

# YOU ARE THERE

Laurie Bellet

At Oakland Hebrew Day School, learning about Israel is interwoven throughout the curriculum. In the art Studio, experiences across the grade levels are designed to engage the artist passionately with the land, history, and culture of Israel. At OHDS, the art experiences are an intrinsic part of multifaceted, sequential, strategic curriculum, but each element of art learning can also stand alone as an effective way to connect students with other lands and cultures.

## Landscapes

At the middle-school level, students eagerly undertake Israeli landscapes. To accomplish their work, students research books in our studio library to find a picture that they would like to render. To complete their landscapes, I require students to use rulers to assure proper proportions and perspective (to the delight of the math teachers). Most students choose to complete these works with paints (oils, watercolors, or acrylics), but some opt for pastels or colored pencils. When the work is complete, students write artist statements, which include the reasons for selecting a particular scene, general information about the region, and the challenges encountered while creating the work.

## Native Plants or Animals

In the early elementary grades, students do similar work, but instead of landscapes, they select photos of plants or animals in Israel. For this experience, students relish pouring through pictorial flash cards and



selecting the one with which they feel a connection. As in middle school, younger students also complete the learning experience with an artist statement.

## Ethnic Art

In grade five, students participate in a rigorous program of culture study, focusing on various ethnic communities within Israel. To augment their classroom studies, students partici-

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pate in five different craft experiences encompassing Iraqi art, Eastern European art, Moroccan art, Ethiopian art, and Yemenite art. The craft component is one part of a comprehensive curriculum that includes music, dance, and cooking

to provide students with an immersive connection with each culture. The art experiences are varied and include metal tooling, beading, paper cutting,

henna design, and textile design. I try to make the art experience as authentic as possible

## Israeli Artists

Throughout all grades, students study the works of Israeli artists who have based their art on national and personal narratives, giving students a different window into the country's history. Students compare the artists' works with their learning in other subject areas to gain deeper insight to the country and its citizens. When artists in grade eight study Israeli artist Theo Tobiassé, they mix their paints with sand collected in Israel to create Tobiassé's signature "terragraphs."

## Collaborative Work

To deepen personal connections, students complete works inspired by the master artists that they study. We also utilize master artist works or photographs as a basis for our collaborative pieces. For years after a collaborative piece is completed, students enjoy finding their own contribution to the group piece. Generally, I ask each student to sign the piece he or she worked on, further investing the student in the learning experience.

## Doll Making

Some of the most passionate learning experiences come through doll making. Dressing dolls requires students to study costume, history, and lifestyle in order to craft textiles that accurately and respectfully depict a country's population groups. At the simplest level, young students create their dolls from tagboard shapes

These early doll-making and fashion experiences set the stage for older students, who make and dress dolls created from bowling pins or wire hanger and newspaper armatures. The bond between students and their dolls is intensely personal and students demonstrate a deep understanding of their subject matter.



At OHDS, we have learned that effective learning about "place" must include quality art experiences. When students participate in art learning that they perceive as significant and sophisticated, they transfer that respect to the core subject matter and carry a depth of knowledge and emotional connection for years after their classroom and studio studies.

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## NATIONAL STANDARD

Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories.

## WEB LINK

[www.ohds.org/art.php](http://www.ohds.org/art.php)