

Blog Visit January 2019 ENG

On the first day of snow in Belgium I am packing my bags for a new trip to the Open Studio in Khan Yunis. In the afternoon Rollema Transport, transports me to the airport, and the next morning I am drinking a delicious Arabic coffee in an office in Gaza. In Belgium it is freezing, here it is plus 15 degrees. To the nordics among us this doesn't sound so bad. But if you don't have electricity, you don't have heating, and without heating 15 degrees also becomes seriously cold.



The people who live here have to spend a few months in this cold every years. Many in bad housing (often without windows), some in tents. Especially the elderly and sick are suffering. The amounts of funerals is very high this month. The people I meet seem to become more and more tired. I even brought simple medicines with me. I see and feel that circumstances are becoming worse and worse. That the team is still moving forward and developing is really worth a big compliment.

As cold as the weather is, as warm is the meeting with the team. It is amazing to see everyone again and to be back in this place that I've got to know so well during the past years. After a group of kids came running down the hallway for a group hug I forgot all about the cold.



The two days before the weekend are full of meetings and presentations. I bring our yearly report full of everything we have achieved in 2018, I present our new project BeeHome Academy and we speak about ideas and plans for this visit and the future. Since this visit will mainly be about making new movies I start by giving a workshop on 'how to film with your smartphone'.

After the weekend we started working with the children. In the last visits I worked with the team and the children to make many films. Films that tell stories and films that teach art to other children. This time we will do the same, only now it won't be me taking the lead, but the team will be in charge themselves. They have split in two groups, chose the stories they wanted to work on and started to make on storyboards, texts, ideas for puppets, backgrounds, sounds and any other preparations for the films. The rest of the week we spend creating, and filming with the children. The children are having a great time, the team is having a great time and the results already looking very promising. Some things take some more time than expected, but even that was expected. I'm hovering between the two groups and give some tips here and there, and everyone is well on their ways. The experience of the people who work here combined with the experience from all our previous collaborations really sheds it's fruits.



One day we organised the BeeHome Cinema. In 4 shifts we showed a collection of the BeeHome films to more than a 100 children. Many of them have worked on making these films so you can imagine the reactions when someone saw themselves popping up on the screen.

Now it is already weekend again and I am getting ready to meet different artists in Gaza City. After the weekend I will only have a few days left in Gaza, but I am sure they will provide for many more stories to tell in the next blog!



Photos by Suzanne Groothuis and Mohamed Mansour