



A Day of Reinventing Ritual Session Descriptions with Presenter Bios

Concurrent Workshops I and II

Creating One's Own Ritual Object – Tobi Kahn

What is a ritual object and how does one make it personal? Artist Tobi Kahn will facilitate a workshop in which participants will create their own ritual objects. As Kahn has stated, "To think visually is a capacity that is essential for everyone, not only for artists; knowing how to see is like learning a foreign language. No matter who you are, visual intelligence can be transformative. It is also one of the highest ways of praising God's Creation."

Bio:

Tobi Kahn is a painter and sculptor whose work has been shown in over forty solo exhibitions and over sixty museum and group shows. Works by Kahn are in major museum, corporate, and private collections. *Objects of the Spirit: Ritual and the Art of Tobi Kahn*, a book about Kahn's ceremonial art, was published in June 2004 by Hudson Hill Press and the Avoda Institute. Among the awards that Kahn has received are the Outstanding Alumni Achievement Award from Pratt Institute in 2000; the Cultural Achievement Award for the Visual Arts from the National Foundation of Jewish Culture in 2004; and an Honorary Doctorate from JTS in 2007 for his work as an artist and educator. Kahn is the first JTS artist-in-residence.



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Making a Tallit from Tyvek – Rachel Kanter

Forget what you think you know about a tallit: the shape, material, color. Open your mind to new and innovative ways of fulfilling the mitzvah of tzitzit. In this workshop we will work with Tyvek, a non-woven polyethylene product that has been used for years in the construction industry and is now being embraced by designers and artists as a new medium. The Tyvek will serve as the “cloth” for the tallit, while scissors, paint, fabric, glue, and markers will help transform it into a new ritual garment. Biblical texts will illustrate the requirements and prohibitions of tallit and tzitzit and *The Jewish Catalogue* will be used for instructions on how to tie tzitzit.

Bio:

The women in my life created. My mother and grandmothers were always making things: knitting a sweater, working on a quilt, beading, weaving. I remember wanting to work with my hands. I wanted to sew, knit a sweater, or throw clay on the potter’s wheel.

When I was in high school, I decided to pursue ceramics at Syracuse University. Since 1995, when I received my MFA from the Rochester Institute of Technology, School for American Crafts, I have worked in clay, making Jewish ritual objects. After the birth of my second child, in 2003, I was no longer able to work in a studio, but my hands still needed to create. It was then that I turned to quilting. I used my interest in textiles and sewing to further my exploration of Jewish ritual objects. I currently work out of my home in New Jersey that I share with my husband and three children. They play while I design and sew my current work.

Concurrent Workshops I and III

The System of Blessings – Dr. David Kraemer

Following the defeat to Rome and destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE, Jews found themselves in a setting in which it was easy to conclude that God’s presence was a mere memory, God’s loving protection an illusion.

We, living in the cold, skeptical heart of modernity, following the Holocaust, can perhaps even more easily arrive at such conclusions. Yet the early Rabbis fought this conclusion by creating a system—the system of blessings—that would provide a lens through which God’s presence and even love could easily be seen.



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In this workshop, we will explore, through direct experience, the Rabbis' "blessing lens," using this as a foundation for creating our own ritual lens through which we might discover divine blessing.

Bio:

Dr. David Kraemer is Joseph J. and Dora Abbell Librarian at The Jewish Theological Seminary, where he has also served as professor of Talmud and Rabbinics for many years. As librarian, Dr. Kraemer is at the helm of the most extensive collection of Judaica—rare and contemporary—in the Western Hemisphere.

Dr. Kraemer is a prolific author and commentator. His books include *The Mind of the Talmud* (1990), *Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature* (1995), and *The Meanings of Death in Rabbinic Judaism* (2000), among others. His most recent book is *Jewish Eating and Identity Through the Ages* (Routledge, 2007, 2009). Dr. Kraemer is a popular lecturer and teacher. He was associated for many years with CLAL—the National Jewish Center of Learning and Leadership—under whose auspices he lectured around the country.

Concurrent Workshops I and II

On the Art of Ritual – Allan Wexler

In this workshop we will investigate the sukkah – both as an abstract concept and a physical object. Invention, creativity, and problem solving will be stressed in order to attain balance between spirituality and function. We will begin with a brainstorming session, a useful tool to start the flow of new and creative ideas. Participants will then create drawings and models resulting in their own sukkah proposals.

Bio:

Allan Wexler's art has been exhibited throughout the world and recently was featured in *Drawing Architecture: The L.J. Cella Collection* (2008) at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. *Custom Built: A Twenty-Year Survey of Work by Allan Wexler* travelled around the country from 1999 to 2001 and was on view at the Atlanta College of Art Gallery, Atlanta; Forum for Contemporary Art, St. Louis; and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. The artist is currently on the faculty of Parsons The New School for Design and is represented by Ronald Feldman Gallery.



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Concurrent Workshops II and III

Trope Aerobics: A Musical Workshop – Cantor Sharon Brown-Levy

Cantor Sharon Brown-Levy will share her unique method of teaching Torah chant (trope) kinesthetically: her Trope Aerobics combines music with movement. And while the method may sound innovative, it has roots in the earliest traditions of public Torah reading. When the system of cantillation was developed in the early synagogue, “chironomy”—a system of hand prompts—served as the precursor to written musical notation. Participants in the workshop will act out the trope marks, not only by using hand signs, but with music, dance, and larger-than-life movements. In Cantor Brown-Levy’s words, the method “makes trope accessible, fun, wild, crazy, and theatrical, and it eliminates the intimidation factor.”

Bio:

Cantor Sharon Brown-Levy serves as the cantor of Temple Emanu-El of West Essex in Livingston, New Jersey. After earning degrees in classical voice and Spanish Education at the University of South Florida (*summa cum laude*), she continued her voice studies at the International Institute of Vocal Arts in Chiari, Italy. In 2005, Brown-Levy completed the certification requirements, with distinction, for both the Cantorial Assembly (Conservative) and the American Conference of Cantors (Reform). She has combined cantorial work with a career on the professional stage in musical genres ranging from opera to big band.



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Concurrent Workshops III

Hands-On Electricity and Prayer – LoVid (Tali Hinkis & Kyle Lapidus)

During the workshop, participants will create a simple electric circuit with an LED light and electricity-generating devices: hand-crank, battery, or a power plug. This simple circuit will lead to a discussion on electrical and physical signals, as well as the relationship between a religious and artistic practice, rituals and performances.

Bio:

LoVid is an interdisciplinary artist duo composed of Tali Hinkis and Kyle Lapidus. LoVid has performed widely at venues including MoMA, PS1, The Kitchen, Roulette, Aurora Picture Show, NY Underground Film Festival, and FACT. LoVid has exhibited in venues such as The Jewish Museum, the Neuberger Museum, the New Museum of Contemporary Art, and Institute of Contemporary Art (London). LoVid has been artist in residence at Smack Mellon, Cue Art Foundation, Eyebeam, Harvestworks, iEAR, free103Point9, and Alfred University, and has received grants, awards, and fellowships from NYFA, LMCC, Experimental TV Center, NYSCA, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, turbulence.org, Puffin Foundation, and Greenwall Foundation

Concurrent Workshops III

DIY Kippah – Studio Armadillo (Hadas Kruk & Anat Stein)

This workshop will introduce the work of art *Hevruta or Mituta* to describe the artists' process for creating a DIY (Do-It-Yourself) kippah, inspired by traditional and contemporary trends in Jewish culture. Participants will then create their own kippot, conceptually designing it as an "identity card" emphasizing any aspects of their personalities that they wish and selecting colors and patterns from a collection of materials, fabrics, design elements, colors, and adhesives.

Bio:

Studio Armadillo is an Israeli design studio founded in 1997 by Hadas Kruk and Anat Stein. In addition to design for industry, they create independent design and art pieces in the field of contemporary Judaica. Creating Judaic pieces rooted in their personal backgrounds gives the artists the opportunity to respond to timeless rituals and aesthetics in modern ways, involving different techniques and media. Studio Armadillo's work *Linen* was purchased by The Jewish Museum in New York City, in 2004, for its collection.