



1. Jaffa Road near corner Mamilla Road, c.1900 Image: Bain News Service

### Situating Mamilla

Mamilla Road and its surrounding neighbourhood took its name from the ancient nearby cemetery Ma'man Allah and the Pool that was one of Jerusalem's water reservoirs in antiquity. With the growth of the city outside its ancient walls in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Mamilla Road became an integral corridor linking Jaffa Gate, the historic commercial district of the Old City, with the new middle class suburbs expanding beyond the walls. As well as its positioning within the area, it also lay at the conjunctions of the road to Hebron (a centre of Palestinian the manufacturing industry) and the road to Jaffa (the economic and cultural hub of Palestine and the major port that brought goods in and out of region). Its central and pivotal location saw Mamilla quickly established as the new commercial centre of the city.



2. Sahhar Family workshop, late 1930s Image: courtesy of Micaela Sahhar

As the area developed it became a focal point of the city. As testament to this when the Jaffa-Jerusalem Railway was completed in 1890 the main Jerusalem terminus (now also converted into a shopping mall) was built but a fifteen-minute walk from Mamilla Road. Similarly, when the Palestine Broadcasting Service (PBS) was established in 1936 it was housed in the Waqf building - already an

established institution itself - moving in 1939 to another building in Mamilla Road.<sup>1</sup> Anecdotes abound as part of the city's urban mythography of personalities like Palestinian nationalist and educator Khalil Sakakini and his ilk passing time in cafes on Mamilla Road. While a commercially important district, anecdotes like these hint at how Mamilla had taken on a cultural significance within the city by the time of the British Mandate.



3. Picture of the remaining portico of a former café frequented by Khalil Sakakini, now an entrance to Mamilla Mall 2015 Image: Sary Zananiri

### Turbulence

With the general unrest sweeping Palestine in the 1930s and 40s Mamilla became an interface for much of the turbulence. In many respects the politicised establishment of the PBS can be seen as a distillation of broader problems to come, not just for Mamilla, but the entire country. The British Mandate administration helped to establish the PBS as means of controlling information and countering unfriendly influences,<sup>21</sup> particularly from Italy and Germany,<sup>3</sup> but also Cairo and Damascus who already had radio stations, making it a vital part of the British propaganda machine in Palestine.



4. Engineers outside the new PBS studio in Waqf Building, 1934 Image: American Colony (Jerusalem) Photo Dept.

Broadcasting was in Arabic, Hebrew and English. It has been argued that the decision to divide programming by language was not only instrumental in the establishment of Modern Hebrew as a language, but also in forming both Palestinian and what would soon be Israeli national identities as two discrete groupings in opposition to one another.<sup>4</sup>



5. Palestinian demonstrators being charged with batons by British Police 13<sup>th</sup> October 1933 Image: American Colony (Jerusalem) Photo Dept.

In more concrete terms, increasing of Jewish immigration began to lead to Palestinian organisation and protest, bringing the indigenous population to a logger heads with the British administration under the pro-Zionist leadership of High Commissioner Arthur Wauchope. Escalating tensions between Palestinians and new Jewish immigrants began to lead to organised demonstrations in 1933 and eventually to establishment of the Arab Higher Committee and the beginning of the Arab Revolt in 1936.



6. Mamilla Street under curfew 17<sup>th</sup> October 1938 Image: American Colony (Jerusalem) Photo Dept.

By August 1939 the PBS studios in Mamilla Street were bombed by the Irgun, a Jewish paramilitary organisation, who terrorised both Palestinian civilians and the British administration. A few days prior a car bomb planted by the Irgun in front of a Palestinian café, also in Mamilla Road, killing two and wounding eight.<sup>5</sup> Such violence continued to escalate across the country with increasingly significant targets. In 1944 the Irgun bombed the District British Intelligence building in Mamilla Road.<sup>6</sup> This terrorist campaign culminated in 1946 with the infamous bombing of the King David Hotel, located on a cross street from Mamilla Road killing ninety-one people and injuring a further forty-six.<sup>7</sup>



7. Wreckage of Palestinian Café bombing in Mamilla Road 30<sup>th</sup> June 1939 Image: American Colony (Jerusalem) Photo Dept.

With the immense tensions around the national aspirations of both Palestinians and the growing population of Jewish immigrants, the proposed 1947 United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine sparked open violence and led to what would eventually be termed the *War of Independence* by Israelis or the *Nakba* (catastrophe) by Palestinians in 1948.

Mass protests often leading to riots took place across Palestine in response to the Partition Plan, which would have seen Palestinians retain only 43% of their land. The war to come would see the creation of the State of Israel on 78% of historical Palestine with over 400 villages destroyed and the majority of Palestinians within what would become Israel displaced and ethnically cleansed.<sup>8</sup>

Mamilla, falling on the seam of the Green line separating the newly formed state from the West Bank, saw heavy fighting and after the 1949 Armistice agreement three quarters fell on the Israeli side and the remnants were in the no man's land between Israel and the Jordanian-held territory. This led to a steep decline in the area with almost all of its residents displaced and heavy damage to its fabric as a result of the war.

### After Nakba

With sections of Mamilla Road, and indeed the district itself, falling in the no man's land, the once vibrant commercial and cultural centre for the city, found itself on the margins of Israeli-held West Jerusalem. Its pivotal location prior to the 1948 war now ironically became its downfall sitting on the militarised slum-like seam of the newly divided city. Once fashionable shops turned into workshops and garages<sup>9</sup>, shifting Mamilla from a commercial centre to a grimy industrial suburb.

Ironically, the new residents who populated Mamilla were primarily Mizrahi, that is Arab-Jewish immigrants mostly arriving in the new state during the 1950s. Yossi Mizrahi, a Kurdish-Jewish resident who moved to Mamilla at the age of five, describes the community that developed with fondness, but also what it meant to live on the militarised seam, with concrete barriers and barbed wire at the end of Mamilla Road and the minefields beyond that divided the city.<sup>10</sup>

After the Six Day War in 1967 with the capture of the West Bank and Gaza and the annexation of East Jerusalem into Israel, Mamilla once again became a vital corridor

between the Western suburbs and the Old City. Pressure was exerted by the Jerusalem Municipality on the local population to vacate the area. Local industry was moved on to Talpiyot and the population to once middle class Palestinian suburbs like Baq'a,<sup>11</sup> which also abutted the green line.

The post 1967 period saw a series of ongoing legal battles both around compensation for the compulsory acquisition of property in Mamilla by the government, but also around the heritage status of the buildings.<sup>12</sup> Plagued with legal and economic issues, including bankruptcy of contractors,<sup>13</sup> it was only in the 1990s that the project was resuscitated with designs by the Israeli architect Moshe Safdie.

### Mamilla Mall

Emerging from the haze of legal and economic battles, Moshe Safdie's design for the new Mamilla Mall, the David Citadel Hotel, Alrov Mamilla Hotel and surrounding luxury condominium complex has a 28-acre footprint. The \$400 million mixed use development saw a massive gentrification of the area, that could be argued saw the area returned to its former function as a commercial district linking the Old City to the Western suburbs.

Architecturally, in a nod to Israeli preservationist, several buildings including the Convent of St Vincent de Paul, the Clarke House, the Stern House, the former PBS Building and six other buildings were taken apart stone by stone, individually numbered and warehoused to be reconstructed, while a 1600 space car park was built beneath the new complex.<sup>14</sup>

Inserting these original buildings back into the fabric of the new development, the stylistic and material properties of old Mamilla were mimicked yet homogenised. The Mall has an eeriness, speaking to the multiple layers of displacement that the area has undergone since the beginnings of its development in the 1860s.

An architecturally eviscerated space, the insertion of the 19<sup>th</sup> century structures attempts (quite successfully) to indigenise the new architecture of the Mall into its surrounds. The deployment of traditional Palestinian architectural aesthetics in the façades and Jerusalem stone in construction anchor the development into the landscape, almost claiming to have always been there.

Safdie's design teeters a fine line of notional sensitivity towards *place*, but in doing so effaces the history of the site proffering a hagiographic reading that falls into an architectural revisionism. The complex, which sports international chains such as Ralph Lauren, the Gap, Zara, Tommy Hilfiger and Abercrombie & Fitch, awkwardly mixes international capital with a highly localised architectural response. The resulting space, while putatively returning the site to its original urban function within Jerusalem, entirely loses the cultural significance of the area within city's urban fabric. This effacement of the intricate play of history that is distilled within a significant site like Mamilla acts as a denial of the city's modernity, and specifically its Palestinian modernity, as a site implicated in Palestinian state building enterprises in the pre-Nakba era.

<sup>1</sup> Sylva M. Gelber *No Balm in Gilead: A Personal Retrospective of Mandate Days in Palestine* McGill-Queen's Press, 1989 pp131-134

<sup>2</sup> Andrea Stanton *Jerusalem Calling: The Birth of the Palestine Broadcasting Service* Institute for Palestine Studies, Jerusalem Quarterly, Issue 50, 2012 pp12-13

<sup>3</sup> Sylva M. Gelber *No Balm in Gilead: A Personal Retrospective of Mandate Days in Palestine* p130

<sup>4</sup> Andrea Stanton *Jerusalem Calling: The Birth of the Palestine Broadcasting Service* pp16-17

<sup>5</sup> *Bomb explosion in Arab café on Mamillah Road in Jerusalem* American Colony (Jerusalem) Photo Dept, 30<sup>th</sup> June 1939, accessed 29/11/2015 <http://www.loc.gov/item/mpc2010005117/PP/>

<sup>6</sup> Jerry A. Grunor *Let My People Go* iUniverse, 2005 p36

<sup>7</sup> Tawil-Souri, whose family were Mamilla residents, marks the bombing of the King David hotel as the moment which her family sees as the beginning of the end of Palestinian West Jerusalem Helga Tawil-Souri *My Aunt's Mamilla* Institute for Palestine Studies, Jerusalem Quarterly, Issue 58, 2014 p53

<sup>8</sup> Nur Masalha *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory*, Zed Books, 2012 pp120-121

<sup>9</sup> Gil Zohar *Long-awaited Luxury* The Jerusalem Post 24<sup>th</sup> May 2007, accessed 29/11/2015 <http://www.jpost.com/Local-Israel/In-Jerusalem/Long-awaited-luxury>

<sup>10</sup> Rochelle Furstenberg *Israeli Life: Old-New Mall* Hadassah Magazine 28<sup>th</sup> October 2012, accessed 29/11/2015

<http://www.hadassahmagazine.org/2012/10/28/israeli-life-old-new-mall/>

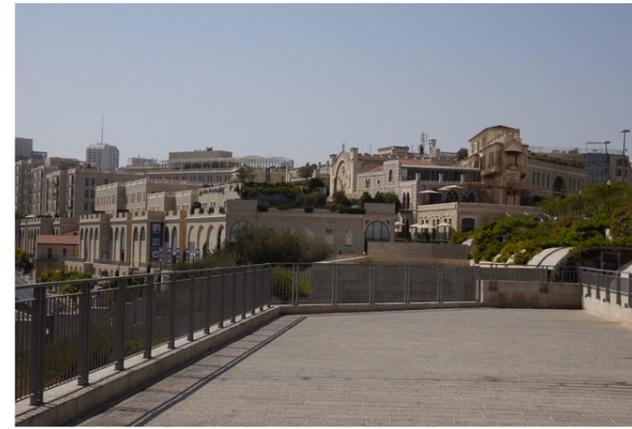
<sup>11</sup> Rochelle Furstenberg *Israeli Life: Old-New Mall* Hadassah Magazine

<sup>12</sup> Aviva & Shmuel Bar-Am *Mamilla, the Jerusalem border neighborhood that rose from the rubble* The Times of Israel 21<sup>st</sup> November 2015, accessed 29/11/2015

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/mamilla-the-jerusalem-border-neighborhood-that-rose-from-the-rubble/>

<sup>13</sup> Gil Zohar *Long-awaited Luxury* The Jerusalem Post

<sup>14</sup> Sarah Williams Goldhagen *Moshe Safdie* Design Observer Group 1<sup>st</sup> November 2010, accessed 29/11/2015 <http://designobserver.com/feature/moshe-safdie/12437/>



Above: Mamilla from Plaza 2015, Sary Zananiri  
Front: Mamilla Riot 2015, Sary Zananiri



### List of works

*Mamilla from the West* 2015

Radiata pine, direct print on glass

Dimensions variable

Edition 1 of 3 plus AP

*Dismembered Façade* 2015

Radiata pine, direct print on glass

200 x 90 x 10 cm

Edition 1 of 3, plus AP

*Mamilla from Plaza* 2015

Photographic print on glass

60 x 90 cm

Edition 1 of 5, plus AP

*Mamilla Riot* 2015

Photographic print on glass

60 x 90 cm

Edition 1 of 5, plus AP

### Public Programs

Mamilla in Context:

Artist talk by Sary Zananiri

3pm, Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> December

Reading Jerusalem:

Selected Poetry by Micaela Sahhar

3pm, Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> January

## Unpicking Jerusalem: a re-examination of the archives

### Sary Zananiri

Little Woods Gallery

1 Langridge Street, Collingwood

Opening: Friday 4<sup>th</sup> December 6-8pm

From: 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2015 to 9<sup>th</sup> January, 2016

Gallery hours: Mon-Tues, Thurs-Sat 11-4pm

Gallery closed: 20<sup>th</sup> December to 4<sup>th</sup> January

### Thanks

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