

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.

Artwork from the ***Painted Portraits of a Family Past*** exhibit is available for purchase. Contact Rachel Kamin at rkamin@nssbethel.org or 847-926-7902 for more information.

North Suburban Synagogue

Beth El

בית כנסת בית אל

Rissman Kol Ami Collection

1175 Sheridan Road, Highland Park 60035

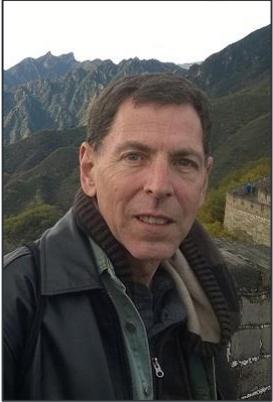
Painted Portraits of a Family Past: **The Art of Howard Schwartz**

March 16 – June 3, 2018



**The Rissman Kol Ami Collection at
North Suburban Synagogue Beth El**

About the Artist



Artist and historian Howard Schwartz creates mixed media compositions that have the sensibilities of non-objective art. He then integrates into the amalgam of paint, photography, and found objects specific images of his own past generations that serve as the inspiration for his work.

Howard Schwartz holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Northern Illinois University and Master of Art and Master of Fine Arts degrees from the University of Wisconsin. He taught painting and drawing courses, including Advanced Placement drawing and 2-D design, at Glenbard West High School in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, from 1984-2014. Now retired from teaching, he exhibits his work and presents artist talks. Two of his paintings, acquired in 2016 by Chicago's Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership, are on permanent display in the Spertus Collection.

For additional information about the artist and his work, please visit his website at howardschwartz.wordpress.com.

Artist Statement

When I was seventeen years old, I began documenting my family's history and preserving artifacts of its past. At the same time, I became an artist whose paintings were inspired by the very history that I was researching.

I continued to use themes of *family past* while working towards my Master of Art and my Master of Fine Art degrees in painting and drawing at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. There, I created non-objective art either on flat planes or as relief sculpture, all inspired by the impact of time on various surfaces. Eventually, images of my ancestors, who continued to feed my inspiration, were portrayed in the more literal format we see today.



Whether working non-objectively or using subject matter, my message of *sentiments from the past* remains the same. I rhapsodize over images of my ancestors by designing surfaces that transcend their original photographic existence to exude a more expressive result. To achieve this, I use primarily traditional paints and collage on stretched canvas. The type of art I make also allows me to experiment with less typical materials like mud, straw, tar, or glitter. Occasionally I may attach to surfaces an assortment of found objects such as those made of metal, wood or fabric, to evoke the nostalgia of an artifact or to simulate primordial substances. Applying media itself is exciting for me as I derive much pleasure in solving compositional challenges with this wide array of materials. While the process is complex, the end product is a simple and honest depiction of my family.

A subplot in much of my art is nature and the cosmos in which we all exist, both past and present. The suggestion of the world beyond the family runs throughout my portfolio, and influences the colors, patterns, and materials I use to build my compositions.

Bringing "what was" back to life by integrating images of past generations into my art is my motivation to produce these canvases. Whether through my mixed media compositions or by the myriad of "artist talks" that I have presented in recent years, I've tried to keep relevant *days past* as well as the people who preceded us. They could now be viewed in a profusion of images that are depicted in the art I create.

