

not appear, but they are heard on the sound track, which increases in volume and density without ever getting really loud. It's made up of gunshots, chanting, microphone crackling, other cars whooshing by, sirens, snatches of pop music on the radio, bells ringing, a muezzin, birds that sound like loons, whistling, bombing or a bulldozer, applause, someone reading a list of Spanish names.

These are middle-distance vistas, not epic like in a biblical movie. Beige and brown dominate under a light blue sky, with white clouds overhead that give way to a grayer, overcast sky and loop back. We don't seem to be *in* the car; this is not a VR environment, it's a movie theater setup. But the longer I sat there watching and listening to *NOW* by myself, the more overwhelming it became, until it got immersive and then threatening. The installation is anxiety provoking, repetitive, and sad. Who wants to be in these places? Driving through them seems enough, not stopping except to view the footage after the fact in this installation. Yet it was not boring. I could have watched it more.

NOW is a striking repudiation and condemnation of today's world conflicts and politics made before the fact by someone who has left the scene. "The images are bad for us," Donald Trump said the other day about pictures of children crying for their parents in his self-created border crisis. Akerman's loops refuse to contribute to the glut of televisual images sickening people all over the planet. They take the opposite approach of TV news, showing no one.

Akerman has visited such areas before, filming them in similar ways. *From the Other Side* (2002), a documentary about Mexican migrants crossing into Arizona, came out fifteen years ago but was largely ignored. I remember people booing at the end when

I saw it at Anthology Film Archives. It was obviously ahead of its time, given the situation now. The technique Akerman uses in this installation is a ramped-up version of the long tracking shots in *From the East* (1993), one of her great films, in which she filmed long lines of people waiting in Eastern Europe right after the end of the Soviet era. Those shots moved more slowly than the ones in *NOW* and had people in them. Only traces of people remain in the sounds she recorded for *NOW*. In this last work, the people are gone. +

ANNA ALTMAN

Truth Construction

Eyal Weizman. *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability*. Zone Books, 2017.

THE VIDEO BEGINS WITH A VOICE-OVER delivering grim news. *On the fifteenth of May, 2014, Nakba Day, 17-year-old Nadeem Nawara was fatally shot during a protest in the town of Beitunia, near Ramallah.* Grainy CCTV footage records a young man as he walks alone beyond the shadow cast by a storefront's overhang. There's the sound of a gunshot, and the body crumples. From the perspective of a different camera, people rush to the man's aid. The video cuts to a third vantage and reprises the last few seconds; again, with the same urgency, several men rush to help the victim, including several journalists wearing bulletproof vests. *Dozens of Palestinian teenagers have similarly been killed or wounded by Israeli soldiers and other security personnel in the West Bank in recent years.* From local TV news footage there's a siren, then an ambulance arrives. *Most of those killings have taken*

place off camera and a very small number are investigated. Yet these Nakba Day killings were captured by security cameras installed outside a nearby shop, by television cameras filming the protest (including CNN footage marked WARNING: DISTURBING VIDEO), as well as by other activists present. A still photograph shows a scrum of more than a dozen young men gathered around the victim, most of them wearing keffiyehs, their faces contorted by desperate cries. Ziem Nawara, his father, found the fatal bullet inside Nadeem's school bag.

This all unfolds in minute one of a fifteen-minute video that reconstructs the events of that May afternoon. It is a collage of professional, security, and handheld camera footage; still images; sound recordings, including gunshots, and their visualization as waves; and interviews with a variety of experts, including an Israeli ballistics specialist. All of it serves to illustrate the sequence of events, and discover how it happened.

This is the work of Forensic Architecture, a loose association of architects, academics, filmmakers, and artists, based in London, who have combined their skills and tools to investigate the events of May 15, 2014. Was Nadeem Nawara's death intentional? Who was responsible? What could we learn from the incident about the frequency of deaths at peaceful protests?

An autopsy confirmed that the cause of death was live fire. Nevertheless, Israeli officials denied that border agents were responsible, offering the explanation that they only use rubber-coated steel bullets—not live ammunition—in such circumstances. With an understandable skepticism of official Israeli accounts of protest violence, the Forensic Architecture team got to work. They used municipal records and on-site measurements to build a 3D model of the area and recomposed the fragments

of video into chronological order. From a combination of architectural modeling (to determine the possible trajectories of the bullets), sound-wave study (to compare the shapes of sound waves for rubber-coated bullets and live ammunition), and syncing the different video sources to triangulate the images, Forensic Architecture drew the more or less unassailable conclusion that Nadeem Nawara and another Palestinian teenager were killed unlawfully that day in Beitunia by an Israeli border agent—that they were murdered.

The video is available on Forensic Architecture's website, along with a lengthy report that walks the reader through the group's architectural, video, weapon, and sound analysis. The report and video were commissioned by Defence for Children International, to be used as evidence in a trial brought against the officer who allegedly fired the shots. The audio-ballistic analysis became the key piece of evidence in the trial, and led to the indictment of the border agent in military court on charges of manslaughter. (The material from the investigation then lived a second life as a work of art: the ballistics audio, rendered in blazes of neon green and blue, became hanging sculptures at an exhibition in Frankfurt, in 2016.) It is the sole instance in which a member of the Israeli forces has been charged for killing a Palestinian minor. In 2016, the border agent was offered a plea deal for the lesser charge of negligent killing; this past April, four years after the murder, he was sentenced to nine months in prison.

The people behind Forensic Architecture have been at work across the globe for more than ten years. They have reconstructed drone strikes in Yemen, Somalia, Gaza, and Pakistan; documented the human consequences of environmental violence

in Guatemala and Indonesia; investigated torture and detention in Cameroon and Syria; monitored violence in the West Bank; produced an architectural model of a Syrian prison from witness testimony; refuted government testimony in a tribunal addressing a slew of neo-Nazi murders in Germany; and produced a multimedia map of the disappearance of forty-three Mexican student teachers in Iguala. The group performs their work at the behest of a range of organizations, such as Amnesty International and the European Research Council, or out of their own sheer indignation. Much of their output is presented for the first time in the context of art exhibitions, and some projects are developed using exhibition funds.

Forensic Architecture relies on several key strategies: the primacy of witness testimony; the way that events, both natural and not, leave traces on bodies and buildings; and the use of diverse, unexpected documentation to mobilize an argument. Their work borrows from investigative journalism, data visualization, and international human rights law. Their ideas originate in what Eyal Weizman, the architect and professor who founded the organization, calls “counter-forensics.” That practice originated in Argentina in the 1980s, when activists exhumed and analyzed the bodily remains of victims of political violence as part of an effort to hold the state accountable for its crimes. In the ’90s, exhumation of the victims of political repression spread to Chile, the former Yugoslavia, Honduras, and Rwanda. These interrogations focused on broken bones and smashed skulls. From there, human rights investigations latched onto a “forensic turn,” arguing that various materials can be used to investigate a crime—including buildings. As Weizman writes in *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability*, the first comprehensive overview of

the collaborative’s history and work, these investigations prompted him to look at “the materiality and texture of a building as a surface upon which events get imprinted and upon which process becomes form.” The root of the word *forensics* comes from “before the forum”: the place where an investigation is presented and contested. Weizman aims for his and his colleagues’ work to be shown in courts of law, UN meetings, and citizens’ tribunals. In 2010, Weizman claimed the term *forensic architecture* as his group’s own, turning a disciplinary designation into a proper noun. That year, Forensic Architecture became an institute at Goldsmiths, University of London.

THE NAKBA DAY KILLINGS project, produced in 2014, traces back to the roots of Forensic Architecture and to Weizman’s early obsessions. Weizman grew up in Haifa, on the northern end of Israel’s coastline: one of the country’s few large, mixed Arab and Israeli cities. Only a few years after completing his studies at the Architectural Association in London, he was invited, along with a colleague, Rafi Segal, to showcase and represent the “best of Israeli architecture” at the International Union of Architects’ 2002 World Congress in Berlin. Weizman and Segal responded by presenting models of Israel’s settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. The Israel Association of United Architects withdrew their support, canceled the exhibition, and destroyed the catalogs. As a riposte, Weizman and Segal republished the catalog material in a volume called *A Civilian Occupation* in 2003 and mounted an exhibition of the same name at the Storefront for Art and Architecture in New York. The gambit brought Weizman significant attention from the architecture world.

Weizman’s time at the AA led him to embrace architecture as a way to think

about the world. He saw that architecture was complicit in the Israeli occupation and its human rights violations—indeed that architecture writ large, in enacting the visions and even the violence of the rich and powerful, was complicit in plenty of bad politics. In his 2007 book, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*, Weizman considered settlements, segregated roads, distribution of water, and the path of the separation wall as elements of Israel's architecture. He noted that Israeli settlers' buildings in the West Bank tend to have red roofs, so that the military can distinguish them from Palestinian structures when they're flying overhead. It's a cruel, modern version of the Passover story: rather than God killing the firstborn son of each Egyptian household to punish Pharaoh, Israeli officials make sure houses are built so that the IDF knows where to rain down destruction when they feel it's been provoked.

Wars increasingly take place within cities, so architecture becomes an important source of evidence, revealing the various forces—political, environmental, social—that act on it. Architecture functions as the remnant, what's left when the dust has settled; or architecture can be the weapon, the means by which violence is enacted. Weizman likes to talk about architecture and the built environment as a kind of “slow violence.”

In April 2017, Forensic Architecture investigated a US strike in Syria on what they (and many others) claim was a mosque called Al-Jinah. The strike killed thirty-eight people, including five children. The US claimed the target was a community center where al Qaeda members were holding a meeting, and pointed to another building next door as the purported mosque, which it had explicitly avoided. Weizman and his colleagues disagreed. They collected overhead

images of the bombing from a commercial satellite company, eyewitness accounts from Syrian activists, photographs published by Russia's Ministry of Defense, and videos from local news agencies like Thiqa, Step News, and Al-Jisr TV. They asked themselves what they saw as the “architectural questions” raised by the strike: What was the function of the building targeted? What can its architectural characteristics before the strike, and the state of ruin afterward, reveal about the incident? Were civilian casualties to be expected? They found the contractor who had built the mosque and used his drawings to prove their point: that the building targeted was in fact a mosque, and with any basic knowledge of the building, its features, and the patterns of community use, the US would have known this to be an area crowded with civilians in the evening hours. Forensic Architecture's findings, which were published on the Intercept and other news sites, showed that the mosque, though only partially built, included spaces for worshippers to remove shoes and perform ablutions; had a residence for an imam upstairs; had mounted speakers to sound the call to prayer; and that there was a sign on the building identifying it as a mosque.

The Al-Jinah project is one of the most straightforward of FA's endeavors; Weizman and his associates completed their work in a matter of weeks. Other projects, especially those that require the development of new methods, can take much longer. In 2015, for a video made with Amnesty International to map Israeli attacks on Gaza in the summer of 2014, the group spent at least a year gathering evidence and devising a way to accurately employ shadows as clocks and conduct what they call plume analysis. Shadows were used to time-stamp and geo-sync all photographic evidence, which was then knitted together digitally to give

an overview and timeline of the day's events. A ballistics expert could then analyze the visible smoke plumes to determine what sizes and kinds of aerial bombs were used, as these resulted in different signatures on a target.

It's in cross-referencing these digital bits and finding the relationships between them that Forensic Architecture's work begins to tell a story. Weizman likes to say that some moments of violence are clearly framed and perfectly captured—as in, say, videos of US police shooting black men. These videos tell the whole story, he said, in an interview with ABC Australia. Easily understood in terms of cause and effect—police officer shoots, man dies—they can quickly go viral. “But for every video like that, there are hundreds of others taken just before, or just after, from different angles,” Weizman continued. In those cases, the material “needs to be composed” to tell a story that “unfolds between images rather than within images.”

“FORENSICS” BESTOWS the appearance of scientific confirmation. But there is a great deal of self-conscious creativity involved in what Weizman and his colleagues are up to. In 2012, Weizman and a Bard literature professor, Thomas Keenan, released a specially commissioned book titled *Mengele's Skull: The Advent of Forensic Aesthetics*, in conjunction with an exhibition of the same name (also spearheaded by Weizman and Keenan) at Portikus, a contemporary art institution in Frankfurt. Both relayed the narrative of a Mossad agent in Argentina in 1960 who, while planning the arrest of Adolf Eichmann, got word that Josef Mengele, the infamous doctor who performed cruel and brutal experiments on Nazi prisoners, lived nearby. Mengele absconded and avoided capture, but the story sets up a comparison between the fates that Eichmann and

Mengele faced. Eichmann was sent to Jerusalem for his famous trial and eventually hanged, whereas Mengele eluded capture for nineteen more years, until his death by drowning in 1979. He was buried under a pseudonym. Six years later, in 1985, he was disinterred and his remains analyzed.

The trouble was that not everyone believed the bones were Mengele's. Israeli officials especially suspected that Mengele's friends were still harboring him and had fingered an innocent's body in his stead. Clyde Snow, a forensic anthropologist, was one of several men summoned to investigate. This was before the standard application of DNA testing, and Snow propounded a theory of osteobiography, in which, Keenan and Weizman write, “a life, understood as an extended set of exposures to a myriad of forces (labor, location, nutrition, violence, and so on), is projected onto a mutating, growing, and contracting negative, which is the body in life.” The bones, in effect, could speak for themselves. Snow, a second forensic scientist named Richard Helmer, and other colleagues managed to persuade the public of the bones' identity using a set of composite images. These images layered Mengele's face as it looked in life over images of his skull morphology to establish the likeness over Mengele's life span. In the absence of more definitive physical proof, these images proved pivotal to the proceedings.

Weizman and Keenan write that while Eichmann's trial initiated an era of relying on witness testimony in the prosecution of human rights crimes, “the Mengele investigation opened up what can now be seen as another narrative in war crime investigations . . . the birth of a *forensic* approach to understanding war crimes and crimes against humanity.” *Mengele's Skull* ends with Keenan and Weizman introducing their theory of what they call “forensic aesthetics”:

an arduous labor of truth construction, one employing a spectrum of technologies that the forum provides, and all sorts of scientific, rhetorical, theatrical, and visual mechanisms. It is in the gestures, techniques, and turns of demonstration, whether poetic, dramatic, or narrative, that a forensic aesthetics can make things appear in the world. The forums in which facts are debated are the technologies of persuasion, representation, and power—not of *truth*, but of *truth construction*.

The forensic approach does not always result in definitive proof. As Keenan and Weizman make clear in Mengele's case and elsewhere, forensic aesthetics is about reducing the gap between what is certain and what is probable: "Absolute certainty was beyond the capacity of these scientists, and moreover, of their field itself. Forensic anthropology, like every other empirical science, is a matter of probability."

IN APRIL 2016, an architect named Hania Jamal and an artist and sound expert named Lawrence Abu Hamdan traveled to Istanbul. Working with Amnesty International, the pair met with five former inmates of a Syrian military prison called Saydnaya to take testimonies about their incarcerations. The goal was to produce a sketch, then an architectural model, then a simulated three-dimensional space of the prison. Because international organizations and journalists are barred from visiting, there are no photographs of Saydnaya. Only fuzzy satellite images, the kind you might find on Google Maps, offer the blurry outline of a low-slung, trefoil building at the end of an unpaved road. The prison is kept as dark and as silent as possible, an enforced sensory deprivation that is its own form of torture. Because prisoners at Saydnaya could see so little while incarcerated, they needed to draw on other

senses to complete the picture—in this case, sound. Survivors left the prison able to identify the various sounds of electrical cables or broomsticks on flesh, the gaits of specific guards, the difference between bodies being punched, kicked, or beaten.

That fall, Forensic Architecture and Amnesty International unveiled the project as a website with copy in English and in Arabic. The landing page loads with a grayscale digital rendering of Saydnaya. A video introduction uses grainy television footage as the backdrop to a primer on the prison and its context. *Since 2011*, a British female voice-over tells us, *tens of thousands of people have disappeared into a vast network of prisons and detention centers run by the Syrian government. Many have been taken to Saydnaya*, she says, as the image pans out to a bird's-eye satellite image of the area, *a notorious and terrifying prison where detainees are incarcerated in horrific conditions, systematically and brutally tortured, thousands have died in confinement. Inaccessible to journalists and independent monitoring groups, the prison is a black hole of which no recent images exist.* The image fades to black. *The memories of those who survive it are the only available resource with which to understand what happens within Saydnaya.* The image fades up on a video of three people facing away from us, looking at three computer screens. The center screen, the biggest, shows an in-process architectural model of the Saydnaya building in an arid landscape.

From there, visitors to the website can "explore" the prison. (Headphones are recommended.) You can visit a variety of different prisoner cells (solitary or group), as well as the central node of the prison and the "arrival truck," the vehicle that brings blindfolded, brutalized men to Saydnaya. Clicking on items on the vertical dropdown menu leads to one of two things: an

THIS FALL from DOROTHY,
A PUBLISHING PROJECT



WILD MILK
Sabrina Orah Mark

"*Wild Milk* [sits] atop a ziggurat of Bruno Schultz, Grace Paley, Lydia Davis. . . . These stories cured all of my sadness." —Amber Dermont



THE TAIGA SYNDROME
Cristina Rivera Garza

Trans. by Aviva Kana & Suzanne Jill Levine

"If *The Taiga Syndrome* is a book of illness, it's also about exile, disappearance, borders, love, language and translation, desire, capitalism and its discontents, fairy tales, and what it means to be possessed by the madness of others." —Daniel Borzutzky

animated sequence showing an aspect of the prison, or a video of former detainees giving their testimony to the FA team. The detainees generally face away from the camera, to maintain their privacy; they are backlit by a screen showing 3D-modeling programs like Rhinoceros, all of its intricate digital tools on display.

A click on "Samer & Jamal's Solitary Cell: Through the Window" leads to a three-minute video of Samer, a lawyer from Hama (just north of Damascus), giving testimony to Jamal, the architect on the FA team, about his two and a half years in the prison. They are trying to define the parameters of his cell. In Arabic, Samer describes the width of the cell door's hatch, which he says was thirty centimeters off the floor: *It's a bit longer than my face*. Jamal corrects him: *That's the height, but what about the width?* Their faces are obscured throughout, either by the camera angle or, with Samer, purposely blurred. Even with the modeling program at their fingertips, Samer and the architect take turns drawing on a piece of paper. *No, I'm talking about the width*, he says. *I know that, because one of the ways they punished me was to put my head out of the hatch to have it kicked*. The video of Samer and Jamal cuts to digital animation of the door's hatch being opened. *Then he straightened my head, so my throat was pressed against the edge. And he jumped with all his weight on my head*. The image goes to black and there's a dull sound, repeated. *I couldn't breathe. . . . I tried to pull my head back in but my cheek got stuck. Then he started jumping and stomping, jumping and kicking. Blood started flowing all over the floor. The pain and the humiliation was unbearable. And then he left me, almost unconscious*.

Another segment, "Salam's Solitary Cell: Where Are We?" is entirely animated. Here, new prisoners, their wounds still smarting

from an initiation ritual known as the “welcome party,” are locked into a crowded cell. It’s so small that the prisoners must take turns sitting. Another survivor, Salam, recalls: *And then they shut the door, and we were in a state of shock—there was a sense of horror. No one dared lift his head, because we thought one of the guards might be in there. A long time passed before we started to communicate, first just by touching and eventually we had the courage to look . . . And we saw that we were alone, in this small space.* As Salam talks, the animation fades from black to darkest gray, and we begin to see the vague and then more distinct outlines of figures, leaning or crouching against the wall, the cell door with its barred transom. *Outside it was totally quiet. There were no sounds at all, total silence.* The image continues to come into focus. Salam’s voice begins to echo against the concrete walls of his surroundings; the room gets lighter as if our eyes are adjusting to the darkness, as his did. *Only occasionally the sound of water dripping. We hear it, too. There was a smell of grease and blood. I started to feel the walls to try and find any messages written by previous prisoners.* The blurry wall comes into focus. *Eventually we started to see each other’s faces. We didn’t recognize each other. They had deliberately shaved our heads haphazardly and we were all naked. We started to whisper to each other, trying to sense where we were. Asking each other: Where are we? And then they said, We are in Saydnaya.*

In Istanbul, Hamdan, the artist and sound expert, listened to the survivors describe their experiences and what they sounded like. Then, like a Foley artist, he did his best to recreate them. (These recreated sounds were used for the website and were not confirmed or verified by the witnesses.) A certain kind of blow, they would tell him, sounded like hitting a leather bag filled with

cotton. Another was like the sound of a wool mattress, “an old one that you can find in your grandma’s house,” rolled up and hit with a stick. Proceeding from this account, this aural solicitation of witness testimony, Hamdan and Jamal worked like a cross between architects and fruit bats: through echolocation, satellite images, the prisoners’ memories of how many stairs in a flight, how many tiles in a cell, they began to determine the dimensions of the godforsaken place. They designed a landing page that pivots around the three-dimensional model and serves as a portal to allow users to explore its interior—to enter cells and passages.

At Saydnaya, the architecture functions not as residual evidence, but as a tool of violence. The raw environment’s darkness and deprivation are part of the torture, not to mention the cell door’s hatch or the drainpipe where someone can be strung up. The prison also works as a mnemonic device: by asking the prisoners to describe it, Hamdan and Jamal provoke testimony and thereby a different kind of evidence. In the weeks and months after the project went live, the website was the subject of dozens of articles in publications from the *Guardian* to *Wired* to design blogs like *Dezeen* and *ArchDaily* with headlines like “Inside Syria’s Torture Prison” and “The Worst Place on Earth.” These stories touted “ear-witness testimony” as the foundation for the interactive model—and a new way to investigate crimes.

But the premise is somewhat perplexing: descriptions provided by a couple of individuals are meant to form the fundamental structure of a real building. Architecture is exacting and precise, while memory is flawed and incomplete. The website isn’t using spatial tools or photograph- and video-footage syncing to reconstruct an event; it’s using the inconsistent memories of traumatized survivors.

Forensic Architecture embraces this ambiguity. Conflicting accounts from different prisoners don't raise any alarms. If the memories of survivors are distorted, it is the trauma of incarceration and violence—the war crimes of the Assad regime—that distorted them. When I spoke to Hamdan in November 2016, he said the intense connections between sounds, architecture, and memory are part of the torture. After days of starvation, he told me confidently, the thwack of a box full of food hitting the ground at the end of the hall, the sound of doors swinging as the guards bring it closer, “become the sound of hunger itself.” That's something, Hamdan stressed, that you never find in a human rights report, exactly because it emerges from the architecture. When another prisoner, Anas, remembers the prison's hub—from which the three spokes of the building extend—as rounded, with cell doors organized in a circle “like a panopticon,” Hamdan acknowledges this may be incorrect, but says it's still meaningful: “It reflects his sense of total incarceration.” This isn't a discrepancy to be settled but evidence of the crime. “That speaks another kind of truth,” Hamdan told me.

For his part, Weizman argues that while memory may not be the only way in, it's what they have in this particular case. In an Amnesty International video introducing the project, he says, “Memory is the only resource within which we can start to reconstruct what has taken place.” If it's the best they can do, he says, then it will have to do. Weizman and his colleagues' stance seems like a moral test of whether to align with the victimized. He tells the *Guardian* that the project is not only a tool to induce testimony, but a powerful form of advocacy: “The aim is to get this place shut down and ensure that Assad is no part of any future peace deal.”

With each successive project, Forensic Architecture's claims shift. In the Nakba Day Killings, it was that the relative positions of cameras, shooter, and victim could be triangulated to reveal what really happened off camera. In such an inflamed, partisan conflict, forensic material—the autopsy, the ballistics analysis, the images, the videos, the sounds—is put forward as more evidence. This follows the argument of *Mengele's Skull*: witness testimony is changeable, which is why forensic evidence has taken center stage. But in the Saydnaya project, Forensic Architecture reverses some of this. Witness testimony returns as the crucial part of the story, even though the prisoners' memories are faulty. What's most important isn't the exact facts of how each individual suffered, but the systemic torture that took place. The details don't matter because what they represent is structurally true. The survivors might not be the most reliable witnesses, Weizman and his colleagues seem to suggest, but who is better equipped to tell their story?

The model and the website, though, do nothing to alert viewers of where the concept foundered. If there were conflicting accounts of a space or a form of torture, we don't hear them. Nor do we see them as overlapping plans or floating walls that don't meet at a corner. Rather than let these inconsistencies stand, as its creators claim to, the Saydnaya project hides them. Only in cases where a survivor's voice-over accompanies animation is it possible to know which bit of testimony, memory, or invented sound was the evidence for this wall, for this cell, for this corridor. We don't get to see the seams. The sounds on the website are Foley sounds, and we don't ever find out whether the survivors think they came out right.

In spite of FA's interventions, the most affecting evidence in the Saydnaya project

comes from interviews with the survivors. Weizman and his colleagues prefer to elide their own roles in favor of the witnesses' voices. In the Amnesty International video, one of the survivors, his face blurred, says, "I think that every detainee who was able to get out of prison has a message, and he must deliver it in any way, to all of the world. So that they know what is happening in the prisons of the regime." These moments show former prisoners invested in the creation of an accurate representation of the prison. They contribute not for the novelty of the project's methods, but because they want to speak for those who are still incarcerated. Hamdan told me the former prisoners hope that, if and when the war ends, Saydnaya will become a museum, left standing to preserve their memories.

FROM THE BEGINNING, Weizman's research and collaborations have circulated not only among activists and NGOs but in the overlapping space of academia and art. Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency, a Palestine-based studio/residency founded by Weizman, Sandi Hilal, and Alessandro Petti in 2007, has yielded projects shown in exhibitions around the world. Just last year, Forensic Architecture showed work at the mega-exhibition documenta 14 in Kassel, and had major shows at Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Mexico City's Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo, and the Institute of Contemporary Art in London. Earlier this year, the Mengele images were on display at Fridman Gallery in New York as part of a show titled *Evidentiary Realism*. These days, even when their projects originate in collaboration with renowned humanitarian organizations or are picked up by mainstream journalism, it's fair to say that Forensic Architecture's work shows up most often in exhibitions.

This past April, the group was nominated for the Turner Prize, Britain's most prestigious art award. Weizman responded with grudging courtesy: "Very surprised and a little overwhelmed by the Turner nomination. Will it help promote FA's cause and investigations (what matters) or get us subsumed within the arts-financial-complex?" he tweeted. He later elaborated: the same week of the nomination, his group had experienced three significant setbacks in their projects, and he mourned those losses far more than he celebrated the nomination's honor. "I would so much rather lose prizes and win cases," he said. Moreover, he emphasized that they don't primarily consider themselves artists—even though some of them, like Hamdan, do—and to categorize them as such can undermine their work. Critics of FA's work, from conservative German politicians to pro-Assad bloggers, use FA's presence in the exhibition circuit as ammunition to undermine the group as making artwork, not evidence. Weizman rejects that analysis as a false dichotomy, insisting that art can be evidence. Nonetheless, he calls the nomination "bittersweet . . . more bitter than sweet." The winner of the prize will be announced in December.

Weizman's ambivalence likely derives from all the work FA has done to expand the discipline at the heart of their project: architecture. In seeking to make architecture political, their work has come to be perceived as belonging more to art than architecture. Nonetheless, it is grounded in essential aspects of architecture. The group draws on an architect's capacity to bring disciplines together—engineering, industrial design, fabrication—in order to present complex three-dimensional information to a lay audience. Architecture is "an important optical device for us," Weizman says. The image flotsam that defines our age can be

composed, reconstructed, or “architected” to offer a more complete narrative. Doing so helps people see that which they otherwise couldn’t perceive.

The group’s methods, purview, and visibility are growing. They collaborated recently with a *New York Times* story producer, Malachy Browne, to verify a chemical attack in Syria, as well as with the research group Bellingcat on a video that presents the final minutes of a Venezuelan activist’s life. Another project in its early stages, and the group’s first undertaking close to home, is an attempt to stitch together the many thousands of videos of the Grenfell Tower fire—for what evidentiary purpose it isn’t yet clear. There are new projects on ecocide and illegal employment conditions in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. FA continues to follow closely the changing dynamics between migrants, NGOs, and European border forces in the Mediterranean Sea, one of several ways that they are addressing antimigrant sentiment.

Other practitioners are stretching the boundaries of architecture in their own ways. One example is Pritzker Prize winner Alejandro Aravena’s strategy of delivering affordable, government-sponsored houses to working-class owners in his native Chile that are only half completed. Residents receive a functional house with a roof, kitchen, and bathroom; the finishes are rudimentary, and there is space next door to expand—and build equity—when and if the residents can. Assemble, another loose London architecture collective formed in 2010, won the Turner Prize in 2015 for their collaborative rehabilitation of a derelict neighborhood in Liverpool. They reoriented some of the more decrepit spaces toward community use: a stripped-down house frame, for example, became an open-roof garden, eschewing a typical developer’s

financial imperatives. Many of the members of Assemble studied architecture but never completed their training, and so circulate outside the mainstream.

Another like-minded organization is SITU, a self-described “unconventional architecture practice” dedicated to social impact. Alongside traditional design work like office fit-outs and solar canopies, the firm-cum-research collaborative—founded in Brooklyn in 2005—constructs models and platforms to support evidence collection and activism. One recent project aided a group of civilian investigators who sought to disprove the Ukrainian government’s claim that a 2014 massacre of pro-democracy protesters, in which fifty-two people died, was a “false flag” plot. SITU helped local activists stitch together ballistics analysis, autopsy reports, and laser scans of local streets into a multimedia presentation and submitted it to a Ukrainian criminal court as evidence. (To do so, they uploaded it to a mini PC: the court would only accept evidence if it was submitted as a physical object.)

FA’s changing methods, and the reverberations of those methods throughout the world of architecture, prove their ingenuity and commitment. In our contemporary world, there are heaps of digital information, available to the public, that can be redirected toward proving deceitful intent or careless, criminal mistakes. When there is no data, there are survivors who can speak. When a written report fails to make an impact, there are ever new ways of showing and telling. Forensic Architecture has repeatedly found new ways to produce and present evidence, to make that evidence speak. By modeling how to use forensic tools, and putting them at the disposal of the masses, they are further shaping what architecture can mean.+