

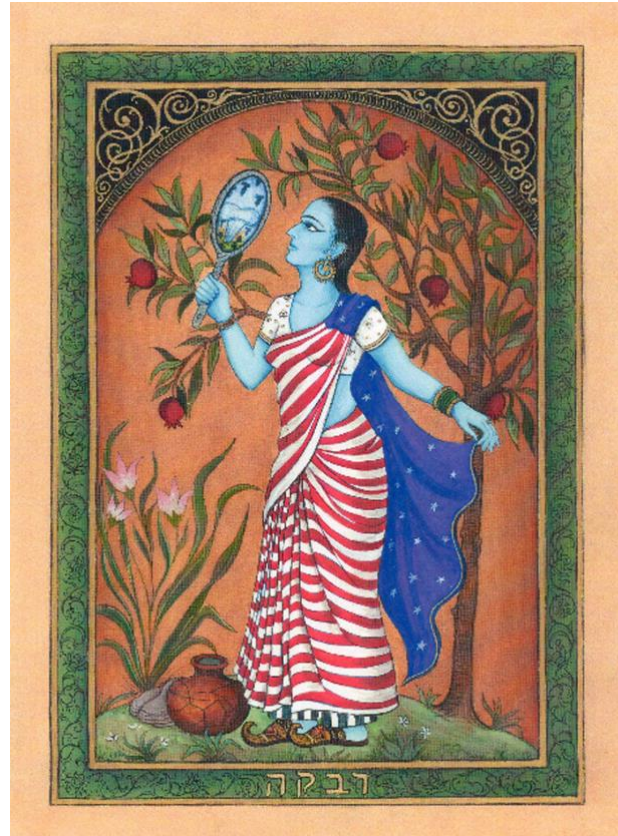
Artist and Educator

Siona Benjamin

Workshops and PowerPoint Artist Lectures and Presentations



Envisioning Women: Siona Benjamin on the Art of Midrash

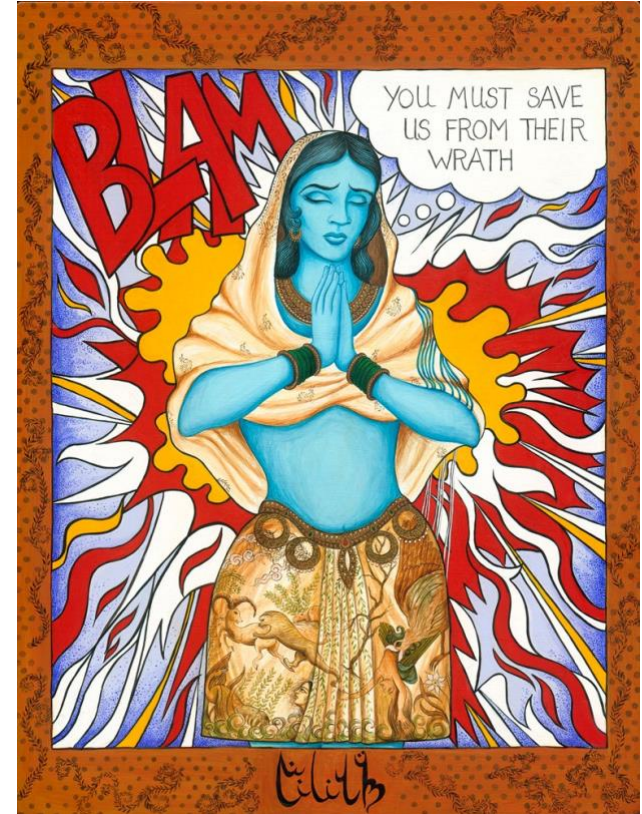


The practice of interpreting biblical text dates back nearly 2,000 years to the first rabbinic midrashim. Visual artists have unique gifts for interpreting texts and unique tools for creating midrash. Experience this tradition through the eyes of an artist, gaining new insights into familiar stories and characters as Siona shares her vision in this presentation.

The Making of Super Heroes and Heroines

Students will be inspired by super heroes from the comic books and also from comic inspired Siona's paintings.

Students will make a collage/painting that will depict how they plan to bring peace to the world and what symbols and stories will they use to depict that. How will their super hero look who will help them to achieve this. The concept of Tikkun ha Olam will be discussed with the students as well to show what we are doing to bring Tikkun and restoration in this world. Students will also be encouraged to make masks of their newly fabricated super hero.



Artist in Residence

Directing and organizing workshops with students.

Working with a core group of selected students to prepare a permanent mural for the school. Siona will organize the residency with selected topics to be researched by the students. Permanent installations and murals will be created in the school/university/institution with Siona. The final mural will be permanently installed at the inviting venue. Duration of artist residencies range from a few days, weeks or months depending on the length and budget of the proposed project.



Stickers from student paintings



Midrash and Megillah painting workshop



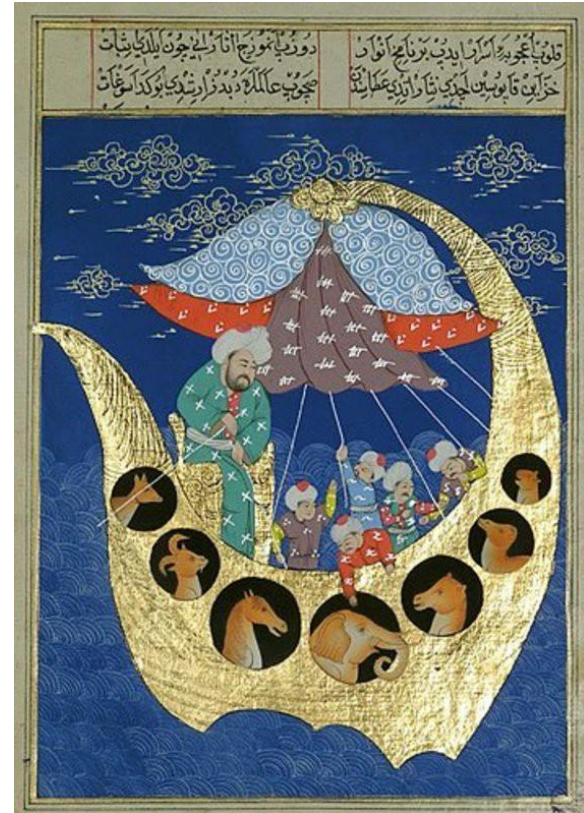
The class will explore the influences of ancient cross-cultural mythology and midrash. The inspiration often is drawn from ancient, traditional cultures, (like Persian miniature painting and Jewish illuminated manuscripts) yet the students are creating contemporary art - here and now. Learn how to make these links between old and new and how to recycle stories and myth. Students will explore this multicultural mosaic and, via hands-on experience, create their own place in it.



Students will be supplied with Xerox copies of ancient manuscript paintings to trace and copy from. A full color copy print of Siona's Esther Megillah commission will also be available for reference (see website link under "commissions" section: www.artsiona.com) Students will be encouraged to take parts of paintings, transform them and incorporate into a final composition of their own.

Finding Home: “Parallels in mythology from around the world”

Refer to mythologies like Indian Matsya story, Noah’s Ark story, Jewish Story about Jonah and the fish, Aleksandr Pushkin’s the tale of the fisherman and the little fish” and Gilgamesh story of the Mesopotamian/Babylonian myth from 2000 BC. Also refer to science/geology for the “flood” that came about due to the rise in sea level caused by the melting of vast glaciers at the end of the Ice Age. Students will bring to class Xeroxes and objects from home about their family, culture and religion. Tie all these stories to show students the parallels in mythologies of the world with their own personal journeys.



Indian/Persian Miniature Painting Workshop

Students will be supplied with Xerox copies of Indian miniature paintings to trace and copy from. A full color print will also be available for reference. Students will be encouraged to take parts of the miniature paintings, transform them and incorporate into the final composition. The technique of miniature painting will be taught in the color application. This project will teach the student to bridge old and new, taking inspiration from history to create a contemporary artwork.



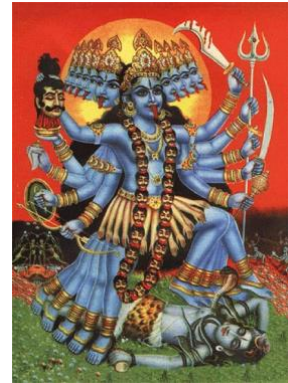
Chalk the Block workshop and event



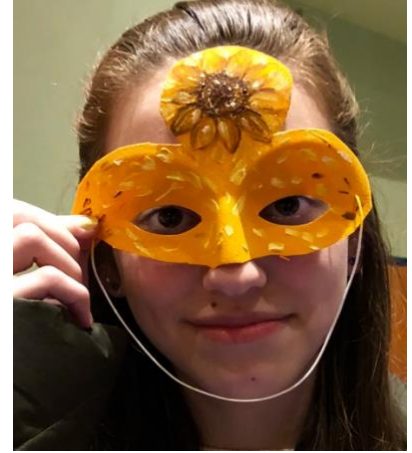
In the spirit of art and community and in the style of Rangoli (art from India where during festival time, people make designs with special Rangoli powder on the floor), this workshop offers an opportunity to have a block/community party at the venue or museum. Participants are given simple drawings from Siona's art to use as inspiration. Materials are provided, and entire families can participate. Draw on the sidewalks and make designs inspired by Indian miniature painting, Rangoli art and Siona's original transcultural paintings.

“Identity: What color are you?”

I start off the workshop by telling students the story of how I became blue and also about growing Jewish in India. This will be accompanied with a short PowerPoint presentation. I then ask students to think about what color they see themselves. I will show them pictures of different colored gods in India and also the different colored Taras in Buddhism (Green Tara, Red Tara, etc.). Students are then given some paper and paints and a paper mache mask. They are encouraged to paint a self-portrait in any color skin they see themselves in and to tell a story about themselves in this role. Next step is to paint a mask in that same skin color and wear it to become the character the students paints him or herself in. Students are encouraged to share this choice of color and their story at the end of the class with the rest of the students.



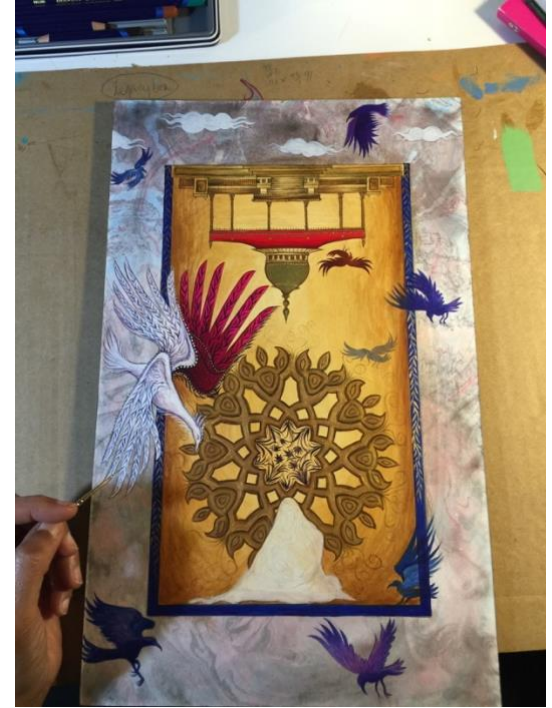
“Identity: What color are you?”



Proposal for Semester Long Class:

Indian Miniature Painting from the Ragmala Series

For the first part of the semester, the class will examine this ancient form of painting and way of thinking, analyzing and appreciating representative examples of the style, as well as learning to listen to the Hindustani classical music which inspired it. To convey the images to the students, I will use books, slides, CD-ROMs and actual paintings. In addition to audio recordings, I will invite musicians for lecture/ demonstrations of Hindustani music. I will also conduct interviews with painters and musicians on video to bring to the class. During the second portion of the semester, the class will try hands-on projects inspired by Indian miniature painting, allowing them to experience the style and the way of thinking first hand. I would like to offer two alternate sections/ versions of the class, one for art majors, the other for the general student.



Proposal for Semester long class:

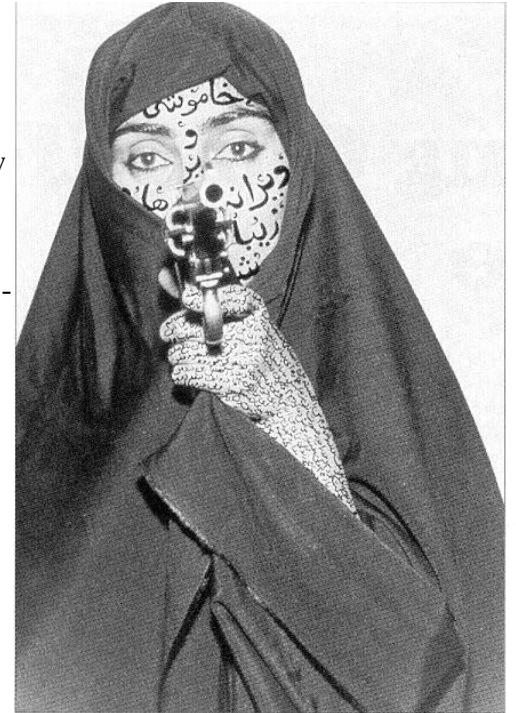
Contemporary Asian Artists in the West: Ideas and Practice



Course Description:

The class will explore the work and influences of artists who were born and raised in Asia, but now live in the West. Their inspiration often is drawn from ancient, traditional cultures, yet they are creating contemporary art - here and now. Learn how they make these links between old and new and how they live the transition through the act of immigration. Students will explore this multicultural mosaic and, via hands-on experience, create their own place in it. Some of the artists discussed in this class: Rirkrit Tiravanija, Lee Ming Wei, Masami Teraoka, Daniel Lee, Yasumasa Morimura, Anish Kapoor, Natwar Bhavsar, Shahzia Sikander, Zarina, Shirin Neshat, Annu Palakunnathu Matthew, Rina Banerjee, Chitra Ganesh, Mona Hatoum, Yayoi Kusama, Mariko Mori, Nam Jun Paik, Yoko Ono.

In addition to these proposed workshops and classes, Siona also teaches general Drawing and Painting classes. Syllabus available on request.



Artist PowerPoint Presentations:

Lecture Abstract:

Blue Like Me: The Art of Siona Benjamin

Growing up in a predominantly Hindu and Muslim society, educated in Catholic and Zoroastrian schools, raised Jewish in India and now living in the U.S., I have always been driven to reflect upon the cultural boundary zones in which I have lived. With this background in a multi-cultural America, I am compelled to create art that speaks of shared similarities with my audience. My intent for my viewers is to re-evaluate their notions and concepts about identity and race, hoping to peel back layers of misconceptions that may result in racism, hate and war. This lecture could be accompanied by a section on my childhood growing up Jewish in a multicultural India. Photos and information about the 2000-year-old Indian Jewish community will be embellished with personal Jewish photos from my family album.

Most of my family now lives in three different continents, share my story and journey about my Diasporic Bene Israel Indian Jewish family. I received my first Fulbright fellowship in 2011 where I conducted interviews with Jews in India resulting in a collection of forty photo-collage paintings project titled “Faces: Weaving Indian Jewish Narratives”. The works continue to travel to numerous galleries and museums. Also, the project was made into a documentary film which has been selected for numerous film festivals. I have also completed a second United States-Israel Fulbright fellowship to extend the current transcultural identity dialogue of Indian Jews in Israel. My project Title is: "From Motherland to Fatherland: Transcultural Indian Jews in Israel". With this project, I hope to discuss similarities instead of differences in these divided and tenuous times and in the process, as an immigrant artist, find “home” again.

Lecture info: Siona is available to be invited to give artist lectures accompanied by power point presentations. She can also show the documentary film made on her work and accompany it with a Q & A in the end from the audience.

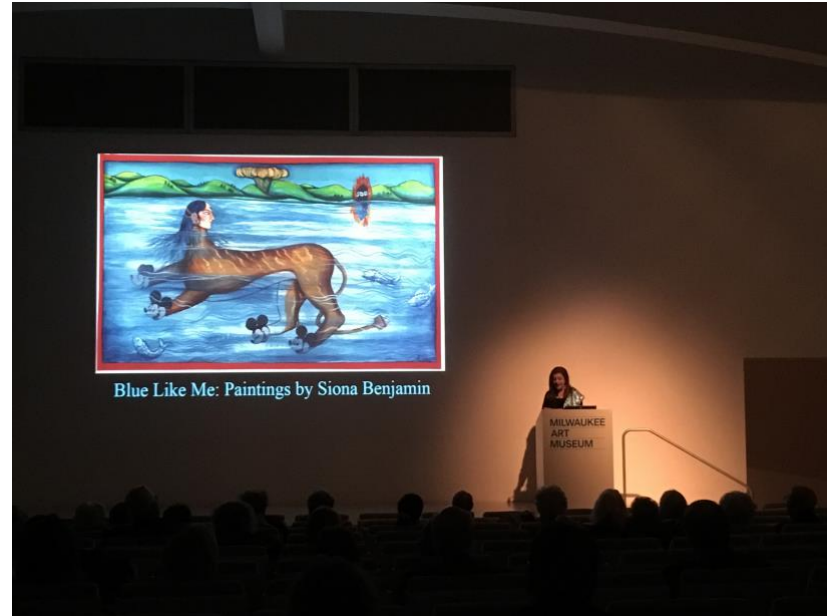
Siona, a Bene Israel Jew originally from India, now living in the US, is inspired by the style of Indian/Persian miniature paintings, Sephardic icons, the socio-political climate of today and in exploring the cultural boundary zones of her immigrant self. Explore the journey of this contemporary artist, as myths are brought to life in her paintings in a new and avant-garde way. The lectures could be accompanied by a section on the artist's childhood growing up Jewish in a multicultural India. Photos and information about the 2000-year-old Indian Jewish community will be embellished with personal Jewish photos from the artists family album. Most of Siona's family now lives in three different continents, share her story, her journey in her art and about her diasporic Bene Israel Jewish family.



Powerpoint presentation:

Finding Home and the Dilemma of Belonging

Siona Benjamin is a painter originally from Bombay, now living in the US. Her work reflects her background of being brought up Jewish in a predominantly Hindu and Muslim India. In her paintings she combines the imagery of her past with the role she plays in America today, making a mosaic inspired by both Indian miniature paintings and Sephardic icons. Siona will discuss her journey as an artist as she developed her themes and painting methods.



Powerpoint presentation:

Blue Like Me: The Art of Siona Benjamin

This presentation could be accompanied with a section about the artist **Growing up Jewish in India**

Growing up in a predominantly Hindu and Muslim society, educated in Catholic and Zoroastrian schools, raised Jewish in India and now living in the U.S., Siona has always been driven to reflect upon the cultural boundary zones in which she has lived. With this background in a multi-cultural America, she is compelled to create art that speaks of shared similarities with her audience. Siona's intent for her viewers is to re-evaluate their notions and concepts about identity and race, hoping to peel back layers of misconceptions that may result in racism, hate and war. Very often she looks down at her skin and it feels as if it has turned blue. It tends to do that when she faces certain situations, such as when people stereotype or categorize others who are unlike themselves. She has therefore over the years developed these varied blue-skinned characters as self-portraits in assuming multiple roles and forms. She employs them as social and cultural agents in raising provocative issues about identity in a trans-cultural world.

This lecture could be accompanied by a section on the artist's childhood growing up Jewish in a multicultural India. Photos and information about the 2000-year-old Indian Jewish community will be embellished with personal Jewish photos from the artists family album. Most of Siona's family now lives in three different continents, share her story and journey about this diasporic Bene Israel Indian Jewish family.

"Growing up Jewish in India: An Historical Perspective"



This lecture could be accompanied by a section on the artist's childhood growing up Jewish in a multicultural India. Photos and information about the 2000-year-old Indian Jewish community will be embellished with personal Jewish photos from the artists family album. Most of Siona's family now lives in three different continents, share her story and journey about this diasporic Bene Israel Indian Jewish family.

**Presentation about Art Project and Jews of India: 1- Faces:
Weaving Indian Jewish Narratives (India project) From
Motherland to Fatherland: Transcultural Indian Jews in Israel
(Israel Project) - Fulbright Senior Scholar Fellowship Projects.**

1- The project proposal is to raise western awareness about the long-standing history of the Indian Jewish communities in India by documenting, using photography and painting, the individual faces and stories of this ancient group and their heritage before their existence becomes a cultural relic of India. Siona visited the Bene Israel people living in and around Mumbai and Pune. Their stories have inspired her to create the iconography in her paintings. Fine art printers have printed the portraits of these people, isolating their faces on large pieces of paper. Siona is painting the stories and iconography around their faces in the paintings referencing painting styles reminiscent of Indian/ Persian miniature paintings, Sephardic icons, the socio-political climate of today. This is a PowerPoint presentation about Siona's journey through Jewish India in search of her roots and heritage. Audience will see and hear stories about the remaining 5000 Jews left in India. Most have immigrated to Israel, but these Indian Jews have lived in the subcontinent for over 2000 years keeping their Jewish faith alive in a Hindu, Muslim cosmopolitan India for all these centuries.

2- The second United States-Israel Fulbright fellowship motive is to extend the current transcultural identity dialogue of Indian Jews in Israel. With 3-D prints, the faces, stories and heritage of this ancient group was documented and exhibited. These faces are maps, linking Siona to the memories and weaving narratives of this transcultural world. Answers are literally found in their faces. It is with these people and their stories that the rest of the world has an opportunity to learn about Indian Jews. With this project, Siona hopes to educate in these divided and tenuous times and in the process, as an immigrant artist, find "home" again.



Rang de Nila (Color me Blue): A Visual Art/Dance Collaboration



Rang de Nila (Color me Blue): A Visual Art/Dance Collaboration

Total of 5 or 6 artists are available (1 visual artist and 1 to 7 dancers as needed).

Requirements for the performance:

- 1) Auditorium with theater lights preferred or at least a good performance space.
- 2) Make-up room for dancers.
- 3) Power point equipment:
 - Macintosh laptop or computer with system OS X.
 - Good quality power point projector and big screen.

A couple of examples of good projectors are:

Sanyo PLC-XF30NL. Throws image up to 80 feet and is good for a bigger auditorium. Also, Dell LCD projectors are good. Please note that the image quality depends on a good projector and will be responsible for rich, clear projected images. This aspect is very important for a successful program, so we can show the connection between painter and dancer.

- Large screen on stage for projecting images.
- Good speaker system for music connected to the power point.
- Movie requirements need the full version of Quick Time from Apple (Please note NOT the free version).

Technical person to be available through the program for set up and for trouble shooting. (Please note the artists will not be able to set up and run part of the program)

For more information please contact: **Siona Benjamin** (Email: artsiona@gmail.com) Tel: 973-219-0705

Links to videos:

<http://vimeo.com/23892974>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbwPxmtrnBA>

<http://elitalks.org/midrash-stage-drama-life>

Documentary film presentation:

BLUE LIKE ME: THE ART OF SIONA BENJAMIN -

Documentary film

Film is approximately 30 min long and can be accompanied with a Q&A with the audience. Alternately there can be a panel of presenters invited. The film maker Hal Rifken, the film editor Ryan Arey and the animator Morgan Lawson will be available to discuss the film after the viewing. Please contact Siona for details.

Blue Like Me profiles Siona Benjamin, an exciting artist working today. She is a Bene Israel Jew from Mumbai, India. Most of her family migrated to Israel while she was a Chile and she began to wonder: What is home?". Now she creates art to answer that question. She paints blue figures who fuse eastern traditions and western pop culture - much like the world we live in today. The film follows the artist home to Mumbai to meet her Bene Israel community and explore the effects of the 2008 terror attacks. In searching the planet for a home, Siona finds that the planet is her home - a world that is vast, vibrant and blue.

Link to film trailer: <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/halrifken/blue-like-me-the-art-of-siona-benjamin>



Blue Like Me: The Art of Siona Benjamin

This documentary will profile an Indian-American artist with an intriguing background. Influenced by the Catholic and Zoroastrian schools that she attended while growing up among Hindus, Muslims and Christians in Mumbai, her childhood experiences inform her art. Though most of the Jews from Siona's youth are scattered around the world, some still call India their home. These Jews are the subjects of her recent Fulbright work. This is a profile of Siona's life and cultural influences as she returns to Mumbai in the fall of 2013 to mount an exhibition at the Prince of Wales Museum.

Director/Producer: Hal Rifken Associate Producer/Editor: Ryan Arey
Animator: Morgan Lawson Production Manager: Diana Puglisi
Social Media Assistant: Kali Wallace

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www.halrifkenproductions.com



ARTIST WEBSITE

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NEW YORK GALLERY REP

www.acagalleries.com

SIONAWARE

<http://www.bluelikeme.com/>