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Bezalel Academy of Arts & Design, Jerusalem, Israel
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My experience at Bezalel Academy of Art and Design

I decided to choose Jerusalem as a city and Bezalel as a university because I somehow felt an incredible attraction to the culture, to the way of leaving and to the pragmatism they adopt in everything they do.

I arrived there without expectations and very excited for the new experience.

I landed on the 10th of February in Tel Aviv and was hosted for a couple of days by a friend of mine that I met in Italy. I went around Tel Aviv but since he was working I had to discover the city on my own and getting lost without knowing the language can be quite scary. Nevertheless almost everyone speaks fluently english but I still wished to have a local person who showed me around.

I left the bags in Tel Aviv and went with a small backpack to Jerusalem for the open day. Politecnico had not given me even a hint of an idea of the courses I could do there and no study plan nor anything else was given to me. The nice exchange students coordinator, Sarit Morat, introduced us to the university, the labs, the campus life, the courses, the language courses for those who wanted to learn Hebrew and so on. But the sad result was that the first day I arrived, 90% of the courses I wanted to take and fell in love with were already full! The local students of the university had of course the priority on us but the point is that everyone else (exchange students included) knew about the courses or had at least read about the several options. In the end I had to pick randomly some courses, which, later on, I changed several times because not satisfied. If you try to ask the students how to get inside a course they would tell you to just insist with the professor.

Besides this unlucky adventure, for which I have to say Politecnico is totally responsible for (why do you collect all this papers before, during and after the exchange if at the end the service we get is not professional at all?) I loved the university for the way the teachers relate to students and for the intimacy and respect that is generated between the two parts.

I went to pick up my language in Tel Aviv and moved to another local friend of mine I met last year in Italy, who hosted me for almost two weeks in Jerusalem. The house

search has been really tough on one hand because the houses I was visiting were horrible, on the other hand because they were also really expensive! I decided to search together with other three Italian friends because I thought it would be easier but it wasn't either. So in the end we called a real estate agency and we took a house in a beautiful area called Rehavia. The total price was a bit more than 2000 euro per month, agency fees and electricity excluded. It sounds like a lot but considering the fact that the not really nice university dorms (40min-1h distance from the city center with public transportation) asked for 550 euro a month, our price was not so bad. The area of Rehavia is 20-30min walk away from the city center but very nice and quiet.

In the end I chose the courses "Social Change", "Research Design" which belong to the Master in Industrial Design and the course "Drawing" which belonged to Fine Arts department. The first two courses, which I recommend, took place in a different department located in Rehavia, called Hansen. It's a beautiful building that had been previously used as hospital to cure infective diseases. "Research Design" was a course in Hebrew language. I tried to start learning the language but it was really really hard so I dropped. Nevertheless I decided to follow the course and the students were sometimes helpful by translating me the things the teacher was saying.

The course of drawing was very interesting although sometimes lesson was too slow and boring. This last took place in the general building of Bezalel, located in Mount Scopus, very far and difficult to reach from the city center.

The bus ticket is quite expensive so I suggest do to a 6 month public transportation card, even though you'll spend at least 3 days to do it because you have to fill a lot of papers in different places in Jerusalem.

I've spent some time traveling but not as much as I wanted since the homework and results the teacher expect is at least 3 times more than in Politecnico. I never complained because I think that if you spend time doing things with your hands, with your creativity, without limits and rules like in Bezalel, you slowly acknowledge the pleasure of working hard and gaining satisfaction from it.

Computers and digital presentations were forbidden, almost even for research. We were invited to 'live', to meet incredible people, to open up, to explore ourselves and to experience, in order to get what we wanted and needed. In my opinion this is the best learning I got and I felt it's part of their culture. There is no hierarchy in class between teachers and students, the teacher was learning from us as we were learning from him. No authority, no actual rules brought me in some way to respect the teacher in a way I never did before. We were friends and colleagues and we hugged and kissed each other before the class started. More than one time me, as everyone else, got emotional and deep and opened up as at a psychologist.

I cannot really explain how and why but this is what you get in that university: you can be yourself, whoever you are. It doesn't matter what you did before that moment, nor what you will do tomorrow; it doesn't matter if you are an architect, a designer, an economist, a lawyer or a simple shoe cleaner. We were what we were in that exact moment, because you never know if you'll be alive tomorrow. This is the truth.

To the students who read this because they are thinking to go to Bezalel: if you are looking for the best place to study, work, learn new methods, do something that you

can be proud of on your portfolio, get high grades etc. this isn't the right place for you. What you will bring home with you instead is a change of your mindset and soul, deep inside. You will experience an introspective journey where you'll have to face yourself and your defects and express all what's hidden inside of you in a creative way without anyone judging. Get lost.

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Autorizzo al trattamento dei miei dati personali ai sensi del Decreto Legislativo n. 196/03 da parte del Politecnico di Milano,
Firma