In 2001, Eyal Weizman and Rafi Segal won a competition to represent the Israeli Association of United Architects (IAUA) at the 21st UIA World Congress in Berlin. Over the next eleven months, they cataloged, classified and historicized the politics of the Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, paying specific attention to how professional architects and planners participated. In the planned exhibition, The Politics of Israeli Architecture, they intended to display a series of maps, planimetric drawings and aerial photographs. The Israeli settlements were named weapons of civilian occupation and the architects and planners whose designs were complicit in helping achieve Israel’s political goals were said to be guilty of violating international law and basic human rights.

After submitting the presentation boards, a steering committee canceled funding for the exhibition, its 5,000 printed catalogs were destroyed and the curators were threatened both professionally and legally.

According to Weizman and Segal, “the strategic use of territory in the exercise of state power is well established…But merely posing the question of the responsibility and culpability of Israeli architects and planners within the context of the conflict, and especially in the construction of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank, led to the exhibition being banned by the same body of architects that commissioned it, the IAUA.”

Abstract

In 2002, Eyal Weizman and Rafi Segal organized an exhibition that was banned just before opening, its 5,000 printed catalogs destroyed. These curators intended to exhibit evidence of Israeli architects’ complicity with violations of international law and human rights. This paper examines reciprocities between architectural media displayed in an exhibition space and the way evidence is exhibited in a legal context. Second, the strategies of attributing meaning to architecture in this exhibition are compared to nineteenth century international expositions and panoramas.

Keywords: media, representation, evidence, testimony, international law, international expositions, panorama, forensic architecture

Resumen

En 2002, Eyal Weizman y Rafi Segal organizaron una exposición para la Asociación Israelí de Arquitectos Unidos. Antes de su inauguración, la exposición fue cancelada y sus 5,000 catálogos impresos fueron destruidos. Los curadores querían exhibir evidencia de la complicidad de los arquitectos israelíes con violaciones a los derechos humanos y las leyes internacionales durante la ocupación de Cisjordania. En este contexto, el presente artículo se pregunta en primer lugar cuál es la diferencia entre exhibir arquitectura en un museo y exhibir evidencia en un contexto legal. En segundo lugar, compara las estrategias de mostrar la arquitectura en esta exposición con las exposiciones mundiales del siglo XIX y los edificios panorama.

Palabras clave: medios, representación, prueba, testimonio, ley internacional, exposiciones mundiales, panorama, arquitectura forense
This exhibition, of course, was not a court of law; however, there are recogni-
tions between architectural media displayed in an exhibition space and the way
evidence is exhibited in a legal context. In a courtroom — just as in a museum —
the preserver does not recreate the crime in real time and space, but
instead relies on the display of indices, representations, objects and testimo-
nies. It is not a bloody glove presented in a courtroom, but a link between
the blood of the victim and the hand of the murderer. Meaning, in other words,
is not held in a single displayed object, but produced through a polycentric
network of objects and media. The exhibition organized by Weizman and
Segal traces the connections between architects and the settlements, show-
ing that architects are not just professionals working for a client, nor are they
passive actors in history, but that their technical expertise instead facilitates
the needs and pressures of the modern Zionist project. Because this exhibi-
tion was curated for an audience of international professional architects, the
agenda of the exhibition, in addition to bringing international awareness to
Israel’s settlements, was to call attention to the responsibility and public char-
acter of architects. This is emphasized by Sharon Rotbard in the preface to the
catalog: “The politics of Israeli architecture is the politics of any architecture.”

However, in the process of attributing a demonstrable connection between
an architect’s drawings — that is, the abstracted, codified architectural lan-
guage for organizing space and territory — to strategic and political agendas,
architecture must be understood and displayed as a complex register of his-
tory, memory and identity.

In 2002, this exhibition was part of a larger cultural shift. In the past
three decades, there has been an increase in the use of architectural evi-
dence exhibited in a legal context, particularly in cases dealing with the
violation of international humanitarian law. According to Weizman, this
is at the requests of the courts, which, after a series of tribunals investigat-
ing the genocides in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, gen-
erally moved away from human testimony and towards medical data and
forensic evidence. Weizman’s recent work has shifted towards the use of
the materials, structure and form of architecture in the court of law. He now serves as the director of Forensic Architecture, an EU-funded
research project that conducts studies on a wide variety of scales, from micro-
scopic transformations in the skins of buildings to the composition of piles of
rubble. In this way, architecture is understood as a complex register of recent
historical events and the building is presented as “objective proof” exhibitible in the court of law. As Weizman says, “The difference between a witness and a piece of evidence is that evidence is presented, while a witness is interrogated.”

As mentioned by Weizman and Segal, what stood out about their exhibition was the suggestion of
the guilt and responsibility of architects. Typically, when architectural evidence is exhibited, it is because
of its destruction rather than its construction. For example, in a report published by the Office of the
United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the destruction of 160,000 homes, involving
the death or displacement of thousands of families, was important to the investigation into violations
of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the context of the military
operations during the 2014 Israel-Gaza war. In an infographic titled “IDF Attacks on Houses,” created
to supplement the report, the destruction of homes was linked to the lives of civilians, something
which had not been used in previous court rulings. This infographic was an attempt to delegitimize the
In these tribunals, there is little debate about the particularities of displaying architecture; the complexities of architectural representation or the paradox of remaking the architectural experience outside of its context. In scholarship focused on architectural exhibitions, these complexities have been well established. As Barry Bergdoll said in a recent anthology, “Nearly every lecture on the architectural museum or the architectural exhibition begins by rehearsing the truism that architecture can only be exhibited through simulacra, substitute objects or representations.” Similarly, Jean-Louis Cohen said in conversation with Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois, “Exhibiting architecture is a matter of showing indices of something which, when the work is built, is out there.” Both Cohen and Bergdoll argue that the exhibition of architecture is a unique problem, unlike the exhibition of sculpture, painting and film, because architecture in its built form is already on display and any act of trying to display architecture in an exhibition space (with few exceptions) can only occur through secondary (presumably inferior) forms of representation. To elaborate on this observation, Cohen used two French translations of the English word ‘work’. The first was ouvrage, referring to the “real” built work, the thing outside of the exhibition space — in the case of Weissman and Segal’s exhibition, the infrastructure, roads and red roof tiles of the Israeli settlements — and the second woëuvre, referring to the project, the idea or the intellectual work. When Weissman and Segal intended to exhibit the Israeli settlements as evidence in a legal context, this distinction between work/ouvrage and work/woëuvre lost its specificity below. It will be shown how these categories were coexistent, codependent and mutually defining.

The most prominent feature of the exhibition was the map created by Eyal Weizman with B’Tselem, also known as the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. At the time of the exhibition, this map was an up-to-date record of the settlements’ project. In the exhibition, the settlements on the map were linked to a chronological narrative showing the history of architecture’s role in developing strategies for building the settlements. According to Weissman and Segal, this civilian occupation of the West Bank began as horizontal expansion, as visible on a map, and transitioned into a vertical, sectional strategy in the 1980s that utilizes the topography of the land.

In addition to the larger map, there was a set of smaller maps made by Ian Pintash to represent different moments throughout the history of the occupation (1967 to 2010) to correspond with the history of the Israeli settlements. According to Weissman and Segal, this civilian occupation of the West Bank began as horizontal expansion, as visible on a map, and transitioned into a vertical, sectional strategy in the 1980s that utilizes the topography of the land.
used today and attempted to direct new immigrants away from the coast and large cities with government incentives and the construction of new settlements.13 After the Six-Day War in 1967, Israel seized 40 per cent of the West Bank, primarily barren hillslopes and mountain peaks, through a manipulative use of the Ottoman land law of 1858, which allowed for the state to take possession of land that had not been farmed or worked in the previous three years.14 To visually display this historical arc — from horizontal land acquisition to vertical landscape domination — maps and planimetric drawings were accompanied by aerial photographs of mountain settlements taken by Milutin Labudovic. Instead of walls or fences, these later settlements, which were built on the seized mountaintops, relied on the power of vision and the infrastructure of the towns to control the valleys below. Most importantly, these settlements were often strategically located near Palestinian cities. The people living in them would provide close territorial surveillance of the Palestinian people below, blurring the understandable boundary as represented on a map. An international tribunal cannot try Zionist ideology, just as it cannot try capitalism. Instead, a court requires a violation of the law to be traced to a specific author. In this legal context, the representation of the built reality (a point on a map) is produced, consumed and able to be debated in a public forum. In the latter, the visitor of the exhibition is given only a single view. In this panorama, the photographs foreground the Israeli settlements perched triumphantly on the mountaintops, with Palestinian cities off in the distance or showing them within isolated, pastoral surroundings. In the former, these acts as evidence of the vertical dominance described by Weizman, and in the latter, they depict the rhetorical strategy used by the Israeli government to encourage young families to move to these settlements — their terraced olive orchards and stone buildings, the return to the biblical land.

The actual built reality of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank (the ouvrage) — the curving roads which act as defensive structures, the infrastructure used to control the movement of people, the rings of houses which tactically use Israeli living rooms to surveil the valleys below, the physical domination of the landscape, the performative displays of Zionist ideology — these are the most significant violations of human rights imposed on the Palestinian people. However, in the interpretive context of the law, the function of these settlements holds no proof of guilt or innocence. What makes these settlements illegal, as defined by international humanitarian law, is that their physical built location violates a specific, understandable boundary as represented on a map. An international tribunal cannot try Zionist ideology, just as it cannot try capitalism. Instead, a court requires a violation of the law to be traced to a specific author. In this legal context, the representation of the built reality (a point on a map) is more important in proving guilt than the physical reality of the object itself, even if this representation relies exclusively on the physical object to derive its significance. In this case, the planimetric drawings of settlements included by the curators are not indices of a built reality, but the link that connects the violation of the law to authorial responsibility (i.e., the architect who drew the plans).

In 2003, Weizman and Segal’s exhibition was reorganized and presented at two separate galleries: first at New York’s Storefront for Art and Architecture and then as part of the Territories exhibition at Berlin’s ew Institute for Contemporary Art. Unlike the original exhibition, neither of these were curated solely for an audience of professional architects and a larger emphasis was placed on the aerial photographs of mountain settlements. At Storefront, the exhibition was organized to bring awareness to the original’s cancellation and coincided with the publication of the censored catalog. The images were hung at eye level and annotated with numbers to be “read” in Weizman’s words, “like an aerial reconnaissance document.”15 The planimetric drawings, maps and other information were located beneath the photographs and on adjacent walls. A few months later, at the ew Institute, the aerial images were made life-sized stretched from floor to ceiling, creating a fictionalized panoramic view across three walls of the enormous gallery. The center of the exhibition was left empty, allowing visitors to walk into the open gallery and look outwards to the occupied West Bank.

These two types of displays — the panoramas and reconnaissance photos — show two different strategies for displaying the meaning of architectural work. In the canceled exhibition and at Storefront, the fragmented display of architectural media is isolated, abstracted and brought into view as a matrix of indices, representations and objects. In doing this, the curators challenge the assumption that architecture is a static symbol; instead, the links between the media are where meaning is produced, consumed and able to be debated in a public forum. In the latter, the visitor of the exhibition is given only a single view. In this panorama, the photographs foreground the Israeli settlements perched triumphantly on the mountaintop, with Palestinian cities off in the distance or showing them within isolated, pastoral surroundings. In the former, these acts as evidence of the vertical dominance described by Weizman, and in the latter, they depict the rhetorical strategy used by the Israeli government to encourage young families to move to these settlements — their terraced olive orchards and stone buildings, the return to the biblical land.

In the nineteenth century, panoramic paintings and photographs became supplements to travel education and mass entertainment. These exhibitions were often held in buildings built for this purpose, designed to showcase the panoramic view, recreating the experience of visiting faraway lands.16 The exhibition at the ew Institute, reminiscent of one of these panorama buildings, was intended to exhibit how Israeli settlers “turned topography into scenography, forming an evocative landscape with a mesh of scriptural signification that must be extracted from the panorama and ‘read’ rather...
than merely be ‘seen.’ ‘Within this panorama, however, lies a cruel paradox,’ Weizman and Segal say, ‘the very thing that renders the landscape ‘biblical’ or ‘pastoral’ – its traditional inhabitation and cultivation in terraces, olive orchards, stone buildings and the presence of livestock, is produced by the Palestinians, who the Jewish settlers came to replace.’

This interest in presenting geography and cities in a single, legible image is central to nineteenth century assumptions about the way architectural meaning could symbolize and visually define national, regional and local identities. This idea was central to debates on the connections between architectural style and the nation-state in Germany and England or, for example, the new awareness of the meaning of public symbols and the potential of planned public spaces that emerged during the French Revolution. In the context of nineteenth century international exhibitions, this tendency can be seen in the architectural reconstructions, narrations and exhibitions that showcased the technological advancements of industrialized countries. Nations outside of Europe, however, such as Islamic countries, were presented, as Zeynep Çelik has said, ‘frozen in an ambiguous and distant past…incapable of change and advancement.’

This attribution of meaning to objects was not just true in full-scale architectural representation, but also in the way Islamic goods at the exhibitions were simultaneously seen as both educational objects and commodities (‘part museum…part bazaar’), which not only suggests that Islamic culture is already complete and knowable (read: not developing), but, as Mark Crinson has said, ‘popularized a certain kind of knowledge about the Orient…by saying that reality elsewhere was already understood and objectified, and therefore could easily be comprehended by the exhibition visitor.’

Exhibition Image at the KW Institute, Storefront for Art and Architecture, 2003

Exhibition Image at the KW Institute, Storefront for Art and Architecture, 2003
The Zionist image of ancient Israel, whose roots are visible in the exhibition’s panorama, is one in which Europeans imagined Palestine as a static landscape. This idea emerged in nineteenth-century biblical studies and is part of the discourse of orientalism. According to Edward Said, the depiction of Palestine by the Zionists was “either empty (as in the Zionist slogan, ‘a land without people for a people without land’) or neglected by the nomads and peasants who facelessly lived on it.” In reconstructing the image of the biblical landscape through a panorama, however, one risks reproducing this discourse of power. In Weizman and Segal’s exhibition, any human presence is assumed only through the depiction of buildings and landscapes, which is emphasized by the lack of any human testimony, most specifically the lack of Palestinian voices. However, some visual presence of the huge populations of Palestinian cities, even if only reduced to faceless buildings off in the distance, is important in terms of displaying the fakeness of these claims, particularly when there has been so much effort to construct artificial memories with actual settlements to write the inhabitants out of history and wipe them off the map.
Weizman's recent work as the director of Forensic Architecture has combined the two curatorial strategies discussed in this paper. This research uses fragmentary media such as images and video clips to create digital models and simulations of real-time events. For example, in a project titled “Hannibal in Rub al Khali,” the research team reconstructed the entire day of August 1, known as Black Friday, the deadliest day in the 2014 Israel-Gaza war. Considering minute details such as the movement of clouds and the length of building shadows, 7,000 images, sound clips and videos were combined to create a panoramic view of the entire day. Given this recent work, the exhibition canceled by the Israeli Association of Architects in 2003 should not be seen as a byproduct of a larger cultural shift in which courts have requested forensic and medical data, but, instead, this exhibition was an early testing ground for creating digital models and simulations of real-time events.

Notes
1. A year later, after the exhibition was banned, Verso and Babel published an edited version of the original catalog. See Raf Segal and Eyal Weizman, A Civilian Occupation: The Politics of Israeli Architecture (London: Verso, 2003).
2. Raf Segal, Eyal Weizman, “Introduction,” A Civilian Occupation, 20.
3. Sharon Rotbard, “Preface,” A Civilian Occupation, 16.
4. Eyal Weizman and Andrew Herscher, “Conversation: Architecture, Violence, Evidence,” Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism 8:1 (Summer 2013): 120–21, doi:10.5749/future.8.1.0111.
5. For a discussion of this work, see Raf Segal and Andrew Herscher, “Conversation: Architecture, Violence, Evidence.” See also Eyal Weizman and Tima Di Carlo, “Dying to Speak: Forensic Spatiology,” Log 20 (Fall 2010): 125–31.
6. Eyal Weizman and Andrew Herscher, “Conversation: Architecture, Violence, Evidence,” 127.
7. A/HRC/29/52, Human Rights Council, Report of the detailed findings of the Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict, para. 574. In this report, 2,512 Palestinians were said to have been killed during the 51-day conflict. The figure includes 1,462 Palestinian civilians, including 299 women and 551 children. These deaths were caused by 6,000 airstrikes and approximately 50,000 tank and artillery shells, which damaged 160,000 homes, killing or displacing thousands of families. In these same 51 days, 60 Israeli civilians and 42 soldiers were killed.
8. See Andrew Herscher, Violence Taking Place: The Architecture of the Kosovo Conflict (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).
9. Eyal Weizman and Andrew Herscher, “Conversation: Architecture, Violence, Evidence,” 115.
10. Berry Bergdoll, “Out of Site/In Plain View: On the Origins and Actuality of the Architecture Exhibition,” in Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen, ed., Exhibiting Architecture: A Paradox (New Haven: Yale School of Architecture, 2015), 13.
11. Yve-Alain Bois, Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss and Jean-Louis Cohen, “A Conversation with Jean-Louis Cohen,” October 89 (1999): 6, doi:10.2307/779136.
12. Sharon Rotbard, “Wall and Tower,” A Civilian Occupation, 48.
13. Zvi Efrat, “The Plan,” A Civilian Occupation, 59–70.
14. Raf Segal and Eyal Weizman, “The Mountain,” A Civilian Occupation, 82.
15. Raf Segal and Eyal Weizman, “The Mountain,” A Civilian Occupation, 86.
16. Eyal Weizman, email to Sarah Herda, January 6, 2003. Found in Storefront for Art and Architecture Exhibition, National Historical Publications and Records Commission.
17. Dietrich Neumann, “Instead of the Grand Tour: Travel Replacement in the Nineteenth Century,” Perspecta 41 (2008): 47–53.
18. See Andrew Herscher, “Invention, Memory, and Place,” Critical Inquiry 26-2 (Winter 2000): 175–192.
19. Segal, Raf and Eyal Weizman, A Civilian Occupation: The Politics of Israeli Architecture (London: Verso, 2003).
20. Eyal Weizman and Andrew Herscher, “Conversation: Architecture, Violence, Evidence” Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism 8:1 (Summer 2013): 111–123. doi:10.5749/future.8.1.0111.
21. Weizman, Eyal and Tima Di Carlo, “Dying to Speak: Forensic Spatiology,” Log 20 (Fall 2010): 125–31.

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