

Open City Texts

Explosions in Landscapes

Three films on Palestine

Xiaolu Guo



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Décembre

2018

Director J

ULIETTE

LE

MONN

R

Year 2025

Country

BELGIUM

rams of language

how language has

been ravaged by the

Israeli occupation of

Palestine:

“Everywhere one goes

in Palestine—even in

rural areas—one finds

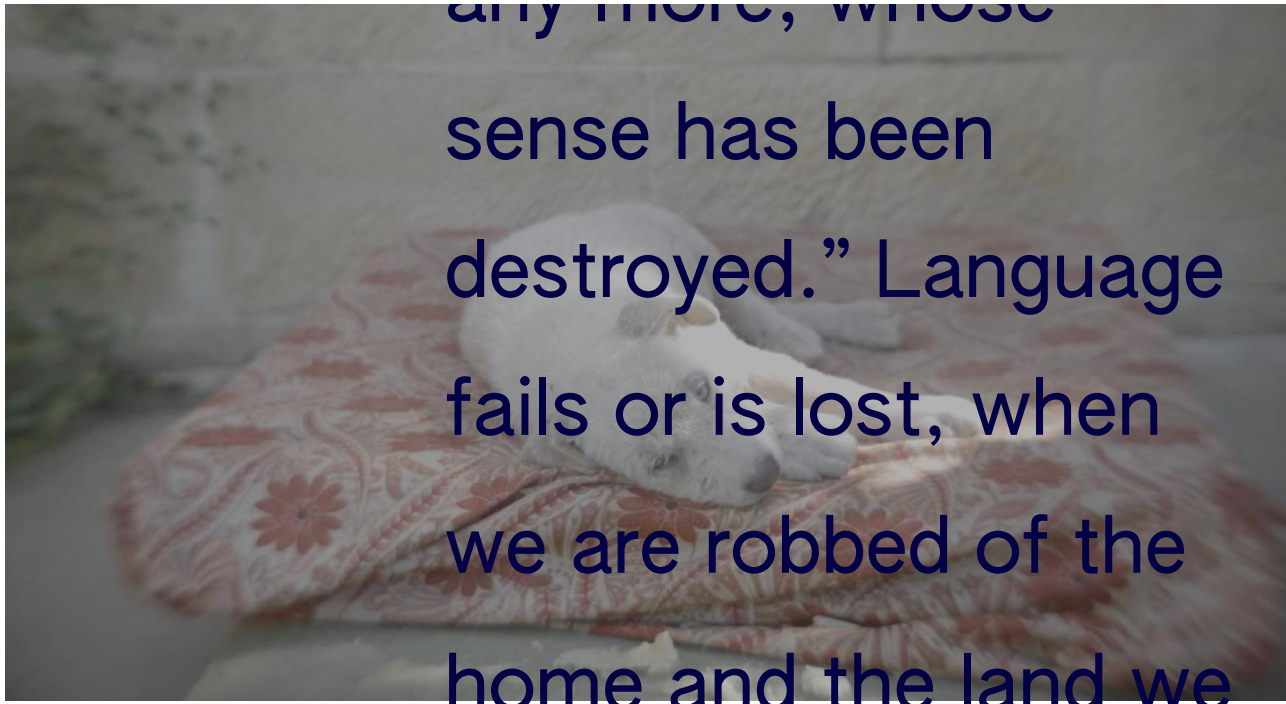
oneself amongst

rubble ...There’s also

the rubble of words—

the rubble of words

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*here and
not here*

Director

ANDREA

LUKA

ZIMMERM

AN

Year 2026

Country

PALESTIN

belong to.

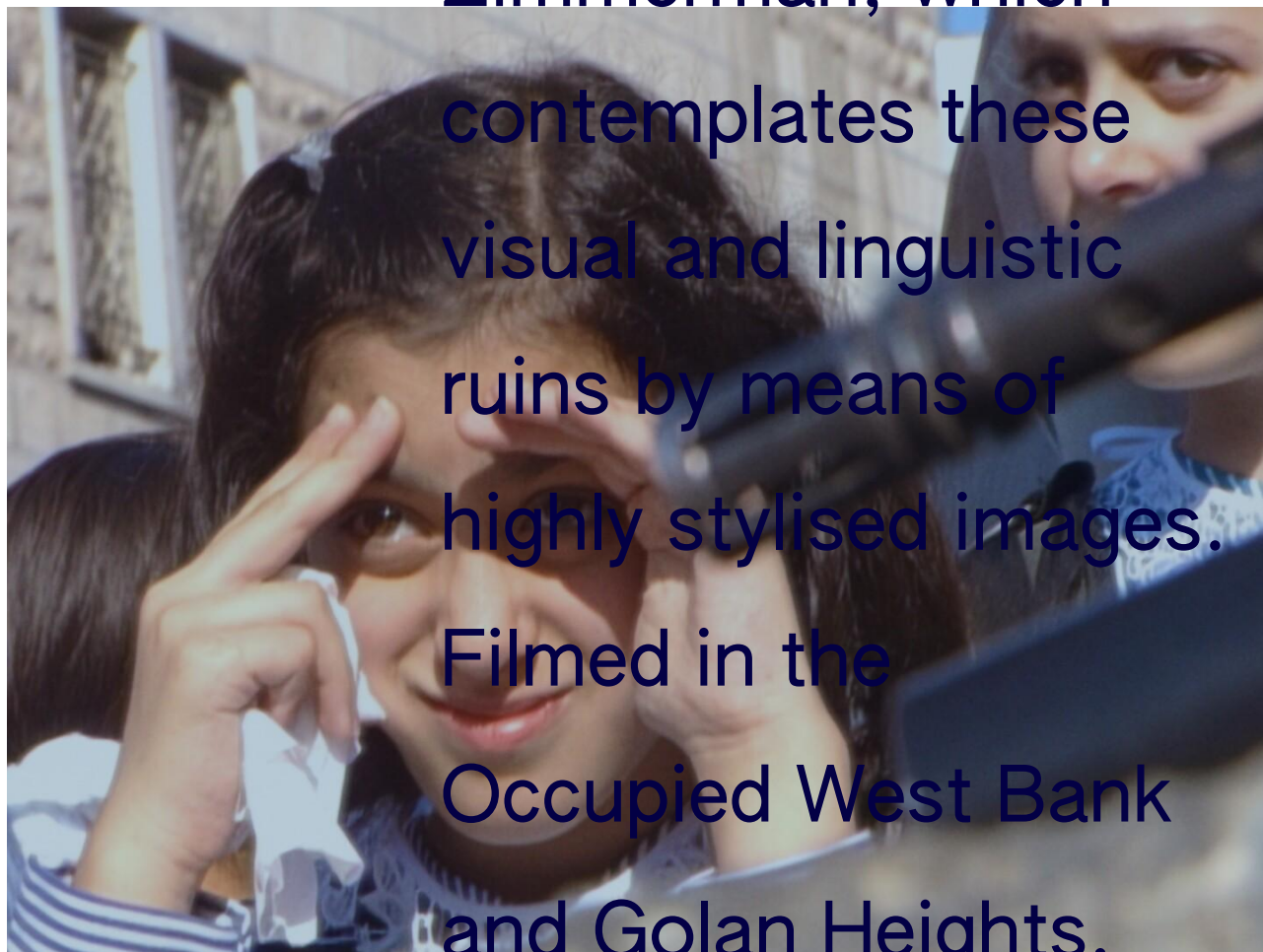
here and not here is a

formidable short film

from Berger’s

collaborator and

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*Intersecting
Memory*

Director
SHAYMA'
AWAWDE
H
Year 2025

Zimmerman, which
contemplates these
visual and linguistic
ruins by means of
highly stylised images.
Filmed in the
Occupied West Bank
and Golan Heights,

the scenes grow out
of a deep
collaboration with
locals. Zimmerman's

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PALESTINIAN LANDSCAPES
E
the marginalised
people and scarred
landscapes, but never
reduces them to
victims, or mere
representations of
political conflicts.
They question the
very nature of the
landscape, showing
olive groves under the
sun, animals on the

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shanty in front of
destroyed buildings.
Indeed, there are no
innocent landscapes,
the filmmaker reflects,
and if we gaze at the
battered landscapes
long enough, we
might read their
narratives. In fifteen
impressionistic
scenes, we hear

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images created by
wires, places and
humans that exist but
resist definition or
categorisation.

Zimmerman notes
that our ability to
imaginatively name
newborns allows us to
name weapons, too;
the production of
killing machines

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me, especially for those who engage in violence. But perhaps their most astonishing observation relates to the idea of zoos. The zoo should never become a metaphor, but razor-wired enclosures cage in Palestinian villages, and create 'zoos' of

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villagers cannot get out; they are watched by armed ‘zookeepers’. The metaphor is made vivid by a cinematic choreography of miniature animals: zebras, giraffes, turtles. Palestine is a sorrowful zoo.

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DOCUMENTARY 2010, by

Brussels-based

filmmaker Juliette Le

Monnyer, is another

short film coming

from the heartland of

the painful conflict.

The filmmaker has

said that she hadn't

intended on making a

film when she first

went to the West

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... came from
witnessing daily the
Israeli occupation of
the Palestinian
territory, “with all its
checkpoints,
humiliations and
scenes of violence”—
when reality is as
shocking as an
ongoing theatre of
cruelty, what a

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to do is find an angle
and simply document
what is there, and
what there is to see.

In a truly courageous
act, Le Monnyer
manages to deliver a
vital visual

documentation of the
occupation of the
Palestinian territory.

The film takes the

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only single take,
without edit or
intercut, that records,
in real time, a
confrontation in the
occupied West Bank
—as if we were right
there in Ramallah, on
a small hill, looking
down at the ruined
city. We see Israeli
soldiers, illegally

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white local

Palestinians watch
from a distance. We
hear gun shots and
warnings from a
loudspeaker. Black
smoke billows
upward. The camera
pans slowly, trying to
find where the
explosion is. Locals
are running and

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about. There are
always children in the
scene, chattering and
pointing towards the
distant explosions.
One little boy laughs.
Where are their
parents? The camera
pans again and
captures one of the
still standing
buildings, burnt and

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expression and the film,
perhaps from some
days ago, or some
months ago. All is
lost.

The last film in this
programme, Shayma'
Awawdeh's
Intersecting Memory,
is a moving reflection
on memory and

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with a powerful
scene; we gaze at a
building in Hebron
when—suddenly—a
huge bang brings it to
rubble. Kids begin to
run, locals try to lift
away the debris,
digging things out
from under the
wreckage. A mother
cries, men shout to

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Amira was six years old when the Second Intifada broke out, depicted in the footage she has found in a box of old videotapes. She recounts the past, layering poignant memories from her childhood over these scenes in a voice-over

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narrator speaks about
her mother and her
school life, what she
wore on her first day
of school: a blue
striped uniform with a
white bow in her hair.
Narrated against the
backdrop of wires,
soldiers, and war-
ravaged spaces,
Awawdeh's personal

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stand in for the
Palestinian collective
memory, and the
film's layering convey
the emotional ruin
that occupation has
wrought. She recalls
precious moments in
her youth: "We sat
down and ate falafel
sandwiches. We drank
grape juice, added

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innocent. Oh, how
delicious that was. I
have been searching
for that taste ever
since.” Indeed, the
children of the war
remain innocent,
playful and spirited, in
spite of their
devastating reality.
Under the white sun,
life in all its forms

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says. LOOK, the
almond trees are
blooming. Breath in,
all the way, into your
heart.”

Xiaolu Guo is a
renowned Chinese
British filmmaker and
novelist. She has
directed a dozen

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*Her first novel, **In Her Eyes, We Went to Wonderland, The Concrete Revolution, Once Upon A time Proletarian.** Her feature **She, a Chinese** received the Golden Leopard Award in 2009 Locarno Film Festival. Her novels include **A***

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English Dictionary for

Lovers, and Call Me

Ishmaelle. Her memoir

Once Upon A Time In

The East won the

National Book Critics

Circle Award 2017.

She is a Fellow of the

Royal Society of

Literature.

This text was

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Documentary Festival

to accompany the

programme

‘Intersecting

Memories’ at Rich

Mix, 16 April 2026.

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