

exhibition, which primarily centers on the Arab-Christian minority in the Palestinian city of Lydda (also known as al-Lydd, its original Arabic name), located between Jaffa and Jerusalem—today defined as a so-called “mixed city” and called Lod in Hebrew. Guez is himself the son of a Palestinian Christian mother and a Tunisian Jewish father, and much of his work in *Georgiopolis* explores his family’s historical roots in the city.

When unfolding the poster-cover, flames are revealed in the image, lighting up this metaphorically silenced (and discriminated against) ghetto, whose population is 20 percent Palestinian. Alluding to *Georgiopolis*’ personal-historical context, both inside covers present black and white head shots from the first Palestinian Christian wedding in Lydda, in 1949, a year after the Nakba. In what may seem to be an implementation of Kamal Boulata’s thesis that religious iconography is a primary source of inspiration for Palestinian art, a two-page spread of a still image from Guez’s two-channel video installation (p. 122) of Lydda’s Orthodox Church of St. George—where some inhabitants sought refuge during the Lydda massacre during the Nakba—is at the center of the book. A similar depiction of the Palestinian Christian village of Eilabun could not have been applicable since the sanctuary of the church there was the scene of a massacre during the Nakba.

Curator Drorit Gur Arie contributes both the foreword and the chapter “An Order of Language,” followed by Ariella Azoulay’s “The Revolutionary Potential of the Ruin: On Dor Guez’s Photographic Series of al-Lydd Ruins.” Gil Eyal’s short yet upbeat chapter “Citizens of Georgiopolis” comes next. The volume concludes with a conversation between the artist and cultural practitioner, Michal Heiman.

Theoretically and thematically, *Georgiopolis* addresses ethnicity and hybridity in conflict zones by presenting the case of Guez’s Palestinian Christian family in Lydda and expanding upon its existing outlook. To do so, *Georgiopolis* approaches its subject matter and analyzes it mainly through the paradigms of memory, religion, language, ethnicity, and identity in a deeply divided society. A symbiotic relationship arguably emerges in *Georgiopolis* between the Nakba (a term only mentioned once by Azoulay) and the post-Nakba calamity

## EXPLORING LYDDA

**Georgiopolis**, by Dor Guez. Petach Tikva, Israel: Petach Tikva Museum, 2009. 198 pages. n.p.

*Reviewed by Makram Khoury-Machool*

Covered by a 2009 photograph that folds out into a poster of Lydda’s market square at night, this trilingual volume (Arabic, Hebrew, and English) is based on Dor Guez’s 2009–2010 exhibition *Georgiopolis* and contains contributions from four Israeli artists and academics, as well as an interview with Guez himself. *Georgiopolis*, the book, attempts to contextualize Guez’s

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of those Nakba survivors who escaped expulsion and managed to remain in their occupied homeland—such as Yaqub Munayyer, Dor Guez's maternal Palestinian Christian grandfather. To further blur the religious-ethnic boundaries otherwise entrenched in the political divide, this third generation Jerusalem-born artist introduces ten nighttime color photographs here in a series named al-Lydd Ruins, relating to the vestiges caused by the Israeli occupation, conveying the message that his Palestinian grandfather and family would live within the framework of *sumoud* (steadfastness) in their homeland.

What is missing, however, is any mention of Ismail Shammout (1930–2006), a founding father of Palestinian art and a Nakba refugee, who painted *Thirst* in the early 1950s, describing how his younger brother died from dehydration during their expulsion from Lydda. A connection here could have provided a magnificent yet belated dialogue with Shammout's painting, *Iqtīlā'a min al-Lydd* (Uprooting from Lydda) painted in the 1950s. Yet it is unclear whether Guez is aware that Shammout's work portrays the other half of his story: the removal from Lydda. It is this interplay between the ruins caused by the Nakba, and the expelled, that is so eloquently analyzed in Azoulay's chapter. These same ruins would become part of the lives of Nakba survivors who stayed in Lydda, including Munayyer who was of the same generation as Shammout.

Subsequent generations would come to realize that "it is even possible to reconstruct the exact construction plans and details prior to their demolition" (p. 173). The fact that "Guez does not attempt to expose the ruins in day light" (Azoulay, p. 174) perhaps is consistent with his avoidance of the term Nakba in his interview with Michal Heiman. Indeed, it is only when the reader imagines Guez's Palestinian grandfather amidst the ruins that one starts to realize why the third generation of Nakba survivors, such as Guez's cousin, Samira (a Palestinian with Israeli citizenship), was—even in 2009, six decades after her grandfather's wedding—asked by her employer in an Israeli-owned Jerusalem restaurant not to use her first name. Thus, she is made to appear "naked" in her Arabness, exposed in the daylight, as the Arab(i)city of the ruins is similarly exposed. By night, however, in Guez's

photographs, the ruins are cloaked—wearing the dark veil of the night so that the Nakba will not appear as naked, nor therefore wear, or refer, to the term, as it is shunned by the artist. Samira, too, has then to wear a "dark veil" in the form of a Jewish name to cover her ethnicity.

When Guez asks the question "Who are you?" in his interviews with three generations of his maternal Palestinian family, he is also arguably asking them to help define his own personal, academic, and artistic identities. In terms of artistic identity alignment with projects by Palestinian artist-interlocutors, and with *Georgiopolis* in its formative stages, one could cautiously add Guez's project to a growing corpus of work about the Nakba—including Emily Jacir's Memorial to 418 Palestinian Villages Destroyed, Depopulated and Occupied by Israel in 1948 (2001), Hisham Zreiq's Sons of Eilabun (2007) and Bashir Makhoul's work on ethnicity and identity theft (see for example, Hold [1999]). With many Palestinian (Christian) artists proficiently eloquent in addressing the Palestinian question, Guez's means of contribution will be subjected to close examination. While the artist undoubtedly adds an important layer, there should also—since it is Lydda in question—be some reservation as to whether the city "emerges from darkness . . . and flourishes from oblivion" (p. 155) because of this book and its exhibition.