

ADAM GELUDA GILDAR

TIMEQUAKE: BETWEEN THE RIVER AND THE SEA

Gallery K102A Colorado State University

Curated by Dinghy Rig

March 6 - April 16, 2025

Thank you for making space in your busy life to see this exhibition. With gratitude I invite you to spend a few minutes in the gallery experiencing the work first through your body and senses and then to read the following text if it's of interest. ~ Adam Geluda Gildar

Exhibition Overview

Timequake: Between the River and the Sea is an evolving body of work that includes collage, ink painting, carved wooden and found sculpture, as well as video and sound. Catalyzed by the October 7th attack on Israel by Hamas and the ensuing destruction of Gaza by the state of Israel, the psychosomatics of looping history, fragmenting narrative, and the subjective landscape come together in this embodied display.

From the Artist

Over the past 17 months, the consistent feeling has been an inverted nostalgia – time rupturing as past and present bleed into each other in a familiar, horrific loop. Bodies stack, and mythologized stories of a land soaked in meaning, disintegrate into incoherence. There's much to say and so much language dies on the tongue.

As an American Jew with Israeli and Zionist family and friends as well as Arab and politically left community aligned with Palestinian liberation, I've witnessed my own nervous system fray in time with this latest, and most horrific cycle of suffering in generations. Almost immediately, the battle of narratives began to play out alongside the physical violence. People I know and love became loudly entrenched in rigid ideology, or like me, even more retreated into tortured silence. Nietzsche's devastating negation of language has rung out, "That which we find words for, is already dead in our hearts."

To manage my own inclination to isolate, I slowly began connecting, one-on-one, with people in my communities across a variety of political and physical locations related to the violence. The through-line in the interactions, I noticed, was that the form of our conversation had the greatest impact on our openness to new understandings. How long were my breaths, how fast or slow were we talking, were there invitations to silence?

From these interactions, an ideological, aesthetic and embodied awareness began unfolding within me. The crisis highlighted the need for a somatic formalism that could open the way to new understandings through the body.

Trauma Transmissions

In 2013 researchers at the University of California Irvine published a study of the effects of broadcast media on acute stress response following the Boston Marathon Bombing. The results indicated that people who witnessed the events via mass media formats such as television, radio, online, and print showed greater acute stress responses immediately following the traumatic event than people directly exposed to the tragedy.

Perhaps the most witnessed war in history, this century's conflict in Israel/Palestine has paralleled the rise of live broadcast media. Multiple generations of audiences have now been exposed to this looping tragedy in real-time. What effect might the catastrophe's mass transmission across those generations be? For American Jews in particular, yoked to the land by mythology and historic trauma, and with our country's outsized influence over Israel, how might our mental distress and reactivity affect the reality of that land?

Ancient Land as Witness

Time as much as geography and sociopolitical orientation have a great deal to do with perspective in the story of this ongoing catastrophe. When does one begin the timeline? Is it October 7, 2023? November 4, 2008? September 28, 2000, December 9, 1987 or June 5, 1967? Is it May 14, 1948, 70 AD or some unknown time in the 2nd millennium BCE? As each new crisis erupts, a tectonic shaking of the clock occurs. Time reveals itself as fugitive, outpacing humanity's grasp in every direction. The land however, knows a different temporal scale. How does the earth, in its billions of years of existence, experience the intense blip of violence played out on and over it, reshaping its contours?

During hours of watching current and historic documentaries about the conflict a curious omission stood out. Among all of the footage, there was very little of the land itself. In nearly 10 hours of film, I counted less than three minutes. While claims to the earth are at the heart of the violence, the actual terrain in question was noticeably missing in the storytelling. I wondered what effect inverting this visual dynamic might have – centering the land and omitting the people fighting over it? What if the land were not an object to conquer and occupy, but the subject of the story itself?

Sifting through film, I came across three short clips of the flowing Jordan River, a lone tamarisk tree in the wind, and the tide rolling onto the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. Stitched together and extended through looping, they formed an ambiguous and tranquil representation of a charged phrase used by both sides of the war to describe the contested territory, "Between The River and the Sea."

Settling into Dissonance

Scoring this film is a song in the form of a nigun. A 17th Century ritual invention by Ashkenazi Hasidic Jews, a nigun is a wordless melody sung repetitively in community. With each loop the tempo, speed and volume can change according to the unconscious and collective will. Stripped of language and theology, a nigun can offer open entry into a mystic and embodied state touching the inverse of Nietzsche's statement, so that we can know that which is unspoken and alive in our hearts.

Unlike its traditional counterparts, Fix's haunting lament, written in response to the current devastation in Israel/Palestine, slowly builds and eventually erodes into dissonance. Its lone voice reflects isolation rather than communal harmony as its coherent melody slowly falls away into noise. The flickering landscapes and disintegrating song broadcast across an installation of radios and televisions manufactured during inflection points of crisis in the last 77 years of war. The devices form a timeline of technological progress paralleling ones of grief and violence alongside the deep time perspective of the perhaps indifferent land.

Wooden Soldiers

As extensions of the land, and living inhabitants, trees too play an important role in this body of work, as images and as physical material. With help from master carpenter Matthew Shaw, I used the wood from arboreal species found in Palestine and Israel, both native and introduced, that hold important symbolic, economic, and political significance. Acacia, Olivewood and Aleppo Pine frame paintings and collages, and are the material for sculptures of books on the gallery's bookcase, which visitors are welcome to handle with care.

The Acacia tree holds significance in Jewish mythology as the material God commanded Moses to use to build the Tabernacle and the Arc of the Covenant during Jewish exile in ancient Egypt. It is consistently associated within the religion with humility, and Jewish exile, which lasted for many thousands of years and is the birth of much of the religion's practices and morality.

The two other types of wood used come from trees forced into opposition in a land where the earth being fought over has become a weapon of displacement. Legal claim to unoccupied land in Israel and Palestine is determined by old Ottoman Empire laws mapping cultivated groves vs wild forests. Olive trees, historically symbolizing peace in the Jewish religion, are a native species cultivated by Palestinians for its production of fruit and oil. These economically important orchards are at odds with Israeli planted Aleppo Pine forests. The imported trees are planted as wild forests in the West Bank by Zionist organizations, often commemorating diasporic Jews' connection to the land. These arboreal inhabitants have become unwitting combatants in a struggle for two homelands.

An Unreliable Library

When painter and art professor Aitor Lajarin invited me to show my work, at CSU's K102A gallery, I was unaware that the gallery, transformed from its original use as his office, had a carpeted floor, with the same burnt orange color I was using to create a sense of nostalgia within my wall-based deconstructions. The floor's color was a concerted addition by Lajarin to recall the time period in which the room had been constructed in the late 1960's to early 1970's. I took this formal serendipity as a sign that this was the right place for an exhibition aimed at the somatics and aesthetics of a fragmenting yet repeated history.

The pretext for bloodshed finds its origins in stories. A war of language and memory renders reality into an impenetrable library. Required by the university to maintain the space's use as an office, the room also retained a custom bookshelf, which I found a fitting structure to respond to with an installation that includes inaccessible containers of knowledge in the form of the wooden books. In this selective library, fabrications and real titles live alongside one another without distinction. Tomes inscribed with the looped spelling of suggestive palindromes sit alongside contemporary titles and writers currently reshaping my perception. Subtly lettered and blending into the bookshelf, they invite inspection and handling up close, where, after dropping into the body through the surrounding elements, intellectual ideas can be examined and questioned from a hopefully more regulated state.

I would like to thank Lajarin and his Dinghy Rig curatorial collaborator, painter and professor, Marius Lehene, who helped me to expand and distill my varied explorations in this exhibition. With their trust and support I was free to create what I hope is an immersive body of work that can open a path to witnessing an inner and outer conflict often defying articulation, that continues to unravel in tremulous time.