

Tuesday, April 18

5:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Reception & Registration

University Club

803 State St, Madison, WI

6:15 p.m.

Special Lecture:

“Defining Bosch Today”

Larry Silver, Farquhar Professor of Art History (University of Pennsylvania)

Room 140, Elvehjem Building

All lectures will be held at the Pyle Center, 702 Langdon St., unless otherwise noted.

Wednesday, April 19

8:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Choreographer’s Workshop

Gates of Heaven Synagogue

302 E Gorham St.

9:30 – 10:00 a.m.

Conference Registration begins

10:00 – 10:30 a.m.

Welcome Remarks

Douglas Rosenberg, others

10:30 – 11:00 a.m.

Judaic Metalsmithing and its Role in Jewish Art

Jim Cohen

This paper looks at the place of Judaic metalsmithing in the light of the question “is there Jewish art”. The talk encompasses the author’s view of Jewish art and Judaic, a history of the

origins of Judaic, early Judaic in the United States and post WWII Judaic.

The later is discussed through review of contemporary Judaic metalsmiths in the United States and overseas.

11:00 – 11:30 a.m.

Jewish Art as Marked

Larry Silver

Harold Rosenberg’s famous essay, which sparked the subject of this conference, challenges the criteria advanced for what constitutes “Jewish” art. This paper responds by saying that no formula or essentialism suffices to provide any useful definition; however, if one starts with the foundational given that Jewish art is made by Jewish artists, some important qualities follow. Borrowing a term from the linguistic theory of Roman Jakobson about items that are marked, I claim that Jewish identity is similarly marked, that is, distinguished from the seemingly neutral norms of an “unmarked” cultural majority. Thus in America, whose norms include Christian, white, male, middle class, and heterosexual, marked minorities can include: Jews, non-whites, females, the poor, and gays, all of whom respond self-consciously as marked against those norms. They can either try to assimilate and deny their difference of identity or else assert that very difference, even provocatively. The subjects and forms of that response to being marked will vary enormously and individually, but one cannot escape one’s skin and how one is viewed by others. Just as there can be Jewish writers, so too there are Jewish artists,

whether they will acknowledge that marking or not.

11:30 – 12:00 p.m.

Understanding the Artistic Language of Crypto-Jews

Jônatas Chimen Dias DaSilva-Benayon, MFA

From the Iberian Inquisitions of the fifteenth century to today, the group interchangeably known as Marranos, crypto-Jews, B'nei Anusim, or simply Gente da Nação has had significant representation within the Arts. By observing the depictions made by these obscure Jewish artists, their descendants, or by non-Jewish creators who featured them as subjects, one may find a common vocabulary, which arguably forms the basis of a crypto-Jewish artistic language. Jonatas Chimen, an artist, author, and descendant of crypto-Jews, sheds light on subject of crypto-Jewish art.

12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Lunch

(variety of food trucks at Library Mall)

2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Workshop: Creativity and the Unknown: Entering the tsim tsum

Judy Sirota Rosenthal
Gates of Heaven Synagogue
302 E Gorham St.

This reverent / irreverent, active multi arts workshop weaves multiple threads, mystical traditions and the human spirit to stretch mind /body/spirit; we enter the gap between the known and nascent.

With trust and courage, traveling outside the familiar, we enter sacred space, to experiment / create, alone / together; engaging in practices that we can take with us, wherever we call home.

Dress comfortably, plan to arrive on time and attend the whole workshop; bring a notebook/pen/pencil...no late entry... it will disturb the community that we are creating

“Somewhere beyond right and wrong, there is a garden. I will meet you there.”
—Rumi

5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Reception & Registration

Location TBA

Thursday, April 20

8:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Choreographer's Workshop
Gates of Heaven Synagogue
302 E Gorham St.

9:30 – 10:00 a.m.

Welcome Remarks

Douglas Rosenberg, others

10:00 – 10:30 a.m.

Confusions and Negations: Harold Rosenberg on Jewish Identity in a Free Society

Tony Michels

During the 1940s and 1950s intellectuals embarked on an extended public discussion of Jewish identity and communal belonging. Some

individuals implored unaffiliated intellectuals to join the communal fold, help build Jewish culture, assist in the struggle for a Jewish homeland, and come to the aid of European Jewry. In response, self-described “rootless” Jews, such as the art and literary critic, Harold Rosenberg, insisted on their independence, not out of indifference or callousness, but because they viewed themselves as cosmopolitans whose Jewishness formed no more than a small part of their identities. If they wished to stay true to themselves, unaffiliated or “alienated” intellectuals could not proclaim to be who they were not. But who exactly were they? Rosenberg and other intellectuals engaged this question as they attempted to come to terms with “the Jewish question” and, through it, problems of modern society in a time of war, totalitarianism, and genocide.

10:30 – 11:30

Jewish Art, Artists, and the Great American Buffalo: Constructing Jewish Art in Dance, Film, Painting, and Sculpture

Karen Goodman and Richard Hecht

We argue that Jewish art is the constructed and self-conscious nexus between time, place, and intention, which we explore through specific visual art and dance works. Richard Hecht will discuss Russian Jewish painter Grisha Bruskin’s “Alefbet Tapestry Project” (2004-2006), reflecting biblical, mythical, kabbalistic and folkloric traditions. The minimalist

and conceptual work of the Jerusalem sculptor Zelig Segal’s (1933-2015), “In Memory of the Destruction of the Temple” (sterling silver, 1988) and “To Touch the Light” (aluminum, 2003). Modern dance choreographer Karen Goodman will show clips of her stage work, “Earthling” (1998) and a new film, “Dybbuk Remix: Dancing Between Worlds” improvised by Goodman with Hecht filming in the former synagogue in Kazimierz Dolny, Poland.

11:30 – 12:00 p.m.

The Millwheel Everyday: Working with the words of Gertrud Kolmar

Toby Kaufmann-Buhler

This talk will feature a screening and discussion of a new video artwork titled “The Millwheel Everyday.” This video juxtaposes the poetry and letters of Jewish poet Gertrud Kolmar (a distant cousin of the artist) and the writings of the artist’s father, Walter Kaufmann-Bühler. Examining his Jewish-German roots, the artist uses video animation and sound to explore the themes of tragedy, loss and introspection during World War II. Linking the father’s words to Kolmar’s writings, the artist examines the textures and nuances of language, memory, and identity.

12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Lunch

(variety of food trucks at Library Mall)

1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Keynote:

**Recovering from Rosenberg's
Blind Spot: Images and Actions
in Jewish Art**

Ben Schachter

Fifty years ago Harold Rosenberg attempted to define Jewish art. After a series of rhetorical definitions, he gave up and wrote, "...the Second Commandment was the manifesto of Jewish art." In other words, if there is a Jewish art, then it is aniconic and resists images. Why did the man who created a critical method based on action turn away from his own ideas and stumble back into a discussion of images? Today, artists apply a whole range of strategies and techniques to their production. One approach is not enough and looking beyond Rosenberg raises new questions. What does a criticism of Jewish art need now? Action is important, but so are ideas and images. Can different critical ideas be brought together? And what can we learn from the artists themselves?

2:00 – 2:30 p.m.

**Contemporary Art:
Identity, Politics, Land**

Ella Levitt

While exile is partially to blame for the Jewish absence from Art History, what's happening now, generations after the Jewish State was established in terms of Jewish Art? Is art produced by Israeli artists more authentic than Diaspora art through its grounding in the Land?

For classic Zionist thinkers including

Herzl and Rav Kook the answer's an emphatic "yes." Yet for contemporary Israeli artists, the validity of Jewish presence in Israel is far more complicated, sensitive and nuanced. I will present several Israeli artists and artworks demonstrating mixed feelings towards Israel and Jewish identity in the global art world today.

2:30 – 3:30 p.m.

**It's O.K. to be Jewish Artists: The
Waxing of Jewish Artists Groups**

Ruth Weisberg, David Harris, and
Richard McBee

This panel will explore current attitudes towards the formation and function of Jewish artists' groups in the US. Three presentations will survey current versus past attitudes towards the category of Jewish art and the formation of Jewish artists groups as well as some of the regional and generational differences among group members. How does the location or scope of these organizations affect their sense of purpose as well as their function, goals and identity? The three members of the panel are from a truly national array of organizations which will allow for a variety of points of view.

3:30 – 4:00 p.m.

**Jewish Subjectivity, Embodying
Conflict and the Reimagining
of Dance Technique**

Naomi M. Jackson

This paper illuminates how ideas about the nature of embodied Jewish subjectivity as a conflicted identity

have impacted the development of dance technique. In particular the paper considers two moments in the history of American dance when this is evident. The first considers the style characterized by angular lines and opposition proposed by the Polish born immigrant Felix Fibich in the mid-twentieth century, which he asserted reflects “the Jewish soul, which is torn between joy and sadness.” The second examines the gaga movement language as developed by the Israeli choreographer Ohad Naharin in the early twenty-first century and re-interpreted by the American dance artist Jesse Zaritt.

4:00 – 4:30 p.m.

The Jewish Soul: Jewish Aesthetics in Holocaust Theatre and Film

David Chack

The question of a Jewish aesthetic being present in performances about the Holocaust is rarely explored. Despite strong Jewish narratives in “Son of Saul” by Hungarian Jewish filmmaker László Nemes, discussions rarely focus on a Jewish vantage point. Presuming a boy from the gas chambers in Auschwitz to be his son, Saul takes on the responsibility for him having a Jewish burial. Using camera work that places us into a very close proximity to what Saul sees and where his gaze goes, Nemes creates a “seeing” and a “search for a soul” that comes directly out of a Jewish aesthetic.

4:30 – 5:00 p.m.

Audience Response to Female Jewish Comedians: An Ethnographic Study

Grace Kessler Overbeke

My ethnographic research began by asking how Jewish female standup comedians disseminated or challenged stereotypes of Jewish women (e.g. Jewish American Princess and the Jewish Mother). In addition to talking with audience members at live performances of case study comedians (Sarah Silverman, Elayne Boosler, Judy Gold and Sandra Bernhard) I conducted an online survey and telephone follow-up interviews with over 400 fans. This paper summarizes the themes and trends that have emerged from this investigation. It focuses on patterns in how audience members’ ethnic and cultural backgrounds impact the way they make meaning from the case study comedians’ performances.

5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Dinner (on your own)

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Tribute to Babe Conney

Featuring the Sound Out Loud ensemble & friends performing Steve Reich’s Music for 18 Musicians
Promenade Hall
Overture Center for the Arts
201 State St.

Friday, April 21

8:30 – 9:00 a.m.

Registration

9:00 – 9:30 a.m.

Whose Jewishness? Inbal Dance Theater, Ethnic Dance, and High Art in 1950s–1960s US Spectatorship

Hannah Kosstrin

Media portrayals of Inbal Dance Theater's 1950s–1960s US tours marginalized Inbal's Arabic Jewishness instead of enabling it to be part of a transcendent Jewish art as Rosenberg defined. Within a cultural context of dance criticism that differentiated modernist, ethnic, and ethnologic dance, Sara Levi-Tanai's choreography engaged modernism and Jewishness even though critics relegated Inbal to the world of the folk and refused Levi-Tanai's aesthetic inclusion in the modern dance record. I argue that this reception affected modernism and implicated postwar American Jewish acculturation within an American-Jewish-Israeli imaginary driven by race politics and cultural-geopolitical allegiances between the US and Israel.

9:30 – 10:00 a.m.

Wrestling with Longing and Wholeness, or Was it Ayin Sof?

Judy Sirota Rosenthal

Through slides and words, the artist presents the development of her very varied body of work as practices along

multiple axes: Jewish, tribal, mystical, and human.”

“I have come to understand that art is (among other things) a spark of light that sends a ray of connection into our souls whether intellectually, emotionally, or spiritually. For me art making at best, is an embodiment of spirituality, a practice of immanence and transcendence, both personal and universal.”

10:30 – 11:00 a.m.

Plenary TBA

11:00 – 11:30 a.m.

Art as a Community Practice

David Jordan Harris

In the town of Chelm there was a man who looked high and low for Jewish art. “We have no Jewish art here, but we are teeming with Jews who are making it anyway.” *Rimon: The Minnesota Jewish Arts Council* watches what happens when Jewish artists are placed at the center of the community's life rather than at its margins. Eschewing an essentialist approach that prescribes the features of Jewish art, Rimon incubates art work in all disciplines through low-cost, high-impact collaborations, offering avenues for creativity that invite participation by an unusually wide spectrum of ages and Jewish backgrounds.

12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Lunch

(variety of food trucks at Library Mall)

1:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Keynote:

Myopic or Blind?

Judith Brin Ingber

“Myopic or Blind?” is Judith Brin Ingber’s keynote talk responding to Harold Rosenberg’s “Commentary” essay from 1966. She will speak to his myopic view of art, reserved for art hanging in museums. She asks other questions including who has created noteworthy dance works in his time extending until today? What can be said differently in dance through how memory and responses to Jewish identity in dance? What has happened to the divide between dancers in Israel and the Diaspora? Who contributes to a Jewish dance canon, through their dances finding expression then and for our time?

2:00 – 2:30 p.m.

Community Discussion

2:30 – 3:00 p.m.

The Jewishness of Israeli

Theatrical Dance

Henia Rottenberg

This paper argues that although Hebrew/Israeli dance was created under the influence of political and social processes attempting to reject the Jewish “body” and issues, Jewish dance continued to flow, occasionally it surfaced and danced. I will examine the Jewishness of works created by Moshe Efrati (b. 1934), an Israeli dancer and choreographer who choreographed Jewish dances while ignoring the

Zionist ethos. I shall examine the “Jewish” characteristics in a selection of his works, and see whether the Jewish angle in Efrati’s work reflects a society undergoing a process of change.

3:30 – 5:00 p.m.

Jewish Choreographer’s Workshop

(Participatory closing event)

Rebecca Pappas, Sophia Levine, Hannah Schwadron, Daniel Kaplan, Karen Goodman, Judith Brin Ingber, Naomi Jackson, and Hannah Kosstrin
Gates of Heaven Synagogue
302 E Gorham St.

6:00 p.m.

Shabbat Dinner

Location TBA