



# **Visual Occupations: Violence and Visibility in a Conflict Zone (Perverse Modernities: A Series Edited by Jack Halberstam and Lisa Lowe)**

By Gil Z. Hochberg

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In *Visual Occupations* Gil Z. Hochberg shows how the Israeli Occupation of Palestine is driven by the unequal access to visual rights, or the right to control what can be seen, how, and from which position. Israel maintains this unequal balance by erasing the history and denying the existence of Palestinians, and by carefully concealing its own militarization. Israeli surveillance of Palestinians, combined with the militarized gaze of Israeli soldiers at places like roadside checkpoints, also serve as tools of dominance. Hochberg analyzes various works by Palestinian and Israeli artists, among them Elia Suleiman, Rula Halawani, Sharif Waked, Ari Folman, and Larry Abramson, whose films, art, and photography challenge the inequity of visual rights by altering, queering, and manipulating dominant modes of representing the conflict. These artists' creation of new ways of seeing—such as the refusal of Palestinian filmmakers and photographers to show Palestinian suffering or the Israeli artists' exposure of state manipulated Israeli blindness—offers a crucial gateway, Hochberg suggests, for overcoming and undoing Israel's militarized dominance and political oppression of Palestinians.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

"Focusing on the politics of visuality, *Visual Occupations* engages the Zionist narrative in its various scopic manifestations, while also offering close readings of a wide range of contemporary artistic representations of a conflictual zone. Through such key notions as concealment, surveillance, and witnessing, the book insightfully examines the uneven access to visual rights that divides Israelis and Palestinians. Throughout, Gil Z. Hochberg sharply accentuates the tensions between visibility and invisibility within a context of ongoing war and violence. *Visual Occupations* makes a vital and informed contribution to the growing field of Israel/Palestine visual culture studies."

(Ella Shohat, Author of *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*)

"Gil Z. Hochberg's brilliant and lucidly written text provides a vivid analysis of the sharp limits on visibility in Palestine/Israel. The expulsions of Palestinians in 1948 are invisible in Israel, and yet they continue to haunt its citizens and mobilize Palestinian resistance. Palestinians under occupation are hyper-visible, as victims and militants, and they seek both non-spectacular images and a measure of opacity. Through her critical readings of an array of Palestinian and Israeli artistic works, Hochberg offers other ways of looking and being seen in this vastly unequal field of visibility."

(Ted Swedenberg, coeditor of *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*)

"Both *Visual Occupations* and *Digital Militarism* are ultimately about the gaze, about the ability of Israelis to see themselves as perpetrators and about the ability of Palestinians to return, refuse, or otherwise manage the disciplining gaze of military and international aid organizations alike. Kuntsman and Stein, and Hochberg all demand that their readers see a long violence in pictures of events that might be taken as spectacular or ruptural, in images that seem to show nothing at all."

(Jenna Brager *The New Inquiry*)

"Hochberg's is a timely and important book that demonstrates that the Israeli occupation of Palestine is determined in and by the visual realm and through the shape of visual fields.... *Visual Occupations* reveals the great extent to which the Israeli occupation of Palestine is interwoven and deeply embedded in the visual politics of cultural production—informing its content, framing, form, message, and even execution—yet the visibility of this influence is not always apparent."

(Sara Rodrigues *PopMatters*)

"Ariella Azoulay, Eyal Weizman, Neve Gordon, and others have created a rich corpus of work on spatial inequality in the region, to which Hochberg adds a vital and innovative dimension in her exploration of its visual field. Organized according to the key concepts of concealment, surveillance, and witnessing, *Visual Occupations* provides a lucid, incisive analysis of the unequal visual rights that sustain the Zionist project."

(Alessandra Amin *Art Journal* 2016-05-06)

"*Visual Occupations* is an important and provocative book. Hochberg's discussion of the place of the visual in this 'conflict' that is no longer consigned to a secondary or background subject within the scholarship on Palestine/Israel is a most welcome addition."

(Kiven Strohm *ReOrient* 2017-01-31)

## About the Author

Gil Z. Hochberg is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and Gender Studies at UCLA. She is the author of *In Spite of Partition: Jews, Arabs and the Limits of Separatist Imagination*.

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