About the artist

Born in Gaza in 1966, Taysir Batniji studied art at Al-Najah University in Nablus, Palestine. In 1994, he was awarded a fellowship to study at the School of Fine Arts of Bourges in France. Since then, he has been dividing his time between France and Palestine. Between two countries and two cultures, Batniji has developed a multi-media practice, including drawing, installation, photography, video and performance.

Taysir Batniji’s artwork, often tinged with impermanence and fragility, draw its inspiration from his subjective story, but also from current events and history. His methods distance, divert, stretch, conceptualize or simply play with the initial subject, offering, at the end, poetic, sometimes acrid, points of view on reality.

Taysir was awarded the Abraaj Group Art Prize in 2012 and became the recipient of the Immersion residency program, supported by Hermes Foundation, in alliance with Aperture Foundation in 2017. His works can be found in the collections of many prestigious institutions of which the Centre Pompidou and the FNAC in France, the V&A and The Imperial War Museum in London, the Queensland Art Gallery in Australia and Zayed National Museum in Abu Dhabi.

On the Passage of Existence: An Interview with Taysir Batniji

In this interview, as part of the special section Art & Borders, Art Editor Elisa Ganivet talks with the artist. Taysir Batniji. The occasion of his exhibition at the Macval (France) allowed reflection on some of his long-term works and on his life path. The strength of ‘the idea’ prevails over the medium for a sensitive awakening to the state of a world simultaneously foreign and familiar.

Du passage de l’existence: Un entretien avec Taysir Batniji

Dans cet entretien réalisé pour la section spéciale Art & Borders, notre rédactrice Elisa Ganivet s’entretient ici avec l’artiste Taysir Batniji. Son exposition au Macval (France) revient sur des pièces phares au long cours ainsi que sur son parcours de vie. Dans son œuvre, la force de l’idée prévaut sur le médium pour un réveil sensible sur l’état d’un monde simultanément étranger et familier.

Elisa Ganivet*

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A propos de l’artiste

Né à Gaza, Palestine, en 1966. Vit et travaille à Paris. Taysir Batniji a étudié l’art à l’université nationale An-Najah de Naplouse, avant de poursuivre des études en France à l’École nationale supérieure d’art de Bourges entre 1995 et 1997. Depuis, il vit et travaille entre la France et la Palestine où, dans cet entre-deux géographique et culturel, il développe une pratique artistique pluridisciplinaire (dessin, installation, objets / sculpture, performance, etc.) dont l’image, photo et vidéo, est au centre depuis 2000.

L’œuvre de Taysir Batniji, souvent teintée d’impermanence et de fragilité, puise son inspiration dans son histoire subjective, mais aussi dans l’actualité et l’histoire. Par le biais d’une approche distanciée, il détouche, éteint, joue avec son sujet initial, de manière à proposer un regard poétique, parfois grinçant, sur la réalité.

Après sa première exposition personnelle à Paris en 2002, ses œuvres ont été largement exposées en Europe et dans le monde, y compris à la Biennale de Venise ; au Jeu de Paume à Paris ; au Martin-Gropius-Bau de Berlin ; à la Kunsthalle de Vienne ; au Witte de With de Rotterdam et au V&A Museum à Londres. Taysir Batniji est représenté par les galeries Sfeir-Semler (Hambourg/Beyrouth) et Eric Dupont (Paris).
Elisa Ganivet: Yes, the second intifada started in 2000, when I decided to

TB. Yes, the second intifada started in 2000, when I decided to
EG: Thinking about your travels and moves during this period and while I was visiting the exhibition, I realized that you didn’t make large volume artworks, like monumental installations.

TB: Yes. Probably because until 2010, I didn’t have a fixed place to work (a studio). For me, it has always been important to be able to store my works. And to be able to move around easily and lightly, without getting bogged down in logistics. I have made many works on paper. Composed of several easily transportable fragments, they unfold in space and can have a monumental scale when exposed. This is also one of the reasons why in traditional terms, I stopped with painting because it requires space, materials, a certain sedentary lifestyle. A different way of life.

EG: Would the installation Inflammable (1997) signal this break?

TB: Yes, there are several works, such as Undefined (1997) [Figure 2] or the untitled key prints on rolled canvas (1997) [Figure 3], that mark this transition from an exclusively pictorial practice to a more multidisciplinary, conceptual practice that evokes the political context in a more concrete, clearer way than before. Even if the starting point remains the personal experience, this one is inscribed in the collective history. The back and forth is permanent.

EG: But precisely, the key is a fundamental element in the Palestinian context. You mention it three times here with the rusty ones on canvas, the glass key ring and also the real estate agency project.

TB: Indeed, for the Palestinians, the key is emblematic. It is a strong symbol because it refers to the history of the Nakba of 1948, of the dispossession of land, of those Palestinians who kept their keys in the hope of being able to return home one day. The prints of rusty keys on canvas express this collective and historical dimension. While the glass copy of my key ring—the only object I had on me when I found myself unable to return to Gaza in 2006—is more a reminder of a personal trauma.

EG: Related to this symbol, could you explain the real estate agency’s project?

TB: These are houses that were bombed during the “Cast Lead” operation carried out at the end of 2008, beginning of 2009 against Gaza. At the time, about 1,500 people died, including 500 children. Many infrastructures and houses were also destroyed. Faced with this destruction, which is reminiscent of the political punishments practiced during the British mandate (the British occupation of Palestine before 1948) and then perpetuated by the Israeli government, my work consisted of paying tribute to these houses and their inhabitants. To make memory. I had the rubble photographed by a friend on the spot who also had the mission of collecting information on these places. I then presented these images in the form of a fictitious real estate agency, in order to create a discrepancy between what the viewer thinks he sees and what he sees.

EG: That’s exactly it. While you evoke politics, you manage, through your mode of representation, to bring into play the subtlety of consequences. We don’t need to see the raw tragedy.

TB: Effectively, for the Palestinians, the clef is emblématique. C’est un symbole fort car se référant à l’histoire de la Nakba de 1948, de la dépossession des terres, de ces Palestiniens qui gardé leur clef dans l’espoir de pouvoir retourner un jour chez eux. Les empreintes de clefs rouillées sur toile expriment cette dimension collective et historique. Tandis que la copie en verre de mon trousseau de clefs, le seul objet que j’avais sur moi quand je me suis retrouvé dans l’impossibilité de rentrer à Gaza en 2006, est plus le rappel d’un traumatisme personnel.

EG: Corrélatif à ce symbole, pourrais-tu nous expliquer le projet de l’agence immobilière?

TB: Oui il y a plusieurs œuvres, comme Undefined (1997) [Figure 2] ou les empreintes de clés sur toiles rouillées, sans titre (1997) [Figure 3], qui marquent cette transition entre une pratique exclusivement picturale et une pratique davantage pluridisciplinaire, plus conceptuelle et qui évoque le contexte politique d’une manière plus concrète, plus claire qu’avant. Même si le point de départ reste le vécu personnel, celui-là s’inscrit dans l’histoire collective. Le va-et-vient est permanent. La levée des sous-terrains, des lieux de passage (aéroports, gares). Jusqu’en 2006, j’étais en déplacement permanent. Cette œuvre fait un écho avec un autre chez moi : Gaza journal intime, qui est une série photographique prise lors de différents séjours au pays entre 1999 et 2006.

EG: L’exposition au Mac Val débute d’ailleurs avec la série de photographies Chez moi, ailleurs (2000, en cours) qui insiste sur cet « autre chez moi », un présent que je donne à voir, tout en insistant sur son caractère intime et autobiographique. Il s’agit d’une sélection d’images qui retraçent ma vie, par bribes, ses étapes, les différents endroits où j’ai vécu en Europe, des lieux de passage (aéroports, gares). Jusqu’en 2006, j’étais en déplacement permanent. Cette œuvre fait un écho avec un autre chez moi : Gaza journal intime, qui est une série photographique prise lors de différents séjours au pays entre 1999 et 2006.

TB: En effet. Sans doute parce que, jusqu’en 2010, je n’ai pas eu de lieu de travail (d’atelier) fixe. Pour moi, il a toujours été important de pouvoir stocker mes œuvres. Et de pouvoir me déplacer facilement et légèrement, sans m’encombrer des questions logistiques. J’ai réalisé beaucoup d’œuvres sur papier. Composées de plusieurs fragments facilement transportables, elles se déploient dans l’espace et peuvent avoir une échelle monumentale sous leur forme exposée. C’est aussi l’une des raisons pour laquelle j’ai rompu avec la peinture, en des termes traditionnels, car celle-ci demande de l’espace, des matériaux, une certaine sédentarité. Un mode de vie différent.

EG: L’installation Inflammable (1997) signalerait-elle cette rupture ?

TB: Oui, il y a plusieurs œuvres, comme Undefined (1997) [Figure 2] ou les empreintes de clés sur toiles rouillées, sans titre (1997) [Figure 3], qui marquent cette transition entre une pratique exclusivement picturale et une pratique davantage pluridisciplinaire, plus conceptuelle et qui évoque le contexte politique d’une manière plus concrète, plus claire qu’avant. Même si le point de départ reste le vécu personnel, celui-là s’inscrit dans l’histoire collective. Le va-et-vient est permanent.

EG: Mais justement, la clef est un élément fondamental dans le contexte palestinien. Tu la convoques ici à trois reprises avec celles rouillées sur toiles, le trousseau en verre et aussi le projet de l’agence immobilière.

TB: L’installation Inflammable (1997) signalerait-elle cette rupture ?
TB: Yes, it is important to me that my work avoids any victimization, any pathos, any strictly political discourse. To this end, all means are good: fiction, detour... I try to use “filters” to keep a distance.

EG: In the scenography, there is an installation that quite disturbed me. It is the one from your Disruptions series (2015-2017) [Figure 4] where we see screenshots of Whatsapp conversations with your family. Green covers a large part of the images. We can make out very pixelated streets. The pixel is also one of your favorite motifs. It reminds us of absence, of a materiality that is no longer, or that is becoming. A blur. Moreover, the scenography of the Mac Val transforms this work into a box of vibrations because the wall shakes at the sound of the projection of the video entitled Bruit de fond (2007).

EG: C’est justement ça. Alors que tu évoques la politique, tu parviens, par ton mode de représentation, à faire jouer la subtilité des conséquences. On n’a pas besoin de voir la tragédie crue.

TB: Oui, il est important pour moi que mon travail évite toute victimisation, tout pathos, tout discours strictement politique. À cette fin, tous les moyens sont bons : la fiction, le détournement... J’essaie d’avoir recours à des « filtres », de garder une distance.

EG: Dans la scénographie, il y a une installation qui m’a assez troublée. C’est celle de ta série Disruptions (2015-2017) [Figure 4] où l’on voit les captures d’écran de conversations Whatsapp avec ta famille. Le vert recouvre une grande partie des images, on y distingue des rues très pixelisées. Le pixel est aussi un de tes motifs de prédilection. Il rappelle l’absence, une matérialité qui n’est plus, ou qui est en devenir. Un flou. De plus, la scénographie du Mac Val transforme cette œuvre en caisson de vibrations car la cimaise tremble au son de la projection de la vidéo justement intitulée Bruit de fond (2007).
When communicating with my mother and family in Gaza, the screen would regularly blur, due to the poor connection. The disruption of the network was destructuring the images. Interested by this formal phenomenon, and by the way the faces of my relatives and the streets of my neighborhood were transformed, I wanted to capture these moments. Photography has never been an end in itself for me. I like the way this type of project questions the medium.

So what was the process of the *Watchtowers* (2008)?

These are Israeli military watchtowers in the West Bank photographed in the manner of Bernd and Hilla Becher. The two German photographers documented Europe’s post-industrial heritage from the 1950s onwards in a documentary style and according to a precise protocol: frontal images taken with a camera, sharp, without human presence, with subdued, neutral light, etc. In 2004, I went to see their retrospective at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. I was already familiar with their work because my wife, Sophie, was doing her DEA on the documentary style and was interested in the German school of Düsseldorf. In 2008, my friend Dominique Abensour, director of Le Quartier in Quimper, invited me to participate in the exhibition “Our Realities”. This is how we were able to get the funds for the production.

How did you locate the watchtowers?

I contacted several people to locate them but they are military buildings. There is no known map. Some photographers were afraid to go there because it could be a dangerous environment.
Other people put me in touch with Israeli photographers who were willing to do this work, but I wanted it to be seen from the Palestinian side. Even if my first idea was to do as the Bechers did, to work with a camera, to take the time... We quickly realized that installing this type of equipment in a guarded military zone, moreover without accreditation, was impossible. The delegated photographer had to work with a normal digital camera equipped with a telephoto lens to take pictures from a distance. Sometimes, he took the picture while passing in a bus or in a car, or even hidden behind a tree... As a result, contrary to the perfect images of the Bechers, who follow the protocol to the letter, the photographs of Watchtowers are sometimes blurred, pixelated, in backlight, etc. Because it was impossible to take the time to pose. What seemed to be flaws eventually became an advantage, because the goal was not to imitate the Bechers identically. It was just enough to create the illusion from a distance. At first glance, one thinks that this is one of their series, but a second time, one realizes that it is not. The precariousness of the photos, their defects, indirectly evoke the situation. Without making a speech on what is a watchtower, on the complexity of the displacement, one feels all this tension which surrounds it, the difficulty, the danger to approach it.

EG: I draw a parallel with one of Rula Halawani’s series, The Wall at Night (2004), who herself confessed to being afraid of the concrete wall and approached it at night, as if to tame it.

TB: Indeed, but it must have been complicated for her...

EG: I didn’t know and I really like the video Me 2 (2003). It looks like a

photographes avaient peur d’y aller car le contexte pouvait être dangereux. D’autres personnes m’ont mis en contact avec des photographes israéliens qui étaient disposés à réaliser ce travail, mais je voulais que ce soit vu du côté palestinien. Même si ma première idée était de faire comme les Becher, de travailler à la chambre, de prendre le temps... On s’est vite rendu compte qu’installer ce type de matériel dans une zone militaire surveillée, de surcroît sans accréditation, était impossible. Le photographe délégué a dû travailler avec un appareil numérique lambda muni d’un téléobjectif pour photographier de loin. Parfois, il prenait la photo en passant dans un bus ou dans une voiture, ou encore caché derrière un arbre... Du coup, contrairement aux images parfaites des Becher, qui suivent à la lettre le protocole, les photographies de Watchtowers sont parfois floues, pixelisées, en contre-jour, etc. Car il était impossible de prendre le temps de la pose. Ce qui semblait être des défauts est finalement devenu un avantage, car le but n’était pas d’imiter les Becher à l’identique. Il était juste suffisant de créer l’illusion de loin. Au premier regard, on pense qu’il s’agit d’une de leurs séries, mais dans un second temps, on se rend compte que non. La précarité des photos, leurs défauts, évoquent indirectement la situation. Sans faire de discours sur ce qu’est un mirador, sur la complexité du déplacement, on ressent toute cette tension qui l’entoure, la difficulté, le danger de s’en approcher.

EG : Je fais le parallèle avec l’une des séries de Rula Halawani, The Wall at Night (2004), qui confessait elle-même avoir peur du mur en béton et qui s’en approchait de nuit, comme pour l’apprivoiser.
burst of pure resistance, a scream. We see you turning with two different angles on this song performed by Gloria Gaynor.

TB: I was in Marseille at the time, between the end of 2002 and the end of 2003, when the Americans were preparing the war in Iraq. In spite of all the demonstrations against it, it seemed that everything was heading towards this war. The situation described by the media in France, full of clichés towards the Iraqis, was unclear, ambiguous, even perverse.

EG: A Manichean image?

TB: Yes, while the majority of international opinion was against the war, the positioning of the media did not reflect the reality on the ground, the feelings of the Iraqis, the way they lived the situation. I could no longer watch the television news (France 2, in particular). I decided to install my camera, like a filter, and to film them. With the vague idea that one day I might do something with these rushes. In the end, Me 2 is the assembly of two sequences: on the first one, I turn like a dervish, carrying the camera at arm's length, filming what I see. On the second, the camera is posed (fixed) and films me while shooting. As for the Gloria Gaynor song, I got it from a carnival that I filmed in Marseille. The interweaving of the two sequences produces a double look: that of a man who turns and sees himself turning. This performative video is a spontaneous gesture, a kind of cry against war, a will to win or, at least, to survive.

EG: To face up to it. Justly in situations where the population is vulnerable and in distress, you also manage to capture, to extract an essence from the situation to make it more universal. We start from our own vulnerability, as individuals, and the added excess by the catastrophic political and geopolitical situations. Your personal experience with Gaza Diary or To my Brother, for example, expresses this.

TB: It is true that To My Brother (2012) [Figure 6] is a special work because it is about my missing brother who was killed by the Israeli army in 1987 at the beginning of the first Intifada. I think

Figure 6. To my brother (2012). Series of 60 hand carvings from photographs on paper, 30.5 x 40.5 cm. Detail (right) and view of the exhibition at MACVAL, 2021. Courtesy of the artist.
this story affected me a lot and had an impact on my work, especially on the works related to disappearance, absence. Basically, beyond the political prism and current events, beyond the war which can only be a one-off, I am above all interested in the human dimension. What happens on the fringe of the bombings? How do people live? Because nothing lasts forever. In fact, I dedicated one of my works to this observation: Nothing is permanent (2014). Wars, occupation, what a people lives at a time T are only passages in History. The situations all change one day. And what remains is the human, the daily life. What people do, what they tell.

EG: How did you react to the clashes last spring 2021?

TB: As usual when something happens. I feel helpless, because I am geographically far away. I wonder what I can do. These are times when I am active on Facebook. I try to share, to inform, to comment on events, to help people understand what is going on, to read between the lines. Because obviously I feel concerned. But these are times of anguish, of concern for my family on the spot. I try to call often, to be in contact with my relatives, I make sure they are well, I tell them that I am thinking about them, etc. What is incredible, and painful, is that although these kinds of events make the headlines, as soon as the episode is over, the situation is forgotten. It is forgotten that people are still living with the trauma of what has just happened. Since 2006, there have been four successive wars. A large number of houses have been bombed without ever being rebuilt. The trauma can be seen in the children. There are many cases of suicides. No one talks about it because there is no future, no political perspective. Fifteen years ago, there was still a horizon, a hope that this situation would be resolved. Now there is nothing. The Israeli government literally has “carte blanche”. The situation is left to rot, under the pretext that Gaza is controlled by Hamas. But I think that everyone has their share of responsibility. Whatever the position towards Hamas, we forget that the Gazan population did not choose and that, since 2007, they have suffered poverty, malnutrition and insecurity.

EG: What do you think when people mention “diaspora artist”?

TB: But here this is also your home, you have a family, you have built...

TB: Yes of course, but I am cut off from my home there. My children were only able to go to Gaza once. They were very small. And it’s hard for me to pass on the language to them.

TB: But they understand you when you speak to them in Arabic.

TB: A little. They have one Arabic class a week because I want them to learn, not to lose contact with the language. I try to speak to them every day in Arabic but it’s not easy every day.

EG: Speaking of transmission, you went to see your family who lives in California. You had done this project with drawings tant qu’individu, et du surplus ajouté par les situations politiques et géopolitiques catastrophiques. Ton expérience personnelle avec par exemple Gaza journal intime ou To my Brother l’exprime.

TB: Il est vrai que To my Brother (2012) [Figure 6] est une œuvre particulière puisqu’il s’agit de mon frère disparu, tué par l’armée israélienne, en 1987, au début de la première Intifada. Je pense que cette histoire m’a beaucoup affectée et qu’elle a eu un impact sur mon travail, notamment sur les œuvres en lien avec la disparition, l’absence. Au fond, au-delà du principe politique et de l’actualité, au-delà de la guerre qui ne peut être que ponctuelle, je m’intéresse surtout à la dimension humaine. Que se passe-t-il en marge des bombardements ? Comment vivent les gens ? Car rien ne dure jamais. D’ailleurs, j’ai consacré l’une de mes œuvres à ce constat : Rien n’est permanent (2014). Les guerres, l’occupation, ce que vit un peuple à un instant « t » ne sont que des passages dans l’Histoire. Les situations changent toutes un jour. Et ce qui reste c’est l’humain, la vie quotidienne. Ce que font les personnes, ce qu’elles racontent.

EG: Comment as-tu réagi face aux affrontements du printemps de 2021 ?

TB: Comme d’habitude lorsqu’il arrive quelque chose. Je me sens impuissant, car je suis géographiquement loin. Je me demande si je pourrais faire autre chose. Je m’intéresse à des périodes durant lesquelles je suis actif sur Facebook. J’essaie de partager, d’insister, de commenter des événements, d’aider les gens à comprendre ce qui se passe, à lire entre les lignes. Car évidemment je me sens concerné. Mais ce sont des périodes d’angoisse, d’inquiétude pour ma famille sur place. J’essaie de téléphoner souvent, d’être en contact avec mes proches, je m’assure qu’ils vont bien, je leur dis que je pense à eux, etc. Ce qui est incroyable et douloureux, c’est que, bien que ce genre d’événements fasse la une des journaux, dès que l’épisode est fini, la situation retombe dans l’oublï. On oublie que les gens continuent à vivre le traumatisme de ce qui vient de se passer. Depuis 2006, il y a eu quatre guerres successives. Un grand nombre de maisons ont été bombardées sans jamais être reconstruites. Le traumatisme se situe à travers les enfants. Il y a beaucoup de cas de suicides. Personne n’en parle car il n’y a ni avenir, ni perspective politique. Il y a une quinzaine d’années, il y avait encore un horizon, un espoir de voir cette situation se résoudre. Maintenant, il n’y a plus rien. Le gouvernement israélien a littéralement carte blanche. On laisse la situation pourrir, sous prétexte que Gaza est 控制 by le Hamas. Mais je pense que chacun a sa part de responsabilité. Quelle que soit la position vis-à-vis du Hamas, on oublie que la population gazouzıe n’a pas choisi et que, depuis 2007, elle subit pauvreté, malnutrition et insécurité.

EG: Que penses-tu lorsque l’on mentionne « artiste de la diaspora » ?

TB: Je n’aime pas trop les étiquettes. Et j’ai toujours eu une réticence à l’égard du mot « exil ». C’est un mot très lourd. Sans issue. Pour ma part, je garde toujours une certaine part de responsabilité. Quelle que soit la position vis-à-vis du Hamas, on oublie que la population gazouzıe n’a pas choisi et que, depuis 2007, elle subit pauvreté, malnutrition et insécurité.

EG: Mais ici c’est aussi chez toi, tu as une famille, tu as construit...

TB: Oui bien sûr, mais je suis coupé de chez moi là-bas. Mes enfants n’ont pu aller à Gaza qu’une seule fois. Ils étaient très petits. Et j’ai du mal à leur transmettre la langue.

EG: Mais ils te comprennent quand tu leur parles en arabe.

TB: Un peu. Ils ont un cours d’arabe par semaine car je tiens à ce qu’ils apprennent, qu’ils ne perdent pas le contact avec la langue. J’essaie de leur parler au quotidien en arabe mais ce n’est pas facile tous les jours.

EG: En parlant transmission, tu es parti voir ta famille qui vit en Californie.

TB: To my Brother (2012) [Figure 6] is a particular work in that it’s about my brother, who was killed by the Israeli army in 1987, at the beginning of the First Intifada. I believe that this story has had a significant impact on my work, especially on the works related to disappearance, absence. Basically, beyond the political prism and current events, beyond the war which can only be a one-off, I am above all interested in the human dimension. What happens on the fringe of the bombings? How do people live? Because nothing lasts forever. In fact, I dedicated one of my works to this observation: Nothing is permanent (2014). Wars, occupation, what a people lives at a time T are only passages in History. The situations all change one day. And what remains is the human, the daily life. What people do, what they tell.

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EG: Speaking of transmission, you went to see your family who lives in California. You had done this project with drawings
and photographs: *Home Away from Home / Adam* (2017) [Figure 7].

**TB:** Yes, it was a funny situation because my cousins turned out to be both familiar and foreign. I knew them very young and very little. They moved to the United States in the late 1960s to the mid-1980s. So, once I was at their home, I felt a certain frustration because I was in the midst of my family, yet I felt like a stranger. Like I was in Gaza without being there. This ultimately exacerbated my frustration at not being able to be with my family in Gaza. It also awakened memories, situations that were buried inside me.

**EG:** In your exhibition at the Mac Val, we understand in particular the coherence and evolution of your thinking. But more than continuity, I think there is a lot of endurance in the body of your work.

**TB:** That’s what was important in this exhibition and, for me, it’s a great opportunity to be able to gather my work, to have visibility, to step back on what I’ve done so far. It’s like an assessment, a time for reflection, before continuing. It’s a gestation in progress.

**EG:** To see what will come next, step by step... To remain patient.

**TB:** Yes, in the middle of this very particular period, because of Covid among other things. At the moment I am preparing an exhibition at the Mathaf in Doha. So I still have to wait before going back to the heart of my creative process.

**Tu avais réalisé ce projet avec dessins et photographies : Home Away from Home / Adam (2017) [Figure 7].**

**TB:** Oui, c’était une drôle de situation car mes cousins se sont avérés être à la fois familiers et étrangers. Je les ai connus très jeune et très peu. Ils se sont installés aux États-Unis entre la fin des années 1960 et le milieu des années 1980. Alors, une fois chez eux, j’ai senti une certaine frustration car j’étais au sein de ma famille, tout en me sentant étranger. Comme si j’étais à Gaza sans y être. Cela a finalement exacerbé ma frustration de ne pouvoir être avec ma famille de Gaza. Cela a également réveillé des souvenirs, des situations qui étaient enfouies en moi.

**EG:** Dans ton exposition au Mac Val, on comprend en particulier toute la cohérence et l’évolution de ta pensée. Mais plus qu’une continuité, je pense qu’il y a beaucoup d’endurance dans le corpus de ton œuvre.

**TB:** C’est ce qui était important dans cette exposition et, pour moi, c’est une belle opportunité de pouvoir rassembler mes œuvres, d’avoir une visibilité, du recul sur ce que j’ai réalisé jusque-là. Comme un bilan, un temps de réflexion, avant de poursuivre. C’est une gestation en cours.

**EG:** De voir ce qui va se profiler ensuite, step by step... De rester patient.

**TB:** Oui au milieu de cette période très particulière, à cause du Covid entre autres. En ce moment, je prépare une exposition au Mathaf de Doha. Alors je dois encore attendre avant de retourner au cœur de mon processus de création.