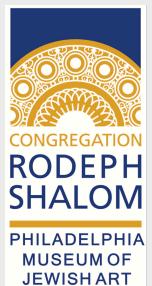


FALLOUT:

October 7th

& the New
Antisemitism





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FOREWORD

As the Director of the Jewish Art Salon, I am immensely proud to present *Fallout: October 7 and the New Antisemitism*, a profoundly moving and timely exhibition. This collection of artworks confronts an urgent issue that remains under-explored in too many cultural spaces today. The rise of new antisemitism, particularly in the wake of the events of October 7, demands our attention, and these powerful works articulate its impact with unflinching clarity and emotional depth.

I am deeply grateful to the Philadelphia Museum of Jewish Art for hosting this exhibition and providing a vital platform for these critical conversations. Their commitment to fostering meaningful dialogue through art is very commendable. My heartfelt thanks also go to my fellow curators, whose vision and dedication have brought this collection to life. Their selection and arrangement of these works amplify the voices of the artists and the urgency of this moment.

Thank you for joining us in this important journey.

Yona Verwer
Director, Jewish Art Salon

FOREWORD

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Philadelphia Museum of Jewish Art, we are pleased to renew our association with the Jewish Art Salon with this historic exhibition of artistic responses to the tragic events of October 7, 2023 in Israel. We pray for the return of all of the remaining hostages and an end to the hostilities.

We are as an arts institution dedicated to eliciting conversation to expand our understanding of our world and community, discussing areas of disagreement and discovering areas of common ground. We recognize that there are a multiplicity of views. Our congregation is devoted to a continuation of the Jewish peoplehood and a democratic Jewish homeland. We affirm Israel's right to exist as an expression of a millennial-long dream. We are committed to pluralism and civil rights for everyone living within Israel. We look to the future and hope for the shared liberation of Israelis and Palestinians.

We thank the Jewish Art Salon for creating this opportunity for meaningful dialogue.

Philadelphia Museum of Jewish Art

Fallout: October 7th and the New Antisemitism

Curated by Joel Silverstein, Richard McBee and Yona Verwer

Essay by Joel Silverstein

Siona Benjamin, Leah Caroline, Dorit Jordan Dotan, Dena Eber, Jenny Edwards Ber , Micha Eden Erdesz, Caren Garfen, Goldie Gross, Debbie Teicholz Guedalia, Robert Hirsch, Julia Holt, Judith Joseph, Tobi Kahn, Yury Kharchenko, Carol Man, Phillip Maier, Richard McBee, Hana Mendel, Michelle Moore, Yigal Ozeri, Nancy Pantirer, Mark Podwal, Leah Raab, Archie Rand, Joel Silverstein, Yona Verwer, Avraham Vofsi, Gabriel Wolff, Billha Zussman

The events of October 7 and the subsequent war in Gaza represent a crucial turning point in the lives of the Jewish People. This is true whether in the land of Israel or in Diaspora communities across the globe. Attacks and criticism of Israel have become commonplace in the media, academia, and cultural spaces. Simultaneously antisemitism and its traditional hateful tropes have skyrocketed; falsely linking Zionism with colonialism and accompanying assertions of political and religious illegitimacy. This often exposes Jewish people to implicit, or explicit threats, intimidation, and outright danger, affecting all Jews regardless of their beliefs and political affiliations.

Simply describing or explaining these experiences seems woefully inadequate to the depth, profundity and moral complexity of the past two years. However, twenty-nine Jewish artists have been moved to create visual artworks in a wide variety of responses to this crisis. Some works are documentarian in nature, representing both Israeli and Diasporic points of view utilizing photography at actual sites. Others experiment with traditional and nontraditional materials in realistic, expressionistic, or abstract ways, relying on the tradition of the artist as social critic. The participants represent a wide range of responses: horror, anger, outrage and resignation. The spectrum of critical and creative thinking actively attempts to make sense of this crisis. Furthermore, in many works there is the quest for spirituality, and ultimately, a longing for peace, dignity, and resolution. For this exhibition artists from four continents were asked to create new specific works of art or to submit existing pieces related to these extremely disturbing topics.

Since the earliest times, visual art has responded to a long history of social protest and moral outrage. However, the role of the artist as stand - alone social critic is really a function of the modern era. The graphic series The Disasters of War by Francisco de Goya, (1810-1820) and the painting Guernica (1937) by Pablo Picasso, are two examples that come readily to mind. These artists expanded the limits of representation and aesthetics in dealing with human tragedy and suffering. The philosopher Theodore Adorno famously wrote, "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric", in opposition to what he deemed the commercialism of "The Culture Industry". However, by 1962 he amended his position after his encounter with the Holocaust poetry of Paul Celan. Only then did Adorno endorse a post-Holocaust art based on authenticity and true empathy. These issues are still with us. While emotional catharsis is the primary tool of traditional views on tragedy, what contemporary methods can be used to address the horrors of October 7th in aesthetic terms?

Transformative genius plays a role. Artists like Goya, Picasso, Kathe Kollwitz, Otto Dix and others, addressed social issues by inventing new aesthetic forms, approaching the subject matter in novel ways. For example, in the Goya Disasters of War series, the artist uses swaths of white space and toned empty backgrounds, virtually unknown in art of the time. These works boldly evoke the sketch, dreams and the negative spaces of photographs, eerily predicting documentary photography that will develop 20 to 40 years in the future. The prints embody an eyewitness authenticity that haunts us and makes them relevant to the present time. Yet skill, genius and expertise may not be the definitive traits in meaningful art. In retrospect, the most evocative drawings and paintings of the Shoah period may actually be the simple works created by children who were imprisoned in the camps themselves. Luminous pictures of butterflies, created with a brutal simplicity in Theresienstadt, portray an engaged affirmation of life in the face of annihilation, while fulfilling every aspiration of creating art in the face of human tragedy.

DOCUMENTATION

One of the ways artists address horrific or poignant social issues is by using a camera on site. This is the documentarian approach and has existed for the entire history of photography. Jenny Edwards Ber took actual photos of Kibbutz Be'eri, brutally attacked on October 7th. Her first photo depicts two individuals, Yuval and Annalee, standing in a shattered doorway, but in a larger sense, her works address those killed, taken hostage, or left grieving. Photographing empty swaths of rubble, the images are composed of claustrophobic trapezoidal spaces, creating eerie, and unnerving voids.



The Aftermath: Be'eri, Yuval and Annalee
Jenny Edwards Ber

In the second photo, only a child's sneaker remains, forcing a visual comparison between the living and the dead, flesh and apparition, and those who remain versus those who were struck down, or were taken.



The Aftermath: Pink Shoe
Jenny Edwards Ber

These images are part of a larger essay called The Land which records the experience of building and rebuilding the Kibbutz, representing the ongoing act of living in Israel.

Debbie Teicholtz Guedalia photographed the cars in an auto graveyard next to the site of the Nova Festival. There, 3,500 burned and exploded vehicles destroyed on Oct. 7th still remain. Witnessing the shredded steel and bullet holes, the photo virtually screams for the 400 victims who never left the site alive.

Car, Nova Festival
Debbie Teicholtz Guedalia



In the United States, Jews record more recent events. Phillip Maier has been documenting the Solidarity Walk for the Hostages, held every Saturday afternoon in Lower Manhattan since October 24, 2023. These photos depict posters of victims, such as the Bibas baby, as well as Naama Levi, framed within a subjective point of view. The marchers hold the posters, forming a kind of human landscape to bear witness. Furthermore, the faces of the marchers reflect gravity and sadness, highlighting the serious connection of Diaspora Jews to their Israeli brethren.



Top: Untitled 1,
Untitled 2
Bottom: Untitled 3,
Untitled 4
Philip Maier

Dena Eber photographs the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, a site holy for Christians and important to Jews. Using a familiar symbol of peace and spirituality, the photographer captures a dove in flight with a piece of plastic in its mouth. Eber is cognizant of how religious symbolism can be weaponized, refuting Jewish claims on the land.



Mount of Olives
Dena Eber



Ode to the Diaspora Jew
Hana Mendel

Hana Mendel's simple but powerful photo shows a man wearing a baseball cap with the outlines of a Kippah, or Yarmulke underneath. In the current absurd situation on the streets of New York, some observant Jews must consider their own safety by covering their religious affiliation under secular sportswear. This is not Weimar Berlin, 1928, but New York City, arguably the most progressive place in the world, 2025.

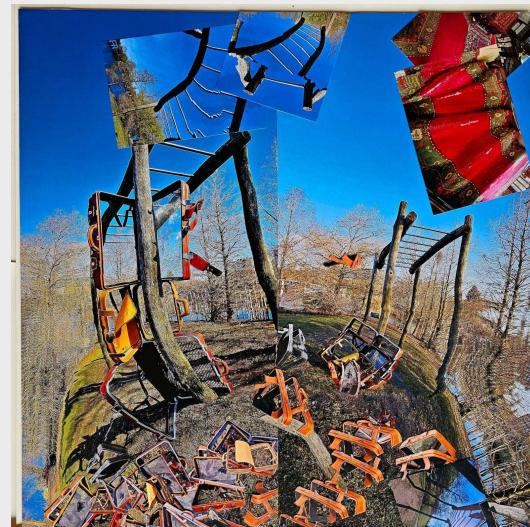
DIGITAL

By contrast, digital mediums offer a startling array of contemporary visual solutions. Such programs as Photoshop and Procreate, as well as the new AI, have quickly assaulted the old ideas of verisimilitude. What used to be a complex and difficult process of airbrushing or retouching negatives has now been transformed, seemingly instantaneously, affecting every aspect of representation. The new media presents a digital depiction of reality that is not really real, at all. Therefore, all news photographs are now rendered suspect, and assumptions of history undermined. Artists, however, have marshalled this technology the way older artists used collage and abstraction, as poetic and pictorial metaphor. As Picasso said "Art is a lie that makes us realize truth".

Billha Zussman uses a child's playground to evoke Jacob's Ladder, the continuum or stairway going up to heaven. Forms are piled into vertiginous plays of shape, stretching into the sky, asserting a spiritual reality as contrasted with the materiality and devastation in the aftermath of October 7th. The works are subtly bisected into two equal rectangles, much like the tablets of the decalogue. They recall the concept of universal Law in light of the brutality of October 7.



THE LADDERS DREAM. 1
Billha Zussman



THE LADDERS DREAM. 2
Billha Zussman

Robert Hirsch has a long history of using archival photos of Shoah victims and others, digitally manipulating them in order to create fresh imagery. His piece, *The Dybbuk: A Wandering Spirit* is derived from Fritz Lang's *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (1933), a German Expressionist film featuring one of the first cinematic supervillains alluding to the rise of Adolph Hitler. Hirsch uses Mabuse as a symbol of evil manipulation, a fiend bent on world destruction, yet the image radiates a strange spiritual light. The concept of the Dybbuk, an uneasy wandering soul returned to the earth, here stands for political oppression and antisemitic violence.



The Dybbuk: A Wandering Spirit
Robert Hirsch



Woods of Violins
Dorit Jordan Dotan

Finally, Dorit Jordan Dotan offers a picture of a broken and worn violin in a fragmented field, promulgating the role of the arts in the very heart of darkness. It is the artist channeling the concept of hope despite the worst of situations.

PAINTING

Meanwhile, artists have not abandoned traditional materials and in fact have used painting, drawing and collage to uniquely address these issues. The artist Archie Rand often uses cartoon imagery and popular culture to engage with Jewish history and the sacred. In a homage to the famous Jewish American graphic novelist, Will Eisner, Rand takes a panel from Eisner's famous work, *The Plot: The Secret Story of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and creates a full-size color painting from a single panel. The actual Protocols are known to be a patent forgery still widely circulated throughout the world. Jews are accused of being criminal masterminds, hell-bent on world domination. They propose transnational agendas through international banking, national governments, labor, media, and the military. The painting shows the Protocols are utilized by evil forces relying on exploitation, lies and cynical manipulation.



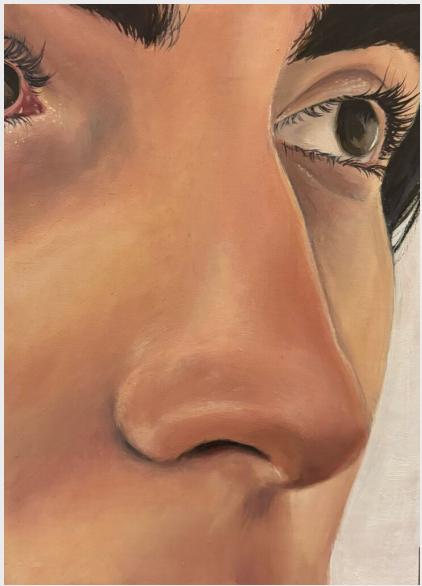
The Protocols of the Elders of Zion

In contrast, Deborah 2, represents the female Prophet as a modern soldier, a prototype of feminist Jewish heroism.

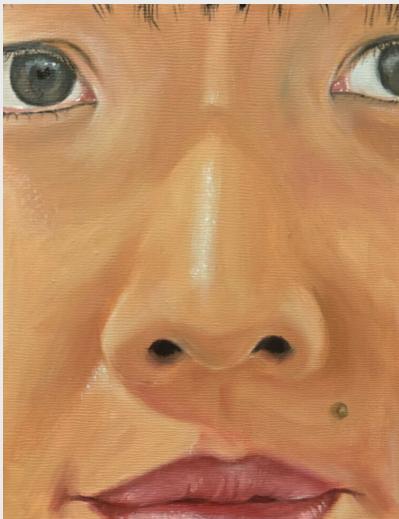


Deborah 2

Goldie Gross is another artist recording the current rise in antisemitic tropes. She documents her 100 Jewish Noses Project, comprising paintings of friends and strangers alike. The noses in question run the gamut: elongated, tapered, flat and wide, thus dispelling preconceived racial stereotypes.



Bluma, Nose 1/100



Carol, Nose 5/100



Alissa, Nose 8/100



Orli, Nose 4/100

Avraham Vofsi uses painterly realism to represent actual Israeli military units deployed and the civilians who mourn or miss them. In *Unit 106*, a military unit is pictured as being stationed near the Syrian border, as Vofsi, a new Israeli emigre, confronts loss and fear through the quiet majesty of his graceful compositions.



Unit 106 at the Syrian Border
Avraham Vofsi

His *Dizengoff at Sunset* shows the fountain in the Tel Aviv plaza decorated with all the photos of people lost or captured, forming a strange external gallery not unlike those spontaneously created in New York after 9/11.



Dizengoff at Sunset
Avraham Vofsi

Finally, Yigal Ozeri's latest works capture the strength, resilience, and unity of the Jewish people. His collection of intimate, emotionally charged portraits of a single IDF soldier, stands as a symbol of the brave men and women in Israel who risk their lives defending the Jewish state.



Shely
Yigal Ozeri

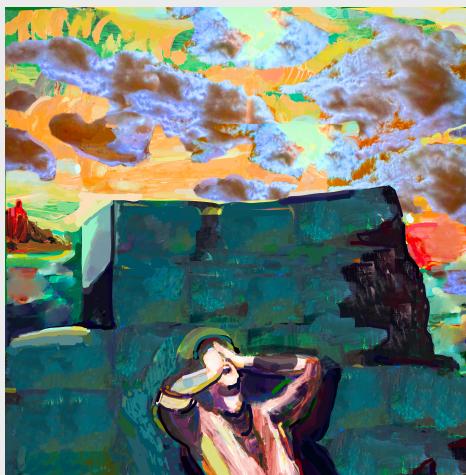
EXPRESSIONISM

Artists who favor Expressionism highlight emotional subjectivity and formal exaggeration in order to make sense of complex or realistic content. Joel Silverstein uses both physical and digital media in order to create works that fuse historical and contemporary iconography. His *Blood Libel* employs traditional antisemitic stereotypes of Jews, here bearing Star of David tattoos on their heads. This work evokes the narrative of the Golem (as in the 1920 German film) and conflates it with concentration camp serial number tattoos and images of yellow star emblems. The artist asserts the connection between the medieval accusations of Passover ritual slaughter of Christian children, to modern accusations levied at both Israel and Zionists.

Blood Libel
Joel Silverstein



His other work, *The Wall* symbolizes the events of October 7th and its aftermath. Jews in the Western world confront what happened, as well as the groundswell of violence and hateful rhetoric which followed.



The Wall
Joel Silverstein

Richard McBee's series of four small paintings, titled *Screams Before Silence*, derive their power from his hide- and -seek approach to content, much of the horror actually occurring off-stage. Panel 1 shows a eucalyptus grove, derived from the actual Israeli landscape around the Nova Music Festival massacre. The grove is empty, but anguished angels are flying in the sky above. Panel 2 shows female figures tied to the trees, clear victims of rape and murder, but abstracted. Panel 3 illustrated a narrative of an Israeli home besieged by Hamas, as an elderly grandfather attempts to hold off his attackers. And finally, Panel 4 presents a morgue where the victims' bodies are being examined. The series depends on the narrative strength of evocation, leaving out key details. The viewer must first imagine the horror and then remember it afterwards, without the artist illustrating it.



Screams Before Silence
Richard McBee

Julia Holt's work, *Aftermath Landscape*, uses dripped and splattered paint to exorcise searing emotions and pain. She belongs to a group that is publicly committed to reading one Biblical Psalm every day since Oct. 7th. The color palette displays the fires of burnt orange, mustard yellow and crimson, while her painted figure, much reduced, weeps.

Aftermath Landscape
Julia Holt



Siona Benjamin presents three giclee prints blending European, American and Indian visual traditions at the same time. The three figures, all variations of Queen Esther, evoke the three monkeys of Japanese and Chinese folklore; See No Evil, Hear No Evil and Speak No Evil. The three female figures are all transformed by war, or its aftermath. The first figure wears an aviator's helmet, the second a hostage's blindfold, and the third, a gas mask, similar to those employed by Israeli civilians. While the Israeli population must endure the stress and heartache of the current situation, the war and its virulent criticism on the world stage impacts everyone.



Coming Home #90 - Hear, See, Speak No Evil

Siona Benjamin

Yuri Karchenko uses the IDF insignia as a chevron or shield, painted expressionistically in sallow and discordant colors. Much like a flag carried into war, the artist uses several key symbols to show his support. There is a sword and an olive branch, paired with hands forming the Priestly Blessing. What might be an unimpressive image is painted so forcefully and oddly that it stays in one's imagination.



IDF
Yuri Karchenko

Persephone
Judith Joseph

Judith Joseph draws upon Jewish and Greek myth to create her wood-block print, *Persephone*. This classical goddess is abducted by Hades and dragged off to the underworld. The real-life events of hostages dragged off into tunnels against their will, practically dictated this metaphor. The tragic pleas of the hostage's families remind the artist of the entreaties of Persephone's mother, the goddess Demeter.





Nebuchadnezzar Mark Podwal

Mark Podwal, well-known painter, author and New York Times cartoonist, created many books based on Jewish history. The painting, *Nebuchadnezzar*, shows the symbol of the monarch as a winged lion. The ancient King led the attack that destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BCE, precipitating the first Jewish Diaspora. A Talmudic legend suggests that he was punished by God, turning him into a fierce hybrid beast. Podwal uses this narrative as a warning to would-be conquerors and dictators. Throughout history, those who have targeted the Jewish people have ultimately suffered dire consequences for their actions.

Promised Land is a complex diptych by the artist Michelle Moore. The left side depicts a sculpture park, Olive Columns (1991) on the outskirts of Jerusalem created by Ran Morin. The three columns support three olive trees, symbolic of "strength, fertility and peace". The right side of the work is a simple text panel that proclaims the words "Promised Land", but is riddled with bullet holes. The artist comments on the difficulties of Jews taking and holding the land in the face of physical attacks and the erasure or denial of Jewish history.



Promised Land
Michelle Moore

ABSTRACTION

Many artists favor abstract or conceptual ideas to confront topics that are difficult to depict or illustrate. For these artists, art is best dealt with in non-representational or aniconic ways. The mid-century critic and theoretician Clement Greenberg typifies this philosophy as do the painters, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, Clifford Still and others. Tobi Kahn, often seen as an artist in the tradition of Mark Rothko, abstracts a masked visage with great simplicity, evoking spectral visions. The careful layered and sanded acrylic and ample materiality denotes the image as an icon, but one without definitive meaning.



Shaburh II
Tobi Kahn

Nancy Pantirer alternatively uses abstracted and semi-figurative shapes, overlaying and dripping paint to produce large and striking canvasses. Unlike pure Non-objective Formalists, Pantirer addresses historical and cultural ideas about Jewish identity in her current work. *Shiva* is a tone poem of hovering spectral presence, as blots of paint loom, seemingly between dimensions. A single white stroke in the center of the painting symbolizes light and the divine presence. Pantirer addresses Jewish ritual through the act of painting, a process she sees as part of her spiritual practice.



Shiva
Nancy Pantirer

Carol Man, an ethnically Chinese Jew from Hong Kong, is fully conversant with both Chinese and Jewish traditions. The Mi Sheberach is used as a healing prayer, evoked in synagogues around the world for the sake of the sick and infirm. She uses her calligraphy to create a hybrid of Hebrew letters rendered in Chinese, transliterated on a single roll of yellow ribbon. This forms a three-dimensional manifestation of the prayer.

Mi Sheberach
Carol Man



Yona Verwer, also evoking Hebrew ritual, has created paintings that function as prayer amulets of protection, or Kame'a, (plural, Kme'ot) created specifically for the hostages. Her works employ a synthesis of Cubism and Dada as the primary visual language, physically slathering paint over scraps of torn hostage posters. She adds Hamsa symbols, gold paint and bits of rope . These complex works successfully engage religious, historical and identity issues at the same time.



The Window Still Glows
Yona Verwer



Tethered
Yona Verwer

Leah Caroline is an abstract artist who works in the tradition of Jungian and Eastern philosophies using mandalas and prayer circles. After October 7, she needed to adjust her process and visual intent. Mandalas are traditionally used in meditation and centering techniques, a symbol of visual calm and equilibrium. But Caroline incorporates scraps of newspaper headlines addressing both October 7th and antisemitic accusations, in an attempt to integrate both the tranquility and the pain of the present moment.

Documentary

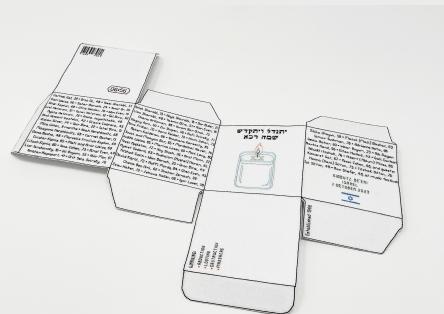
In her other work, *Mourning Light*, a printed Yarzeit candle box is dedicated to the massacre at Kibbutz Be'eri. She employs text to present a conceptual narrative, since from her point of view figurative depictions are impossible and even disrespectful.

Searching Rubble

Leah Caroline



Caren Garfen confronts old ideas concerning the neutrality of social media, advertising, and print to demonstrate a looming antisemitic narrative that is unfortunately rearing its head in mainstream culture. Her work, *Documentary*, displays a computer screen with text, graphically describing the atrocities committed to the female victims on October 7th.

*Mourning Light*

Caren Garfen

Gabriel Wolff, a German Jew living in Berlin, uses printed books to highlight his loss of cultural memory. In light of October 7th, the artist realized his knowledge of Hebrew was fading, a process similar to many Jews living in the Diaspora. Wolff had spent his childhood in Israel, so at one time it was his primary language. His series, *Yesh Yeladim Zig Zag*, uses a faux Hebrew script then burned and abraded through five successive images, until only a rough and partly obfuscated image remains. Created as a sequence from right to left, it mirrors the Hebrew language. The artist plays with concepts of fixed matter, text and historical agency, where in the end only questions and blurs endure.

[Yesh Yeladim ZigZag](#)

Gabriel Wolff

Micha Eden Erdész often creates complex environments comprising both painted medallions and mylar banners. The current work, *Fear of Innocence* is painted in wax and oil. It is based on the content of both Psalm 130 and the works of medieval Christian mystic Julian of Norwich. Erdész proposes a hybrid of Jewish and Christian mysticism, described by the artist as forms and traditions that evolve and then fade away. The ongoing presence of the Jewish people and their cultural impact directly contradicts the instability of these images.

[The Fear is Innocent](#)

Micha Eden Erdész



The Scream
Leah Raab

Leah Raab is a realist figurative artist living in Israel. After documenting street scenes of social gatherings during the Covid pandemic, the horrors of October 7th created a major crisis and turning point in her career. She immediately switched styles and evolved an abstract vocabulary based on her profound feelings of pain that could find no representational expression. Accessing children's wooden models of dinosaurs and airplanes, the artist breaks these forms and uses them as a basis for shallow three-dimensional reliefs. Channeling Hebrew letters, hieroglyphs and expressionist artists like Chaim Soutine and Francis Bacon, the artist creates an image that is both strangely unrecognizable, and striking in its clarity. The dichotomy of her complex iconography is like a tomb relief made of letters that embody the meaty and corporeal nature of an eviscerated human form, summing up the complexity of her feelings as well as those of her peers in Israel.

Fallout: October 7 and the New Antisemitism seeks to address the new and often dangerously negative narratives concerning both Israel and Jews around the world. While the initial event occurred two years ago, the subsequent aftershocks have created an environment demanding to be addressed. The exhibition presents twenty-nine artists and their collective experiences in response to a rapidly changing world. While creative artists are not journalists, historians or politicians, the ability to make and display concrete expressions in a time of crisis is exactly art's challenge and mandate. We offer the exhibition as a visual narrative crafted specifically by Jewish voices in order to communicate to both Jewish audiences and all those who wish to view, listen, and engage. We assert Jewish culture as an ongoing dynamic presence, one that has successfully navigated numerous conflicts and obstacles throughout its three-thousand-year history, and will continue to evolve, comment and develop, whatever current situations bring.



Image: Yigal Ozeri's "Shely" flanked by two paintings by Archie Rand

