



Bridging the Gap: The Jewish-Arab Art Program **2014-2015 Report**

Bridging the Gap, initiated by the Ruth Youth Wing for Art Education in 1995, has been supported by the German Friends of the Israel Museum since 2010. Through the German Friends' active and generous support, the program offers high-quality art classes while creating opportunities for dialogue between Arab and Jewish youth in Israel.

Marking 20 years since the program's inception, 2014-2015 welcomed another successful cohort of *Bridging the Gap*, which included special celebratory programming in honor of the Israel Museum's 50th Anniversary in 2015. The year also aligned with 25 years of the renewal of diplomatic relations between Israel and Germany, which will also be marked by special exhibitions due to open in the Museum's galleries in the second half of 2015.

Program for the Current Year:

Introduction

During the 2014-2015 academic year, 77 5th and 6th grade students from Jerusalem took part in *Bridging the Gap*. Students were divided into four sections with a curriculum tailored to each group. At preliminary meetings held in September and October 2014, the Youth Wing's staff met with school principals, teachers, parents, and administrators, prior to which participants had already been selected based on two major criteria:

1. A demonstrated curiosity and commitment to dialogue with the "other"
2. An interest in and motivation to create art

Program Curriculum

Bridging the Gap began in fall 2014 and was divided into four main sections, as detailed below. The curriculum was inspired by the Youth Wing's two main exhibitions, *Journeys*, in the first half of the year, and *Happy Birthday* in the second. For most of the year, the programming emphasized the theme of *Journeys*, exploring different types of journeys, ranging from the metaphorical to physical; while *Bridging the Gap*'s final project paid homage to birthdays as presented in *Happy Birthday*. The latter exhibition opened during the Museum's 50th Anniversary "birthday party" festivities on May 11, 2015, exactly 50 years after the Museum first opened its doors in 1965.

Journey to Japan

Bridging the Gap's opening session introduced students and their parents to the program. Participants were invited on a journey to Japan, encountering Japanese screens from the Israel Museum's exhibition *Unfolding Worlds: Japanese Screens from the*



Bridging the Gap at Unfolding Worlds

Gitter-Yelen Collection. Following their guided tour, the participants played an icebreaker game inspired by the exhibition in which parent-child pairs were asked to decorate one panel of a triptych “screen” made out of paper; once their panel was complete, the “screen” was passed onto another couple, and finally another.

At Home with the Other: A Journey

For the next project, Arab and Jewish children worked together in pairs, bringing in objects from their bedrooms to use in a joint art project which involved designing a room together. This was a journey of getting to know one another as individuals, and through art, to become acquainted with their partners. We deem this project to be of particular importance since members of the two communities seldom get to know the “other” on a personal level; *Bridging the Gap* often constitutes the participants’ first opportunity to encounter their peers from a different community.

Journey to Africa

Following an interactive tour of the *Journeys* exhibition, pairs of Jewish and Arab students compiled a list of equipment needed to go on a journey. Later, students constructed three-dimensional models of these objects out of paper. Students then “journeyed” to Africa as part of another lesson, studying the Museum’s exhibition *Hidden Power in African Art*, which showcased African masks. In the studio, students used their partners’ faces as molds for plasticine masks. This activity, which is a favorite of *Bridging the Gap*, has proven over the years to be a highly effective icebreaker.

Final Project: A Birthday Celebration

Bridging the Gap’s final project this year was inspired by the Youth Wing’s current exhibition *Happy Birthday*. Students designed and decorated an entire table for a birthday party with a three-dimensional cake as its centerpiece. Celebrating the festive atmosphere surrounding the Museum’s 50th Anniversary, *Happy Birthday* examines the many sides of this annual milestone, encouraging students to reflect on birthdays—both their own and others’—and their accompanying emotions, ranging from somber to festive. In this way, students were encouraged to consider their journey over the past year with *Bridging the Gap*.

Bridging the Gap students, along with their parents, were invited to the program’s festive end-of-the-year celebration. At the event, students enthusiastically welcomed a group of Museum friends from around the world, led by Sonja Lahnstein, head of the Israel Museum’s German Friends. This special opportunity allowed the program’s staff and participating parents to thank Mrs. Lahnstein and our German Friends personally for their generous support of this life-changing program.



***Bridging the Gap*’s End-of-the-Year Celebration with Friends of the Museum**

“Bridging Gaps”—An International Conference on the Occasion of the Israel Museum’s 50th Anniversary and in Celebration of 20 Years of Bridging the Gap

“Bridging Gaps,” a major international conference on the occasion of the Israel Museum’s 50th Anniversary, was held in June 2015 by the Youth Wing for Art Education, in collaboration

with ICOM Israel. The conference was attended by approximately 500 participants from seventeen countries who came together to discuss the educational challenges encountered by museums and other arts organizations. The conference was a great success and a true professional exchange of ideas, inspiring our participants.



“Bridging Gaps” Conference

The second day of the conference was dedicated to the 20th year of *Bridging the Gap*, with a special session devoted to the program. Following an introductory short film produced by our German Friends, representatives from Israel, Denmark, and Germany spoke about tackling the challenges of teaching tolerance between different communities, religious groups, and cultures.



“Bridging Gaps” Special Session Dedicated to *Bridging the Gap*

Staff

Eldad Sha’altiel, Senior Curator of Art Courses at the Ruth Youth Wing for Art Education, oversaw *Bridging the Gap*. Classes were taught by Arab artists and teachers Nasrin Abu Baker, Riham Ashikrat, and Siwar Mashrawa, and by Jewish artists and teachers Yael Robin, Roma Keinan, and Anat Bar’el. Alian Safa and Alian Dua served as the program’s translators.