

AH HA YAH VAH
Boruch Hoo Boruch Hee
Cheselyn Amato, Witness, Servant and Ritual Enactor
Afikomen Judaica, Berkeley, CA
June 6, 2010

Cheselyn Amato will be enacting reinvented Jewish ritual and creating an interdisciplinary aesthetic experience in conjunction with her visual installation, *Liberation Garden: Healing & Redemption After Slavery*, on view in the windows of Afikomen Judaica on June 6th at 3 pm. Through designed and improvised actions, events, occurrences, sounds, sung and spoken words/text, visual effects, images, and ritual wear/costume/garb, Cheselyn will incant/invoke/call/beckon/invite Indwelling Presence - Shekinah – to descend amongst us.

Cheselyn uses visual and aural effects as cues, props and instigators to summon and to embody Shekinah, the presence of awe, sublimity and delight in our midst. Cheselyn herself is delightedly overwhelmed by all the presentments, embodiments, and signs of wonder apparent any time any where. She believes that any material, any sound, any image, any sensory experience is resplendent resonant imbued with numinous energy – all phenomena is as outpouring, a pouring forth, an efflux of delightful mysterious life as a delighting mystery.

She describes herself as having one foot in the Old Jewish World – in Torah; in Kabbalist Spain; in Pre-Holocaust Europe including the shtetls of Chasidic Eastern Europe and the intellectual and artistic circles of late 19th–Early 20th Century Europe; in Ellis Island NYC and Jewish tenement life of the Lower East Side of Manhattan; and in Post-Holocaust Europe and America. The other foot is in the emerging New Global World – the Post-Post Holocaust era that is now. This is the time of the beginning of the end of Judaism, Christianity and Islam as we have known them and the gestation of mature love. She understands herself as reinventing and reclaiming ritual – Jewish and Jewishly – so that she can first know who she was and has been, and then so that she can become a truly integrated global soul and citizen. She believes that knowing oneself – having identity - is critical to becoming whole and to well-being, and therefore, identity requires attention. She has consistently existed as a secular humanist and as a Jewish soul.

Cheselyn is passionate about every infinitesimal shift on every level – spiritual, mental, emotional and physical. She finds every nuance of change in pattern or color or sound or design to be equally exquisite and worthy of recording. She will use personal and borrowed text – prayer, lyrics, sound strings, word strings, tones - primarily in English and Hebrew along with “unaffiliated” sound that she believes issues from a primal, primordial, a-priori source. She is sure that all experience is the result of an active dynamic between memory/remembrance and immediate unmediated sensation.

Cheselyn cannot remember in general the words to “songs” of any kind nor can she quite tell any story by heart. Why? Because of continuity and discontinuity, because of degrees of separation, because of having lost something along the way with the waves of

immigration and the Holocaust and the particular trajectory of her own life. She thinks that she just doesn't quite find place, home and a sense of belonging in American life, even Jewish American life per se. She is looking forward to the day that she can tell a story as stories have always been told; or maybe what she tells today is a story after all, the kind that she is supposed to tell. She will manipulate materials, make utterance, effect actions and change her garb in the enactment of new manifestations of ancient Jewish rituals. Wave, peace and burnt offerings no longer practiced in our times become new gestures in her repertory in which printed matter becomes manna, colored effects from the manipulation of radiant film becomes the ceremony in the Holy of Holies; and more.

So, in the beginning there was creating.
All began as null and void,
Darkness and light were yet to be separated...
After all was done, and the first rest happened on the first 7th day,
Then all the designing for how to live every day – ordinary and sacred - began.
These are actions that we may take to kindle the light so that we may see it.

OMEN

