



New Translations: Genesis

In her paintings, Jill Nathanson explores and updates the tradition of color-based abstraction, while experimenting with the abstract elements within Jewish thought. Since the 1990s she has created three series related to Jewish text and ritual: The Shivitis, Seeing Sinai, and New Translations: Genesis. Seeing Sinai (2005) – a close reading of Exodus 33-34 through abstract painting and original midrash – was a collaboration with Jewish Theological Seminary Chancellor Arnold Eisen. Works from two of the three projects are on view in her exhibition, Sacred Presence/Painterly Process: Jill Nathanson’s “Seeing Sinai” and “New Translations: Genesis,” at the Derfner Judaica Museum in Riverdale through December 31.

New Translations (2007-2010) is a mixed media installation based on the implications of Robert Alter’s translation of Genesis 1. Nathanson finds that the Alter text is less conceptual than previous translations, describing it as “physical, even gestural, where the language allows for visualization of the ‘Days’ and a sense of the essential energy of each part of creation.” Her series in response to Genesis “is a meditation on energy and matter forming, separating and ordering in those first six ‘Days.’ It is a commentary on how the parts of existence might be thought to relate to one another. How did God know when the job was done, creating things that had never been seen before (when nothing had been seen before)?”

The artist has been exhibiting since 1981 and has had solo exhibitions of her Judaic work at the Philadelphia Museum of Jewish Art and The Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale. She currently exhibits at Messineo Art Projects/Wyman Contemporary where a show of her recent abstract paintings, No Blue Without Yellow, is on view through December 22.