End of Year Summary Report 2019

This year, through the coordinated efforts of its three operational centers (the Cinematheque Program for the General Public, the Jerusalem Film Festival, and the Israeli Film Archive), the Jerusalem Film Center strove to act as its founders envisioned it. It functioned as a leading cultural center in its field and advanced cinematic excellence alongside the values of democracy, pluralism, and peace..

2019 abounded with cinematic events for the general public attended by [insert number here] visitors. The education department organized [insert number here] events in which more than 10,000 K-12 students from East and West Jerusalem participated. Hundreds of partnerships with cultural and academic institutions, social institutions and non-profit organizations, embassies and cultural institutes served as the basis for a rich cinematic program offered to the general public by the Cinematheque. Our annual schedule included more than 1,200 events that supplemented film screenings with lectures, filmmaker talks, artistic performances, and other means. The Cinematheque placed special emphasis on developing and advancing activities directed toward the Arabic-speaking population, as well as the creation of quality youth programming scheduled at times appropriate for them.

A record number of events took place at this year’s Jerusalem Film Festival with more than 350 different events attended by 70,000 visitors (70% of visitors were not Jerusalem residents and came to the festival from other areas of Israel and the world).

The festival opened with a gala affair in the Sultan’s Pool attended by the President of the State of Israel, hundreds of invited guests from the Israeli and international filmmaking communities, and a capacity crowd of nearly 5000 spectators. Director Bong Joon-Ho’s film “Parasite,” which won the Palme d’Or at the most recent Cannes Film Festival and is a leading candidate in the American Academy’s Oscar award competition, served as the festival’s opening film. One of the festival’s highlights was an event interweaving a performance of the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra with an outdoor screening of the classic film “Back to the Future.” Cinema lovers of all ages and from all the city’s communities numbered among the nearly 2000 spectators who watched the film on a giant screen. For the third year running, within the framework of the JFF on the Go project, we employed a mobile outdoor cinema to provide free screenings of some of the festival’s best films in neighborhoods on the fringes of East and West Jerusalem. Together with screenings of more than 200 films from more than 60 different countries, a number of conferences and professional events took place at the festival (the Pitchpoint competition, a documentary film conference, a film festival organizers conference, and meetings that brought film directors and composers togethers). They were intended to advance Israel film and Israeli filmmakers and develop international ties. This year the festival’s 10 prize competitions awarded approximately one million shekels in prizes.

The digital archive project’s ongoing activities are proceeding vigorously and have included: further solidification of necessary infrastructure and establishment of support systems for digitation, preservation, and access; digitation of legacy collections, some of which contain rare materials, and feature films pivotal to Israeli cinema’s development with a combined running time totaling approximately 500 hours; the signing of agreements with rights holders that will enable free public access to additional films with total running time in excess of 500 hours (among the collections to which public access has been secured this year through the signing of rights agreements are the Spielberg collection, the David Avidan collection, the Emerging Female Directors collection, and historic home movie collections made from the 1930s to the 1960s); the restoration of 5 cinematic masterpieces; exhaustive examination of historic collections with a 200 hour total running time and tagging of their materials according to location, the names of individuals involved, historic events, and topics.

Over the course of the year, the detailed planning and design of **a multitrack archival website that will offer three different user experiences,** a researcher track for researchers, a cinema lovers track, and a track for the general public pitched towards those interested in cinema and nostalgia, was completed in preparation for the website’s development and **launch.** A public relations campaign intended to spread the word about the archive on television and in print media and to expose the Israel public to the treasures housed at the archive kicked off this year. So far, tens of reports about the various collections that have come together in the archive have appeared. Of particular note is a 20-minute long feature on the Friday night Channel 2 news (the most widely viewed news report each week in Israel). It provided an especially sympathetic overview of our project and created a high level of public awareness about our project.

The final quarter of 2019 was marked by the completion of a building renovation and improvement of the visitor experience at the Cinematheque in advance of a new season of regular operation (the annual subscription campaign, the opening of the course and series seasons):

In September, the “Orient Express” project, supported by a private donation made through the Jerusalem Foundation, was completed. It established a designed and furnished space that invites visitors to spend time at the Cinematheque holding meetings, participating in study groups, professional gatherings, or other activities, enjoying the beautiful views visible from the Cinematheque, or just hanging out.

In October, workers completed the central building project of 2019—a comprehensive renovation of Auditorium 1 with the support of the Van Leer Foundation and the Jerusalem Municipality. Changes made include introduction of handicap access, installation of new more comfortable seating, and updating of technological systems.

In October, a new season of courses and series opened at the Cinematheque. This season includes new programs, such as an art and film course produced together with the Israel Museum and a cinema series cooperatively operated with the Hebrew University School of Social Work that deals with “The New Third Age” entitled “The Age of Enlightenment,” alongside successful programs from previous years, such as “Concerto for Cinema” that offers live broadcasts of Metropolitan Opera performances and “Exhibitions on the Screen,” a far-ranging travel course.

In November, two festivals that we have recently developed and that have enjoyed great success will take place: The Anthropological Film Festival, a joint project with Hebrew University’s Department of Sociology and Anthropology, and the AniNation Festival for Animation, a joint project with the Jerusalem Film and Television Fund.

As we have traditionally done, we will conclude 2019 with our annual Jewish Film Festival whose twenty-first iteration will take place during Hannukah in December. This time it will include a competition for interreligious cinema dealing with the relations between individuals with divergent identities, culinary and musical events, and the screening of scores of films from throughout the world dealing with Jewish identity and culture from divergent viewpoints that raise myriad questions about what constitute Jewish identity’s boundaries.

**A Glimpse at 2020- Challenges, Objectives and Tasks**

The Jerusalem Film Center is a public nonprofit organization supported by a variety of different sources including private foundations, primarily the Van Leer Foundation (13%) and the Jerusalem Foundation (6%), governmental bodies, such as the Jerusalem Municipality (6%) and the Ministry of Culture and Sport (10%), and scores of additional foundations and private donors (10%). In addition, the Jerusalem Development Authority supports additional projects (25%). Finally, the Jerusalem Film Center generates a portion of its total annual revenue independently (30%).

Unlike other cultural institutions that are supported almost exclusively by the state, the Jerusalem Film Center’s budgetary structure enables it to function as an autonomous institution, to go about fulfilling its vision without disruption, and to create an artistic program independent of political or commercial considerations.

Maintenance of a balanced budget is a perpetual challenge for every cultural institution in Israel (state support for culture constitutes only 0.16% of the annual national budget), especially institutions in Jerusalem. This is case, because municipal support for culture is substantially lower in Jerusalem than it is in the other large cities in Israel. We have met the challenge for seven straight years; we have finished every year since 2013 with a balanced budget. Nevertheless, we continue to face the same challenge. In order to once again meet this challenge in 2020, we will be taking a number of steps, including the ones enumerated below, in an effort to increase revenues:

1. Continued development, acquisition, and national distribution of art film content for the Cinematheques, other cinemas and for cable television networks as an additional independent revenue stream. This effectively aligns with the Jerusalem Film Center’s aspiration to positively influence the cinematic repertoire presented throughout the country.
2. Increase of revenue through office space leasing in the JFC building and hall rentals for special events.
3. Engagement of new donors to support both the development of new content-based projects and improvement of the physical infrastructure.

Beyond basic financial challenges, the Jerusalem Film Center faces the challenge of maintaining and developing its audiences, a challenge that has arisen largely due to demographic changes that have taken place in Jerusalem: Jerusalem’s liberal secular community long found the Cinematheque’s activities appealing and it came to constitute its primary audience. Yet two decades ago, the size of this community began to decline in a significant and continuous manner. Now it constitutes only 20% of the city’s population. Other factors have contributed to this challenge as well: changes in the way that culture and cinema in particular are consumed (people view media content from home); increasing competition from the commercial movie houses that have been established in the city over the course of the last few years; the Jerusalem Municipality’s creation of free cultural events that frequently compete with those offered by the city’s professionally run cultural institutions. Our content departments and our marketing department are staffed by individuals whose innovative and creative thinking have shaped our response to this challenge. As part of our effort to meet this challenge, we will take the following steps in the coming year:

1. Development of additional activities, such as meetings with filmmakers, lectures by top-quality scholars, panels, dance and musical performances, and culinary events, that offer audiences further value when they accompany film screenings. The last few years have shown that events featuring activities that supplement film content proves highly attractive to audiences. The Cinematheque wants to offer the audience a “pilgrimage” experience that gives it a special one-time experience whose value surpasses that of just viewing a film in a cinema.
2. Creation of events with content partners who have their own audiences who will gain exposure to the Cinematheque through such joint partnerships.
3. Continued development of activities directed towards the city’s Arabic-speaking population and creation of content frameworks that present cinematic works from the Middle East that are not screened in Israel: The “Arab Film” project on Friday run jointly with the Jerusalem International YMCA, the Arab film week produced in conjunction with the Van Leer Institute, a special Arabic language young filmmakers course directed towards elementary school children in East Jerusalem, and screening of foreign films with Arabic subtitles for the Arabic-speaking community promoted through an extensive digital marketing campaign.
4. Continued development of marketing and programming activities that draw more young people and college students studying in Jerusalem to the Cinematheque: A symbolically priced badge promoted through a national campaign that grants its wearer free entrance to the film festival, a pilot campaign for student purchase of a free entrance pass that automatically renews itself every month modelled on the Netflix approach, the creation of content frameworks for the university student audience with special emphasis given to development of Friday programming that starts in the early afternoon.
5. Development and running of courses for adults and new educational programs for high school age students through the education department.
6. Creation of new film festivals that will serve as original content frameworks that will attract audiences throughout the year. Our work experience shows that festival creation and content packaged in distinctive branded frameworks promotes our activities and connects our audiences with us. Every month the Cinematheque programs activities in such frameworks: film festivals dedicated to specific national cinemas run jointly with embassies and cultural institutes (more than 20 such festivals run throughout the year, such as the French Film Festival, the Italian Comedy Festival, and the Czech Film Festival), tributes to specific filmmakers, and thematic frameworks that enter into conversation with contemporary affairs.

In addition to all of these activities, the Jerusalem Film Center will jointly hold at least one major original film festival every month throughout 2020 together with its content partners drawn from the academic and cultural worlds (among the festivals that we successfully held in the past and that we will continue to run are Art and Brain Week together with the Hebrew University’s Edmund and Lily Safra Center for Brain Sciences, The Anthropological Film Festival together with Hebrew University’s Department of Sociology and Anthropology, the restored film festival ReFILM, the Turkish film festival in partnership with the Van Leer Institute, the AniNation Festival for Animation co-organized with the Jerusalem Film and Television Fund, and the Women’s Film Festival in partnership with women’s organizations in Jerusalem).

This year, for the first time, we want to create a film festival dealing with immigration. We intend for this to be a flagship event developed in partnership with the Van Leer Institute and through the support of the Bernard Van Leer Institute and other international institutions. The festival will deal with immigration as a complex multifaceted phenomenon that dominates the cultural landscape; we will look to create a discourse around this phenomenon that will resonate with the general public.

Additionally, we are working to present a comprehensive exhibition of the film archive’s treasures at one of Israel’s leading art museums in an effort to expose the general public to the products of our digital archive projects (this idea is inspired by an exhibit of the archive’s treasures currently on view at the Museum of Modern Art), and to raise public awareness of the need for audiovisual preservation currently spearheaded in Israel by the Jerusalem Film Center.

Finally, the central challenge that stands before us is how to cross audience and community boundaries to make a social and cultural impact that influences life in Jerusalem and throughout the nation and allows us to play a role on the international stage through participation in its cultural discourse and activity.

Since its establishment, the Jerusalem Film Center has been an international meeting place for Israeli and International filmmakers and cinema lovers and a gateway to the universal. Over the years, the institution’s activities have advanced cinematic excellence together with pluralistic, egalitarian, and peace-loving values.

At a time that the government in Israel (like in other places in the world) advances a narrow nationalist and frequently blatantly anti-pluralistic agenda, the importance of cultural institutions that advance critical thinking, provide platforms for films that challenge public discourse and bring different and diverse communities together becomes especially clear. In an attempt to increase the Jerusalem Film Center’s impact as a leading cultural influencer, the institution will operate according to the following guidelines:

1. Creation of programming and events through partnerships with cultural and academic institution in Israel that advance pluralistic, creative, and outside of the box thinking.
2. Sharing of original content with cultural institutions and other cinematheques in Israel.
3. Expansion of public relations operations and collaborations with media groups to promote the programming and various festivals being put on by the Jerusalem Film Center.
4. Development of ties and collaborative efforts with organizations through the world in matters related to regular operations, the archive, and the various film festivals.
5. Invitation and hosting of influential filmmakers from throughout the world in an effort to promote the Jerusalem Film Center’s place as an international meeting spot where filmmakers and cinema lovers go to take part in creation of a world-influencing discourse.

In 2020, the archives website will go live and turn us into a global institution for cinematic culture. The digital archive project expresses the Jerusalem Film Center’s vision—preservation and provision of access to the audiovisual treasures of Israeli cinema. Moreover, it turns the Jerusalem Film Center into a player on the international stage through its curated presentation and distribution of digital content on the internet.