

Hebrew Home at Riverdale
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For Immediate Release
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Making Continuity Contemporary: Eastern Europe in New York

Opening Reception: Sunday, March 13, 1:30–3pm
in the Elma and Milton A. Gilbert Pavilion Gallery at Hebrew Home at Riverdale
R.S.V.P. 718-581-1596 or art@hebrewhome.org
On view from March 13–July 17, 2016



Maryna Bilak, *Time to Gather Stones*, 2016, paint, plaster, found materials, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist.

Derfner Judaica Museum + The Art Collection at Hebrew Home at Riverdale is pleased to announce its latest exhibition *Making Continuity Contemporary: Eastern Europe in New York* on view in the Elma and Milton A. Gilbert Pavilion Gallery from March 13–July 17, 2016. This exhibition featuring work by eight artists originally from Eastern Europe addresses themes of personal history, geographical dislocation, identity, and intellectual freedom. An opening reception with the artists will take place in the Gallery on March 13 from 1:30–3 pm. R.S.V.P. 718-581-1596 or art@hebrewhome.org.

In different ways, each artist explores the disruptions and continuities in their cultural backgrounds, whether through pictorial abstraction, participatory projects, auditory or written language, or conceptual reinterpretation of cultural symbols. Their mediums also range widely and include hand-drawn animation and audio, chemigrams, painting, mixed media, photography, sculpture, and installation.

Maryna Bilak, a Ukrainian artist originally from the Carpathian mountains, came to the U.S. to study art at the New York Studio School in 2012. Using her knowledge of traditional Ukrainian textile motifs, she incorporates these patterns into 3-dimensional paintings in which she manipulates color and shape by folding canvas and in multimedia installations in which she assembles hand-painted stones.

Alina and Jeff Blum's series *Casual Conversations in Brooklyn* (2007) engages questions of how cultural experiences and identities intersect. The photographers spent a day in Brighton Beach—home to a large Jewish and Russian-speaking community—and offered passersby the opportunity to choose from three different signs featuring the words “Russian,” “Jewish,” and “American,” or to create their own. On view are a selection of subjects photographed holding the signs they chose—sometimes more than two—to represent their cultural identity. Alina and Jeff Blum were born in Belarus and Moldova, respectively.



Alina and Jeff Blum, *Casual Conversations in Brooklyn*, 2007, C-print, 40 x 50 inches. Courtesy of the artists.



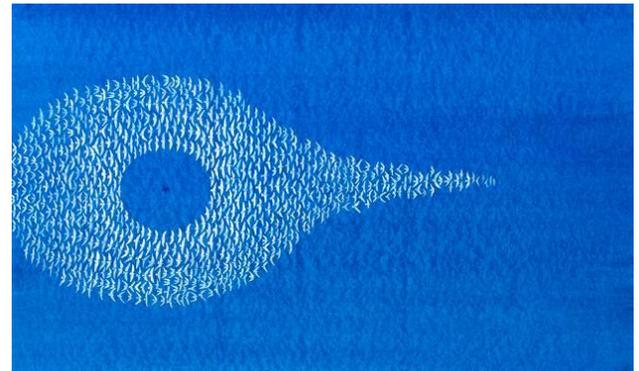
Yevgenia Nayberg. *Bird Dictionary*, 2011, oil and collage on canvas, 24 x 30 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Yevgenia Nayberg, who grew up in Kiev, Ukraine, is represented by the painting *Bird Dictionary* (2011), a rumination on the process of learning a new language. Phrases in Cyrillic text are incorporated into the work, labeled as ordinary things: “regular person,” “regular landscape,” and “standard moon.” However, the reality is the opposite, and the work touches on the idea that learning a new language is strange and surreal for non-speakers. The artist also pays homage to Suprematism in another work on view, a triptych entitled *Happy Man Series* (2013).

Bulgarian-born artist Eva Nikolova references Balkan architecture in her hand-drawn animation and chemigrams—paintings on light sensitive paper—that construct narratives about memory and personal dislocation. In the animation *Zemya Zemya* (2008), the iconic architectural form of the Orthodox Christian church is seen

through a series of free-associative events, leaving interpretation of the narrative up to the viewer. According to the artist, the title is a doubling of the Bulgarian word for earth, land, or ground and refers to the signage on rockets designating the missile type—ground-to-ground or surface-to-surface. The architectural images in Nikolova’s works function as cultural emblems—whether intact or seemingly dilapidated—and explore shifting identities.

Acclaimed illustrator Peter Sís’s work using the motif of wings references themes of freedom and liberation. In two illustrations from his adaptation of *The Conference of the Birds* (2011)—a 12th century Persian epic poem published by The Penguin Press—a surrealistic flock of birds in the shape of an eye that spreads across a richly colored surface, one blue, one yellow, demonstrates the process of journeying. Sís emigrated to the United States from Czechoslovakia in 1982.



Peter Sís, “The endless deserts are crystals of sand, the mountain ranges are strings of beads,” 2011, published in *The Conference of the Birds*, ink and watercolor on paper, 15 ¼ x 22 1/8 inches. Image courtesy of the artist and Mary Ryan Gallery, New York.

Diana Shpungin’s *You Will Remember This* (2011) is a hand-drawn animation derived from video footage of her father recorded several months before his death. In it he recounts anecdotes about life in Soviet Latvia, including the tale of acquiring his first car and the black market culture of the USSR in the late 1950s.

Leonard Ursachi’s drawings of bunkers and a maquette for *Fat Boy*—a large sculpture on view in Prospect Park in Brooklyn—engage what the artist describes as “the bunker mentality.” Ursachi’s native Romania is dotted with bunkers abandoned after the Soviet period—symbols that instill a sense of fear and the unknown. He defected from the country in 1980.

As a member of the American Alliance of Museums, Hebrew Home at Riverdale by RiverSpring Health is committed to publicly exhibiting its art collection throughout its 32-acre campus including the Derfner Judaica Museum and a sculpture garden overlooking the Hudson River and Palisades. The Derfner Judaica Museum + The Art Collection provide educational and cultural programming for residents of the Hebrew Home, their families and the general public from throughout New York City, its surrounding suburbs and visitors from elsewhere. Hebrew Home is a nonprofit, non-sectarian geriatric organization serving more than 12,000 elderly persons in greater New York through its resources and community service programs. Museum hours: Sunday–Thursday, 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Art Collection and grounds open daily, 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Call 718-581-1596 for holiday hours and to schedule group tours, or for further information please visit our website at <http://www.hebrewhome.org/art>



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