Endeavors to Forget: Bedouin Resilience and Desert Sustainability Vs the Israeli State's Contemporary Colonialist Sculpture

Large piles of rubble that remain after acts of destruction and forced displacement appear like temporary, monumental manifestations of "Contemporary Colonialist Sculpture." They stand out in stark contrast to the lightweight and versatile construction used by the Bedouins, which it seeks to supplant, and as a tangible embodiment of the violent act of erasure and enclosure. The Common View collective learns from the Naqab/Negev Bedouins' adaptability and resilience towards an alternative, equitable futures.

Essay [1] / David Behar-Perahia [2] December 13, 2024

Zionist Israel endeavours to forget, with all its might, the history and current reality of the Bedouin communities within Israel and the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, the Bedouins in Israel and the Israeli-occupied West Bank have been subjected to a series of human rights violations, including forced displacement. They have been classified as a 'security threat' and branded 'squatters' on state lands. Successive Israeli governments have sought to expropriate their lands and concentrate them in desert townships. The Israeli authorities refuse to recognize the Bedouins as an indigenous people, thereby denyingwithholding from them the full range of rights due toof indigenous peoples under international law.

In their struggle against dispossession, the Bedouins endeavour to forget the ongoing destruction of their homes and heritage. With the aid of their unique, evolved adaptability and resilience, they display demonstrate a Sisyphean and stubborn insistence on their traditions and identity.

An estimated 90,000 Bedouins currently live in what the state defines as '"unrecognized'" villages, where construction is deemed illegal by the Israeli government, and they remain ineligible for municipal services. Since 1965, any such unlicensed homes built by the bedouins cannot be connected to facilities such as the water mains or the electricity grid. Consequently, the local communities maintain a contemporary desert sustainability, informed by Bedouin heritage. This involves the widespread collection or harvesting of rainwater and solar power, the use of greywater for irrigation, and rainwater dependent, desert-adapted agriculture, the wide reuse of cheap and light construction materials, and more. The pastoralist, '"unrecognized'" Bedouin villages present a powerful, flexible, and adaptive form of resilience that combats the attempts to erase its inherent value.

Contemporary Colonialist Sculpture

The Bedouins who live in 'unrecognized' villages face ever more frequent eviction notices and home demolitions. Bedouin families stand helplessly by as Israeli armed forces, who arrive with heavy bulldozers, at times flatten whole villages in one fell swoop. If they opt not to demolish their homes by with their own hands, they Bedouins also face hefty demolition fees that are levied on them.1 The large piles of rubble that

remain after these acts of destruction, seem like temporary, monumental manifestations of "Contemporary Colonialist Sculpture."2 They stand out in stark contrast to the Bedouins' lightweight and versatile structures construction of the Bedouins, which they seek to supplant, and as a tangible embodiment of the violent act of erasure and enclosure. Each one of the many rubble mounds, composed of twisted metal, broken concrete, and shattered furniture, home appliances and personal belongings, stands as a marker, commemorating the destruction and the many resulting individual tragedies of displacement.

Over the past 5 years, the Common Views collective has endeavoredto forget the manufactured boundaries between Bedouin and Jewish populations in their shared desert environment of the eastern Negev (Arabic: Naqab). Their aim is to highlight and learn from the valuable Bedouin desert sustainability heritage and contemporary practices.

How and what must we forget so as to enable the imagining of alternative visions? Forgetting can allow for a fresh look of wonder and an appreciation of the immense value inherent in the unique heritage of the Bedouin communities and in their contemporary sustainable desert adaptation and resilience. With this fresh perspective, one can better recognize the immense potential these hold for shaping a collective vision for a more equitable, just, and sustainable future.

A site with 3D LiDAR scans of demolished "CCS"s: https://commonviews.art/contemporary-colonialist-sculpture/ [3]

Further reference for the work of Common Views in the Naqab / Negev can be found in this interactive map: https://sourcingwater.commonviews.art/ [4]

- 1. See the 2018 Minority Rights Group International report, https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/mrgi/2018/en/64885 [5]
- 2. In dialogue with Rosalind Kraus's influential text The Art of Art, In "Sculpture in the Expanded Field [6]", *History: Critical Anthology*, New York: Oxford Press, 1998.

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