



# Xposure Jerusalem or Malameh al-Quds

Reviewed by Issam Nassar

*Xposure Jerusalem*

*Edited by Jack Persekian*

*Al-Ma'amal Foundation for Contemporary  
Art in Jerusalem, 2001.*

Jerusalem is no doubt one of the most photographed cities in the Middle East. Ever since photography arrived in the region in the nineteenth century, the city has been a favored destination for professional and amateur photographers alike. The number of pictorial books on Jerusalem may well be in the thousands. They cover a wide variety of themes, depending largely on the period and the background of the photographer/author. While 19th-century and early 20th-century photo books were mostly about holy and biblical sites, post-1967 books seem to be

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predominantly on Jerusalem as a Jewish city.

*Xposure Jerusalem* is not a book about religious heritage or about the conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Nor is it a book that attempts to portray the history, political life and Jewish, Christian or Muslim attachments to the city. It is simply a book of pictures taken mostly by young Jerusalemites who were encouraged to pick up a camera and document what they saw in front of their eyes. In that sense what makes it a Jerusalem book is not only that the photographs in it are of Jerusalem, but because Jerusalem photographers took them.

While it is common in photography courses for teachers to instruct their students to go out and film, it is rare that such pictures make it into a book about a

particular city. *Xposure Jerusalem* is exactly that: a book of photographs taken by students, teachers and instructors who participated in photography workshops held in Jerusalem over a period of two years at *al-Ma'amal* Foundation for Contemporary Art.

Between the covers of the book, one finds pictures representing various themes and photographic styles. Some are blurry in ways that give the viewer a feeling of motion, while others are crisp and depict people, things and places. There is the sleepy life of the city (an old man dosing off next to a pay phone emblazoned with an ad for Iberia Airlines), and there are the Old City's crowded alleys and roadways complete with Israeli soldier monitors.

The collage of pictures, while carefully organized by the editors, is indeed a muddle of images that invoke every



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reaction. The viewer sees Jerusalem's essence: its people without pretense and their social life as a scattered glimpse of habits, street snapshots, food fetishes, commercialism and daily politics. Indeed, this city, while being symbolic for so many, is really a jumble of the banal and the sophisticated. Such mishmash places an Israeli policeman at the entrance of a religious shrine and murals depicting the burial of Jesus next to graffiti of the Palestinian flag.

Most of the photographs are in color, although there are a few select black and whites. Photographs taken by the trainees appear without captions or credit (although a list of the photographers is provided at the beginning), so assigning a meaning is left solely to the viewer. At the same time, photographs taken by the trainers appear in special sections divided

by photographer. This book is a must-see, not only for its art, but because it manages to depict the vibes of daily Palestinian life in all its surrealism. There are a few shortcomings; some of the pictures appear on two pages with part of the image lost in the binds. Nonetheless, this remains an important photographic book for both students of photography and art, as well as students of everyday life.



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