

Regarding the Missing Objects is an exhibition articulated around several absences: the absence of items from a museum collection, the absence of an exhibition, and the absence of an artist—Dana Carter—who passed away in the early days of the exhibition design. This exhibition, organized by Ruslana Lichtzier, showcases artworks that consider these absences, yet it also spotlights the deep material, social, and spiritual relations between the selected works and their makers; a group of artists and writers who decided to work together in the face of institutional denial.

The absent exhibition—a thesis exhibition for the Chicago Jewish Artists Fellowship at the Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership—was originally planned to happen there in June 2019. Two months prior to the exhibition’s opening, the host institution decided against exhibiting one of the participating artist’s works, stating the work featured a “one-sided” view of Gaza after the 2014 Israeli aerial raids. The decision led to the fellows-artists unanimously withdrawing from the exhibition and to the subsequent resignation of Lichtzier, who at the time was the Director of the Fellowship. Prior to the thesis exhibition’s cancellation, the artists intended to present selected items from the institution’s collection upon which they conducted a year-long artistic investigation while developing their own work.

Built on the mostly hidden dynamics between institutions that care for cultural archives, and the artists and scholars who study them, *Regarding the Missing Objects* endeavors in excavating objects and histories that were denied representation. The exhibition invites us to ask what are the material and immaterial outcomes of institutional censorship? What historical perspectives are being suppressed in museum collections and why? In turn, the artworks here suggest how collections and archives that resist institutional silencing may take shape in the future.

Curated by Ruslana Lichtzier

Related Programs

***Regarding the Missing Objects* Exhibition Tour with artists and curator**

December 10, 2022 at Center Days @ 2-3pm

Join the exhibition’s artists and the guest curator, Ruslana Lichtzier for a guided tour of the exhibition to learn more about the inspiration behind the works on view, the curatorial process, and the histories of the Jewish collection of objects that the exhibition is derived from.

The Politics of Identity in Practice

January 28, 2023 @ 2-4pm

Join *Regarding the Missing Objects* exhibition artists Julia Klein, William J. O’Brien, and Jaclyn Mednicov, to discuss the role that identity plays within their creative practices. The artists will discuss the complexities of the Jewish identity, including the context of belonging to a larger group of people within an individualistic society, the performance, burden, and relational aspects tied to identity, and what that means through the lens of art. Moderated by Ruslana Lichtzier.

The Convergence of Creativity and Censorship

February 16, 2023 @ 6-8pm

Join *Regarding the Missing Objects* exhibition artists Elana Adler, Tirtza Even, Ben Segal, and Maggie Taft, as they discuss what it’s like to be an artist making work within a complex political climate which often silences discourse in relation to Palenstine and Israel.

Hyde Park **ART CENTER**

5020 South Cornell Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60615 773.324.5520 www.hydeparkart.org

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Regarding The Missing Objects

November 13, 2022 – February 27, 2023
Kanter Family Foundation Gallery



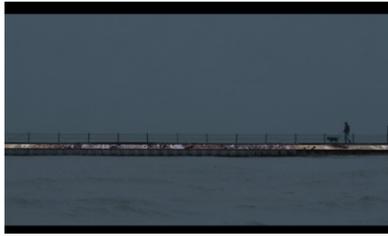
Installation view of *Regarding The Missing Objects* (2022) at Hyde Park Art Center

Artists

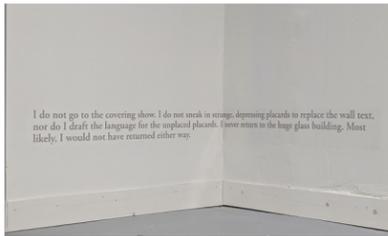
Elana Adler
Dana Carter
Tirtza Even
Julia Klein

Jaclyn Mednicov
William J. O’Brien
Ben Segal
Maggie Taft

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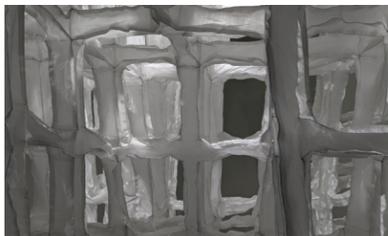


Tirtza Even's video installation and print *Gaza Strip* (2022), presents a panoramic view of life on the Chicago pier. A narrow strip of aerial footage of Gaza in the aftermath of the 2014 Israeli attacks is seen through a cut in the image of the pier's base. The work responds to artist Jason Lazarus's photograph *Untitled* (Palestinian wall, East Jerusalem, 2008) in the Spertus collection. *Untitled* depicts graffiti on the Separation Wall, sprayed on behalf of Lazarus, which reads, "Trying to imagine a clear view between Palestine and Israel." *Gaza Strip*, answering Lazarus' call, presents that which Israel—with the support of its American allies—works hard at obfuscating: the residue of war.



Covering (2022), a vinyl text by **Ben Segal**, is spread throughout the exhibition space. Originally it was conceived as an exploration of a machine that generates unexpected texts yielded from the Spertus archive. In the absence of the original exhibition, the text turned to a meditation on the archive as a creative site and, as what Segal calls the "bunker." The work addresses the effects produced by institutional censorship,

presenting both the allure of secrecy as well as the exclusionary manner of institutional operations.



I see through your barriers (2021) by **Elana Adler** is inspired by Jewish material concepts of community building. The partially see-through sculpture which takes the form of a dripping grid is based on a personalized unit of measurement the artist designed while echoing "handbreadth," a traditional measuring unit used to build the Sukkah (a temporary shelter constructed for the holiday of Sukkot). Hovering off the ground, the

sculpture also considers the space of the Eruv (an urban area enclosed by a wire boundary, permitting various activities on the Sabbath). Used in reversal, here the concept produces spatial exclusion: an impenetrable space that one can see but not enter.



William J. O'Brien's *Lost Family Pt. 2 - 2* (2022) is composed of a site-specific installation and an artist book. Spanning between the exhibition's space and the pages of the book, the artwork is violently haunted by a hovering sense of grief. Levitating large-scale paper objects are surrounded by wall-size textile prints. Elevating Punk into a dramatic play, the prints can be read as broken manifestos and as laments. At their base are faint traces

of Abel Penn's *Creation* book; an object that O'Brien studied while at Spertus. The book's traces demarcate unreachable histories and myths that O'Brien at once submits to and battles.



Dana Carter's artist book, *Automatic Expressions* (2012) and the fabric drawings, *The Rule of Twelfths* (2013), are studies of dark energy, the reception of light, and disappearing traces. Carter was the Spertus fellowship. The study did not yield final work prior to Carter's sudden passing in July 2019. At the base of the works is "theatrical cotton," as Carter called it, a heavy-duty fabric and a stage for an unfolding drama. The cotton

features what seems to be nocturnal aerial landscapes, the marks are made of evaporated saltwater. Designed with impermanence in mind, the works demand our witnessing to their unavoidable motion towards disappearance.



Traces of Unclaimed Objects (2018/2022), by **Jaclyn Mednicov**, is a series of photographic transfers on acrylic polymer "skins." Hung, the "skins" present morphed images that the artist took while researching at Spertus the unclaimed textiles the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction organization had rescued after World War II. Featuring unclaimed textiles turned to skins, the work gives space to unspoken embodied histories. Mednicov

also made *Memories of Objects* (2022), a grid of nine cyanotype collage panels. The collages are made of photographs taken by the artist during a workshop where the fellows brought objects of personal significance. Uniting the dispersed objects into a unifying grid, Mednicov transfers the objects' individual stories to the story of one group.



Julia Klein's book, *The Spertus Institute Collection: An Illustrated Catalog of Personal Highlights* (2022), is a product of digressive research Klein conducted into the Spertus collection. The fellowship's abrupt ending resulted in Klein designing a catalog with illustrations—drawings and cellphone photographs—which are created in the spirit of fair use and out of deference to copyright restrictions. Three prints with

images from Klein's catalog are in the exhibition: *Torah Pointers (Yads)* (2022), *Hannukah Lamp (Hannukiah)* (2022), and *Fertility and Death* (2022). As with the stories the artist gathered, the illustrations too present fractured yet deeply engaging histories that refuse one monolithic form.



Maggie Taft constructed the *Spertus Jewish Artists Fellowship/Regarding the Missing Objects Archive* (2018-2022), a physical archive chronicling the activities of the cohort that was formed in the 2018-19 Spertus fellowship. The archive includes administrative records, correspondence, sessions' designs, sketches, and descriptions of artworks conceived for the initial exhibition at Spertus, among other items. Presenting materials relating to the controversy that resulted in the cancellation

of the Spertus exhibition the archive resists institutional censorship. In chronicling the formation of a community of artists and scholars that are bounded by an ethical commitment, a community that flourished outside the institution, it in effect, presents a counter-archive.