

# JUMANA MANNA

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*A Sketch of Manners (Alfred Roch's Last Masquerade), 2013*

*A Sketch of Manners* was prompted by a black-and-white photograph taken in 1924 at an annual masquerade party hosted by prominent Palestinian socialite and politician, Alfred Roch. Guests pose in Pierrot costumes for a group picture, recalling the bourgeois settings of Berlin in the 1920s. Palestinian artist Jumana Manna discovered the picture and became intrigued with its theatrical and enigmatic depiction of a radiant urban modernity. In re-enacting the photograph, she creates a filmic *tableau vivant*, peering into the sophisticated world of Palestinian urban elites under their British Mandate. By transposing the event to 1942, Manna repositions Palestine in the history of global crises and their consequences, allowing Alfred Roch's last masquerade to unwittingly encapsulate a premonition of the difficult years that lie ahead.

*A Sketch of Manners* is the first part of a project called *Imagined Cities*, which links the histories of Jerusalem and Los Angeles as different kinds of promised lands.

*Blessed Blessed Oblivion, 2010*

*Blessed Blessed Oblivion* is an adaptation of Kenneth Anger's legendary avant-garde short film *Scorpio Rising* of 1963. Anger, an American underground filmmaker, produced loosely linked sequences showing rockers with motorbikes in partially homoerotic poses. Using Anger's method of combining collage and soundtrack as ironic commentary, Manna weaves together a portrait of thug culture in East Jerusalem. Her camera shows them trimming their hair at barbershops, painstakingly building their bodies at gyms with the help of machines, and exchanging tips with the car mechanic about the best wax coating for their vehicles.

Manna sees this expression of the unrestrainable "tough guy" as a dystopic response to the immense pressures that the (male) youth of Jerusalem undergo. The vehicles in these images rarely move – a subtle reference to the constraints on Palestinians in East Jerusalem, and the fact that these young men's acts pose only a superficial threat to the established structures of power.

Depicting the vulgarity, misogyny and muddled desires of heroic resistance and petty crime, Manna creates a unflattering, yet empathetic portrait of this sub-culture from a female perspective.

*The Umpire Whispers, 2010*

In *The Umpire Whispers* Jumana Manna explores the relationship between an athlete and her trainer, and the intimacy that grows from working together. This piece has close links with the artist's own biography: as a teenager she was a competitive swimmer. Manna and her team mates used to sometimes receive massages by their coach during competitions or in the case of muscle pains.

For the video, Manna returned, five years after quitting her sporting career, to visit her former coach. They repeat the old ritual, where he massages her, and she returns the gift of massage for the first time. In a room bathed in warm light, we see close-ups of their two bodies, and viewers clearly sense the intimacy of the situation. The physical act of massage becomes a reflection on the diffuse boundary between what is morally reprehensible and what is right or necessary.

Jumana Manna was born in New Jersey (USA) in 1987. She studied in Jerusalem, Oslo and Los Angeles and is currently an artist in residence at Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin. The venues that have so far exhibited her work include the 11th Sharjah Biennale, Kunsthall Oslo (Norway), Kalmar Konstmuseum (Sweden), Kunsthall Charlottenberg (Denmark), the ifa-Galerie in Stuttgart, and a number of film festivals. In 2012 she received the Young Palestinian Artist Award from the A.M. Qattan Foundation.