

FIELD GUIDE TO A MOMENT

Can We Have A Conversation?

Material Explorations and
Invitations for Interaction
by the Fellows of the
Atiq Maker Kollel,
Cohort Two



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Can We Have A Conversation?



Cohort Two of the Maker Kollel in Spring 5781 began with two glorious meetings in the Atiq studio. We sat around a shared table, exploring the various lineages, mentors, inspirations and questions we collectively brought into the room. We shared Hasidic texts and raw materials through which we explored our own embodied perspectives and began to share those too.

By our third meeting an awareness of a new pandemic reality had dawned and instead of a shared table in the studio we found ourselves in a shared Zoom room, each of us a small face, one of a collection of small squares.

Would we be able to transfer the heart of our work online from the new vantage point of our home studios, ie, whatever corner we could temporarily clear away to fill with art supplies? Would we be able to stay connected to our own energy for creating and to our newly forming community of fellow makers? Slowly we found that indeed we could, and we did.

Week by week, we travelled through the ten sefirot, understood in Kabbalah as the map of the creative process through which God created the world, mapping our own generative creative process, inspired and held by this original one. At the same time we travelled through weeks characterized by personal and national tragedies, nationwide protests for racial justice, and an extraordinarily divisive presidential election cycle.

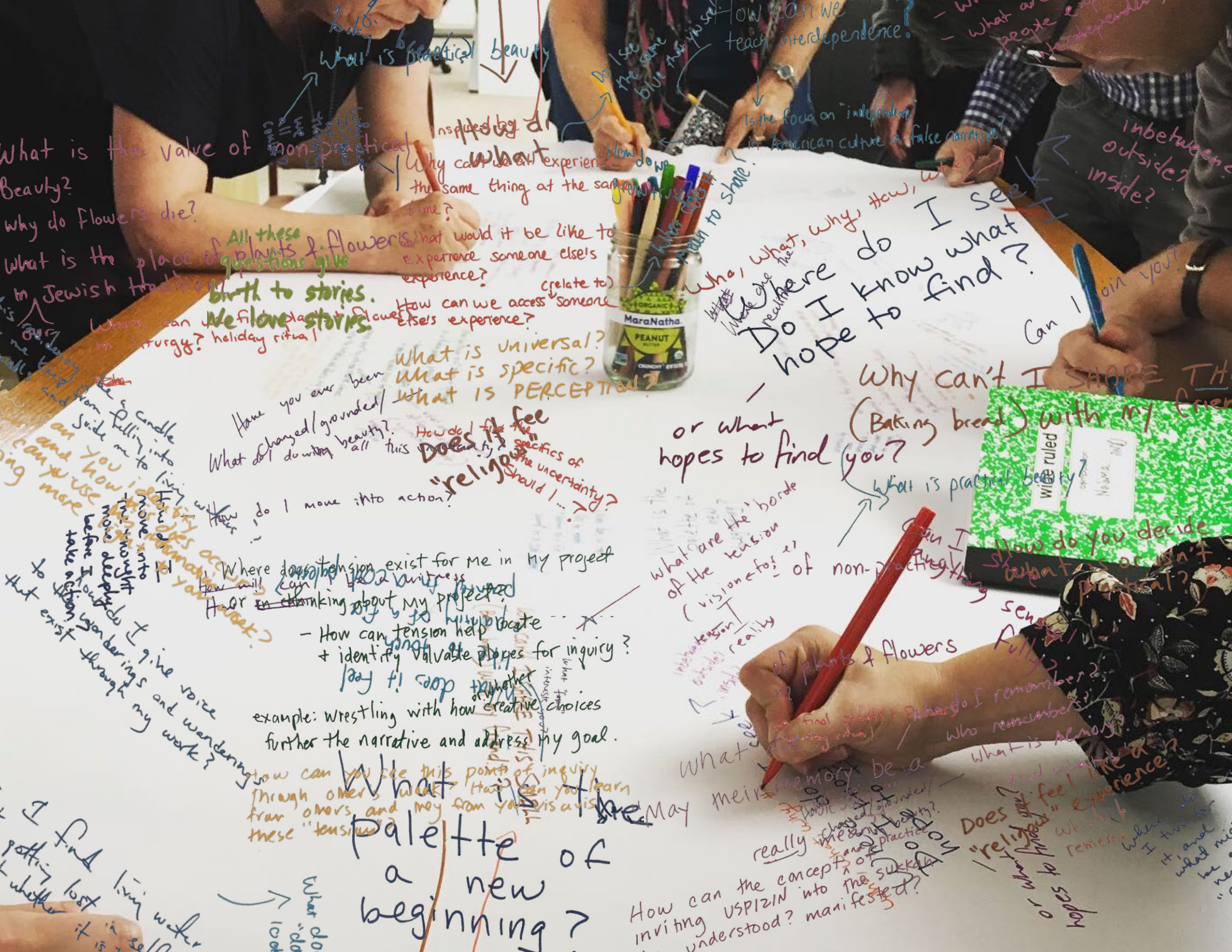
As we walked the path of our own inquiry through the emergence of individual projects, we were also exploring a layered landscape of shared territory. This chapbook, titled with a question suggested by cohort fellow Andrea Nemerson, is a field guide to a moment in time and space during which we found ourselves using words, feelings, materials and actions to ask ourselves and others and the world: “Can we have a conversation?”

Here we offer documentation of our projects, with some details about process and result. We also invite you to explore the territory that each of us situated our inquiry in relation to, through some prompts to catalyze your own inquiry. We’d be honored to have a conversation with you through your reflections.

With blessings,

Adina and the staff and fellows
of Maker Kollel Cohort Two





What is the value of non-practical beauty?
Why do flowers die?
What is the place of plants & flowers in Jewish tradition?

What is practical beauty?

Do I see the same blue that you see?
How can we teach interdependence?
Is the focus on 'independence' in American culture a false narrative?

What are people experiencing?
In between outside?
Inside?

All these questions give birth to stories.
We love stories.
Where can we find flowers in liturgy? holiday ritual

Hobby or experience?
Why can't we have the same thing at the same time?
What would it be like to experience someone else's experience?

Do I know what I seek?
Do I know what I hope to find?
Who, what, why, how, when?

What is universal?
What is specific?
What is PERCEPTION?
How can we access someone else's experience?

Why can't I SHAPE TH...
(Baking bread) with my friend
Can I join you?

How have you ever been changed/grounded?
What does it feel like to be grounded?
Does it feel like 'religion'?

How do I feel the specifics of the uncertainty?
Should I...?

What are the 'border' of the tension (vision) of non-practical reality?

Where does tension exist for me in my project?
How can I articulate + identify valuable places for inquiry?
example: wrestling with how creative choices further the narrative and address my goal.

How do you decide what is or isn't practical?
Can I articulate my sense of plants & flowers?
Who remembers?
What is almost?

How do I move into action?
How do I give voice to my wandering and wondering?
How do I give voice to my work?

What is this point of inquiry through others' work that you learn from others and may learn from your own?
These 'tensions'...

What is the palette of a new beginning?

How can the concepts of 'religion' be invited into the 'sukkah' understood? manifested?

I find living water getting lost in self-whether it is...

Armor for Adaptation

Anna Ostow



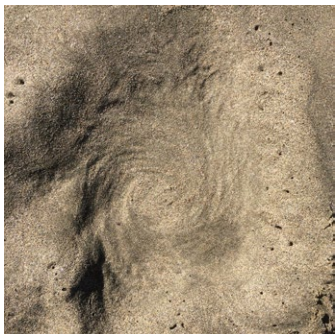
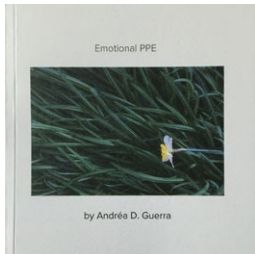
I began this work with the concept of uncertainty and the question - What do we do with all this uncertainty? I generated this question two weeks before we went into quarantine, before the pandemic was nationally and regionally recognized in my community in the Bay Area... the uncertainty of our lives and time, while always present, has only asserted itself more explicitly since March 2020. I have historically disliked and resisted the sensations of uncertainty in my body. This is still true - however, the opening and upheaval we're going through in the US is undeniable, as we all grapple with the violent reality that the scarcity of food, shelter, and health is not real but merely fabricated, and as the horizon of shared power and a phasing out of the supremacy of whiteness and wealth moves closer. I want these changes, I want to adapt and help others adapt so that we can welcome these other ways of relating. I am more motivated to not only tolerate the sensations of uncertainty in my body, but also to know them, embrace them, and continue to move forward regardless. Out of this internal movement I created a protective cloak for my shoulders - an empowering garment that lends weight and a sense of power to my torso. The cloak protects my torso so that my soma may shift and open as it needs to in order to bring my purpose forward. The ways I show up in every aspect of my life will be purposefully aimed toward bringing forward the shifts that are rumbling in our world.

Invitation for Interaction:

Identify a conflict, tension, or dynamic in the world that elicits some feelings from you, whether you are excited, disgusted, "bored", or curious. Find where the conflict or dynamic lives in you or your sphere, and advance it from there. (This prompt is inspired by my teachers at the Untraining, and by the work of adrienne maree brown.)

Emotional PPE

Andréa Guerra



In April of 2020, as the wave of COVID-19 reached our shores and crashed over the east coast, I began texting images from my daily life to a dear friend who is the Director of Nursing of Palliative Care at a Boston hospital. With no time for conversation as she planned for disaster, I began to send her these quiet moments in the place of words, thoughts, and as close to prayer as I come. When time allowed, she sent singular responses: Beautiful. Thank you. At one point, she shared with me that she was sending the images to various colleagues, one who had recently lost her father, others on the front lines of the pandemic to remind them of the beauty available to them in the world, paying forward my form of emotional PPE. This book stems from the desire to bring comfort through the act of creating and offering art as solace in a time of crisis and uncertainty.

Ladders Up and Down

Tom Wachs

Ladders Up and Down, Video stills



לעלות בסולם ascend the ladder

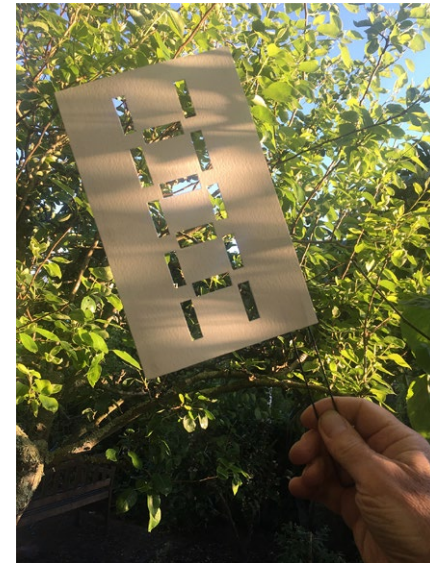
בסולם יורד descend the ladder

השיר סולם ladder of song

Seven centuries after its writing, I started a conversation with the Zohar and have found that its startling and challenging language transports me to places of surprise, wonder, and insight. Using language while recognizing the limitations of language, the Zohar blurs boundaries and expands connections. It invites the reader to continually weave in and out of form and formlessness. Here, I am similarly exploring, with images and song, how one can be drawn into a world beyond imagery.

Full video can be viewed at www.atiqmakers.org/ladders.

Transparent Ladder, Handheld ladder cutout



This handheld ladder cutout was my solution to a desire to create a piece that one could interact with directly while it retained an openness to all exploration. The ladder form occurs in different faith traditions and it has engaged me for some time. In reading about the uses of imagery in Jewish Kabbalistic tradition, I have been especially drawn to contemporary interpretations that suggest that some images were intended to be engaged and interacted with in order to enter an attentive contemplative or meditative state. I hope that the cutout can be used as a tool for this kind of engagement.

Invitation for Interaction: Transparent Ladder

I pose these thoughts and questions: point the ladder and direct your attention to the surroundings and the light that enters.

Consider that for the moment, you are viewing the world through a ladder. How does this impact how you feel about what you are observing? Switch places for a moment, look into and imagine stepping out through the ladder. Where do you envision yourself going? If the ladder were to take flight and transform from an object into a state of mind, how would you describe that state of mind?

Braiding The Realms

Andrea Nemerson

The braid in question is both the physical braiding of the challah (heading into Shabbat) and the Havdallah candle (heading out), and the intertwining of the mundane, physical realm with the divine. On Shabbat we have the chance to experience the connection between these and even to break through to seeing them as no dichotomy at all.

So far the piece consists of two complimentary elements, an embroidered waxed linen cover for the challah in process and an appliquéd silk cover for the challah itself. The first is meant to be touched and manipulated, warmed by your hands and readable through your fingertips. The second is smooth and light, although still approachable through touch and texture. It imagines the braiding of earthly beauty (plants and animals, rich vibrant colors) and the impalpable or evanescent divine (ethereal blues and grays left blank for the viewer to complete). A further piece in the series might intertwine human craft with natural wonder.

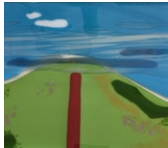


Invitation for Interaction:

How might you, the viewer, imagine these two realms, and how might you make them visible to an observer? Would they be separate or entwined? If entwined, could they be separated?

Baruch Hamakom: Blessed is the Place

Raizy Lichtenstein



I sought a way to connect to Hashem more deeply in prayer at home during Covid by creating a space that would engender a sense of sanctity, security, and hope. I found comfort in the conversations between the Jews and God in Tanach, Midrashic, and liturgical sources that reflect a trajectory of mutual love as the Jews traveled from Egypt to Sinai, mirroring the Sefirah period of our artistic fellowship.

I considered the following verses as a love conversation through time:

God: I will take you out from under the burdens of Egypt. (Shemot 6)

Jews: This is my God and I will glorify [God]. (Song of the Sea; Shemot 15)

God: I remember the kindness of your youth; the love of your bridal days: you followed after Me in a barren land. (Recollection of Jews traveling in the desert; Jeremiah 2)

Jews: Whatever God has spoken, we will do and we will listen. (Sinai; Shemot 24)

Jews: Blessed is the Place; Blessed is [God]. (Passover Haggadah)

I created an immersive space for prayer that mirrored the three locations of the journey that inspired these expressions of love: the desert, the sea, and the mountain. I have found it deeply meaningful to pray in this space on a nearly daily basis. In its portability, I also have a sense of the Mishkan, the Desert Dwelling of the Shekhinah. As I move to new places and understandings, I find renewed meaning and comfort in the prayers that accompany me.

1. Wandering in the Desert window installation (glass and chiffon): A barrenness of parched desert trail is punctuated by glass charms that reference the verses of faith, loyalty, and love which were forged by that trying journey. I see it as an expression of personal love to God; of times facing a barren and unmarked stretch of life and bravely venturing forth in faith. It's mounted in the east, facing Jerusalem.

2. Splitting of the Sea tapestry rug (wool and canvas): The sea splits in the center of the rug, leaving a clear space upon which to stand in the Amidah. It expresses my prayer for a clearing of that which muddies or blocks the way to redemption.

3. Mount Sinai siddur stand (fused glass and acrylic): The Torah tells of the meeting of Heaven and Earth in a heavy cloud; tradition teaches that the mountain was covered in beautiful foliage. I added Mount Tam's spring wildflowers and capricious fogs to the glasswork, bringing a touch of the blessings of my current "encampment" to color this image of fused awe and love. It enables me to connect in gratitude to the Source of all the wild beauty that surrounds us even in this bounded time.

Invitation for Interaction:

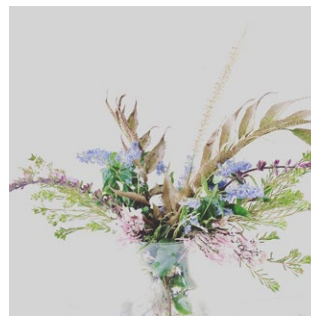
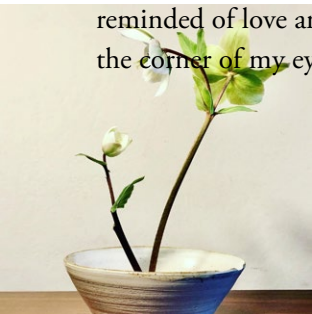
What is your desert, your sea, your mountain? Which one of these do you relate to now? If you were to overlay your experience on one of these images, which would it be? Consider: the signposts in your desert; the view from within or beyond your splitting sea; the meeting on your mountain.

Ephemeral Beauty as a Pathway Towards the Infinite

Naama Sadan



The questions that sent me on a journey were: what is the value of non-practical beauty? what is the place of plants and flowers in our Jewish tradition? in response, another fellow asked me: have you ever been changed/grounded by beauty? To answer these questions I navigated between biblical psukim (verses) Japanese spiritual tradition of flower arranging (Ikebana), Kabbalistic symbols in shape and color, I cut flowers, branches, ties them, wore them and tries to give expression to my ancient timeless tradition with them. I found that flowers, arranged with care and wisdom, can be deeply grounding even despite their short time with us. Their colors and shapes can point our attention toward an intention we want to hold. Intentions like flowers are time-specific and part of a cycle, of a bigger creation. I put pink flowers in the entrance to my house to be reminded of love and connection that I want to evolve in this space, from the corner of my eye they gently tune my heart towards the creator.



Invitation for Interaction:

What intention do you want to bring into your week? And how can you create a floral arrangement that will take you there?



Esteemed Guests in The Sukkah, Exploring the Narratives of Past Lives and the Power of Storytelling

Jane Simon



My participation in Atiq's Spring Kollel afforded me the great pleasure of being in a community dedicated to learning and creating, inspired by Jewish thought and practice.

For my project I choose to explore the mystical tradition of inviting sacred guests from The Torah into our present day Sukkahs. Collectively these transcendent guests are known as Ushpizin (m) or Ushpizot (f). For Phase 1 of my project I completed each of the seven Ushpizin as well as a sukkah wall for their backdrop. Because this project took shape at the onset of The Coronavirus Pandemic the materials I used were ones that were readily available: paper bags, fabric and paper scraps, needle and thread and old buttons. Each of the Ushpizin is unique and brings with them a particular quality that is an emanation of the Divine. Abraham brings Chesed :LOVE, Joseph brings YESOD: Foundation, Aron brings HOD: Splendor, Moses brings: NETZACH : Victory, Jacob brings TIFERET: Beauty, Isaac brings GEVURAH: Restraint, David brings MALCHUT:Receptiveness. Now I am in the process of Phase 2- creating the women or Ushpizot. Moving forward, I plan to make more visual images and characters that can be used to bring stories from Jewish tradition to life!

I am drawn to the holiday of Sukkot with it's deep connection to our agricultural past. It serves as a reminder of the beauty and rhythms of nature as well as the fragility and fleeting nature of our time on earth. The sukkah can be a physical and temporal space for abundance, peace, wholeness and generosity. During Sukkot we can welcome these ancient guests and let their stories be part of our lives, grounding and inspiring us.

Some of the questions that informed my work were:

- How can we bring the past into the present in a meaningful way?
- How can I elevate the intentions and capacity of The Sukkah experience?
- How can I bring new life and purpose to upcycled materials?
- How can images and environments crafted out of these humble materials create vibrant landscapes for Jewish storytelling?

Malleable Material

Liam O'Connor



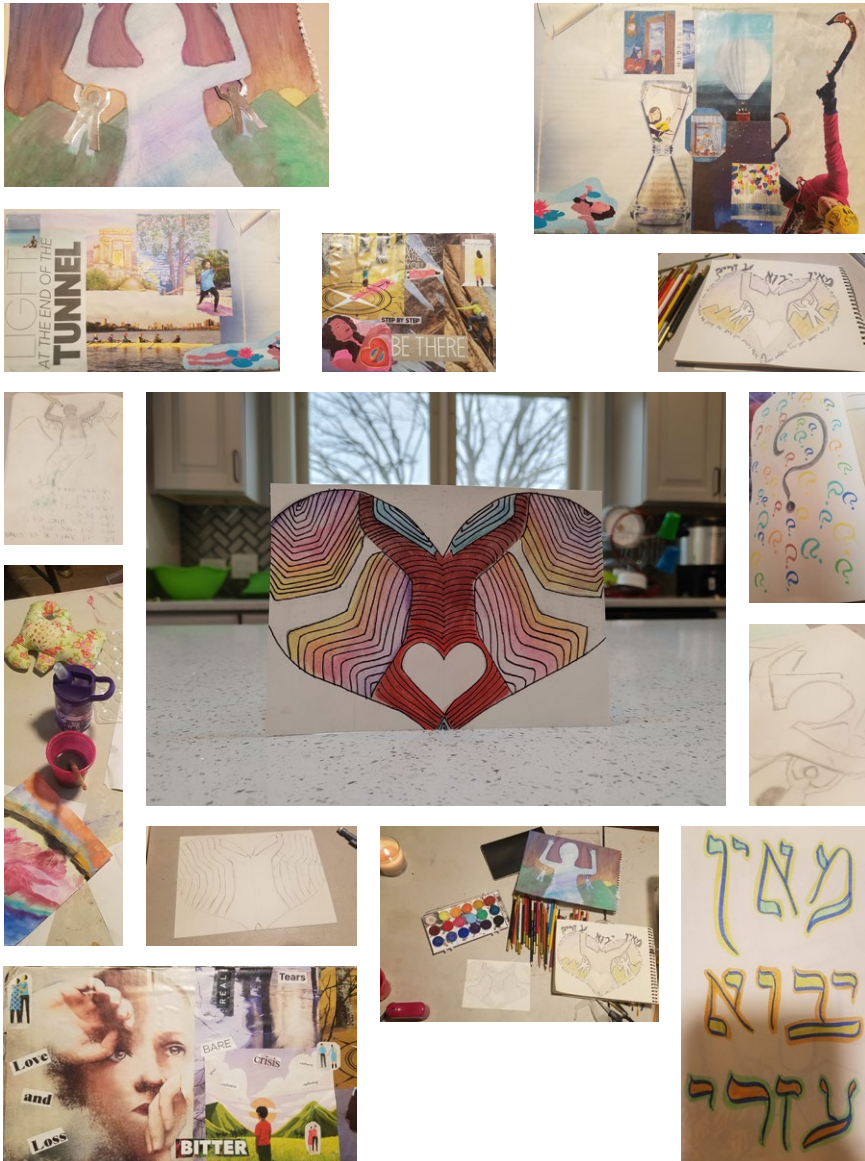
The piece that I have been working on for most of the time was considering what I even felt capable of making in times like these. The form that I arrived at came from these hour long community art hours I've been doing with my students. In that time I was taking a piece of foil and bending it back and forth until at the end of the hour it ends up in a certain form and then I just leave it and that's that. So this is a photo of some of the foil sculptures I especially liked, with the colors inverted to imagine what this might look like in a world without the pandemic, where I could more easily explore other formats.

Invitation for Interaction:

Take a malleable material from your home, and move it back and forth within your hands. Can you build something with it? Can you connect it to something else? Can you place it with another material? Do those materials create a feeling of energy? Alchemy? Boredom? Hold it in your hands for a while. Do something else, but keep holding it. Call an old friend, don't tell them about what you're holding, bend it back and forth in your hands, does it feel brittle? Smooth? Strong? Was your friend there? If not, listen to the sound out your window. Which direction does it face? Forget about what you're bending and sculpting in your hands for a while. Maybe get bored with it and set it down on a windowsill, or next to your fruit bowl. Take a picture of it and send it to the friend you called with no note explaining what it is. If they ask, send them these instructions.

Making Space in the Nooks and Crannies of Life

Ariel Wolgel



I began the second session of the Maker Kollel with the goal to expand upon my inquiry from the first session- How can Jewish rituals and wisdom inform our support of infertility and miscarriage? Full of passion, energy, and ideas- I was ready to dive back into the wellsprings of creativity.

Then the pandemic started raging across the world at the exact same time as I was struck with personal grief and trauma. Suddenly those creative wellsprings were blocked by the heavy boulders of despondency and pain. The wellsprings were now static and frozen and seemingly impossible to access.

I tried to quit, but with the gentle support of our dear Rosh Kollel, Adina Polen, I opened myself up to micro-making sessions. 2 minutes of doodling after lunch. 5 minutes of painting random shapes with watercolors. 13 minutes of collaging from old magazines. 7 minutes of drawing with my favorite paint brush markers. 8 minutes of learning Torah. 4 minutes of pounding and stabbing a stubborn piece of clay.

In the end all that “tiny making” led towards creating another support card for my original inquiry. Boulders still firmly rested upon the wellsprings, but making Space in the nooks and crannies of life thawed the tiniest stream and allowed it to rise to the surface.

Invitation for Interaction

What could happen if you commit to a mirco-maker practice?

I invite you to include a small and consistent maker practice into your weekly routine. As you make, notice the materials and images that you are drawn towards. What can those noticings teach you about yourself and the voice of your soul?

ORIENT. FRAME



FOIL FOIL

The purpose
to this foil
is to delve
into possibilities

AUDIENCE



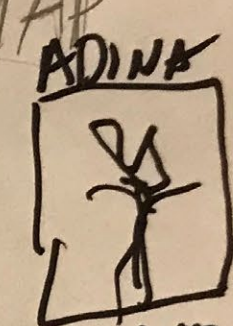
ANGEL IN
THE DESERT

THE PURPOSE
TO PRESENT
THE ELEMENT OF
BEAUTY



SAFETY AND
SHAWING

is further
seeks
safety and
shawing



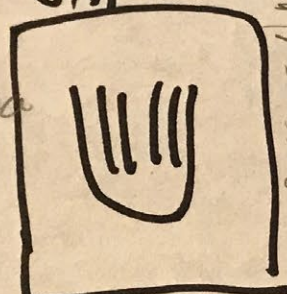
ADINA
SNAKE
~~HEAVEN~~
HEAVEN

OFFERING FOR
FRIENDS - FAMILY
- COLLEAGUES.

MAP PURPOSE OF SIYUUM

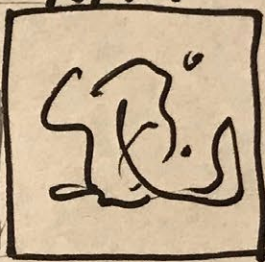
The purpose
to Luminaria
is to bring
light to
the world
and to
and between
people.

JAME



The purpose of my being
courage is
to show God
with me.

ANNA



AUDIENCE

LIZAM



The purpose
to this
hive is
to unite
people in
their
vision

KOLLEL
LUMNAMA

COURAGE
to interact.
HIVE

What sort of relationship is being asked to be formed?

SIYUUM

The purpose
to this
why?
why is
this all?
what is he
finding me for?

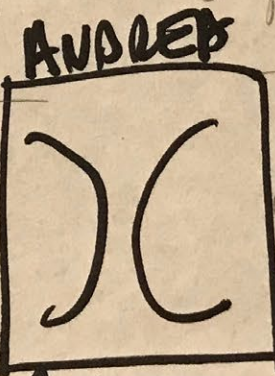
AUDIENCE



AMEL
SPIRITUALITY

The purpose
my offering
to be a CATALYST.

AUDIENCE



ANDREAS
CAN WE
HAVE A
CONVERSATION?

levels
①
②
③

Respond
with words -
live chat?



TOGETHER
TRANSCENDING
PACING
BELOW

WORDS - SOUND -
IMAGE
FORM - DYNAM
RELAY RACE
OPPORTUNITY
MOVIE - (M90)
+ DUBB - SLIDE ST
HIGHER -
PROCES
MATE

SWER? 'S BASED ON IMAGES.

VIA ART RIFFS?

OUR REL
OUR LEARN
TEXTS.

Shalom

