

The Cellular Burden of Belonging

Jude Abu Zaineh

Feb. 19 - March. 21, 2026

Opening Event Feb. 19, 5:00 - 8:00 pm

168 Suffolk St.

New York, NY 10002

www.trotterandsholer.com

Wednesday to Saturday: 12:00 - 6:00 pm

Monday and Tuesday: By Appointment



Jude Abu Zaineh, *gharb(a)*, 2018, Phosphor-coated glass tubes, argon, and electrical transformer (neon), 30 x 60 in.

Trotter&Sholer is pleased to present *the Cellular Burden of Belonging*, a solo exhibition by Jude Abu Zaineh. This exhibition, Abu Zaineh's first solo show in New York City, presents work made from hand-bent neon, archival screen printing, and images of living matter the artist grows in petri dishes to investigate the experiences of belonging and displacement on a cellular level.

The Cellular Burden of Belonging brings together her neon bending and bio art practices. Abu Zaineh is interested in the intracellular experience of culture, belonging, displacement, and understanding. Considering both the seen and unseen is key to her practice which makes use of both light and cellular division; things that are very real, but not immediately tangible in the ways that traditional art materials like paint or clay are. Pulling from her childhood in Southwest Asia and her own experience as a Palestinian-Canadian, Abu Zaineh interrogates the psychological boundaries of physical space and connections to home.

The use of neon often recalls storefront signs that greet customers, indicating whether the space is available to them or, at least for the moment, closed. Abu Zaineh's work *gharb(a)* delves into the vulnerability of such a relationship. In one moment, the work spells غرب, a term that translates to west. As an additional neon bend that assumes the form of a modifier to the letter ʾ lights up, the neon text becomes غرباً, meaning *estrangement*. An 'open' sign becomes a 'closed' sign, a home(stead) becomes (un)familiar.

Abu Zaineh's works deal in beauty as much as scientific-based explorations of the human condition. Her work considers not only that people can feel a longing for places, but also that land can feel the absence of its people.

Works like those in her series *(de)composition* showcase how that feeling can manifest on a cellular level. Each photo presents a microscopic view of a person's imagined interior. A microcosm not made of blood and tissue, but flora and fauna from their motherland or new homestead: oranges, soil, sage, and even leftover food. While many Palestinians, including Abu Zaineh, have never had the opportunity to step foot on the soil of their ancestral homes, that home still exists within them, in the space between their cells. It can be difficult to understand a longing for a place one has never been. To begin to comprehend this, Abu Zaineh uses counter-archive practices to build a relationship with a place she knows only from ancestral stories, food images, and cultural tradition.

The Cellular Burden of Belonging will be on view through March 21st, at 168 Suffolk Street.

Press Inquiries: jenna@trotterandsholer.com

Instagram: [@judeaz_](https://www.instagram.com/judeaz_) [@trotterandsholer](https://www.instagram.com/trotterandsholer)

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