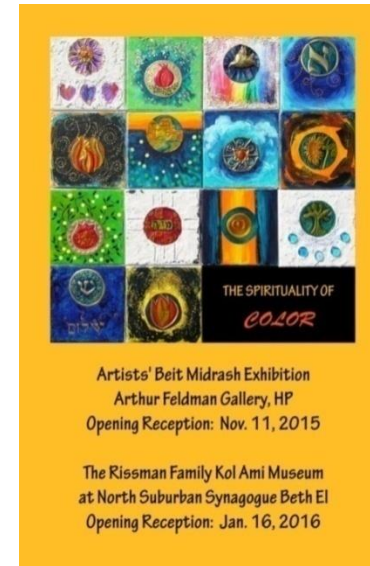


# The Spirituality of Color



**Arthur M. Feldman Judaica Gallery**  
465 Roger Williams Ave.  
Highland Park, IL 60035



**The Rissman Family Kol Ami Museum** is a unique collection of Jewish art, artifacts and ritual objects. In addition to preserving significant objects for posterity, the museum seeks to develop programs and exhibitions that are designed to educate the congregation and promote an appreciation for works of Judaica.

*North Suburban  
Synagogue*  
**Beth El**  
בית כנסת בית אל

1175 Sheridan Road, Highland Park 60035

Featuring works by participants in  
**North Suburban Synagogue Beth El's Artists' Beit Midrash**

Lois Baer Barr ▪ Sam Bernstein  
Enid Brick ▪ Trudy Isbitz Brodsky ▪ Sylvia Dresser  
Nessia Frank ▪ Brenda Jackson ▪ Judith Joseph  
Betsy Katz ▪ Michael Katz ▪ Ruti Modlin  
Bonnie Price ▪ Judy Solomon ▪ Sandy Starkman  
Steven Tovian ▪ Phyllis Woloshin

Curated by Judith Joseph



## The Spirituality of Color

The following participants also studied with the Artists' Beit Midrash during the summer of 2015:

Rebecca Rubin

Myrna Schwartz

Laura Hodes Zacks

The art in this exhibit resulted from an Artists' *Beit Midrash*, a course of text study and art discussion at North Suburban Synagogue Beth El, with support from the Gertrude Lederman Family Continuing Education program. The class was co-taught by **Judith Joseph** and **Jane Shapiro**. Judith is on the faculty of the Chicago Botanic Garden and The Art Center, Highland Park, where she teaches painting and calligraphy. She is a member of the Midwest Jewish Artists' Lab and organizes the adult study program at Congregation Hakafa. ([www.judithjosephstudio.com](http://www.judithjosephstudio.com)). Jane is a local Jewish educator. She is one of the founders of Orot: Center for New Jewish Learning ([www.orotcenter.org](http://www.orotcenter.org)).

Using sacred text study as a stepping-off point, the *Beit Midrash* participants studied ideas about color in the Bible, and viewed and discussed work by contemporary artists who explore similar concepts. They then went on to create their own works, inspired by and in response to the course discussions. The result is an exhibit in which sixteen artists express their connection with Judaism through paintings, ceramic sculpture, fiber art, photography, and poetry.

## Lois Baer Barr *What We Kept*

Poster and archival ink



*The poem was inspired by a Jenny Holzer poem that is installed in LED (light-emitting diode) lights in a two floor space in the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, and by looking up texts from our Artists' Beit Midrash. When I shared the poem with the group, the artists moved me with their comments about remembering loved ones who had died; so I decided to trace their words around the poem. I chose a silver matte because the silver walls of the museum in Bilbao reflect the poem just as the artists in our group reflected on the poem.*

**Lois Baer Barr** is a professor of Spanish at Lake Forest College. Her poetry in Spanish and English has appeared here and abroad and her chapbook won *Poetica's* 2013 Chapbook Contest. She has written extensively about Latin American Jewish Literature.

### In Front of Jenny Holzer's LED INSTALLATION IN BILBAO

I am forgetting my father.  
I was afraid of bathing him.  
I was afraid of dressing him.  
I was afraid he would forget my name.

I KEEP YOUR CLOTHES.

Suits and shoes went to Salvation Army.

I KEEP YOUR CLOTHES

## Phyllis Woloshin Necklaces

Czech beads and silver



*The individual colors of the rainbow are interpreted in separate pieces. The necklaces are constructed with Czech beads and 23 oz. of sterling silver in their clasps. The clasps are decorative and can be worn either front or back.*

**Phyllis Woloshin** spent the past thirty years as a Philosophy professor. She began making jewelry when a colleague of hers was saddened by the loss of some 'little people' on a necklace her husband gave her on their last vacation. He had just been diagnosed with cancer, and she said it would probably be her last gift from him. Phyllis took the necklace, replicated the little ones and made a few extra for good luck. Good luck indeed! He went into remission for seven years. That was enough to teach her that beads had powerful jiu-jiu!

## Steven Tovian

### Words from Torah

Calligraphy and ink drawings



*This work reflects those words from the Torah which are both very intellectual and emotional for Steven. Words from the Torah stimulate colorful visual responses as well. The Torah embodies all realms and senses of human experience. In response to the Artists' Beit Midrash class, he used colors that reflect strong emotions with several words and phrases from the Torah that are salient.*

### Unity

Digital print



*For my collaborative piece, I used the Hebrew from the Kabbalistic "72 Names of God."*

**Steven M. Tovian** is a Clinical and Health Psychologist in independent practice in Highland Park. He readily expresses himself in his work, in his personal life, and through his art; ink drawing, sculpture, and calligraphy. He will exhibit his work wherever he is invited.

Love letters from Camp Shelby, Mississippi: gone.

I KEEP YOUR CLOTHES

Brother has your tee-shirt from Iowa Writer's Festival.

I KEEP YOUR CLOTHES

Mom scolded when you wore dirty slacks from the hamper.

I KEEP YOUR CLOTHES

Your eyes, gray blue in the sweater from LL Bean.

I KEEP YOUR CLOTHES

Yellowed hankies thrown away.  
And boxer shorts and undershirts.

I KEEP YOUR CLOTHES

One brother got your fox hat from Russia.  
One a gold Rolex that never kept time.

I forget the feel of your hands, your gait, your  
aftershave. Your laugh, songs you hummed.

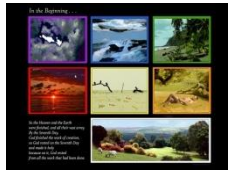
Today I find Torah: A Modern Commentary.  
Genesis, 2:25. In pencil you wrote "naked"  
above the Hebrew verse.

I search for notes, passages you've starred.  
I put the book on my face and breathe in the smell.

## Sam Bernstein

### *Creation through Colors*

Digital photography



*I tried to depict (somewhat surrealistically) the poetic Creation story from Genesis, by assigning one color to each day. Each day is represented by a photograph (or several) that I took in various locations – Highland Park, Brazil, Costa Rica, New Zealand, England, and Kenya – and then used digital manipulation to adjust colors, merge locations, etc.*

### *Under the Rainbow*

Digital photography; story by Lois Baer Barr



*While studying together at the Beit Midrash, Sam and Lois discovered that color is used parsimoniously in the Torah. Thinking about the idea of Noah's Ark, Lois reflected that the rainbow at the end of the flood has poetic contrast, because life in the ark must have been difficult, dark, and devoid of color. She wrote the short story to express that, and her story inspired Sam to use his photograph of a rainbow at Iguazú Falls in Argentina as an illustration. This is their second collaboration.*

**Sam Bernstein** was born and raised in Ottumwa, Iowa. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Chicago and graduate degrees from Northwestern, and has been married to the same wonderful woman since 1971. He took up art, including painting and photography, after his retirement in 2001.

See page 2 for **Lois Baer Barr's** biography.

## Sandy Starkman

### *The Spirituality of Color*

Quilt



*This piece is based on simple Amish and “stained glass” quilts. Tanach is full of colors and each color has different meaning: red for blood, life, danger, and sin; white for faith in God, manna, discernment, and ritual purity; blue for where God “lives” and where we live, royal and aspirational; gold for the menorah and Jerusalem; green for the earth and the Jewish value of Bal Tash'cheet (do not destroy or waste); and the colors of the rainbow to remind God (and human beings) of the Covenant. The tzitzit were made with techelet (blue) and the red string reminds us of the High Priest's sacrifices. The border of techelet v'argaman v'tola'at shani (blue, purple, and crimson) is reminiscent of the hierarchy of colors in the Mishkan (Tabernacle) and in the Hoshen (breastplate of the High Priest).*

**Sandy Starkman** of Highland Park does not yet consider herself an artist, but she thoroughly enjoyed being part of the Artists' Beit Midrash the past two years at NSS Beth El. Her first quilt was published in the 2009-2010 edition of East on Central Journal of Arts and Letters.

## Judy Solomon

### Avodah

Ceramic

### Bereshit (Genesis) Work in Progress

Ceramic



(detail)

“Avodah” (work, dedication, service) is a wonderful word that transcends the common and every day, or rather, gives the everyday activity of work in one’s field a higher value, a spiritual value. The simple numbering of the days of Creation in Genesis becomes the metaphor for our weeks of avodah. Six days (sheshet yamim) and rest/reflect; then repeat the cycle. Working with clay, with all of its timing and technical issues and tasks, makes me even more aware of the passage of time: hours, days, the time that remains.



For Bereshit (Genesis) Work in Progress, I found a parallel between the poetic description of the first six days of Genesis and the transformation of wet, unformed clay into something of value in the medium of ceramics. Starting with “tohu vavohu” of Day One, I responded to the images created in my mind by key phrases. I incised those into the platforms in rough Hebrew script.

**Judy Solomon** is a retired art teacher. She is now concentrating on the study of ceramics. These are her first attempts at combining new high fire ceramic skills into larger format pieces. The Artists’ Beit Midrash sessions these past two summers have given her the key first to understand and then to explore what it means to be a contemporary artist.

## Enid Brick

### Untitled

Pastel drawing



“The sky is the daily bread of the eyes.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson  
To contemplate creation by looking at the vast array of colors in the sky is to see G-d’s handiwork and know that this intricate and mysterious creation holds us and our loved ones in ultimate safety and care.

**Enid Brick** is a student of mysticism. Her intention is to capture the feeling of the mystical through her art work. In past years she has exhibited her work in group shows at the Beverly Art Center Invitational, Union League Club and other venues.

## Trudy Isbitz Brodsky

### Shiviti Jars: “Black Gold,” “Shamayim,” and “Sefirot”

Found materials



I am fascinated by the use of eclectic materials taken from nature and from recyclable materials to make statements about concepts in Torah. The Shiviti jars are meant to help focus the viewer’s consciousness both visually and tactilely, focusing on the ideas of Black Gold, Shamayim (heavens) and Sefirot (the connectedness of the world).

**Trudy Isbitz-Brodsky** is a native Chicagoan, mother of 3, grandmother of 3 ¾ grandchildren. She is a Master Teacher with a BS and MA from Northwestern University and has served as Religious School Director at Anshe Emet Synagogue, Niles Township Congregation, and Ezra-Habonim, the Niles Township Jewish Congregation Religious School. She presently teaches at Am Yisrael’s School of Jewish Studies and substitutes in the Evanston-Skokie District 65 schools. She is also a Senior Diversity Trainer for the Anti-Defamation League.



## Sylvia Dresser

### 1 + 1 = 3

Yarn, thread, fabric and beads



*In my professional life, I have had many opportunities to collaborate with wonderful people, coming up with outcomes that were greater than the sum of us, hence 1 + 1 = 3. When we read Exodus 25 in this Beit Midrash, about the items that were to be in the tabernacle and how they were to be made, the concept of using acacia wood and gold together reminded me of this kind of collaboration.*

**Sylvia Dresser** has held fiber in her hands since she was a child, learning to knit, crochet and embroider from her grandmother. She continues to learn new techniques and seeks out ways to express concepts using a variety of materials.

## Nessia Frank

### The “Stones” of the Hoshen: A Work in Progress

Ceramic



*These tiles consist of the names and symbols of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. I attempted to recreate the colors of the stones of the hoshen (breastplate of the High Priest) – a different color for each tile.*

**Nessia Frank** was born in Israel. She studied graphic design at Betzalel Art School in Jerusalem. Nessia taught art at day care centers and summer camps, both in Israel and in the US. Her media are calligraphy, ceramic, and papier-mâché.

## Bonnie Price

### In the Beginning...

Acrylic on canvas board

### Don't Touch

Acrylic on canvas board



*Connecting specific color to Jewish concepts is an old, yet timeless, exploration of grand themes. My challenge in these works was to create a cohesive expression of color, while embracing the dichotomy of grandeur and exclusion. These two pieces use colors so dramatic and familiar to women — gold and red. We are alternatively sought after and separated by society and yet we are known for our clarity and strength... we just keep rolling along.*

**Bonnie Price** is a “creative” with colors and textures. The Artists’ Beit Midrash course has encouraged her to combine her love of being Jewish and her bold color preferences by experimenting with paint.



## Ruti Modlin

### *Beged Habgadim*

Acrylic on canvas

### *Shabbat*

Acrylic on canvas



(detail)

*Beged Habgadim*, translated as “Cloth of Clothes,” depicts the ceremonial robe the high priest, HaKohen HaGadol, used to don once a year, when entering the holiest place of the Temple, the core – the Holy of Holies, Kodesh HaKodashim. The title is a play on words on the Holy of Holies.

**Ruti Modlin** is an Israeli-born artist who spent her formative years in Europe. After her army service in Israel, she studied graphic design and fine art in Johannesburg, South Africa. She moved to Highland Park with her family in 1998.

Ruti is a two-time participant in the Artists’ Beit Midrash. She is a member of ARC Gallery in Chicago. She teaches at the Art Center of Highland Park and at Congregation Beth Shalom Hebrew School in Northbrook. Her work is in private collections and has been exhibited in Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Toronto, Canada and Paris.

## Brenda Jackson

### *Gilgul*

Mixed media

### *Just Breathe*

Mixed media



*Gilgul* (“cycle” or “wheel”) includes the three colors of the priestly garment: crimson, blue and purple. These colors, when mentioned in the Torah, are often layered and in specific order. This painting has many layers of color and while there may be chaos to the brush strokes, it takes on certain order with shapes and boundaries. On our personal journeys, we all have the desire for connection and protection and can find our pathway to

the spiritual by traveling “in circles” rather than a straight path, finding ourselves again and again.

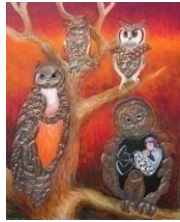
*Just Breathe* is a mixed media work that depicts in an abstract way the relationship we all have to one another. Separateness is an illusion. We are all connected. The letter “hey” emits a “breath” that is carried to the four corners of the earth and touches everything in between. Focusing on our breath can be a means for spiritual development. When spoken, the letter “hey” makes the sound of breathing out. It is effortless and if repeated can bring our attention and our mind into the present. The colors depict purity, honesty and a closeness to G-d as well as one another.

**Brenda Jackson** is an artist with a degree in painting from Hope College in Holland, MI and a degree in Art Education from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She has taught in the Chicago public and private school system as well as for the Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Preschool at NSS Beth El.

## Judith Joseph

### *Portrait of My Grandmother and Her Sisters as Owls*

Egg tempera and tooled copper on panel



*My grandmother and two of her sisters emigrated from Poland in the 1920's as teenagers. They had older half-sisters who stayed behind in Europe. Along with their young children, they perished in the Holocaust. As my grandmother put it, "Hitler took care of them."*

**Judith Joseph** is a painter and calligrapher. She exhibits internationally and creates commissioned works for public and private collections. She specializes in the Ketubah (illustrated Jewish marriage contract). She received Illinois Arts Council Artists' Fellowship Awards in 1998 and 2004.

## Michael Katz and Betsy Dolgin Katz

### *Revitalization and Triumph*

Photography with poetry



*These photographs by Michael and the accompanying poetry written by Betsy capture both the light and darkness of life in the Chicago Botanic Garden – and perhaps are a microcosm of life in general. We are immersed in a world shaped by cycles of birth and death and birth once again. It is a world in which creation and decay exist side by side. If we remove barriers in our mind that block our vision, we can become aware of beauty in all natural aspects of existence--not only in the world of plants, but also in the world of animals and of humanity.*

**Dr. Betsy Dolgin Katz** has worked in Jewish Education since high school as a teacher, education director for the Kohl Jewish Teacher Center, and consultant for the Board of Jewish Education. After twenty-three years as the founding director of the Florence Melton School of Adult Learning, she is now doing what she enjoys most – teaching adults about Judaism – and writing poetry on the side. **Michael Katz** has always enjoyed the technical and aesthetic aspects of photography. He is a volunteer photographer for the Department of Plant Documentation of the Chicago Botanic Garden.

**TRIUMPH** (by Betsy Dolgin Katz in response to photo of Nymphaea Red Flair)

A crimson water lily opens  
Reaching outward to conceal surrounding blackness  
With a brilliant red glow

Life triumphs with its light and color  
Defeating dark nature  
That dwells in the cycles of existence

**REVITALIZATION** (by Betsy Dolgin Katzin)

When my cold soul yearns for nourishment  
I visit new spring gardens where death and life dwell together  
I walk winding paths between decay and creation, thorn and flower

As winter ends the sun warms my heart, mild breezes caress my spirit  
Sequined ripples on the pond wash away the shadows  
Swooping hawks, chattering blackbirds, graceful herons nourish my imagination  
Blooming trees, budding blossoms awaken a dormant desire for being

I walk amidst life reborn  
My soul refreshed