

# TRAIT D'UNION

des femmes et l'olivier, du symbole à l'œuvre

## *From AFULA TO FRANCE.*

The project is a yearlong art program that involves forty women from Afula and surrounding Arab villages. Olive trees are the subject of the exhibit and the uniqueness, personality and perspective of each artist is reflected in the thirty-five oil paintings on show. These women worked together, sharing their life experiences, and cultures to create these unique and symbolic pieces of art. The women spent hours painting both in the WIZO Afula Community Center and traveling around the country to get inspiration.

They painted in one another's neighborhoods, in Emek Israel, and in the Southern Galilee. At a festive evening, on October 28th, the WIZO Afula Community Center hosted leading individuals from the Belfort Community (a city in north-east France) as a token of the mutual collaboration and close ties between the cities of Afula and Belfort.

The artists were introduced to the guests and Amal, one of the Arab artists addressed them on behalf of the group. She is also a sculptor, and her work on a pumpkin is a beautiful expression of this art form.

As an important cultural symbol for both Jews and Arabs, the olive tree was the perfect subject for this exhibit. It helped to crystalize a wonderful group of women who utilized painting as the tool to express their emotions, their connection to the olive tree, and the meaning behind this basic part of nature. It is around the olive tree that people from different background, who have converging values, who do not share the same ways of socializing nor thinking have come together to connect to their homeland and to the olive tree.

The paintings have already been exhibited in Mulhouse, France. The women traveled to France together in order to represent their work. This mission, was graciously hosted by WIZO members, and has succeeded in bringing together people from all walks of life.

The Jewish community in Mulhouse is being inspired by WIZO Mulhouse's groundbreaking efforts. Bringing Arab and Jewish women together through art is exciting the community of Mulhouse. The artwork was presented in the main church which is located in the city center. It brought together people from different religions and backgrounds including Jews, Muslims, Christians, and Circassians.

Attending the exhibition was the Mayor of Mulhouse, members of the department

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council, the priest of the church, and Presidents of WIZO Federations from seven cities throughout Europe. Countries included Switzerland, Italy, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and United Kingdom. A mission of this nature has a tremendous impact on all WIZO and non-WIZO communities throughout Europe. The visit gave the WIZO members the opportunity to see first-hand the impact of their efforts and motivated them to continue their work. The exhibition moved to Belfort and then to Paris – including Saint-Maur and Levallois- , Lyon, Nice, Marseille and Strasbourg.

On the second evening of Hanukah, the Municipality of Paris hosted the women at an event in the City Hall.

Moreover, in light of the current situation in Israel, the women have agreed not to let this interfere with their mission. Together, they have agreed that they will not listen to news broadcasts while abroad. This is a testament to the strength and positive relationships established through this project.