

The following participants also studied with the Artists Beit Midrash during the summer of 2017:

Trudy Isbitz Brodsky

Rinna Maletsky

Rhonda Newman

Carol Pomerantz

Linda Sonin

The Rissman Kol Ami Collection 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

Rissman Kol Ami Collection

1175 Sheridan Road, Highland Park 60035

Family Ties as Inspiration for Art

An Artists Beit Midrash Exhibition

curated by Judith Joseph

November 5, 2017-January 7, 2018



Featuring works by:

Lois Baer Barr ▪ Susan Dickman ▪ Sylvia Dresser
Shoshana Friedman ▪ Suzanne Horwitz ▪ Brenda Jackson
Dorit Jordan Dotan ▪ Judith Joseph ▪ Betsy Dolgin Katz
Jacqueline Kott-Wolle ▪ Arlyn Miller ▪ Ruti Modlin
Marla Snyder ▪ Judith Solomon ▪ Sandy Starkman
Laura Hodes Zacks

The Rissman Kol Ami Collection at North Suburban Synagogue Beth El

Family Ties as Inspiration for Art

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 **Dr. 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. Jane is a local Jewish educator. She is co-founder of Orot: Center for New Jewish Learning and the recipient of the 2017 Covenant Award for excellence in Jewish education.

Using sacred text study as a stepping-off point, the *Beit Midrash* participants studied ideas about family relationships 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, prints, ceramic art, sculpture, fiber art, photography, poetry, and prose.

Laura Hodes Zacks

Arrival and Departures

Collage and prose



*The story in this exhibit is a chapter from my book-in-progress, **Arrival and Departures: One Family, Four Continents**. Each chapter is about some kind of arrival or departure in the interconnected lives of a family, based upon stories of my family. The thread running through the stories is the theme of loss and survival, and how much of our ancestors' experiences become our own, and how we transcend those experiences.*

I found the Artists Beit Midrash to be such an inspiring, collaborative experience. Learning about text and art, seeing other participants' work, and talking sparked many ideas for my own creative work. Seeing the work of Dorit Jordan Dotan in which she collaged images of Jewish objects found in a market in Prague with portraits of her own family members gave me the idea to make art out of my own family photos. During SuperStorm Sandy, my father's photo albums of his childhood and the early years of his marriage to my mother were ruined by the floods. In this age of Photoshop, Instagram and Snapchat in which we erase physical flaws and the ravages of time, we are so accustomed to seeing idealized images. I thought, what about taking these ruined family photos and instead of trying to preserve or perfect them, magnifying the image and the damage and thereby making manifest the ephemeralness of time and memory? I used two lines of text from my manuscript, collaging them onto the image. Thank you to Marla Snyder for encouraging me and suggesting that this could be the start of a series.

Laura Hodes Zacks writes regularly for the Arts and Culture section of the *Forward* reviewing art, theater and books. Her op-eds and essays have also been published in *Slate*, *The New Republic*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *BUST Magazine* and *Kveller.com*. She is working on a book of linked stories, an excerpt of which is in the exhibit. She majored in English literature at Yale and graduated from the University of Chicago Law School. She was born in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia), grew up in Long Island, and now lives in the north suburbs of Chicago where she is married and the mother to four children. This is the first time she has had her own work displayed in an art exhibit since high school!

Sandy Starkman

The Family that 'Nests' Together. . . Family Relationships in the Bible

Photographs on fabric



My family was created and driven by Genesis 12:1: "... Lech L'cha ... leave the house of your father..." and Deuteronomy 26:5: "My father was a wandering Aramean..."

Great grandfather Isaiah Glabman was murdered by Cossacks 1904 in Zlatopol Ukraine. His children Fanny, Esther, and Isadore came to the United States to save their lives. (Isaiah's wife

Chayna and other children and grandchildren followed.)

Grandfather Louis Starkman of Selitz, Russia, left to avoid conscription in the Czar's army.

Grandfather Sam Lashinsky left Poland to attain economic advantage.

Great great grandmother Eva Kluska of Lubraniec, Poland, and her children Crusa and Zelik came to the "goldene Medina" of America (and all siblings followed except son Yona and family).

Yona's son Henry, an ardent Zionist, joined the Irgun, arrived to Israel on the Altalena after a "detour" in Auschwitz and other evil places.

My family exists because they left "their father's house and wandered!!!"

A member of NSS Beth El since 1982, [Sandy Starkman](#) is the "Founder" of Beth El's Artists Beit Midrash with Jane and Judith. She is an experienced seamstress, an intermediate quilter, and a creative cook and baker. Sandy enjoys Hebrew text study and is an admirer of art, especially glass, textiles, photographs and ceramics. Still, she doesn't consider herself an artist!!!!

Lois Baer Barr

Secrets ▪ Megillat Bialystok ▪ Woodcut of a Field of Wheat

Poetry, Collage, Multimedia



***Secrets**, poem, collage: The piece was inspired by Judy Solomon's ceramics piece by the same title. As Judy talked to me about her mother, the poem grew. The photo of her mother's doily is by Judy Solomon.*

***Megillat Bialystok**, poem and multimedia: Judy Solomon and I started thinking about what we would do as a combined effort with ceramics and poetry. We looked at old photographs of my family here and in the Old Country, and I started thinking of the legacy of my great grandfather who was a Torah scribe. I thought of him sitting down to begin a scroll and the words "Bereshit Bialystok" came to me. Researching Bialystok, I realized that I never heard my family speak about it at all. I discovered why. Thanks to Judith Joseph for graphic design of the parchment and to Betsy Dolgin Katz for examples of megillah cases.*

***Woodcut of a Field of Wheat**, poem: At a brainstorming session after the close of our Artists Beit Midrash classes, Judith Joseph told the story of how her grandfather escaped a pogrom. The poem grew out of the first stanza which I wanted to have the quality of a folk ballad.*

It's an old family story.
Who knows if it is true,
but sometimes when I nap,
I dream of skies of blue,
of the smell of pine,
the taste of grass
and stalks of red, red wheat.

[Lois Baer Barr](#) is an emerita professor of Spanish at Lake Forest College and a literacy tutor at the Waukegan Public Library. Her poetry, fiction, memoir and critical essays in Spanish and English have appeared here and abroad, and her chapbook won *Poetica Magazine's* 2013 Chapbook Contest.

Susan Dickman

What Is Kept

Photograph, beeswax, damar resin, oil stick, ink, paper



My piece is based on a house that I've often photographed in my cousin's village, and on a long poem I wrote about the fragmented and mismatched nature of family and identity. An aunt who emigrates to Palestine and never returns; a child born, it seems to her, to the wrong parents in the wrong place; a cousin who, encountering relatives for the first time only as an adult, realizes what she is missing. Our family stories are housed within the fragile buildings of memories that span lands and seas and years. The image of the house in my cousin's village—tiny but sturdy, a relic from the pre-state era but still standing, abandoned yet alive and open to the elements—seems emblematic of the dynamic of the small but tangled nest of cousins born on another continent, familiar strangers who share my blood. When we visit, we linger over photographs from our dead parents' albums, turning over images of people whose faces we cannot always decipher. Familiar and yet nameless, lost to the years: what is kept. We keep looking.

Susan Dickman is an artist, writer, teacher and founding member of the Jewish Artists Collective of Chicago. She has exhibited work at the Spertus Institute of Jewish Learning, The Evanston Art Center, The Art Center of Highland Park, The Bridgeport Arts Center, and Morpho Gallery. An Illinois Arts Council Award recipient, she has published poetry, fiction, and essays in *Intellectual Refuge*, *Best of the Best American Poetry 2013*, *Lilith*, *Zocalo Public Square*, and *Brain, Child*. In Spring 2018, look for her story, "The First Time That He Died," in *Jewish Fiction*.

Judith Solomon

Secrets

Glazed stoneware

Not A Word...

Mixed media (ceramic, paint and collage)



Secrets is a piece that addresses her mother's inability to be open and sharing. While warm and loving, she was too timid to come out of her shell to effect change in the family dynamic. Take a close look and see if you can see inside.

Not A Word... is a graffiti-style remembrance for the great tragedy mentioned in Lois Barr's poem, **Megillat Bialystok**. Using copies of Lois' family pictures and bits of information from Wikipedia, I viscerally reacted to the words "nisht a vort in Yiddish." Also, because Lois and I often converse in Spanish, and some of her relatives went to Argentina, the phrase "ni una palabra" would not leave my mind and found a place here.

Judy Solomon is a retired public school art teacher working exclusively in ceramics for the last six years. She has attended all four sessions of the Artists Beit Midrash and credits it for her ability to participate in the contemporary art dialogue.

Marla Snyder

Little Miss Pineappleme

Book and story boards (colored pencils and gouache on paper)



Little Miss Pineappleme is a mixed medium custom book project inspired by her adorable granddaughter. Sophia loves books and Marla loves reading to her. Marla wanted to create something special for Sophia to cherish and celebrate the arrival of her new sister. She used colored pencils, gouache and cut paper. L'Dor Vador.

Marla Snyder was a graphic designer for over 30 years before starting a second career as a teacher, deciding that she enjoyed working with people more than computers. She was the Studio Art teacher at Rochelle Zell Jewish High School for 16 years and just retired. Marla continues to teach her signature classes DRAWING/WATERCOLOR FOR THOSE WHO DON'T THINK THEY CAN in the community area. Currently, she is teaching at The Art Center in Highland Park and The Gallery in Lake Forest.

Ruti Modlin

Avraham, Avraham!!

Acrylic on canvas



I chose the subject of Akedat Yitschak / The binding of Isaac (Genesis 22), because of its monumental philosophical and evolutionary significance to the Jewish people and to future generations of the world. This difficult moment signifies that a line had been drawn between past barbarian sacrificial practices and a more measured way of showing our devotion to Elohim. Avraham and Isaac are encapsulated in their own emotional turmoil, on top of an innocent Ram, unconscious of its own fate. We are always striving towards a gentler, kinder way towards our environment, trying to be the light onto the nations.

Ruti Modlin is an independent artist and teacher in Highland Park. She was born in Israel, grew up in Europe and travelled the world with her late father, who was a seafaring Captain and child Holocaust survivor.

Sylvia Dresser

The Ties that Bind

Fiber and Shofar



This is my son's shofar. The band I wove, using a ply split braiding technique, is in the colors of the Mishkan, symbolizing Judaism, which is one of the many ways that we are connected in the mother-son relationship.

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.

Shoshana Friedman and Betsy Dolgin Katz

Chupah ■ Wimples

Embroidery and paint on fabric



The Chupah: The Jewish concept of marriage has always been a sacred one. Each new couple is a new version of the first couple, Adam and Eve, standing at the beginning of time. The chupah, in our exhibit belongs to Hannah Katz Kornbluth and Craig Akiba Kornbluth. Like all chupot, it represents the new home created by the marriage. The designs portray important events in Hannah and Craig's lives, places where they shared their growing relationship. In addition, they are accompanied under the chupah by an image that blends their family trees, the generations of parents, grandparents and great grandparents who come together through their marriage. The chupah was designed by Hannah's mother, Betsy and was embroidered, painted, and stitched together by family and friends who willingly took it on as a project sharing their skills and their love with the new couple and joining those represented in the family tree in blessing the sacred occasion.

A wimple, a Torah binder, is a centuries-old German Jewish tradition, originally adapted from the wimple worn by nuns as part of their formal dress. In Jewish tradition, it is

ideally made from the blanket a baby boy is wrapped in at his circumcision. The blanket is cut into strips that are sown end to end and decorated with a traditional blessing that names the baby and his father along with his birth date and prays that God see that the child be raised to Torah, to chupah, and good deeds. Today it can be for a boy or for a girl, the fabric may not be from the swaddling cloth, the names also include both parents, the four grandparents, and any brothers or sisters. The prayer remains the same. The wimples in this exhibit were designed by Shoshana Friedman and Betsy Katz. Dozens of friends and family members stitched or painted the designs. Some of the pieces were sent around the country to complete and then returned to be stitched into place. A special dimension on some wimples is the incorporation of meaningful fabrics—pieces from a grandfather's tallit bag, a grandmother's apron, a mother's wedding dress, a father's kippah.

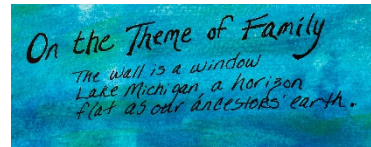
Shoshana Friedman learned her love for the colors and textures of fabric and threads from her mother and grandfather. "The New Jewish Catalogue" inspired her to apply sewing skills to creating Jewish family heirloom textiles. From her first wimple created for her son Ari's Bar Mitzvah, to project planning of wimples for friends and community, to original chupah designs and executions, Shoshana has integrated precious fabrics and images into these heirloom textiles. After "retirement" from an active career in marketing and sales, Shoshana continued involvement in the community through employment at the Council on Jewish Elderly and spearheading the founding of Lone Soldier Connect. Jewish study has inspired the motifs for her textile arts as she continues to express her creative spirit.

Betsy Dolgin Katz grew up where women and young girls spent free time weaving fabric, embroidering samplers, or stitching quilts. As a Jewish educator and writer, Betsy more often is weaving together ideas, embroidering stories, or stitching together Biblical and Talmudic texts. Betsy started her career as the Assistant Principal at Beth El, moved on to the Kohl Jewish Teacher Center and the Board of Jewish Education, and spent thirty years as National Director of the Melton School of Adult Learning. She has written three books and many articles on adult learning and has served as adjunct professor and mentor at Spertus and Gratz College.

Arlyn Miller

On the Theme of Family

Poetry, Multimedia



This project is my latest exploration of the merger of words – incorporeal signifiers used to conjure sound, image and story – and the dimensional materiality of visual media such as painting, collage, and film.

What is both interesting and daunting for me about integrating art and writing is how to draft text and create art in a way that is complimentary and achieves the right balance. Should the text of the poem be the focus or foreground and the visual art be the backdrop or frame, or vice versa? And where on the spectrum from representational to suggestive to abstract should the visual art fall? The process of interweaving words and art feels very different from "ekphrasis," the time-honored tradition of writing about art. While I've had a lot of experience manipulating the sound, meaning, and spacing on the page of language to create a poem, navigating the functions that image, color, shape and texture serve in a work of visual art is less familiar and more challenging for me. And so my work and play in the expressive arts continues, enriched by my participation in the 2017 Artists Beit Midrash.

These works are a poetic chronicle of my Summer 2017 Artist Beit Midrash experience. As a kehillah (study group) we shared our own reflections on family and how they have or might inform our artistic work. The synergy of the group is reflected in these pieces, thanks to my classmate, Marla Snyder, helping me design and create the visual art elements.

Arlyn Miller is a published poet, essayist, and journalist. She teaches poetry-based expressive writing in schools and other community venues and is the founding editor of Poetic License Press. In recent years, Arlyn has explored the intersection of writing and visual art, sometimes collaborating with visual artists and art therapists. Inspired by her participation in the 2016 Artists Beit Midrash on the theme of "landscape," Arlyn is the senior editor of *In Plein Air*, a limited edition anthology of poetry and art about the natural world.

Betsy Dolgin Katz ... see Shoshana Friedman

Jacqueline Kott-Wolle

Lech Lecha... Go To Yourself

Oil on canvas



"Leave your land, your birthplace, and your father's house, and go to a land which I will show you." (Genesis 12:1)

I still remember the filtered light streaming through my window on that winter morning. It was all ahead of me. I was starting my own transformative "lech lecha" journey toward motherhood. I imagined endless hours looking down into your baby face, streams of legos and small socks everywhere. I pictured birthday parties and trips to the playground. One day, far in the distance, I'd teach you how to ride a bike. I could see myself reading to you, feeding you, soothing you and becoming 'mom'. I was nervous about my new role but excited too. When I was six months pregnant I could not imagine that glaring summer day a few months ago when I watched you walk away from me on the beach. You are 18 now and you are heading toward your own Lech Lecha journey to Israel for the year. Where did the time go? I still see the little boy playing with his toys, not the young man who is taller than me. Now when I want to see your face I have to look up. My sweet son, you are my great blessing – in you I found so much of my life's purpose. Today I'm feeling wistful and nervous but I am so very excited for you. Now it's your turn: Lech Lecha. Go my Henry. Go to yourself and learn who you were meant to be...

Jacqueline Kott-Wolle has lived in Highland Park for the last nine years with her husband and three children. Born and raised in Toronto, Canada, Jacqueline has always enjoyed all creative pursuits. Although she studied Social Work, Jacqueline managed to incorporate the arts in almost every professional position she has held. Over the last ten years, Jacqueline fulfilled a long-time goal of pursuing her desire to paint by taking many classes at The Art Center of Highland Park. She currently paints in oils, focusing on both landscapes and works that have more sentimental value, capturing precious moments with her family. Jacqueline's works are in private collections in Highland Park IL, Toronto Canada, Milwaukee WI, Boca Raton FL, Nantucket MA, and Ra'anana, Israel.

Suzanne Horwitz

Masks and Drawings

Porcelain



Although primarily a figurative sculptor, I have produced a diverse and extensive body of work in both drawing and sculpture. My artwork ranges from intimate portraits to room-sized and outdoor installations. Viewer-object orientation, social commentary, and implied use of materials are integral to the interpretation of my sculpture.

The theme of family relationships was the focus of our study in the Artists Beit Midrash. To create a family, we form an organization with connections between the mentors and mentees. Parents excitedly anticipate the birth of their children, wanting everything to be perfect. However, as we cross the bridge of life from couple to family, the road has many obstacles. Parents, siblings and extended family members assert influences directly and indirectly on each other, with different outcomes, as alluded to in the exhibited drawings.

I am fascinated by people, and the masks we all wear in our roles, whether consciously or unconsciously. It is as a veneer, veil, cover or window-dressing, an outward appearance. In this exhibit, the youthful porcelain masks are installed above the standard adult eye level. This allows the observer to view childlike images from an unusual perspective.

Suzanne Horwitz is a second generation artist interested in viewer-object orientation, the implied use of materials and social-cultural commentary. She has produced a diverse body of sculpture, ranging from intimate portraits to large installations. Her works earned numerous awards, and have been exhibited in various venues. Her work is in the collections of The Options Clearing Corporation, Chicago, Goldman Sachs, New York, plus private collections. This year Suzanne was selected to be a Fellow of the Covenant at The Spertus Museum of Jewish Learning. Horwitz is on the faculty of The Art Center of Highland Park. She received a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Michigan, studied drawing and sculpture at the Art Students League of New York, and earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Brenda Jackson

Where We Meet

Mixed media



I like to work in abstract form. Painting for me is a collection of colors, shapes and lines that evoke feelings. I am drawn in to a piece where I can make connections about the world we live in.

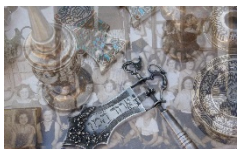
Where We Meet is a painting about family and how families can disconnect and reconnect. Families are dynamic and constantly changing. Sometimes they are torn apart or slowly unravel. The stability and familiarity seems lost. There can be disruption, strife, pride, envy, disgust, anger, joy and love in every family. My painting reflects the fragility, repair and constant longing to connect to family.

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.

Dorit Jordan Dotan

Damned Hamman

Photography/New Media



This work consists of sacred Jewish objects found for sale at an antique market in Vienna, looted from the original owners by our century's Hamman. The background is the last photo taken of my grandmother before fleeing Vienna, to become a refugee

in the Shanghai Ghetto, China. This piece was created for The Jewish Art Salon's Exhibition "Faith & Form" and was on view at The Anne Frank Center USA in NYC.

Dorit Jordan Dotan, was born in Israel in 1961. In her work, she combines her photography with innovative digital art. Her images often express her social/political views. Through her creations, she attempts to call attention to social and cultural issues. Her recent work has dealt with her family's journeys, from Vienna to Shanghai to Israel.

Dorit lives and works in Evanston. She is a Fellow with the Jewish Art Salon and is currently in a group exhibition with the Artist's Lab of Spertus. Her work has been exhibited in Israel and around the world. She exhibits often in the Hebrew Union College Museum, and her work was selected for the permanent art installation at the Park Avenue Synagogue, New York. She participated in the Jerusalem Biennale of Jewish Art in 2015 and 2017, and curated an exhibition at the Evanston Art Center about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Judith Joseph

Zaida In The Wheatfield

Woodblock print



My woodblock print depicts a story I heard from my father, about his father. I think of it as an impression, rather than an illustration. The image emerged through the collaborative process of the Artists Beit Midrash. It began with my telling the story in an ABM-related informal coffee setting. Lois Barr, a poet and longtime member of the ABM (and longtime painting student of mine) was moved to create a poem in response to my story. Only when I read her beautiful poem was I able, through my tears, to see how this tale might take shape visually.

To me, this represents the ideal synergy of the Artists Beit Midrash: we gather, we share, and our Jewish memories and ideas are enlarged and enhanced through our shared ideas and wisdom. Artistic collaboration has the dual benefit of sparking creative projects and strengthening our bonds as a Jewish artistic community, as we study our ancient texts and look at art being created today by Jewish artists all over the world.

Judith Joseph's paintings, woodblock prints and calligraphy (*ketubot*) are in numerous public and private collections. She exhibits widely across the U.S. and Canada, is a two-time recipient of the Illinois Arts Council Fellowship Award, and was one of twelve artists selected for the inaugural cohort of the Midwest Jewish Artists Lab for an exhibit at Spertus. She is a Fellow Member of the Jewish Art Salon, the largest international artists and scholars organization for contemporary Jewish visual art. She is on the art faculty at the Chicago Botanic Garden and the Art Center, Highland Park. She is passionate about helping people explore and express their Jewish heritage through art.