

DOCUMENTATION

Bridging Histories – Transforming Perspectives



**A Berlin Seminar
for Israelis and Germans
from 27 October
to 03 November 2024**

Overview

This seminar brought together Israelis and Germans in Berlin for a week of dialogue, and creative expression. It focused on individuals whose lives are touched by historical and present trauma. The seminar aimed to provide a space for participants, particularly those in education and therapy, to exchange expertise and perspectives.



The seminar took place in a private art space in Berlin Mitte (Auguststraße area).

Key Themes and Activities

Trauma, Memory and Identity

The core theme involved exploring the influence of Shoa historical trauma and recent trauma (October 7th) on individual and collective identity in both Israeli and German societies.

Shared Dialogue and Storytelling

Participants delved into shared narratives and personal/family stories.

Creative Expression

Workshops utilizing creative writing (poetry, prose) and art therapy were central to the seminar, serving as tools for self-discovery, dialogue, and processing complex themes.

Experiencing Berlin

The program included exploring historical sites in Berlin to connect with the city's scars and stories.

Expert Input

- Facilitators included educators, activists, therapists and authors from both Israel and Germany:
Barbara Stellbrink-Kesy
Patricia Paweletz
Hanoch Katsir
- Lectures from professionals included one on „October 7th and Antisemitism“ by Dr. Matthias Becker (Decoding Antisemitism), a film screening by Director Tanja Cummings and an art workshop by Sculptor Gilad Eshel.

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Hanoch Katsir Memory and Politics

Beyond facilitating discussions my part was to bring into the circle the way Shoa memory plays in the political sphere, mainly in the Israeli society.

The simple question behind my workshop was : Can we come to terms with our past, so that we could see a future ? How does Shoa create the Israeli collective psyche? I presented the story of the symbolic flight of the Israeli air force above Auschwitz and its implications to the IRAN question – for years Israel security's main concern. Is the framing of current security concerns in historical terms productive ?

Moshe Dayan's eulogy for Roi Rothberg (1956) was presented to discuss Israel ideology and practices of using force.

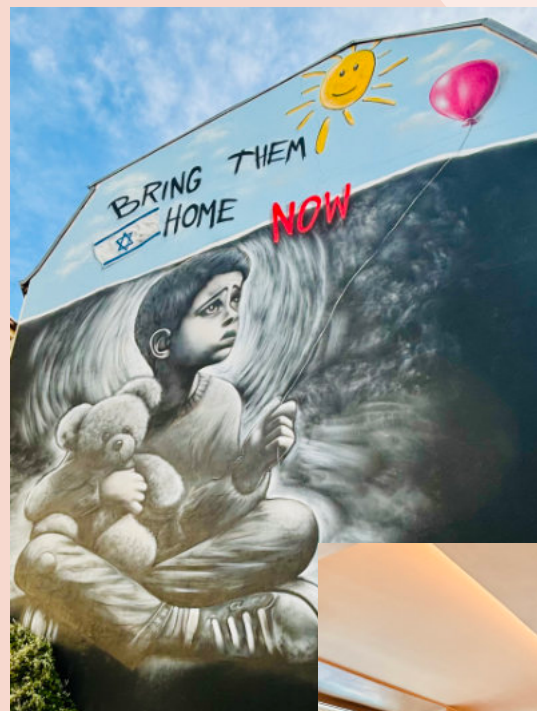
7 October was constantly looming over our discussions, as was the Hostages crisis and the war in Gaza.

The Judicial Overhaul and the challenges to Israeli Democracy were always in the background. It seems we were not lacking in big issues...

Hanoch Katsir
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“For the first time in my life, I was able to confront, process, and speak openly about the impact of memory and trauma - both on myself and those around me. Professionally - as a psychologist and educator - I came away with meaningful insights, as well as important questions, particularly about the implications for identity formation among children and youth in the Gaza border area.”

Ella Nahum, Educational Psychologist



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Barbara Stellbrink-Kesy Art workshop

The art workshop supported participants to mention feelings of relief, being able to actively create after a „period of paralysis“ some had suffered before. Within the group everybody experienced appreciation, felt alive and connected. Significant contents connected with stressful experiences could be expressed symbolically, shared and reflected.

The guided tour in the near environment gave participants information and a feeling for the important Jewish life that had existed in the area before the NS-Regime. It was known as „Little Jerusalem“. Awareness about the intense Jewish tradition of the place, the seminar was situated, increased and let the group feel more familiar with the environment.

Barbara Stellbrink-Kesy
www.spielraum-fuer-kunst.de



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Patricia Paweletz Creative writing sessions

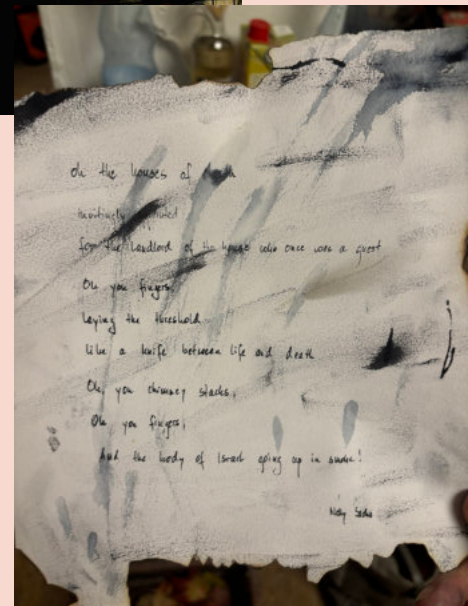
Writing allows us to reflect and get connected with our inner voice.

On the basis of various guidelines to explore personal subjects, the participants were writing poems or prose. While sharing the texts (which was not obligatory) the group had the opportunity to have insight to different layers of identity and family history, personal approach and individual interpretation of social and private circumstances. This led to explicit questions within the group, exchange of experiences and emotional connection between the individuals either German or Israeli.

Patricia Paweletz
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“In the middle of life,
in the middle of the mess,
I came to a place of peace and creativity.
I had an exciting encounter with warm
and open people .
A super interesting seminar. ”

Gilad Eshel, Sculptor



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Perspective

In examining Israel and Germany as post-traumatic societies, we aim to provide a space for experiencing tools of resilience. We intend to hold future seminars in both countries.

A seminar from

IAK Politisch Reisen
Internationaler Arbeitskreis e.V.

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