



ook of the Month

A Vision for My Father

The Life and Work of Palestinian-American Artist and Designer Rajie Cook

By Rajie Cook

Interlink Books, 2018, hardback, 344 pages, full color, \$35.00



“A powerful and poignant expression of the Palestinian narrative of exile that weaves together the aesthetic and the personal story of longing for home. Rajie Cook’s personal account is an intimate revelation of the special bond between father and son in the context of the Palestinian national identity and experience ... a visual and artistic celebration of creative expression. The multifaceted narrative unravels in the context of an exile in the West – an environment that is essentially discriminatory and dismissive of the humanity of the Palestinian people, both individually and collectively.” *Dr. Hanan Ashrawi*

Rajie Cook’s memoir is a tribute to his parents, Palestinian immigrants Najeeb and Jaleela Cook – who had come to the United States in search of peace and opportunity for themselves and their family – but evolves into a narrative of how their son made his mark on the international stage of graphic design. Sight is a major theme in this narrative, as Rajie aims to give sight back to his father who was blinded in the early 1930s by the ravages of cataracts. Najeeb could not share in the excitement of Rajie’s achievements and died before “seeing” his talented son shake the hand of an American president. But Najeeb’s greatest legacy to Rajie was his love for Palestine. At age 54, Rajie made his first trip to Palestine, a life-changing, spiritual journey that turned him into a peace activist.



For Rajie Cook, art is an organic expression of what moves him; his art activism is his gift to the world. Much of the art he currently creates is an expression of his deeply felt concern for human rights and for the tragic conditions in Palestine. Through provocative yet truthful poster art, sculptural assemblages, and film, Rajie calls attention to the plight of the Palestinian people and the injustices they face. His work has been featured in art shows throughout the United States and internationally. In his own words, “My art will be my voice long after I have gone. It will never be silenced.”

Born in 1930, Cook is a graduate of the Pratt Institute and, in 1997, was selected as Alumnus of the Year. In 1967, he cofounded the design firm Cook and Shanosky Associates in New York City. In 1984, he and his colleagues received the Presidential Award for Design Excellence for creating the universal pictograms that guide travelers through airports, train stations, and hotels. In 2003, the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum acquired the Symbols Signs project.

The father of two grown daughters, he lives in rural Bucks County, Pennsylvania, with his wife Peggy.