

TRAIT D'UNION

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

Mulhouse, November 14. 2016

WOMEN AND THEIR OLIVE TREES : 3 exhibitions in Paris (Oct 31-Nov 17 2016)

Three hot spots to bring WIZO's message of peace under the spotlights; five workshops with children or youngsters to help them share our experience of coexistence: last week in Paris was a non-stop thrill.

The City Hall in the exclusive 16e in Paris, a garden near the business district of la Défense and a cultural center in Saint-Cloud: three different ways of reaching out to the people and inspire them.

Mairie du 16e, Paris (oct.31 to nov.7)



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18 artists made the trip to Paris, some with husbands, for 8 days running from opening n°1 to opening n°3. All of them were hosted in WIZO families or at WIZO friends'. The get together-welcome cocktail took place at WIZO Head Office where each artist or host was eager to meet her one week partner. Dudu managed to spend the week-end with us.

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Ambassador of Israel Aliza Bin Nun honored us and opened the exhibition at the Mairie du 16e. The mayor Claude Goasguen, who invited and sponsored the exhibition in his city hall, welcomed WIZO, the artists and the project. The Chief Rabbi of France, Haïm Korsia, warmly talked with the artists, both in Hebrew and in Farsi (which moved deeply our Ester). He was enthusiastic about the exhibition and in his speech he promised to sponsor the project upon the Paris-Airports for a show to come during the next December holydays. Imam Azizi, co-chair (with Rabbi Sarfaty) of the Jewish-Islamic Friendship of France, also spoke warmly. Of course Joëlle explained about WIZO to a wide audience, with passion, and Dudu spoke about the olive tree project.

Shabbat dinner was hosted in the Rotonde, a round room continuing the exhibition hall, with huge windows overlooking the avenue and a beautiful painted ceiling. We were happy to host Eric Gozlan and Imam Chalgoumi, both of them deeply involved in promoting peace between the people.

A beautiful cold sunny Sunday raised on our guided tour around the capital. A walk in the Marais (the Jewish district), some shopping...and the day was over!

On Monday, a lunch organized around the artists by the Aviv filled the Rotonde again with joy and goodies. At 6:30 pm, after having packed in a rush the exhibition which was due to Saint-Cloud the next day, we all attended the opening of the exhibition at the "Passage des Roses".

Passage des Roses, Puteaux (Nov.2 to 17)



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Copies of the paintings and the stories printed on big weatherproof boards were displayed inside and outside the railings of the garden. More were standing inside, over the benches. The place is very special: it was inaugurated 2014 to mark the 40th anniversary of the twinning of Puteaux and Gan Yavné and a hanging olive tree was planted then in a resin seed. Our exhibition surrounds and echoes the hanging olive tree.



As a partner to our exhibition, a local group of women, "Expressions de Femmes", who is active in Puteaux at bridging women of all backgrounds and promoting them in their social, cultural and professional dimensions. The Mayor, Joelle Ceccaldi-Raynaud, spoke about the olive tree project as if it was her own. She organized with her team a warm and exclusive opening, with a cocktail declined around the olive and a dinner around the roses.

The opening at Le Carré, Saint-Cloud (Nov.8 to 16), held under the honorary chairmanship of the mayor Eric Berdoati, was very successful too, with many sister organizations invited to join the event.

We took the opportunity that the artists were with us to organize workshops for the children. Thanks to the tight relationship between some of our volunteers and teachers or school principals, we managed to have:

- 1 workshop on the exhibition with a high school class from the 16^e district
- 1 workshop in a primary school in a mixed working class district from Paris
- 1 workshop in a primary school in a difficult suburb neighborhood
- 1 workshop in a vocational school
- 1 workshop in a technical school in a difficult suburb neighborhood

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The experience of these workshops is unique, thrilling, moving, inspiring. This is exactly the core of the job: educate. Bring the message to the children who can understand it through the example. They have many questions, and the opportunity to raise them; if they get their answers they are ready to embrace our message of respect, of dialogue, of friendship, through the art. Art helps them tell their stories where sometimes the words are missing; it becomes their common language. You can feel that you give them the keys to maybe help solve problems they are dealing with.

Some examples? Mohammed, 9 years: "I know about Israel! My mom told me! It's the country where Jews and Arabs are separated by barriers!"

Hasan, 9 years: "do you make war?"

Mehmet, 9 years: "how can you communicate if you don't talk the same language?" One hour later I understood why he asked that question. A new boy just joined the class, a little Algerian who only speaks Arabic.

Children are open, creative, they have much to say and deserve to be listened to and answered. Adults' words are important to children. To me, the workshops of the olive tree should be included in an educational program and implemented now in the Jewish and Arab schools all over Israel. This would certainly help create mutual respect and understanding.

The week spent with our friends the Women of the Olive Tree went so fast! I didn't host any of them this time for I too, was a "stranger" in Paris. But I heard from many of our friends that they enjoyed sharing a lot with their guests.

See you again in Israel!

Manuèle Amar