

VISIT US TO SEE US

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I had a dream where I was standing on a hill in the middle of Israel and Palestine, and I said "PEACE". After that there was peace in the Middle East.

Bachelor thesis

Anna Kiuru



Abstract

"Visit us to see us" is my final project for Lahti Institute of Design.

I had an exhibition at my place on 7th of May, 2015.

(KEURUUNTIE 17B8, 00510 HELSINKI, FINLAND, EUROPE, PLANET EARTH)

It was a combination of photographs, photo montages, diaries, videos, ready-made art and some installations, as well as food and no alcohol. Maybe wine for holy people.

Written part is about my notes, stories and experiences from Israel/Palestine (Jerusalem).
About interesting areas in Jerusalem.
About my relation to religion. About me, and artists I admire.

Bachelor thesis

Lahti University of Applied sciences, Institute of Arts and Design

Bachelor of Arts

Photography

Spring 2015

Anna Kiuru

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Thank you speech

1 Introduction

Once upon a time...

This is how I started all my stories, back in the days.

All my teachers at school said to me that I think and write at the same time, that's why it's hard to understand what I'm trying to say.

Also this is the reason I started my introduction like this. I don't really know what to say.

I want to be honest, especially to myself.
And as an artist I'm trying to show that.

I'm openminded and I like to try new things. I'm not so precise. I don't care that much about the rules. Rules are made to be broken.

Art should not be categorised.

I'm not a writer, but I'm writing a lot, and I'm always wondering how bad I am at it, and then I envy people who write like Tolstoi.

I keep diary about everything. All the little things I do, I write them down. My memory is not so good. I like to write my experiences down and read them later. And maybe make some art out of it.

Like this time.

My final project is my diary/thoughts from Jerusalem.

In September 2013 I got to know that I got accepted for an exchange semester at Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, in Jerusalem. I didn't know what to expect, but I was happy. My life was about to change, I just didn't know it yet.

On the 31st of January, 2014 at 06:00 AM I was on my way to Israel...

Something is very wrong somehow.
I came just a bit too late...
Didn't see GERmania Depressia.
Asif is lying to me all the time.
Asif wants to be on ~~the~~ ^a boat.
Not with someone he knows.
Everything is kinda weird now and
nothing is open. I want to find a
job today. I will go and ask from
places. Maybe Sira needs a worker.
But now I'm lost and don't know
what to do with myself. I really
think that there's somethin' devil
in this place.

Two days ago when I took the
bus from Bethlehem to JLM, an old
woman sat next to me. She was
a english teacher and I was really
surprised that she had such a
good english. She's retired now.
She gave me liquirice candy,
which wasn't so good but

NICK CAVE and THE BAD SEEDS
[anyway ate them all. And gave
some to Itzik and Haim and Asif.
I really don't wanna be an artist.
What can I do now? I haven't
done anything about my thesis
and I feel guilty all the time
about it. U see, ~~FOR~~ FOR
some people writing is easy
and natural, I would like it to
be the same FOR me but it's
not, it's just hell FOR me.
I can write just like this and
nothing official. I was thiking
that it would be cool to change
my life to one of these lifes.
Easy and lost. REALLY. Og-life.
Religion, it's a waste of hands-
me men. I need to start on
that.

2 Jerusalem

2.1. My Jerusalem

When I was in Jerusalem for the first time, I experienced lots of things. Things that many people won't experience at all during their lifetime. Maybe. And I was there for five months.

I spent most of my time in Jerusalem, only because I was studying there. I hated almost every moment. Always when I left the place, I felt so much happier.

This is what happened...

I was homeless for three and a half months. I had no money for a month (actually I had money but bank of Israel didn't want to cooperate with me). I got free food (positive sides of being homeless). I had a crush on a gay guy thinking that he will be my future husband. I was asked to have sex for money, and for free too. I was asked to get married, and promised to have 100 camels and one car. I was yelled at for wearing wrong kinda clothes. I was ignored just because I'm a woman. I got tired of being a woman. I had some tricky situations with the police and young soldiers. I got teargas in my eyes. Got a "job" as a DJ. Saved human lives. Got an F from a test. Saw a place where Jesus was buried (all three of them). Met a person who thought that he was Jesus (Jerusalem syndrome). Had many mental breakdowns, and cried almost every day. I got dumped and I fell in love. I had the most beautiful/painful night. I heard many crazy and interesting stories. AND I bought blue lipstick.

After five months, I'm back in Jerusalem.

I went back to do my final project, this project. Or at least that is what I was telling to myself. I had to go that far to realize that it wasn't true. I was there for two and a half months.

Nothing really changed, except that this time I didn't want to leave the city. I fell in love with Jerusalem.

Also this happened...

My heart got broken after three days of entering

the country. I fell in love with another gay guy. I got bitten by a crazy dog. I was sick for over a month. I continued my "job" as a DJ. Got a new job as a Zumba teacher. Turned 25, and spent the new year there. I almost got raped. Experienced Jerusalem snow storm. Met religious gay guy, and fell in love with him too. Moved five times. Was asked to have toilet sex and I didn't learn Hebrew or Arabic.

When people think about Israel and Jerusalem, they immediately think about the conflict between Israel and Palestine, and Gaza. Politics and all that craziness.

When I think about Israel or Jerusalem, I think about religion, army, cultural difference, woman's position and beautiful people.

I feel that it's important for me to tell people how it actually is to live in the Holy Land. It's not so bad as it looks like in the news.

All the news you hear from Israel or Middle East in general are bad news. But in real life it's actually not like in the news, it's more. Of course they have their problems, we all have our problems. Israel/Palestine is a country like any other country. Maybe with a small twist.

Israel/Palestine has rich history or even sad.

From Hitler's hate against Jews (because they are smarter than others, or because they are rich and own all the banks, does not give a good reason to kill over 6 million Jews). To Benjamin Netanyahu's hate against Arab people (because they are occupying their land). Netanyahu is repeating the history. It's a chain reaction.

Jerusalem is divided in East Jerusalem and West

Jerusalem. East is for Arab people and West is for Israeli (Jewish) people. Some Arab people who live in East Jerusalem are not allowed to go to the West. It is awful to think that you are a prisoner in your own country.

I was once walking with a group of Palestinian

people and we met Jewish people on a way, and then one of them said "You killed some of our people 60 years ago, we can do the same to you now!"

BUT, Jerusalem is the Holy Land for both sides. No one could ever bomb Jerusalem.

After seeing this, you realize how ugly this conflict is.



2.2. Old City

"I was walking and thinking that nothing has changed. Suddenly I was in the Old City again, after five months. Someone thought I was Japanese, because of my eyes...? Two men wanted to take me for a dinner. One man stopped talking to me when I told him that I'm not religious. I had to lie that I have an Israeli boyfriend. Guy who sold me postcards was nice and friendly, he said he can teach me any language I want. Vegetarian guy wanted to take picture with me. Jewellery seller said to me that he does not want to bother me, he jus likes my baby face. Other guy was trying to sell me clothes and fabric and asked me what do I know about sex. And third guy was talking to me very long and offered me tea and wanted to be my boyfriend, because he has never had a girlfriend. He asked me who is more good looking; him or my "boyfriend"? When I wanted to leave his shop, his brother was in front of the entrance, I asked him if he could move, he said "If you kiss me, I'll let you go." I didn't do it and left. - I continued walking and then on my ~~left~~ right I saw adorable old man eating cookies. He had kind eyes and kind smile. He offered me a cookie, and I felt happy to see him, somehow. Like he was my old friend or something. Omar is his name. I went inside his shop and then we started talking. Oh, he's so magical. He was talking about eyes, how the can't lie and everything else can be faced. He said that my smile is real and that he likes that I'm smiling and not lying. Then he started to analyse me. He said that I'm a great giver and nice and kind and that I don't love myself enough, so that's why I'm empty inside. I started to cry. I don't even know why, maybe because of all that shit from yesterday... And then there was this kind old man who made me feel again. We talked more and he said that I'm a beautiful flower with a beautiful smell. Like Jasmine.

I know that this is what they say to everyone, I wasn't born yesterday, but in that moment it felt so good to hear these kinda words. I sat a bit more. Ate two more cookies and then I wanted to go. Before I left, Omar wanted to know my birthday, to know what is my lucky number and it was 1 is 6. Like Omar's. I knew there was something similar between us. It's just the feeling you get when you meet someone special. He also told me that when you are with someone, you own only 50% of the feelings, and other 50% is for the person you are with. I got up and hugged him goodbye, he hugged me back and gave a kiss on my cheek, afterwards he asked if he can kiss me on my lips, I said no. At that moment I felt like ash, again just another guy who wants to have sex, but then I was thinking that it was sweet of him to ask and not just kiss, just like Shay did when we first kissed. Omar was fine with it and referred to the 50% rule."

(Notes from diary 17.12.2014, 23.1.2015)

OLD CITY - JERUSALEM
JUNE 2014

"I do dancing, u see!
I live in Australia, I love it there. I can dance there.. HERO NO.
Women here are very closed and strict.
Once I met a woman at the dance class.. In Australia. She was a woman who was unhappily married for 10 years!
She said to me: "Come with me"
And I went:
We didn't do anything, we just took a shower and I gave her 15 orgasms, just by touching her.
She said that she had never had even one orgasm and now she got 15!"

~~Notes from my +~~
Notes from the Old City

I've learned that in Jerusalem you get a lot of attention, especially in the Old City, and especially if you are a woman from a Western country. It doesn't matter how you look like or how you dress, you will get attention anyway. I like how openminded people are there. They care about you and you feel special, even though you know that's what they do to everyone. Old City of Jerusalem is the best place for hearing stories and learning about the history. There you can see conflicts between religions and nations.

Old City is the holiest place in the whole Jerusalem. It is divided in four different quarters (Muslim quarter, Jewish quarter, Christian quarter and Armenian quarter) and it has 11 gates.

All these nations are fighting for the Temple Mount.

Four thousand years ago god sent Abraham to this hill (Temple Mount) to sacrifice his son. The first temple was built on this site in the 960 BC by King Solomon. Inside was the holy of holies. In 586 BC, Nebuchad-Nezzar the second destroyed the first temple. Part of the population was forced into exile in Babylon. Ark returned and built a second temple in 516 BC. In 10 BC, Herod the great expanded and beautified the temple. That is where the Wailing Wall is now. The Romans destroyed it in 70 AD, setting the Jewish diaspora in motion. Caliph Abd Al-Malik built the Dome of the Rock on the site in 691. During the successful crusades, the Dome served as a church for close to a century (from 1099 to 1187). In 1187, Saladin reclaimed the site. The Dome of the Rock became Muslim once more and remains so today. Muslims believe that the prophet took flight from this rock on his night journey to heaven, crossing seven skies on the back of a winged horse. It's the third holiest place in the Muslim world. For Jews, it ranks first.

The Temple Mount was the location of the holy of holies, the most sacred site in Judaism. The Rabbish have forbidden Jews from entering the Temple Mount since they might inadvertently set foot on the holy of holies. One Rabbi even called for a no-fly zone over the site...

Only the high priest is allowed to enter the holy of holies. Before Jews can return to the Temple Mount, an elaborate purification rite needs to be performed. According to the biblical book of numbers, it requires pure water and the ashes of a red heifer. The problem is that red heifers aren't so popular on this planet. There have been only nine since Abraham. To speed things up, American ranchers have been hard at work developing a breed to create the tenth heifer. In 2002, a ritually acceptable heifer was born in Israel, but in its second year, it developed a few white hairs around a scar. To be declared KOSHER, it needs to be perfectly red until the age of three, hooves and all. Once the red heifer is found, observant Jews will be able to return to the noble sanctuary, and the way will be cleared for the construction of the third temple and, as a bonus, the second coming of christ.

"Of course for that to happen, the Dome of the Rock would have to be knocked down or moved, which would probably set off World War 3. But since it's written in the Bible, we may as well get on with it. At least, that's what some hardline Jews and Christians who are just itching to bring on Judgement Day believe." (Jerusalem: Chronicles from the Holy City, Guy Delisle, 2012)

2.3. Mea She'arim

Jewish people are the chosen people. And Israel is the land of chosen people. That's how it's said in the Book of Deuteronomy (the fifth book of the Hebrew Bible, and of the Jewish Torah).

In Jerusalem there is an area which is called Mea She'arim. This area is especially for these "chosen people". It is one of the oldest areas in Jerusalem, it is populated mainly by Haredim Jews, also known as Orthodox Jews and sometimes referred to as "ultra-Orthodox". Which means that these people live by the rules of Torah, including both the written and oral law.

Haredim Jews have "occupied" Mea She'arim. They don't like when other people come there, even other Jewish people. They don't like to be photographed and they don't like to talk much. They have their own world there.

Haredim Jews are easy to recognise; men wear black suits (dresses) and wide-brimmed black hats, they walk their faces down because they are not allowed to look at women; it might cause them sexual feelings and it's forbidden by the laws of Torah. Haredi women wear long skirts, thick stockings and something to cover their head. Many wear wigs. And usually they have 5 to 7 kids with them.

Always when I go to Mea She'arim, I feel like I'm in a black and white movie. All you see is people wearing black and white clothes and Jerusalem stone buildings, which are always white. My friend asked them once why do they wear only black clothes, they didn't know the answer, they just said that this is how it's said. But I guess they just want to be modest.

For me Mea She'arim is the most interesting area in Jerusalem, even though I'm always afraid to go there, I find it fascinating how they don't really know what is happening outside the world of Mea She'arim. It actually feels like you are in a totally different world.

I was once walking there on a hot summer day, without covering my shoulders, and I was yelled at by women "Please cover yourself, I'm religious!", and ignored by men.

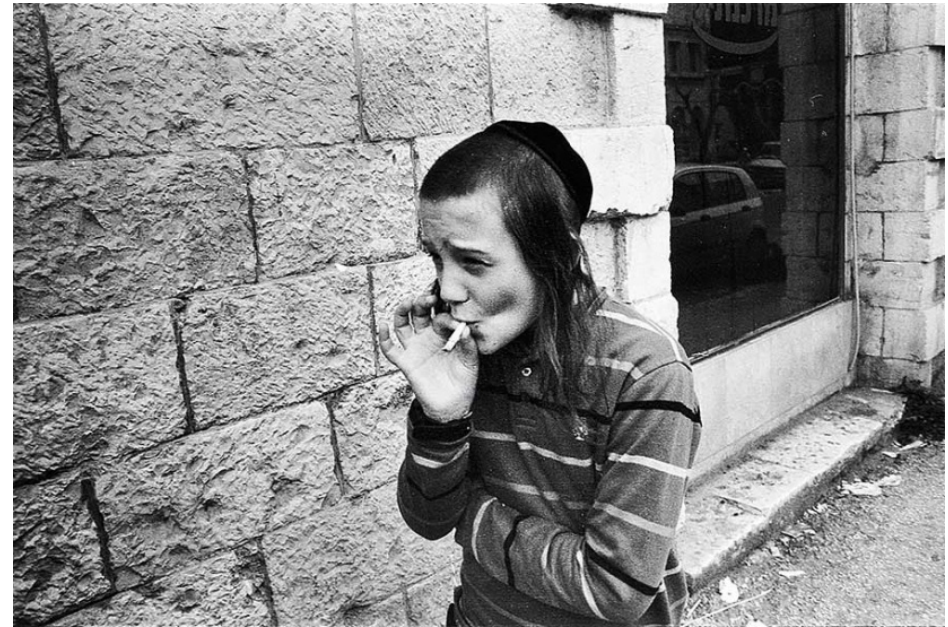
I was lucky not to be stoned.

It's better not to go to Mea She'arim during any Jewish holidays. On Shabbat they will throw stones at you and spit on you and yell at you (Shabes) if you do something which is against of the laws of Torah. For example driving a car or any other vehicle or using a telephone.

This is, obviously, the most religious area in Jerusalem, but I think that there is a "dark side". When Jewish people have their Purim holidays (Jewish Halloween), Mea She'arim goes crazy. Purim is a holiday of drinking and being crazy, but the things which are happening in Mea She'arim are extremely hard core. Young religious kids are getting drunk and smoking cigarettes. A bit older kids are getting totally drunk and trying to have sex, with anyone. After Purim, Mea She'arim is like a huge garbage bin. It is always dirty but after Purim it's chaos.

"... I went to Mea She'arim and I was thinking why don't they clean there. It's like a big garbage bin. People don't want to be photographed or seen. - ... They are all obsessed with marriage and babies. It's so exhausting. Mea She'arim is ~~not~~ exhausting."

(Notes from my diary, 17.12.2014, 23.2.2015)



Young ultra-Orthodox boy
smoking a cigarette in
Mea She'arim on Purim.
Photo by Hannes Schilling ♥

2.4. Lifta

Lifta was a Palestinian Arab village in the East Jerusalem. People of Lifta were driven out during the Arab-Jewish war in 1947/48. In 2012 it was planned to build luxury houses and a hotel, but it never happened. Village stays as a historic site. Lifta is the last remaining Arab village that was depopulated to have not been either completely destroyed or reinhabited.

Arab people don't go there anymore.

Nowadays Lifta is just an abandoned village and "park" for Jewish people and tourists. People play music, swim, hike and have barbecues there. Lifta is the only place in Jerusalem where people can go for a swim. There is a small pool, and water of this pool, is claimed to be holy, that's why religious Jews go there, to clean their souls and bodies.

If you read any guides or books about Jerusalem, Lifta is never mentioned anywhere. I find it very odd, because it's a big area with big history and beautiful nature opportunities for tourists to see.

As a woman, I don't recommend to go there alone. I once did it and couldn't almost get out of there anymore. It is such a nice and beautiful place but what is happening there is so ugly.

People who go there are mostly religious Jewish guys, they hope to find someone to have sex with. This happened to me too. I went there alone and spent about 2 hours there, and I was offered to have sex three times, one guy almost didn't let me go.

Arab people want to go back to Lifta, but it's unlikely. Government says they don't need to save the Palestinian heritage, that it's a state of Israel now and that Arab people will always remember it was Lifta, it doesn't need to be build as Arab village anymore. But some Israelis think that Lifta is a village of hope, where people can talk about their future and remember the past. Israelis can go there and see how Palestinians used to live and could understand what it is for Palestinians to loose their houses.

During my exchange period I had a course of a political photography. In this class main topic was the village of Lifta.

Of course most of the students were exchange students, but there were some local students as well, from the both sides. That kept this course interesting. One girl's family was from Lifta, and you could see how she wanted it to be given back to her family.



After taking this selfie,
this guy asked me if I ~~wanna~~
wanna have sex with him.

STUFF. And the rain just got worse and worse. We decided to go back home. On the way we met this fast guy from the Banksy shop. Amut. or something like that. He's so weird and he asked for a party too, but I'm not sure if I want to party with him. He's weird.

We are home. I started to make soup. Carrots. potatoes. lentils. Zucchini. Spices. Oil. It was delicious. Then we did nothing. I started to watch X-men. It sucked. Saara watched some documentaries. I drank a lot of tea. And ate. Saara took a shower. No hot water. Boiling water. MORE X-MEN.

Draw or write what is on your mind / how do u feel.

Jerusalem is somehow taking me. I'm not thinking about Shay so much anymore. I need to get a copy of this letter I wrote to him.

This land has thought me many things. Mentally and physically. I've experienced lots of things here. Maybe this is the place I belong to?

Oh yes, I'm not going to get the job. I'm not legal. But Neta is nice. Super. I will bring her the nicest stone from somewhere. 😊
ISRAEL IS ALWAYS BREAKING MY HEART!

3 Religion

3.1. My religion

"Religion is the part of the human make-up. It's also part of our cultural and intellectual history. Religion was our first attempt at literature, the texts, our first attempt at cosmology, making sense of where we are in the universe, our first attempt at health care, believing in faith healing, our first attempt at philosophy."

This is how atheist author and journalist Christopher Hitchens said in his book "God is not great: how religion poisons everything".

I was born in Russia.

Russia is kind of a religious country, as far as I know, with all the holidays, rituals, icons and believes.

My family is Orthodox Christian, but no one is really religious. Some of my family members believe in something, in karma.

I'm not religious.

In Russia, if you are not ultra-religious, you still respect the religion and believe in some level. It's a cultural thing. Every Russian should have an icon in their house. They believe that it will keep the house safe and away from bad luck.

My grandmother was like that, she believed in luck and karma. She even thought that she was cursed by a Gypsy woman.

Religion is something you grow up with. I think everyone should have a freedom to choose themselves what they believe in, and not to be forced by anyone, especially family members. I was lucky to have this freedom.

When I was a kid my grandmother was reading Bible to my sister and me. I never understood it, I was just listening it as a fairytale. I didn't know what to believe. I thought that there is someone who is playing with us, like kids play with toys. Sometimes I was even praying. I was mostly praying for my family and my health.

As a kid I had problems with my ears and no doctor could help me anymore. My mom told me that she knows a lady who can heal people, just like Jesus did. But it won't work if you don't believe in it. We went to see this lady, to try if she could help me. Before she did her thing/praying, she said to me "just believe in God". After two days my ear was like nothing has ever been wrong with it, I couldn't believe it. I guess when you are sick, you start to believe in things you never thought you believe in. I didn't become religious after that, I think I believed in spirits and luck back then. Few years after this ritual I was diagnosed with chronic ear infection...

When you live in Finland and you have Finnish citizenship, and you are Christian, you belong to the church. When you turn 15, you get a letter from the church where they suggest you to go to confirmation school. I never did it. When I turned 17, I resigned from the church. Since that I've been an atheist, officially.

I respect religions or at least I want to respect, sometimes it is just hard to understand everything. I find them very interesting, especially Judaism. I have to admit that I'm a bit afraid of religious places and people, especially after being so long in Jerusalem. After all, it is the holiest place on earth. It's holy for Jewish people, Christians and Muslims, and when you say that you have no religion, it can be challenging to communicate and be respected, or respect.

People might stop talking to you just because you are not religious, especially religious Jewish people. If you are not Jewish, your blood is "unclear". They can't even invite non-Jewish people for Shabbat dinner, because this non-Jew might touch the wine and after that the wine is not holy and not drinkable anymore.

It is true that religion is everywhere and you can't escape it. Religious people have their own believes which they try to tell to the others, non-religious people.

I was called stupid because I said that I'm not religious and I don't see how it would help or make me any happier if I was religious. A guy who said that to me is "half religious" Jewish guy. He said if you are smart you will convert to Judaism, at the same time I was telling him that it's Shabbat, and you are riding your bike and claim to be religious... If religious people can't follow all the rules they have, how hard it must be to people who are trying to convert. As long as no one is trying to convert me to any religion, I respect it and I'm interested to hear about it.

Religion is also connected to relationships and love. Two different religion can't get married, or can, but will be hated forever. If you are not religious, in Israel, you are not allowed to get married there, you need to go somewhere else to get married.

Religion is destroying family relations. If you are homosexual, if you are marrying a wrong religion, if you are divorcing, if you decide not to be religious anymore, etc... You will be hated by your own family members, by your own blood. The people who probably love you the most are willing to forget and hate you, just because you are free to do your own decisions.

Religion takes people with itself.

You can also have a break from religion.

For example army is a big reason for people to have a break from their believes. When religious Jewish person (not Haredim Jews) goes to army, s/he is experiencing new things and forgets about her/his believes. When the army ends, they go back to their believes. Of course this is not happening to everybody. I find this fact interesting, do they still think that they are "pure" people after abandoning something big like their religion and believes.

3.2. Judaism

I heard that my family might be Jewish.

Of all the religions, Judaism interests me the most, because this is something I will never understand. It is totally different from what I'm used to hear about religions.

75,5% of people in Israel/Palestine are Jewish.

Haredim Jews, who are the ultimate religious Jews, study Torah every day. While studying Torah they don't have time for any other studies, for example they know just basics of mathematics and biology and they don't know anything about art. I was asking religious people, who I met, if they know Frida Kahlo or Andy Warhol (which I think are artists to know), and they didn't know, they have never heard about them. They are so busy with the Torah that they don't even work, and they are exempt from the military service. They wear modest clothes, have their own language (Yiddish) and eat kosher food. AND they wait for messiah to come...

Religious Jewish people are easy to recognise. Men usually wear black long "dress" suits and some kind of a big hat, depends on which kinda of a Jew you are.

Kippah is a small cap. They believe that wearing this cap will keep them closer to god. You are not allowed to go to the Wailing Wall without wearing a kippah, even if you are not Jewish, you need to wear kippah to enter to the Wailing Wall. Or you can't go to a synagogue without wearing a kippah. Also for praying kippah is required. Other big hats are just to recognise from which descent are you. Hairstyle is also recognisable; payots, also known as side-locks.

Women cover themselves from wrist to ankle, and they never wear pants, only skirts, they also hide their hair with a scarf, or sometimes a wig. Wigs are worn only by the married women. It's a biblical law.

Food is always kosher. It means, that the meat and dairy dishes are not served in the same establishment, and that the restaurant is closed on Shabbat. Kosher establishments do not serve pork or shellfish, and meat must be slaughtered in a specific way. Kosher restaurants may not mix meat and dairy products. There are also stricter versions of kosher; for example some restau-rants can have only religious Jews preparing the food.

So if you are vegetarian or vegan, Jerusalem is a good place to get good food.

In Judaism it is also very important to get married on time and have children, as many as possible. I was invited for a Shabbat dinner, and I heard the weirdest rule of Judaism; If you are divorced woman, you cannot marry a guy whose last name is Cohen, because of the Jewish temple and the priest there. Woman who told me this, was divorced and she met a guy whose last name was Cohen, she couldn't continue seeing him...

Without their strictness, they believe, Judaism would eventually disappear.

I met a guy who was religious. He lived in Mea She'arim with his wife and seven children. He studied Torah and didn't work. After 17 years he got enough and all this, religion and believes. He is still married and lives with his wife, who is religious. He is not welcome to Mea She'arim, and he never wants to go back to the life he had, he said that he waisted 17 years of his life. I asked him how did he decide to become religious. He said he had Jerusalem syndrome, which means that a person who has this thinks s/he is a messiah. He was studying film making in Jerusalem and then it just happened, something inside him happened. He also said that if he was studying in Tel Aviv, nothing of this would have never happened.

When Jewish people have their holidays, they take them very seriously and celebrate them with joy and happiness. Even Shabbat which comes every week. Holiness and modesty are the main things in Judaism.

Shabbat.

Jewish day of rest and seventh day of week. It's an important day for religious Jewish people. During Shabbat everything is closed and the city looks like a ghost town.

On Shabbat it is forbidden to write, erase, tear (toilet paper for example), do any kind of work or business, drive any vehicles, shop, use telephone, use any kind of electronic device, cook, bake, make a fire, take care of garden, do laundry and so on, list just continues...

People who keep Shabbat prepare everything before Shabbat starts; make the dinner (kosher), light the candles, tear toilet paper, etc.

They even have Shabbat elevators and Shabbat lamps...

Usually after Shabbat dinner, married couple should have sex to show that they care about each other, and if either partner refuses to participate, that person is considered rebellious and the other spouse can sue for divorce. That's why they have so many kids. Average amount of kids in one religious Jewish family is five to ten.

According to halakha (Jewish law), Shabbat starts few minutes before the sunset on Friday evening and ends on Saturday evening when the three first stars appear in the sky.

I don't understand what could happen if you, for example, tear some toilet paper on Shabbat.

It is not such a big job.

I was once walking on the street with my friend on Friday evening, and suddenly we saw a group of girls who were sitting on a bench and one of them couldn't breathe. I asked if she is ok, they said yes, and we continued our walking. After some minutes one of the girls ran to us and asked if we could call the ambulance, I was thinking why don't they do it themselves, but because it was Shabbat they were not allowed to use telephones...

So Shabbat goes over peoples lives?

"...Took a bus to Jerusalem. Very Jewish lady sat next to me. She was sweet but so full of hate against Arab people. This makes me sad because she said that it doesn't matter who you are, as long as you are a good person. But it's not true. Jewish people care about their religion too much. She was saying that this is their land and they won't give up. That's why there is war."

(Note from my diary 30.1.2015)

Religious Jewish guy saw me doing this picture and said "What are you doing? Jew is not a nazi!"



3.3. Islam

If there is something I learned, while being in Jerusalem, it is that they don't care about the rights of women there. Women are basically nothing. In some Arab countries women are not even allowed to drive a car.

I was walking with a friend of mine, who happened to be a guy, and I was wearing shorts, on a way we met few Muslim guys, after a while they came to my friend and said to him if I could put some pants on.

This religion arouses some kind of hatred or madness in me. Maybe it is because I am a woman and I believe in freedom and I want everyone to be treated equally. One of this men could have come and said to me, and not my friend. I'm a human too.

"Men are the maintainers of women because Allah made some of them to excel others and because they spend out of their property; the good women are therefore obedient, guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded; and (as to) those on whose part you fear desertion (committing a religious sin), admonish them, and leave them alone in the sleeping-places and beat them; then if they obey you, do not seek a way against them; surely Allah is High, Great." - (Qur'an, 4:34)

Women in Islam are always below men. Man is the ruler and woman is ruled. Women are not allowed to do almost anything. They are allowed to work only if it is not affection of a role as a mother and a wife and as long as it is not violating Islamic law (for example, serving alcohol).

Women are not allowed to have sexual intercourse if she is not married, it is a religious crime, while some men can be married to four different wives at the same time. Under Islamic law, marriage is not a status, it is a contract, that requires a woman's consent. Married woman needs to respect her husband and think of him as he was her god. Marriages are usually arranged. Marriage between Muslim and non-Muslim is not an opportunity.

Women are not allowed to travel alone, if the journey takes longer than three days.

Dress code is to be modest, like in Judaism. Covering from head to toe, that no man can see any part of a body that can cause a sexual need. Head cover is required almost in every Arab country.

Muslims eat and drink halal. The most common example of non-halal food is pork, just like in Judaism. Pig is considered to be filthy. Muslims also don't drink alcohol. Bread is holy and it's a sin to throw it away. Bread is holy in almost every religion.

Of course in Jerusalem you can see and feel only slight of all this. In Israel/Palestine 20,2% are Muslims. Islam is the second largest religion in the world.

All the Muslims I met and know are very openminded and friendly. They like to give you things and invite you for a dinner or a cup of tea. That is why it is sad to see how they are treated in Jerusalem.

Israelis (Jews) think they can treat Muslims like they want. I many times saw Muslim people walking by the street and Israeli soldiers stopping them, without any reason, and doing full body search. If you are Muslim, it does not automatically mean you are a terrorist. Just like not every German is a nazi.

3.4. Christianity

Christianity is basically about Jesus and the Holy Trinity; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is my favorite religious character. He has the greatest story. Being born immaculately to a Jewish mom, after that being hated by Jewish people, crucifixion and rising from the dead. How can this even be possible?

Jesus died because of our sins, and then rose again from the dead, by the power of his Father, God. God raised him from the dead. This is the reason to celebrate Easter. Jesus is the reason to celebrate almost every holiday.

This is what makes me somehow mad. You are "thought" to have all these holidays, like Easter and Christmas. Oh, Christmas, the holiday of presents, because it was Jesus' birthday. As a kid you love Christmas, and of course you are waiting for it every year, you are used to it. Even if you are not religious.

This is the religion I should know the most about, since I was studying this at school. But somehow, I don't, maybe because I am bitter that this was something that was "forced" to me.

Teachers telling you stories about God creating the world, people and animals, forcing you to read Bible (text you can't even see to read), going to church and making you believe in all this. While, at the same time you are studying the Big Bang theory and dinosaurs.

Of course this is school and you should study as much as you can, but isn't this something which makes you confused, and makes you question what is the truth?

If you want to believe in all that, you should study it from your own will and not be forced to do at school.

When I was in secondary school and high school, I wasn't interested in hearing all these stories from Bible; Jesus and God. I thought they are silly and I was mad that we needed to study it.

Of course now, I understand that I should have listened better on my religion classes.

"Study what you hate". This is how Nazis say. I guess I could say the same way about my relation to religion, except that I don't hate, I just don't believe.

I remember, I was in a Christmas play where I was playing Virgin Mary, I was holding baby Jesus in my hands, I was holding him upside down. And I remember when I didn't want to go to the church just because it was a tradition to go to church when new semester at school starts or when it's Christmas or when you are graduating. If you didn't do it, you got notes from teachers. This is again something you should have the right to decide yourself, whether or not to do it, and not to be forced or taught.

In Jerusalem, every year on Great Sunday, Christians set The Holy Fire at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. This church, where Jesus walked through Via Dolorosa, is the place where he was buried. This church is the holy place for Christians in Jerusalem (4,3% are Christians in Israel/Palestine), and for all the tourists who go there just to cry and leave gifts and pray and kiss the grave.

For me it's weird that in Jerusalem there are three different graves of Jesus. Which one is the real one. Was Jesus actually buried or dead or real?

Jerusalem has its own, alive, Jesus. His name is Jako. He lives just like Jesus did; with no shoes, no cellphone, no money, no home... Just a white robe, bible and the Holy Spirit. People all over the world know him. They come to Jerusalem just to see him and be blessed by him.

During Easter, Jerusalem is very holy, because it is Pesach (Passover) at the same time. Everything is closed and there is no bread anywhere. And people just go crazy.

Last Easter I was in Jerusalem and that time Pope was visiting this holy city. I saw where he landed his helicopter. But I never saw him. Jerusalem went crazy. Streets were closed and public transportations were delayed.

The Holy Man is in town.



"Statue" from the Garden Tomb.
(one of Jesus' graves)

4 Me

4.1. How I became me

I started to make collages when I got tired of photography. I thought that everything was already done, and I felt like doing something different and new to me. The fact that I was doing something new and interesting kept me going and believing in art, because I was doing something new for me, and this is what has never been done before.

When I began my studies at Lahti Institute of Design (2011), my major was, and still is, photography, but already then I felt that photography is more than just a picture on a paper or screen. Photography can be more, it can be combined with so many things; video, collage, installation and so on.

During my first year I was still mostly taking photographs, but also in photography, I was always trying to show my feelings and being more "artistic". Before studying in Lahti I was severely depressed, and recovering from it while studying. I always felt like I need to deal with this topic, and also my therapist said that it can help me if I deal with it through my art. And most of the time when I do something, I try to be honest, honest to myself and express my feelings, deal with myself, my thoughts or my life. And I always do it for myself.

So, I started with self-portraits. I felt like this is a good way to deal with my problems, and it helped me.

Little by little I was getting over my depression and I could concentrate on something else than just myself. I didn't need to be so serious. I started to deal with my family members and make fun of myself.

I realized that photography is not enough for me anymore, so I started to combine different methods. I found collage art. Collage art became like an obsession to me. I didn't want to take any photographs anymore. Idea of using camera and taking photos was somehow strange to me.

I started my collage "career" with minimalistic things, for example, changing peoples heads or drawing over someones eyes or adding extra ears to someone. I felt that this is the easiest way for me to express myself. I think I have strong message in all my works but of course everyone sees everything differently, and I like it. Everyone can read my art, and any others art as they wish.

I started to deal with things like: religion, politics, sexuality, love, and other things that are somehow involved in my everyday life.

In the future want to keep my voice of freedom, and myself, in the art I make.

- I want to build a selfie-installation-exhibition.
- I want to continue with political issues and collage art.
- I want to continue with humor.
- I want to confuse people.
- With just photographs I can't do all the things I want to.



One of my first collages, 2010

My self-portraits back then



and

now



"You know how I know that you are not from here...? Because of your blue eyes."



Except that my ~~own~~ eyes are not blue...

4.2. Anti-art + political art + collage art + kitsch

I feel that my art is a mix of all these genres. Actually all these genres are just parts of Dadaism.

Dadaism was found in the early 20th century, when Marcel Duchamp exhibited ready-made art; his Fountain, a urinal signed with the pseudonym "R. Mutt". It shocked the art world in 1917. Afterwards it was questioned if art is real.

Anti-art.

Genre which basically questions art.

Anti-art works may voice a question as the whether "art" really exists or not.

Ready-made art, found art, collage art... All this is anti-art. Using someone else's belongings and making it yours. Nothing is really real. This is anti-art. I think that anti-art and collage art go hand in hand. When you make a collage, it is already anti-art.



Example of anti-art.
Duchamp's Fountain.

I find most of my material in the internet or magazines or I use old family photos, which someone already made before me. In the beginning I was thinking that I'm doing wrong and I am not allowed to do it, but in the end I thought that who really knows if it's mine or not, if I anyway change it. It is just reproducing.

The most used piece of art for anti-art is Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa". There are thousands of different variations of this painting.

Mona Lisa is kind of a mass product.

Speaking of mass production; Kitsch is a low-brow style of mass-produced art or design using popular or cultural icons. Kitsch generally includes unsubstantial or gaudy works or decoration, or works that are calculated to have popular appeal.

In my case it is Jesus. I like to collect different kind of Jesuses; candles, 3D-pictures, statues, postcards, etc... And of course I'm making different collage variations of him.

Kitschy things are considered to be ugly and tasteless, but it is a matter of taste. The 90's was kitschy.

The concept of kitsch is applied to artwork that was a response to the 19th-century art with aesthetics that convey exaggerated sentimentality and melodrama. Hence, kitsch art is closely associated with sentimental art. Kitsch is also related to the concept of camp (style of doing or wearing silly things on purpose), because of its humorous, ironic nature. Especially with my Jesus art I try to keep this kitschiness, to not make it too serious.

I like how ridiculous kitsch is.



Different variations of Mona Lisa

It is funny to notice that I'm doing political art. I don't usually have much to say (I'm more of a listener) and I've never been interested in political things. I guess somewhere deep inside I'm concerned about our world and I want to change it. Maybe this is the reason I'm doing political art, because I want our world to be better and not so serious place to live. Without humor it is hard to deal with all the things that are happening in this world. People need to be taken out from their caves and see that this world is not so serious. Of course there is always a risk of hurting someone, but again, everyone has the right for his own opinion.

Dictators, historical leaders. This topic was probably the first political thing I started to work with. This was already before I started to study in Lahti.

I wanted to make fun of the people who somehow changed our world, but not in good way. I wanted to make them silly and not so sad to look at.

My intentions are never to hurt anyone. I just want people to see and think. My intentions are just to show how I feel.

Just like the poster of pink Hitler, by Italian clothing shop. In this poster Hitler is wearing a pink suite, make up, and instead of swastika there is a heart. Slogan for this poster was: "Change your style. Don't follow your leader". Of course this caused fury and posters were called to be taken down.

"The use of an image of a person responsible for the worst chapters of the last century is offensive to our country's constitutional principles and to the sensitivities of citizens." A city councillor Rosario Filoramo said. (www.telegraph.co.uk/news, Nick Squires, May 20th, 2010).

That is a perfect example of how I want to affect. I want people to think and not live in the past.

People are living in past and attacking the future with terror (take Charlie Hebdo, for example). People are not ready to face the fact that the world is moving on, and art with it.

But are we allowed to make fun of people?

Are we allowed to make fun of holy things?

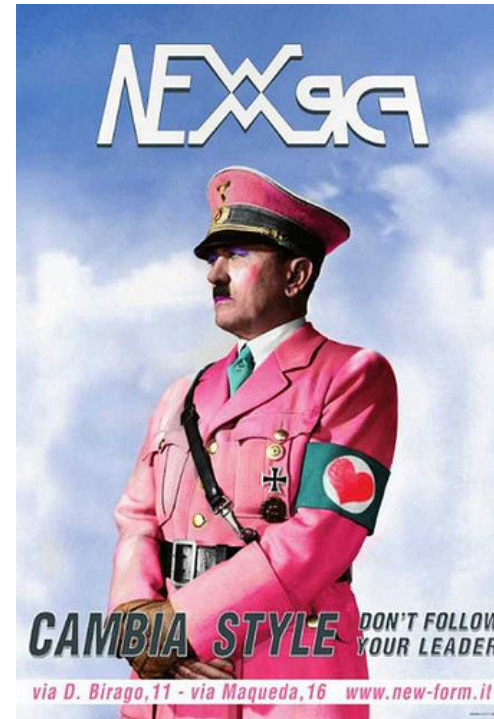
We all have our freedom of speech and art is the best way to express ourselves.

What is holy for someone, is not holy for everyone.

I'm sure when these "important" people step in to the power, so to speak, they know what is waiting for them, they know that people will make "fun" of them, especially nowadays, with all modern programs, such as Photoshop and After Effects.

So after all this, I could say that I am a political artist, most of the time. My works for this project are almost all, somehow, political or protesting.

I'm not making fun of just one special group of people or religion, I'm doing it equally.



Poster of pink Hitler, 2010



Different covers of Charlie Hebdo magazine

Situation which is going on in the Middle East is out of control, and I didn't want to work on this conflict, but you can't avoid it. I'm trying to work with it (conflict) differently and not being so serious and sad, I want to make it silly, in a way. Only after being there, you can really understand how it is like.

I made a collage of Benjamin Netanyahu (Prime Minister of Israel) sliced in half. I named it Slice me nice (not kosher, not halal). With this piece of work I want to say that Mr. Netanyahu doesn't actually care about either side, not Palestine nor Israel.

He always says that he will make Israel more secure place to live. "Security, security, security". Nothing is really changing. Israel has been a mess since 1948. All the money goes to the army, and army is not securing anything, it is just another reason to start a war.



Slice me nice (not kosher, not halal)

5 Me and my artists

There are too many artist I like. This time I chose to tell about the ones who touched me somehow.

I like that feeling when I find some new interesting artists. I'm looking at their works and have new ideas.

Other artist inspire me and of course I'm influenced by them. Like I already said; everything is already done.

5.1. Ion Bărlădeanu

Ion Barladeanu was the first real inspiration for me to make collages. Barladeanu is Romanian (ex-homeless) artist. He was found by the film maker Alexander Nanau. Nanau made a documentary film about Ion B. "The world according to Ion B".

I admire how this guy gives all his life to art. He is homeless, and according to his words, he has no reason to live, the only thing that keeps him alive is his art.

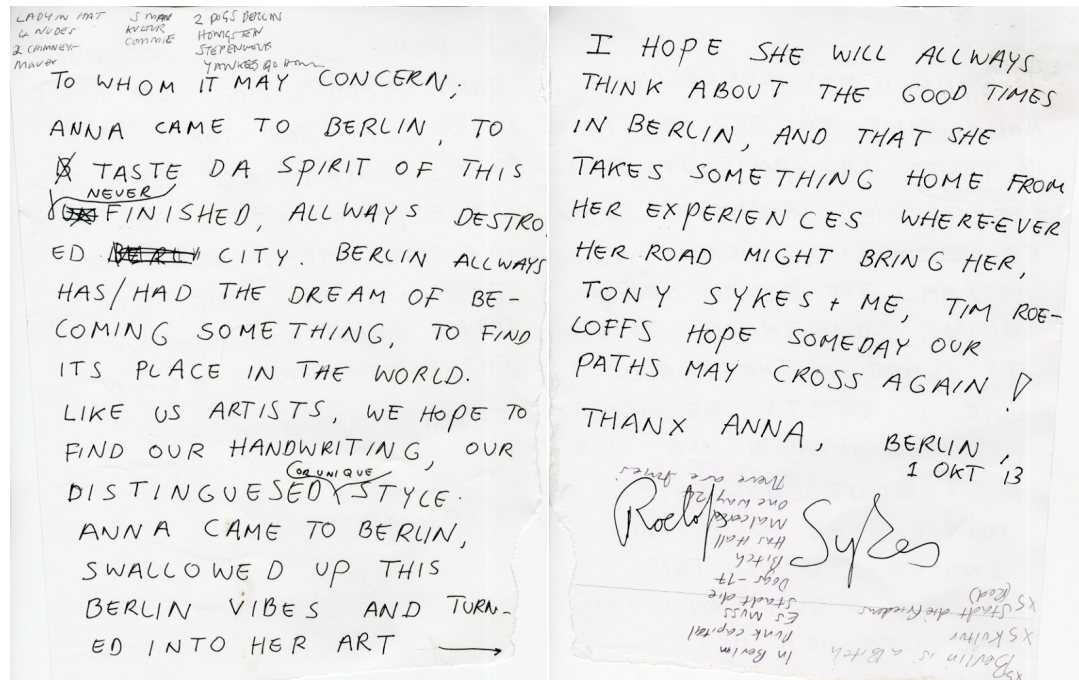
He is diving dumpsters to find the material to work with.

He is working with topics such as, his country (Romania), and politics together. As a homeless guy he has lots to say about these things. When I was homeless in Jerusalem (only for 3,5 months) I realized how hard it is. I've always thought being homeless would be fun and easy somehow, as long as you have a place to sleep, it is ok, but when you don't, it is not fun at all. I couldn't concentrate on almost anything, because I was just thinking where can I sleep tonight. I admire this guy for being so strong. Even when life throws shit on you, you still continue and make such a beautiful art. If I will ever again be homeless, I will think of Ion Barladeanu.



Collage of Ion Bărlădeanu

5.2. Tim Roeloffs



(My "certificate" from Tim)

Tim Roeloffs is a collage artist who lives in Berlin. In his art, he focuses on Berlin. He moved to Berlin from Holland, when he was something about 20 years old. That time, Berlin was an opportunity for young artists to become something big. He has always loved Berlin. I did my internship with him, and for the first time I saw how other people make collages. He makes all of them by hand, not using photoshop or computer. I admire him for that. Not so many collage artist use only glue and paper anymore. His works are almost always bigger than A3 and he also makes 3D-collages.

Always when I look at Tim's works, I remember why I started to do collages. His works always remind of original style of collage art. Tim made me realize how important it is to be yourself and not care too much about what others think or say, you need to be honest and open, express yourself.



This is one of my favorite works from Tim.

After my internship with Tim I became stronger and I was more open to express my feelings. I realized what I am as an artist. Tim is the artist who inspired me to write diaries and combine them to my art. He showed me his workroom, which was full of old magazines and his old diaries. He said he has kept diaries over 20 years. He is doing art for the love of it, and not for the money. That is how it should be.

WE ARE THE ART UNIVERSITY OF REAL-LIFE !

5.3. Hannah Höch

I remember how I got to know Hannah Höch's art. A teacher of mine came to me with a book, which was full of Hannah Höch's collages, immediately, I fell in love with them.

After that I had my small Hannah Höch-period.

She was German Dada artist, and she was one of the originators of photomontage. There are not so many women artists who do this kind of political art, or at least not that time when Hannah Höch was alive. And what keeps it interesting is that her art works look like they were made today, but actually they are over 80 years old.

She was one of the most important collage artists in the 20's. She stood her ground as a woman in art world which was dominated by men. She made art that criticised society. With her art, she wanted people to learn how to look at the world when it's rebellious, exciting and humorous.

She always had a rebellious attitude towards art, but she didn't want to question just political issues, such as military or other social ills, she also wanted people to question beauty; how do we think about people being beautiful or what do we feel about genders. She wanted to make people aware of different standards of beauty.

I can relate to this, I have always wanted to criticise the standard of beauty.

I made a series where I was dealing with beauty, and how is it affected in our society nowadays; girls need to be skinny with big boobs (because that's what they think that men want), fat people are treated badly and men need to be muscular and strong.

There actually are no beautiful or ugly people.

And this is what I think that Hannah Höch was also trying to tell with her works.



Hannah Höch's political collage



My beauty-series



Hannah Höch's vision ^{of} ~~about~~ beauty

5.4. Philippe Jusforgues

This collage artist has influence on my art the most. I think he is clever and smart, and he makes art funny. He is a mastermind.

Always when I start to hate art, I look at his works, and stop hating.

I'm bitter that he never answered to my email. So this is a love-hate-relationship.

Philippe Jusforgues is French artist who started his career by drawing and painting which you can see, he is still using these methods in his collages.

In his collages he is dealing with old photos, mostly family photos. He is changing the life. He is making them funnier and uglier at the same time. Without even doing much.

I got inspired from this pic to make ~~my~~ this one



Philippe Jusforgues



"One moving day I found a suitcase full of family pictures. Most of them were copies and I could use them without destroying the familial inheritance... Before that, I used to draw or paint, and the family albums were part of my inspiration, but this time I could use these images directly. I started to change faces and all the images were overwhelming... My characters became real and the range of emotions became larger.

Collage wasn't part of my culture and that's why I liked it. I felt more free. I became addicted with the rapidity of execution and possibility of surprise. The realism of the photography and the lightness of the drawing mixed together... I consider my images like drawings with flesh and blood. A poetic surgery..."

(<http://rojoprojects.co/Philippe-Jusforgues>)

I found Philippe Jusforgues after I started to work with my old family photos. After finding Philippe I got more inspired and I was full of new ideas.

I am even a bit afraid that I'm taking too many ideas from him.

Philippe Jusforgues



After seeing Philippe's family collages, I tried new ~~the~~ technique.

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I have always wanted to make a thank you speech.
Now I have a reason for it.

First of all I want to thank all the people I met and talked to in Israel/Palestine.

Special thanks to *Meyer*, who told me so many interesting things about Judaism.

Moti, who was the best roommate ever.

Asif, Haim, Itzik.

Then I want to thank my classmates, my friends, and teachers.

Special thanks to *Laura*, who has been the best train friend and great support.

Marko, who is always pushing me forward.

Daria, who has been there with me since the beginning of this project. She made me realize that I don't need to be something I'm not.

Leka.

And of course I want to thank my *dear mother*, who is always there for me. And my *dear sister*, without her I would be so lost.

Special special thanks to

Davide, Ludovica, Jofia, Marco, Andrea, Giulia, Hans, Anton, Johannes, Hannes, Rebecca, Asif, Haim, Itzik, Noam, Omri, Shay, Adam and Itzik P.

Thank you,
I love you all!

P.S. Don't be sad if I didn't mention your name, you know you are on my mind, always.

