

“Walls Interrupted” (Group Exhibition)

Beit Ha'Gefen — The Arab-Jewish Cultural Center, Haifa

Curator: Ravit Harari

Opened: August, 2015

In the beginning, was the port. The lower city of Haifa, the city of the workers, was a bustling centre of the passage of people and goods and developed from the sea to the mountain. Then a class gap was created between the upper city that grew on the Carmel and the lower city, which remained poorer, more Arab. Finally, with the decline in civic activity around the port, the lower city remained abandoned.

The "Ruin" (החורבה) club - which opened in one of the abandoned buildings on the edge of the harbour - was a stronghold of performances and parties in the 80s and 90s without disturbing the neighbours, because there were none. For the past decade, in parallel with the downtown renewal efforts, the building has stood abandoned as a ruin, true to its name, until two years ago the municipality allocated free studios as part of a multifaceted attempt to breathe life into the port campus complex named [Hurva \(2015\) Ha-Hurva Artists' Studios at Downtown Haifa](#).

Artists David Behar Farhiya, Hamudi Janam, Nir Dvorai, Hadas Weiss, Vik JF, Nitzan Set, Orit Siman-Tov, Manel Mahmid and Yuval Feiglin are now exhibiting in a joint exhibition to mark the end of their period in the workshops.

The process of renovation, renewal and turnover of businesses in the area significantly changes the character of the neighbourhood. Along with the benefits and good intentions, these changes also carry with them damage to the fabric of

community life in the place. Now, towards the end of their stay in the artists' workshops, the exhibition participants have created works that convey the feeling of uncertainty. The urgent need to move, the questions to where. These are also reflected in the manner of placement in the exhibition space, which creates a physical experience in the viewer.

"The work in changing architectural spaces - the urban landscape that was destroyed and built, as well as the expected departure from the private workspaces - permeated and influenced the works, each of which in its own way relates to disturbances in space," writes curator Ravit Harari.

Many of the works refer directly to the city of Haifa, for its historical and political baggage. The abandoned houses in the Wadi Salib neighbourhood, fences of construction sites, the bustling harbour landscape, historic public buildings that have changed ownership and purpose, alongside new public buildings that dominate crumbling environments - all these are reflected in the works of art.

The purpose of the artists' workshops in the ruined building was to establish an active centre and gather a community around the place. The project was carried out in collaboration with the Beit Hagefen Gallery, the Jewish Arab Cultural Center, the Lower City Administration and the Haifa Municipality's Culture Division.