

MATANEL FOUNDATION

ACTIVITY REPORT

Program: Bezalel's Center for Excellence in Art and Design in Ofakim
Year: 2021

Please present your activity report according to the following lines. The whole rapport will not exceed 2 or 3 pages (as word document).

Name of the Program:

Centers of Excellence in Art and Design in the Social and Geographic Periphery

Year of activity: 2021

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Number of active participants in the program:

Throughout the 2020-2021 academic year, Bezalel Academy's Center for Excellence in Ofakim had 74 active participants in the program: a group of 16 students on their third and final year of the program; a group of 30 students in their second year; and a group of 27 students in their first year of the program. As we publicized and promoted the program extensively during March 2021 just as COVID-19 restrictions were being lifted, several new students joined the program at that time. The Center provided these students with a structured environment and opportunities to pursue their passion and interest in art and design, which is not a readily accessible field in the Periphery.

Estimated number of impacted participants:

The people who are most directly impacted are the 74 participating students as well as the staff and lecturers at the Center, as the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience with teens who are eager to learn is both instructional and rewarding.

Moreover, as a community-based program, the Center for Excellence's impact extends beyond its participants and staff, touching the lives of hundreds of people in the area. The families of the participants themselves are impacted by the Center's activity as it enables their children to explore different avenues of expression and creativity, accompanied by experts in the field who teach and mentor them throughout the year. This last year was another challenging year, dominated by the ongoing pandemic and later by the "Guardian of Walls" Military Operation, which forced the area's residents into bomb shelters for 12 days in May 2021. Throughout the year, the Center for Excellence gave the students and their families a sense of normalcy and a way to express themselves, especially during these difficult times.

The community of Ofakim and the surrounding area are also significantly impacted by the Center's activities, as the Center strives to promote art and design in the Periphery. Below you will find details of the Center's activities throughout the year, which were open to the public and which invited the area's residents to participate.

Give the actual state of the program (where the program stands at the date of the activity report, no more than ten lines):

Last year, the Center had three groups of students, each in a different stage of the program. This past year also marked the Center's first graduating class, as its first cycle of students completed their third and last year of the program. Throughout the year, the students participated in a variety of courses in the fields of photography, comics, drawing, jewelry and visual communication, allowing them to experience a wide range of fields. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, classes were held until March 2021, when we were able to resume activities on site until the end of the school year in June. While 2 school days had to be cancelled due to the "Guardian of Walls" Military Operation in May, we maintained our regular curriculum throughout the year, whether on Zoom or in person.

The main achievements during the last year of activity (main achievements, number of events, number of participants, etc.):

We are proud to report that the Center for Excellence's very first cycle has just completed its three-year program, concluding the year with a festive end of year Graduate Exhibition, where our new graduating class displayed their final projects to their families and friends and to the public. The opening event was a joyous and touching event attended by the Mayor of Ofakim, the President of Bezalel, Bezalel's Dean of Students and other prominent figures of local government, and, of course, the proud families of the students and their friends. In total, 160 people attended the exhibition. As part of the Exhibition, the Center produced an official catalogue of all the participating works.

The Center for Excellence also held a number of other significant events throughout the year:

In December, we held a special online event "Bezalel in Pajamas" – a night of lectures and workshops with artists and designer from Bezalel. 150 people from the area participated in the event, which was open to the public.

In June, the Center for Excellence held a community-wide photography competition in partnership with MetroWest. The competition included approximately 100 photographs from 40 participants and the winning photos were displayed on billboards and buses throughout Ofakim and on social media.

In July, the students had a day trip to Jerusalem, which included a workshop at Bezalel Academy on Art Critique – Developing Artistic Discourse, a drawing workshop in the streets of Jerusalem and a tour of Hamiffal (The Factory), an artistic endeavor in the heart of Jerusalem that strives to promote and support local artists.

In addition, the Center has bolstered and strengthened its connection to the community and developed a close partnership with the Municipality. This includes participation in the Municipality's Ecosystem project in collaboration with Rashi Foundation, and a collaboration with the Municipality's Education Department and Press Office to further promote the Center's work as well as art and design education in the region.

In all these activities, the Matanel Foundation's name was also prominently included as a principal partner of our Ofakim Center of Excellence.

The evaluation (methodology, results, comparisons with the precedent year, conclusions for the future...):

The students were asked to fill out evaluation forms at the end of the year:

- 97% of students responded that they are either happy or extremely happy to be learning at the Center.
- While all students said they learned new topics, 69% of students were satisfied with the amount of new topics they learned.
- 95% of students indicated that they were comfortable or very comfortable being part of the Center

Some comments made by the students in the forms:

- The main thing that helped me and the general experience was the social and professional atmosphere. Everything was very pleasant and relaxed. We weren't forced to do anything we didn't want to do. Everything was optional and this gave us the freedom to enjoy the wonderful classes and the time we devoted to our projects. It also allowed us to rest and spend time with friends, eat and take our time with our personal art.
- The learning experience was that of an open dialogue which didn't dismiss my suggestions and also opened my mind to other possibilities.
- The center and the staff lifted my spirit every time. Especially when I was starting my project, when I still didn't understand what I even wanted from myself, you helped me to rise above it, stop whining and simply move on, even at the end of the project, when we were so close to the final submissions and I had almost given up. Thanks to you, I realized that I am creating a lovely project and that I should definitely be proud of myself. This was a very central part of the process – my difficulty in believing in myself. I can list a thousand other reasons that helped me during my work process. It was complicated but wonderful.
- This is a wonderful place that helps us live, breath and love art always. It's like a family.
- It was fun and I got to try techniques that I wouldn't have been able to do on my own. I also love the people here.
- I felt that I was really learning new things and getting better with time. It was fun to have classes about things I never dealt with before.

Provisional guidelines for the advancement of the program in the next year:

During the new school year, the Center intends to stabilize and regularize its activities for the students after two consecutive years of uncertainty due to the pandemic. While

the Center has continued its activity throughout this difficult period, it will strive to resume its normal 'on site' routine as much as possible.

As the center grows, another coordinator has been added to the staff this year, to bolster the Center's administrative support team.

Additionally, in order to expand the available options for art studies in the area, the Center is working together with Amirim High School and the Municipality in order to open a program for matriculation in art.

Please join the Evaluation Report, the Financial Report and the list of the participants to the program (as PDF documents)

Attached please find the list of participants in the Center during this year and the Center's financial report.

Please join photos – as **JPG files** – and any link or any other document connected to the program which will seem to you relevant – as **PDF document**.

Please join a 5 minutes movie which presents your institution and the particular project supported by the Matanel Foundation. The movie should be accessible to the philanthropic world and to other potential donors.

Attached please find a short video featuring this year's graduating class at Bezalel Academy's Center for Excellence in Ofakim.