

Frequently Asked Questions

Isn't the Koffler Centre of the Arts censoring the artist?

No. The decision about whether or not the exhibition continues is entirely up to the artist. However, the Koffler Centre of the Arts will no longer be associated with it and Ms. Katz. It simply cannot support in any way, anyone who rejects the existence of Israel as a Jewish state, which is a core value.

If the exhibition itself has nothing to do with Israel, why are you disassociating yourself from it and the artist?

The existence of Israel as a Jewish state is a core value of the Koffler. While we will support artists with diverse views about Israel, we will not endorse anyone who calls for the demise of Israel as a Jewish state.

Why wouldn't the Koffler Centre of the Arts simply cancel the show?

The Koffler believes in free artistic expression. It simply cannot endorse in anyway, anyone who seeks the demise of Israel as a Jewish state, which is a core value of the Koffler Centre of the Arts.

Do arts organizations have the right and responsibility to uphold their core values?

Arts organizations must have policies about how their core values are reflected in their realization of their artistic vision. The Jewish Museum in New York, the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles, the Spertus Museum in Chicago – all of which are world renowned cultural centres for example – hold true to their core Jewish values while remaining centres of artistic excellence. Just as every individual has a right to freedom of expression, any organization is free to choose with whom it partners.

Will the Koffler Centre of the Arts only program artists who agree with its position on Israel?

The Koffler Centre of the Arts has a respected history and reputation for developing and presenting artistic works that reflect a diversity of ideas and expressions, and debate about Israel's policies. However, it cannot support any individual who actively seeks the demise of Israel as a Jewish state. The existence and wellbeing of Israel as a Jewish state remains a core value of the Koffler Centre of the Arts, and as such, it cannot endorse any artist who advocates against it.

The Koffler is deeply committed to developing and presenting works that explore with honesty and truthfulness a full range of artistic expression with special emphasis on Canadian artists, while remaining true to its core values.

Doesn't the Koffler believe in dialogue?

At the Koffler Centre of the Arts we completely understand that like any healthy and vibrant community, ours is one with many diverse opinions where ideas are explored and examined. Our commitment is to ensure that as a cultural centre, we are part of that examination and certainly have no intention of preventing anyone for being critical of Israel's or any other country's policies. However, our Centre, like our community, is committed to Israel's existence as a Jewish state. No organization could partner with any individual who works against one of its core values.

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Is the Koffler saying that artists are not allowed to criticize Israel?

Criticizing Israel and calling for the end of Israel as a Jewish state are very different things. The nature of Israel and its policies are, like any other state, subject to dialogue, debate and examination, and the Koffler Centre of the Arts has no intention of stifling that dialogue.

What is the difference between being Anti-Zionist and opposing Israel as a Jewish state?

There is no difference. Zionism is the realization of Israel as a Jewish state. When one makes statements calling for the end of Zionism, one is making a statement about the end of Israel as a Jewish state.

The Koffler Centre of the Arts is an arts institution, not a political advocacy group. Why are you politicizing its activities?

The Koffler, as a Jewish institution, must stay true to its core values. We cannot endorse any artist who makes public statements that undermine the wellbeing and existence of Israel as a Jewish state.

Did the Koffler know about Ms. Katz's activities at the beginning of the relationship?

Upon learning about Ms. Katz's public statements that undermine Israel as a Jewish state, the Koffler Centre of the Arts took immediate action to disassociate itself from the exhibition and Ms. Katz. We were made aware at the start of the relationship that Ms. Katz was an artist who had been critical of Israel, however, criticism of Israel is not the issue here. At issue are her activities aimed at undermining Israel as a Jewish state.

Has the Koffler Centre of the Arts withdrawn its funding to Reena Katz and the project?

The expenses of this exhibition were incurred and committed before we were aware of Ms. Katz's efforts to undermine Israel as a Jewish state. The Koffler Centre of the Arts will honour its financial commitments.

Hasn't the Koffler effectively censored the show since as a result of its decision, Baycrest - a central component of the exhibition has withdrawn and the artist has postponed the show indefinitely?

No. The decision to continue with the exhibition was left solely up to the artist. The funding commitment remained in place. The decision by Baycrest and other partners who may have withdrawn from the project, was their decision alone. In disassociating from the artist and the exhibition, the Koffler Centre put the realization of the exhibition in the hands of the curator and artist.

Was the Koffler's decision based on Reena Katz's personal beliefs?

No. The Koffler's decision was not based on Reena Katz's beliefs, but rather her role in undermining Israel's existence as a Jewish state.