

Good evening,

Thank you for attending the opening of Driving in Palestine. I thank curator Jenelle Pasiechnik for all her efforts in bringing this exhibition to the Campbell River community. I am also grateful for curator Stefan St Laurent, with whom I have been working and facing challenges for many years. Our dedication to impactful art remains unshakable.

It is unfortunate that I cannot be present at the opening due to the very systems and structures that Driving in Palestine focuses on. The settler-colonial systems and architecture that control the Palestinian mobility, enforcing apartheid and fragmentation of the population to facilitate the colonization of their land.

The works in Driving in Palestine emerged from my embedded experience while navigating the roads in the Palestinian West Bank, documenting the physical obstacles to movement, imposed on the Palestinian people in their own space, as well as the ground level surveillance structures that proliferate the country.

Being currently in the Palestinian West Bank, between Bethlehem and Jenin for the past seventeen months, I have witnessed unimaginable atrocities, including forced displacement of tens of thousands of Palestinians, killing and abduction of thousands, military raids, destruction of roads, cultural sites, and infrastructure, and bombing, bulldozing, and burning of hundreds of homes, and targeting of Nakba refugees, who were forcibly displaced and over their homes and lands the Israeli state was established in 1948. The Palestinians here are being confined to ghettos, cut off from their workplaces, essential services, and for one another by more than 850 military checkpoints. These checkpoints not only restrict movement but also impose a colonial grip on our time.

All of this unfolds in the West Bank while the world watches, as western financial and military support enables the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza, now in its 17th month. The genocide, ethnic cleansing, and destruction of Palestine further reveals the nature of the Zionist settler-colonial project, which was created by British imperial ambitions over a century ago to displace, replace, and eliminate the indigenous Palestinian people. Today, the same racist colonial ideology, legitimized through divine deed, historical distortions, and denial of reality, is sustained by American financial, military, and political support, shielding Israel from accountability. The genocide of Palestine is a test of our humanity and of what is called international law.

We all have a responsibility: to learn the truth, to question the complicity of politicians, mainstream media, and institutions that invest in and benefit from Israel's military occupation, apartheid, and genocide. Every human being can take a stance in dark times like these. Every citizen in the world can boycott Israeli products and institutions until the apartheid and settler-

colonial system is dismantled and all people in this tiny piece of land can live equally, free of all forms of discrimination.

Thank you,  
Rehab Nazzal