

# RUNAWAY CIRCUS: JERUSALEM DESIGN WEEK

Much like Hollywood films which offered crowds a way to escape the reality of life during difficult periods in history—so did the big American circuses in the second half of the 19th century. Under their big tents, audiences would be amazed, forgetting life's challenges momentarily, while watching acrobats flying through the air, elephants balancing balls, and tigers jumping through flames.

Last year, the annual Jerusalem Design Week was supposed to highlight the topic of escapism. Postponed by the pandemic, it was restaged this summer, infused with new relevance and meaning. Now that our lives are slowly returning to normal, are we returning to our old forms of escapism, or did we find new ones during the pandemic? Through exhibitions, installations, new projects and shows, “Runaway Circus” examined the topic of escapism, which seems more relevant than ever.

*“For some of us it represents the perfect refuge from the past year, and for others it serves as an optimal metaphor to describe what has happened and is still happening. We are happy, excited, and in need of rebuilding this important project, which is at the same time completely escapist in nature and, on the other hand, deeply rooted in the unstable ground we stand on.”*

—Anat Safran, Artistic Director of Runaway Circus

“Runaway Circus” took place at the historic Hansen House in Jerusalem during the first week of July 2021. The site, a large stone building with a walled-garden and grounds, was a Hansen’s Disease (leprosy) hospital and asylum between 1887 and 2000, when the last patient was discharged. Its



## Runaway Circus: Jerusalem Design Week (continued)

history makes this year's theme especially meaningful and poignant. Keeping some of the original facility's historic features, today it is a cultural center. It is home to six resident organizations, among them the graduate program of [Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design](#), and [Ofaimme](#), a seed-to-plate store and cafe.

What escapist delights awaited spectators under the big tent in Jerusalem?



Get a taste of Jerusalem Design Week's [Runaway Circus](#)



Uncover the history of Jerusalem's mysterious and beautiful [Hansen House](#)



More on the [Hansen House's](#) 150 years of contributions to the people of Jerusalem