

ZUMU- Museum on the Move

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Introduction

Museums, songs, historical events, crafts, art, places, cultural sites, and rituals, are the keystones of culture and heritage, whether intangible heritage or tangible one. Simultaneously, they are components of our nation shared heritage or our community shared heritage (Apaydin 2020; Ahmad 2006). The linkages between shared heritage, contemporary art, and local communities in Israel's periphery are the main subject of my research. To understand this subject matter and explore this complexity in an immigrant multi-cultural society of Israel, I focused on the mobile museum ZUMU - Museum on the Move, and more specific on its fourth stop of the journey in Kiryat Yam (2019-2020). ZUMU is a community-based, mobile museum of contemporary art, which moves throughout Israel and presents exhibitions that are created and curated with collaboration of local communities. The relations between art, community and education are "The Golden Triangle" through which ZUMU is working (ZUMU's [official website](#)).

To explore the linkages between shared heritage, contemporary art, and local communities in Israel's periphery, the case study examined the changes that have taken place in the perspective points and practices of Zumu leaders regarding the work with a community. The examination of the changes was made by comparing between the statement of intent with which they were launched in 2017, and the exhibition that took place in Kiryat Yam in 2019. The research question was: What changes took place in the current perspective of Zumu leaders towards the work with the community compared to the initial statement of intent with which they set out (2017)?

ZUMU - Museum on the Move

Move Museum - Because art moves all.

ZUMU is a community based mobile museum, which moves throughout Israel showcasing changing exhibits that are created and curated together with the local communities. At ZUMU (a portmanteau combining the Hebrew words for “move” and “museum”) we believe that art plays a key role in creating a more open and accepting community and builds bridges between all different sections of Israeli society. We set out on this groundbreaking journey in order to overcome geographical distances, to bridge cultural divides, to circumvent physical barriers, to overcome conceptual hurdles and to get rid of the conventional divisions between the artists & audiences, art & communities and creativity & reality (ZUMU’s [official website](#)).

The fourth Journey - Kiryat Yam (2019-2020).

Zumu’s 4th stop (and last for now) in Kiryat Yam, which ended in January 2020, was the biggest, longest and most impactful stop so far. The Kiryat Yam exhibition was the first to be staged in a large, heavily populated city, which borders the even bigger Haifa metropolis. Over 50,000 people came through its gates in less than two months (ZUMU’s [official website](#)).



Kiryat Yam exhibition



Kiryat Yam exhibition



Kiryat Yam exhibition

Methodology

Interviews were conducted, in order to understand the ideological point of view, the practical ways of working within a specific place and with the local community, and the methods of working with the (local and outside) artists. The visual-critical research method is the method in which I examined the research question (Rose 2007). To answer the research question and find out the perspective on the relationship between contemporary art and local communities in the periphery, and what practical ways Zumu leaders actually took in the exhibition in Kiryat Yam (December 2019) with the local community, local artists and traditions, I used three research

tools: Photo-based interviews, participatory photography, and images as data. Photo-based interviews is a method of interviews in which the researcher gathers information from the participants by using visual images, mostly photographs. The use of images makes it possible to hear a unique perspective from the participants who can share their interpretation of the images. Adding photographs to the course of an interview allows for the collection of additional information and offers a visual aspect to thoughts, feelings, experiences, and understandings that emerge from viewing (2015, Richard & Lahman). Participatory Photography: According to Prins (2010), in participatory photography people use cameras to represent their experiences and perspectives on a given topic. Participatory photography allows ordinary people to explore and represent their lives while challenging the hierarchy of professional-participant relationships. As a result, participatory photography is used in a variety of settings, including education, with children, youth and adults. Images as visual data: According to Radley (2010), photographs can be used as visual data for research because according to him, photographs are not just images of the world as it is. Photographs are more than representations, because they are also resources, mediators alongside words, giving shape to ideas. This is true in all societies, not only in those where photography is oriented. The person will choose what he wants to show and talk about his condition through the photo, and what he allows the researcher to see. The analysis of the image therefore depends on what is visible and why; What is kept hidden, unsaid or unbound.

I conducted three photo-based interviews with Milena Gitzin - Adiram, initiator and CEO of Zumu Mobile Museum; artist Sharon Glazberg, creator of the emerging social collection "Ha'Asif" at Zumu, and responsible for work in the community; and artist Shai Eid Aloni, responsible for the design of the museum at the temporary space and the central exhibition. The three interviewees were asked to send 3-4 images they took at the exhibition held in Kiryat Yam and which they would like to talk about in the interview. The research ethics were maintained, and all interviewees were given information about the research, project details and how the data would be used. All interviewees were given anonymity and research confidentiality. They all agreed to

participate in the research openly. At the same time, I analyzed images and documents of the Zumu Association's statement of intent that are displayed on the association's website for self-presentation. The analysis of the documents and images was done with perspective to the question of the connections between common heritage, hegemonic culture, and community.

ZUMU-Contemporary art, Communities and Education

Reading the mission statement, vision and goals mentioned on the Zumu website, reveals recurring concepts such as: the artistic experience, experiential learning, partnerships, conversation, community, multiculturalism, and critical thinking. The idea of A society in which a visit to a museum is perceived as a necessary, routine, available activity, just as a visit to a library or a community center are perceived, and not as a deterrent, esoteric or elitist activity, reserved for scholars.

Objectives:

1. To create a connection and bridge between the community and the artistic experience, which is empowering, inspiring, and motivating to action.
2. To have a diverse space that allows for multi-sensory experiential learning and encourages a multiplicity of view-points, resulting in promoting independent and critical thinking.
3. To offer a space that contains and enables multicultural community meetings, initiatives, partnerships, and discourse.

These concepts have recurred in the interviews I have conducted. Out of all the issues that arose, I extracted four main categories:

- a. Art, Education and Heritage
- b. Contemporary Art, Local Art and Heritage
- c. Community-based art, shared learning and research
- d. Art in the urban space, alternative exhibition spaces.

Contemporary art, Education and Heritage

"I chose this picture with education in mind" says Sharon about the following photo, raising one of the educational issues Zumu faces in meeting with various communities in the periphery, which is the suspicious attitude, exclusion mechanisms and opposition to contemporary art, and how to change that perspective and teach observation.



Children observing the work of Gili Avisar (Sharon)

[...]Kids come and say: "I can do that too". Their exclusion mechanism and the way I dissolve it. Work like Aviv's which is just cleaning products, and that is in a museum, "I know it from home," and it is in a place where I observe it; And that's the place of "I can do it too", lowering defenses if I don't understand it. We tell them "True, you can too." It is about changing a point of observation, teaching observation (interview, Sharon).

Milena talks about the transformative dimension of education, and the possibility of social change through an encounter with art: *"A child who is exposed and opened to*

art becomes an open democratic person. [...] The potential to educate children from an early age to be open to social change. Only in this way can social change happen", She says.



Girl watching a video by Morsen (Milena)

Referring to a photo of a girl watching a video work, Milena explains: *"The girl looks at the video work in which Morsen sweeps the sea back and forth [...] Morsen's work symbolizes the character of the Arab woman criticizing herself. [...] A girl watching an Arab woman criticizing herself and her life and the encounter between them"* (interview, Milena). Educational action and the possibility of change occur not only through looking at artworks but also through action and through the body:

The children are active partners in the performance, they participate through the activity and breathe life into it [...] I see the children who are the future generation, and they breathe life into a work of art. [...] In Kiryat Yam we talked about a city in transition. What will be the child's perception? Will these children stay in the city? [...] How does the child perceive himself, his city,

himself within it? [...] I perceive Zumu as a potential for a better future life – there is a future, there is an option (interview, Milena).



Children observing and participating in an installation by Guy Saraf (Milena)

Contemporary art, Local Art, and Heritage

The question of the relationship between contemporary art, local art and heritage is a complicated question to which all the interviewees addressed.

Sharon clarified:

A meeting with the local artists? I think it's an unresolved place yet, still being explored. There is often a clash between professional and local art. In Kiryat Yam there were artists who exhibited at a museum, sometimes it is possible to combine very nicely. [...] Effie is a resident of Kiryat Yam who photographed his mother through the balcony through a mirror, his mother came to see her photograph in the museum. That sounds cynical. And the work that was presented next to it is by the artist Sigalit Landau, [...] Effie sent the work, and he was presented among top artists; Sigalit Landau, Yael Bartana, this is how it happened. [...] In Yeruham Ofra combined the local through the practical, through the act of art, the act itself. [...] a desire to make room for the local community, but there is a tension of how? The embroidery alongside the

painting which is more kitsch, I would like to meet brothers and sisters in the world, more partners in knowledge, and what is the role of the museum in this matter? To me, this is the most interesting struggle, if we can solve it. All the museums in the world are dealing with that today. People around the world want to return to the community of local artists who are attracted to aesthetics, to art, and that is the community connection. There lies their power, becoming the cultural centers again. This tension fascinates me the most, interests me the most. My research even before the "Ha'Asif" was how to give a respectable place to the locals (interview, Sharon).

I asked Milena about presenting the traditions of the communities who host the museum.

[...]There is always a fear of not being "Beit Hatfutsot" (historical museum) but a museum of contemporary art. What does the community bring with it? We deal with that alot. Creating a situation where everything can be criticized! In Kiryat Yam, Zumu's community team plus the curatorial team worked significantly to make contemporary art rather than a historical museum. [...] There is always a discussion about where the community comes in and how the materials are preserved to create a contemporary exhibition with critical artistic action.

In the "Ha'Asif" project, the thought was how to take objects that represent different communities and the members of the many communities, that would reflect the community through the work. [...] Sharon worked with the senior community and asked them to bring objects they received in the past. [...] The objects are a tradition for all intents and purposes. When we started "Ha'Asif" the thought was how to take cultural artifacts that represent the community and give them a voice. (interview, Milena).

Sharon conducted the workshop in the archives of Kiryat Yam, where collage work was done and used as a raw material for the work that was finally presented at the

exhibition. *"[...] The local communities tell their story. It is exciting to see an image of an artist talking about her Moroccan aunt, next to a work by Yair Garbuz. She gets the pedestal to tell her story. It's something that creates a correction of society and the possibility of another life here."* Sharon concludes with Zumu's mission statement and the question of the relationship between contemporary art, local art and heritage: *"What is the role of the museum? The conquering narrative is marching towards an era of multiple narratives. To tell the local story in the voices of the people and in their mother tongue, this is the credo of Zumu"* (Sharon interview).

Art Based Community, Participatory learning, and Participatory Research

All interviewees emphasized the desire for integrated and collaborative research work with the local community as a primary tool for Zumu's creation and as a part of the future practice. All of them placed emphasis on joint study, joint research and "dialogue benches", as well as being guests and hosts in an accurate and respectful manner. *"As part of the mission statement we have a community department that is trying to produce projects that will link the community to the museum. A photo from the opening event symbolizes for me the attitude towards people, and the intensity that the project wants to bring to the world. Different audiences, crowds, come to see an art museum, the story is really in the audience and that's what makes Zumu, in thinking of people and communities, joint learning"*, says Milena when she refers to a photograph from the opening event in Kiryat Yam that she brought to the conversation.



The opening event of the Kiryat Yam exhibition 31.1.2020 (Milena)

Sharon addresses the issue and says about the "Ha'Asif" project:

The "Ha'Asif" came to ask a question: Can a museum collection be a community-based collection? it asks, what is culture? it approached the community with this question, it didn't decide in advance. Wherever I gather the representation, in that place (the representation) is a reflection of the place. What is a social collection? it's collecting artifacts of culture, it's an attempt to take-apart, and it's also a bit of an attempt to correct the cultural mourning created by the "melting pot" in the country, to re-melt it (interview, Sharon).

Collaboration and the recognition that everyone has knowledge and can bring the specific knowledge of his local community, arises in the following case:

This child who listened to Amharic and took it upon himself to translate it to the group, it's insanely empowering, he presents the story to the rest, and that's part of our mission statement. All students bring with them knowledge, not necessarily in art, knowledge in Amharic in the case of Kiryat Yam, or it can be knowledge about the sea, and through the work the dialogue is created. [...] These are a lot of communities. There is local knowledge here like

braiding hair, dancing etc. We started doing the "pass it on" from the community to the community, without giving a specific direction (interview, Sharon).

Milena expands on community-based art, sharing and mutual learning:

In the project "Pass it on" - we made a call to local artists from different art streams (a doll knitter, an Ethiopian artist, a dancer, etc.) who met for workshops once a week where the community teaches, and vice versa. The museum became a large workshop for the benefit of the project. [...]

We are trying to look for a common denominator from the community [...]

Sharon looks for existing communities, people who sing once a week and so if there is a stage in the community museum they will come and sing there. In Kiryat Yam there was an evening of singing and lighting Hanukkah candles. On Hanukkah we cleared the aisles of the museum and allowed the place [...] to be a square for a moment. After they see what is possible and can be created, they understand what art can do and allow. [...] We decided on the "local lab" and a call came out for local artists and activists in different languages to create a unique work for Zumu in their studio/home. That way we will not need to search and look for what is appropriate and what is not, [...] we'll learn something from them about their criticism. [...] As part of the "local lab" they will receive professional guidance and learn to work as a group so that they can establish the art center and practice the artistic language after Zumu moves on. [...] In Kiryat Yam - we knew how to work more properly in connection with the city, for the opening event people came and waited outside for half an hour in line to enter, it moved us to see the diversity of the communities of the people and was exciting that they stood in line to enter.

I do Zumu, the first time out of thinking about people and communities and how I learn from them, the second time how I give from myself. That is why Zumu started? [...] the Israeli society, what is my connection with my neighbor, there is no dialogue between the communities that make up the society in

Israel. Strangers, angry folk, and what about the villages in front of us? To build a healthy society one needs to know the culture of the neighbor, understand it and give it respect. To understand his rituals, to do my rituals, that is a respectful society (interview, Sharon).

Art in the urban space, alternative exhibition spaces

The importance of art in the urban space and the significance of alternative exhibition spaces that stand in contrast to the museum's "white cube" structure; changing the thinking of what is allowed and what is forbidden in an exhibition space; how to maintain proper tension between the "white cube" and the experience of freedom of movement and work; all came up in the interview with Shai. The aspiration to create an alternative space he says, is "a place where everyone will find themselves, a place diverse enough, a place to experience, to bring a meeting of culture and art to an audience that doesn't experience such an encounter close to home " (*interview, Shai*). In the face of the feeling of strangeness and alienation that takes place in art galleries and museums or the Ivory Tower, as Shai calls some of them, the alternative display space for Shai is a space where feelings of comfort and familiarity exist. It is a space that has variety and produces a meaningful experience that changes the viewer.



Exhibition space (Sharon)

Sometimes people expected to meet a museum, white plaster, brick walls, what they have in mind for "how a museum should be presented" [...] It is important to me to create a place that everyone can. A place that is diverse enough, that will have more people who stay for longer than a moment, and not leave disappointed. [...] I must produce a meaningful experience. [...] In the picture I am creating a place. Whoever enters, leaves feeling different", Shai said about the photo he brought (*interview, Shai*).



Exhibition space (Shai)

The possibility of producing comfort in space, says Shai, is through familiar objects that simultaneously take on an extra dimension thanks to their new placement in a new space. "The guest will identify himself in his place and will feel comfortable in his familiar environment, by turning a familiar object into a bold object," he says and explains how he created the design in Kiryat Yam.



Pillar and duvet blanket (Shai)

I gathered this blanket around the pillar, and it created a lot of interest and responses, everyone responded to it in one way or another, how material transforms and turns from a familiar object to a bold object. It is this conversation about low and high, conversation about how the pillar becomes something that is not, [...] we see in the picture a gathering of the blanket like a chubby belly. That's my preoccupation of years of trying to personify. It must not fail. It can be the last meeting (of the child and the parent). The museum should have as complete an experience as possible, and as positive and good as possible, for the next visit at the museum to take place (interview, Shai).

Sharon refers to the design thought of creating a different feeling in the space from the alienation in the museum and says in her words about the photograph she brought:

Gili Avishar's work is very visual, it was convenient for the children to soften the entrance, to be in this non-threatening quiet place, the space and the mission statement are one thing, community work and education are one thing, we try to make the mission statement appear in the guests' space experience, so when Shai lets the audience enter a Bedouin hospitality experience with the tea ceremony, first of all you receive something. There is giving (interview, Sharon).

Milena also refers to the tea ceremony and the desire to create, with the help of the design of the space and the ceremonies that take place in it, pleasant experiences and feelings of trust, closeness and familiarity, unlike the strangeness, coldness and silence of the standard museum space.



Tea ceremony (Milena)

The photo talks about the role of the museum with the kids, and why is Zumu in their city? Intended to break down the walls, with a smooth entrance and opening doors by drinking tea. The intention is to produce an initial eye-level conversation with everyone. [...] You see a conversation take place with a cup of tea in hand, in a pleasant, not cold or alienated space, and it warms the

heart. The ceremony brings the children who bring the parents and the grandparents, and it all starts from the cup of tea. Dialogic art is the opposite.

The importance of art in the urban space and of alternative display spaces is not only in the sense of comfort they produce but, in the dialogue, they may allow, or should occur in them. Shai says:

What does the model of the space allow it to be? To hold a dialogue of the viewer in front of the work, between the guest, the guide and the student. [...] it's better to act from a place that moves you towards dialogue, and then the demand to produce such places will arise. And that the communities will create out of themselves more such encounters. Different encounters are created. I think it is important for communities to nurture themselves.



Activity (Shai)

And Sharon adds about the connection between feelings of comfort and the possibility of making conversation and dialogue through the following photograph:



A parent resting (Sharon)

Using the tools of art to create activism and the possibility of dialogue.[...] We talked about the dialogue bench and what it brings, and the dialogue that it created, the place that allows conversation, like with the wrapped pillars, the idea of placing my head while my children are in the museum, I think it's wonderful and feels like home, even in "Ha'Asif" in Arad, where people fell asleep in beds from my artwork. So, the body relaxes. Children will usually say they can't touch anything in the museum, a museum is 'shhhh'. And here there's relaxation, you can touch, you can drink tea. It must be given a physical presence in space and not stay just a part of the mission statement.

Conclusion

At the beginning of my research, I asked to reveal the mission statement with which the Zumu thinkers set out towards the establishment of the mobile museum, as they foresaw the tasks before them, and to find out what changed along the way after four

exhibitions. 'Move-Museum - Because Everyone Deserves Art!' This is the key phrase for the activity, and it is agreed upon by all. Fine art, in motion, for all and for free.

Zumu's journey is based on an isosceles triangle that includes:

1. The best contemporary art exhibition in Israel.
2. A tight collaboration with the hosting communities and creation based on the variety of voices and communities.
3. Educational and dialogical program plan - which make the museum visitor an active partner and an integral part of the creation of the narrative of the visit.

And free admission! Always!

The interviewees continue to speak the same language and these principles continue to lead the way, so within this idea today it is clear for the interviewees the work must keep being fine-tuned, and judging by the images they sent me, the challenges the interviewees identify can be refined for further discussion and work. The display of tradition, crafts, and the history of the community have been found to be the most significant to the connection and trust with the community and the city's patrons and locals. Sensitivity is required in working with amateur artists alongside institutional artists, which produces tension that requires attention and hypersensitivity, and figuring how to make a significant exhibition of contemporary art out of it? Working in an equal and un-arrogant research dialogue is one of the challenges the interview participants emphasized and was particularly important to them. The audience that visits the exhibitions, and the educators within the communities and peripheries that Zumu has visited, should be fully researched. I believe that such research can shed light and answer some of the inaccuracies that Zumu creators seek to make so they have the complete picture of the changes needed and adaptation to the exact needs of each community that hosts it.

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ZUMU's [official website](#)