

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

***Sacred Space:
Wrapped in Spirituality***
**Art by Jane Cooperman and
Karen Bieber**

September 10 - October 29, 2017



The Rissman Kol Ami Collection at
North Suburban Synagogue Beth El

Reconciliation

“For on this day, atonement shall be made for you to purify you from all your sins. You shall be pure before the Lord.” *Leviticus* 16:30

Jacob’s Dream I

“He had a dream; a stairway was set on the ground and its top reached to the sky, and the angels of G-d were going up and down on it.” *Genesis* 28:12

“Remember, I am with you: I will protect you wherever you go...” *Genesis* 28:15

The Creation of Man

“Rabbi Simeon then rose and spoke: ‘In meditating, I have perceived that when G-d was about to create man, then above and below all creatures commenced to tremble. The course of the sixth day was unfolding when at last the divine decision was made. Then there blazed forth the source of all light and opened up the gate of the East, from where light flows. The light which had been bestowed on it at the beginning, the South gave forth in full glory, and the South took hold upon the East. The East took hold on the North, and the North awakened and, opening forth, called loud to the West that he should come to him. Then the West traveled up into the North and came together with it, and after that the South surrounded the Garden, being its fences.’” *Zohar: The Book of Splendor: Basic Readings from the Kabbalah*, edited by Gershom Scholem

Jacob’s Dream II (see *Jacob’s Dream I*)

Light

“G-d said, ‘Let there be light’ and there was light.” *Genesis* 1:3

Gold

“Rabbi Hisda said: ‘There are seven kinds of gold: gold; good gold; gold of Ophir; fine gold; spun gold; locked gold; Parwayim gold. Gold and good gold, as it is written: ‘And the gold of that land is good.’” (*Genesis* 2:12).” *Mishna Yoma* 44b

Day and Nightingales

Rabbi Isaac said: “Light is sown for the righteous, then will the worlds be in harmony and all will be united...this light emerged from the darkness which was hewed out by the strokes of the Most Sacred.” *Zohar: The*

Book of Splendor: Basic Readings from the Kabbalah, edited by Gershom Scholem

Jacobs Dream III (see *Jacob’s Dream I*)

Breath of Life

“...the Lord G-d formed man from the dust of the earth. He blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.” *Genesis* 2:7

Consuming Fire

“Rabbi Isaac said: In one place it is written, ‘For the Lord thy G-d is a consuming fire,’ (*Deuteronomy* 4:24), and elsewhere, ‘But ye that cleave unto the Lord your G-d are alive every one of you this day’ (*Deuteronomy* 4:4). Underneath it is blue or black light upon which the others rest as on a support. At times this blue or black light turns red, but the light above remains constantly white. Only just perceptible above the white light is yet another light. This one symbolized the supreme essence.” *Zohar: The Book of Splendor: Basic Readings from the Kabbalah*, edited by Gershom Scholem

The First Day I

“In the beginning G-d created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep and a wind from G-d was sweeping over the water....” *Genesis* 1:1 - 1:2

Jacob’s Dream IV (see *Jacob’s Dream I*)

Mist from the Earth

Rabbi Simeon continues: “Thus, to form the cloud, vapor ascends first from the earth. And, likewise, the smoke of the sacrifice ascends, creating harmony above and uniting all, so the celestial sphere has completion in it.” *Zohar: The Book of Splendor: Basic Readings from the Kabbalah*, edited by Gershom Scholem

Parting of the Red Sea – Brown

“Then Moses held out his arm over the sea and the Lord drove back the sea with a strong east wind all that night, and turned the sea into dry ground. The waters were split....” *Exodus* 14:21

Parting of the Red Sea – Blue (see *Parting of the Red Sea – Brown*)

The First Day II (see *The First Day I*)

About the Artists

Jane Cooperman has been an artist all her life and holds a graduate degree in Fine Arts from the University of Chicago. For the past 20 years she has devoted her art to the translation of stories of Torah and Kabbalah in works painted on silk and velvet.

Karen Bieber has been an active member of North Suburban Synagogue Beth El since 1985. She has been collecting Jewish stories and retelling them to a variety of adult audiences (including a program for the Men's Club's *Bagels for Your Brain* series at Beth El) for more than 20 years. She is also an accomplished seamstress.

These cousins lend form to their love of Judaism and Jewish stories in fine silk designs. Their collaborative works were included in Jane's show at Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel in New Haven, Connecticut, sponsored by the Religious Studies Program at Yale University, and were most recently exhibited at Congregation Beth Shalom in Naperville, Illinois.

Jane and Karen tell stories in different ways. Inspired by biblical sources, Jane evokes emotion through vibrant color painted on silk. Drawing from Jewish folk tales, Karen captures the imagination and heart of listeners telling stories that give new voice to lives from a distant past. Together they create unique *tallitot*, traditional prayer shawls, made of vibrantly painted and pieced silk, inspired by a story or verse from the Torah or Kabbalah. The sumptuous silk beckons us to come closer, to touch it, wrap and drape it around us. In return, it bestows quiet, comfort, and deepens understanding. Draped about the shoulders, these *tallitot* create an intimate sanctified space to connect to G-d through prayer. Mounted on a wall, they mark a place to contemplate the ancient wisdom, humor, and spiritual depth of our Jewish tradition.

These powerful pieces ask: What is the experience of being physically enveloped in a thought? Of being transported within an ancient story? Of being seduced by prayer? Of being engulfed in the emotion of color? Each *tallit* captures a story in visual form and connects us to G-d. When tossed over our head and around our shoulders, these *tallitot* create a soulful and sacred space.

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All pieces in the exhibit (except *Jacob's Dream II* and *Light*, which are on loan) are available for purchase. The artists will donate 20% of each sale's proceeds to North Suburban Synagogue Beth El. Custom made *tallitot* are also available. For details, contact Jane Cooperman (jcooperman6@hotmail.com) or Karen Bieber (kruthbieber@gmail.com).

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