

On the

CONSEQUENCES

of **HATE
SPEECH**

Robin Atlas & Nancy Current



Vector Artist Initiative

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HATE SPEECH

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PROVOKE

by Jacqueline M. Massey

Art Matters

The Bowen Island Arts Council is very excited to be presenting *On the Consequences of Hate Speech* at the Gallery @ Artisan Square on Bowen Island. The proposal that Nancy Current and Robin Atlas submitted to our visual arts committee jury in 2016 was greeted with unanimous positive response. Our gallery has a long history of mounting creative works that provide a platform for reflection, collaboration and building community and that explore and address contemporary issues. We accept it as part of our mandate and responsibility to deliver socially relevant programming, and to support those artists whose endeavours may be provocative, or broach difficult or uncomfortable, but eminently important topics.

The devastating impacts of hate speech and intolerance in our society are not to be denied or ignored. Demeaning

words and language injure and maim; they incite violence and horrific acts.

We all need to understand what creates the conditions in which deplorable behaviour is fomented and allowed to persist. We need to appreciate our role in the instigation and/or perpetuation of vocabulary that viciously attacks individuals or a group on the basis of gender, ethnic origin, religion, disability or sexual orientation. And we need to find approaches to combat such behaviour, to develop and deploy tools that we can use to turn the tide and help us muster the strength to counter hatred with compassion and empathy.

Art provides a way. It has an impressive track record as a powerful agent for change. Marvin Bing, creative director

at Amnesty International's Art for Amnesty program is an arts advocate who recognizes creative expression as a means to engage individuals and communities to enact social, political, and cultural transformation. In his words:

"As a cultural tool, the arts help humanize and actualize the emotions, grievances, and fears of those who may not have another place to voice concerns. As an illustrative and journalistic tool, art shocks and inspires us to action. What art depicts can illicit a visceral, almost cellular, reaction ..."

Art can alter how we see the world, possibly igniting outrage and motivating a demand for social justice. Socially engaged art exposes a diversity of people to a shared experience, laying the ground for an interactive exchange that can foster understanding and instill empathy. It can fling open once tightly shut doors and beckon strangers to gather in a safe and welcoming environment, where respectful dialogue on topics such as societal bias,

bullying, prejudice and racial stereotyping can be addressed. In the process it enhances individuals' sense of belonging or attachment to a community, cultivating a collective identity.

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“ ”

Informed to some degree by the current political and social realities, the arts council believes that now more than ever we need to support artists who seek to illuminate and address the rise of intolerance, antagonism, rejection and exclusion of many in our society. It is our hope and

belief that *On the Consequences of Hate Speech* will do that and more.

We expect this exhibit will provide an opportunity for islanders and others to investigate the issues raised, to develop understanding and possibly the confidence to add their own voices to this timely discussion and possibly to inspire future initiatives. We are grateful to Nancy and Robin for travelling to Canada to share their work with us.



Midrash

by Andrea Iaroc

Visual Midrash & Jewish Art

Art does not exist in a historical vacuum.

As an art historian, I see Jewish art as a robust river from which many distributaries flow, forming their own paths; Visual Midrash is one of these distributary channels. The body of work presented in this show is but the tip of the iceberg of the contemporary Jewish art world. On the Consequences of Hate Speech sensibly suits the current international sociopolitical climate and serves as a guide to maintaining integrity on both the personal and collective level.

To better understand the Visual Midrash movement, it is important to throw light on its foundations. Its investigation of the Torah, Halakha (Jewish law), and other sacred texts, follows a rabbinic interpretive tradition known as Midrash, which searches for answers to religious, ethical, and

existential questions by analyzing and interpreting Jewish religious literature. Midrash has both an oral and a written component that continues to expand to this day and is a complex field of study in its own right. In the case of Visual Midrash, interpretation is done through art. This process aids in the creation of highly spiritual work that is informed by artists' own experiences and perspectives. Visual Midrash is active interpretation.

It is important to note that art in Judaism has a conflicted history. As Hebrew priests and leaders developed Jewish religion, artistic expression was strongly discouraged. The Torah assigned a set of commandments, one of which is hostile towards visual representations in general. The second commandment appears in Exodus 20: 3–4 and says: 'Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of anything that is in the heavens above

or that is in the water under the earth.’ Under this demand no one was permitted to make any type of art and little has been found from the early period of Hebrew history. Religious authorities feared the repercussions of followers’ behaviors when exposed to graven images; they could have treated these images as idols, transgressing the law against Avodah Zarah or “foreign worship”.

The attitude of religious authorities towards art, even figurative art, changed as time passed. While artists were only invited to decorate worship places originally, little by little, Jewish art divorced architecture and ritual objects to stand on its own.

Contemporary Jewish art, for instance, relies heavily on symbolism and, although a lot of it is abstract, figurative art is also popular. When people think of art movements, they understand them to encompass many styles, media, concepts, and perspectives. Notwithstanding all the information that is out there about contemporary Jewish artists and what they do, the notion of what Jewish art is supposed to be remains stubbornly traditional and

restricted. Visual Midrash is not commercial thematic art. Its richness is just one part of the Jewish art mosaic, which includes Judaica, Talmudic art, Feminist Jewish art, and Cultural Jewish art among others. It is imperative that these distinct movements are studied and understood for the sake of Jewish art’s progress and growth.

This type of work requires active participation from its audience



Visual Midrash artists use styles, media, and techniques to present meaningful and delicate narratives. It is also highly intentional and, through each piece, artists seek an inclusive connection with all viewers. However, this type of work requires active participation from its audience; i.e., discerning observers who are ready to mentally, emotionally, and spiritually navigate what each piece proposes, for art remains the basic narrative that humans understand when there are no words to read or sounds to listen to. It has been used since the beginning of human history to connect and communicate the ideas of everyday life, love, war, and power.

Visual Midrash artists use styles, media, and techniques to present meaningful and delicate narratives. It is also highly intentional and, through each piece, artists seek an inclusive connection with all viewers. However, this type of work

Robin Atlas & Nancy Current

Exhibition Statement

Words have always been a catalyst for civil discord, and today hate speech is increasingly prevalent, tearing apart the fabric of our communities in ever more violent and destructive ways. Examples of hate speech are everywhere, in our personal and work lives and in the public sphere. They pass from generation to generation by written and spoken word, inculcating attitudes of intolerance, anti-Semitism, racism and discrimination in both children and adults.

This exhibit illuminates hate speech, its historically destructive manifestations and the consequences for humanity. The exhibit also advocates the antidote: Educating our children and taking responsibility to condemn hate speech in any form. In this respect, the show is both timely and timeless, resonating with all ages and cultures.

Robin Atlas's narrative entitled *Lashon Hara* (Hebrew for "evil speech") reflects her own personal experiences with hate speech as well as looking at the effects of hate speech in both the physical and spiritual realms. Her work features twenty deconstructed pieces of diverse elements coalesced on hand-dyed, manipulated and collaged fabric, using methods such as hand embroidery, freehand machine stitching, printmaking and other creative techniques.

L'Dor Vador ("from generation to generation" in Hebrew), Nancy Current's series of figurative glass paintings and prints, uses fragments of ancient writings as a metaphor for the education of children. The visceral attraction of light, color and glass combined with non-traditional glass painting and print-making conveys the responsibility of education and action to prevent hate speech and its consequences.

Speech

by Spirit Trickey

School Yard Hate Speech

The glittering sun warmed the school yard on a crisp spring morning. The snow had finally melted from the swing set so my best friend and I ran to play. From the corner of my eye I saw my crush Andrew and his friend walking toward us. I twirled around on the bar in all my shyness as they began teasing us in a playful, innocent way. I was sooooo in love with him. I thought about him all the time. Morning. Noon and Night. His dimples, his smile, his laugh. My heart raced with excitement and joy surged through me. I savored every second he was in my presence.

Out of nowhere emerged Stephanie. The most popular, coolest and self-proclaimed "prettiest" girl in our class. I was always tense when she came around because she exuded the aura of a mean princess. And even worse everyone knew she liked Andrew too. She pranced past him in the most kittenish way, smelling like strawberries, flipping her pretty hair. She walked right in front of him and pointed at me and scowled "Andrew, why are you

hanging around with her, she's a n*gger?" They all broke into boisterous laughter like hyenas. Like a tsunami, blood flushed my face. My smile collapsed and I fought back big, hot tears. They spilled over inside of me as I drowned into nothingness and my heart dropped out of my chest. The humiliation was so intense I got dizzy. Her words and their laughter gouged deep wounds in me that would last for years. The venom of those words penetrated me like a scorching spear many more times throughout my childhood.

The word n*gger hovered above my being, lingered in the back of my mind, and turned a vivacious and cheery girl into a tense and timid one at school. I was always trying to stay out of the way, sink lower into my seat so I wouldn't be seen. I tried my best to disappear. If they can't see me then they can't hurt me. I felt like an alien, like if there was a god why would I be chosen to be this deviation child? I didn't raise my hand in class even when I wanted to. My heart

was always racing and it was hard to concentrate. A couple years of school were never absorbed in my brain because I was constantly in a state of fear.

Two years later we moved to a new town and on our first night some kids asked me to go sledding. I bounced with glee but in the back of my mind I just knew they wouldn't accept me if they knew about my aberration. I just had to go sledding. I had a chance to make a fresh start. I went to my room and applied...white...baby powder...to...my...face. With every puff of powder I died a little inside. The kids befriended me but it wasn't long before the n-word was resurrected and oozed out of their mouths too. This time I retreated. I went into a dark shell and didn't come out for years.

Hate speech ripped a hole in my childhood. It robbed me of the freedom all children should enjoy. The n-word is violence and it often leads to physical brutality. The sort that nearly drowned my little sister in a public swimming pool, bloodied my brothers' lips and blackened their eyes.

That one poisonous word burned our bones like it did our ancestors. The first time I heard it I didn't even know what it meant, but I could feel the sting of the past like hot metal pouring over my soul.

My salvation came in the 7th grade when I started going to school with refugee children, poor children, kids who lived in homeless shelters. Our silent wounds connected us, bound us together and we slowly began to heal. As Jalaluddin Rumi proclaimed, "The wound is where the light enters you." The light of our collective sorrow fused together to

form love, harmony, and within ourselves reconciliation. We stood taller, became proud of our color, proud of our circumstances and proud of ourselves. We sought education as an outlet. Through it all, I came to understand that ignorance is where the disease of hatred comes from. I eventually learned that it wasn't even about me. Decades later I still patch pieces of myself together that were torn apart at a tender age. Yet, the stitches are woven with gold.

I could feel the sting of the past like hot metal pouring over my soul.

“ ”





Robin Atlas \ Lashon Hara

The Genesis: A Personal History

I am continually amazed by how gossip always seems to make its way back to the person being targeted. I personally experienced this during a stay in Arizona the winter of 2011. The “incident” occurred on a Tuesday night and, as the universe has a way of doing, *Wham!*, first thing Wednesday morning I was already hearing about it. I was annoyed and angry at the woman who spewed the poison—a “friend” and fellow congregant—and at the messenger who delivered the “news.” More than angry, however, I was hurt and humiliated, knowing that such vicious and untrue statements about me were made to a large group of mutual friends and acquaintances.

In a subsequent casual conversation with my Rebbitzin about the incident, we talked about lashon hara (evil speech) in a general way. That conversation motivated me to further exploration. I gleaned insight from Torah, midrash and various other writings on the subject, including the writings of Chofetz Chaim.

I initially approached the project as a sort of “cathartic artistic exercise.” With an artistic response to the gossip, I mused, I can create commentary and process the experience personally in a single focused effort. And so began my creative catharsis. The narrative Lashon Hara is the result of this particular journey.

I set about creating seven pieces from bits of cloth and trim. While constructing the work I ruminated on how damaging lashon hara is in both the physical and spiritual realm, and how few people in this world escape being targeted by evil speech, gossip or slander. Since this experience is almost universally shared, I came to believe a collective response could change the culture. The original seven-piece concept proved inadequate to the message and evolved to its final twenty-piece expression. My work is intended to heighten awareness of the power of words, to encourage us to choose words that compassionately and constructively express what we feel, and, above all else, to implore us to recognize and repudiate evil speech in all of its manifestations.



FACING

1 • Lashon Hara

The tongue is partly hidden and partly revealed. According to the Maharal: Hashem designed the tongue to reflect its function—to reveal the hidden self, one's thoughts, ideas and personality. The tongue takes the hidden elements from within the person and through words brings them into the open. Its simple premise is that we should remove negativity, gossip, slander and divisiveness from our vocabulary.



DETAILS ABOVE, LEFT

The counterpoint to Lashon Hara is represented in the gold seed beads (loving kindness) secured into place with French knots.





RIGHT

2 · Protect

The Queen of Lashon Hara is represented by her gold crown. Her job is to protect the home. When she speaks Lashon Hara that protection is broken.



LEFT

3 · All Roads Lead To...

All roads lead back to the Queen of Lashon Hara.



FACING

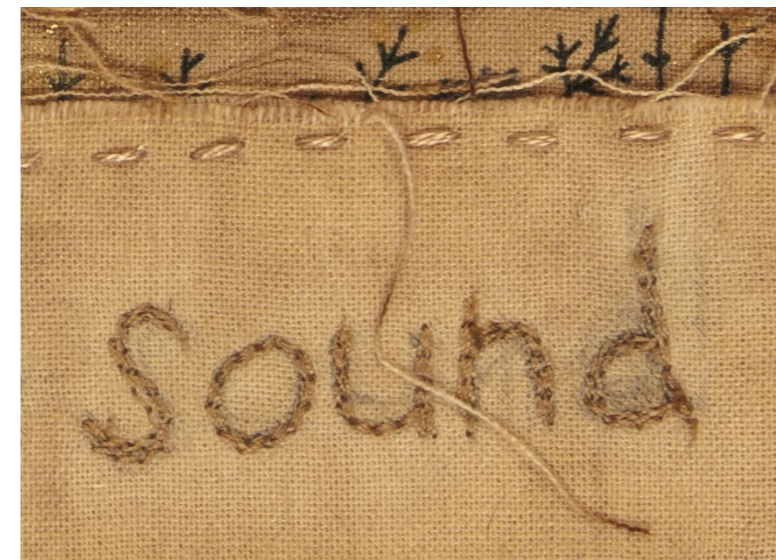
4 · Words, words, words

The bird of heaven carries the sound of Lashon Hara to the heavens, where the angels testify before Hashem.



DETAILS ABOVE, LEFT

The gold bugle beads of lashon hara are floating to the heavens on puffs of clouds where they await the angels and their testimony.





RIGHT

5 · L'dor Vador

The circle of Lashon Hara passed down from generation to generation.



LEFT

6 · We Three

The strong protecting the vulnerable from the effects of Lashon Hara.

BELOW

7 · Chofetz Chaim

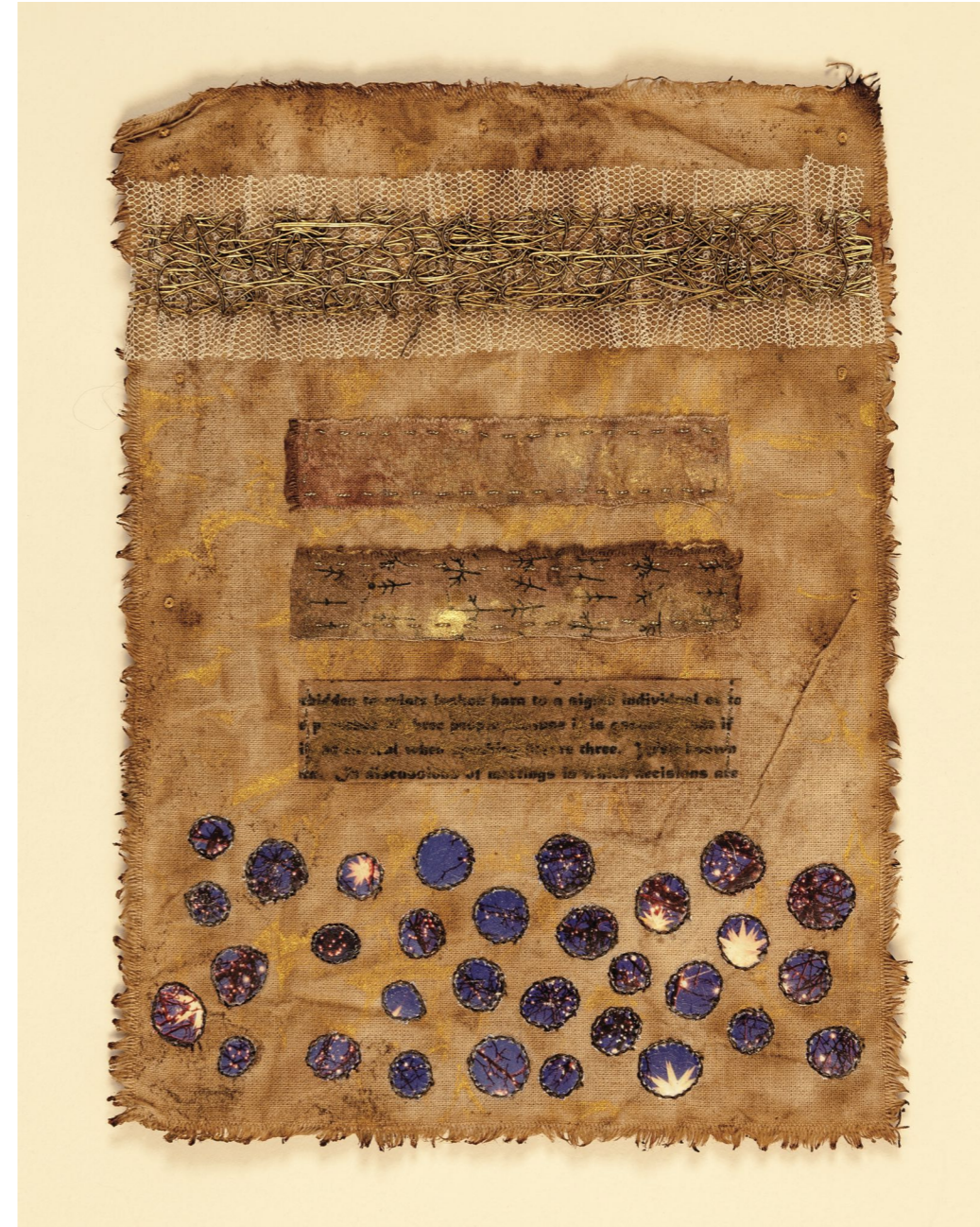
Rabbi Israel Meir (HaKohen) Kagan (1838–1933). Also known as the Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Kagan wrote the definitive works on Lashon Hara: Sefer Chofetz Chaim and Sh'mirat HaLashon, among others.



ABOVE

8 · Rain (Leaning)

The road is often uncertain and the path never straight, but as we struggle there is always chessed (loving kindness) to find along the way.



LEFT

9 · Three Murders

It is said that Lashon Hara kills three souls: The soul of the speaker, the soul of the listener and the soul of the person who is the target of gossip.

FACING

10 · To The Winds/Red String

An ancient Jewish ritual conducted by the Kohens (holy priests) to restore one's spiritual purity after becoming "unclean" because of speaking Lashon Hara.



DETAILS ABOVE, RIGHT
The gold seed beads again represent loving kindness (chessed).
-Stitched and beaded plastic
-Braided red string





Vessels, 2017

The vessels correspond to the idea that our physical external selves are the container for what's inside. It's our free will that dictates how we fill them.

Think no evil

by Natasha Boškić

I shut the door tight,

sealed the chinks.
I locked the memories inside,
lost, forgotten, poisoned to death.
Evil.
Do no evil.
Think no evil.
Wish no evil.

It started with a boring evening of a basketball practice

that turned into a dark sky with shiny orange balloons.
All TV channels merged into a single one
with a continuous banner
at the bottom of the screen,
saying: "Our country is in a state of war."

Under the table, a whisper ventures

to be louder than the sirens and bombs.
"What's your name?" I ask in English.
"Borislav", he answers looking me in the eye.
"And what's your name?"
"Nevena", she says, rooting herself deeper into my
lap.
"How old are you?" I continue.
"I am ten."
And "how old are you?"
"I am, I am..." she struggles.
"Eight" – I finish the sentence.
"Let's count now. You remember the numbers, right?"
In unison, "one, two, three..."
Quickly, we exhaust the knowledge of English.
Should I try colours? – I think.
Maybe that will keep them focused on me,
on the words they are trying to master.
I praise them for every syllable
they manage to pronounce,
but angst embarks like marching ants
and interrupts my teaching.
"Are they gone" – they ask.
"How long do we need to stay here?"
Suddenly, he is hungry;
she needs to go to the washroom;
they want their toys.

I am starting a game.

This dining table is our make-believe tent.
We are on a camping trip.
My brain is split between
the fairy tale I am creating,
the sounds of blasts,
and my calculation of the distance.
Who is not safe today?
What is the target? I wonder.
I slowly sink into silence despite my wish
to keep the day and the moment ordinary.
There is nothing ordinary in feeling
my heart hiding in my throat,
in holding two little hands in mine,
with sweaty palms. ●●●

I refuse to go to the nearest bomb shelter

as they strongly suggest.

For the lack of a classroom space,

with some cadre's permission,

we strangely used one of them to teach there.

And I know, that despite the documentation

about their capacity to protect,

equipped with beds and basic furniture,

boasted for their indestructible design,

I know what they look like.

Even with less than 20 students,

we had to keep the exits open all the

time to get the fresh air,

to breathe normally.

I know those spaces,

covered with grass as hobbit houses,

but with solid, steel doors.

I refuse to crawl into a hole with my children

and suffocate, trapped.

I would rather stay here,

leaned against the inside supporting wall

of my ground-floor apartment.

I would rather be here

with four little yellow handprints

on the kids' bedroom door.

Yellow, my son's favourite colour,

the paint we chose to decorate our home,

the colour of the sun.

I am determined to keep them here, next to me,

surrounded by the pillows I made for our sofa

and an orchid on the window sill.

Here, I can turn on the radio

and not let the chaos in.

We can listen to Bajaga, my daughter's favourite

singer, and dance until we drop, dead-tired.

Here, the world is sparkling and young,

here, we still have names.

Say: "I am Borislav. I am Nevena".

**I refuse to crawl
into a hole
with my children**

**There is no language
to explain**

the logic of how that

man in the plane

can see us as dots

and Xs on his map;

no mathematics to calculate the distance

between his thoughts and mine;

to multiply our heartbeats;

no chemistry to describe the difference

between the warmth of our embraces.

What is he doing here, far from his home?

Who is waiting for him at the dinner table?

Tears tiptoe down my dry lungs,

for those who are equally bewildered,

waiting for the loved ones.

What did I do in my life to end up

asking these questions?

How did that happen that I slipped

from interpreting at business meetings

with foreign delegations,

and translating TV shows and cartoons,

into this reality where everything collapses?

How am I, instead of taking my kids to school

and catching a bus to work,

suddenly waking up to an empty day

of scary expectations and indifference?

We sleep in our sweatpants with shoes close-by

and a backpack with our passports, birth certificates,

and a bottle of water.

Will that save us? Or just identify us?

We sleep together in my bed, away from the windows.

Words keep losing their meaning and innocence.

I stare at the two faces into the night

and through the dark

as if that would help,

as if I could take them with me into my memory,

into my body, where they once were, protected.

I don't want to lose them.

I haven't loved enough.

What if I don't have time to love enough?

How will the universe

compensate for the void of this colossal lack of love?

I don't want much,
just a clear, friendly sky.

For the sake of my children,

I start again,

from this very moment.

Do no evil.

Think no evil.

Wish no evil. ●●●●●

INSULT

by Yasmeen Nayfeh

Hijab Tailgate

A couple of years ago I was riding with my mom in the car when we pulled up to a red stop light. Next to us was a middle-aged man in a yellow pickup truck who appeared to be singing to himself. I laughed thinking how funny it looked only to realize that the man was not singing along with the radio but was actually swearing and looking straight at my mom. The man then started angrily pointing at his hair while still cursing at us. Sometimes my mom goes out wearing a baseball cap, but on that day she was wearing her hijab, the traditional head scarf that Muslim women often wear.

The light turned green and my mom started to drive while trying to actively ignore the man. Unfortunately, he started to tailgate us and even changed lanes whenever we did. My mom must have been afraid and upset but she did not show it. Finally, the man veered off and went on his way.

I could not help feeling angry and insulted at what had just happened.

I asked my mom how she managed to remain so visibly composed and not lose her "cool" throughout all that had happened. Her answer is something that I have taken to heart and I believe to be universally true across cultures: "People fear most the things that they don't understand. And the great shame of it is that this man probably doesn't even want to understand. But you can't let that affect you. You can only control your reaction and not other people's actions."

I realized then and there that I do not ever want to be like that man and that the best way to do that is to understand differences before I ever begin to fear them.



FACING

11 · Thirty-One

The Chofetz Chaim enumerated that there may be up to 31 mitzvot commandments that may be violated when a person speaks or listens to Lashon Hara.

LEFT

12 · Chessed

Even in the darkest of times the chessed is there if you look for it.

13 · In B'nei Shlosa
Gossip in front of three. Spreading the
disease even further



DETAIL ABOVE

Black seed beads rain lashon hara down from the heavens while at the same time the black bugle beads carry the lashon hara towards the heavens.

DETAIL RIGHT

The paper collage represents the purity of the soul before being tarnished by lashon hara





RIGHT

14 · In the Garden of Good and Evil (Chilul Hashem)

Lashon Hara as the diseased tree of life; seeds falling to the ground; new pods of Lashon Hara begin to sprout and grow (l'dor vador).



DETAIL TOP LEFT

The seed beads in the center represent the seeds of lashon hara.

DETAIL BELOW

The gold bugle beads represent the mature lashon hara hanging from the edges of the tree. The seeds are ready to drop and take root and perpetuate the cycle again for the next generation.



DETAIL BOTTOM LEFT

The stitching on the trunk of the tree represents the web of lies and deceit that is lashon hara.





FACING

15 · Mending

Harsh words that sear the soul will heal over time—the voids filling with chessed.

LEFT

16 · Tzara'at/Metzora

A skin affliction associated with spiritual impurity. It is written in the Torah that Miriam was afflicted with Tzara'at after she spoke to Aaron harshly about her brother Moses and his wife Zipporah.



RIGHT

17 · Measure for Measure

A basic tenet of Judaism: Hashem repays a person measure for measure in the world to come.

FACING

18 · Bomb

A bomb of loving kindness (chessed).





FACING

19 · Feather Pillow



DETAILS ABOVE, LEFT
*Mixed media, beads and feathers
on gauze.*

Old Eastern European Folktale

A Pillow Full of Feathers

In a small town somewhere in Eastern Europe lived a man who talked too much about other people. Whenever he heard a story or rumor about somebody he felt compelled to repeat it. He loved the attention he got because of the way he told his anecdotes, sometimes embellishing them with little details he invented to make them even funnier or juicier.

One day he heard a rumor about another businessman in town. He told his colleagues, who told it to their friends, who told it to their wives, who told it to their friends, who told it to their neighbors and so on around the town, until the businessman who was the target of the rumor finally heard it. He went to the Rabbi of the town and told the Rabbi of the rumor going around which had tarnished his good name and reputation. Later that day the Rabbi summoned the man who talked too much

about other people to his study. The Rabbi figured that if he was not the one who initiated the rumor, then he might at least know who did.

When the man who talked too much about other people heard from the Rabbi the devastating effect this rumor had on his neighbor, he admitted to relating the rumor to others. He told the Rabbi that he had not considered it such a big deal to repeat a nasty rumor or speak unkindly about another individual. The Rabbi explained that “it is lashon hara, evil speech, and it’s akin to committing murder—it kills a person’s soul.”

“I feel terrible about this,” the man who talked too much about other people stated. “What can I do to undo this? I will do anything.” The Rabbi asked him: “Do you have any feather pillows in your house?”

“Rabbi, you know that I am not a poor man; I have many feather pillows at home. What do you want me to do, sell them?” “No, just bring me one,” said the Rabbi. The man was mystified, but he returned to the Rabbi’s study with a nice fluffy pillow under his arm. The Rabbi opened a window in his study and handed the man a knife. “Please cut your pillow open.” The man looked at him quizzically and said, “Rabbi, here in your study? It will make a mess!” “Please, cut it open” the Rabbi said again.

The man did as he was told and cut open the pillow and a torrent of feathers came pouring out. They landed on the desk and on the chairs and on the bookcase, and on the clock, and on the cat which jumped after them. They floated over the table and into the teacups, on the Rabbi and on the man with the knife, and a lot of them

swirled out of the window and were carried away by the breeze.

The Rabbi waited until the feathers had settled and then he said to the man: “Now, gather up the feathers, and stuff them back in your pillow. All of them, mind you; not one may be missing.” The man stared at the Rabbi in utter disbelief. “That is impossible, Rabbi. The ones here in this room, well I might be able to get most of them, but the ones that flew out of the window are gone forever.”

“Yes,” said the Rabbi and nodded gravely, “that is how it is once lashon hara leaves your mouth; you do not know where it will end up. It flies around the universe on the wings of the wind, and you can never get it back!”



DETAILS RIGHT, BELOW
The gold beads of lashon hara are now surrounded by the golden seed beads of loving kindness preventing them from continuing on their destructive path.



FACING

20 · Whole Cloth
Being the best that we can be is a never-ending journey.



Untitled

by Rosemary Nowicki

1) Imagine if conversation always happened without Lashon Hara

Following all the rules,
Not just the one about evil speech.
To adhere to all the precepts
Nothing---good or bad, truth or falsehood---about
an absent person.
I'm sure conversations would not just become a discussion of the weather...
...at least I think I am sure.

2) I have trouble responding to this:

Even if I have been the object of Lashon Hara
I just don't care.
Does that sound smug?
I am sure it does.
Most people who have broken my heart with words
Have done so to my face.
And, as often as not, without realizing it.

3) " If you don't have anything good to say about anyone, come sit beside me"

-Alice Roosevelt Longworth

Honestly, all this has made me think
I may have to stop talking,
I may have to stop listening.
We all know the power of words---
That is why we are here after all.
I have agonized about being so flippant
about this very serious transgression.
I know I am guilty of Lashon Hara,
In fact, I don't think I know anyone who isn't.
It has been a good reminder to me to be careful
what I say and to whom I say it.
But I prefer the mantra my father gave to me many years ago
"Be honest, straightforward and to the point".
If you can offer the same to me, maybe we can talk.

“ Free speech does not mean ...

One of the ongoing stories this summer has been the emergence of a worrying pattern of abuse through social networking sites. There was the intimidation of a classics professor, and threats against women campaigning to have Jane Austen's portrait on banknotes. Most worrying by far has been [the] link made between one site, based in Latvia, and the suicides of four children, two in Britain, two in Ireland. The reason many feel this site is dangerous is that it allows people to post hurtful and hateful comments anonymously. More than 60 million young people use the site, posting thirty million messages a day, so some are going to be vicious, and some recipients are

going to be vulnerable. All in all, it's a new chapter in the world's oldest story, the use of words as weapons by people seeking to inflict pain.

New because in the past most communications were face to face, and set in some kind of social context, in which parents, teachers or friends were aware of what was going on and could intervene. There were the occasional anonymous letter writers; but at least the pain they caused was private, not public the way social networking messages often are.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

... speech that costs nothing ”

By allowing people facelessly to make threats or be offensive or spread false rumours, the new sites are offering the demons of our nature the maximum of temptation, combined with the maximum opportunity. Greek myth told the story of Gyges' ring which made whoever wore it invisible, so he or she could get away with anything. The internet comes pretty close to being Gyges' ring, allowing people to hide behind a mask of invisibility, and even the service providers can usually escape by relocating beyond the reach of regulation.

The technology is new but the moral challenge is old. Judaism's sages were eloquent on the dangers of what

they called evil speech, by which they meant derogatory, demeaning or offensive words. They called this a cardinal sin and said that it destroys three people, the one who says it, the one he says it against, and the one who listens in.

Words injure; they hurt; they wound. And every new technology that allows us to share words more widely calls for a renewed insistence on the ethics of communication. Free speech does not mean speech that costs nothing. It means speech that respects the freedom and dignity of others. Forget this and free speech will prove to be very expensive indeed.



Nancy Current \ **From Generation to Generation** Guarding against Evil Speech

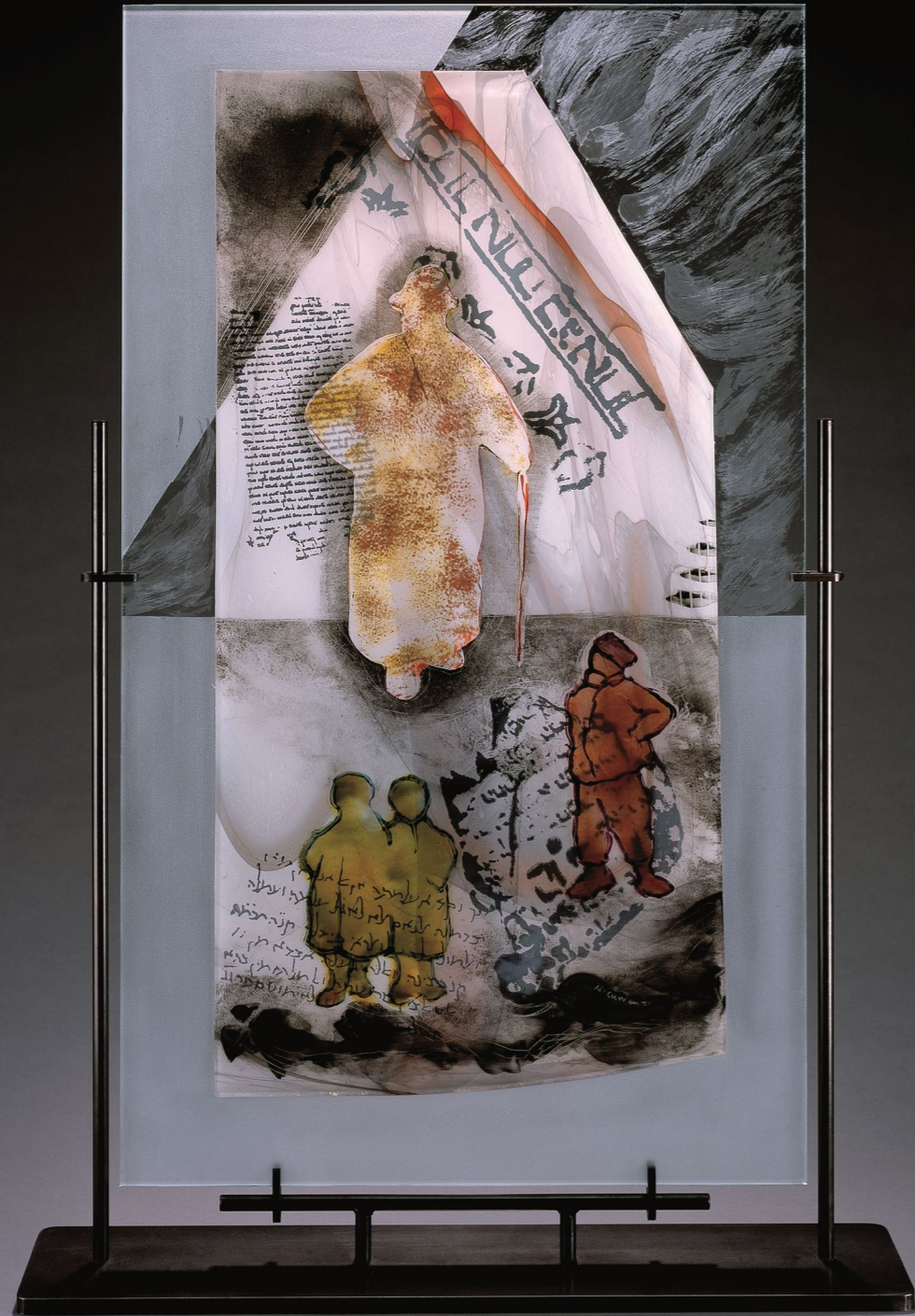
My studies of biology, psychology, and the teachings of my religion have informed my views of humanity. We are beings of great complexity in which both good and evil co-exist. Pulled in both directions, we employ free will to decide which inclination to choose. The question is, how free is our will? Many factors, both internal and external, can make it difficult to determine the right thing to say or do. My series of glass paintings, L'Dor Vador: From Generation to Generation, addresses this issue. Images of ancient manuscripts allude to the writings of Jewish sages that are an important source of information and

guidance about lashon hara, evil speech. We have an obligation to ourselves and others to "guard our tongues from evil and our lips from speaking deceit," (Psalm 34:14).

Much of my work is about children and lashon hara. In addition to preparing ourselves to understand and take action against evil speech, we are obligated to prepare our children. We know they will encounter lashon hara in their lives because bullying, especially on the internet, is a common experience.

By preparing them to recognize and counter evil speech, children can take action to empower themselves and avoid being the perpetrators or victims of cruelty. My work reminds viewers that what children say is important and it is never too soon to learn about evil speech and its consequences.

The individual stands between history and the future, what has happened and what will happen. The choices we make now determine what will be. Let us choose paths of light, not darkness, so that our children will also be courageous and take a stand for what is right and good in our world.



FACING

Teach Us to Apply Our Hearts to Wisdom

LEFT

In Seeking Wisdom, the Second Step Is Listening

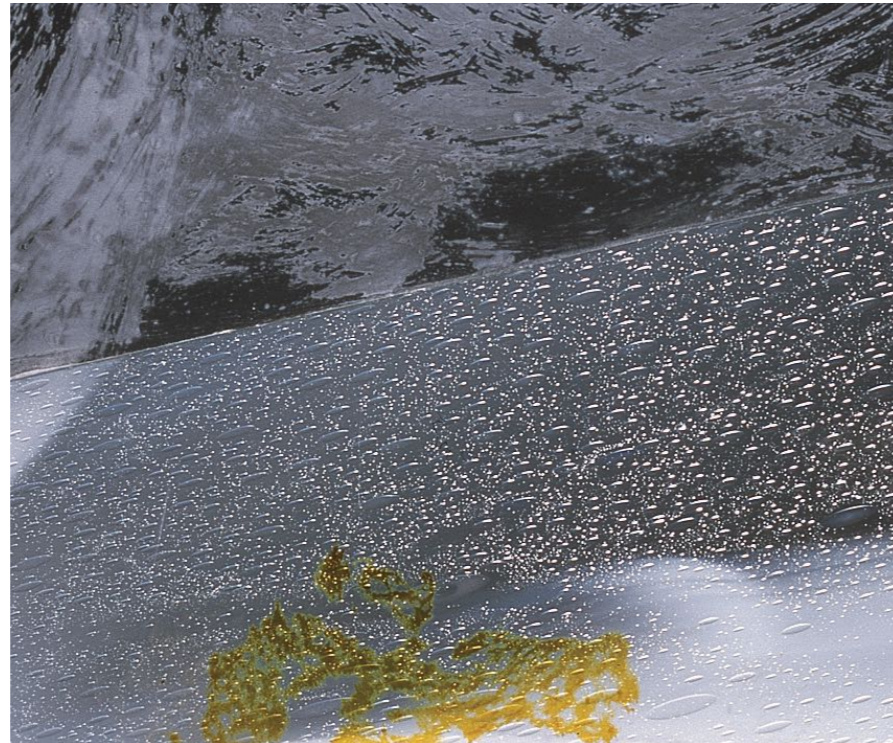


DETAIL ABOVE

Illustrates some of the painting and printing techniques used: Hand painted figures with monotype and screen printed versions of ancient Hebrew manuscripts.

DETAIL RIGHT

Characteristics of hand-made stained glass: The bubbles scatter light. Above them are brush-strokes etched into the plate glass.



FACING

In Seeking Wisdom, the First Step Is Silence





FACING

In Seeking Wisdom, the Third Step Is Remembering

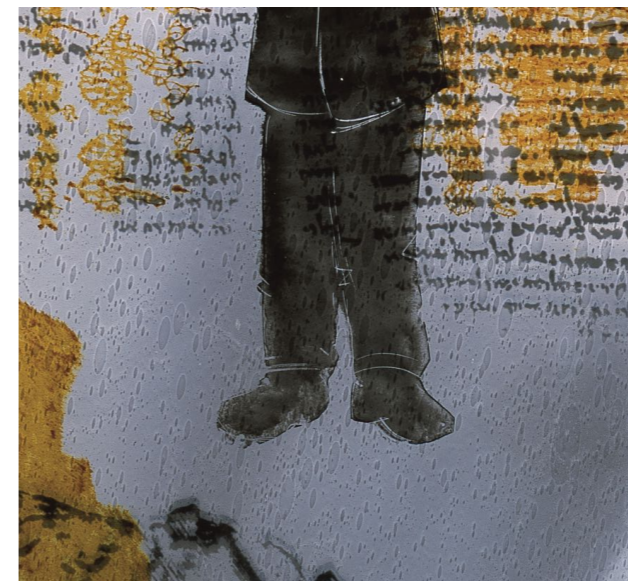
LEFT

In Seeking Wisdom, the Fourth Step Is Practicing



RIGHT

In Seeking Wisdom, the Fifth Step Is Teaching Others



DETAIL ABOVE

Ancient manuscripts screen printed in black enamel and golden silver stain are used as architectural elements, emphasizing traditional cultural foundations.

DETAIL RIGHT

The manuscripts also symbolize learning. The students were painted with black enamel which was scratched (sgraffito) with a feather.





L'dor Vador I



L'dor Vador II



L'dor Vador III

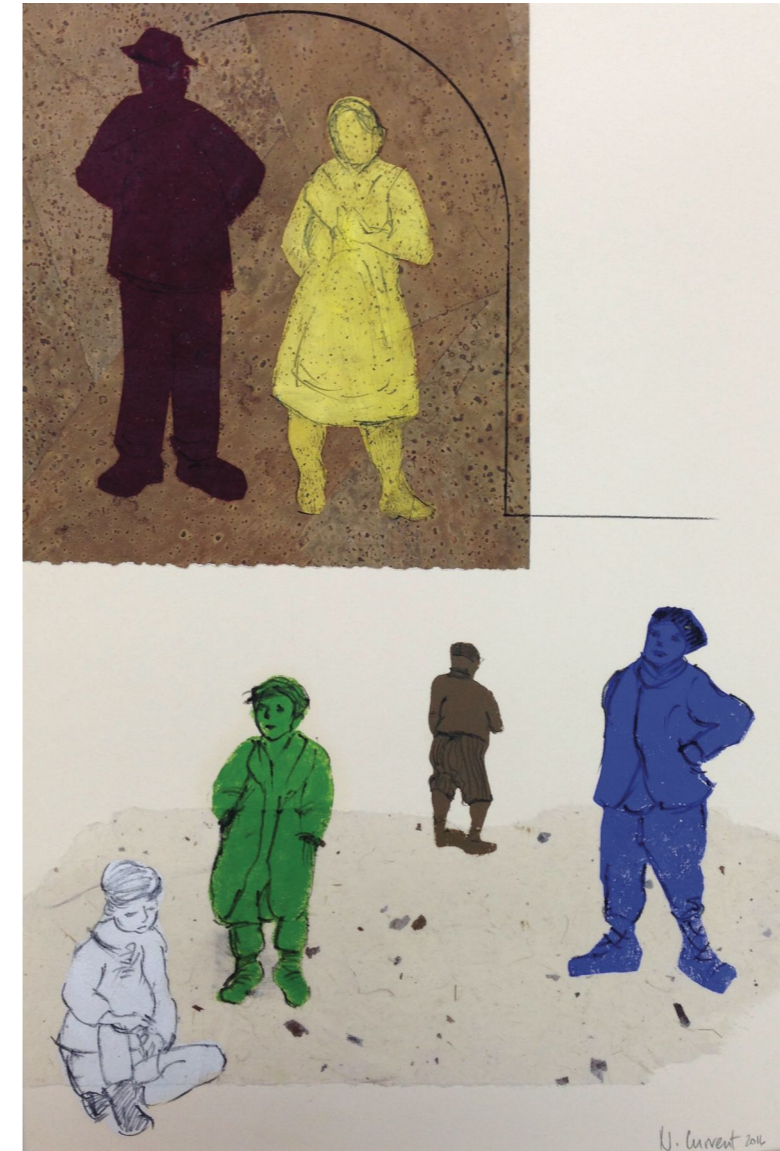


L'dor Vador IV



DETAIL LEFT
Collaged cork paper and lines provide an architectural focus, a metaphor for the teachings which parents are obligated to give their children.

DETAIL BELOW
This figure of a boy, who seems to be turning away from the others, represents the child who is difficult to teach.



Teach Your Children I

Teach Your Children II





FACING

Girl Talk

LEFT

Red Boy

These works focus on peer interactions, especially between children. There are multiple interpretations possible for each image, indicating the complexity of both the instigation of lashon hara and also its consequences

Feathers gathered, feathers lost

by Jude Neale

We speak them

into shadowed lives
They balloon our dry throats
with malice and the recognizable
gossip of our station and design
These words drift like pollen
over sleepy blank tongues
eager for a bitter taste
to inform them
of the hard rub of someone else's
slim bag of misery

We ask ourselves

who are we to paint you
with such sticky tar
casting stones
at your blind innocence

Now we try to gather

back the words
that have stained
your spotless name

The wind lifts

the feathered flutter
of these secrets and lies
and it blows them clean
away from our
undeserving eyes

We promise

we're sorry

and won't whisper

won't *whisper* again

the mean lies
that held your face
to the night

Art Materials

Robin Atlas

Lashon Hara Narrative, 2011–2012

Mixed media on fabric
Framed 13"x13"

Vessels, 2017

Muslin, paper and trim
Various sizes 1"x2" to 7"x4"



Nancy Current

L'Dor Vador: From Generation to Generation series

Glass paintings, 2011–2012

L'Dor Vador 11: In Seeking Wisdom, the First Step Is Silence

Vitreous (fired) enamel and silver stain on handblown Fremont Antique glass, silicone, etched plate glass, 29" x 21" x 5" with stand

L'Dor Vador 12: In Seeking Wisdom, the Second Step Is Listening

Vitreous enamel and silver stain on handblown Fremont Antique glass, silicone, etched plate glass, 26" x 17.5" x 5" with stand

L'Dor Vador 13: In Seeking Wisdom, the Third Step Is Remembering

Vitreous enamel on handblown Fremont Antique glass, silicone, etched plate glass, 32.5" x 21" x 5" with stand

L'Dor Vador 14: In Seeking Wisdom, the Fourth Step Is Practicing

Vitreous enamel and silver stain on handblown Fremont Antique glass, silicone, etched plate glass, 27.5" x 20" x 5" with stand

L'Dor Vador 15: In Seeking Wisdom, the Fifth Step Is Teaching Others

Vitreous enamel and silver stain on handblown Fremont Antique glass, silicone, etched plate glass, 26" x 17.5" x 5" with stand

L'Dor Vador 16: Teach Us to Apply Our Hearts to Wisdom

Vitreous enamel on handblown Fremont Antique glass, silicone, etched plate glass, 29" x 23" x 5" with stand

L'Dor Vador I–IV prints on paper, 2011

Altered monotype with screen printed collage, 32" x 24" framed

Teach Your Children I and II, 2016

Altered monotype and collage on paper, 24" x 18" framed

LASHON HARA SERIES PRINTS ON PAPER, 2017

Girl Talk

Ink and watercolor collages on print, 14" x 18" framed

Red Boy

Ink and watercolor collages on print with litho, 18" x 14" framed



Collaborating Essayists, Poets & Contributors

Jaqueline M. Massey

Jacqueline M. Massey is the executive director of the Bowen Island Arts Council. A former journalist and freelance writer, the opportunity to explore and reflect on contemporary social issues through art is one of the things she loves best about her job. She is a long-time arts advocate who believes that the emotional impression of all genres of arts is a unifying force that connects people on a deeply profound level and is therefore ideally suited to stimulate intercultural understanding and a shared sense of humanity.

Andrea Iaroc

Andrea Iaroc is an independent art historian, museum professional, and Founder and Executive Director of the CORAI Project, a foundation that awards springboard grants to art historians that are revolutionizing the foundation of art history by making it more inclusive and global. Her five-year research on Jewish art iconography led to a three-year lecture series, which concluded in the summer of 2015. Her current art historical focus is on cultural hybridity and identity. Andrea also writes in her blog "random thoughts and, more organized concepts about what [she] sees, feels, and thinks is happening in our fragile, dramatic, and vulnerable art world," among other things. Her cultural experiences and diverse ethnoreligious family background inform her ideas, work, and life philosophy which, so far, parallels James M. Barrie's quote: "Life is a long lesson in humility."

Spirit Trickey

Spirit Trickey completed her undergraduate work at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock with a B.A. in Mass Communications and minor in journalism. She received her Master's Degree at President Clinton's School of Public Service in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Spirit worked at Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site for 10 years where she founded the Reel Civil Rights Film Festival. She worked also at Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park in Seattle for 2 years. Spirit is the playwright of One Ninth, an exploration of human dignity and racial conflict as seen through the eyes of Minnijean Brown Trickey, one of the Little Rock Nine who desegregated Little Rock Central High School in 1957.

Spirit lives and works in New York City, is co-writing Minnijean Brown Trickey's memoir, and serves as a speaking agent for her and civil rights icon Ruby Bridges.

Natasha Boškić

Natasha Boškić moved to Vancouver (Canada) in 1999 from Novi Sad (Serbia). A long history of family storytelling, folk tales and legends as well as her personal life experiences have shaped and directed her writing. She writes poetry and prose in English and Serbian. Her work has been published in Quills, dutch, Alive at the Center: Contemporary Poems from the Pacific Northwest, Visual Verse, Allegro and other places.

Natasha works at the University of British Columbia, designing learning experiences with integration of educational technology. Interested in technology as a new landscape for literary expression, she experiments with new media. Her Ph.D. is in Language and Literacy (UBC), with a focus on ethics and narratives in gameworlds.

Yasmeen Nayfeh

Yasmeen is a Digital Design student at Seattle University. She was born in California and moved to Seattle at a young age. She is half Palestinian, a quarter German, and a quarter Jordanian. Although she has lived in the states her entire life, she has visited, and continues to visit, her family in Jordan every summer.

Experiencing different cultures from a young age has helped her realize that when one blindly chooses sides, one can start to lose perspective. Being in the "best of both worlds" culture-wise, allows her to see and appreciate other points of view. She has been fortunate growing up immersed in the Arab, American and German cultures.

Rosemary Nowicki

Rosemary Nowicki is a Vancouverite by birth and has had a lifelong interest in literary expression. She has started to express that enthusiasm in poems that are always personal, often observational and sometimes humorous. She has performed at Thundering Word, In The House, and several Pandora's events, including previous Word Whips at the Zack Gallery. She is proud and grateful to be invited to share her thoughts...

Jude Neale

Jude Neale is a Canadian writer who has written five books and is a classically trained singer, mentor and internationally award winning poet. Jude's recent book, Splendid in its Silence, is a finalist for the SPM Book Award and will be published in the U.K. in April.



Featured Essay

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is an international religious leader, philosopher, award-winning author and respected moral voice. He was awarded the 2016 Templeton Prize in recognition of his “exceptional contributions to affirming life’s spiritual dimension.”

A sought-after contributor to various media around the world, Rabbi Sacks is the author of over 30 books including: *The Dignity of Difference*—which won the 2004 Grawemeyer Prize for Religion—and his most recent bestseller, *Not in God’s Name*.

Knighthed by Her Majesty The Queen in 2005 and made a Life Peer, taking his seat in the House of Lords in 2009, Rabbi Sacks served as the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth for 22 years. Since then, he has held a number of professorships at several academic institutions including Yeshiva University, King’s College London and New York University.

BBC Radio 4: Thought for the Day, 9 August 2013

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Yasmeen Nayfeh, Social media & Promotion

JEWISH
ART
SALON



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