

The Walled Off Hotel

New Art Installation/Hotel Comes With a View of the Bethlehem Wall TC

Acclaimed British street artist Banksy has presented artwork in Palestine before, but his new venture is his largest installation in the West Bank yet.

The Walled Off Hotel, at once art installation and real hotel, opened this week in Bethlehem. The 10-room hotel overlooks the controversial border wall dividing Israel and Palestine.

The Telegraph reported:

“The 10-room Walled Off Hotel - built in the style of a colonial club, complete with delicate china and deep leather sofas - stands in the shadow of a wall considered illegal by most of the international community.

All of its rooms look out onto the wall's bleak concrete slabs and its upper floors stand eye-to-eye with the Israeli watch towers that loom over parts of Bethlehem.

The hotel was built in complete secrecy over a 14-month period, surprising even Palestinian officials when its doors suddenly flew open on Friday.

“It has the worst view of any hotel in the world,” Banksy stated, but the view is unlikely to deter visitors. The Telegraph continued:

“The hotel is aimed at attracting foreign visitors to a corner of the occupied West Bank where they might not usually stay, at once giving a badly-needed boost to the Palestinian economy and showing them the realities of life surrounded by the wall.

The hotel opening is designed to coincide with the centenary of the Balfour Declaration, the 1917 statement by the British government in favour of a Jewish homeland that helped pave the way for the creation of Israel.

“It's exactly one hundred years since Britain took control of Palestine and started re-arranging the furniture - with chaotic results,” Banksy said. “I don't know why but it felt like a good time to reflect on what happens when the United Kingdom makes a huge political decision without fully comprehending the consequences.”

truthdig
drilling beneath the headlines

posted: March 4, 2017
by Emma Niles



A view of Bethlehem's border wall from a room in the Walled Off Hotel.

acclaimed

installation

controversial

colonial

delicate

bleak

deter

occupied

boost

As Al-Jazeera noted, the famously secretive street artist has a long history of creating politically charged work in Palestine:

“ In February 2015, he allegedly sneaked into the Gaza Strip through a smuggling tunnel and painted three works on the walls of Gaza homes destroyed in Israeli air strikes during the previous year’s conflict.

In 2007, he painted a number of artworks in Bethlehem, including a young girl frisking an Israeli soldier pinned up against a wall.

In 2005, he sprayed nine stencilled images at different locations along the eight-metre-high wall.

They included a ladder reaching over the wall, a young girl being carried over it by balloons and a window on the grey concrete showing beautiful mountains in the background.

The Walled Off Hotel features a gallery of work by local Palestinian artists and employs people from the surrounding community.

“I would like to invite everyone to come here, invite Israeli civilians to come visit us here,” hotel manager Wisam Salsaa told The Guardian. “We want them to learn more about us, because when they know us it will break down the stereotypes and things will change.”

However, it may be difficult for Israeli visitors to reach the hotel.

“Israelis are banned from visiting Bethlehem and its famous sites,” The Guardian noted. “And although Banksy has chosen a site officially under Israeli military control – meaning it is legal for Israelis to stay there – all the roads to reach it involve an illegal journey through Palestinian-controlled territory.”

Still, the artist urges Israelis and visitors from around the world to stay at the hotel.

“The aim is to tell the story of the wall from every side and give visitors the opportunity to discover it for themselves,” the hotel’s website states. “We offer an especially warm welcome to young Israelis.”

Rooms in the hotel range from a simple one with military-style “budget” bunk beds to a “presidential” suite complete with a Jacuzzi. Pictures are available on the hotel’s website.

charged

allegedly

sneaked

smuggling

frisking

stereotypes

banned

military

legal

illegal

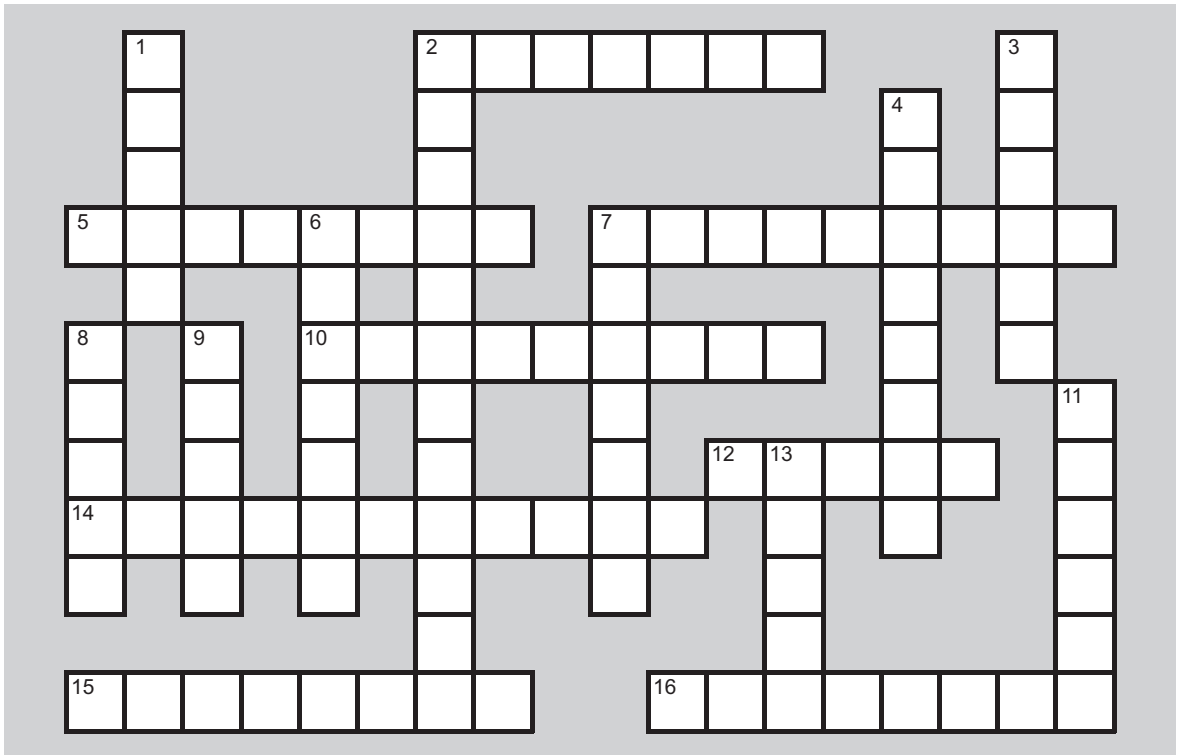
urges

opportunity



"To travel is to discover that everyone is wrong about other countries."

- Aldous Huxley



Down

- 1 Strongly say or push for something (5)
- 2 A building, place or thing used for a special purpose (12)
- 3 Not allowed (6)
- 4 Adjective: someone or something with power in another country (8)
- 6 Full of emotion and excitement (7)
- 7 If you moved quietly and secretly then you... (7)
- 8 Help, improve, increase (5)
- 9 Turn away, prevent (5)
- 11 The artist who created the Walled Off Hotel (6)
- 13 The law says it's OK (5)

Across

- 2 The opposite of 13 down (7)
- 5 Something very fine but easily broken (8)
- 7 Secretly bringing things into a country (9)
- 10 Adverb: said to be true (9)
- 12 Without hope, also cold (5)
- 14 An idea said to describe a whole group of people, not really true (11)
- 15 Searching a person for something hidden (8)
- 16 The army, navy and airforce are all part of the... (8)

See the [truthdig](#) article for answers!



If you stay at the Walled Off you could find yourself literally sleeping inside a work of art. So far Banksy, Sami Musa and Dominique Petrin have customised guest rooms, more will follow.

As Diane Arbus once said 'to live with an artwork is something different, to glimpse it from the corner of your eye.'

Questions to answer and discuss:

1. What does the phrase "Occupied Territories" mean to you?
2. Can you think of any differences between what the BBC News report said about the hotel and the truthdig article?
3. Can you think of any other man-made barriers from history? Why were they built? What happened?
4. What do you know about the artist known as Banksy?
5. Would you like to stay in the Walled Off Hotel? If yes, why? If no, why not?
6. What do you now know that you didn't know before?



So, what is the wall exactly?

It divides the nation of Palestine from the state of Israel and restricts movement between the two for citizens of both sides. Depending on who you talk to its either a vital security measure or an instrument of apartheid. Its route is highly controversial and it has a dramatic impact on the daily lives of a lot of people. The one thing beyond dispute is that everything here is under dispute.

