



Revolution Is Female at P21

Description

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Revolution

Nearly two years on from [Art of Palestine: from the river to the sea](#) Rasha Eleyan is back at London's P21 with her [own solo exhibition](#) *Revolution Is Female*. The Palestinian artist explores the vital role women play in the Palestinian liberation movement.

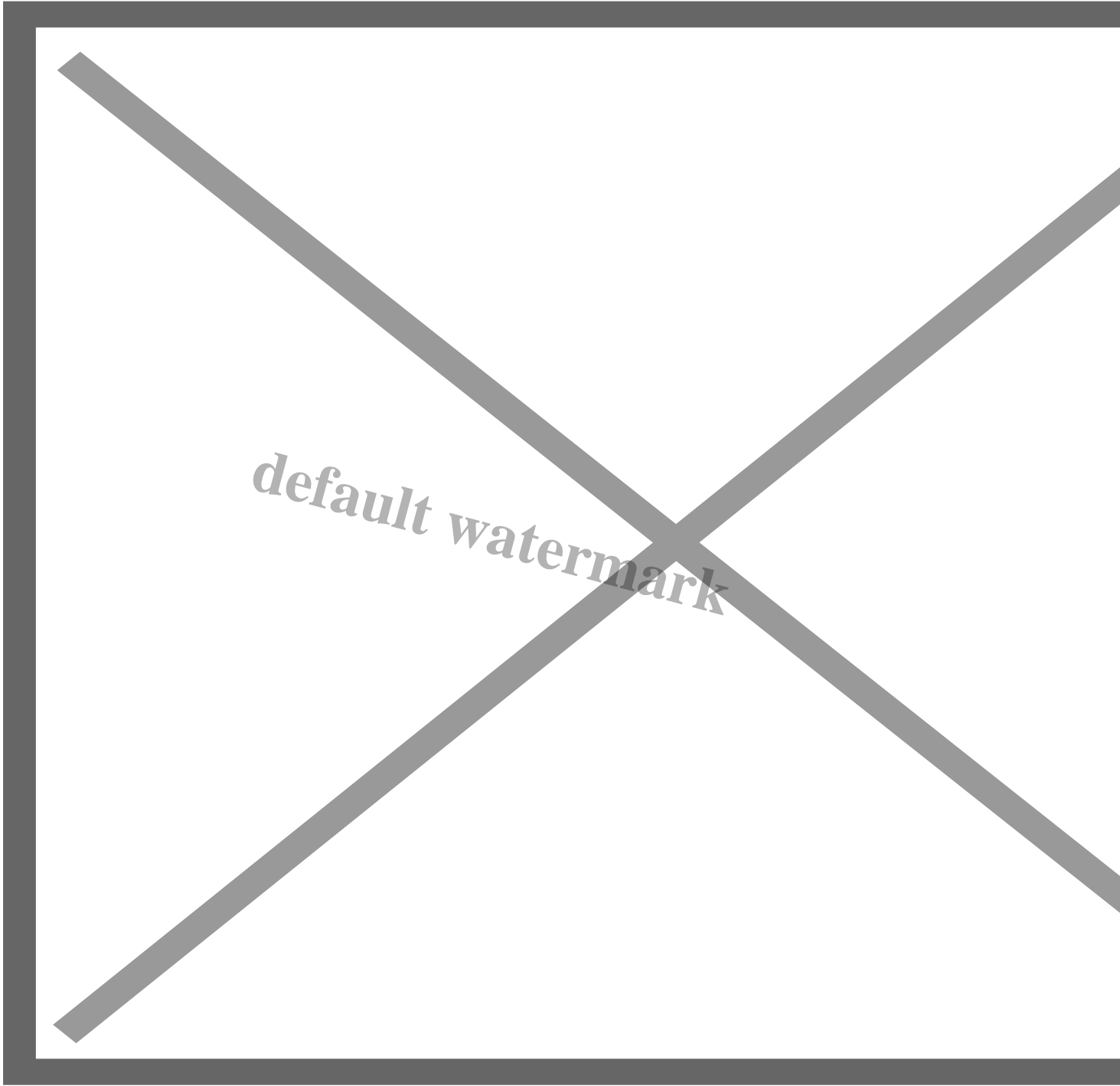
Pop-inflected style

Eleyan's style is very distinctive. The daughter of Palestinian artist [Nasr Abdelaziz](#) Rasha had access to a well-stocked library of books on animation she would copy from: Abdelaziz had studied animation in London in the 1970s. But where his style is figurative, focusing on traditional life in Palestine, Rasha's paintings have a distinct pop art influence. She also credits her first job at Disney Television in Singapore. She tells *The Canary*:

I'm often identified as a pop artist, but I was also obsessively inspired by films that combined animation with live action, especially *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. That's where I started merging pop-inspired visual elements with more classical realistic painting techniques.

She also credits her father for the way she chooses to focus on and portray women. His paintings depict Palestinian women — including her mother — with dignity and quiet strength:

The women in his paintings are my inspiration: beautiful women in Palestinian thobe[s], with long dark hair, engaged in daily rural life, carrying a serenity that feels suspended in time — but also a quiet mourning.



Portrait of Rasha Eleyan â?? Image courtesy of the artist

Growing up in the Gulf, Rasha was all too aware of her familyâ??s (and her peopleâ??s) history of displacement. Her parents were keen to retain their identity as Palestinians and foster a strong sense of belonging.

We all had Palestinian thobes that my mother would dress us in for special occasions. We grew up with songs of resistance that emerged from the catastrophic situation our people were placed in. Our heritage was simply us being ourselves – but blended with frustration, loss, and also steadfastness.

That connection to her roots is what inspires the subject of her work. Recurring patterns and colours are drawn from elements that are ubiquitous in Palestinian culture: cactus, watermelon, red, green. Another motif is the Zaghrouta, a ululation with both celebratory and political connotations.

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Can You Hear Me, 2025, acrylic on canvas, 123 x 94 cm. Image courtesy of the artist.

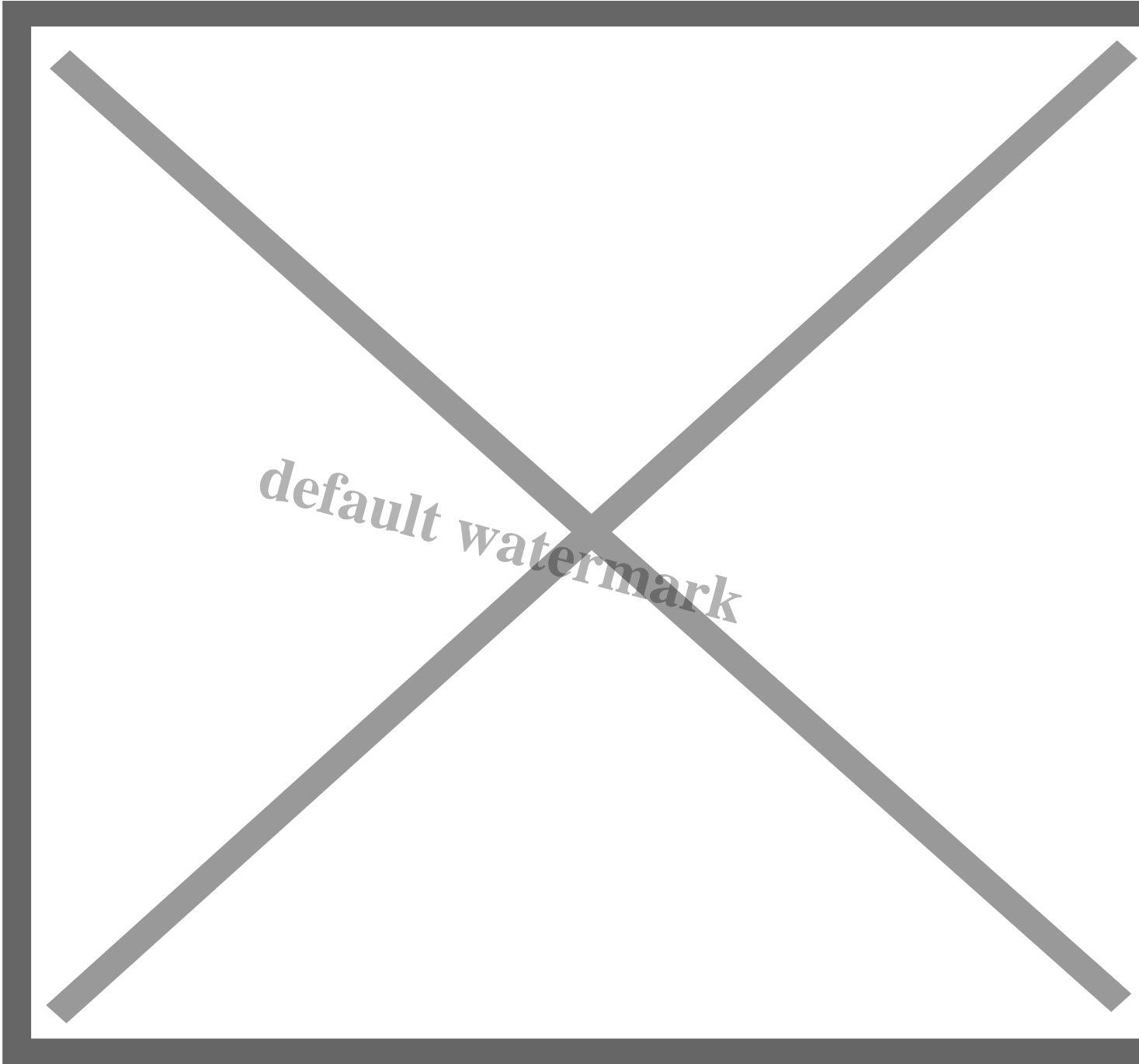
Revolution is Female

The exhibition at P21 is Rasha's first solo show in the UK in a long time. She moved to the UK a few years ago, and took part in group exhibitions. But this is Rasha's opportunity to showcase a larger body of her work and its evolution over more than a decade. Co-curated by Zeina Saleh, the exhibition focuses on the role of revolutionary women through resistance, but also through domestic space, symbolism, celebration, and political presence.

I find myself highly inspired by the Arabic saying "Revolution is Female", a phrase deeply embedded within our culture and collective consciousness.

Indeed, the phrase reflects the way that women have been the backbone of the liberation movement in the region for decades. In the 1970s and 1980s, films such as *Leila and the Wolves* and *Mai Masri's Wildflowers: Women of Suez* were already celebrating them.

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Watermelon Love Affair, 2026, acrylic on canvas, 70 x 80 cm — Image courtesy of the artist

A thriving scene despite censorship

In spite of Israel's ongoing efforts to erase Palestinian life and culture, Palestinian artists are as prolific as ever. Just this past month, the [Palestine Film Institute](#) showcased at the Cannes Film Festival new initiatives and partnerships to structure their film scene, the Venice Biennale exhibited the *Gaza Genocide Tapestry*! The ubiquity of Palestinian art has of course been met with increased

attempts at [censorship](#)

There is undeniably more interest in Palestinian artists, and that is a natural reaction to the atrocities we have been living through over the last two and a half years – though of course our reality stretches far beyond that. As for censorship – yes, we experience it. [–] Conversations around resistance, in particular, can feel constrained in digital spaces.

Eleyan believes art is a privileged medium for raising awareness and fostering empathy. Certainly, the popularity of recent exhibitions ([Thread Memory](#)), music events ([Sada Together for Palestine](#)), and films ([Palestine 36](#)) attest to this.

Revolution Is Female runs from 11 to 19 June at P21 in London. The opening reception is on 10 June. Booking and info [here](#)

Featured image via the [artist](#)

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