

I am Rehaf Al Batniji, a photographer based in Gaza City- Palestine.  
I am working currently at Nawa for Culture and Arts Association,  
as a public relations officer. My duties include documenting the activities inside the  
association through photos, and videos. in addition to giving children  
focused training in photography.

I am a self-learner; I learn everything in photography by myself, and I also learned  
about paint (Portraits)

I am very interested in street photography, with all details, because the streets  
always answer all the questions in my head, about life, about contradictions around  
me.

In addition, I am interested the cultural life of communities, its momentum and rich  
various outputs.

I produced two photography projects so far, the first was entitled "Road works",  
while the second entitled: "Al-Khidr Monastery Restoration Photography Book."

I discovered my talent in photography early when I was 15 years old. By time, I  
worked on developing the way I perceive and practice photography. I wanted to  
have my own way. To me, the camera was not only my eye, it is something related to  
my heart and soul.

I first owned my camera when I was 21 years old. I started taking photos from  
everything around. Then, I stopped when I realised that photography is a cause, an  
idea and a word.

I am looking for establishing a photography school for the talented and passionate  
learners. The school would empower them to think and express freely themselves in  
a way from the deteriorating political and regional situation.

I think of travelling and studying abroad to take the opportunity to watch and  
experience different photography concepts, approaches and examples. It is possible  
to have artistic and cultural context in which I can reflect my personal view in a  
distinct and new way, this became crucial for photography at the present time.



## Roadworks:

It is a series of photos that shows the everyday lives of the people on the roads of the Gaza Strip. These roads bear the differences and similarities among people. All differences in age, educational levels, social classes, etc. melt away in the streets who embrace all people.

People, in Gaza, usually turn the biggest and the most spacious spaces into small and narrow ones. They find the street as the sole place that they can express their feelings, anger, upset, joy etc. in. It is where they share their ideas without the fear of being restricted. One finds that the streets as the most suitable places to share most of their daily interests, happy moments, or even the sad ones.

For example, one might find a wedding party or a funeral that blockade the street, and one should wait for three days until the road reopens again. Then, the children can go out and play in the middle of the street. Not only that, but also demos always starts from the streets, for mundane usually find their freedom in the street. Needless to say, they find the road as refuge from poverty and other daily concerns in the roads during the peaceful days.

Further, some people find the roads as cultural reviving for their knowledge, past stories, etc. Then, the road appears to be the most suitable place for the night coffee conversations.

People are in dire need for this free space, as they did not get use to such spaces for multiple reasons including the siege and the long history of the Israeli occupation in its sudden closure. They, thus, take the sidewalks as permanent places. Conclusively, the roads of the



coastal enclave remain as a mirror for the unstable conditions the people of the strip are going through.

### **(51 Lands):**

They are 51 portraits for 51 Palestinian women at different geographical areas in the Gaza Strip. The women do their works while they talk about their daily lives.

This project documents their stories through having a portrait for everywoman during her



work while she talks about her simple life.

The image of the Palestinian women has been distorted because they are portrayed according to what the media machines want them to appear in. The media put the women in a frame that does not fit her, and the image of the women becomes distant from the real one. Therefore, this project is to show what is missed or more accurately what the media fails in showing: the woman, her identity, and feature as they are in life.

Showing the identity in the faces of the Palestinian is more important than showing it to the world especially with the recurrent Israeli hostilities and attacks against the Palestinians. This makes us denying what we have around us. We also deny the existence of ourselves. Interestingly, Palestinian woman always bears her own simple and beautiful story in a real one far away from what the media machines wanted her to appear through.





### **Red Dates Project:**

This project documents the harvest season of dates in Deir Al Balah city, (Arabic for Monastery of the Palms) in the middle of the Gaza Strip. During this season, many products are made from the dates. For instance, women make different types of jams, biscuits filled with dates (locally called k'ak or Ma'moul), and Makhtoom ( a type of jam made particularly from the dates jam).

Red Dates project aims at:

1. Documenting the Palestinian heritage and identity inside Deir Al Balah city which is known for its huge historical heritage;
2. Reviving the heritage of this fruit, and its related habits. The wide appearance of the fast food meals led to the shrinking of these habits. Storing and preparing these foods traditionally has become limited to few people.
3. During this season, women prepare the dates, and then they start preparing K'ak and Mamoul date filled cookies traditionally filled with pitted dates or date pastes. They bake a huge amounts of such cookies to distribute them among others.
4. Buying dates in Deir Al Balah city has been considered a shameful deed as palm trees are almost available inside every single house in the city.
5. Such traditions remained an integral part that help in maintain the heritage.



### **Bottleneck:**

They are a series of immediate documentation for a collection of scenes for the people on the streets. The photos were taken from behind the car's window. In the aftermath of the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip in 2012, people faces looked really pale, and they were moving like walking dead. People went through a state of disbelief as they cannot believe that the war has ended. They are still expecting anew destructive war.

Politicians usually promise them of helping them in getting out this bottleneck.

To me, people were inside the bottleneck which is this separating line between the people's anxiety and their expectation of new war that will totally destroy their lives. Gaza is the bottles that cannot handle new wars.



### **White x White:**

It is a collection of photos that tell the stories about the old house where I was born in at Al Shujayea neighbourhood and spent my childhood in with my big family. I paid the house a visit; for my surprise, its details remained as they are.

When I saw my grandmother surrounded with her grandchildren, this scene triggered all the tales that my parents as well as grandparents used to tell me. Since then, I decided to document all the scenes I saw in this house.

I called white x white because we are in a great need for the white color in our lives to purify us from all the life tiresome. To me, every white thing is authentic and original until time comes and pierce it into pieces.

“نرى الأبيض ك حاجة ماسة لقلوبنا كأنه المرهم الوحيد الذي نلون فيه ذاكرتنا الخصبية ، يأخذنا الى حيث ترفض الذاكرة الجلوس ، الى حيث هواء الرطب للمحبة كل أبيض هو (أصيل ) الى حين يتعبه الزمن بآلته الحادة ، فيترك ندباته الكثيرة فوق هذا الحس كالبعيد الحالم يقف أبيضاً مبهياً بنفسه على الألوان وكأنه صوتها الوحيد المشغوف ، لا يلمس أي شيء ، فاذا لمس ، يصبح زجاجة عطر ، تسكب روائح حنين مضي تسكب رمل الوقت البعيد وتسكب طفولة الهوى..”



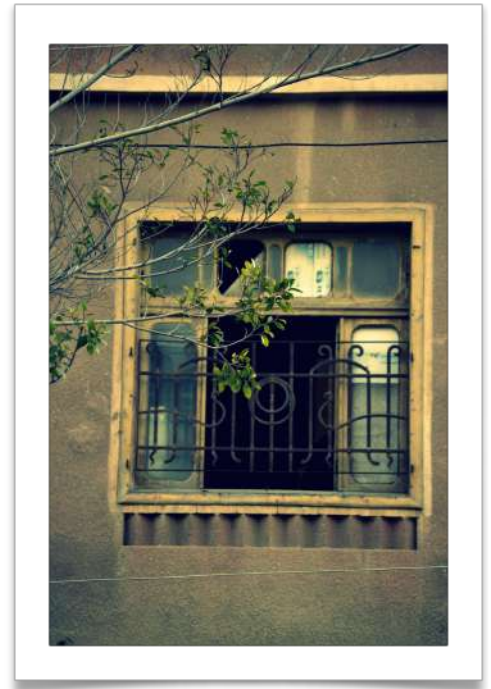
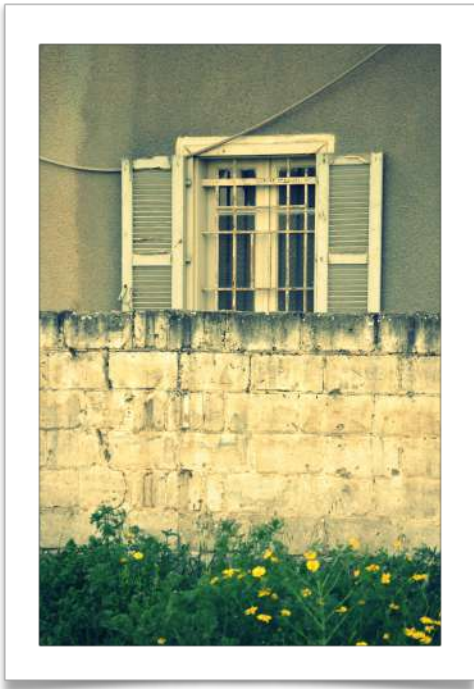
#### “ Masterpiece

It is a collection of photos that tells very different stories for this Palestinian traditional Tools and Antiques

All of them are returns to the number of Palestinian families

Every piece of these antiques is come from different house,

And then they come together such as (Masterpiece )



### **Only One Window:**

It was the first series of photographs I made in 2010. The series consists of (15) photos for (15) windows. If one pays more attention, he/she will find that there all look alike. This shows that most Gazans have a very similar look towards the window which represent their acute need for freedom, the desire for having change, and above all the hope.





**The Memory Identity:**

It is a series of photos that shows how different and paradoxical items can be juxtaposed together in one work. In addition, these works taught me how the places details haunt us everywhere. The memory and the past events always remain present even in the present time.

The photos were in white and black to describe the identity of the memory. It is bit ironic that the spacious places refers us to think of the details in the place. And the small cozy places refer us to think of the spacious places.



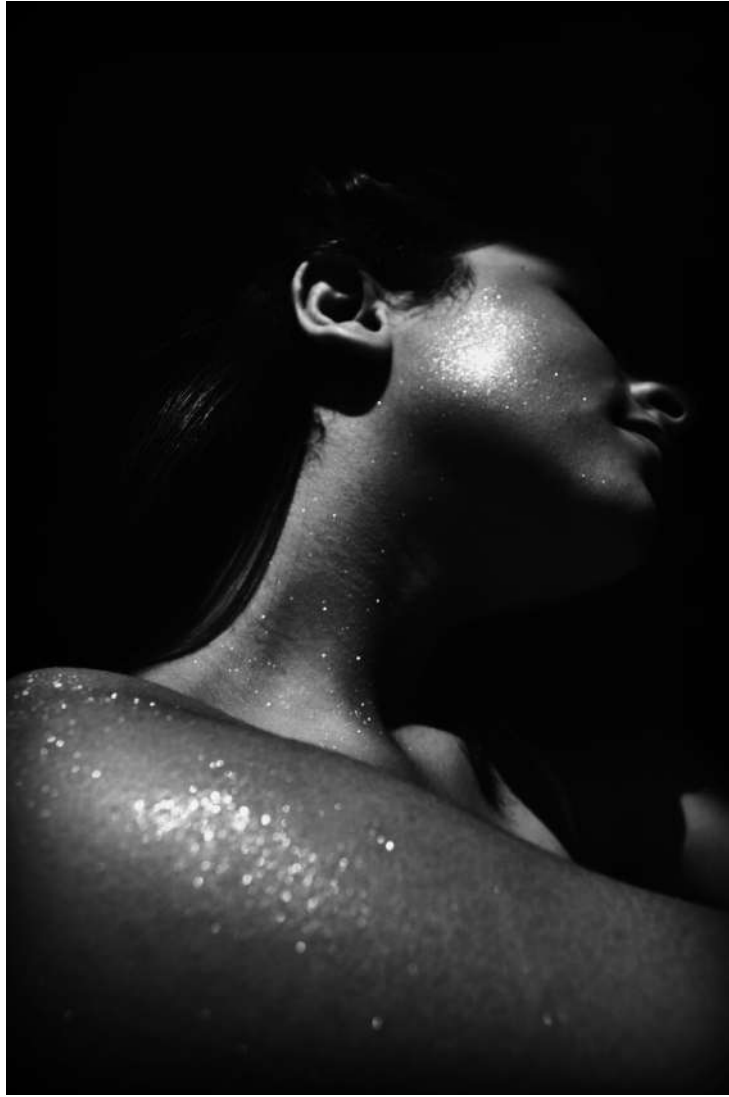


### **Al-Khidr Monastery Restoration Photography Book:**

Nawa for Culture and Arts Association started working on the restoration and renovation of Al-Khidr Monastery, dated back to 1800 years ago. As a rare and one of its type act in the impoverishing Gaza Strip, I decided to follow the stages of the whole renovation process. I started taking photos before the renovation, during the restoration, and what has this monastery become now. With the support of Riwaq-Centre for Architectural, the monastery has become a cultural library for the children aging between (4-12) years, where cultural and recreational activities are provided to the children. Also, during photographing, the camera showed us some Greek inscriptions on the walls and pillars of the monastery. I collected all photos in one book to allow people see how man has a massive power in construction rather than destruction.







**(Body):**

(Body Project) is a series of photographs that I took during the Israeli aggression of 2012. Going through wars more than one time grab our feelings with our bodies. We no longer have any connection with our bodies. In other words, we have lost the meaning of our bodies. We cannot sense them.



- (Hatta)
- Hatta it is a Palestinian word which is mean Al Kufieh
- Al Kufieh still have a symbolism of everything is Palestinian everywhere.

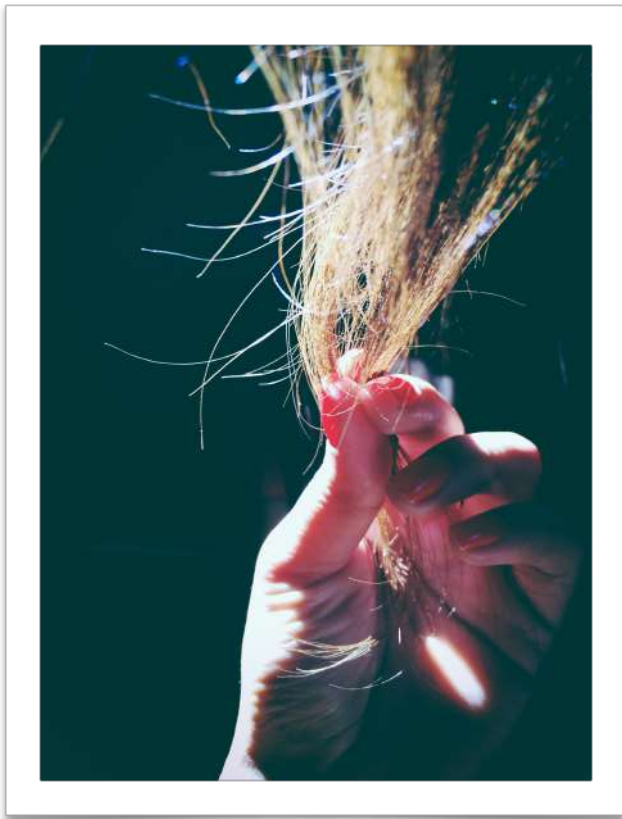
It is a series of photos for the Palestinian people in the street where they wearing Al Kufieh during the cold weather, Most of them are using this symbolism such as raincoat, covering their heads or nicks, and also as a Hijab for the women

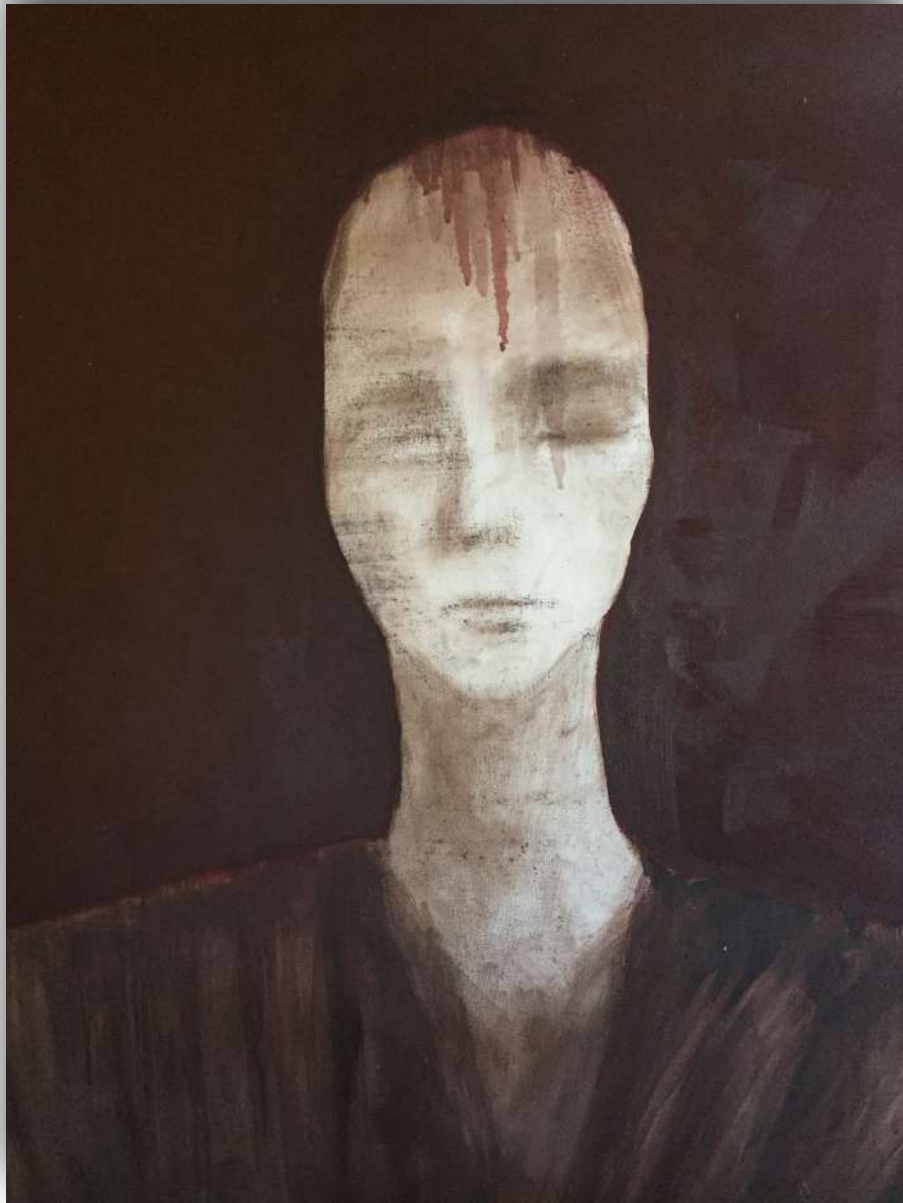


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**"The Mother Nature:"**

It is a portrait that I produced in 2014 which illustrates the reciprocal relationship between the woman and the nature.





**"All of us are Infected" Portrait:**

After the last Israeli offensive on the Gaza Strip in 2014, I painted this portrait which says that the people who survive wars are not well-recovered from the war ravages. The war memories and details are still engraved in our hearts and minds.