

Ali Shrago-Spechler (b.1989, Hollywood, Florida) is an interdisciplinary artist and educator whose work examines the malleability of history and imagined community. Her installations and performances explore the violence and ubiquity of Jewish histories while creating a familiar and strange space for her audience. Ali is a Fulbright Scholar (Germany 2020-21) and the recipient of the Naomi Anolic Emerging Artist Award. Her work has been reviewed in the NY Times, Time Out NY, VICE, The Forward, New Times Broward, The Miami Herald and ArtNet News. Ali currently lives and works between Germany, Israel and the United States.

Goldie Gross (b. 1997, New York) is an artist, researcher, and sometimes-curator whose practice explores portraiture and landscape through a lens of subjective interpretability which interrogates the biases and expectations that viewers bring to the table. She lives in Brooklyn and is currently experimenting with lost wax casting.

Ken Goshen (b. 1988, Jerusalem) is a NYC-based artist and educator with a background in classical painting and printmaking. Goshen's art explores the gap between visual sensory experience and conceptualized pictorial narratives. His work brings together traditional techniques and a contemporary outlook—evoking both a sense of nostalgia and an exhilaration of the unexplored. Goshen is an alumnus of Parsons School of Design (BFA with honors, 2013-2017) and Hatahana Studio for Figurative Drawing and Painting (classical training, 2010-2013). Goshen teaches painting and drawing online to over 800 students from all over the world. He works and lives in Queens, NYC.

Yael Hovav (b. 1993, Jerusalem) lives and works in Tel Aviv. She studied in the MFA program of the Glasgow School of Art (2020), holds a BFA from Bezalel Academy of Art and Design (2019), and graduated from an Exchange Program at The State Academy of Fine Arts, Stuttgart (2017). She is a two times winner of The Haim Shiff Prize for Figurative Realist Art for Students, The Baden Württemberg Stipendium, and The Ranald & Jennifer May Postgraduate Painting Scholarship. Hovav exhibited a solo exhibition at Rosenfeld Gallery (2022, Tel Aviv), and participated in numerous group shows in Israel, among them at Hanina Gallery, Hamiffal Gallery, and The Jerusalem Biennale.

Yosef Itzkowitz (b.1995) is a writer, painter, & musician who lives and works in New York City. Philosophy is at the heart of his process. He seeks to understand and synthesize the medium at hand with the subject of mind. Itzkowitz graduated from the School of Visual Arts in 2021 where he majored in Illustration and published his first picture book. His work has been shown at CAY in Crown Heights, The Studio 33 Art Gallery, Jewish Action Magazine, Talmudology.com, and Polizzi Fine Art.



Lindsay LeBoyer (b. 1995, New York) is an independent curator who joined Havurah in 2022 as Chair of Art. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Art History from New York University (2017) and a Masters degree in Curatorial Practice from The Glasgow School of Art (2019). Recent projects include *Pillars* by Simon Benjamin at The Arts Center at Governors Island and *Instant Tunnel* by Mira Dayal at The Gallery Ltd. Lindsay lives in Brooklyn, NY with her dog Pluto, and she currently serves as Exhibitions Associate at Lower Manhattan Cultural Council.

EMANATIONS

A Havurah Gallery Night of Contemporary Jewish Portraiture



Likutei Maharan 36:6

לפי בחינת קלי המקבל את האור, כך נצטרך האור בתוכו

Depending on the aspect of the vessel that receives the light, that is how the light within it takes shape

Pirkei Avot 4:20

אל תסתכל בקנקן, אלא במה שיש בו

Don't look at the container but at that which is in it

Berakhot 55a:12-13

יודע היה בצלאל לצרף אותיות שנבראו בהן שמים וארץ

Bezalel knew how to join the letters with which heaven and earth were created

In the story of Shemot, when God calls upon Moshe to construct a sanctuary for His spirit to dwell among the people of Israel, Moshe instructs Bezalel to build an arch, Kelim¹, and a Mishkan². Several explanations are given for why Bezalel is chosen to build the Mishkan: his wisdom, his intellect, his understanding of creation. In Talmud Bavli, Rav Yehudah points to Bezalel's ability to "combine the letters that were used to make the Heavens and Earth" [Berakhot 55a:12-13], or in other words, to attempt an act of formation in the physical world that parallels creation itself. Bezalel, confused by Moshe's instructions, replies that one should first build a house and then fill it with things, or else "where do I place the vessels that I am making?" [Rashi Exodus 35:22]. Here we see Bezalel's intuition that the universe is ordered in a certain way: Divine energy needs a physical home to inhabit here on earth. The Gemara expounds: Moshe answered, "What you have said is indeed the way I heard it³. You are just like your name BTZAL-EL, In the shadow of God."

Just as the tabernacle was made to contain the spirit of God, the body is made to contain the soul of a person. In the Kabbalistic tradition, the form we see in the mirror holds a deeper and more complex light, one that emanates from a divine source. Pirkei Avot 4:20 refers to the primacy of this emanation, saying "Don't look at the container but at that which is in it."

If physical appearance is a wrapper for the soul, how, then, is an artist to proceed? Some turn to pure abstraction in an attempt to see beyond material constraints, while others embrace materiality, using precious resources to affect a divine aura. Tonight, we hope to offer a Jewish approach; a fusion of spiritual light with physical matter that leaves the viewer to parse out one from the other, or perhaps to enjoy their ambiguity. "Depending on the aspect of the vessel that receives the light, that is how the light within it takes shape [Likutei Maharani 36:6]." Havurah's first portrait gallery offers colors, edges, and textures that interact with subjects and play off their character. Gestures and mannerisms, folds and drapes point to the distinct human experience of extracting meaning from visual language.

We would not claim any artwork is the image of a soul in the literal sense—such an entity is not to be comprehended in this world. Rather, it is evidence of the continual aspiration to understand, mimic, and express the intangible qualities of a person or moment. Art, as means of spiritual practice, can allow us to capture the essence of creation within our physical building blocks of reality.

¹ Hebrew: כֵּלִים, literally "Vessels"

² Hebrew: מִשְׁכָּן, a residence or dwelling place

³ Moshe had indeed been instructed that the Mishkan be built first, as Bezalel suggests

