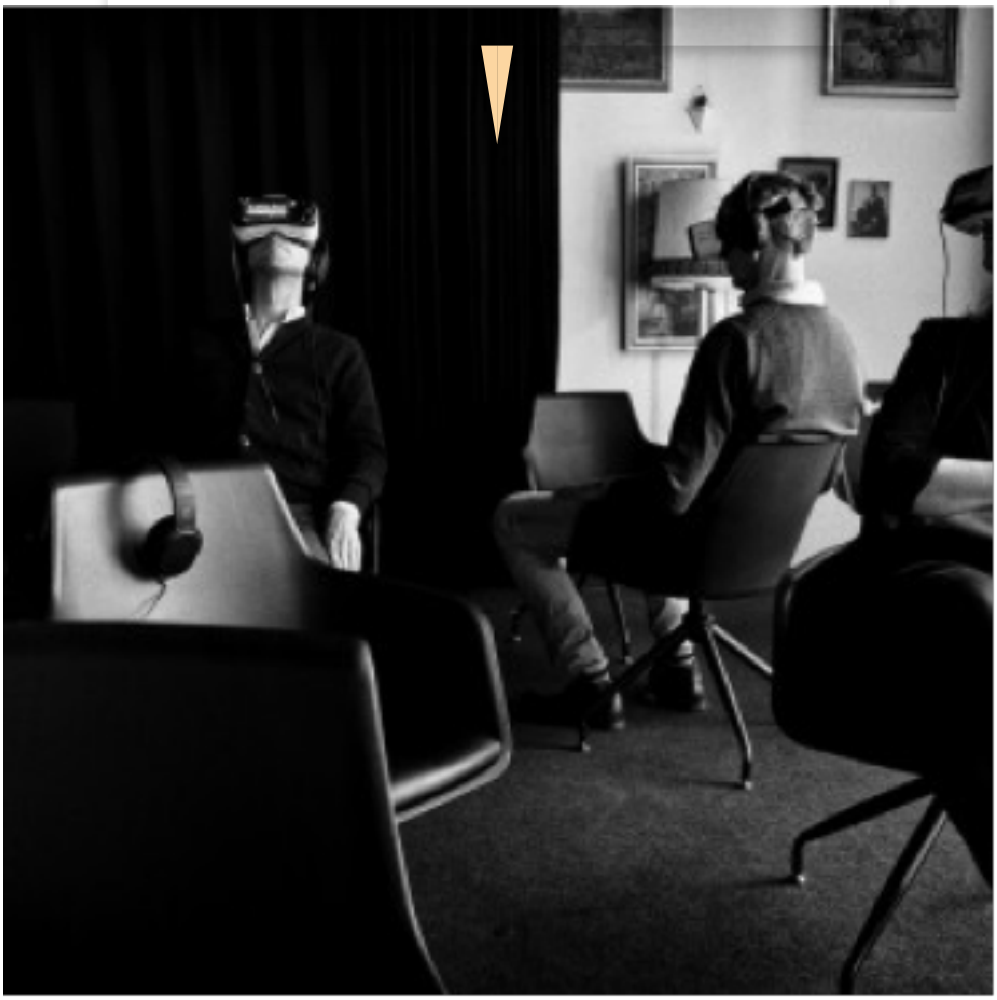
"In terms of having to describe what Palestine is, I have to ask, 'do you know what Israel is?' and then I have to ask, 'do you know the conflict?', and then I have to say, 'I'm the other side, the other half.'" (Safa Batniji, West Palm Beach, Florida)

At this year's photo festival Les Rencontres d'Arles, Taysir Batniji presents his solo exhibition *Gaza to America, Home Away From Home*, curated by Sam Stourdzé, the festival's director. Founded in 1970, Les Rencontres d'Arles is the oldest photo festival in Europe and one of the most important gatherings on the photography scene. Its official programme consists of 36 exhibitions, shown at different venues all around Arles. Among the places to visit are a number of deconsecrated medieval churches such as Chapelle Saint-Martin-Du-Méjan, where Batniji's exhibition is shown on two floors.

Gaza to America, Home Away From Home is part of the *America Great Again!* section—a title whose irritating use of Donald Trump's rhetoric ironically contradicts the image of America suggested by the photographers. In addition to Batniji, the section also features Robert Frank's legendary photo series *The Americans* (1958) in the Espace van Gogh and Paul Graham's exhibition, *The Whiteness of the Whale*, in the Église des frères prêcheurs. There are also exhibitions by Raymond Depardon and Laura Henno. In this section, we are confronted with a critical image of America as seen through the eyes of a Swiss, a British, a Palestinian and two French photographers: "More than other places America is nourished by the foreign," says Stourdzé.

Recommended Trips

1 – 7 July 2019



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