

Ruth Wallen ~ Judith Margolis ~ Gail Rebhan
Karen Shaw ~ Barbara Drucker ~ Diane Fine
Beth Grossman ~ Karen Klein ~ cj grossman
Stephanie Brody-Lederman ~ Jo-Ann Brody
Judy Hoffman ~ Susan Bee ~ Pnina Gagnon
Evelyn Eller ~ Miriam Schaer ~ Vered Galor
Lynne Avadenka ~ Ruth Ginsberg-Place
Elaine Langerman ~ Channa Horwitz

women of the Book

Jewish Artists

Jewish Themes

Elena Mary Siff ~ Miriam Beerman
Robyn Sassen ~ Ita Aber ~ Paula Levine
Claire Jeanine Satin ~ Beth Bachenheimer
Gloria Helfgott ~ Linda Rubinstein ~ Io Palmer
Robbin Ami Silverberg ~ Eva-Lynn Diesenhaus
Lila Wahrhaftig ~ Joyce Abrams ~ Carol Hamoy
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The Park School of Baltimore presents

women of the Book

Jewish Artists

Jewish Themes

Artists around the world began making books as an art form in the second half of the 20th century, experimenting with innovative combinations of images, text, and format, sometimes creating single works and at other times publishing multiple copies. The aim of artists' books is not to merely see words on the page, but to think about how the words, pictures, and physical form of the object all contribute to the meaning. Artists' books assume many forms and have made use of every artistic medium and method of bookmaking. A wide variety of structures and formats are employed, such as traditional codex, unfolding accordion books, pop-ups, fans, and scrolls. The materials used in these works range from handmade and commercially produced papers to nontraditional materials such as found objects, fabric, ceramic, wood, and metal.

One of the most compelling exhibitions of artists books is this collection, *Women of the Book: Jewish Artists, Jewish Themes*. I first saw it at the Missouri State University Art and Design Gallery in 2000 where I was fortunate to meet Judith Hoffberg while she was installing the exhibition. Judith's knowledge and understanding of the artists and their books allowed me to gain insight into their stories of family, religion and history, and to bring them to life. Her energy focusing on the exhibit was unique and inspiring.

Judith and I had been in contact several times about recreating the exhibition here at Park School, but sadly, she died in 2009 before we could get the project off the ground. A number of the participants, beginning with Elena Mary Siff, encouraged me to follow through with a new, slightly altered, version of *Women of the Book*. It was because of Judith Hoffberg's enthusiasm that this interdisciplinary art form was brought to Park School, and we present this catalogue in her memory.

Rick Delaney
Exhibitions Educator
February, 2011

From personal narrative (including family relationships), ritual and liturgy, the Holocaust and history, literature and myth, the books in the exhibition demonstrate how Jewish women artists use the book form to establish their position within Judaism; they also explore the intimacy as well as the universality of the book within the Jewish tradition. With zest and exquisite skill, the books run the gamut from finely executed artist books by those who have been doing it for many decades to humorous treatments of liturgy or Jewish daily life. What really moved me most is that all the bookworks have content, something that had not necessarily been the case in the more than a dozen exhibitions I have curated during the past fifteen years. The books have something to say, not simply for themselves, but to educate by elucidating issues that are best expressed visually.

Many of the artists comment about the treatment of women in the Bible.

The exhibition allowed several of the women to do research and to find their “cultural identity” that had been lost in the shuffle of generations of assimilation.

In discussing Jewish identity, there are few of these artists who have not been affected by the Holocaust, most personally and others through empathy.

With regard to the liturgy, calligraphers have a joyful way of using paper structures to create glorious interpretations of prayers.

It has been a remarkable journey for this exhibit and for me. The women I have come to know have been “the other” for so long. They first of all are women, second they are Jewish, and third they are artists. That would be a triple negative in this culture. But their art has sustained them and allowed them to express themselves in many ways. Always creative, always breaking the mold, these women have found a way to tell about themselves and their ethnic and spiritual culture in very specific ways. Taunted by prejudice and separateness, these women have courageously surpassed hurdles and have created remarkable works of art in a medium known so well to their “people:” the book. That familiar form of book has been expanded to incorporate not only new technology but also the old structures. As a result, these women have created their own bridge, their own windows to their souls and to their spirits. I salute them as catalysts for allowing a much larger audience to know and participate in their creativity and their culture.

Judith A. Hoffberg (1934-2009)

excerpts from the catalogue

Women of the Book: Jewish Artist Jewish Themes

Florida Atlantic University Friends of the Library, 2001

~ Ita Aber ~

In the pre-Christian period, the Greek letter gamma is known to have been used as a design element on Jewish women's clothing to distinguish them from men's clothing. The men's symbol was the Greek letter eta.

Evidence of this is found in the murals of the Dura Europus frescoes that were excavated by Yale University, and at archeological finds at Masada and at Bar Kokhba's cave (132 CE). Italian mosaics also show the same symbols on women's and men's sarcophagi.



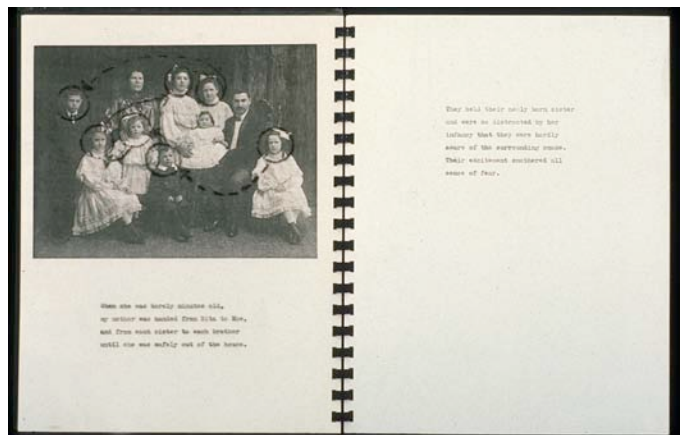
Gamma Book • mixed media • 1997

~ Joyce Abrams ~

Family mythology has always fascinated me. The story of my mother's birth was something I heard about from the time I was a small child. Hoping to get some details for *Born in a Fire*, I asked my Uncle Moe and Aunt Rita, my mother's two surviving siblings, what they remembered of that day.

At the time, my mother was 89 and suffering from some dementia. I read her the story. It was an homage to her. She loved it but wouldn't take any excuses regarding poetic license. She corrected my grammar. "I was born during a fire not in a fire," my mother insisted.

I continue to make artist's books and installations inspired by and about my family.



Born in a Fire • printed media • 1994

~ Melinda Smith Altshuler ~



As a granddaughter of Jewish immigrants, I have never really known which objects were brought from Europe by my family or which were acquired as inexpensive, used items to recreate a home or history. All objects were treated as precious.

I like to draw on these lessons of object loss and found as a memorial for family members' loss and rebirth in regard to the stamina of our people and our heritage.

The White Album • Victorian photo album, found objects, acrylic medium, light • 1997

~ Lynne Avadenka ~



By a Thread • offset lithograph, die-cutting • edition of 300 • 2006

By a Thread looks for elements that Judaism and Islam share, instead of the divisive elements that are more often in the spotlight. Focusing on the lives of Queen Esther and Scheherazade, the artist finds striking similarities in the two women – both were the second wives of betrayed and humiliated kings, and both were preceded by a thousand women before they were chosen by the kings. Jewess and Muslim are joined in this age of disconnections and venom.

The book structure – the accordion-folded page spreads with tab pages printed on both sides – reflects the endless, always changing nature of storytelling. This offset work in full color with a die-cut cover, has original drawings using gouache, powdered graphite, and letterpress printing.

~ Beth Bachenheimer ~



See Weed • mixed media • 2009-11

Since 2003, I have had five surgeries in my right eye – one cataract and three detached retina surgeries, and a combined cornea transplant with a new lens. This artist book captures my optical history from 2003 to 2010. It begins with the initial pain and despair, and progresses to loss, confusion, and changes in daily behavior.

~ Susan Bee ~

In a sense the title, *Little Orphan Anagram*, refers to my mother, who grew up in a Jewish orphanage in Berlin, and then was moved in 1934 to Israel, thus saving her life. I used images from early children's books and other collage elements and drawings to refer back to that time and used Charles Bernstein's nursery rhyme and song-like rhymes to complement the images.



Little Orphan Anagram • Grannary Books • letterpress, hand painted with gouache, ink, watercolor, and crayon • edition of 35 • 1997

~ Miriam Beerman ~

I have spent most of my life creating images that are responses to the brutality of our time. I am reminded constantly of the world's injustice. It weighs upon my mind and body. Therefore, I seek the beauty and the vigor of the paint and the poetry that inspires the act of painting.

Human or animal forms are usually somewhere in my work. They are the angels and demons of an inner perception and they re-enact the past as well as presage the future.



Graphomania • mixed media • circa 2007

~ Terry Braunstein ~



Shot on the Spot • mixed media, altered book • 1999

Terry Braunstein's maiden name, Malikin, is not a common one and her family was not aware of any relatives. A 1994 discovery changed all that, in the form of a document that listed people from a small village in Russia who had been rounded up, taken out into the countryside, and shot by the Nazis. There on the list, three separate times, was the name, "Malikin." These were relatives of the artist's grandfather who survived the pogroms and escaped to the United States. Braunstein's family was not prepared for this information. They were not prepared

for the numbers in each family, and the ages of each person. Braunstein suddenly saw her great-grandfather and great-grandmother, her great-aunts and -uncles, and all her Malikin cousins. Two years later, when she visited Ellis Island and photographed a tailor shop, not that different from her grandfather's in the Bronx, the book, *Shot on the Spot*, came together in her mind – her grandfather's journey from his shtetl to America, juxtaposed with the horrors he had left behind.

~ Jo-Ann Brody ~

She was my role model for life, a giant of a woman, an immigrant, and an activist. She lived as wife, mother, earth mother, and Communist. She knew all the radical entertainers and writers. She was one of the organizers of the Robeson Concerts that resulted in the Peekskill Riots. She was my beloved grandmother. This book is an attempt to grasp the complexities of her life and to honor her.



Pauline • stoneware, oxides, glazes • 2011

~ Stephanie Brody-Lederman ~



Wolf at the Door • acrylic, cardboard, found object • 2006-08

I grew up with very uncertain finances in my family. Money was always a worry. The wolf was always at the door; in fact, the wolf engulfed my home.

~ Eva-Lynn Diesenhaus ~

Shema Yisrael is one of the most important prayers of Judaism. In the prayer service, it is followed by the Vehavta, and parts of the prayer are the English words of *Shema Yisrael*. Since It is one of the morning prayers I chose morning colors of the sun rising up in the sky. The book structure when opened is the six-sided Star of David, a universal symbol of Judaism.



Shema Yisrael • acrylic, watercolor pencils, arches text wove paper, rice paper, ribbon and gold thread watercolor, pencils • 1997

~ Barbara Drucker ~



Austrian Prayer Book
mixed media • 2002

Austrian Prayer Book is from an ongoing series based on a trip I took to Austria in 1997 for an exhibition. While roaming around Vienna, I found a small Christian prayer book in a used bookstore. In response to my rather ambivalent feelings about being in Austria, I proceeded to cut a Jewish star into the front pages and back cover of the book, attached a piece of braided hair to the inside pages, and then nailed the rest of the book shut.

Am I religious? That's a hard question to answer. I am extremely open to religious environments of all kinds – the music, prayers, images, atmospheres and smells all touch me to my core. Am I specifically religious? No. I am fascinated by religion but I am not a believer. And yet, when confronted with what I sense as an attack on “my religion,” I am surprised at the emotional depth of my response and my readiness to defend my inheritance.

~ Johanna Drucker ~

Testament of Women is a radical retelling of tales of Biblical women. These figures – Eve, Sarah, Hagar, Esther – are archetypes in Western thought whose stories have been reinterpreted by generations. In this version, each is represented by a linocut based on a real, living woman whose identity embodies a current, lived experience that parallels the original. The Biblical story is recast and retold, alongside an excerpt from scripture and a statement of the lesson to be learned. The typographic layout and motif of broken rule(s) in the headers and on the end sheets reinforces the contemporary feel, while the use of letterpress and handmade cuts extends traditional fine print values. Taken as a whole, the book is a feminist artist's dialogue with a received tradition, and a deliberate attempt to rethink the interpretation of these major female figures. The writing combines multiple registers – vernacular, popular slang, literary syntax, poetic vocabulary, and scriptural tones. The linoleum cuts are in a contemporary expressionist idiom, physical and striking in pose and presence.



Testament of Women • printed letterpress
from Virginia Arts of the Book • 2005-06

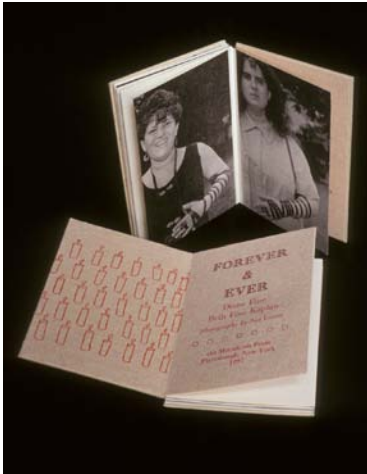
~ Evelyn Eller ~



Prague • mixed media • 2000

The book format is a natural form to express my ideas on memory, travel, language and nature. Lately I have been using the book as a sculptural object in which I combine disparate materials. Many of my books incorporate wooden boxes, photographs, reproductions, maps, music, and newspaper and magazine print.

~ Diane Fine ~



Forever and Ever

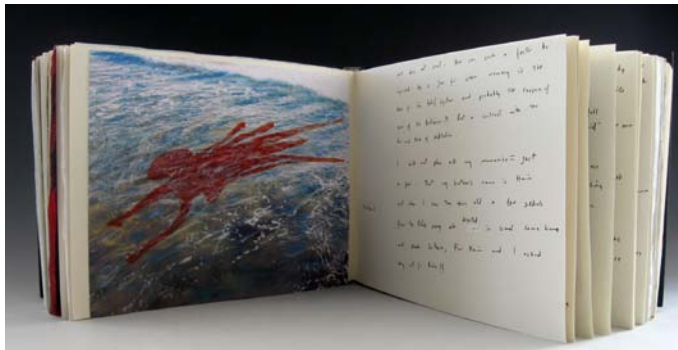
Published by the Moonkosh Press
1997

This book was born from two sisters' desire to understand the role that Judaism played as we coped with breast cancer in our family. We often spoke of the number and variety of unanswered and unanswerable questions – medical, practical, psychological, and spiritual. We wondered whether the Sh'ma held the answers to these questions. We decided to explore the message, ritual, and history of tefillin. We were unfamiliar with that mitzvah because, as females, we were excluded from the obligation of laying tefillin.

As we read and talked to our rabbis and to each other, we found wonder, comfort, togetherness, and a challenge in learning to lay tefillin. We hoped that this book would enlighten others about the message that we have been commanded to pass down from generation to generation. There is healing in that message.

~ Pnina Gagnon ~

My artist book is a mixture of a short diary and a confession; it covers a few months of my life both in Haifa and in Montreal. It does not answer the questions I ask and it ends without some final answers. But it has as many images as text pages and demonstrates how visual imagination can be related to a text candidly, and sometimes in a cryptic, even poetic, form.



Things and Thoughts • collaged drawings, documents, text • 2010

~ Vered Galor ~



Days of My Life • offset, ed. 100 • 1980

I was born in Slovakia, raised in Israel, and educated in the United States. I have been involved with the fine art world as an artist, curator, and educator for over 30 years.

Days of My Life is a biography that symbolizes the history of the Jewish people. It covers the first part of the 20th century and the first 32 years of the State of Israel.

The poems are titled by the years from 1942 to 1980, a period in which the Jewish people experienced wars. The book is a personal memory, yet factual, that follows documented history.

~ Ruth Ginsberg-Place ~

In *Lila's Room* I explore certain themes. One of them is my relationship to Lila and my impending loss as she moves into young adulthood. I've tried to capture who she is through the room she has inhabited at the very moment that she prepares to leave that space. In her room, Lila has expressed herself through

the objects she has chosen and the fascinating combinations in which they are arranged. During the photography process, questions arose about privacy and intrusion. In this autobiographical book, these concepts and feelings are embedded within the photographic collages and the minimal text. At the end of the book, on the night before Lila leaves her childhood home forever, my journey into her room crystallizes in an unexpected way.



Lila's Room • photographs, text • 2010

~ Beth Grossman ~



As Jacob lay with his head on a stone pillow, God sent angels with a message for him to sow his seed throughout the land. The conflict engendered by this commandment is forever caught in the naming of his sons by his competing wives Rachel and Leah. These two sisters, and their maids, engaged in a strident fertility game, vying for Jacob's love and social standing.

Jacob's Ladder is fashioned after the folk toy of the same name. Like the angels ascending and descending in Jacob's dream, the blocks miraculously fall and rise continuously. A germinating sleeping herb, Jacob's ladder flower climbs upwards on one side of the ladder. On the other side, the naming of the twelve tribes of Israel is told through the voices of Rachel and Leah.

Jacob's Ladder • photographs on wood, watercolor, canvas straps • 2009

~ cj grossman ~

Much of my work reveals stories that cry out to be told. Whether it be a story of an artist heroine of the Holocaust, people murdered solely because they are LGBT, or a battered woman who triumphs, there is an urgency to exposing these truths. As I create my books, the story begins to tell itself. When I first began to tell the story of a battered woman, I had thought she was going to die. But as I told the story, she triumphed over her batterer instead, and what a much better ending. I want the

audience to access my work easily, to understand or perhaps to be educated. I often use humor as a background or graphics as part of the tale, but I never want to hit people over the head with a message; that's just not my style.

Why was I so moved to tell the story of Friedl Dicker Brandeis? She was an artist before the holocaust and an art teacher in the midst of it. She probably saved hundreds of children's minds as she taught them how to create art in Thierezenstadt, also called Camp Terezin. As a result, there is a legacy of artwork by children in the book, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*. In the first edition, Brandeis was not recognized as the teacher, but in the current edition, there is a whole bio about her.



Friedl Dicker - Brandeis, a Flame that will Never be Extinguished
mixed media • 1995-96

~ Carol Hamoy ~

This work is inspired by the Midrash that tells of the spaces between the letters in Torah becoming a new alphabet when the Messiah comes (Blessed be She!). Carrying it a step further, I used Chinese Joss papers (simple blank rectangles printed on squares) as pages so not only can one write his or her own version of the story of my life, they can also mentally illustrate it as well. The two languages are (of course) English and Hebrew.



The Illustrated Story of my Life in Two Languages
mixed media, text • 2010

~ Gloria Helfgott ~



Handwriting on the Wall is a unique visual interpretation of the Biblical story found in the book of Daniel. At a drunken feast hosted by the King of Babylon, a disembodied hand writes on the wall: Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin. Only Daniel is able to decode “the writing on the wall” as a portent of doom. That night the King is murdered.

Handwriting on the Wall • Pacific Palisades • edition of 9 • 1987

~ Judy Hoffman ~

As far back as I can remember I have always made things. Playing with my brother in the woods, I'd construct homes among the trees with string, twigs, bark, anything we could find. There I found the beginnings of my gut impulses, a world of ideas and my wonder of nature.

My works, like this one that directly explores prayer and Jewish themes, are inspired by the Jewish feminist community's movement to reinterpret and invent forms of ritual and expressions of spirituality. They are created to search for and deepen my connections to Jews and Judaism.

I am wild for nature – the changing colors of leaves, flickering sunlight touching the tree bark, the lace of worn shells. These are miracles – the webs made by tree branches and vines the deep glowing blue of morning glory petals. I bless them as they bless me. *



Siddur: Blessing on Seeing the Wonders of the Trees
artist-made paper • 1997

~ Channa Horwitz ~

8 is a lithograph done in 1979 in an edition of 30 printed at the original Tamarind workshop. Master printmaker Edward Hamilton printed the book which is housed in a Plexiglas hinged box. When opened, the print is 16 feet. There are eight shapes going from narrow to wide, eight concrete poetry statements about the eight shapes and numbers that all correspond to the drawings.



8 • lithograph • edition of 30 • 1979

~ Sandra Jackman ~



Study of a Crime Scene • mixed media • 2003

This unique paper sculpture is a two-page spread that rises from an altered painted book and has the attributes of a pop-up. A metal-ring binder detached from a loose-leaf notebook acts as a pen or enclosure for cattle.

The “study” is a metaphor for one of the twentieth century’s most horrific events.

But for the word “caution” and fragments of words stamped on the wood base of the work, there is no text.

Words fail.

~ Karen Klein ~



Wardrobe • mixed media • 2004

The quotation on the inside of the wardrobe’s doors is taken from Hanna Krall’s story, “The Woman From Hamburg,” which was published in *The New Yorker* (December 20 and 27, 2004). During the Second World War, many non-Jews hid Jews in wardrobes or clothes closets in their homes, and thereby saved them from deportation to the concentration camps and almost certain death.

In making this book, it is my purpose both to remember the plight of Jews in Europe during World War II and to honor those who, whatever their motivation and in the face of Nazi terror, risked their lives to shelter and save others.

~ Elaine Langerman ~



Sefer • 4 loose woven pages, acrylic, metal paint
1997

I wish to create realms of enchantment for the heart where it might find play and adventure.

My wish is to coax the mind to give way to the spirit so that it may perceive and create in new ways, so that it might escape the illusion of limitation.

In this book, as in much of my work, I combine letters, words, and names with visual things, treating them both as equal partners in the sacred dance that we form with our lives.

Ah, to dance, to evolve through contemplation and joy!

~ Paula Levine ~



Braided came from a time when I was thinking about the isolation and categorization of belief as corralled into mutually exclusive formal structures of religion. I soaked the bible, containing both the new and the old testament, dried, twisted and wove the two testaments together into one strand. As what happens with rope, the combination of strands make the whole stronger.

Braided • Manipulated bible • 1994

~ Judith Margolis ~

The Underground Dreams of a Cactus
intaglio on 100% rag paper
signed limited-edition of 20 • 1983

As a recipient of a generous grant from Woman's Studio Workshop, I created *The Underground Dreams of a Cactus* during a month-long artist residency in Rosendale, New York in 1983. The story shows a woman seeking clues to sexuality, spirituality, and death. It traces a passage through domestic befuddlement to spiritual revelation and features some slightly pornographic imagery in an otherwise wholesome and uplifting setting.



~ Barbara Milman ~



Berlin • linocut • 1997

I am a printmaker and book artist. Many of my books, including *Berlin*, are made with hand printed linocuts. *Berlin* is one of five limited-edition books based on interviews I conducted with Holocaust survivors. I created/ imagined the images for these individual stories in order to present the experience of the Holocaust in as personal and direct a manner as possible.

~ Beverly Naidus ~



What Kinda Name Is That
self-published book • 1996

What Kinda Name Is That was commissioned by the Jewish Museum in New York City in 1994. Stories of assimilation, anti-Semitism, and post-Holocaust cultural identity are counterpoised with advertising images from the post World War II era, distorted photos of late 19th-century immigrants and other cultural icons. For over three decades Beverly Naidus has created art that addresses the social issues she has witnessed and experienced, as well as her visions for the future.

~ Laurel Paley ~

At the time I created this artist's book, I was obsessively drawing links (hooks, clasps, chains), often from a charm bracelet given to me by my late Grandmother (of blessed memory). I saw these links as representations of both individuals in my life and the mesh of human connection, with some links plump, some pulled, some connecting to many others, some trailing off. Somehow the intensity of the process of intaglio – reverse drawing, laying into acid, gently agitating, cleaning, rubbing, polishing, inking, burnishing, wiping, soaking, pressing – was the medium best suited for suggesting both the fine craftsmanship and material cost of the bracelet, as well as the travails of human experience.



Links • intaglio, etching, aquatint, spit bit, sugarlift • 1992

~ Io Palmer ~

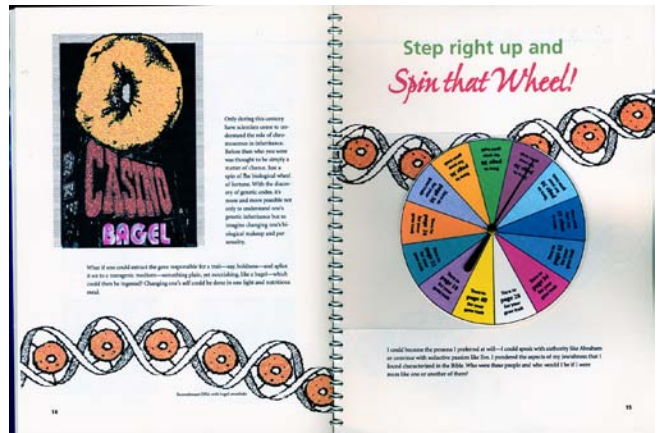


Dyed and Parted • watercolor on paper, linen tape • 2010

Dyed and Parted represents various family members who have passed on in recent years. By drawing close and careful examinations of hair parts, an intimate and quiet gesture occurs. The varied textures and dyed hair represents not a specific coif of a long-gone family member, but more so the expressive and eccentric personalities evident in many of my relatives.

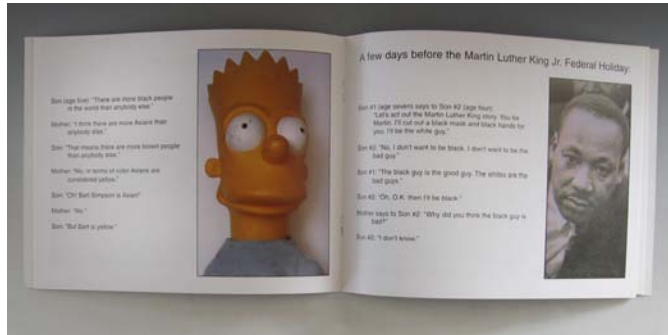
~ Sonya Rapoport ~

The Transgenic Bagel is a parody on a gene-splicing theme. The state-of-the-art bagel technology allows the reader-consumer to alter personality upon eating a recombinant bagel. The gene-splicing theme is based on the assumption that Noah's Ark comprised the first gene pool. Each animal that resided in this virtual ark had the character trait associated with a Biblical personality from the Book of Genesis. As an adolescent Jewish girl, I wished to repress those Biblical traits so I could be accepted into my Boston WASP environment. Here, the reader can decide to select the opposite of these Jewish trait genes in order to conform to a WASP personality. *



The Transgenic Bagel • laser print • 1997

~ Gail Rebhan ~



Mother-Son Talk • offset litho printed
at the Visual Studies Workshop • 1996

Produced at Visual Studies Workshop, this autobiographical book examines issues pertaining to the complexity of family values. These one-page stories, which grew out of conversations with my two young sons, show how my sons develop their own cultural identity as they assimilate dominant cultural values and stereotypes. The stories also show how I attempt to raise my sons in a manner consistent with my own values. The book is about communication and miscommunication between generations, issues that confront many families on a daily basis.

~ Marilyn R. Rosenberg ~

I am a Jew. If my grandparents had not left Russia at the turn of the century, I could have been there, grown up there, died there, near Kiev at Babi Yar, on September 29 or 30, 1941, just twelve days before my seventh birthday. As I become the older generation, less and less of us remember those war years. So, I remember, I feel I must tell about the Holocaust. I cannot forget, ever. *



Remember Babi Yar
mixed media • 1997

~ Sophia Rosenberg ~



The Lilith Scroll • mixed media • 1996

The Lilith Scroll is an exploration of the Biblical first woman Lilith, who was banished and replaced by Eve. The scroll form is an allusion to the Torah and the contents are an attempt to conjure the dark, sexual, female, mystical experience that was forbidden and edited out of Judaism. The artist costumed herself as Lilith and danced as Lilith, and the photos (taken by Catherine Gilchrist) and poems (written by the artist) are the result.

~ Linda Rubinstein ~

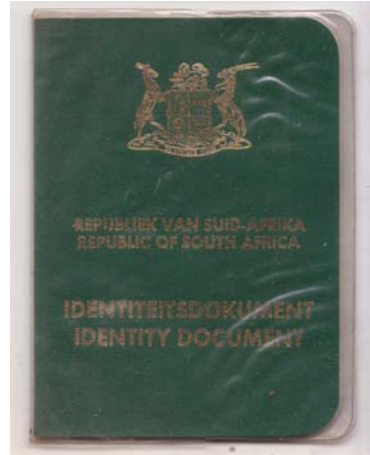
Commissioned by their daughters, this book tells the life stories of Holocaust survivors Sonia and Martin Konichowski through an introduction, an interview, drawings, letters, and photographs. The materials were family photos and other paper documentation from Lithuania (some of it extraordinary like the pass Sonya's father used to leave the Kovno ghetto each day); the transcription of an interview with 83-year-old Martin, in which he recalled his experiences as an armed resistance fighter (he escaped the ghetto and lived in the woods with a band of 100 partisans); compositions that Sonya wrote while studying English at Brooklyn College and some of her art work; and photos of their daughters and their families. I created a book that takes you from the pre-ghetto lives of Sonya and Martin; to their walk across the Alps to Milan, Italy; to birthday pool parties in suburban New Jersey.



And The Air Stood Still • wire edge binding, hard cover
edition of 6 • 2000

~ Robyn Sassen ~

The type of support that excites me more than any other for an artist's book is something that has life and resonance beyond the basic elements it comprises. As with the first manifestation of *Women of the Book* in 1998, this piece engages with my identity as a South-African, Jewish woman, and uses my own official identity document as its starting point.



Identity Text • South-African identity document, beeswax, stamps, mixed media • 1997

~ Claire Jeanine Satin ~

JCMCJJ/Dancers on a Plane VI is one of a series of steel book works where the text is based on the writings of John Cage. The text has been reassembled according to chance thereby producing new configurations. The brass filings/crosshatchings reference *Dancers on a Plane*, a series of paintings by Jasper Johns (a longtime friend of John Cage and choreographer Merce Cunningham).

I was fortunate to meet with John on several occasions at his home in New York City and when he was a visiting artist at the college where I taught in the '70s. It was then that I was introduced and deeply influenced by his theory of indeterminacy.



JCMCJJ/Dancers on a Plane VI
steel, braided wire, metallic ink,
handwritten text, brass filings • 1990/2001

~ Miriam Schaer ~



Hands of Josephus II • altered text
from *Josephus: History of the Jews*,
beads, wire hand forms • 2008

Hands of Josephus is an altered book, created from a broken-down copy of Flavius Josephus' *Twenty Books of the Jewish Antiquities: The Life of Josephus and the Jewish Wars*. Each page, cut in the shape of hands, is sewn on multiple beaded cords then attached to wire hand forms that are encrusted with beads. Josephus was a first century Jewish historian and apologist who survived and recorded the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. His works give an important insight into first-century Judaism, while raising questions about who owns history.

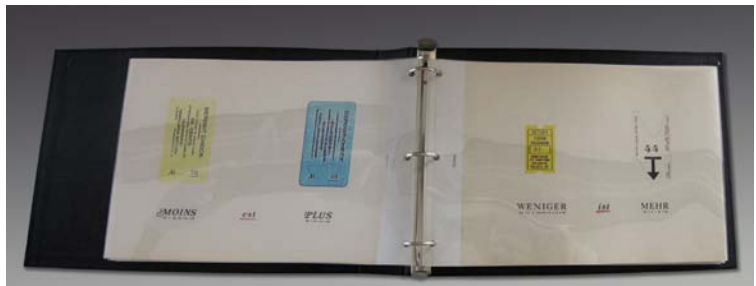
The hand of the victor, it seems, always controls the of truth.

There are five books in this series all created from the original two-volume set. The book in the exhibit is number two in the series.

~ Karen Shaw ~

*Less is More: Proof in 14
Languages of Latin on the left
and Maltese on the right*
mixed media • 1985

My days are numbered; my existence is marked by a trail of digits a thousand places long. 845, 10011, 12531... are just some of the cardinal numbers that define and fix me in time and place.



My resistance to this numbing numbering has moved me to investigate a linguistic evaluation of numbers that expand the language of mathematics into a personal literature. In a process I call Summantics, I designate a numerical equivalent to each letter of the alphabet according to its position: A=1, B=2, C=3...Z=26. A word is spelled out numerically and added to reach the sum of the word. Consider the number 33. It is the sum of MEAN=13+5+1+14=33, ALAS=1+12+1+19=33, and MAGIC, GAY and THE, to mention a few. Words are collected in a numerically ordered vocabulary. Since a number can equal the sum of various words, the choice is determined by mood, imagination, sound, syntax, and the rules of grammar. The idea of turning numbers into words touches on Gematria, a cabalistic method of interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures.

~ Elena Mary Siff ~

Having to think about my lack of Jewish identity in regard to my creation of this “book object” has been a personal journey of profound significance. It has put me in touch with my long-departed grandparents and their sons. One of those sons was my fascinating father, who ignored his Jewish identity. He wanted me to learn about my Jewish half because he kept every document about his early life of which I knew little. He must have known that I would find these clues when he died – on my birthday – and that I would connect the strands of his life to mine. I learned that there was great tragedy in my father’s life. He never spoke of these things because it caused him too much pain.

My father loved to travel and every year until I was twelve years old, we lived in a different place. I often felt “rootless,” as did my grandfather, as did my father. This exhibition has compelled me to discover the difficult and troubled history of my Jewish half, and for this I am grateful. *



Rootless: On The Road With My Jewish Half • mixed media • 1997

~ Robbin Ami Silverberg ~



*Just 30 Words • hemp paper, human hair, eggshell collage, piercing and hand coloring
Artists' Press, edition of 30 • 2005*

Just 30 Words sets up several scenarios that are each limited by the same dictate attached to those very postcards - any communiqué must be a maximum of 30 words. This is part of a continued exploration of language cognition: what words can actually communicate and their limitations. Each time, reading between the lines offers more than what can actually be read.

Postcards have been found that were written by deported Hungarian Jews to their relatives from Auschwitz, but dictated by SS officers. Rules for responding to correspondence can be found on the front:

“Answer only on a postcard, (maximum 30 words), in German via the Hungarian Jewish Association. 12 Sip Street, Budapest, VII.”

The starting point for *Just 30 Words* was an attempt to do the impossible: to read between the lines of an actual postcard sent by a woman to her husband in 1944.

~ Carrie Ungerman ~

...and a still small voice is part of a Torah-based body of work. Traditionally, women were not allowed to be Torah scribes. This inspired me to write all the names of the women in the Bible in my own hand and insert them into my Confirmation Bible. I made STAM Hebrew letters (the type used for a Torah scroll) cut from kosher parchment which had been prepared to make a Sefer Torah. The “empty” Hebrew letters are placed like bookmarks to hold a place for the yet unnamed women of the Bible and provide the space on which their stories may be written.



...and a still small voice • mixed media • 1998

~ Lila Wahrhaftig ~

I started working on *My Alphabet Book*, my first artist's book, during a family crisis. It is a stream of consciousness book with the words for each letter in the English alphabet tumbling out or slowly emerging, as in the letter “X”. Is the letter X image the one that will be shown in the catalogue? I used Adobe Garamond, a beautiful and very legible font. The entire book is in this font, but various words are in different styles such as bold, italic, and regular. Using the same font throughout keeps the text unified, but the styles and positioning of each word often ties in with its dictionary definition and meaning.



My Alphabet Book • computer generated on recycled paper with text, initial letters, illustration • 1997

~ Ruth Wallen ~

Dialogue begins with establishing trust and safety as we learn to listen actively and compassionately. As trust is built, we can make connections between the personal and political, and begin to seek new truths or political realities. The book shares personal stories and excerpts documented on the San Diego Jewish/Palestinian Dialogue website (<http://communication.ucsd.edu/rwallen/dialogue>).



Family Stories: excerpts from Palestinian-Jewish dialogue • mixed media • 2003



Dedicated to Judith Hoffberg
artwork by Elena Mary Siff

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