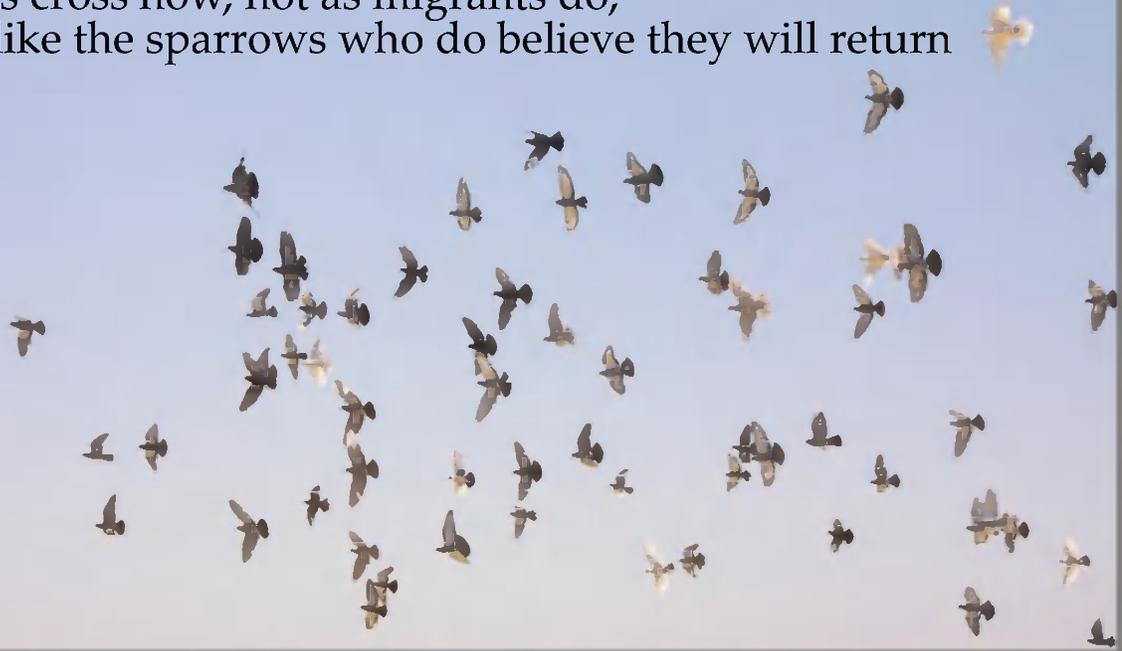


# ARCHAEOLOGY FOR A YOUNG FUTURE



How an archaeological site  
in Syria has come to stand  
as a symbol of  
pride in the past  
and of  
hope for the future

...now that we are at the last foot of earth's boundaries....  
my companion asked me, crying:  
do you think we will ever come back?  
I said to her:  
let us cross now, not as migrants do,  
but like the sparrows who do believe they will return



the poems of the Syrian poet Adel Mahmoud  
will accompany us through the exhibit

his refusal to admit defeat and exile  
reflects the inspiration behind our effort at Mozan:  
it is the effort to keep the faith,  
the faith in a past we share,  
a past that warrants our future

the millennia are for today,  
and for tomorrow

the birds we see today  
are those the ancients  
saw in their sky



our exhibit tells the story  
of ancient Urkesh,  
today the site of Mozan in northeastern Syria.

Urkesh has become a rallying point  
for a broad collaborative effort  
where the discovery of the past  
gives new meaning to peace  
in a modern context of war

PROVOCATIONS  
THE DIGNITY OF THE FINDS  
A SITE ALIVE  
THE VIGOR OF THE WOMEN  
OF SHERDS AND MEN  
THE POWER OF THE IDEAL  
REFLECTIONS

# ARCHAEOLOGY FOR A YOUNG FUTURE

An exhibit at the  
American University of Beirut

concept, design and elaboration  
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**Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati**  
**Ruggero Spagliarisi**

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with the support of



in collaboration with



**American University of Beirut**



**the International Academy of Archaeology**



**IIMAS – the International Institute for Mesopotamian Area Studies**



**the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, UCLA**



**Ambasciata d'Italia, Beirut**



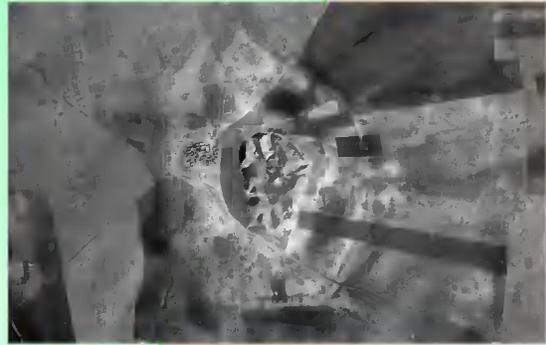
**MUSIC AND BEYOND FOUNDATION**



**Ire**  
INNOVATION  
real estate

# PROVOCATIONS

what do you do  
when you are facing a hill  
you know to have been  
an ancient city?



it is not enough  
to let yourself be guided  
by a rainbow...



you must let yourself  
be provoked to aim  
for something bigger  
than yourself...

# the past provokes us

the past provokes us  
by simply being there:  
who were the people  
living then  
where we are today?



and here  
we are today

one thousand  
years  
in ten meters

1300 B.C.

2300 B.C.



four and a half  
millennia old,  
this monument  
provokes us  
into asking:  
why they built it  
and how?

the weather  
provokes us:  
are we to let  
it all disintegrate  
through rain  
and snow?



# the war provokes us

the violence and  
the intentional destruction  
aim right at the heart  
of a group's identity

without a past,  
we are no longer provoked  
by our roots



but the war also provokes us because  
it wants to stop us from being present at the site:  
we have in fact not been there now for six full years



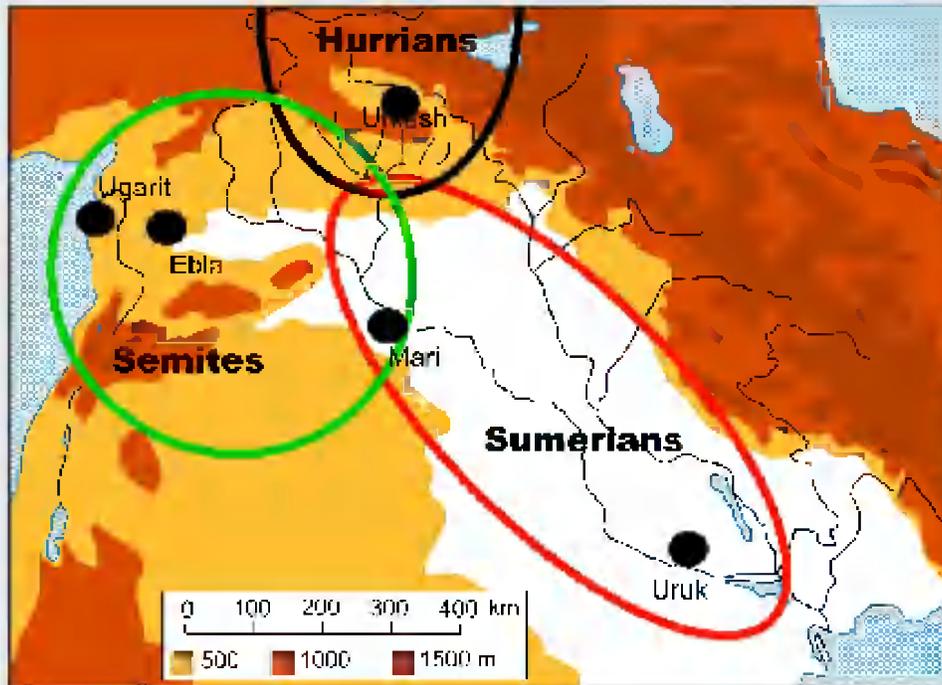
but we fought back:  
in these six years,  
we met the challenge

physically absent,  
we have been actively  
working with our  
men on the ground

this exhibit tells you  
the story  
of this remarkable  
partnership



# the millennia are for us!



at Urkesh, archaeology fulfills its larger cultural goal,  
by uniting people from different ethnicities

our Hurrian city is proudly Syrian  
and the Hurrians are proudly our Syrian ancestors.



# a parallel war

during the six long years of the war,  
we have been present to fight our war against the elements  
and even simply the war against fatigue

we were  
present  
in 2011



and  
in 2012



in 2013



and then  
again  
in 2014



in 2015



all the way  
through  
2016  
and today



# the appropriation of the past

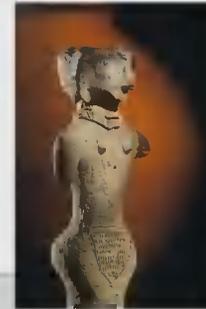


objects have an immediate appeal – and yet, it takes an effort to make them ours

all the more so for the excavated site

and it takes an even greater effort to care for it, preserve it, and insert back in our living tradition

*courtesy Ken Garrett  
National Geographic*



# THE DIGNITY OF THE PAST

April 2016



to discover is not enough

we must protect  
what we bring back to light

each find has a dignity of its own:  
this, too, we must respect  
and thus share  
in the pride of the ancients

our approach to Urkesh  
was what we call the  
“arte povera” of conservation

it has served us well  
in the ensuing time of war

# the ascent to the heavens

the past  
provokes us ...

how often,  
while working  
on this  
staircase,  
have we  
wondered...



built more than four and half  
millennia ago,  
it saw many a generation climb it

why were they climbing it?

it led to a temple at the top,  
so climbing it was like ascending  
to the heavens

in the beauty we can thus read  
a spiritual experience  
and make it ours

it is a monument that must be preserved  
for all to experience it as we did



# our watchful eye



the Hurrian inhabitants  
of Urkesh  
saw this as the ascent  
to their supreme god,  
Kumarbi,  
who lived in the mountains

but the care of his  
manmade mountain  
is now entrusted to us

we have not betrayed the trust,  
year after year



2011



2012



2013



2014



2015



2016

# back to a sandy shade

grass and shrubs  
grow all over the site,  
especially in spring time



left unattended,  
they would affect  
the integrity of the  
monument

removing the vegetation  
is thus  
the first order of business



simple enough,  
but necessary:  
from verdant green  
to its original sandy shade



we must then each spring  
re-fill the joints between the stones with mud:  
this keeps the stones from becoming loose  
and the staircase from falling apart

# THE NECROMANTIC SHAFT



just like the ancient Hurrians,  
we are guided  
by the wisdom of our ancestors

facing the challenge  
of keeping the *Abi* alive  
is our own way  
of keeping the spirits  
and the wisdom of the ancients  
alive

the protective structure  
mirrors our commitment  
to protect souls and stones

# the descent to the Netherworld



at the base  
of the temple terrace,  
there is a deep shaft

our Hurrians  
called it *abi*

it connected  
the world of the living  
with the world of the dead  
through a medium

placed as a counterpart of the  
great staircase,  
it reminds us of Dante's journey,  
from the Inferno to Paradise



# against all odds

the trajectory of the *abi*  
during war time  
speaks volumes

half way through this period,  
the dome shaped cover  
had lost all its protective tarp

we opted for a major  
intervention



2011



2012



2013

2014



2015



2016



# a commitment for the long run

we did not want to just repair:  
we wanted to improve  
showing that our commitment  
is for the long run

through an intense  
two-way communication,  
we designed  
a whole new dome  
with overlapping metal sheets

for all its simplicity,  
this was an important step  
in showing how we could  
collaborate long distance  
in our shared concern  
for our wounded  
four millennia old *abi*

this was in 2013

the next year,  
it turned out that the  
square entrance to the *abi*  
also needed repairs

and we opted  
for the same solution,  
strong of the experience  
we had gained  
in communicating  
and acting accordingly



# our little epic story

looking at these pictures  
from a distance,  
they evoke a muted response:  
is it really all so special?

why bother to even care  
for its appearance,  
covering the metal with cloth and  
paint so as to avoid  
the sheen of the metal?



what we felt was “epic”  
about our little story  
was that  
during the dark night of the war  
we had been able  
to produce something  
strong and durable

something that would keep the *abi*  
in 2017 and forward  
in the same condition  
in which we had found it fifteen years earlier

# THE ROYAL PALACE OF TUPKISH



having worked at this site  
for so long,  
we feel that we are a part of it --  
past, present and future

just as king Tupkish,  
ould have defended  
his kingdom and his palace,  
so we, too, feel the obligation  
to defend it

we clearly face  
a different kind of danger,  
but face it we do,  
and with  
the same determination

# what is a palace?



when excavations started,  
we had no inkling that here there would be  
a very large building, with a monumental stone courtyard (below)

the size alone told us we were dealing with a major building,  
then we found written texts that gave us the name  
of the king who built it, around 2250 B.C.

we knew then we were within the Palace of Tushpata,  
the king of Urkish



*photos courtesy of Ken Garrett, National Geographic*

# one score and seven years ago...



excavations of the palace started in 1990, 27 years ago  
the mudbrick walls are still in perfect state today,  
thanks to our protective system  
which we see above as it was in 2003

2011



2012



2013



2014



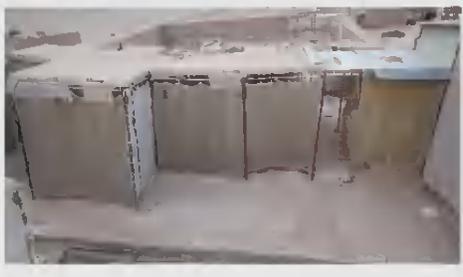
2015



2016



# sleeping walls



our *arte povera* of conservation  
aims at achieving the maximum protection  
with a minimum of technology:  
the test of these six long years has validated our approach

april 2016



# maintenance and monitoring

six years is a long time

if the approach  
has been  
so successful,  
it is because we made  
maintenance  
our first priority

our highest level  
of technology is just  
the Internet:  
through it, we receive  
a full monitoring  
of the activities  
in all their  
minutest details

during these six years  
of physical absence,  
we have received  
more than 12,000  
digital photos



# A SITE ALIVE

no, we will not  
be cut off



true,  
the remnants of the  
ancient monuments  
are mute and still  
but understanding  
what they meant  
is what brings them  
back to life

that is our  
ongoing task,  
even as war  
would seem  
to want  
to clamp on us  
a final silence



Urkesh  
will not  
be silenced

# the “high” of an ancient view

we want to take you  
“on a high”

from the rise above  
temple and palace  
you gain a panorama view  
from a distance in space  
that matches  
the even greater  
distance in time



the two “panoramas” speak on our behalf  
during our absence

that is why it is so important  
to keep them in a good condition and  
fully capable of telling visitors the larger story



# they are everywhere

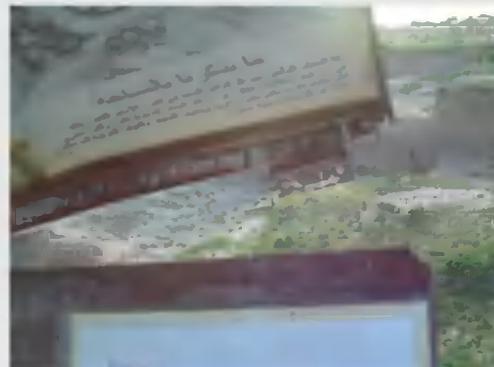
yes,  
they are everywhere,  
like footnotes  
to a text that  
is the site itself –  
unobtrusive,  
rich and spread out  
along a leading path



they are some  
200 pages of information  
about the substance of each individual view



but the weather wages its own war  
our panels break  
in front of the mighty wind,  
lose their color in the sun  
and the informational content  
is sometimes blown in the wind  
or swept away in the heavy rain



# facing mighty nature



our approach to facing  
weather damage  
is simple and effective:

it relies on periodic monitoring  
and direct maintenance, so as  
to intervene at the right time.

earlier in 2017,  
all the damaged panels  
were fixed and welded

the metal frames were  
cleaned and repainted  
and all the information  
was printed again,  
laminated and glued back

it is the window  
through which Mozan  
lets us look at ancient Urkesh



# parasols in a time of war



April 2015

to offer normalcy  
in a time of  
global deviance  
is not surrealistic

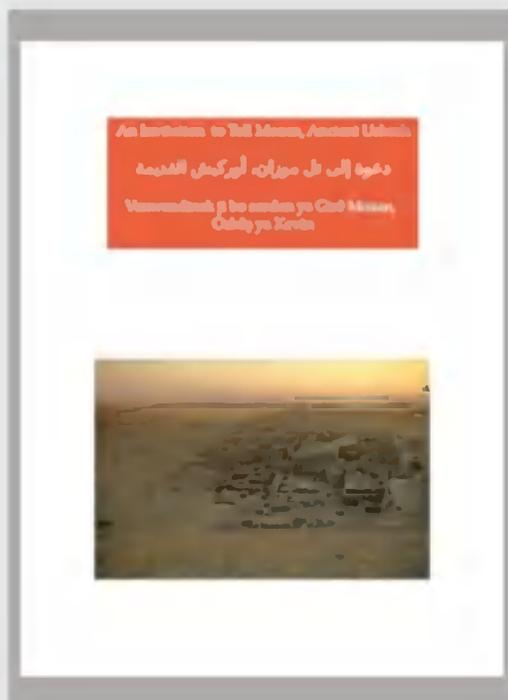
that an ancient site,  
Urkish,  
should be the target  
of a week-end visit  
bodes well for  
the social fabric  
of the country

the site contributes  
to give life meaning  
in the midst of tragedy



even  
a journalist

visitors from  
Qamishli  
cultural affairs  
and from Hassaka  
Department  
of Antiquities



in December 2016,  
we issued  
a 60 page booklet  
that offers a guide  
to the site in  
English, Arabic  
and Kurdish

it aims for an even  
broader outreach

and it is  
the first of its kind

# THE VIGOR OF THE WOMEN



faces,  
hands ...

the women  
of Mozan and  
neighboring villages  
are at work

they are producing  
dolls and clothes  
that keep alive  
an old craft

sustainability  
is not a mere word  
for them...

# the Eco-archaeological Park



in 2009, we launched the idea of a Park that would protect the pristine landscape and develop an economically sustainable project around the site: an area of 54 square kilometers with 22 villages



in 2011-12 a delegation from the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums went to Mozan to make plans for the implementation of the Park



# the Urkesh atelier – phase 1

the one component of the Park that became a reality  
was the handicraft project of the women



*“we never  
betrayed  
our schedules  
and we met  
regularly  
for two years....*

*then the tension  
became too high  
and we were  
no longer able  
to meet  
in our atelier”*

jewelry

clothing



Syrian  
smiles!



nicely packed, a logo proudly says:  
“Urkesh atelier of handicrafts”

# the Urkesh atelier – phase 2



with the passing of time,  
the young members of the group  
left the villages because of  
marriage or other family events

in October 2016,  
we proposed to start a regular school

the teacher was Amira, of the original group:  
by December 2016,  
a whole new inventory was available...



*“I like to make  
handicraft objects  
because I see  
my character and soul  
through the objects I did.  
It is something  
I elaborate and  
hold in my arms  
for a long time therefore  
it gives me satisfaction  
when I see  
my kids wearing it “*





# a human time machine

we present to you Hammade,  
our Mozan assistant  
and pottery expert

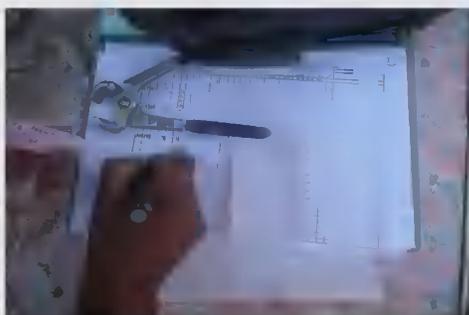
during the six years of war,  
he has analyzed  
some 65,000 sherds

sending us for each piece  
the full details  
to be included in our  
growing database



the process starts  
by sorting the sherd bags  
according to excavation units

then Hammade  
analyzes each item  
by shape and fabric  
and every other detail  
according to a full  
set of standards



he writes this down by hand  
onto a detailed log  
that is then entered in the computer  
and sent to us via the internet  
for inclusion in our database

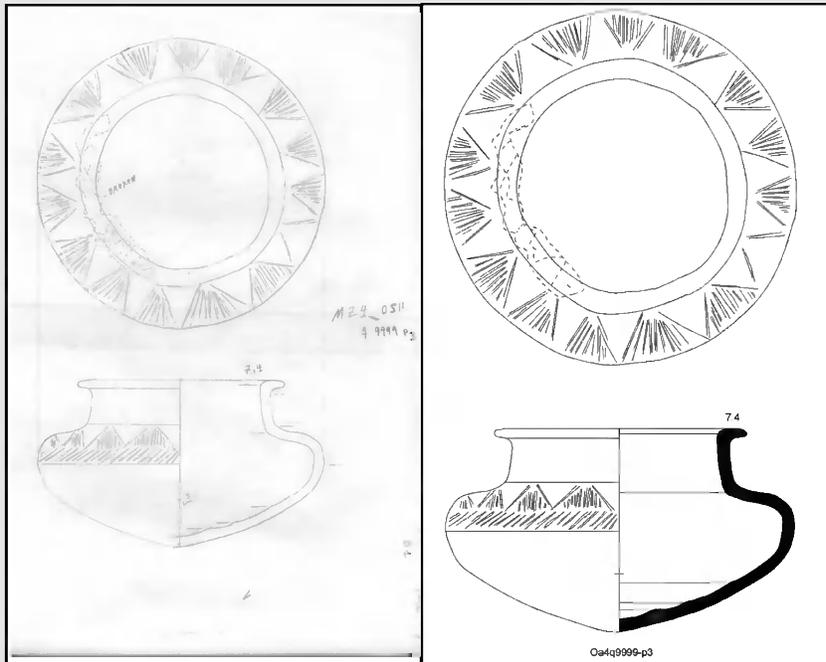
# for the record

part of the process  
is a full photographic  
documentation

we give pride of place  
to this sherd because  
the theme of the bird  
is the poetic leitmotiv  
of our exhibit

seeing it  
among the photos  
that have just reached us  
from Mozan  
struck a chord  
in our heart:

a beautiful symbol  
of the bond we have  
with our site  
and people  
even across  
the gulf of war



next to  
the photographs,  
the drawings

thousands of  
hand drawn objects  
have been scanned  
during these  
six years,  
and as many have  
been digitized  
in vector format

Kamiran Beg  
has lent all his skill  
to this exacting task –  
an immense  
contribution  
to the Urkesh project

# passing the torch

from his sherd laboratory  
in Mozan  
Hammade went on  
to teach  
a regular workshop  
to the archaeology students  
in Qamishli

a truly hands-on experience  
that took place  
in October 2016

it is with pride  
that we see  
the new generation  
come thus in touch  
with the material  
from Urkesh  
through the continuity  
that our project  
has made possible  
over the years



the graduating class  
included Hamrin Omo  
(leftmost in the upper row)

the daughter of our guard,  
Muhammad Omo,  
she grew up  
with the expedition

we hope to work with her  
when inshallah  
we, too, will be back  
in Mozan!



# field school 2017

September 2017:  
a field school for the  
archaeology students  
of al-Furat University

with our support,  
it was held at Mozan,  
because our site still has  
well preserved architecture  
and available  
ceramic collections



# THE POWER OF THE IDEAL



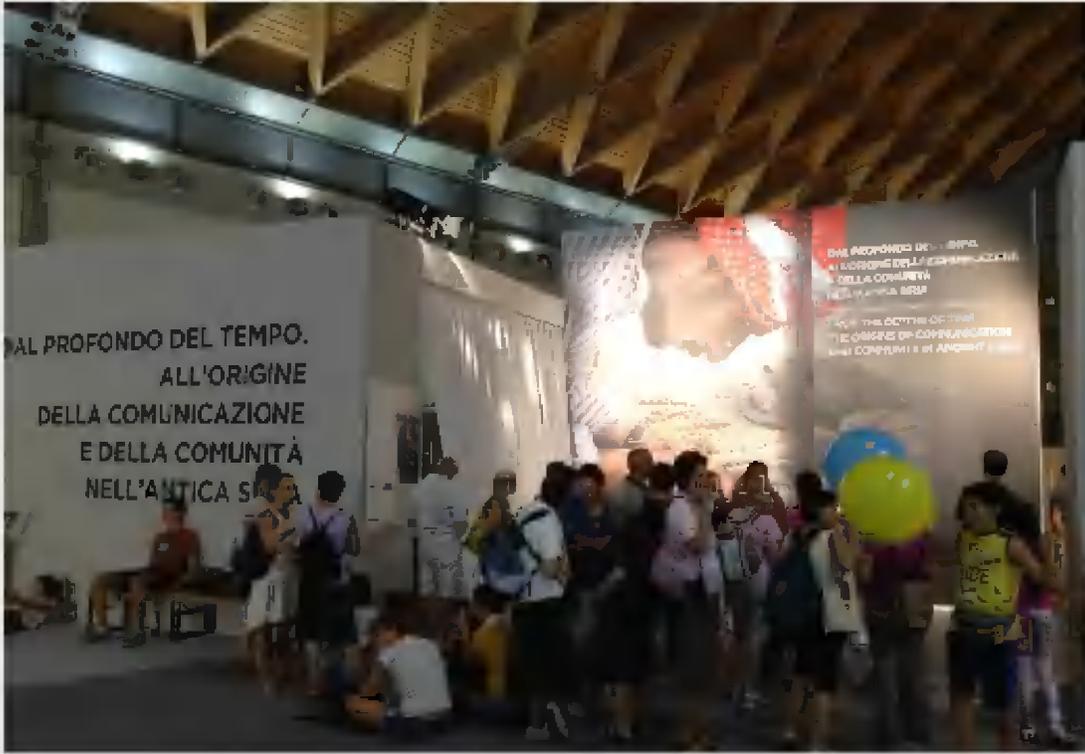
*"the Center  
for the Revival  
of Civil Society"*

Amuda,  
a small town in northeastern Syria,  
offers a strong bulwark  
against the perverse ideals  
of fanaticism

even the remote past,  
even Urkesh,  
can provide society  
with a common purpose:

to find a greater unity  
against the forces  
of disaggregation

# exhibits



in 2014, we organized a major exhibit on Urkesh at one of the largest cultural festivals, the “Meeting” of Rimini: it had some 22,000 visitors in one week

the directors of the antiquities departments from the regions of Idlib, Aleppo and Qamishli came to Rimini



the director from Qamishli, Dr. Suleiman Elias (to the right), suggested that we mount a similar exhibit in Qamishli itself and its region

so we did:  
it opened in December 2014 and toured the region in early 2015

# the ripple effect of great ideas



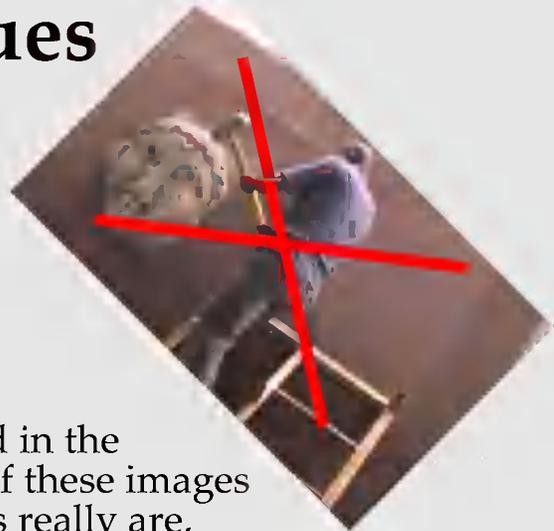
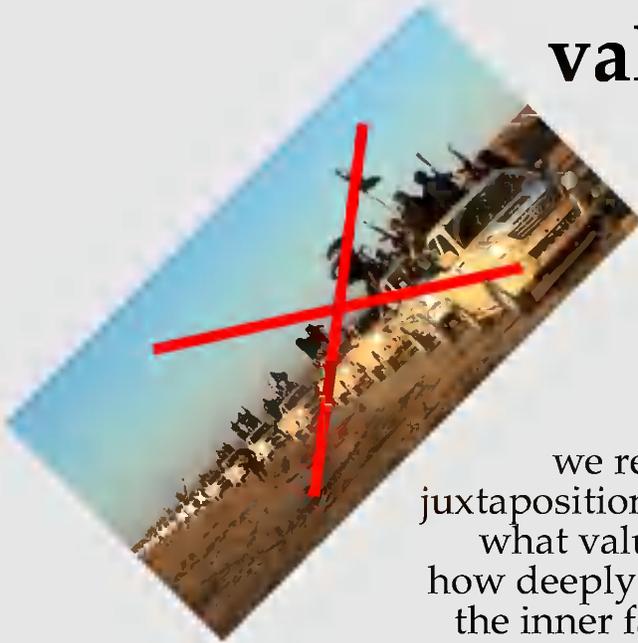
Qamishli and Amuda:

December 2014 and February 2015:  
two towns at the heart of the Syrian northeast,  
with the so-called Islamic state at a distance of some 60 kms

we have learnt the real meaning of the term "outreach"  
as we have seen the ripple effect of great ideas:  
the past, explained, becomes a motor for growth

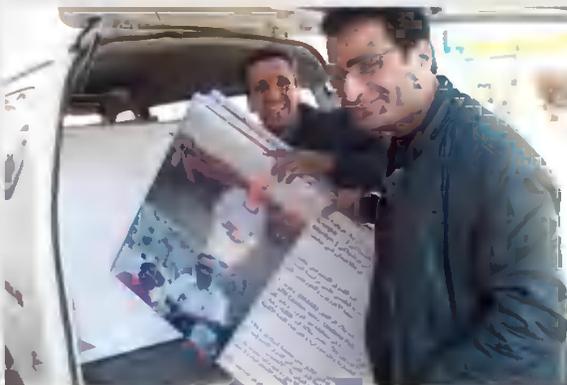


# values



we read in the  
juxtaposition of these images  
what values really are,  
how deeply they truly affect  
the inner fabric of society

against the iconic images of the destruction wreaked  
by the so-called Islamic state,  
we want to turn into iconic images those  
of the young men and women of our region  
as they transport and mount  
the panels of the Qamishli/Amuda Urkesh exhibit





looking  
at yourself  
in an imaginary  
mirror,  
would you  
see a trace  
of Urkesh  
in your own  
image?

ancient monuments  
seem mute and still  
but they speak loudly,  
if we can only listen

all the more so when war  
wants to clamp on us  
a final silence

how can *we*,  
looking at the past,  
learn for our own  
"young future"?

# storytelling



the main story archaeology tells us is continuity:  
the continuity of the space in which we live,  
the continuity of the time enshrined in memory.

children are at the core of storytelling:  
the past orients them towards the future

so a story-teller came to Mozan,  
to tell them about Urkesh.

and here  
they are,  
hailing to  
their past  
and their future.



# from organizer to interlocutor

*"the minute  
I reached  
Moazan  
I felt  
more Syrian  
than ever"*



*"From Damascus, I went to Moazan in 2012 to build a cultural pilot project*

*Moving in between yellow landscapes of the most fertile area in Syria was a touching experience. A sense of connection was very loud...*

*As a woman from the capital I thought I had it all figured out, and that my identity would be so different from my fellow women from a rural area. Again, I was completely mistaken. Going to the "periphery" made me understand what it means to belong to the center!"*



*"... vibrant eyes  
were looking  
straight  
in our faces..."*

*how do we dare  
advise them?*

*all we needed to do  
was to listen!"*

*Yara Moualla*

if Mozan birds had mirrors,  
they would recognize  
themselves in  
the birds of yore...



*Oh stranger...How long have you been in this street,  
Looking for addresses you knew once upon a time?*

*The face of the city changed in your long absence.  
Prepare for yourself a seat in the garden of the past.*

*And sit, as if but waiting for the ones you love...  
Be careful not to get into the oriental boredom.*

*They will come, for sure, they will come.  
The bird does not forget the window of the house,  
the branches on which he lived an old spring.*

Adel Mahmoud