



Bridging the Gap: The Jewish-Arab Art Program **Winter 2016 Update**

Since its inception in 1994, *Bridging the Gap* has offered high-quality art classes to Arab and Jewish youth in Israel, presenting a unique opportunity for dialogue between the two groups.

As we approach the end of 2016, we would like to use this mid-year update as an opportunity to express our profound gratitude for the steadfast support of German Friends of the Israel Museum, who have championed this meaningful program since 2010.

Overview

During the 2016-2017 academic year, 68 students from schools in Jerusalem took part in *Bridging the Gap*. A group of 37 fifth graders attended the program on Wednesday, composed of 19 Arabic-speakers from Silwan Elementary School, 11 Hebrew-speakers from Yefe Nof Elementary School and 7 Hebrew-speakers from the Gershon Agron Elementary School. These schools have been working with us for many years, and we enjoy a warm and respectful professional relationship with their principals, who share our vision and appreciate the program's significance and unique ability to bring together children who otherwise would not have likely gotten to know each other. Thursdays feature a mixed group of 31 fifth and sixth graders, composed of 19 from an Arabic-speaking school in Beit Safafa and 12 from the Jewish Paula Ben-Gurion School.

Due to political and social circumstances, this year's number of participants reflects a slight decrease from past years. Unfortunately, registration occurred during a tense period in Jerusalem. In addition, a new principal was appointed at an Arabic-speaking school in Abu Tor – which had been partnering with the Museum for over a decade – who regrettably decided against continuing to cooperate with the Israel Museum. However, we were delighted by the recent participation of an elementary school in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Beit Safafa. Our hope is that this will mark the beginning of a long relationship.

Program Curriculum

Bridging the Gap's central theme this year is "Home," inspired by the Israel Museum's upcoming major exhibition *No Place Like Home*, which examines how artists from the early 20th century till today radically modify functional home objects to subvert everyday experience and trigger new thoughts and perspectives on the familiar.

We are pleased to report that the 2016-7 *Bridging the Gaps* program launched successfully on November 2. Both participants and their parents were invited to the Museum to learn about the program and its curriculum, as well as to see a presentation about last year's activities. The group – composed of Arabic- and

Hebrew-speakers – then visited the galleries and created a joint creative project together.

At the second meeting, participants began to get to know each other, and made a painting as a group. We were pleased that a delegation of German Friends was able to join the class, observing and even creating alongside the participants.

In consideration of Muslim participants, *Bridging the Gap's* final meeting will take place just before the beginning of Ramadan. An end-of-the-year celebration will also be held on June 5, 2017 during the International Council, and we would look forward to welcoming our German Friends at the festivity.

Staff

As in previous years, Eldad Sha'altiel, Senior Curator of Art Courses at the Ruth Youth Wing for Art Education, oversees *Bridging the Gap*. The program is being taught by young and established artists alike, as well as graduates in architecture and art from Bezalel Academy of Art and Design.

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In Pictures







