

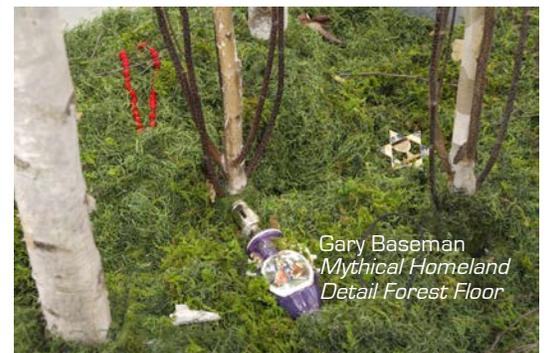
Shulamit Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition by noted regional artist **Gary Baseman**. Displayed in a unique birch tree forest environment, this new body of work is an extension of Baseman's exploration of family history and heritage, as seen in his recent and critically-acclaimed retrospective at the Skirball Cultural Center, *The Door is Always Open*.

As youngest and first American-born child in a family of six, Baseman grew up in idyllic Los Angeles with Disneyland and the Dodgers, a stark contrast to his Survivor parents' experiences. Only recently has the artist considered more seriously his family's origins. While visiting the Ukraine and Poland in 2012, Baseman heard stories throughout his travels describing how Jews lived and observed their religion prior to WWII. Tour guides, shopkeepers, community leaders and the general public shared tales with the artist. The varied and complicated versions of modern Jewish history took on a fairytale aspect for Baseman. The lack of strong Jewish communities in these regions has led to the repurposing of seemingly disjointed aspects of Jewish life from the last century. This understanding of Jewish life today disturbed, fascinated and perplexed Baseman. Upon returning, the artist decided to create his own "mythical homeland" full of characters that are at first glance adorable yet hold grave messages.



Gary Baseman
Mythical Homeland
Installation View [2013]

Shulamit Gallery has been transformed into a birch tree forest. Hung on the trees are over twenty new paintings and drawings. The forest refers to both the name of the artist's father's hometown, Berezhne (birch), and the environment into which he fled and survived among other freedom fighters during WWII. Scattered along the forest floor and tucked into tree branches are objects from the home of the artist's parents, Ben and Naomi Baseman, including necklaces, a broken wine glass, bottles, a prayer book, other Baseman relics and family photographs. They remind the viewer of Ben's harried escape into the forest. These relics recall the passage of time. Each object is moss-laden yet the stories associated with these personal and sacred relics are timeless.



Gary Baseman
Mythical Homeland
Detail Forest Floor

Mythical Homeland is filled with landscape paintings and drawings that feature Baseman's iconic characters (Toby, the Happy Idiot, ChouChou and the Wild Girls) that congregate with new and, even human figures, some of whom represent the artist's ancestors. The lion, an ancient symbol of strength and protection, is prominent in these paintings as is Baseman's Veritas, also known in Hebrew as Emet, the Magi of Truth. Popular culture and childhood inspirations - Porky in Wackyland, Mickey Mouse, and the La Brea Tar Pits - complete these allegorical compositions.



These elements are seen in *The Excavation of the Brave*, 2013, 18" x 24" acrylic on canvas. The artist's grandparents are featured prominently riding on top of the elephant in this painting. Historically elephants symbolize military might. The elephant in Baseman's work is wearing a Russian garrison cap (pilotka) with the red field star

symbolizing the Red Army. Russian paratroopers rescued Baseman's father during WWII. The jumbo beast and some of the artist's most beloved friends are bearing witness to the lion rescuing the young Jewess. The artist is depicted as a young child floating in a pool of tar. This is a nod to Baseman's growing up in the Fairfax District (near the La Brea Tar Pits). The young boy is one of only two figures in this work not watching the lion. The boy, Baseman, stares at the viewer as if to suggest we must make sense of this complicated reality.

The Happiest Place on Earth, 2013, 18" x 24" acrylic on canvas is another example of Baseman's referencing the fantastical aspect of life in and around Los Angeles. The title is referring to Disneyland yet he moves



Disneyland's famous castle from the Magic Kingdom to the middle of his mythical homeland. The paratrooper in the upper right corner refers to his father, Ben Baseman. The lamppost is a nod to Chris Burden's 2008 large-scale assemblage sculpture, *Urban Light*, outside LACMA. Here the lion, once a hero, is sinking into tar pits. The wolf references the fairytale of Little Red Riding Hood and the idea that danger is lurking in the woods. Baseman's iconic Wild Girl becomes Little Red and, instead of a hood, she is crowned with the All Seeing Eye. The mermaid floating in the sky adds to the fantastical narrative and emphasizes the fairytale aspect of this painting. Displayed as the last work of the series, Baseman uses a brighter palette and reveals a rosy sky in combination with whimsical characters. While there are darker elements, together they provide a sense of hope.

The Happiest Place on Earth and the works gathered in *Mythical Homeland* ultimately tell the story of survival. They remind the viewer to search for magic, to unearth meaning from our past and to forge ahead towards new horizons.

Artist Bio:

Gary Baseman weaves together multiple forms of art as a painter, illustrator, video and performance artist, animator, TV/movie producer, curator, and toy designer. He created the three-time Emmy and BAFTA award-winning animation series, *Teacher's Pet*, earning him credit as one of the 100 Most Creative People in Entertainment-by-Entertainment Weekly Magazine. He is also known for designing the best-selling board game "Cranium." His fine art has been displayed in galleries and museums in California, Brazil, Germany, Israel, Italy, Russia, and all over the United States.

About the Gallery:

Shulamit Gallery, founded by owner and director Shulamit Nazarian, began as a roaming gallery in the spring of 2006. Shulamit is pleased to be expanding to her first flagship space in Venice, California at 17 North Venice Boulevard, adjacent to the ocean. The gallery supports work that is aesthetically innovative, socially engaged, and that fosters dialogue and views the artist as a cultural ambassador. Devoted to building bridges between our regional and global community, Shulamit Gallery focuses on the Middle East with a special interest in Israeli, Iranian and Jewish artists.

Shulamit Gallery is deeply rooted in the Persian value of *mehman navaz*, meaning hospitality. In Hebrew, this is expressed as *hakhnasat archim*. The gallery is a place where people from diverse communities are welcomed. Our programming explores the role of art and culture in assimilation, acculturation, the shifting of geographical boundaries, personal identity and in how racism and religious persecution negatively impact our society. Shulamit Gallery strives to use art as a platform to create a more inclusive and hospitable future.

To learn more about Shulamit Gallery, our exhibition schedule and programming, please visit our website:
www.shulamitgallery.com.

Khosh amadid. We look forward to welcoming you!

Gary Baseman, Mythical Homeland

OCTOBER 5 – DECEMBER 14, 2013

Project Space



MYTHICAL CREATURES

A KESSELSKRAMER FILM

DIRECTED BY DAVID CHARLES

PRODUCED BY LANETTE PHILLIPS AND ERIC BARRETT

Running time: 18 minutes, 54 seconds.

Shulamit Gallery presents a sneak peak of the first 19 minutes of the documentary *Mythical Creatures*, currently in production and selected to be part of Sundance Lab in 2013. Part Pixar, part History Channel. From animation to harsh reality, this is the story of Gary Baseman, one of America's most prolific artists, and the relationship between his art and the breath-taking discoveries about his parents who survived the holocaust in the Ukraine. Gary opens up his sketchbook and heart to shine a new light on such dark times keeping not only his families story alive, but of many other survivors.

