




INTERCESSION

PERMUTATIONS ON HERENESS & THERENESS






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MASTER OF FINE ART - DESIGN



INTERCESSION, by Saba Maheen (b.1997) is a mixed media installation that is decidedly a sensorial composition. This exhibition is multimodal, tangling with image, reproduction, and participation. The installations form an ecosystem, using a variety of visual, tactile, and auditory components to focus the attention of the audience on the topic at hand – the liberation of the Palestinian people and land. The title, *Intercession*, is a reference to an act of prayer, a plea to a supreme being on behalf of another. To be an intercessor is to demonstrate care and commitment to another human being, even to the extent of sharing the weight of their plight. In a world that is constantly pulled by the currents of history and happenings, we are tasked not only to bear witness, but to intercede.



Gallery I, the first phase of Maheen's environment, is a demonstration of the insidious nature of imperial debris. *Accumulation* greets you with mounds of debris and concrete detritus referencing the scenes of destruction in Gaza and occupied Palestine. Maheen toggles with the dichotomy of hereness and thereness, pointing to the ways in which imperialist violence permeates their, and our, realities. Manuport is sampled from the construction site of the HELIX New Jersey Health and Life Science Exchange in New Brunswick. The building is slated to host a Tel-Aviv University satellite campus, and has been a focal point for the local community's unanswered call for divestment from Israeli funding. The immediacy of this connection serves as a reminder that while there is a perceived distance between the overt violence inflicted on the Palestinian people and our reality in the imperial core, the structural violences that diminish our lives and harm our bodies in the West serve as fodder for the destruction of these elsewhere. Our labor funds their demise, and the blueprint for Israel's campaign of terror has opened a new chapter in movement suppression, surveillance, apartheid borders, prison industrial expansion, and modern warfare.

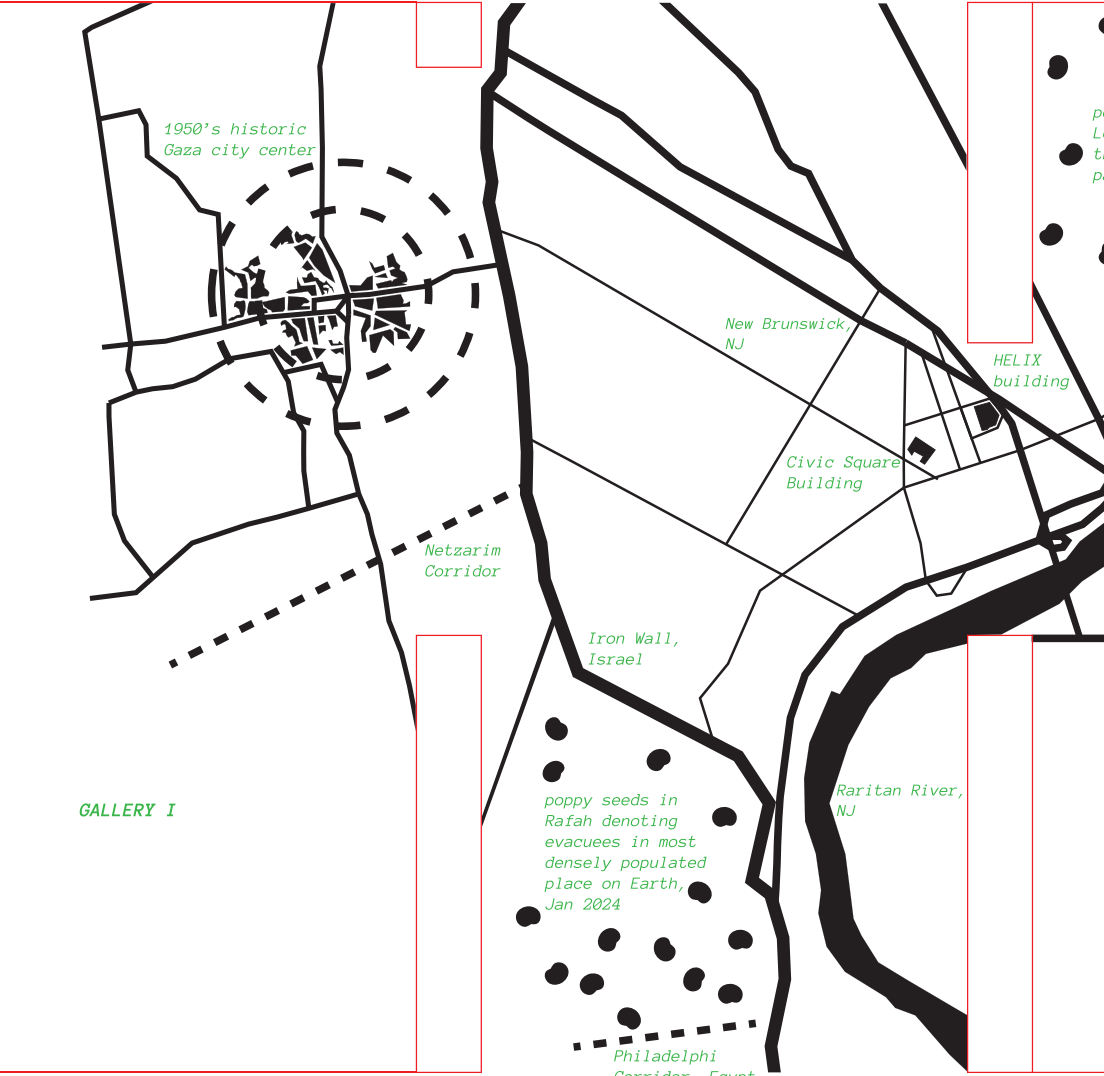
The linkages continue on in *Accumulation*, where a multitude of screens flash images gathered from the most live-streamed genocide in human history. The global media interface is saturated with content about the genocide from both Israeli settlers and Palestinians, but the differences in their reception reflects the overall balance of power in the conflict. The public is inundated with misleading headlines from legacy publications that intentionally downplay the role of the perpetrators and haphazardly attempt to place the responsibility of these gruesome deaths on the dead themselves. However, major news sources are not only to blame; it is known that political echo-chambers are stoked through the social media algorithm by design. Our user experience is essentially an automated feedback loop. Maheen tested this algorithmic phenomenon by training a fake Israeli Zionist TikTok account - which acclimated in a few hours - and the results are displayed on one screen where, amongst the sea of pro-Palestine imagery, lies the content a Zionist would see... or what Tiktok believes a Zionist would like to see.

Additionally, as behemoth American social media companies actively censor Palestinian people, they are simultaneously profiting from an increase in political ads from Israeli organizations and investors - Meta alone has profited between \$14.8 and \$22.1 million dollars from Israeli political ads since October 7th, 2023.

Meanwhile, Palestinians are forced to wrangle the algorithm in their favor, using strategic tactics to avoid censorship and advertise their crisis for digital attention in order to raise funds for evacuation and life saving humanitarian aid. We are faced with an absurd, yet unsettling question: **How many views, likes, and comments are worth a Palestinian life?** The screens will continue to run the duration of the exhibition, 24 hours a day. However, during the 5 daily Islamic prayer times, the screens take a moment of stillness and silence in reverence to the adhan, or public call to prayer, recently outlawed by the Israeli government to combat "unreasonable noise".

Scattered amongst the rubble are casted concrete models of the Gold Apollo AR924 pager, and the Icom IC-V82 transceiver, exact replicas of the devices typically associated with the Hezbollah. As part of a clandestine Israeli attack, on September 17, 2024, nine people were killed and nearly 3,000 men, women and children were wounded as these model pager devices exploded in public spaces across Lebanon and parts of Syria. Immediately after, on September 18, there was another explosion of walkie-talkies in Lebanon, which according to the Lebanese Health Ministry, killed 14 people and wounded 450 others. The explosions were incredibly revealing of Israel's covert hijacking of supply chain logistics. Concurrently, it raises concerns about the extent of access state actors have regarding privately owned technological devices.

En route to Gallery H, emanating from the rubble, the floor is black with white lines of a map. The blueprint reflects an amalgamation of borderlands, subverting scales of a nation and the domestic: historic Gaza city center of 1950, the IOF-controlled Iron Wall around Gaza, Philadelphi and Netzarim Corridors, the HELIX building, Civic Square Building, Raritan River in New Brunswick, NJ, and the New York L-train subway line. There are poppy seeds strewn in various areas of the map; a national symbol for bloodshed and Palestinian resilience, the seeds represent lives lost in each location to imperialist aspirations. While discussing the Israeli government's mechanisms of border control, Heba Gowayed asked us to consider borders "not as legal markers of sovereign territory but as a coalition of costs." Do borders really exist? Or are they just propagandized through inciting bureaucracy, ownership, and violence? The space between here and there are flattened through the use of the colonial invention of mapping, yet upended figuratively as if continental plates converged. Make no mistake; their struggle concurs with ours.



1950's historic
Gaza city center

Netzarim
Corridor

Iron Wall,
Israel

New Brunswick,
NJ

Civic Square
Building

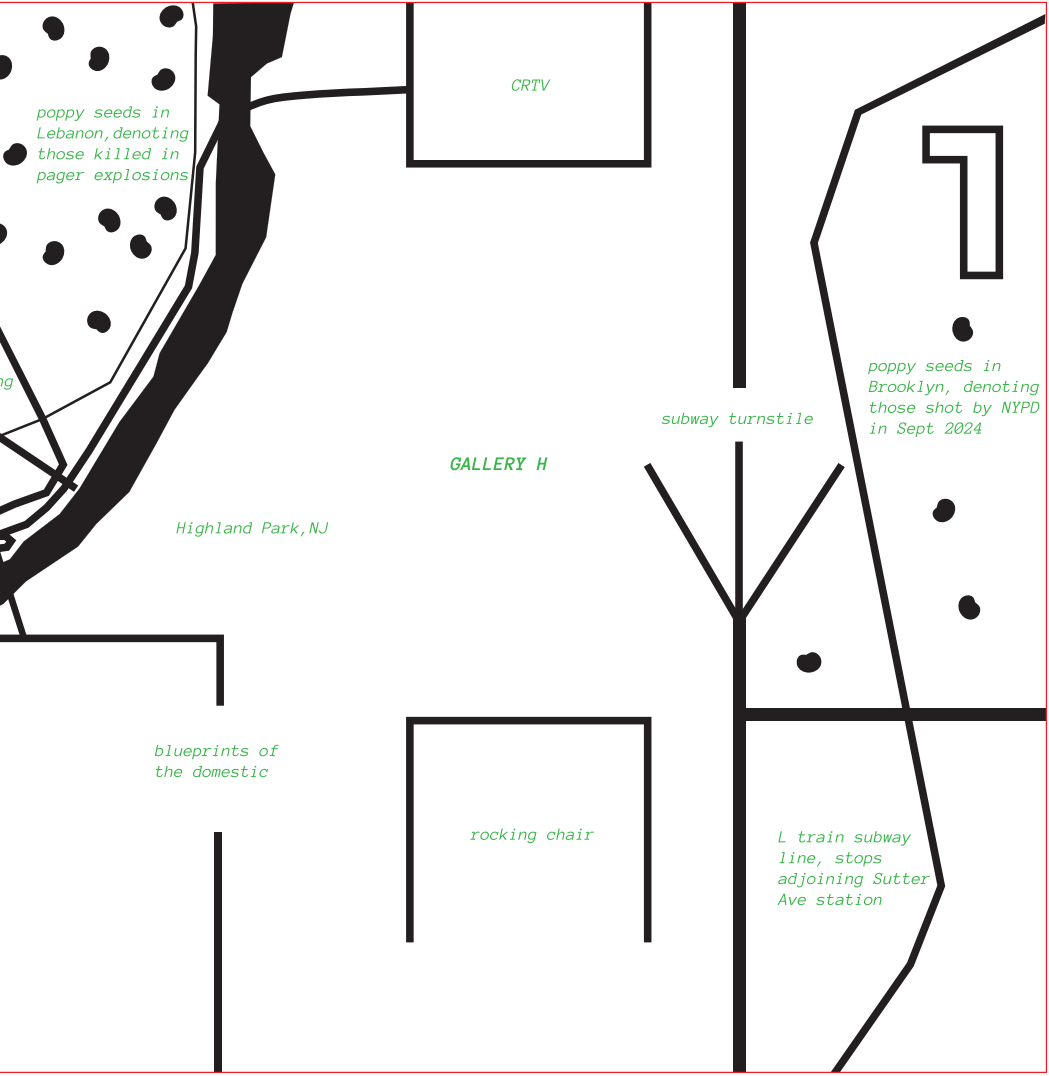
HELIX
building

Raritan River,
NJ

poppy seeds in
Rafah denoting
evacuees in most
densely populated
place on Earth,
Jan 2024

Philadelphi
Corridor, Egypt

GALLERY I



poppy seeds in Lebanon, denoting those killed in pager explosions

CRTV

GALLERY H

Highland Park, NJ

blueprints of the domestic

rocking chair

subway turnstile

poppy seeds in Brooklyn, denoting those shot by NYPD in Sept 2024

L train subway line, stops adjoining Sutter Ave station

Entering Gallery H, the space becomes more intimate, enveloped in scarlet. *Noise/Signal* is inspired by Zbigniew Ribczynski's short film, *Tango* (1980); a CRTV's high-pitched hum shows white, pixelated figures in space. A severe dehumanization occurs here; the video shows the discombobulated bodies of the other space walking amongst the rubble, creating a live, looping, ephemeral video. Akin to thermal maps and AI systems used by the Israeli military to find presence of life in Gaza, this footage functions as a record of the room, and alludes to the surveillance technology aiding military hyper-presence. Yet, civilian casualties are considered collateral damage by the IOF when these systems decide who is a target, and how many among them will also come in the line of fire. Additionally, these militaristic surveillance systems developed in the United States are contracted to Israel to utilize Palestine as a testing ground.

After 15 months of carnage, a temporary ceasefire was announced by Israeli authority on January 19th, 2025. Since, survivors are returning to the ruins of their homes to search for signs of life for survivors, or the remains of their loved ones in the hope of being able to properly grieve. As debris is being cleared, 137 bodies were found in Rafah over the last few days (as of 1/22/2025). Experts estimate that underneath the heaps of concrete that cover the landscape of Gaza lies the bodies of at least 12,000 people, not to mention many whose bodies may never be found having been horrifically vaporized by the Israeli government and its powerful accomplices in the West.

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

Inna lilahi wa inna ilayhi rajioon.

Indeed, we belong to Allah, and indeed, to Him we return.

2:156

To Feel aims to strike a humanizing connection to the victims, to consider how we can stoke the fire of empathy within ourselves beyond the screen. The rocking chair incorporates a transducer that captures the pulse of those who stick their finger in the rubble in *Accumulation* in Gallery I, allowing one to feel the heartbeat of another, even when not present. Not often are gallery visitors encouraged to touch an artwork, but here a pair within the artist's audience may find each other by doing just that. May we never find it necessary to reach into the rubble to find our loved ones, and ease the pain of those who must.

In this forensis, Maheen hopes to demonstrate the conjunctions through histories and geographies that had coalesced into this particular iteration of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The recent ceasefire has allowed some Palestinians to return to what was once their homes, and to receive aid at last. However, the agreement has already been violated several times as the IOF has killed more than 200 Palestinians in a matter of days and has now set up many new checkpoints in the West Bank. Even celebrations of the ceasefire and the release of Palestinian hostages have been outlawed, and It’s important to understand that until Palestinians are restored to their homeland in full dignity, we are in yet another conjunction. We owe them our continued dedication, vigilance, and intercession.

Written in collaboration with Oisakhose Aghomo

**So much gratitude to all those who made this happen.
Forgive me if I missed you.**

Oisakhose Aghomo
Maura Torres Diaz
Selma Mehmedagic
Asem Kialova
Jake Paron
Amy Zhang
Sayeeda Akhter
Mike Islam
Sarah Tasneem
Maryam Shakura
Francisco echo Eraso
Rachel Herring
Ariana Martinez
Maisie Luo
Nusrath Yusuf
Natalie Romero
Jaleel Porcha
Adrija Gadamsetty
Moshopefoluwa Olagunju
María del Mar Hernández
Gil de Lamadrid
Sandyva Amoabeng

Dominic Valentine
Brianna Beach
Fareena Aslam
Henna Aslam
Max Wang
Stayshey Sagastume–Castillo
Atif Akin
Sue Huang
Gerry Beegan
Jackie Thaw
Jason Hirata
Chat Travieso
Heather Hart
Bryce Wilner
Didier William
Stephen Westphal
Paul Catanese
Richard Siggilino
Jahi Sabater
Shane Whilden
Sean Zujikowski
& the folks @ RU Makerspace

LIST OF WORKS

Accumulation

2025

Concrete debris, select manuport from HELIX construction site in New Brunswick, NJ, flexible screens, mini-touchscreens, adhan, Instagram algorithm, trained TikTok algorithm, cast concrete models of Gold Apollo AR924 pager and Icom IC-V82 transceiver

Noise/Signal

2024

Presence detection, motion recognition, implication, witness

To Feel

2024

Finger sensor, pulse, transducer, artist's chair, interoception

فلسطين حرة