

ISRAEL



Official Country Name
STATE OF ISRAEL

Languages
HEBREW, ARABIC

Population
8,049,314

Median Age
29.9

GDP Per Capita
US \$32,700

Source: CIA World Factbook

Total Value of Art Exported
(UN Comtrade Database 2014)
US \$91,680,000

Arts Funding
(Culture)
US \$291,281,177

Art Programs
(University Level)
20

Student Enrollment
5,121

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, AAP (non-official)

Museums Exhibiting Contemporary Art
33

Contemporary Art Galleries
(Commercial)
137

Contemporary Art Spaces
(Nonprofit)
47

Art Foundations
(NGO + Private)
14

Source: AAP (non-official)

In October, the killing of two Israeli settlers in the West Bank by members of the

Islamic militant group Hamas sparked a spate of violence between Israelis and Palestinians, leaving more than 90 Palestinians and 17 Israelis dead. Parliamentary elections in March brought the landslide reelection of incumbent Benjamin Netanyahu, head of the center-right Likud party, further limiting the prospects of peace between the Israelis and Palestinians as West Bank settlements grow.

While Netanyahu opposed the nuclear accord signed by Iran and six world powers in October, the local Hamabul Art Collective announced they would convert a Jerusalem community center into an unofficial Iranian "embassy"—to celebrate Persian culture through exhibitions, performances and educational programs, and to bridge the sociopolitical void between Israel and Iran—sparking divisive reactions both at home and abroad.

Despite all this, the art scene carried on in Tel Aviv, the cultural heart of the nation. Under the direction of Suzanne Landau, the **Tel Aviv Museum of Art** hosted a number of significant exhibitions celebrating both modern masters and fresh, upcoming talents. "National Collection" (10/28–12/10) invited museumgoers to participate in site-specific performances presented by the Public Movement collective and featured New York painter RH Quaytman's works made on visits to Israel, displayed in a gallery specially designed to look like the Hebrew letter, *He* (n) (5/20–9/5).

Tel Aviv's most prominent nonprofit, the **Center for Contemporary Art**, closed out the year with "Resort" (10/15–12/12), which transformed the gallery into a mixed-media installation filled with architectural models

and musical and theatrical performances by Ohad Meromi. Earlier, the Center had presented "Rounding Up the Hours" (5/20–7/18), featuring Hilla Toony Navok's large-scale, kinetic sculptures that resemble industrial machines.

South of Tel Aviv, in Holon, the **Israeli Center for Digital Art** hosted "Identity_ Identify" (11/21–12/26), a culmination of Dafna Shalom's yearlong documentation of the local Jessy Cohen neighborhood, comprising photographs, videos and archival material of its mostly immigrant residents.

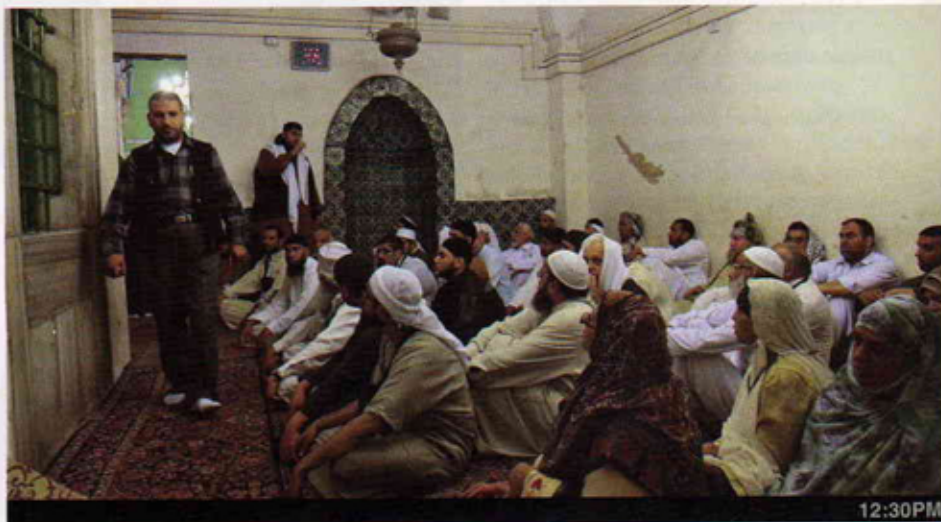
Another institution that focuses on the social impact of art is the **Petach Tikva Museum of Art**, just east of Tel Aviv. Sigal Kehat-Krinski curated "Superwoman" (4/24–6/20), a group show of works exploring the image of the female soldier, from 1950s-era photographs of soldier-mothers, to an installation comprising a spinning, inflated parachute reminiscent of a woman's skirt.

The nonprofit **Shpilman Institute for Photography**, which closed its museum section in 2014, is active in its research and education programs.

The one-year-old **Artspace Tel Aviv**, in the Kiryat Ha'melacha art neighborhood, was founded by a group of artists and curators. The space made a splash in April with "Decoding the Circle" (4/17–5/16), which featured Emil Abraham's canvases whose surfaces, covered entirely in words, appear to depict abstract imagery.

At other alternative spaces, **Zochrot**, run by scholar and activist Ariella Azoulay, documents and educates audiences about al-Nakba, the expulsion of Palestinians during Israel's formation in 1948. This year, Zochrot hosted the 3rd International Film Festival on "Nakba and Return" (12/4–6), screening the works of Palestinian and Israeli filmmakers.

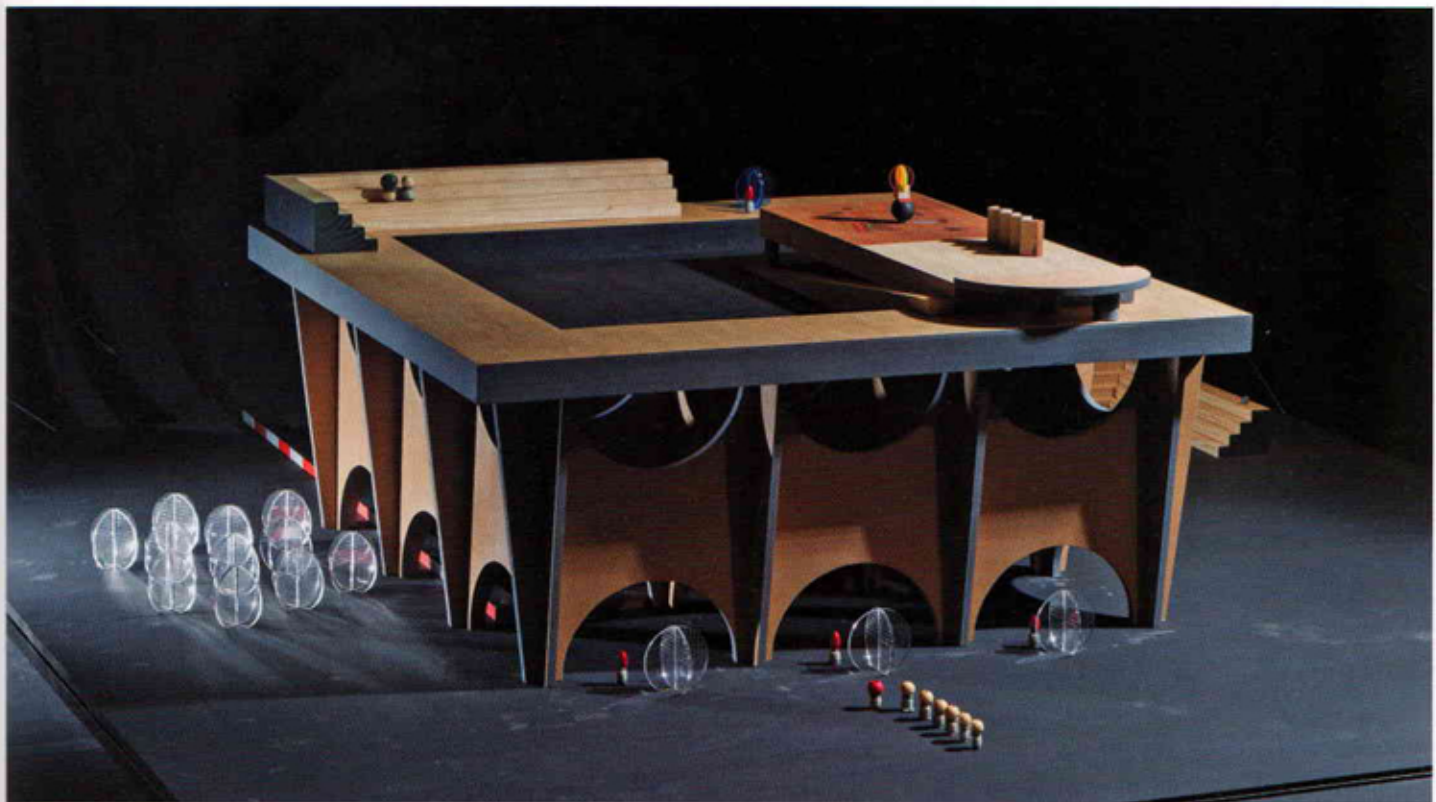
Jerusalem, the second-largest center for art in Israel, is home to the national **Israel Museum**. Its 2015 program included



12:30PM

NIRA PEREG, *Ishmael*, 2014–15, still from four-channel HD video: 10 min 44 sec. Courtesy Braverman Gallery, Tel Aviv.

Acknowledgment: Sarah Peguine



OHAD MEROMI, *Resort* (detail), 2015, mixed-media architectural model, dimensions variable. Photo by Youval Hai. Courtesy Center for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv.

"6 Artists, 6 Projects" (2/11–8/22), which featured Tel Aviv-based Gilad Ratman's two-channel video installation *Five Bands From Romania* (2011–15) and Uri Gershuni's blue-tinted, murky photographs depicting Google Street View images of Lacock, the British hometown of Victorian photography pioneer William Henry Fox Talbot.

The annual **Jerusalem Season of Culture** (7/27–9/4) organized music and art festivals throughout the city, including "Under the Mountain," which held numerous public art events around the Temple Mount. Elsewhere in the city, the alternative nonprofit art space **Jerusalem Print Workshop** presented "Moshe Gershuni: Days of Our Lives" (10/15–12/31), a selection of the artist's screen-prints, etchings and books dating from 1982 to 2005. Directed by Raphie Etgar, the **Museum on the Seam** displays sociopolitical art, such as those in "Unprotected Zone" (11/12–3/1/16), a group show of 25 artists from Israel and abroad, which included Lida Abdul, Yael Bartana and Bruce Nauman.

Around the rest of the country, the **Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art** featured "Ruthi Helbitz Cohen: Veil of Tears" (9/26–12/26), an exhibition of paintings, floor installations and seaweed-like gold strips suspended from the ceiling. At the **Haifa Museum of Art**, "Out of Sight: Israeli Young Artists in New York" (5/16–11/8) offered mixed-media works by Eli Barak, Ety Yaniv and Ido Abramsohn, among others.

In the Arab-majority city of Sakhnin, the **Arab Museum of Contemporary Art**

and **Heritage (AMOCAH)** opened in June, despite tensions resulting from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Co-founded by artists Avital Bar-Shay and Belu-Simion Fainaru, with the support of Sakhnin's mayor Mazin G'Nayem, AMOCAH's mission is to engage artists from the region and to provide an opportunity for peaceful, cultural exchange between Jewish and Arab communities.

There are roughly 80 active commercial galleries in Tel Aviv. On Rothschild Boulevard, **Sommer Contemporary Art** exhibited Guy Zagursky's bright, abstract, wall-sized canvases and kitschy found-object sculptures (5/28–7/18). Nearby **Noga Gallery** opened the year with Lea Avital's surreal, eerie gray-scale sculptures (1/1–2/14), and **Chelouche Gallery** presented Yossi Mark's intimate pencil and acrylic portraits (4/1–6/13). A solo show of new works by Sigalit Landau at **Hezi Cohen Gallery** (9/10–10/24) included *Rite of Passage* (2015), a vibrant 12-minute video installation depicting Arab and Israeli children dancing with ribbons around a maypole. **Dvir Gallery** displayed Yudith Levin's faux-naïf canvases of bright dots, blobs and swirls in "New Paintings" (10/31–12/12).

In north Tel Aviv, **Gordon Gallery**, the more established sister space of **Gordon Gallery 2**, mounted the group show "Charred. Rusted. Drawings" (4/30–5/30), which included Yaacov Dorchin's contorted, rusted iron sculptures, among other artists' works. Nearby, **Givon Art Gallery** kicked off the year with "Painting Is Nothing But a Religious Dedication" (1/9–2/28), a solo

showing of Pinchas Cohen Gan's collaged newspaper clippings, handwritten notes, small paintings and drawings. In the south of the city, **Rosenfeld Gallery**, among many of its critically acclaimed exhibitions, held a show featuring artist, writer and filmmaker Roece Rosen's new paintings that resemble giant CD-ROMs, whose surfaces depict fantastical, cartoon-like figures (5/21–7/11). Further east, **Braverman Gallery** finished the year with Nira Pereg's "Ishmael" (10/8–12/10), which presented her eponymous four-channel video work documenting the daily religious rituals performed at the sacred Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron. **Julie M. Gallery** showed Liat Ebling's ominous, gray-scale paintings of objects and their shadows (6/11–7/17), before pausing its program to move its location in August.

Internationally, the Hong Kong space of Ben Brown Fine Arts presented "On Reflection" (5/16–7/16), Ori Gersht's first solo exhibition in the Asian metropolis, featuring his new series of colorful, floral still-life photographs. Elsewhere abroad, Omer Fast's new film, *Continuity (Diptych)* (2012–15), depicting a gruesome, mockumentary-style horror narrative, debuted at the Jeu de Paume in Paris (10/20–1/24/16). On view at Berlin's Grimmuseum were Alona Rodeh's minimalist sculptures, reminiscent of the running figure in exit signs and C-print portraits on light-boxes (9/12–10/17).

At the 56th Venice Biennale (5/9–11/22), the Israel Pavilion was represented by Tsibi Geva, whose site-specific installation,