

Just A Moment

Dreamer, Sharonna Karni Cohen, reincarnates the spirit of the original hipster hub, Café Tamar, in her own artistic vision with Rega Salon

■ By Jennifer Greenberg, Photos by Ilanit Turgeman

REGA. WE UTTER THIS FOUR-LETTER WORD MORE TIMES THAN WE CAN COUNT. Yet, how often in our hectic, fast-paced lives do we actually adhere to its implications, taking a moment – to breathe, to contemplate, to dream? Between running Dreame (a global project that transforms dreams into realities using art as its platform), and piecing together the future of Israel in an impressive yoga mat mosaic, Sharonna comprehends the importance of “taking a moment.” The phrase forms the basis for Rega, her latest popup salon bringing bohemians, books, and beautiful minds together under one art-laden roof on Shenkin. I pedal over to the long faded, but never forgotten street for coffee talk with the girl who dreams big and follows through.

A mustachioed musician out front taps his index finger on the offbeats of Bohemia. I slip inside the quaint café, tiptoeing past patrons, as to not disturb their conversations; to my left, an Israeli Kerouac recounts the next great travel memoir, to my right, a young couple shares a slice of vegan cake, their forks intertwined in a Gordon Beach folk dance. “The other day, an older couple stopped by who had fallen in love thirty years ago on a first date at Café Tamar,” Sharonna singles me out from the crowd, although we have never met before. I imagine the older couple at that very same table, clanking forks over a slightly less vegan dessert, perhaps a babka or apple tart. Today, they folk dance on the cracked boardwalk pavement – every Saturday, without exception.

Many Café Tamar regulars have waded cautiously into the Rega waters, Sharonna remarks. The ghost of Rega’s past was once the most famous left-wing café in town. Her goal is to maintain its essence: “When [Café Tamar] closed, the left became more cynical, staying home instead of going out to talk.” Conversation is an evident focal point of the freshly opened hipster haven, which was originally packaged as a “laptop-free zone” where customers could write by hand, experience Dreame (housed inside), and be inspired. Sharonna gestures towards an academic-looking fellow just shy of a tweed jacket and elbow patches. “I remember the first week we banned laptops, he’d come in everyday, read a book, drink a glass of wine, maybe write something on a napkin...that was the vibe I wanted.”

“How about Wifi-free Wednesdays?” I suggest. She jots the idea down. “For January,” Sharonna grins. Laptops or not, the new kid on the abandoned block fits right into Tel Aviv’s daytime café culture, and equally, its nightlife, moonlighting as a salon that hosts game nights, poetry readings, and live jazz made possible by David Sheerit and an antique piano leaning nonchalantly against the wall. Captivated by the protagonists living out their daily lives against a backdrop of poetry, film, and the likes, I begin to wonder whether Rega is one giant casting call for *Rent* or the contagious creativity merely rubs off on the table, bringing my wandering mind back to reality. Sharonna thanks the waiter, talks shop with a copartner, and simultaneously takes in the scene as if for the very first time. I seize the opportunity to embody the spirit of Rega between sips and take a moment to stare up at the ceiling, where a deconstructed piano decorates the wooden slats. I later discover that the artist responsible also painted the ceiling its rich, espresso color. I take a moment to breathe in the books, beckoning to me from behind the regal sofa – a Karni Cohen artifact. These aren’t just any books, these are “Sefi-approved” books, save for the *Where’s*

Waldo?, as out of place on the shelf as the red-and-white striped character himself. I take a moment to browse the menu: “A dream: NIS 90. Your dream, commissioned: NIS 250,” an invitation to hand your dreams over to one of Dreame’s artists – a valuable addition to the vegan desserts, feel-good soups, and journalist-approved caffeine section. Sharonna leads me on an abridged tour of the Dreame library and back out to the patio. I take a moment to question the red herring: a red chair standing apart from the rest in a snide, Florentinian fashion. “We ran out of spray paint,” Sharonna reads my curious mind. In the words of Luther Vandross, sometimes “a chair is still a chair.” We linger outside the bustling venue and say our goodbyes. I fiddle for my bike keys, taking a moment to ask one last question: “Why a pop up?” “Besides the fact that they are demolishing the building? Most of my Dreame-related projects are temporary. Nothing is completely permanent, like dreams – you achieve one, then move onto the next.”

→ 57 Shenkin St, Tel Aviv, on the corner of Ahad Ha'am St. The Rega team includes: David Sheerit (the “Piano Man”), Elad David (the “Guy in Charge”), Sefi Atun (the “Space Finder/Designated Bureaucrat”), Itay Golan (“Mr. Fix-it”), and Sharonna Karni Cohen (the “Creative Web Spinner & Marketing Mastermind”)

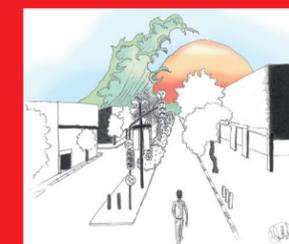
DREAME ARTISTS



Or Rosenstein
“I’ve been creating ever since I can remember. I deal with melancholy, angst, nature, childhood, and fantasy - my ideas often forming as I work.”



Eitan Marks
“I’m interested in the sea, philosophy, military history, ice cream, wine, and darkness - a blend of the real & surreal.”



Nathan Gotlib
“I am a Belgian-born urban nomad interested in artifacts of human communication and cultural expression.”