



Zeev Engelmayer - Optimistic Artist Bio:



Photo credit: Daniel Chanoch

Zeev "Shoshke" Engelmayer's brightly colored postcards dedicated to the hostages in Gaza have captured our hearts in moments of shared pain and above all -- hope.

I am an artist, illustrator, comic book creator, performer, activist, and lecturer in the Department of Visual Communication at Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem.

My illustrated books, independent comic books and animated projects have been featured in exhibitions in galleries and museums in Israel and around the world. I participated in projects with international artists, actors, filmmakers, and musicians as well as with fashion designers inspired by my works.

I often appear in the character of "Shoshke," a comic character I drew, through which I create shows and activist actions to promote tolerance. Shoshke has received recognition and publicity, and articles have been written about her in the press and academic journals in Israel and around the world.

"I see great solidarity and beautiful actions that are making me optimistic."

October 7th found me at my home in Tel Aviv with my wife Gila, and my daughters Rotem and Tamar. I was shocked, like my family and people around me, and started creating and drawing what I felt, from the first day.

I draw daily "postcards" to keep our collective attention on freeing the hostages in Gaza. I see myself as an "art-ivist," using my art for my activism. I meet the families of the hostages and those we lost every week and give them the drawings of their loved ones.

I always try to create optimistic works, especially during these times we are having.

Israel is in a time of crisis, and I see it in everyone that I meet. People are very worried about the future. At the same time, I see great solidarity and beautiful actions that are making me optimistic. I see so many great people and great initiatives around me. Crises are sometimes an opportunity to get closer, and to open up to new ideas.

A selection of Shoshke's daily postcards (Courtesy of Zeev Engelmayer) - youtube.com/watch?si=OM0p3090k1Syalbb&v=qO85CW6u0cw&feature=youtu.be

I believe in goodness, that it's our responsibility — each one of us — to change the future, to make it better. To help others feel the same way, I drew a map of Israel with all the good things that are happening now. The Ministry of Education sent the map to high school students all over Israel.

I find my motivation in the fact that there isn't a better cause to create and to live for. In my optimistic belief, we can change reality for the better. I live in Israel with people I love and want to do whatever I can to make it a better, more tolerant place.

My greatest challenge is how to get to people who don't agree with me to listen and think. I try to do this through my art, my activism, and my everyday meetings all over the country.

Zeev Engelmayer's work "Be'eri" depicts a family in the kibbutz where nearly 100 residents were killed and about 30 taken hostage. Photo courtesy of Zeev Engelmayer

A personal challenge I faced was the diagnosis of my daughter's rare disease, which required her to have a liver transplant two years ago. We went through that very difficult time the same way we do now — by creating art and keeping an optimistic mind.

Before the war started, I was involved deeply in the [judicial reform] protest, designing and drawing cartoons, and performing protest art. Now my time is devoted to the hostages — waiting for them to be released so I can get back to do whatever I can for the better future of Israel.

I hope we can overcome the hostility, suspicion and prejudice. I hope the region will stop being violent, and become a great peaceful place to live in. It will take time, but it is possible. And it's a worthwhile cause to live and create for.