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LIFE &
ARTS

Picture perfect

New JCC art exhibition brings the faces of Tel Aviv to Northbrook, Page 33



Israeli photographer Erez Kaganovitz talks over his 36-piece photography exhibit called "Humans of Tel Aviv," which is now on display at the JCC. PHOTOS COURTESY OF LYNN RENEE

COVER STORY

'Humans of Tel Aviv' art exhibition arrives at JCC

ZOE ENGELS, Editorial Intern

The grandchildren of a Holocaust survivor, a young boy guffawing in the arms of his nanny and a dog wearing a lion's mane — these are the faces of Tel Aviv, captured in a 36-piece photograph collection by Israeli photographer Erez Kaganovitz.

The images and their accompanying captions comprise an exhibition called "Humans of Tel Aviv," which officially opened June 2 at the Jewish Community Center in Northbrook. The opening coincided with Chicago Loves Israel, a day of community celebration in honor of Israel's 71st anniversary.

The room of the Northbrook JCC where the exhibition

is held — often subdued — is now vibrant and colorful as the photographs characterize the street cultures, fashionistas and events of Tel Aviv.

"I think it's natural to kickoff the exhibition here in Northbrook, especially as we celebrate Chicago Loves Israel," said Ilene Uhlmann, the director of arts and ideas for JCC Chicago. "This (exhibition) is something that we can all come together around, have discussions, learn from and grow from, and understand that Israel is a country like every other country.

"And, the people (of Israel) are what make the country. It's not one face. It's many faces, many colors and many perspectives."

During his global travels, Kaganovitz said he often gets asked, "So you are coming from Israel? Is that the place where people are being exploded all the time?" or "Israel, isn't that the place where you are constantly at war with your neighbors?" He said he hopes to alter these misconceptions about Israel through his photography.

"My goal is to give people around the world an inside look into the rich and the remarkably diverse lives of Tel Avivian's and showcase Israeli multiculturalism and vibrant civil society," Kaganovitz said. "What I love most about this project is that I can reach people in a way that I'm not forcing my ideas



Israeli photographer Erez Kaganovitz poses for a photo in front of his "Humans of Tel Aviv" photography collection, which is on display at the JCC. PHOTOS COURTESY OF LYNN RENEE

upon others, but rather simply taking a photo, telling a story and letting it speak for itself."

Before returning to Israel, Kaganovitz spoke at the exhibition's opening. According to Uhlmann,

Kaganovitz shared that he had discovered his passion for photography while traveling in India where his "senses came to life."

In 2012, he was further inspired by the "Humans of New York" Project, a col-

lection of street photography and portraits accompanied by often emotional and inspirational interviews.

"What (Kaganovitz) expresses is, Israel is a multicultural, diverse and civil society, and when he saw 'Humans of New York,' it occurred to him that [photography] was a way that he could change the dialogue around Israel by telling the stories of people that live there," Uhlmann said.

For Kaganovitz, photography became a conversation-starter — a way to speak through images while simultaneously bridging generational divides, Elizabeth Abrams, the director of program marketing and communica-

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JCC

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tions at the JCC, said.

The exhibition is scheduled to travel around the metropolitan area and into Wisconsin over the course of the next year. It will be on display at the JCC in Northbrook until June 30, and the exhibition's next stop is on July 12 at the Shabbat on the Lake event at the Peggy

Notebaert Nature Museum in Lincoln Park.

According to Uhlmann, as the exhibition continues to travel, the JCC Chicago plans to move it to both secular and sacred spaces. At times, the JCC Chicago intends to host purposeful programming events, which involve a lunch-and-learn surrounding the photographs. At other times, the exhibition will meet

people where they are, such as in coffee shops, so as to inspire conversations and build connections among observers through the stories of each photograph.

"After photographing more than a 1,000 people for this project, I came to the conclusion that every person has a story to tell," Kaganovitz said. You just need to find the right key to unlock it."

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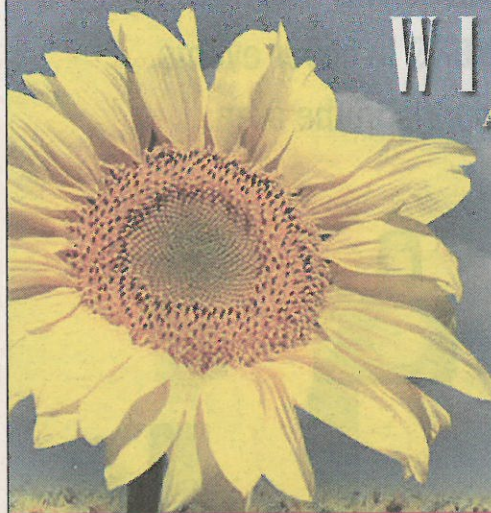
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