

Artist Statement

Underneath, in between, and around the surface details of prayer, ritual and biblical narratives, I find layers of personal, emotional and spiritual meaning. The literal tales are spare; emotions are missing or hinted at, and character traits are only suggested. This frugality of language permits delving beneath the outer coats of the stories into a deeper and more mystical realm. The empty spaces on the written page become as important as the words themselves.

Yizkor

Yizkor, which means remembrance in Hebrew, is a memorial service that is observed four times during the Jewish calendar year. The series of paintings, *Yizkor*, is an introspective exploration of the relationships among memory, death and birth. My father died on my birthday, tangibly and forever linking his passing to my beginning. Inspired by personal narratives, ritual and prayer, these works utilize the archetypal language of my ancestry.

Birds

My images come from the Bird Specimen Collection in the back hallways of the Field Museum in Chicago, which amasses hundreds of thousands of birds from all over the world; some more than 100 years-old. The birds are empty, feathered cases; smelling of moth balls; stuffed with cotton; legs tethered. The collection exists primarily for research. By observing the lives of birds, we hold up a mirror, reflecting our own future as a species.

In Jewish text, birds herald hope and serve as offerings for worship. As archetype, they possess a specific meaning, in that they inhabit earth, sea and sky. They symbolize humanity's deepest aspirations and fears of freedom, and transition from outer shell to soul. Beautiful alive and dead, birds assume the persona of angel: messenger, guide, bearer of life and death.

Hamabul – The Flood

The biblical story of the flood primarily addresses the small segment of life that is saved: Noah and other residents of the ark. Yet I wonder about the experience of the drowning creatures, and the representation of water as the instrument of death. I envision the devastation of the human and beastly bodies. I visualize the figures of the flood story with their gaping orifices, becoming one with the waters. I am compelled by this devastation, and by the implications of spiritual renewal. The bible begins with divine creation, yet only divine retreat allows space for mortal creativity. There is no need for Adam and Eve to create while living in the idyllic Garden of Eden. Childbirth and labor come after the expulsion. Suffering necessitates creative action.

Although the flood is brutal and deadly it utilizes the living sea as its medium of ruin. Water signifies purity and rebirth in the archetypes of literature and visual art. To journey through water takes one from the mundane to the holy and from the weakness of mortality to potency.

Sefer Hana

Birth and death are recurring themes in the bible. In Samuel I, the biblical narrative mostly belongs to Hana - her infertility and subsequent birthing. She is lost in the desire that originates in her body, to carry and give birth to a child. Instead, each month Hana experiences death, as her body flows out the potential for life.