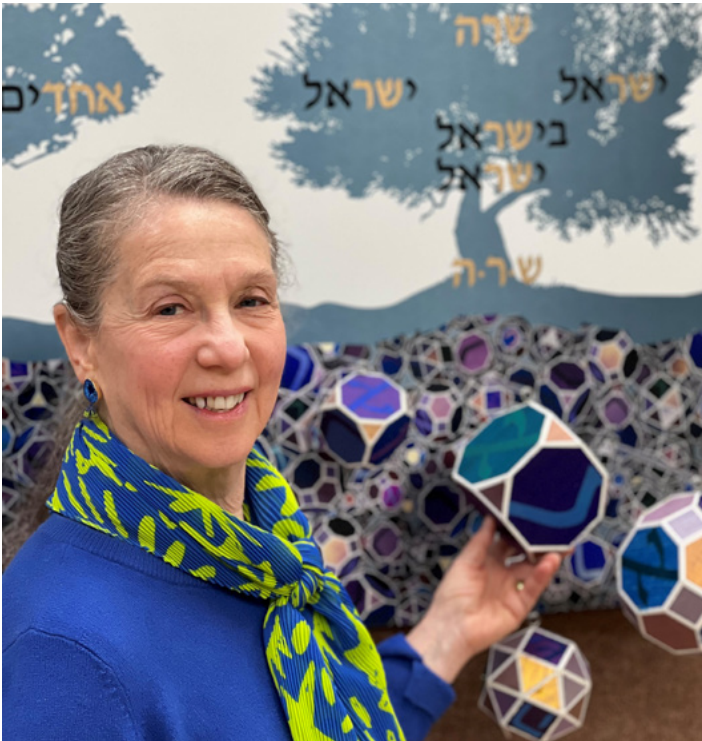


Artist explores universal connections with Hebrew



Artist Sara Harwin has spent 18 years creating “Illuminated Letters: Threads of Connection.” After a temporary exhibit of the 2,000-square-foot work in September, she now has a mini-installation in her studio, where she is hosting monthly salons.

Salons Explore Illuminated Letters

Jan. 15, 1-3 pm: Lighting the darkness

Feb. 12, 1-3 pm: Names/Naming

March 12, 1-3 pm: Connecting/Becoming One

RSVP for location: info@harwinstudios.com

Judaic artist Sara Harwin has spent the past 18 years creating “Illuminated Letters: Threads of Connection.”

In 2014, the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education presented a preliminary exhibit that served as “a visual entry point to Judaism.” In the years since, Sara has expanded the project to explore the universal connections that can be accessed through the ancient language. She hopes future exhibitions of her work will share the universal threads.

“Creating Illuminated Letters required time for study, involvement and enlightenment of my own understanding of how we are all connected, and how that connection is both individual and universal,” writes Sara. “We are now starting a series of Illuminated Salons at Harwin Studios (see box). We are inviting small groups of sponsors, supporters, and local and regional speakers to help foster the individual and universal understanding of this work.”

At an exhibit of the full project in September, several visitors commented on the meaning of the art.

“It’s rooted in Judaism in the Torah and Jewish mysticism, but on the other hand, because

it is art and because there are aspects of it that are really universal, like the form of the tree. All of these different shapes that Sara has created and fabricated are universal shapes that anyone can relate to,” said Natan M. Meir, Academic Director of The Harold Schnitzer Family Program in Judaic Studies at Portland State University. “And also, there are translations that she provides that are custom-made translations of all these Bible verses, and so it (Illuminated Letters) invites people to come in and explore it at whatever level they are on. At whatever access point they can reach it on, that gives it its universality.”

“I think it is an astonishing work,” said award-winning children’s book author Eric Kimmel “The Hebrew language grows out of three- and four-letter roots. The whole language comes out of these little, tiny combinations. And what Sara has done has gone back to the roots. ... It’s the heart of Western civilization if you are looking at sacred texts coming out of the Bible. So, it’s astonishing to see this as roots, leaves, seeds, stems expressed artistically. I think it is a marvelous work.”

Sephardic Film Fest begins with “Battle for Jerusalem”

The 16th Annual Sephardic Film festival kicks off Dec. 14 with the docudrama “In Our Hands – The Battle for Jerusalem.” Admission is free.

The film festival continues the second Wednesday of the month through May (with the exception of February and April, see below). Films screen at 7 pm at Congregation Ahavath Achim, 6686 SW Capitol Hwy., Portland. Discussion and Sephardic desserts follow each film.

Following is this year’s schedule:

Dec. 14: In our Hands – The Battle for Jerusalem: “In Our Hands” tells the story of the Battle of Jerusalem in the Six-Day War through the eyes of the IDF’s 55th Paratrooper Brigade, highlighting their role in the liberation of Jerusalem. The docudrama combines dramatic reenactments with interviews of veterans of the Six-Day War and archival footage and photos.

Jan. 11: Empty Boxcars: “Empty Box-

cars” tells the amazing story of the survival of more than 50,000 Jews in World War II from territories under Bulgarian control in Greece and Macedonia. Bulgarians from many walks of life – church leaders and labor leaders, lawyers and doctors – rose up in protest. Would we risk our lives to save someone in deep trouble?

Feb. 7 (Tuesday): Cuba’s Forgotten Jewels: After turning away the Jews aboard the ill-fated St. Louis in 1939, Cuba changed course the next year and took in 6,000 Jewish refugees, including hundreds of Jewish diamond cutters and their families. Co-director Judy Kreith draws on tales of her mother’s escape from Nazi-occupied Belgium and her years in 1940s Havana.

March 8: Jewish Soldiers in Blue & Gray: This film explores the little-known history of the Civil War Jews who fought on both sides of the battlefield – 7,000 for the Union and 3,000 for the Confederacy.

Some prominent Jews, including Jewish slave owners, cited the Torah to justify slavery, while others were leaders in the abolitionist movement or established stops on the Underground Railroad in their synagogues.

April 19 (third Wednesday): Double feature: Rhodes Forever & From Philadelphia to the Front: “Rhodes Forever” is a contemporary portrait that ties the Jews of Rhodes with their descendants.

“From Philadelphia to the Front” focuses on six Philadelphia veterans in their 80s, and their experiences during the war and a bittersweet reunion in their old age.

May 10: GI Jews

“GI Jews: Jewish Americans in World War II” tells the story of the 550,000 Jewish American men and women who fought in World War II.

Please RSVP before each film. Email info@ahavathachim.com.