

My adventures and subjective experiences on September 22, 2016

Or: That time I accidentally went on a tour I was not supposed to during my spying mission

The time was 16:06 and I rush into Agripas 12, late. It was merely six minutes yet I feel horribly guilty. Those six minutes are utterly meaningless in the grand scheme of life and we waste many six minutes without even thinking about it. That said, I found myself recounting my steps and wondering what could I have done in order to arrive properly on time. What if I had brushed my teeth quicker this morning? I should have never stopped to tie my shoelaces on the way to the bus stop.

Nevertheless, I arrive and notice the courtyard is full of people waiting to be let into the gallery, as it is small and only a few people can enter at the same time. I observe my fellow audience members. Similar to most days of the festival, the audience is made out of people who have the time to go to art galleries at 16:00 (and not 16:06) on Thursday afternoons. I notice immediately I am the youngest one. Now, this is not quite new but this time, I am not the youngest by five years or perhaps ten. Oh no, the next youngest person seems to be in their forties. Senior citizens surround me.

I continue looking around and realize the other agents or the head of the mission are nowhere to be seen. Now, in retrospect, this should have been a sign I am in the wrong place but instead, I brush this off, thinking they might have already entered the gallery in the six minutes I was late.

In the meantime, there is a dramatic tension slowly unraveling in the courtyard. There are about thirty people standing and waiting, the majority in their fifties and sixties. In the side of the courtyard, it stands. A chair. One lone chair. The pressure in the air rises and suddenly, this is everything Hobbes wrote about, this is "war of every man against every man," the natural state of mankind and this is a battle waged with glances and shifting feet. I am in suspense, watching as a few people walk towards the chair and hesitate when the gallery opens and it is all for nothing. We rush in. The chair is forgotten.

After this gallery, I walk outside, unsure of where to go next, when I see the group of senior citizens walk with a guide, talking to them about more galleries. I notice the photographer hovering next to them. And so, I decided to embark on this mission and join their tour.

In all the days of the festival, I have never felt more like a spy than in the following three hours. Or perhaps not, because spies blend in and I have never felt more like an outsider than in those three hours.

All my recollections from Nachlot neighborhood are with friends, at 3am, roaming the streets and feeling infinite, feeling simultaneously young and old, recklessly independent. This is an entirely different beast, walking slowly and discussing graffiti in artistic terms.

I am steadfastly breaching the suggested limit of 500 words and must reach a conclusion. The chair became irrelevant when time had passed and another option became available. My youth is something incredibly momentary (as an elderly woman told me when I stood up easily while she struggled). And surely, she has moments similar to my memories from last week with friends in Nachalot. And perhaps there will be a moment I will say the same to a young person.

There is this notion that age is arbitrary as time is simply a human invention. We simply started counting something completely fickle and are now leading our lives based of this. That would mean that age is meaningless, that the six minutes are meaningless because what is four pm even? That would mean the life experience was the only thing differing between me and them.

And yet, I find myself finishing this mission celebrating my age. I find myself thrilled by the ability to talk honestly to people three times my age and feel comfortable and yet still be young. The ability to be a spy yet stand out, the contradictions that are everywhere, the tensions of the chair in civilized societies, accidentally joining a tour and having a great time, the circularity of the arbitrary age, I find myself never wanting to grow up yet looking forward to being as old as them and having time to go to art galleries. These are my revelations from the 22.9.16.