AIma



Itzhaky



† *Map no.* ① *hair is like flesh (the coastline)*, 2025. Oil pastel on paper, 319 × 84 cm. Photo: Daniel Hanoch

↓ Detail, 1 : 1





† *Map no.* ② *scarring (the coastline)*, 2025. Oil pastel on paper, 348 × 84 cm. Photo: Daniel Hanoch



↓ Detail, 1 : 1



† *Map no.* ③ *Self-Portrait with a spider, moths, stones, and the Jordan River,* 2025. Oil pastel, inkjet print, and collage on paper, 203 × 105 cm. Photo: Eric Tschernow

↓ Detail, 1 : 1



↑ *Map no.* ④ *Stones in the stomach (where I used to live)*, 2026. Oil Pastel, inkjet print, and collage on paper, 203 × 147 cm. Photo: Elad Sarig ↓ Detail, 1 : 1



↑ *Map no.* ⑤ *Abu Kabir,* 2026. Oil pastel, ink, and watercolor on paper, 290 × 105 cm. Photo: Eric Tschernow

↓ Detail, 1 : 1





† *Map no.* 6 *Wadi*, 2026. Oil pastel and crayon on paper, 116 × 105 cm. Photo: Eric Tschernow



↓ Detail, 1 : 1

SCARRED THRESHOLDS
↓ by Debby Faber

Alma Itzhaky's *Maps of Withdrawal* is a work in progress that confronts the apocalyptic imaginary and violence dominating our present. It is a response to the deliberate erosion of Palestinians' capacity to exist in Palestine/Israel and the ongoing state of emergency affecting, in varying degrees, all the people of the land. The map series asks what happens to a place when a living fabric is destroyed: how can we rethink the site of the wreckage? In Itzhaky's *Maps of Withdrawal*, the site of wreckage becomes the material from which one can trace the contours of another potential time and space.

Itzhaky reactivates the substance of various sites, whether these are destroyed Palestinian neighborhoods located close to her former home in Israel, the Jordan River, or the Gaza Strip–representing them as living sites, despite colonial erasures. The "maps" are inscribed with living memory, the absence and presence of human figures, hybrid creatures, vegetation, and the animals that inhabit these places.

The term "map of withdrawal," commonly associated with military maneuvers and negotiations, is reconfigured here as a means of engaging in a fraught relationship to a place that is ravaged by genocidal violence.

While maps have functioned as instruments of control, the project gestures toward an alternative form of cartography, with the aim of withdrawing and setting free what has been conquered. It envisions a counter-cartography that unfolds through multiple gaps and points of indeterminacy and employs drawing and collage as forms of spatial reflection. The works thus document biographical memories that articulate attachment and loss.

Each work pieces together individual A4 sheets into expansive, asymmetrical spreads that bring to mind traditional foldable travel maps. The horizontal arrangement of the sheets is itself a cartographic gesture, a map that refuses to be settled or bound. Some of the maps interweave cartographic materials–historical and contemporary maps and aerial photographs–generating a friction between the intimacy of the hand-drawn marks and the abstracting gaze through which territories are represented and controlled.

The first two maps suggest the coastline, reflecting on its status as an unstable threshold between land and sea which geography and politics demarcate and which Zionist culture has often represented both as a site of danger and as a passage to be crossed. The imagery of the map pair can also be read in light of Israeli citizens' refusal to see the Palestinian destruction. Perhaps the harshest anomaly to unravel during the recent genocide in Gaza was when beaches in Tel Aviv were full of bathers, while an hour's drive away two million Palestinians were on the brink of starvation.

On the left-hand side of *Map no. 1: hair is like flesh (the coastline)*, a young woman on her knees withdraws into herself, burying her head in the soil. Her hair merges with the ground, her hand covers her face, and a thick rope is fastened around her hips. At the center is a headless shorn animal whose torso, legs, and an abstract extension of its lower body are visible. At the upper right of *Map no. 2: scarring (the coastline)*, we can observe a male figure lying prone. The landscape is depicted as a no-man's-land governed by crows and other birds. To the upper left is an apocalyptical image depicting swarms of people and a city. This massed human presence projects a mythical past onto the landscape, echoing a memory of displacement.

Hair, flesh, scars, coastline–different registers of boundary–form a dense grammar that echoes, following Kader Attia, not only geographical or corporeal thresholds, but wounds that have been sutured without having healed, leaving permanent traces that can never be fully contained on the surface. The coastline can be read here as the sites' scars: edges redrawn by force, never settling into a stable form. The hair carries a similar logic–growing from the body's external boundaries, persisting beyond the edges of the self. Itzhaky's two maps thus reclaim these liminal wounds and keep them in sight, revealing that within every repair something remains, by necessity, irreparable.

Map no. 3: Self-Portrait with a spider, moths, stones, and the Jordan River reveals a distorted portrait of the artist sitting naked on a tiled floor. A spider is suspended from her nostrils, and to her right, moths scatter into empty space. The artist is holding a stone in her right hand, a recurring motif in this body of work, which, along with the mound of debris to the left, can be read as a symbol of ruination. To her left is a patched-together aerial photograph of the Jordan River. The photograph was taken in 1938 by Robert Moore, an American photographer who worked for National Geographic. As Rachel Havrelock has argued, the Jordan River has historically functioned as the primary border of Israeli and Palestinian national imagination: for Zionist mythology, the river marked the threshold of national redemption, while for Palestinians, it is the line across which displacement was consummated.

Several images emerge from *Map no. 4: Stones in the stomach (or where I used to live)*: a young woman is urinating in public with her genitalia–the source of the world–exposed. She's cutting her hair with scissors; a stream of stones runs beneath her legs, as if she had "swallowed" them, turning a grotesque digestive process into something visible and vulnerable.

The map includes an insertion of historical photographs and maps of the Palestinian neighborhood Manshiya and of Gaza City. The stones located on the right were reconstructed from photographs documenting the destruction of Manshiya, taken by the Israeli photographer Rudi Weissenstein in December 1948. In Itzhaky's map, they are transformed into an archive of ruination, in the sense given to the term by Ann Laura Stoler. This ruination, rather than being the aftermath of colonial violence, as she argues, is a continuation of it by other means. By reconfiguring the visible ruins of Manshiya into an object, the artist works against a melancholic perception, repositioning the present within structures of vulnerability and violence that imperial formations perpetuate.

To the left of the stones, the artist has added a fragment from a British survey map of Manshiya from 1943. The surveyor's lines with their red infrastructure markings press against the geological texture of the landscape like a wound that refuses to heal. Edward Said famously emphasized the connection between colonialism and mapping, revealing the violence ingrained in the mapping process and rendering it amenable to control.

In the second insert, the artist painted Gaza's desert sands based on a British survey map from 1938. These sands, located on the lower right-hand side of the fourth map, were designated by the cartographers as desert: empty and uncultivated, and therefore available for appropriation. This is the logic through which cultivated lands were classified as desert. Across them, Itzhaky paints delicate vegetation, fragile life that colonial mapping ignored. The gesture brings to mind what Ariella Azoulay has theorized as the unlearning of imperial perception: learning to see what the colonial archive systematically made invisible.

Between the two maps the stone migrates–from the artist's hand in *Map no. 3*, a personal symbol of ruination, to the stomach in *Map no. 4*, where it becomes the literal debris of a concrete place that is now absent. Like the Jordan River, the stones are threshold spaces, transformed by colonial forces into instruments of separation: Manshiya, the connective tissue between Jaffa and Tel Aviv, pulverized into indistinguishable rubble; the Jordan River transformed into a border of exile. Interwoven into the landscape's surface, they unravel the scales at which colonial ruination operates.

VITA
↓ Alma Itzhaky

Alma Itzhaky, born in Israel/Palestine and currently based in Berlin, is an artist and researcher. She holds a PhD in Philosophy from Tel Aviv University and has completed a Minerva Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Leibniz Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung.

Rooted in painting and drawing, her studio practice centers on the connections between body and place. Her projects are informed by personal and collective memories tied to specific sites; they explore geographical imagination with a focus on environmental issues. A central question that runs through her work is how a painting can be experienced as a place, and what kind of place that might be.

Itzhaky has exhibited extensively in solo and group exhibitions, including a solo show at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. She has participated in international fellowships and residency programs, including the Goldrausch Künstlerinnenprojekt, LABA Berlin: A Laboratory for Jewish Culture, and the NARS Foundation Residency in Brooklyn.

↓ Debby Farber

Debby Farber, PhD, is an independent curator and researcher based in Berlin. She is trained as a political scientist and cultural historian, and these professions are part of her curatorial agenda, which brings together art, historical perspectives, and critical theory.

COLOPHON

Alma Itzhaky
Maps of Withdrawal

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The Jordan River, aerial view, 1938. W. Robert Moore, *The National Geographic*