

## **If you Force it, it is no Dream**

*text by Hamza Badran*

In Basel.

I have struggled to understand why Zionism is a topic for celebration in Switzerland. When I arrived in Basel in 2018, I took a walk through the city and noticed a tourist gift store that I assumed had something to do with Basel. The gift store was in Stadtcasino Basel, where the first Zionist congress was held in 1897. When I went in, I noticed a bronze cast portrait of Theodore Herzl covered in glass. While I knew that the first Zionist Congress had been held in Basel, I didn't realize it was also a cause for jubilation.

When I asked about the bronze print in the Stadtcasino, the woman working there asked me if I was from Israel. I said no, I was from Palestine. She «Oh...»

In the Hotel Les Trois Rois in Basel, where Herzl stayed in 1901 during the fifth Zionist Congress, his room is still well preserved and named after him: River Room Herzl.

Not only that, but there is also a ceremonial text on the Hotel's website:

*“Das River Room Herzl besticht durch den einmaligen Charme seiner Ausstattung. Bis heute sorgt dieses schlichte und faszinierende Zimmer mit Rheinblick für Inspiration und Ruhe (ca. 22 m2).”*

*“The River Room Herzl impresses with the unique charm of its furnishings. To this day, this simple and fascinating room with a view of the Rhine provides inspiration and peace (approx. 22 m2).”*

I also wanted to experience that “Charm, Inspiration and Peace”. I thought this might help me understand where Herzl's five-star “bright” and “young” Ideas came from.

When the hotel receptionist asked me what PSE was after checking my B temporary Swiss residence permit? I told him it was the Swiss shortcut for Palestine.

He also «Oh...»

He asked if I knew who the room belonged to. I said, no, I don't know. He thanked God for my naivety.

The Herzl River room was the best bedroom I've ever had; it cost me about 735 Swiss francs for one night. With my name and ability to pay, they might have thought I was a rich Arab who wanted to buy the hotel. I heard that the ruler of Qatar had once wanted to buy the hotel and that the Times of Israel did not obviously like the idea. In any way, thanks to my production budget, I stayed there.

It was a very comfortable room with a classic bathtub and the best Swiss-quality perfumed hand soap, shampoo, and shower gel I have ever used for my dry skin. Standing on the balcony, looking at what some call «Herzl's inspiring view,» which is simply a view of Kly Basel, I also got some very inspiring ideas. For example, how can I earn money to pay next month's rent, and how could I get funded for my next art project? I was afraid that I might have to end up as a Palestinian tree-hugging artist in Switzerland.

The bed was also very comfortable; there was a sky painted on the ceiling that you see when you lie in bed; it gave me a Sistine Chapel feeling and another bronze portrait of Herzl hung on the wall of the room. Unfortunately, the room did not meet my high expectations, and I did not manage to have any dreams when I slept in that bed that night. I returned to the hotel late and drunk. In the morning, I was very disappointed that breakfast was not included in the room price; they charge 50 Swiss Francs for their luxury breakfast, so imagine that!!!!

## Works

01

Hamza Badran, *Basel's Pride*, 2024, bronze, wooden frame  
40x30x4 cm circa, ed. of 3 + 1AP

02

Hamza Badran, *Herzl's Bed*, 2024, 4k color video, sound, 7' 9",  
ed. of 3 + 2AP. Produced with the support of Forde, Geneva

03

Hamza Badran, *If you Force it, it is no Dream*, 2024, 1000  
posters 100x70 cm each, ed. unique

**Gian Marco Casini**

Booth n. **65**

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