

represent Jerusalem in an event, despite earlier violence

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"From my point of view, it doesn't matter if it's Jewish or Arab violence. One time it's this, another time it's the other. It's something I strongly object to," says Marouf.

Team member Mohammed Jaber, 15, agrees. Instead of fighting, he argues, more should be done to negotiate between the sides. Also from Beit Hanina, he joined the group at the beginning of summer after a Running Without Borders representative came to speak at his school.

"You come and meet new people - Arabs and Jews - and you talk," he says of the group. "What surprised me the most was how willing people were to talk to each other."

The group is certainly gaining traction. With its strong social media presence, it is gathering fans and supporters, and even managed to raise the NIS 59,000 needed to send the team to the Berlin race on August 23 with the help of 366 donors on the Headstart crowdfunding site.

But it could do with more support, especially from the Jerusalem Municipality, according to Haas. "It is easy for us to get people to join as individuals, but as long as the establishment doesn't have the motivation or the guiding hand that decides to promote real coexistence activities, then things will move slowly."

The race in the German capital was definitely an organizational high point. Each participant ran individually, and the boys are pleased with their results. "I'm very excited and proud of my result - 10.5 km. in 47 minutes - it's my best result, even though the race was difficult because of the rain and the roads," enthuses Marouf. The rain was a surprising factor for the boys to take into consideration, seeing that they've been practicing in the sweltering Israeli heat of the past month.

Haas reveals that the team garnered some attention. "We actually came across responses particularly when I cheered on the runners in Arabic during the race," he details. "The Germans were very excited about it, and came over to ask what it's about."

As for future plans, the nonprofit mainly hopes to expand. "In the next year, I would like to see the organization operate two large groups of boys and girls in Jerusalem, two established men and women's groups, delegations that will go abroad once a year and shared races for Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem," says Haas. Running Without Borders is also planning to duplicate the model it created in the capital to Haifa, and work on the matter has already begun.

All these groups "will show that things can be different in Jerusalem," Haas hopes. "This city also has different sides."

Almost paradise

• By JOSH LOGUE

There is hotel in Jerusalem with a capacity of one, built in the courtyard of a former leper colony, where a single night will run you NIS 5,000.

"A dream for only one person," proclaims the Paradise Inn website. "Infinite stars and a real gate to paradise."

Most bona-fide hotel ratings schemes do not run up past five stars, let alone approach the infinite - which, depending on which mathematician you talk to, may or may not even be possible. But The Paradise Inn also has no roof, so technically yes, it can boast having a lot of stars.

Although it is absolutely true that you can book a night or two at this inn, you would in reality be participating in art project (rather than a serious commercial venture) dreamed up by a team of artists working out of the Mamuta Art and Media Center at Beit Hansen.

Under the direction of artist duo Lea Mauas and Diego Rotman - known collectively as Sala-manca - groups of local artists work out of the center for six to 12 months on a variety of broad creative design projects.

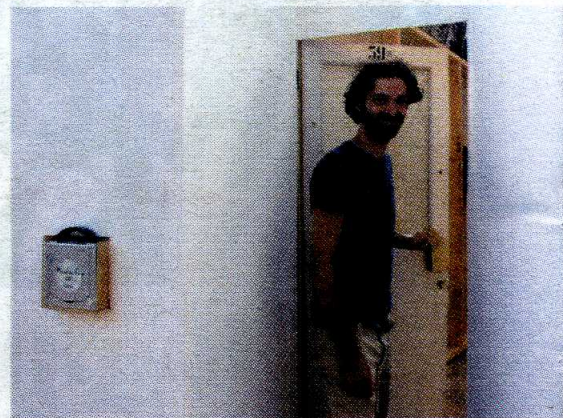
This year, the idea was to do something with recycled technology. "What can be trash or waste for some people can be a starting point for other people," said Rotman, standing beside a small, coin-operated box in front of a large white wall and mysterious door - the front entrance to Paradise Inn.

After beginning with the collection of obsolete or broken electronics from the surrounding community, the project followed a winding road of conceptions and ideas about recycling (ideas and myths in addition to trash) and techno-utopia, eventually culminating in the Paradise Inn - in a space comprised roughly of 1,000 square meters of the Hansen courtyard and four large, bright white walls.

It's a place, explained Rotman, that not dissimilar to the junk used to build its mechanisms, can be "paradise for some, hell for others." Like trash and paradise, hell will mean something different to everyone. But for journalists specifically, the words "of course, you cannot enter," spoken off-handedly by Rotman, are pretty universally hellish.

The best you can do for now is cough up two shekels to drop in that mystery box. Shutters along the wall will open for a prolonged, leisurely eight seconds, and you'll be able to catch a glimpse of, well, some trees and foliage. Not a whole lot.

The only person allowed in the Paradise Inn for the time being is Itamar Mendez-Flohr, another Mamuta artist who has not only been living there for three weeks, but has also furnished the interior with a large bed (with plenty of mosquito netting), a shower and plenty of other amenities, and created the art



Mamuta artist Itamar Mendez-Flohr prepares to enter 'Paradise.' The 'mystery box' is to his left. (Marc Israel Sellem)

installations installed all along its exterior or façade (in the hotel parlance).

The inn certainly has proven to be a kind of paradise, Mendez-Flohr said. Free to work invisibly and unpressured behind those walls, he's been able to approach his art with a new sense of "naiveté." He can work on what he wants when, with no need to display anything he's not happy with.

He's been able to work impulsively, he disclosed, with "the freedom to make mistakes and not treat them like mistakes."

One of his creations, for example, looks like a simple tree branch lying ensconced behind a ground-level window in one of the inn's walls. If you look away for a moment though (puzzled, maybe a little disappointed), and then back again, the branch will have begun to writhe, snake-like, sinister and eerily robotic.

When he started working on it, Mendez-Flohr said he didn't know what it would turn into. "I looked at the trees and they seemed very snakey to me," he described. "So I sliced it up and glued it back together and gave it life."

Another one of Mendez-Flohr's works looks, at first glance, like a little peephole carved into another one of the inn's walls. When you bend down (eagerly, starved of information about Paradise's interior) to peer inside, all you see is your own eye reflected (cunningly, via mirrors) and staring chillingly right back at you. "That's my revenge for the peepers," Mendez-Flohr told this rather shaken reporter.

Come mid-September, however, he'll have to move out. "We have to expel him from paradise," Rotman said flatly.

"I will resist," Mendez-Flohr joked, or half-joked. He really does seem to like it in there.

As of today, no one has dropped NIS 5,000 on even a single night at the Paradise Inn, so the room remains 100-percent open after September 15.

"We may be open to a price reduction in the future," Mauas said, "and we are looking into the possibility of promotional deals, but for now we are still trusting that NIS 5,000 for paradise is nothing."