

7,567mi→☞ Los Angeles to Jerusalem
Jerusalem Biennale2015
The Second Jerusalem Biennale For Contemporary Jewish Art

The Jewish Artists Initiative (JAI) is proud to have been selected as one of only two North American entries in the Jerusalem Biennale2015. JAI is represented by 39 artists in four venues, in Jerusalem and Los Angeles. The exhibit, 7,567mi☞explores the physical, spiritual, and cultural connections between Los Angeles and Jerusalem through the eyes of the members of JAI.

Despite the 7,567 miles that separate our cities, we share a great deal in common. Los Angeles is home to the second largest Jewish population in the United States. California has the second highest number of Israeli-Americans. This creates a unique lens to explore how our modern Jewish experiences are both similar and different. Both cities loom large in the public consciousness—offering cityscapes that are instantly recognizable. Each is, in its own way, a promised land beckoning people to come with the possibility of dreams realized, prayers answered, and opportunities for new beginnings.

The JAI exhibit physically takes place in the two cities, extending the reach of the Jerusalem Biennale2015. Through presenting components of the exhibition in multiple venues, we are able to create dialogues that go beyond the central exhibition in Jerusalem, and lead to a greater exchange of ideas between our two cities. The Los Angeles based exhibition sites include Platt/Borstein Galleries at American Jewish University, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles; and the University of Southern California (USC) Hillel. JAI is demonstrating that the many miles between our homes is no longer a barrier in today's hyper-connected world.

For this exhibition, the members of JAI were asked the question, *What does it mean to be Jewish in Los Angeles in the 21st century?*, and then create new artworks in response. The artworks selected for this exhibition represent the diversity of media and life experiences of the featured artists at all the exhibit sites. Artists in JAI often deal directly with Jewish subject matter in their artwork. However, the work extends beyond stylized iconographic or traditional cultural motifs. Rather, they have applied their contemporary interpretations to key Jewish or Israeli historical, political, or social events. The works reflect issues of immigration here in the USA or in the promised land; issues of drought that is of concern for both California and Israel; reflections on moments of triumph and tragedy in the hope that we will learn from these events and continue to move forward. The works touch on a wide range of knowledge and connections in reflecting on heritage, cultural pride, community, and the intersection of the past with the present in how one views Jerusalem/Israel from afar.

All of the works presented are very personal narratives. The varied responses are reflected in the diversity of style and subjects the artists selected to communicate their views about Israel. The work captures the sights and sounds of everyday life in Israel, as well as the traditions and cultural heritage of Jewish life. In looking towards Jerusalem, they peeled back the layers of what it is to be living in the diaspora, while maintaining a deep connection to Jerusalem and Israel. From this vantage point of 7,567 miles away, the membership sought to uncover their uniquely authentic relationship with Israel. In doing so, they have explored deeply held issues and beliefs about Israel, while facing east.

Georgia Freedman-Harvey & Anne Hromadka
Curators

