

Tobi Kahn Career Narrative

Tobi Kahn is a painter and sculptor whose work has been shown in more than 70 solo exhibitions and more than 60 museum and group shows since he was selected as one of nine artists to be included in the 1985 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum exhibition, "New Horizons in American Art." Works by Kahn are in major museum, corporate, and private collections.

A museum exhibition of more than a decade of his work, "Tobi Kahn: Metamorphoses," curated by Peter Selz, traveled to eight museums from 1997 through 1999, including the Weatherspoon Art Gallery in Greensboro, NC, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

For more than 40 years, Kahn has been steadfast in the pursuit of his distinct vision and persistent in his commitment to the redemptive possibilities of art. In paint, stone, and bronze, he has explored the correspondence between the intimate and monumental. While his early works drew on the tradition of American Romantic landscape painting, his more recent pieces have added his fascination with contemporary science, inspired by the micro-images of cell formations and satellite photography.

In the late 1980s, Kahn also designed sets for composer-director Elizabeth Swados at The Public Theater and for work by choreographers Muna Tseng and Gus Solomons Jr.

For decades, Kahn has been making miniature sacred spaces he calls shrines. In 1993, the first full-scale shrine, *Shalev*, was commissioned as an outdoor sculpture in New Harmony, IN, by Jane Owen and the Robert Lee Blaffer Trust.

In 1997, Kahn created *Gan Hazikaron: Garden of Remembrance*, an outdoor installation of six bronzes as a Holocaust memorial for the Jewish Community Center on the Palisades in New Jersey. This was the first of his Holocaust memorials.

In 1999, "Avoda: Objects of the Spirit," an exhibition of Kahn's ceremonial art curated by Laura Kruger, opened at Hebrew Union College, NY, and traveled for nine years throughout the United States. That year, Kahn and Carol Brennglass Spinner co-founded the Avoda Project, an educational program that accompanied the exhibition. Led by Kahn, more than 10,000 university students of all races and religions made their own ceremonial objects for both traditional and contemporary ritual in their lives. *Objects of the Spirit: Ritual and the Art of Tobi Kahn*, a book about Kahn's ceremonial art edited by Emily Bilski, was published in June 2004 by Hudson Hill Press and the Avoda Institute.

"Landscape at the Millennium," curated by Douglas Dreishpoon, opened that year at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY, with an accompanying catalogue. Kahn's fascination with the power of art for healing led to the creation, in 2001, of a permanent installation commissioned by the HealthCare Chaplaincy of New York: a meditative room consisting of nine sky-and-water murals and sculptural furniture made by the artist. The room was conceptualized as a sanctuary for contemplation, to envelop those who enter it with the serenity of sky, sea, and horizon.

In May 2003, an exhibition of Kahn's "Sky and Water" paintings opened at the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, NY. An exhibition of selected paintings from the show traveled in 2004 as "Reflections: Tobi Kahn" to the Brauer Museum of Art and two additional museums. The catalogue included an essay by David Morgan.

In 2008, Kahn was commissioned to create eight wall-scale paintings and ritual objects, including the eternal light, mezuzah, and panels for the ark doors, for the sanctuary of Congregation Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun, in Milwaukee, WI.

In October 2009, "Tobi Kahn: Sacred Spaces for the 21st Century," a solo traveling exhibition of Kahn's ceremonial and liturgical art, opened at MOBIA in New York. *Tobi Kahn: Sacred Spaces for the 21st Century*, edited by Ena Giurescu Heller and published by MOBIA in New York in association with D Giles Limited, London, accompanied the exhibition.

In September 2011, "Embodied Light: 9-11 in 2011: An Installation by Tobi Kahn," was commissioned by the Educational

Alliance of New York in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of 9/11. In November 2011, "ALIGNED, PAINTINGS AND WORKS ON PAPER BY TOBI KAHN," a solo exhibition of Kahn's paintings, curated by John Shipman, opened at the University of Maryland Art Gallery with an accompanying catalogue.

In 2012, "IMMANENCE: The Art of Tobi Kahn," a solo exhibition of Kahn's paintings from 1987 to 2012, opened at the Philadelphia Museum of Jewish Art. Showing concurrently, RIFA: SKY & WATER PAINTINGS opened at the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia with an accompanying catalogue.

In 2015, solo museum exhibitions, "Tobi Kahn: Reverie," a show of Kahn's recent work, opened at the Cornell Fine Arts Museum at Rollins College, Winter Park, FL, and "Meridian: Paintings and Ceremonial Art of Tobi Kahn" opened at the Fort Wayne Museum of Art in Indiana. Both had accompanying catalogues. Later that year, Kahn was commissioned to create a meditative space for Auburn Theological Seminary in New York City.

In 2016, Kahn's sculpture, "M' AHL," was included in the exhibition "Rendering the Unthinkable" at the 9/11 Memorial Museum in New York City. Paintings from the 1980s and 1990s were included in the exhibition "Golem" at the Jewish Museum Berlin.

In 2017, "Anointed Time: Sculptures and Ceremonial Objects by Tobi Kahn" opened at the Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, OH, with an accompanying catalogue.

In 2018, "AURA: New Paintings for Nature, Tobi Kahn" opened at The Museum of Art-DeLand, FL, with an accompanying catalogue.

In 2020, Kahn's outdoor sculpture, consisting of five bronzes, was installed on the East Falls campus of Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia, PA, as was a three-panel painting in the lobby of the Ronson Building on that campus. "Formation: Images of Body, Tobi Kahn" opened virtually at the Dadian Gallery, Henry Luce III Center for the Arts & Religion, Wesley Theological Seminary Washington, DC, with an accompanying catalogue. In 2022, the in-person exhibition opened. The exhibition traveled to the Br. Kenneth Chapman Gallery of Iona University, New Rochelle, NY.

In 2022, Tobi Kahn Unit: Seven Works in the Permanent Collection, The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C. were on view from February-August. "Elemental: A Decade of Paintings by Tobi Kahn", PAC-MoCA, Patchogue Arts Council Museum of Contemporary Art, Long Island, NY (catalogue). ZAHRYZ Tzedek Box, a new ritual ceremonial object in an edition of 7 was created. The first two Tzedek boxes in the edition were purchased by The Jewish Museum, NY and the Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles, CA where it was on view as well. IMKHA, an installation consisting of 13 interrelated sculpted painted wooden panels, constitution a single work of art, was commissioned by Zelda R. Stern in memory of her husband Stanley R. Rozenweig for the Marlene Myerson JCC of Manhattan to be used as a Sukkah during the holiday and as a meditative space on the 7th floor during the rest of the year.

In 2023, Kahn's outdoor meditative space, comprised of 3 aluminum sculptures, were commissioned for the entrance of the new Honickman Center Specialty Care Pavilion at Jefferson University Medical Center, Philadelphia, PA. Mezuzot were commissioned for The Museum at Eldridge Street, New York, incorporating glass from the original Rose window.

In 2024, a Memory & Inheritance: Paintings and Ceremonial Objects by Tobi Kahn, a solo museum exhibition at The Museum at Eldridge Street opened with 50 works including paintings and ceremonial objects on view from May – November, 2024.

Among the awards Kahn has received are the Outstanding Alumni Achievement Award from Pratt Institute in 2000; the Cultural Achievement Award for the Visual Arts from the National Foundation of Jewish Culture in 2004; and an honorary doctorate from the Jewish Theological Seminary in 2007 for his work as an artist and educator.

Kahn also communicates his vision through his passion for teaching. For more than 30 years, he has taught fine arts and visual thinking at the School of Visual Arts in New York City. Kahn has designed the arts curriculum for several high schools in the New York area, as well creating the program “Thinking Visually,” an interdisciplinary arts program for Kivunim: New Directions, where he is artist-in-residence. He co-founded and facilitates the Artists’ Beit Midrash at the Streicker Center of Temple Emanu-El. Kahn lectures extensively at universities and public forums internationally on the importance of visual language and on art as healing.

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS INCLUDE:

PHILLIPS COLLECTION, Washington, DC
MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, Houston, TX
SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, New York, NY
JEWISH MUSEUM, New York, NY
ALBRIGHT-KNOX ART GALLERY, Buffalo, NY
MINNEAPOLIS INSTITUTE OF ART, Minneapolis, MN
YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY, New Haven, CT
GREY ART GALLERY - NYU, New York, NY
EDWIN A. ULRICH MUSEUM OF ART, Wichita, KS
COLBY COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART, Waterville, ME
WEATHERSPOON ART GALLERY, Greensboro, NC
MUSEUM OF ART, Ft. Lauderdale, FL
ROSE ART MUSUEM, Boston, MA
FORT WAYNE MUSEUM, FORT WAYNE, IN
SKIRBALL CULTURAL CENTER, Los Angeles, CA
BRAUER MUSEUM OF ART, Valparaiso, IN
NEUBERGER MUSEUM OF ART, Purchase, NY
PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY OF THE FINE ARTS
(from Vogel Collection), Philadelphia, PA
BUTLER INSTITUTE OF AMERICAN ART, Youngstown, OH
9/11 MEMORIAL MUSEUM, New York, NY
CLEVELAND CLINIC, Cleveland, OH
KNOXVILLE MUSEUM OF ART, Knoxville, TN
PORTLAND MUSEUM OF ART, Portland, ME
FREALIN MUSEUM OF ART, Charlottesville, VA
JEWISH MUSEUM FRANKFURT, Germany (Jüdischen Museum Frankfurt)
MUSEUM AT ELDRIDGE STREET, New York, NY
MUSEUM OF JEWISH HERITAGE, New York, NY
TEMPLE EMANU-EL BERNARD MUSEUM OF JUDAICA, New York, NY
FAIRFIELD UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM, Fairfield, CT
GREY ART MUSEUM, NY
BURROUGHS-CHAPIN ART MUSEUM, SC
KITA-HARIMA MEDICAL CENTER, Japan
THOMAS JEFFERSON UNIVERSITY SIDNEY KIMMEL MEDICAL COLLEGE, Philadelphia, PA
MEMORIAL SLOAN KETTERING CANCER CTR., MONMOUTH, Monmouth, NJ
NYU LANGONE MEDICAL CENTER, New York, NY
GOUVERNEUR HEALTH CENTER AT NYC HEALTH
AND HOSPITALS, New York, NY
AUBURN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, New York, NY
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