

## Recent Digital Photographs

Wortzman's free-form, sinuous abstract landscapes draw you into an emotive world of color. Influenced by the Fauvist approach to color and the interior explorative nature of abstract expressionism, her canvases often have a spiritual message. What she calls "spiritual conceptualism", based in her Jewish heritage and study (she is an award-winning Doctor of Ministry in Jewish Spiritual Direction) informs much of her work in paint and print. In her fantastical and poignant digital prints, she combines images of her paintings with photographs from her travels, often using herself as a subject, to create palimpsests of *midrash*, interpretations, of spiritual and mystical wisdom. The role of women, their place as transmitters of wisdom and the oppressiveness of cultural norms become a major theme. One critical goal of her work is to encourage the active participation of the "viewer" in the artwork, often in the form of community art projects. Wortzman sees the creative process as a way for everyone to enter into the *shefa*, or flow of divine energy that connects us all: "The image carrier the power of a messenger, in a constant state of evolution, as it is witnessed by the other." Wortzman has taught workshops across the country, including at the Academy of Jewish Religion, SUNY Purchase and Spiritual Directors International. Exhibitions include the Derfner Museum, the San Francisco Jewish Library and the Koslowe Judaica Gallery. She has been invited as artist in residence to Art Kibbutz, (New York) and Kol Ha Ot (Jerusalem). Born in Toronto, Canada, in the 1970s, her work has taken her to France, New York, San Francisco, Montreal, Ottawa and Dayton.

Elyssa Wortzman                      [www.elyssawortzman.com](http://www.elyssawortzman.com)

For my upcoming solo exhibition at the Koslowe Judaica Gallery in Westchester, NY, *Sanctity Through Sacrifice*, I delve into the ritual of sacrifice - from its religious undertones to its more contemporary, self-referential realities. Human beings have been making sacrifices for thousands of years. The sacrifice of living beings (animal, Isaac) became both an opportunity for trust and a practice of prayer. My interest lies in how we have transformed the traditional idea of animal or human sacrifice through psychology, mysticism and contemporary culture and what meaning the concept of sacrifice has today. Are the sacrifices we make today forms of personal prayer? What offerings do we give? To others? To ourselves? To the Creative Force of the Universe? How can offering something (ego, time, hopes) become the opening to receive more (children, love, insight, wisdom) or a narrowing for receiving less (eating disorders, isolation, depression, purposefulness)? Do we need to have a regular practice of "sacrifice" to keep our channel of connection (to others, the Divine) clear to receive? Is art sacred? Is the process of making art, making holy? In this exhibition, I begin with the root meaning of the word "sacrifice" - to make holy - playing with the relationship between human creation, here in the form of art, and Divine creation. I look at three areas of sacrifice in daily life: connectivity, to each other and to the Creative Force; self, in terms of our bodies, emotions and psyche; and dreams, both personal and collective. In the end, the exhibition challenges us to consider our notion of sacredness and

sacrifice so that our personal sacrifices become pathways to greater internal and external awareness, or in Hebrew, *korbanot*, usually translated as sacrifice but literally meaning "coming closer". For more information about this exhibition, contact Amy Levine-Kennedy, Curator, amy ruth67@aol.com

Gallery Reception \* Tuesday, September 11, 2012 \* 7:45 p.m. The exhibition will run from September 11 to mid-November.

To arrange a program our tour for your group, contact Elyssa Wortzman, at mail@elyssawortzman.com

Working with Jewish themes and rituals, Wortzman tries to deepen our relationship to traditional texts or prayers through an emotional and spiritual response. She produces Jewish art prints, Torah mantles, bimah covers and other ritual/sacred objects.