

"Jassar Al Zarka is the first or second village on the poverty scale in Israel. It is the only Arab village along the entire Israeli coast whose people haven't been driven out during the war of 1948. This was the result of the intervention of their Jewish neighbors who depended on the village's people as their cheap labor. Located north of the village is Kibbutz Maagan Michael, one of the wealthiest kibbutzim in Israel. To the south, Cesarea's inhabitants erected, about five years ago, a six-meter wall to prevent thefts and to protect the value of their properties. East of the village stretches the coastal highway, preventing the village from expanding eastward. It was cheaper to build the highway there than building it a little farther to the east on swampy grounds." (Ron Amir interviewed by Liora Lupian, "Ha-ir" Newspaper).

In this manner Ron Amir speaks of **Jasser Al Zarka**, which has been his photographic arena for the last six years. Amir's endeavor begun hesitantly in Jassar's western border on the public beach, and slowly Amir made his way into the heart of the village and into its homes. In addition to his photographic process, Amir's activities drew him closer to his photographic subjects; he became involved in social and educational activities, and he established a studio in the village's community center.

The photographs presented in Amir's exhibition function as a tool for interaction, a tool that enables coeducational activities rather than just observation. Amir's photographs are saturated with the belief in the possibilities of photography to produce more than just a gaze or hard evidence, but serve as a point of interaction between the photographer, his subjects, and, indeed, the spectators.

The definition of the Arabic word "Barzach" describes the union of sweet water that flows through rivers with the salt water of the sea. Because of the different in salination, the two do not mix. "Barzach" in the context of this exhibition signifies the passion to dilute, a passion to create a profound political critical observation, which avoids the immediate claim of photographic "otherness" – the political validity observation is derived, above all, from the distinctive subjectivity that he offers his photographed subjects; thus taking a courageous personal stand which disallows him as a photographer an exploitative behavior towards that which is foreign.

In this context, the prosaic importance that emerges from Amir's photographs enables the viewer to focus on the human drama. There are no extreme events in these photographs. At the most, one could spot here and there a "small event". They draw their strength from their withdrawal, their insistence on observing. They replace the "critical moment" with patience; their "stern gaze" is converted by observing the photographed subjects staring at the observer, or looking away.

The burning land, the political ground upon which these serene photographs materialize, is presented metaphorically with blazing flames often found within Amir's works.

