

OHIO ARTS COUNCIL'S

RIFFE GALLERY



# ASPIRATIONS

TOWARD A FUTURE IN THE MIDDLE EAST



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN ARTISTS

JANUARY 25 - APRIL 8, 2001

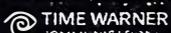
Curators Nella Cassouto and Robert Stearns

RIFFE GALLERY  
Vern Riffe Center  
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Downtown Columbus  
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**COLUMBUS DISPATCH  
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**MAR-20-01**

# **Student photos on display at Riffe Gallery**

**219** A student photo show pegged to an international exhibition will be on display through next Tuesday at the Riffe Gallery, 77 S. High St.

A reception will take place from 5 to 7 tonight at the gallery.

The Aspirations Photo Project was organized in conjunction with "Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East," an exhibit of more than 170 images from Israeli and Palestinian photographers.

The project was conducted with three Columbus schools — Parkmoor Elementary School, Beck Urban Academy and South High School — along with the Ohio Arts Council's Children of the Future program and members of Strategies Against Violence Everywhere at Linden-McKinley High School.

Participants worked with photographers and art teachers to create the photographs and text.

Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays and Tuesdays, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesdays through Fridays, noon to 8 p.m. Saturdays and noon to 4 p.m. Sundays. For more information, call 614-644-9624.



opposite page: *The Last Supper* by Adi Ness;  
 this page: *Untitled (Marsaba)* by Amit Geron.  
 Both photos are part of the Ohio Arts Council's  
*Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East*  
 exhibit currently on view at the Riffe Gallery

work from countries including Syria and Lebanon. The lack of peace agreements between Israel and these countries, however, meant that Cassouto could not travel to them. Jordan was also considered, until one of the photographers dropped out. He feared for his job in an organization promoting Arab culture should he participate, due to the heated relationship between Jordan and Palestine.

"We decided we're going to have to focus this, this is going to have to be an Israeli/Palestinian show," Stearns explained. "By focusing on these, we're focusing on the core of the conflict."

As Geron's work shows, no matter what the political landscape, the earthen reality of the area has a beauty that can't be permanently sullied by the millennia-old turf war. "I wanted to test how we could merge with the land without getting involved with the conflict," he explained. He accomplishes this by capturing gorgeous vistas in the visual context of vacation photos or picture postcards.

Universally recognizable images permeate the show, placing heavy emphasis on the commonalities of all nations and all people. The first set of photos a viewer sees on the far left gallery wall is Sharon Ya'ari's *Lawns* series. The green fields offer a bridge of the cultural gap through lawn care, an obsession of Americans and a way in which neighbors have gotten to know each other since the post-World War II birth of the suburbs.

Tamir Sher chronicles the entrances to parking lots in the *Openings* series. Concrete and dotted lines look familiar, yet these pictures conjure a dread at what's within the shadows behind the entrance. Sher uses perspective for a taste of claustrophobia.

Adi Ness adopts one of the most recognizable images in art—Leonardo DaVinci's *The Last Supper*—for a photo of the same name posed with men in Israeli army uniforms. In its huge presentation, a window's reflection casting a golden halo on the central figure and the many bullet holes that dot the walls behind them are clearly defined.

Breathtaking images with neither a sense of place or time come from Lee Yanor, an Israeli who lived in Paris and has concentrated on dance photography. In *The Dance*, members of Pina Bausch Dance Theatre are fluid, ethereal and passionate in a string of images printed on curling canvas and nailed to a common base. Above, monochromatic roses, not taking the chance of inciting through color, fly on parchment-like fabric as flags for a non-existent, but probably peaceful nation.

Even when the artists give a specific sense of their homeland and its people, there are unexpected ties that bind. Noel Jabbour's shots of *Palestinian Interiors*, while often including signs in a language most of us can't decipher, also present a glossy head shot of Jason Priestly from *Beverly Hills, 90210* among family photos and, in one home, what looks like a desiccated goat. In the most light-hearted part of the show, Naomi Tereza Salmon compiles souvenirs from the area for *Black Box: Souvenirs from Israel*. Through her, we learn that one can find snow globes in Bethlehem and Bazooka bubble gum and a Stanley measuring tape that reads "Peace Now" on its side in Jerusalem.

For Americans watching the Middle East crisis from halfway across the world, this exhibit allows a chance to look at the humanity within both sides, as well as to examine our own understanding of the region and its troubles. Stearns found that in conversation with educated friends about this project, many had no clear understanding of the conflict's history. Also, contrary to expectations, in Stearn's three-week visit to gather photography, more people were murdered in the city of Columbus than in the West Bank. Perhaps in the causes and possible solutions of one conflict is the key to ending them all.

*Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East* will be on display in the Riffe Center Gallery, 77 S. High St., through Sunday, April 8. Dial 466-2613 for info.

## Peace Project

Through the Riffe Gallery's education director, Julie Otten, and local mediation expert Patricia Williams, kids from several Columbus area schools and the Americorps-sponsored Children of the Future program will have their own visions of community hung alongside the images of *Aspirations*. The *Aspirations Photo Project* will be introduced at a reception on Tuesday, March 20.

Otten found it challenging at first to come up with a project that would resonate with the Middle East-themed exhibit and with the local children participating. She found inspiration in the common theme of individuals at home in their communities.

Williams, agency school coordinator for the non-profit Communities in Schools Columbus, realized the Riffe Gallery show fit perfectly into a conflict resolution program in place at several of the schools she works with, including Parkmoor Academy, Beck Urban Academy and South High School. Together, they enlisted the help of school administrators, then children were asked to take pictures of their neighborhoods. Parkmoor and Beck used artists-in-residence to help with the mechanics of the medium.

Evelyn Ikehorn, principal of Parkmoor Academy, said that this is the first time the school has used an artist-in-residence, but added that the arts have always been integral to the school's curriculum. As a model school for the district affiliated with the OSU School of Education, Parkmoor has for five years explored different ways of improving how students learn and how teachers share information for a fully integrated curriculum. In the *Aspirations Project*, math and science were studied in the photography process and writing came into play when each student provided a photo caption, incorporating the project into state benchmarks.

More importantly, the project holds the possibility of breaking down barriers, getting kids from diverse neighborhoods around the city to think with pride of their own communities, in a country in which it's scarily common for schoolchildren to answer conflict with firepower, the project wisely brings together the learning of facts with basic tools for peaceful living.

Otten found the impact of the project obvious to spot in the children's work. "You could tell which kids were thinking about what they shot, and thought a lot about community," she said. Children of the Future participants, at-risk kids who meet in community centers after school, often used the centers as their subject, which Otten found personally gratifying. "It said a lot about the role art can have in these kids' lives."

The *Aspirations Photo Project* will bang through March 27.

—Melissa Starker

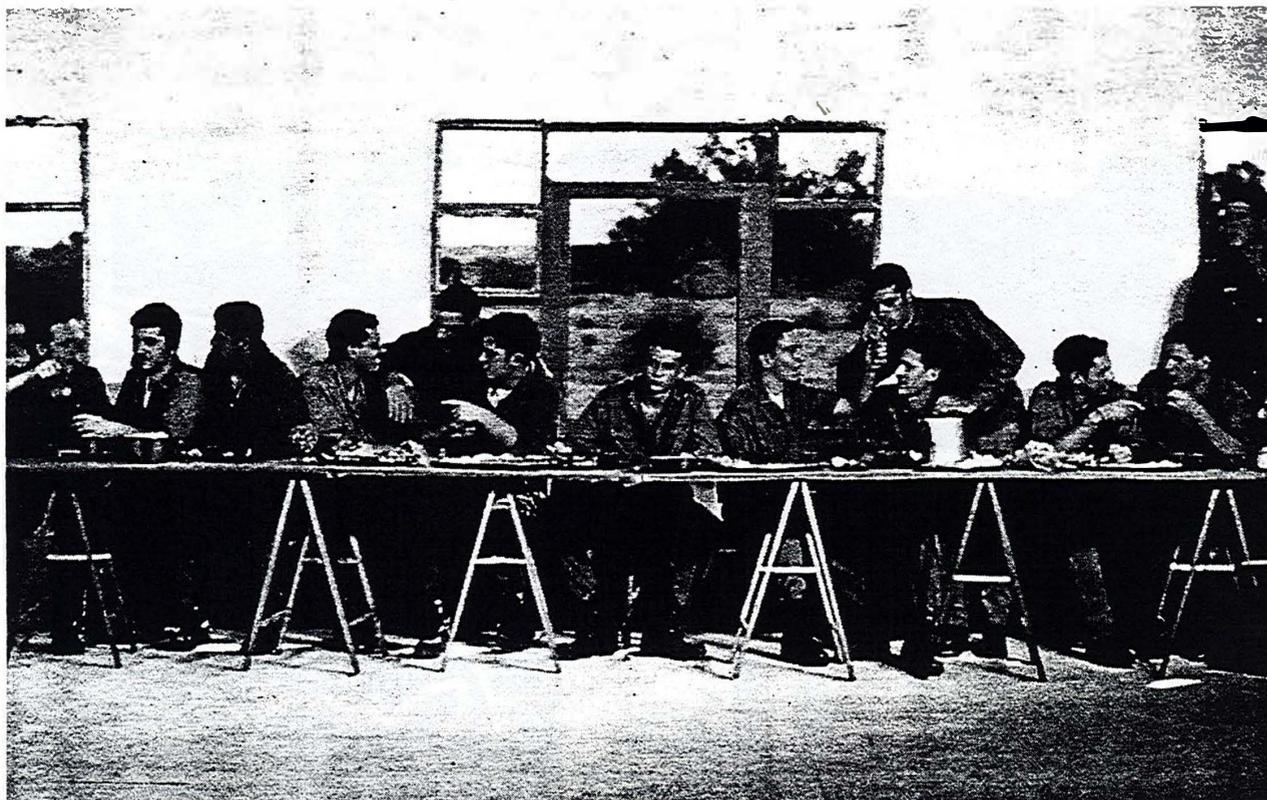


photo by Christine Miller of Parkmoor Urban Academy

# Postcards from the Middle East

## Israeli and Palestinian photographers find common ground at the Riffe Center

by Melissa Starker



“**Y**ou can touch it—I don’t care,” photographer Amit Geron said to a visitor at a preview of *Aspirations*, the new Riffe Gallery exhibit. Geron has three works taking up a central wall, all large-format silver-gelatin prints of idyllic landscapes, unframed and held up with tacks. There’s no barrier between art and viewer, no glass to muddy the picture’s surface with reflection—just clear images of clear days. One photo shows a group of casually dressed friends enjoying a picnic on the edge of a hearty forest. They could be anywhere.

The idyllic moment was captured in a place internationally known as a hotbed of political discord and violence. But that’s not the point here. In the common, accessible medium of photography, Palestinian and Israeli artists were asked to show their homeland as they see it each day, with all the incidental interactions between the two peoples. Each photographer included feels strongly

about the need for real peace, in the streets as well as in a sustainable treaty. Their individual results are powerful, artistically endearing and utterly universal.

The politics of the Middle East seem to have come into play only in the gradual evolution of the show. According to Robert Stearns from Arts Midwest, Ohio Arts Council head Wayne Lawson originally con-

tacted him two years ago about a show encompassing the entire Middle East. Stearns agreed to co-curate the show with Israeli curator Nella Cassouto, a former visiting professor at Ohio State University who worked with OAC previously on the similarly themed *Common Grounds* exhibit.

Stearns and Cassouto traveled together through the Israel region for three weeks, meeting with artists and examining submissions. Stearns called it “a wonderful journey,” though the logistics of traveling circuitous routes through border checkpoints turned short-distance trips into four-hour odysseys.

Photography was chosen as the focus because, as Stearns said, “You can present work from artists of very different backgrounds. It’s more of a level playing field.” Also, there’s no market for art-for-art’s-sake in the Palestinian economy; this opened the selection process to Palestinians making their living as photojournalists.

After this decision, the curators sought

Campus Partners' Weinland Park fix-up plans page 8

Purple Plastic Purse packs plentiful pleasure page 23

# COLUMBUS

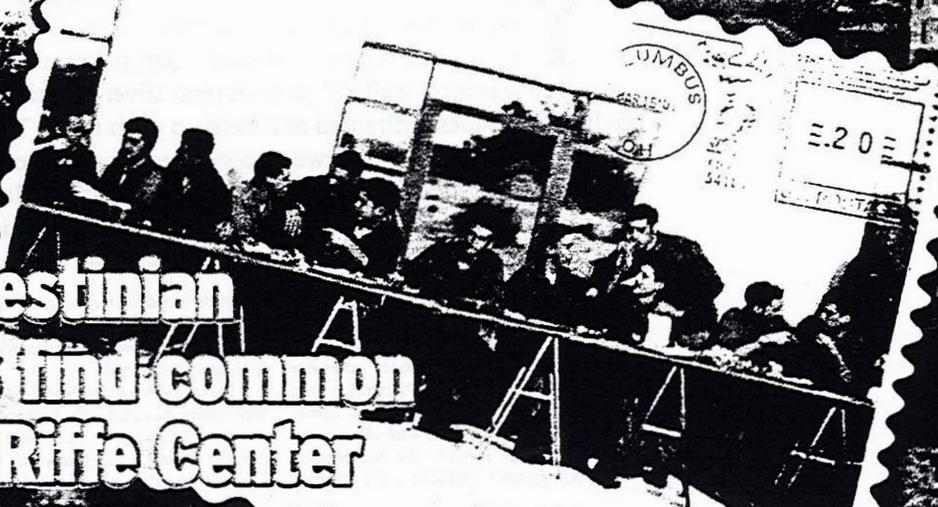
# Alive

Michael Braddock steams into the North Market page 24

Put your money where your NCAA bracket is page 26



# Postcards from the Middle East



Israeli and Palestinian photographers find common ground at the Riffe Center

COLUMBUS DISPATCH

COLUMBUS, OH

AM-CIRC. 284,796

MAR-3-01

## THE LIVELY ARTS

### PHOTO EXHIBIT TALK

Robert Stearns, co-curator of "Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East," and mediation specialist Patricia Williams will speak about the photography exhibition at 2 p.m. Sunday in the Riffe Gallery, 77 S. High St.

The show by 11 Israeli and Palestinian photographers continues through April 8. The exhibition was produced by the Ohio Arts Council's International Program and curated by Stearns, senior program director of Arts Midwest, and Nella Cassouto, an independent curator in Jerusalem.

### KIDS' FAVORITE BOOKS

For 20 years, the Buckeye Children's Book Award has called attention to the favorite books of Ohio schoolchildren and children who visit Ohio libraries. Children in more than 600 schools and libraries voted online (books are nominated one year and the list voted on the next) for the 2001 winners:

■ Kindergarten-second grade: Jules Feiffer's *Bark George* (Harper-Collins, 1999).

■ Third grade-fifth grade: Dav Pilkey's *The Adventures of Captain Underpants* (Scholastic, 1997).

■ Sixth grade-eighth grade: Louis Sachar's *Holes* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1999).

The award, reserved for books published during the past three years

by American authors, is sponsored by the Ohio Council of the International Reading Association, Ohio Council of Teachers of English Language Arts, Ohio Educational Library Media Association, Ohio Library Council and the State Library of Ohio. For more information, call Ruth Metcalf, 800-686-1531 or 614-644-6910.

### WINNERS OF HAIKU CONTEST

Winners of the Dublin Art Council's haiku competition are:

■ Kindergarten-fifth grade: First place, Chelsea Andrews, Emily Durell, Sarah Dutton and Kelly Luke, Bexley; runner-up, David Cody, Dublin.

■ Sixth grade-12th grade: First

place, Erin Gasper, Dublin; runner-up, William Gray, Upper Arlington.

■ Age 18 and older: First place, Stanford Forrester, Wethersfield, Conn.; runner-up, Timothy Russell, Toronto, Ohio.

■ Senior citizen: First place, Yvonne Hardenbrook, Columbus; runner-up, Catherine Gallager, Columbus.

Haiku is a Japanese poetry form, traditionally written in 17 syllables with nature usually its subject. The judge was Larry Smith, professor of English and humanities at Firelands College in Huron. A record 333 poems were entered.

## ARTS &amp; LEISURE

# Israeli/Palestinian photography exhibit world premiere in Columbus

By Tami Kamin-Meyer  
Special To The Observer

COLUMBUS — The Vern Riffe Center in downtown Columbus is home to more than just legislative offices. It also houses the Riffe Gallery, a museum that showcases the works of Ohio artists and exhibits with international connections.

Such is the case with the gallery's current exhibition making its international debut, *Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East*.

Robert Stearns, senior program director for Arts Midwest, co-curated the exhibit along with Nella Cassouto of Jerusalem. The exhibit features the work of 11 photographers from Israel and Palestinian territories expressing their visions for a peaceful future for Israel.

According to Stearns, *Aspirations* was the brainchild of Wayne Lawson, the executive director of the Ohio Arts Council. The show attempts to present a broader view of the Middle East beyond just Israel, he said.

"I hope people come away with the feeling that it is not only the media that talks about what happens in Israel," Cassouto said.

Stearns hopes the exhibit encourages people to "discuss and learn more" about how our differences and similarities as human beings can overtake negative attitudes.

On Sunday, March 4 at 2 p.m., Stearns and mediation specialist Patricia Williams will discuss the making of this exhibition and the power of communities around



Photo from the exhibit 'Aspirations: Toward A Future In The Middle East'

the globe. The discussion is free and open to the public. It will be held at the Riffe Gallery, across from the Ohio Statehouse on High Street.

Viewing hours for the exhibition are Mondays and Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Saturdays, noon to 8 p.m.; and Sundays, noon to 4 p.m. The gallery is free and open to the public.

Following its world premiere in Columbus, *Aspirations* will travel to Argentina, Chile, Mexico and Cuba. It is scheduled to end in Chicago in 2002, but Stearns said it might continue depending on how

well the photographs weather the exhibit. It will not travel to Israel because the photographers chosen for the exhibition are widely known there.

In 1996, Israel and the state of Ohio signed a cultural exchange agreement to facilitate exchange opportunities in the arts, education and the humanities. The pact opened the door for artist and exhibition exchanges between Ohio and Israel.

*Aspirations* is the second exhibit to be co-curated by Ohioans and Cassouto under that agreement.

*Aspirations* runs through April 8. For more information, contact the Ohio Arts Council at 614-644-9624, or visit the organization's Web site at [www.oac.state.oh.us](http://www.oac.state.oh.us).

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# Lawns of the Middle East

## The everyday photography of 'Aspirations'

The morning paper is a good breakfast accompaniment, but it usually starts off with a story about something boring and impersonal, like budgets or probes.

So it was a nice surprise Monday to sit down to a plate of eggs and a photo of Colin Powell holding hands with Yasser Arafat.

Among the picture's thousand words was the revelation that grown men *do* hold hands. That the revelation involved Arafat was extra illuminating; until then, he just hadn't seemed like the hand-holding type.

The Riffe Gallery's current exhibit sheds a similar light concerning the Middle East. **Aspirations** isn't about the region's leaders, however: It's about regular people and things. So regular, they seem almost familiar.

Featured in the show are more than 170 photographs by 11 Israeli and Palestinian artists. The curators, Robert Stearns (who happens to be former director of the Wexner Center) and Nella Cassouto (from Jerusalem), chose works that "are personally relevant and universally recognizable," according to the introductory press release.

They picked well.

While most of the works bear a distinct specificity, they also possess a kind of affability. The portraits of a foreign place tell stories whether the onlooker is up on current events or not.

It's surprising which photos resonate the most.

Most startling are the works of Sharon Ya'ari. Her *Lawns* series looks across fields toward the horizon. Each photo contains the same unexpected abundance of green—in one, especially, the tall grasses appear to sun themselves.

It's the first time I've ever given thought to lawns in the Middle East.

The girl in Issa Freij's *My Neighbor* sits on a beach, completely engrossed in something she's holding in her hands.

Noel Jabbour's 11 *Palestinian Interiors* are snippets of, well, Palestinian interiors. Whereas black-and-whites often lend their subjects a sense of timelessness, Jabbour's use of color makes the scenes feel immediate, close at hand.

In Amit Geron's oversized *Untitled*, a small group of people on a hill in the foreground is dwarfed by the city the hill overlooks. The buildings, in turn, are rendered puny by the vast landscape that stretches to the horizon. It feels immeasurable.

The styles vary widely, from candid portraits to formal compositions to collages. Adi Nes worked in a studio with models to create *The Last Supper*, casting Leonardo da Vinci's signature painting with Israeli military. Lee Yanor uses "innovative" techniques to get surreal results, such as the swirls and blurs in *The Dance*, printed on canvas.

Naomi Tereza Salmon's *Black Box: Souvenir from Israel* involves 90 small images of tourist keepsakes—a lighter, a snow globe—in rows. From far away, the

## You call that ART?

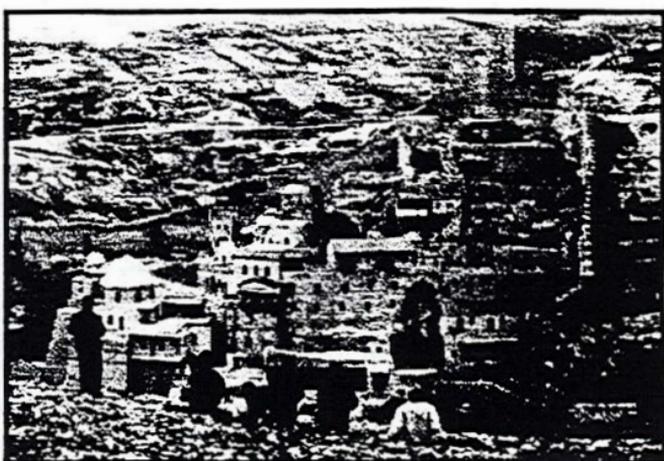
JENNY MULLIN

volume of photos can be appreciated, but not their details. Only by zooming in close can you discern their content.

The exhibit's companion provides an excellent supplement to the artwork. It begins with a lengthy interview conducted in March 2000 by Cassouto with two natives of the region.

Although a bit dated now, the exchange is nonetheless pertinent.

David Grossman, an Israeli novelist



It feels almost immeasurable: Amit Geron's *Untitled*

and political commentator, recalls being a child in 1967, before the Six-Day War: "I listened every day to the Hebrew-language radio station from Cairo.... I remember very vividly that they promised us they would come and throw us into the sea and rape our mothers and sisters.... I urgently begged my parents to let me take swimming lessons. That way I'd know how to swim and not drown immediately."

Ahmad Harb, a Palestinian writer and teacher at the Bir-zeit University, gives his account of the same period, when he was 16: "When the war erupted, I was a shepherd.... All I knew about the war was through the Arab radio.... The first day passed, the second day of the war passed, and where I was nothing happened. I stopped believing everything after that."

The men are in general agreement throughout the conversation. But like their similarities, their differences are apparent.

"Israelis, deep in their hearts, want to be loved by Palestinians," Grossman says. "But I'm more realistic than that.... I talk about common interest, about Ahmad and his wife Sarah living their own lives without my intervention.... I don't want to impose my existence on them, because it's bad for them, and it's bad for me."

Harb isn't in a position to display such beneficence, however: "Palestinians believe the 'peace process' is a tactic to justify control over us," he says.

"When you called me to meet with you," he says to Cassouto, "I spent the whole next week planning how to get into Jerusalem. It takes only 10 minutes to get here from where I live, but it is very difficult to get from there to here."

Still, they speak of Israelis and Palestinians maturing enough to understand each other and achieve real peace, which they distinguish from a treaty between political leaders. The Palestinians and Israelis, explains Grossman, "are two miserable guys caught in a twin trap. We reflect each other, our fears and our suspicions. That is our tragedy."

### INFO:

The Ohio Arts Council will host *Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East* through April 8 in the Riffe Gallery, 77 S. High St. 644-9624.

COLUMBUS DISPATCH  
COLUMBUS, OH  
SUN-CIRC. 402.193

FEB-25-01

# 'Aspirations' captures daily life in a land of sorrow

By Christopher A. Yates  
For The Dispatch 2/19

News reports from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict bombard our lives every day. It is difficult to remember a year or month without a tragedy, horror or spectacle from the Middle East. Quenching the public's thirst for sensation and drama, the media saturate the airwaves with photographic images that document and reveal the conflict.

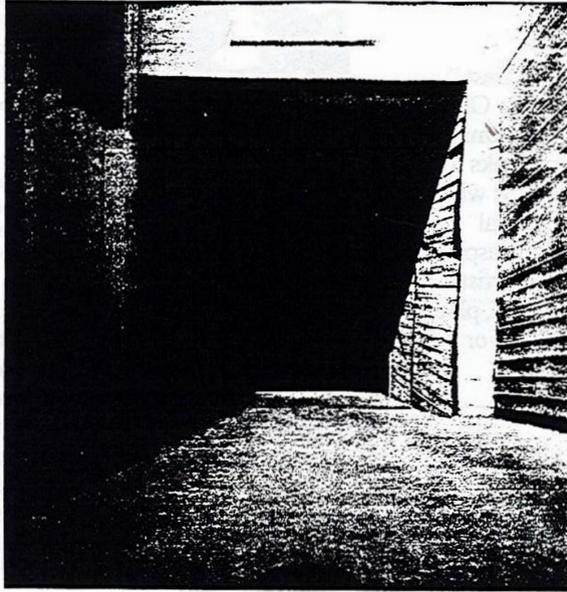
In "Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East," we see yet another stream of images from the Holy Land. However, rather than the familiar barrage of gunfire and rock throwing, we witness images created by both Palestinian and Israeli artists living day-to-day amid the conflict.

There is no single message found within the photographs. Each artist presents images that are more about individual image-making and less about social purpose. This fact is both a strength and a weakness. Essentially, the exhibit offers a less "in your face" view of life in Israel at the start of the 21st century.

The work of the 11 photographers encompasses a broad range of styles and techniques. There are large-scale color images, gelatin silver prints, digital prints and photosensitive emulsions.

Some of the best images come from photographers working for newspapers and international news agencies. Such images are documentary in nature and reveal unstaged moments of life in Israel.

In *On the Way to the Wedding*, Khaled Zighari (*Al-Quds, Jerusalem Post*, Reuters, Associated Press) reveals how security precautions affect the lives of Palestinians. A



ABOVE: *On the Way to the Wedding* by Khaled Zighari

LEFT: From "Openings" series by Tamir Sher

well-dressed man escorts his date through an Israeli checkpoint. Tainted by a gauntlet of soldiers and metal tire spikes in the road, the simple joy of attending a wedding becomes an ordeal.

Journalistic documentation is key to the work of Osama Silwadi (*Al-Ayyam*, Agence France Press, Reuters). Filled with humor, Silwadi's images capture "slice of life" moments. In *Awaiting the Arrival of Jacques Chirac*, a group of clergy stands on a wind-swept airfield. Dressed in their vestments, they struggle not to lose their hats.

Several images are apolitical. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not immediately apparent in such work. In his series "Lawns," Sharon Ya'ari focuses on the connection between people and the environment. His large-scale color images feature vistas with grassy fields.

By photographing stark desert landscapes, Amit Geron evokes a sense of history. In *Untitled, Marsaba*, Geron photographs the Marsaba monastery. Built in 439, destroyed in 619, and rebuilt by the Russian Church in 1835, the monastery is a popular tourist site.

■ "Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East" is on view through April 8 in the Ohio Arts Council's Riffe Gallery, 77 S. High St. Hours: 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday and Tuesday, 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Wednesday-Friday, noon-8 p.m. Saturday and noon-4 p.m. Sunday. Call 614-728-2239 or 614-644-9624.

Probing into the psyche, several artists explore how place reveals one's inner life. In her series "Palestinian Interiors," Noel Jabbour documents the objects found in Palestinian homes. Photographed against a backdrop of crumbling walls, the objects she chooses represent the aspirations, dreams and tragedies of the Palestinian people.

Tamir Sher photographs enigmatic parking-garage entrances. In his series "Openings," he creates dark, ominous spaces echoing a life spent under constant watch. Security doors meant to protect become threatening and exclusionary. One wonders which side of the door is safest.

Much thought arises from the work presented in "Aspirations." However, the thoughts are produced not solely from the images.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a chronic problem. Through the instant access of modern media, we watch as two peoples tear themselves apart. Glimmers of hope are rare and short-lived.

The images presented in "Aspirations" offer no solutions and little new insight. It is difficult to compete with a story that continues to saturate magazines, newspapers and television.



From "Palestinian Interiors" series by Noel Jabbour



*Awaiting the Arrival of Jacques Chirac* by Osama Silwadi

COLUMBUS POST  
COLUMBUS, OH  
W-CIRC. 10,000

FEB-1-01

# 214 Photography Exhibition Focuses on Peace in the Middle East

The Riffe Gallery presents "Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East," now through April 8, an exhibition of more than 170 images by 11 Israeli and Palestinian photographers. Aspirations seeks to address a goal that seems impossible and inevitable at the same time-peace in the Middle East between the Israeli and Palestinian people.

Artists in the exhibition have been chosen for their ability to convey a sense of self, place and community. The exhibition is curated by Robert Steams, senior program director, Arts Midwest and Nella Cassouto, independent curator, Jerusalem. Aspirations is produced by the Ohio Arts Council's



International Program in partnership with Arts Midwest and with the support of the Illinois Arts Council and the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cultural and Scientific Relations Department and Office of Cultural Affairs in the United States, Consulate General of Israel, New York.

Aspirations focuses on the medium of photography because it is available to artists of many different backgrounds. Only artists from Israel and the Palestine territories were chosen because their confrontations are well known and closely watched around the world.

Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East will travel in Latin America to Buenos Aires, Argentina; Santiago, Chile; Havana, Cuba; and Monterey, Mexico; and will continue its United States tour beginning in Chicago in mid-2002.

The Riffe Gallery, operated by the Ohio Arts Council, showcases the work of Ohio's artists and curators and the collections of the state's museums and galleries. The gallery is in the Vern Riffe Center for Government and the Arts, State and High Streets, Columbus, OH. Hours are Monday and Tuesday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 10 a.m.-8:00 p.m., Saturday 12-8 p.m. and Sunday 12-4 p.m. Admission is free. For information or to schedule a tour call the Riffe Gallery at 614/644-9624.

Next week we'll take an in-depth look at this exhibition.

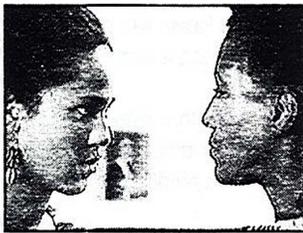
COLUMBUS POST  
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FEB-1-01

# a&e around town

A&E AROUND TOWN COMPILED BY Ronald N. Bryant Urban POST Entertainment Editor

## COLUMBUS MUSEUM PRESENTS FREE SCREENING OF MUTE LOVE



The Society for African American Art presents "Mute Love," a feature-length narrative film about three generations of African American women who are attempting to mend their fractured relationships. Dorothy Thigpen, the independent film's Director of Photography. Attend the free screening and meet Thigpen Executive Director of Third World Newsreel one of the oldest alternative media organizations in the United States. The screening takes place Friday, February 9, from 6 - 8pm For more information or to reserve a seat, please contact Lyn Grimes at 629-0357. Parking is free.

## HIT THE GROUND RUNNING THE- ATER PRESENTS A SWEET STAGE PLAY

Hit The Ground Running Theatre, Inc. presents "Freedom, Sweet as Suguh In M'Tee" a historical experi-

ence at the YWCA's Huntington Hall 4th Floor, 65 South 4th Street. Performances are February 1-3, 8-10, and February 15. All Shows Begin at 8:00 P.M. Tickets can be purchased at the door for \$10.00 and groups of 10 or more are \$8.00 per person with children 15 and under \$6.00.

## PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION FOCUS ON PEACE IN THE MID- DLE EAST

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High Streets, Columbus, OH. Hours are Monday and Tuesday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 10 a.m.-8:00 p.m., Saturday 12-8 p.m. and Sunday 12-4 p.m. Admission is free. For information or to schedule a tour call the Riffe Gallery at 614/644-9624.

## BALLETMET PRESENTS THE BEAUTIFUL GISELLE



Valentine's Day weekend is the perfect setting for Giselle the passionate love story presented by BalletMet. The company, under the artistic direction of David Nixon, premieres Giselle February 15 - 18 at the Capitol Theatre at the Riffe Center. Giselle depicts a haunting love triangle about a betrothed young girl's perilous journey to seek a love that she can never possess. Travel with her beyond human bounds where Giselle finally experiences the perfect love that she so maddeningly sought on earth. Giselle will mesmerize audiences with its passionate tale of unrequited love, sweeping choreography and romantic, score by Adolphe Adam in the grand tradition of French Romantic Theatre!

Internationally-acclaimed ballerina and BalletMet's Director of Professional Training Yoko Ichino will stage BalletMet's production of Giselle. The timeless production will be enormously compelling inviting people to step outside of their daily lives and remember the power and

[see A&E page 3]

AKRON JEWISH NEWS

AKRON, OH

M-CIRC. 3,200

Akron Jewish News  
Feb 1, 2001

## Aspirations

### Photography exhibition focuses on hopes for peace in the Middle East

The Riffe Gallery is presents *Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East*, now through April 8, an exhibition of more than 170 images by 11 Israeli and Palestinian photographers. *Aspirations* seeks to address a goal that seems impossible and inevitable at the same time--peace in the Middle East between the Israeli and Palestinian people.

Artists in the exhibition have been chosen for their ability to convey a sense of self, place and community. The exhibition is curated by Robert Stearns, senior program director, Arts Midwest and Nella Cassouto, independent curator, Jerusalem.

*Aspirations* is produced by the Ohio arts Council's International Program in partnership with Arts Midwest and with the support of the Illinois Arts Council and the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cultural and Scientific Relations Department and Office of Cultural Affairs in the United States, Consulate General of Israel, New York.

"The issues at the heart of this exhibition concern everyone, no matter where we live," said Wayne Lawson, executive director of the Ohio Arts Council. "For that reason, we were inspired to assemble an exhibition of diverse viewpoints from the Middle East and to share it with audiences in North and South America. We hope it will encourage dialogue among many different cultures about a situation that will continue to evolve over time and affect our lives for years to come."

Israeli and Palestinian cultures are like geologic plates painfully grinding against each other, but politics, compounded by religious division, camouflages common bonds of social and economic interdependence that can drive the peace process, the curators say.

Images in this exhibition convey the realities and aspirations of the photographers. The artists certainly desire peace, but in the face of the perpetual disappointments of the past, they view their world with a combination of optimism, skepticism and irony.

*Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East* will travel in Latin American to Buenos Aires, Argentina; Santiago, Chile; Havana, Cuba; and Monterrey, Mexico and will continue its United States tour beginning in Chicago in mid-2002.

The Riffe Center is located across from the Statehouse on High Street in downtown Columbus. Admission is free.

OHIO  
NEWS BUREAU INC.  
CLEVELAND, OHIO 44115  
216/241-0675

STARK JEWISH NEWS  
CANTON, OH  
M-CIRC. 1,200

FFR-2001

## 219 Columbus Exhibit Focuses on Peace in the Middle East

An ongoing cultural exchange agreement between Israel and Ohio has resulted in the art exhibit, *Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East*. *Aspirations* is a photography exhibit of more than 170 images by 11 Israeli and Palestinian photographers. It will be on display January 25-April 8 at the Riffe Gallery in Columbus.

"*Aspirations* seeks to address a goal that seems impossible and inevitable at the same time—peace in the Middle East," said Wayne Lawson, executive director of the Ohio Arts Council. The exhibit is produced by the Ohio Arts Council International Program.

Lawson says that artists in the exhibition were chosen for their ability to convey a sense of self, place and community. "The photographs reflect many aspects of everyday reality in the region," explained Lawson. "But the issues at the heart of this exhibition concern everyone, no matter where we live."

The Riffe Gallery is located in the Vern Riffe Center for Government and the Arts. Admission is free. For gallery hours and more information about the exhibit, call the Riffe Gallery at 614-644-9624.

## FEB-1-01 Aspirations<sup>219</sup>

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**OHIO  
NEWS BUREAU INC.**  
CLEVELAND, OHIO 44115  
216/241-0675

CLEVELAND JEWISH NEWS  
CLEVELAND, OH  
W-CIRC. 14.711

**JAN-26-01**

**State capital hosts show**

2/19 The Riffe Gallery in Columbus, Ohio, will present, "Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East," through Sunday, April 8. The exhibition contains more than 170 images by 11 Israeli and Palestinian photographers, addressing hopes of peace for both peoples.

The show is produced by the Ohio Arts Council International Program and will travel throughout the U.S. and the world. The gallery is located in the Vern Riffe Center for Government and the Arts, across from the Ohio Statehouse on High Street. Call 614-644-9624.

GERMAN VILLAGE GAZETTE  
COLUMBUS, OH  
W-CIRC. 4,265

JAN-25-01

# Photo exhibit depicts conflict, everyday life in Middle East

By ROSEMARY GOODBURN

German Village Gazette Reporter

Insight into the darkly complicated relations between Israelis and Palestinians can be found in a photography exhibit that opens today at the Riffe Gallery.

"Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East" features 170 pictures taken by 11 Israeli and Palestinian

■ "Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East" will run from today through April 8 in the Riffe Gallery, Vern Riffe Center, 77 S. High St.

photographers, said Robert Stearns, program director. The exhibit was organized and produced by the Ohio Arts Council.

After closing here April 8, the photo exhibit will travel to Argentina, Chili, Cuba and

Mexico. It returns to the United States in the summer of 2002, when it will be displayed in Chicago.

The exhibit offers one central message, said Stearns: "We can live together here. It is possible for people of a

different background to live in the same part of the world."

At the same time, the exhibit does not skirt tensions that plague the area. Subjects range from confrontation to national pride, friendship and the area's natural beauty.

The Ohio Arts Council had been considering an Arab-Israeli-themed exhibit for a long time, Stearns said. Members decided photographs would tell the tale best because they show real images.

"We want to tell a story, not just show studio art," Stearns said.

The title, "Aspirations," was chosen for its suggestion of optimism.

Co-curator Nella Cas-souto, an Israeli, will discuss the photographs, the artists and her country at the gallery at 2 p.m. Sunday.

In another related event, Stearns will team with conflict-resolution expert Pat Williams at the gallery at 2 p.m. March 4 to discuss not only the problems but the day-to-day life in the country.

Most of the region's people, Stearns said, co-exist peacefully and lead relatively safe and normal lives. This is true even despite long-standing conflicts over land and



An Israeli soldier and Palestinian children are pictured in this untitled image from "Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East." The exhibit will remain on display through April 8 at the Riffe Gallery.



A conversation between a Jewish man and an Arab woman is the subject of this untitled photo from the Ohio Arts Council's "Aspirations" exhibit.

history, she said.

"For the most part, every-day people get along with

each other reasonably well,"

Stearns said. "But I don't want to minimize the situation. It's very disturbing these days."

The public is invited to an opening reception at the gallery at 77 S. High St.

from 5 to 7 p.m. today.

Regular viewing hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday and Tuesday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesday through Friday, noon to 8 p.m. Saturday and noon to 4 p.m. Sunday.

Admission is free.

JAN-18-01

## Photography exhibition focuses on hopes for peace in Middle East

The Riffe Gallery will present *Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East*, Jan. 25-April 8, an exhibition of more than 170 images by 11 Israeli and Palestinian photographers. *Aspirations* seeks to address a goal that seems impossible and inevitable at the same time — peace in the Middle East between the Israeli and Palestinian people.

Artists in the exhibition have been chosen for their ability to convey a sense of self, place and community. The exhibition is curated by Robert Stearns, senior program director, Arts Midwest, and Nella Cassouto, independent curator, Jerusalem.

There will be an opening reception on Thursday, Jan. 25, from 5 to 7 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

*Aspirations* is produced by the Ohio Arts Council's International Program, in partnership with Arts Midwest and with the support of the Illinois Arts Council and the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cultural and Scientific Relations Department and Office of Cultural Affairs in the United States, Consulate General of Israel, New York.

"The issues at the heart of this exhibition concern everyone, no matter where we live," said Wayne Lawson, executive director of the Ohio Arts Council. "For that

reason, we were inspired to assemble an exhibition of diverse viewpoints from the Middle East and to share it with audiences in North and South America. We hope it will encourage dialogue among many different cultures about a situation that will continue to evolve over time and affect our lives for years to come."

"Israeli and Palestinian cultures are like geologic plates painfully grinding against each other. But politics, compounded by religious division, camouflages common bonds of social and economic interdependence that can drive the peace process," the curators say.

Images in this exhibition convey the realities and aspirations of the photographers. The artists certainly desire peace, but in the face of the perpetual disappointments of the past, they view their world with a combination of optimism, skepticism and irony.

*Aspirations* focuses on the medium of photography because it is available to artists of many different backgrounds. It also is adaptable to different artistic attitudes, from the abstract and conceptual to the politically motivated and photo-journalistic. And for viewers, it provides a common ground from which to grasp these artists' widely differing messages.

Only artists from Israel and the Palestinian territories were chosen because their confrontations are well known and closely watched around the world. Artists who created images that are both personally relevant and universally recognizable were chosen for the exhibition. As a result, these photographs reflect many aspects of everyday reality in the region at the beginning of the 21st century.

Artists represented in the exhibition include Issa Freij, Amit Geron, Yehoshua Glotman, Noel Jabbour, Adi Nes, Naomi Tereza Salmon, Tamir Sher, Osama Silwadi, Sharon Ya'ari, Lee Yanor and Khaled Zighari.

Two special events will take place in the gallery during the exhibition. On Sunday, Jan. 28, at 2 p.m., *Aspirations* co-curator, Nella Cassouto, will share her personal insights about the artists and their work. On Sunday, March 4, at 2 p.m., *Aspirations* co-curator Robert Stearns and mediation specialist Patricia Williams will discuss the making of this exhibition and the power of communities around the globe.

A full-color catalog of the exhibition will be available for \$10.

*Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East* will travel in Latin America to Buenos Aires, Argentina; Santiago, Chile; Havana, Cuba, and Monterrey, Mexico, and will continue its United States tour beginning in Chicago in mid-2002.



Amit Geron, *Untitled (Marsaba)*.



Issa Freij, *Worker*.

The exhibition is supported by the Ohio Building Authority. Media sponsors include *Columbus Alive*, *Small Business News*, Time Warner Communications and WWCD/CD101.

In 1996 Israel and the State of Ohio signed a cultural exchange agreement to facilitate exchange opportunities in the arts, education and humanities. The agreement opened the door for artist and exhibition exchanges between Ohio and Israel. *Common Ground: Contemporary Landscapes from Israel and Ohio* was the first exhibition to take place under the agreement.

The Riffe Gallery, operated by the Ohio Arts Council, showcases the work of

Ohio's artists and curators, and the collections of the state's museums and galleries. The gallery is in the Vern Riffe Center for Government and the Arts, State and High Streets. Hours are Monday and Tuesday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Saturday, noon to 8 p.m., and Sunday, noon to 4 p.m. Admission is free.

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Working with national corporations, philanthropic and arts organizations, the Ohio Arts Council's International Program is recognized as a leader in cultural arts exchanges among U.S. state arts agencies.

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OHIO ARTS COUNCIL'S RIFFE GALLERY

# ASPIRATIONS

TOWARD A FUTURE IN THE MIDDLE EAST



Osama Silwadi, *Untitled*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN ARTISTS

JANUARY 25 - APRIL 8, 2001  
OPENING RECEPTION - Thursday, January 25, 5-7 pm

Curators: Nella Cassouto and Robert Stearns

In Partnership with Arts Midwest  
With Support from Illinois Arts Council and Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cultural and Scientific Relations Department

Supported by Ohio Building Authority

Media Sponsors



RIFFE GALLERY  
Vern Riffe Center  
Across from the  
Statehouse on High  
Downtown Columbus  
Call 614/644-9624

Gallery Hours  
M, Tu 10-4  
W, Th, F 10-8  
Sat 12-8  
Sun 12-4  
Free Admission

TIMES LEADER  
MARTINS FERRY, OH  
SUN-CIRC. 23,216

JAN-21-01

# Photo exhibit focuses on hopes for peace

<sup>219</sup>  
THE RIFFE Gallery will present "Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East," Jan. 25-April 8, an exhibition of more than 170 images by 11 Israeli and Palestinian photographers.

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There will be an opening reception on Thursday, Jan. 25 from 5-7 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

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"The issues at the heart of this exhibition concern everyone, no matter where we live," said Wayne Lawson, executive director of the Ohio Arts Council. "For that rea-

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A full-color catalog of the exhibition will be available for \$10.

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DAILY RECORD  
WOOSTER, OH  
PM-CIRC. 23,101

JAN-21-01

OHIO  
NEWS BUREAU INC.  
CLEVELAND, OHIO 44115  
216/241-0675

EARLY BIRD  
GREENVILLE, OH  
W-CIRC. 26,700

JAN-21-01  
**Exhibition focuses on hopes  
for peace in the Middle East**

**COLUMBUS**—The Riffe Gallery will present Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East, Jan. 25-April 8, an exhibition of more than 170 images by 11 Israeli and Palestinian photographers. Aspirations seeks to address a goal that seem impossible and inevitable at the same time—peace in the Middle East between the Israeli and Palestinian people. Artists in the exhibition have been chosen for their ability to convey a sense of self, place and community. The exhibition is curated by Robert Stearns, senior program director, Arts Midwest and Nella Cassouto, independent curator, Jerusalem.

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<sup>219</sup>  
**COLUMBUS** — The Ohio Arts Council's Riffe Gallery will present "Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East," an exhibition of more than 170 images by 11 Israeli and Palestinian photographers, opening Jan. 25 and running through April 8.

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The opening reception, Thursday from 5-7 p.m., is free and open to the public.

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OHIO  
NEWS BUREAU INC.  
CLEVELAND, OHIO 44115  
216/241-0675

DAYTON DAILY NEWS  
DAYTON, OH  
SUB-CIRC. 234,000

JAN-21-01

'Middle East' exhibit  
in Columbus 219

**COLUMBUS** — An exhibition of images by 11 photographers from Israel and Palestinian territories will be displayed in "Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East," on view Thursday through April 8 in the Ohio Arts Council's Riffe Gallery, 77 S. High St. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday and Tuesday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesday through Friday, noon to 8 p.m. Saturday and noon to 4 p.m. Sunday. An opening reception will be from 5 to 7 p.m. Thursday. Call (614) 644-9624.

STARK JEWISH NEWS  
CANTON, OH  
M-CIRC. 1.200

FFR-2001

## 219 Columbus Exhibit Focuses on Peace in the Middle East

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"*Aspirations* seeks to address a goal that seems impossible and inevitable at the same time—peace in the Middle East," said Wayne Lawson, executive director of the Ohio Arts Council. The exhibit is produced by the Ohio Arts Council International Program.

Lawson says that artists in the exhibition were chosen for their ability to convey a sense of self, place and community. "The photographs reflect many aspects of everyday reality in the region," explained Lawson. "But the issues at the heart of this exhibition concern everyone, no matter where we live."

The Riffe Gallery is located in the Vern Riffe Center for Government and the Arts. Admission is free. For gallery hours and more information about the exhibit, call the Riffe Gallery at 614-644-9624.

OHIO  
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WOOSTER, OH  
PM-CIRC. 23,101

JAN-21-01

# Mideast 'Aspirations' photo show at Riffe Gallery

219  
COLUMBUS — The Ohio Arts Council's Riffe Gallery will present "Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East," an exhibition of more than 170 images by 11 Israeli and Palestinian photographers, opening Jan. 25 and running through April 8.

"Aspirations" seeks to address a goal that seems impossible and inevitable at the same time — peace in the Middle East between the Israeli and Palestinian people. Artists in the exhibition have been chosen for their ability to convey a sense of self, place and community. The exhibition is curated by Robert Steams, senior program director for Arts Midwest, and Nella Cassouto, an independent curator from Jerusalem.

The opening reception, Thursday from 5-7 p.m., is free and open to the public.

"Aspirations" is produced by the Ohio Arts Council's Inter-

national Program, in partnership with Arts Midwest and with the support of the Illinois Arts Council and the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cultural and Scientific Relations Department and Office of Cultural Affairs in the United States, through the Consulate General of Israel, New York.

"The issues at the heart of this exhibition concern everyone, no matter where we live," said Wayne Lawson, executive director of the Ohio Arts Council. "For that reason, we were inspired to assemble an exhibition of diverse viewpoints from the Middle East and to share it with audiences in North and South America.

"We hope it will encourage dialogue among many different cultures about a situation that will continue to evolve over time and affect our lives for years to come."

Israeli and Palestinian cul-

tures are like geologic plates painfully grinding against each other, the curators say. But politics, compounded by religious division, camouflages common bonds of social and economic interdependence that can drive the peace process.

Images in this exhibition convey the realities and aspirations of the photographers. The artists certainly desire peace, but in the face of the perpetual disappointments of the past, they view their world with a combination of optimism, skepticism and irony.

"Aspirations" focuses on the medium of photography because it is available to artists of many different backgrounds. It also is adaptable to different artistic attitudes from the abstract and conceptual to the politically motivated and photo-journalistic. And for viewers, it provides a common ground from which to

grasp widely differing messages.

Only artists from Israel and the Palestine territories were chosen because their confrontations are well known and closely watched around the world. Artists who created images that are both personally relevant and universally recognizable were chosen for the exhibition.

Two special events will take place in the gallery during the exhibition. On Sunday, Jan. 28 at 2 p.m. Aspirations co-curator, Nella Cassouto, will share her personal insights about the artists and their work. On Sunday, March 4 at 2 p.m. Aspirations co-curator Robert Stearns and mediation specialist Patricia Williams will discuss the making of this exhibition and the power of communities around the globe.

A full-color catalog of the exhibition will be available for \$10.

"Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East" will travel in Latin America to Buenos Aires, Argentina; Santiago, Chile; Havana, Cuba; and Monterrey, Mexico; and will continue its United States tour beginning in Chicago in mid-2002.

The Riffe Gallery, operated by the Ohio Arts Council, showcases the work of Ohio artists and curators and the collections of the state's museums and galleries.

The gallery is located in the Vern Riffe Center for Government and the Arts, State and High Streets, Columbus.

Normal gallery hours are Monday and Tuesday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Wednesday through Friday 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Saturday noon-8 p.m. and Sunday noon-4 p.m.

Admission is free. For more information or to schedule a tour, call the Riffe Gallery at 614/644-9624.

COLUMBUS POST  
COLUMBUS, OH  
W-CIRC. 10,000  
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# a&e around town

A&E AROUND TOWN COMPILED BY Ronald N. Bryant Urban POST Entertainment Editor

## COLUMBUS MUSEUM PRESENTS FREE SCREENING OF MUTE LOVE



The Society for African American Art presents "Mute Love," a feature-length narrative film about three generations of African American women who are attempting to mend their fractured relationships. Dorothy Thigpen, the independent film's Director of Photography. Attend the free screening and meet Thigpen Executive Director of Third World Newsreel one of the oldest alternative media organizations in the United States. The screening takes place Friday, February 9, from 6 - 8pm For more information or to reserve a seat, please contact Lyn Grimes at 629-0357. Parking is free.

## HIT THE GROUND RUNNING THE- ATER PRESENTS A SWEET STAGE PLAY

Hit The Ground Running Theatre, Inc. presents "Freedom, Sweet as Suguh In M'Tee" a historical experi-

ence at the YWCA's Huntington Hall 4th Floor, 65 South 4th Street. Performances are February 1-3, 8-10, and February 15. All Shows Begin at 8:00 P.M. Tickets can be purchased at the door for \$10.00 and groups of 10 or more are \$8.00 per person with children 15 and under \$6.00.

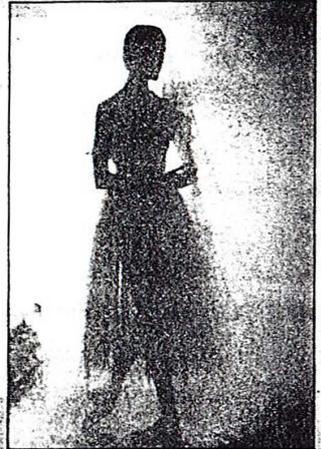
## PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION FOCUSES ON PEACE IN THE MID- DLE EAST

The Riffe Gallery presents "Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East," now through April 8, an exhibition of more than 170 images by 11 Israeli and Palestinian photographers. Aspirations seeks to address a goal that seems impossible and inevitable at the same time-peace in the Middle East between the Israeli and Palestinian people. Artists in the exhibition have been chosen for their ability to convey a sense of self, place and community. The exhibition is curated by Robert Steams, senior program director, Arts Midwest and Nella Cassouto, independent curator, Jerusalem. Aspirations is produced by the Ohio Arts Council's International Program in partnership with Arts Midwest and with the support of the Illinois Arts Council and the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cultural and Scientific Relations Department and Office of Cultural Affairs in the United States, Consulate General of Israel, New York.

Aspirations focuses on the medium of photography because it is available to artists of many different backgrounds. Only artists from Israel and the Palestine territories were chosen because their confrontations are well known and closely watched around the world. Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East will travel in Latin America to Buenos Aires, Argentina; Santiago, Chile; Havana, Cuba; and Monterey, Mexico; and will continue its United States tour beginning in Chicago in mid-2002. The Riffe Gallery, operated by the Ohio Arts Council, showcases the work of Ohio's artists and curators and the collections of the state's museums and galleries. The gallery is in the Vern Riffe Center for Government and the Arts, State and

High Streets, Columbus, OH; Hours are Monday and Tuesday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 10 a.m.-8:00 p.m.; Saturday 12-8 p.m. and Sunday 12-4 p.m. Admission is free. For information or to schedule a tour call the Riffe Gallery at 614/644-9624.

## BALLETMET PRESENTS THE BEAUTIFUL GISELLE



Valentine's Day weekend is the perfect setting for Giselle the passionate love story presented by BalletMet. The company, under the artistic direction of David Nixon, premieres Giselle February 15 - 18 at the Capitol Theatre at the Riffe Center. Giselle depicts a haunting love triangle about a betrothed young girl's perilous journey to seek a love that she can never possess. Travel with her beyond human bounds where Giselle finally experiences the perfect love that she so maddeningly sought on earth. Giselle will mesmerize audiences with its passionate tale of unrequited love, sweeping choreography and romantic score by Adolphe Adam in the grand tradition of French Romantic Theatre!

Internationally-acclaimed ballerina and BalletMet's Director of Professional Training Yoko Ichino will stage BalletMet's production of Giselle. The timeless production will be enormously compelling, inviting people to step outside of their daily lives and remember the power and

[see A&E page 3]

## ARTS &amp; LEISURE

# Israeli/Palestinian photography exhibit world premiere in Columbus

By Tami Kamin-Meyer  
Special To The Observer

COLUMBUS — The Vern Riffe Center in downtown Columbus is home to more than just legislative offices. It also houses the Riffe Gallery, a museum that showcases the works of Ohio artists and exhibits with international connections.

Such is the case with the gallery's current exhibition making its international debut, *Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East*.

Robert Stearns, senior program director for Arts Midwest, co-curated the exhibit along with Nella Cassouto of Jerusalem. The exhibit features the work of 11 photographers from Israel and Palestinian territories expressing their visions for a peaceful future for Israel.

According to Stearns, *Aspirations* was the brainchild of Wayne Lawson, the executive director of the Ohio Arts Council. The show attempts to present a broader view of the Middle East beyond just Israel, he said.

"I hope people come away with the feeling that it is not only the media that talks about what happens in Israel," Cassouto said.

Stearns hopes the exhibit encourages people to "discuss and learn more" about how our differences and similarities as human beings can overtake negative attitudes.

On Sunday, March 4 at 2 p.m., Stearns and mediation specialist Patricia Williams will discuss the making of this exhibition and the



Photo from the exhibit 'Aspirations: Toward A Future In The Middle East'

the globe. The discussion is free and open to the public. It will be held at the Riffe Gallery, across from the Ohio Statehouse on High Street.

Viewing hours for the exhibition are Mondays and Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Saturdays, noon to 8 p.m.; and Sundays, noon to 4 p.m. The gallery is free and open to the public.

Following its world premiere in Columbus, *Aspirations* will travel to Argentina, Chile, Mexico and Cuba. It is scheduled to end in Chicago in 2002, but Stearns said it might continue depending on how

well the photographs weather the exhibit. It will not travel to Israel because the photographers chosen for the exhibition are widely known there.

In 1996, Israel and the state of Ohio signed a cultural exchange agreement to facilitate exchange opportunities in the arts, education and the humanities. The pact opened the door for artist and exhibition exchanges between Ohio and Israel.

*Aspirations* is the second exhibit to be co-curated by Ohioans and Cassouto under that agreement.

*Aspirations* runs through April 8. For more information, contact the Ohio Arts Council at 614-644-9624, or visit the organization's Web site at [www.oac.state.oh.us](http://www.oac.state.oh.us).

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Akron Jewish News

Feb 1, 2001

## Aspirations

### Photography exhibition focuses on hopes for peace in the Middle East

The Riffe Gallery is presenting *Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East*, now through April 8, an exhibition of more than 170 images by 11 Israeli and Palestinian photographers. *Aspirations* seeks to address a goal that seems impossible and inevitable at the same time—peace in the Middle East between the Israeli and Palestinian people.

Artists in the exhibition have been chosen for their ability to convey a sense of self, place and community. The exhibition is curated by Robert Stearns, senior program director, Arts Midwest and Nella Cassouto, independent curator, Jerusalem.

*Aspirations* is produced by the Ohio arts Council's International Program in partnership with Arts Midwest and with the support of the Illinois Arts Council and the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cultural and Scientific Relations Department and Office of Cultural Affairs in the United States, Consulate General of Israel, New York.

"The issues at the heart of this exhibition concern everyone, no matter where we live," said Wayne Lawson, executive director of the Ohio Arts Council. "For that reason, we were inspired to assemble an exhibition of diverse viewpoints from the Middle East and to share it with audiences in North and South America. We hope it will encourage dialogue among many different cultures about a situation that will continue to evolve over time and affect our lives for years to come."

Israeli and Palestinian cultures are like geologic plates painfully grinding against each other, but politics, compounded by religious division, camouflages common bonds of social and economic interdependence that can drive the peace process, the curators say.

Images in this exhibition convey the realities and aspirations of the photographers. The artists certainly desire peace, but in the face of the perpetual disappointments of the past, they view their world with a combination of optimism, skepticism and irony.

*Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East* will travel in Latin American to Buenos Aires, Argentina; Santiago, Chile; Havana, Cuba; and Monterrey, Mexico and will continue its United States tour beginning in Chicago in mid-2002.

The Riffe Center is located across from the Statehouse on High Street in downtown Columbus. Admission is free.

# Lawns of the Middle East

## The everyday photography of 'Aspirations'

The morning paper is a good breakfast accompaniment, but it usually starts off with a story about something boring and impersonal, like budgets or probes.

So it was a nice surprise Monday to sit down to a plate of eggs and a photo of Colin Powell holding hands with Yasser Arafat.

Among the picture's thousand words was the revelation that grown men do hold hands. That the revelation involved Arafat was extra illuminating; until then, he just hadn't seemed like the hand-holding type.

The Riffe Gallery's current exhibit sheds a similar light concerning the Middle East. **Aspirations** isn't about the region's leaders, however: It's about regular people and things. So regular, they seem almost familiar.

Featured in the show are more than

170 photographs by 11 Israeli and Palestinian artists. The curators, Robert Stearns (who happens to be former director of the Wexner Center) and Nella Cassouto (from Jerusalem), chose works that "are personally relevant and universally recognizable," according to the introductory press release.

They picked well.

While most of the works bear a distinct specificity, they also possess a kind of affability. The portraits of a foreign place tell stories whether the onlooker is up on current events or not.

It's surprising which photos resonate the most.

Most startling are the works of Sharon Ya'ari. Her *Lawns* series looks across fields toward the horizon. Each photo contains the same unexpected abundance of green—in one, especially, the tall grasses appear to sun themselves.

It's the first time I've ever given thought to lawns in the Middle East.

The girl in Issa Freij's *My Neighbor* sits on a beach, completely engrossed in something she's holding in her hands.

Noel Jabbour's 11 *Palestinian Interiors* are snippets of, well, Palestinian interiors. Whereas black-and-whites often lend their subjects a sense of timelessness, Jabbour's use of color makes the scenes feel immediate, close at hand.

In Amit Geron's oversized *Untitled*, a small group of people on a hill in the foreground is dwarfed by the city the hill overlooks. The buildings, in turn, are rendered puny by the vast landscape that stretches to the horizon. It feels immeasurable.

The styles vary widely, from candid portraits to formal compositions to collages. Adi Nes worked in a studio with models to create *The Last Supper*, casting Leonardo da Vinci's signature painting with Israeli military. Lee Yanor uses "innovative" techniques to get surreal results, such as the swirls and blurs in *The Dance*, printed on canvas.

Naomi Tereza Salmon's *Black Box: Souvenir from Israel* involves 90 small images of tourist keepsakes—a lighter, a snow globe—in rows. From far away, the

## You call that ART?

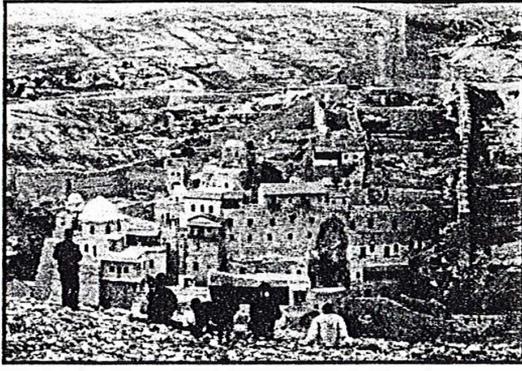
JENNY MULLIN

volume of photos can be appreciated, but not their details. Only by zooming in close can you discern their content.

The exhibit's companion provides an excellent supplement to the artwork. It begins with a lengthy interview conducted in March 2000 by Cassouto with two natives of the region.

Although a bit dated now, the exchange is nonetheless pertinent.

David Grossman, an Israeli novelist



It feels almost immeasurable: Amit Geron's *Untitled*

and political commentator, recalls being a child in 1967, before the Six-Day War: "I listened every day to the Hebrew-language radio station from Cairo.... I remember very vividly that they promised us they would come and throw us into the sea and rape our mothers and sisters.... I urgently begged my parents to let me take swimming lessons. That way I'd know how to swim and not drown immediately."

Ahmad Harb, a Palestinian writer and teacher at the Bir-zeit University, gives his account of the same period, when he was 16: "When the war erupted, I was a shepherd.... All I knew about the war was through the Arab radio.... The first day passed, the second day of the war passed, and where I was nothing happened. I stopped believing everything after that."

The men are in general agreement throughout the conversation. But like their similarities, their differences are apparent.

"Israelis, deep in their hearts, want to be loved by Palestinians," Grossman says. "But I'm more realistic than that.... I talk about common interest, about Ahmad and his wife Sarah living their own lives without my intervention.... I don't want to impose my existence on them, because it's bad for them, and it's bad for me."

Harb isn't in a position to display such beneficence, however: "Palestinians believe the 'peace process' is a tactic to justify control over us," he says.

"When you called me to meet with you," he says to Cassouto, "I spent the whole next week planning how to get into Jerusalem. It takes only 10 minutes to get here from where I live, but it is very difficult to get from there to here."

Still, they speak of Israelis and Palestinians maturing enough to understand each other and achieve real peace, which they distinguish from a treaty between political leaders. The Palestinians and Israelis, explains Grossman, "are two miserable guys caught in a twin trap. We reflect each other, our fears and our suspicions. That is our tragedy."

Thursday, January 18, 2001

### PAPER AND WOOD

An exhibit of 25 works on paper by Romare Bearden and contemporary wood sculpture by LaVon Van Williams Jr. will open Friday at Keny Galleries, 300 E. Beck St., in German Village.

Bearden, who died in 1988, was a collage artist, writer, composer and musician. While he is best known for his collage works, he also worked in printmaking and watercolor.

His work will be the subject of a retrospective exhibition in 2002 at the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

Van Williams is a fifth generation woodcarver who lives in Kentucky. He will attend the opening of the shows, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Friday. Both shows continue through Feb. 9. Call 614-464-1228.

### MIDDLE EAST HOPES

"Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East," a selection of 170 photographs by 11 Israeli and Palestinian artists, will open next Thursday at the Ohio Arts Council's Riffe Gallery, 77 S. High St.

The artists were selected for their ability to convey a sense of self, place and community through their works. The show was organized by Nella Cassouto, an independent curator from Jerusalem, and Robert Stearns, senior program director of Arts Midwest.

Cassouto will discuss the artists and their works at 2 p.m. Jan. 25. Stearns and mediation specialist Patricia Williams will talk about the making of the exhibit and global communities at 2 p.m. March 4. The exhibit will continue through April 8.

An opening reception will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. next Thursday.

Hours: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Tuesday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesday-Friday, noon to 8 p.m. Saturday and noon to 4 p.m. Sunday. Call 614-644-9624.

### INFO:

The Ohio Arts Council will host *Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East* through April 8 in the Riffe Gallery, 77 S. High St. 644-9624.

# Photography exhibition focuses on hopes for peace in Middle East

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CLEVELAND JEWISH NEWS  
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JAN-26-01

## State capital hosts show

The Riffe Gallery in Columbus, Ohio, will present, "Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East," through Sunday, April 8. The exhibition contains more than 170 images by 11 Israeli and Palestinian photographers, addressing hopes of peace for both peoples.

The show is produced by the Ohio Arts Council International Program and will travel throughout the U.S. and the world. The gallery is located in the Vern Riffe Center for Government and the Arts, across from the Ohio Statehouse on High Street. Call 614-644-9624.

The Riffe Gallery will present *Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East*, Jan. 25-April 8, an exhibition of more than 170 images by 11 Israeli and Palestinian photographers. *Aspirations* seeks to address a goal that seems impossible and inevitable at the same time — peace in the Middle East between the Israeli and Palestinian people.

Artists in the exhibition have been chosen for their ability to convey a sense of self, place and community. The exhibition is curated by Robert Stearns, senior program director, Arts Midwest, and Nella Cassouto, independent curator, Jerusalem.

There will be an opening reception on Thursday, Jan. 25, from 5 to 7 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

*Aspirations* is produced by the Ohio Arts Council's International Program, in partnership with Arts Midwest and with the support of the Illinois Arts Council and the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cultural and Scientific Relations Department and Office of Cultural Affairs in the United States, Consulate General of Israel, New York.

"The issues at the heart of this exhibition concern everyone, no matter where we live," said Wayne Lawson, executive director of the Ohio Arts Council. "For that

reason, we were inspired to assemble an exhibition of diverse viewpoints from the Middle East and to share it with audiences in North and South America. We hope it will encourage dialogue among many different cultures about a situation that will continue to evolve over time and affect our lives for years to come."

"Israeli and Palestinian cultures are like geologic plates painfully grinding against each other. But politics, compounded by religious division, camouflages common bonds of social and economic interdependence that can drive the peace process," the curators say.

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*Aspirations* focuses on the medium of photography because it is available to artists of many different backgrounds. It also is adaptable to different artistic attitudes, from the abstract and conceptual to the politically motivated and photo-journalistic. And for viewers, it provides a common ground from which to grasp these artists' widely differing messages.

Only artists from Israel and the Palestinian territories were chosen because their confrontations are well known and closely watched around the world. Artists who created images that are both personally relevant and universally recognizable were chosen for the exhibition. As a result, these photographs reflect many aspects of everyday reality in the region at the beginning of the 21st century.

Artists represented in the exhibition include Issa Freij, Amit Geron, Yehoshua Glotman, Noel Jabbour, Adi Nes, Naomi Tereza Salmon, Tamir Sher, Osama Silwadi, Sharon Ya'ari, Lee Yanor and Khaled Zighari.

Two special events will take place in the gallery during the exhibition. On Sunday, Jan. 28, at 2 p.m., *Aspirations* co-curator, Nella Cassouto, will share her personal insights about the artists and their work. On Sunday, March 4, at 2 p.m., *Aspirations* co-curator Robert Stearns and mediation specialist Patricia Williams will discuss the making of this exhibition and the power of communities around the globe.

A full-color catalog of the exhibition will be available for \$10.

*Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East* will travel in Latin America to Buenos Aires, Argentina; Santiago, Chile; Havana, Cuba, and Monterrey, Mexico, and will continue its United States tour beginning in Chicago in mid-2002.



Amit Geron, *Untitled (Marsaba)*.



Issa Freij, *Worker*.

The exhibition is supported by the Ohio Building Authority. Media sponsors include *Columbus Alive*, *Small Business News*, Time Warner Communications and WWCD/CD101.

In 1996 Israel and the State of Ohio signed a cultural exchange agreement to facilitate exchange opportunities in the arts, education and humanities. The agreement opened the door for artist and exhibition exchanges between Ohio and Israel. *Common Ground: Contemporary Landscapes from Israel and Ohio* was the first exhibition to take place under the agreement.

The Riffe Gallery, operated by the Ohio Arts Council, showcases the work of

Ohio's artists and curators, and the collections of the state's museums and galleries. The gallery is in the Vern Riffe Center for Government and the Arts, State and High Streets. Hours are Monday and Tuesday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Saturday, noon to 8 p.m. and Sunday, noon to 4 p.m. Admission is free.

For information, or to schedule a tour, call the Riffe Gallery at 644-9624.

Working with national corporations, philanthropic and arts organizations, the Ohio Arts Council's International Program is recognized as a leader in cultural arts exchanges among U.S. state arts agencies.

OHIO ARTS COUNCIL'S RIFFE GALLERY

# ASPIRATIONS

TOWARD A FUTURE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN ARTISTS

**JANUARY 25 - APRIL 8, 2001**  
**OPENING RECEPTION - Thursday, January 25, 5-7 pm**  
 Curators Nella Cassouto and Robert Stearns

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 Free Admission

In Partnership with Arts Midwest  
 With Support from Illinois Arts Council and Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cultural and Scientific Relations Department  
 Supported by Ohio Building Authority

Media Sponsors

# Photo exhibit depicts conflict, everyday life in Middle East

219  
By ROSEMARY GOODBURN

Suburban News Reporter

Insight into the darkly complicated relations between Israelis and Palestinians can be found in a photography exhibit that opens Thursday at the Riffe Gallery.

"Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East" features 170 pictures taken by 11 Israeli and Palestinian photographers, said Robert Stearns, program director. The exhibit was organized and produced by the Ohio Arts Council.

After closing here April 8, the photo exhibit will travel to Argentina, Chili, Cuba and Mexico. It returns to the United States in the summer of 2002, when it will be displayed in Chicago.

The exhibit offers one central message, said Stearns: "We can live together here. It is possible for people of a different background to live in the same part of the world."

At the same time, the exhibit does not skirt tensions that plague the area. Subjects range from confrontation to national pride, friendship and the area's natural beauty.

The Ohio Arts Council had been considering an Arab-Israeli-themed exhibit for a long time, Stearns said. Members decided photographs would tell the tale best because they show real



A conversation between a Jewish man and an Arab woman is the subject of this untitled photo from the Ohio Arts Council's "Aspirations" exhibit.

images.

"We want to tell a story, not just show studio art," Stearns said.

The title, "Aspirations," was chosen for its suggestion of optimism.

Co-curator Nella Cassouto, an Israeli, will discuss the photographs, the artists and her country at the gallery at 2 p.m. Sunday.

In another related event, Stearns will team with conflict-resolution expert Pat Williams at the gallery at 2

p.m. March 4 to discuss not only the problems but the day-to-day life in the country.

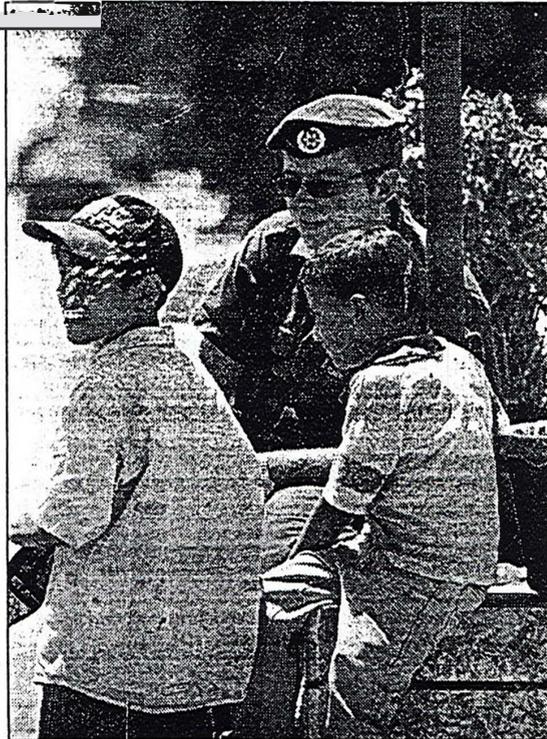
Most of the region's people, Stearns said, co-exist peacefully and lead relatively safe and normal lives. This is true even despite long-standing conflicts over land and

history, she said.

"For the most part, everyday people get along with each other reasonably well," Stearns said. "But I don't want to minimize the situation. It's very disturbing these days."

The public is invited to an

■ "Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East" will run from Thursday through April 8 in the Riffe Gallery, Vern Riffe Center, 77 S. High St.



An Israeli soldier and Palestinian children are pictured in this untitled image from "Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East." The exhibit will remain on display through April 8 at the Riffe Gallery.

opening reception at the gallery at 77 S. High St. from 5 to 7 p.m. Thursday.

Regular viewing hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday and

Tuesday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesday through Friday, noon to 8 p.m. Saturday and

noon to 4 p.m. Sunday. Admission is free.

# 'Aspirations' captures daily life in a land of sorrow

By Christopher A. Yates  
For The Dispatch

ews reports from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict bombard our lives every day. It is difficult to remember a year or month without a tragedy, horror or spectacle from the Middle East. Quenching the public's thirst for sensation and drama, the media saturate the airwaves with photographic images that document and reveal the conflict.

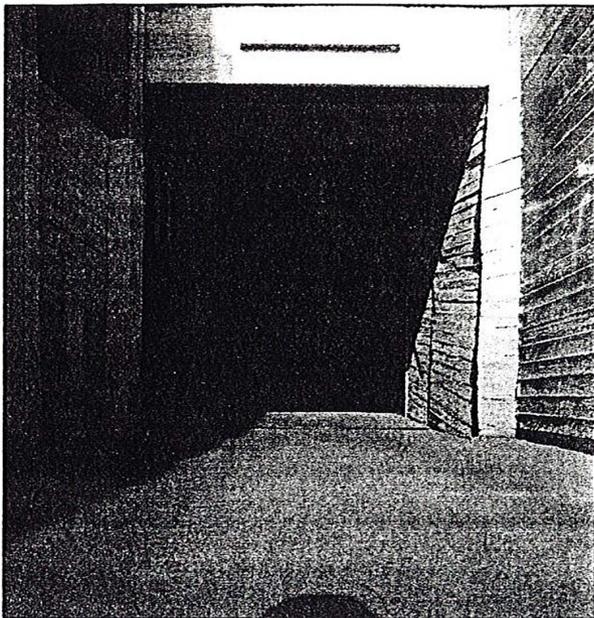
In "Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East," we see yet another stream of images from the Holy Land. However, rather than the familiar barrage of gunfire and rock throwing, we witness images created by both Palestinian and Israeli artists living day-to-day amid the conflict.

There is no single message found within the photographs. Each artist presents images that are more about individual image-making and less about social purpose. This fact is both a strength and a weakness. Essentially, the exhibit offers a less "in your face" view of life in Israel at the start of the 21st century.

The work of the 11 photographers encompasses a broad range of styles and techniques. There are large-scale color images, gelatin silver prints, digital prints and photosensitive emulsions.

Some of the best images come from photographers working for newspapers and international news agencies. Such images are documentary in nature and reveal unstaged moments of life in Israel.

In *On the Way to the Wedding*, Khaled Yari (*Al-Quds*, *Jerusalem Post*, Reuters, Associated Press) reveals how security precautions affect the lives of Palestinians. A



well-dressed man escorts his date through an Israeli checkpoint. Tainted by a gantlet of soldiers and metal tire spikes in the road, the simple joy of attending a wedding becomes an ordeal.

Journalistic documentation is key to the work of Osama Silwadi (*Al-Ayyam*, Agence France Press, Reuters). Filled with humor, Silwadi's images capture "slice of life" moments. In *Awaiting the Arrival of Jacques Chirac*, a group of clergy stands on a wind-swept airfield. Dressed in their vestments, they struggle not to lose their hats.



ABOVE: *On the Way to the Wedding* by Khaled Yighari

LEFT: From "Openings" series by Tamir Sher

Several images are apolitical. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not immediately apparent in such work. In his series "Lawns," Sharon Ya'ari focuses on the connection between people and the environment. His large-scale color images feature vistas with grassy fields.

By photographing stark desert landscapes, Amit Geron evokes a sense of history. In *Untitled Marsaba*, Geron photographs the Marsaba monastery. Built in 439, destroyed in 610, and rebuilt by the Russian Church in 1835, the monastery is a popular tourist site.

## RIFFE GALLERY

■ "Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East" is on view through April 8 in the Ohio Arts Council's Riffe Gallery, 77 S. High St. Hours: 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday and Tuesday, 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Wednesday-Friday, noon-8 p.m. Saturday and noon-4 p.m. Sunday. Call 614-728-2239 or 614-644-9624.

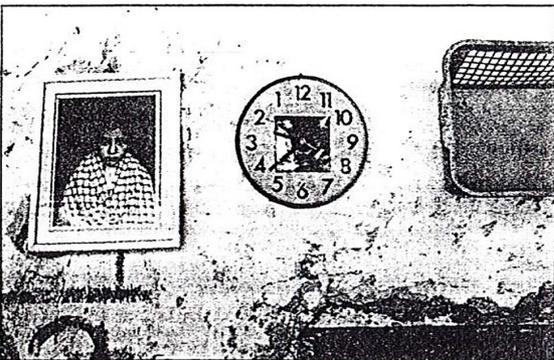
Probing into the psyche, several artists explore how place reveals one's inner life. In her series "Palestinian Interiors," Noel Jabbour documents the objects found in Palestinian homes. Photographed against a backdrop of crumbling walls, the objects she chooses represent the aspirations, dreams and tragedies of the Palestinian people.

Tamir Sher photographs enigmatic parking-garage entrances. In his series "Openings," he creates dark, ominous spaces echoing a life spent under constant watch. Security doors meant to protect become threatening and exclusionary. One wonders which side of the door is safest.

Much thought arises from the work presented in "Aspirations." However, the thoughts are produced not solely from the images.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a chronic problem. Through the instant access of modern media, we watch as two peoples tear themselves apart. Glimmers of hope are rare and short-lived.

The images presented in "Aspirations" offer no solutions and little new insight. It is difficult to compete with a story that continues to saturate magazines, newspapers and television.



From "Palestinian Interiors" series by Noel Jabbour



*Awaiting the Arrival of Jacques Chirac* by Osama Silwadi

# Postcards from the Middle East

## Israeli and Palestinian photographers find common ground at the Riffe Center

by Melissa Starker

Columbus Alive



“You can touch it—I don’t care,” photographer Amit Geron said to a visitor at a preview of *Aspirations*, the new Riffe Gallery exhibit. Geron has three works taking up a central wall, all large-format silver-gelatin prints of idyllic landscapes, unframed and held up with tacks. There’s no barrier between art and viewer, no glass to muddy the picture’s surface with reflection—just clear images of clear days. One photo shows a group of casually dressed friends enjoying a picnic on the edge of a hearty forest. They could be anywhere.

The idyllic moment was captured in a place internationally known as a hotbed of political discord and violence. But that’s not the point here. In the common, accessible medium of photography, Palestinian and Israeli artists were asked to show their homeland as they see it each day, with all the incidental interactions between the two peoples. Each photographer included feels strongly

about the need for real peace, in the streets as well as in a sustainable treaty. Their individual results are powerful, artistically endearing and utterly universal.

The politics of the Middle East seem to have come into play only in the gradual evolution of the show. According to Robert Stearns from Arts Midwest, Ohio Arts Council head Wayne Lawson originally con-

tacted him two years ago about a show encompassing the entire Middle East. Stearns agreed to co-curate the show with Israeli curator Nella Cassouto, a former visiting professor at Ohio State University who worked with OAC previously on the similarly themed *Common Grounds* exhibit.

Stearns and Cassouto traveled together through the Israel region for three weeks, meeting with artists and examining submissions. Stearns called it “a wonderful journey,” though the logistics of traveling—circuitous routes through border checkpoints turned short-distance trips into four-hour odysseys.

Photography was chosen as the focus because, as Stearns said, “You can present work from artists of very different backgrounds. It’s more of a level playing field.” Also, there’s no market for art-for-art’s-sake in the Palestinian economy; this opened the selection process to Palestinians making their living as photojournalists.

After this decision, the curators sought



opposite page: *The Last Supper* by Adi Ness; this page: *Untitled (Marsaba)* by Amit Geron. Both photos are part of the Ohio Arts Council's Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East exhibit currently on view at the Riffe Gallery

## Columbus Alive Continued ...

work from countries including Syria and Lebanon. The lack of peace agreements between Israel and these countries, however, meant that Cassouto could not travel to them. Jordan was also considered, until one of the photographers dropped out. He feared for his job in an organization promoting Arab culture should he participate, due to the heated relationship between Jordan and Palestine.

"We decided we're going to have to focus on this is going to have to be an Israeli/Palestinian show," Stearns explained. "By focusing on these, we're focusing on the core of the conflict."

As Geron's work shows, no matter what the political landscape, the earthen reality of the area has a beauty that can't be permanently sullied by the millennia-old turf war. "I wanted to test how we could merge with the land without getting involved with the conflict," he explained. He accomplishes this by capturing gorgeous vistas in the visual context of vacation photos or picture postcards.

Universally recognizable images permeate the show, placing heavy emphasis on the commonalities of all nations and all people. The first set of photos a viewer sees on the far left gallery wall is Sharon Ya'ari's *Lawns* series. The green fields offer a bridge of the cultural gap through lawn care, an obsession of Americans and—a way in which neighbors have gotten to know each other since the post-World War II birth of the suburbs.

Tamir Sher chronicles the entrances to parking lots in the *Openings* series. Concrete and dotted lines look familiar, yet these pictures conjure a dread at what's within the shadows behind the entrance. Sher uses perspective for a taste of claustrophobia.

Adi Ness adopts one of the most recognizable images in art—Leonardo DaVinci's *The Last Supper*—for a photo of the same name posed with men in Israeli army uniforms. In its huge presentation, a window's reflection casting a golden halo on the central figure and the many bullet holes that dot the walls behind them are clearly defined.

Breathtaking images with neither a sense of place or time come from Lee Yanor, an Israeli who lived in Paris and has concentrated on dance photography. In *The Dance*, members of Pina Bausch Dance Theatre are fluid, ethereal and passionate in a string of images printed on curling canvas and nailed to a common base. Above, monochromatic roses, not taking the chance of inciting through color, fly on parchment-like fabric as flags for a non-existent, but probably peaceful nation.

Even when the artists give a specific sense of their homeland and its people, there are unexpected ties that bind: Noël Jabbour's shots of *Palestinian Interiors*, while often including signs in a language most of us can't decipher, also present a glossy headshot of Jason Priestly from *Beverly Hills, 90210* among family photos and, in one home, what looks like a desiccated goat. In the most light-hearted part of the show, Naomi Tereza Salmon compiles souvenirs from the area for *Black Box: Souvenirs from Israel*. Through her, we learn that one can find snow globes in Bethlehem and Bazooka bubble gum and a Stanley measuring tape that reads "Peace Now" on its side in Jerusalem.

For Americans watching the Middle East crisis from halfway across the world, this exhibit allows a chance to look at the humanity within both sides, as well as to examine our own understanding of the region and its troubles. Stearns found that in conversation with educated friends about this project, many had no clear understanding of the conflict's history. Also, contrary to expectations, in Stearns's three-week visit to gather photography, more people were murdered in the city of Columbus than in the West Bank. Perhaps in the causes and possible solutions of one conflict is the key to ending them all.

*Aspirations: Toward a Future in the Middle East* will be on display in the Riffe Center Gallery, 77 S. High St., through Sunday, April 8. Dial 466-2613 for info.

## Peace Project

Through the Riffe Gallery's education director, Julie Otten, and local mediation expert Patricia Williams, kids from several Columbus area schools and the Americorps-sponsored Children of the Future program will have their own visions of community hung alongside the images of *Aspirations*. The *Aspirations Photo Project* will be introduced at a reception on Tuesday, March 20.

Otten found it challenging at first to come up with a project that would resonate with the Middle East-themed exhibit and with the local children participating. She found inspiration in the common theme of individuals at home in their communities.

Williams, agency school coordinator for the non-profit Communities in Schools Columbus, realized the Riffe Gallery show fit perfectly into a conflict resolution program in place at several of the schools she works with, including Parkmoor Academy, Beck Urban Academy and South High School. Together, they enlisted the help of school administrators, then children were asked to take pictures of their neighborhoods. Parkmoor and Beck used artists-in-residence to help with the mechanics of the medium.

Evelyn Ikehorn, principal of Parkmoor Academy, said that this is the first time the school has used an artist-in-residence, but added that the arts have always been integral to the school's curriculum. As a model school for the district affiliated with the OSU School of Education, Parkmoor has for five years explored different ways of improving how students learn and how teachers share information for a fully integrated curriculum. In the *Aspirations Project*, math and science were studied in the photography process and writing came into play when each student provided a photo caption, incorporating the project into state benchmarks.

More importantly, the project holds the possibility of breaking down barriers, getting kids from diverse neighborhoods around the city to think with pride of their own communities. In a country in which it's scarily common for school children to answer conflict with firepower, the project wisely brings together the learning of facts with basic tools for peaceful living. Otten found the impact of the project obvious to spot in the children's work. "You could tell which kids were thinking about what they shot, and thought a lot about community," she said. Children of the Future participants, at-risk kids who meet in community centers after school, often used the centers as their subject, which Otten found personally gratifying. "It said a lot about the role art can have in these kids' lives."

The *Aspirations Photo Project* will hang through March 27.

—Melissa Starker

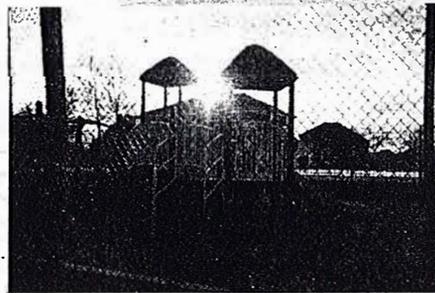


photo by Christine Miller of Parkmoor-Urban Academy