

Mending My Gestures

HADASSA GOLDVICHT


I grew up in Jerusalem, in a reality where everything was experienced as sacred. A few days after I was born, after the Sabbath's *kiddush*, my father placed a drop of wine in my mouth, and he did so every week until I could hold the cup myself. His gesture, one of hundreds, etched a sense of ritual deep within me.

My parents did not see eye-to-eye on matters of religion and debated every ritual to its essence. I listened intently to those debates, which created a living, open book of questions and answers. God was extremely present in every aspect of our lives, and everything was charged with endless, substantial spiritual meaning.

As an artist, the materials I work with are rooted in my parents' questions and answers. Though my work today does not always address religion or the Hasidic traditions I grew up with, the materials, practices, and ideas of my background serve as its foundations. I use the gestures, rituals, and materials — such as honey seen in my piece "Honey Plumbing System" (below) — that are present in religious practices. Religion, as I grew up to know it, is

not to be taught but to be embodied. I point to the ways in which our rituals hold on to social, historical, and religious ideas, even after our minds have supposedly let go.

The French philosopher Michel Foucault speaks about how culture is engraved in our bodies. But I wonder if — in my work — the opposite can happen. When I create a piece, I look at myself and the people around me and I think: If I can change just one gesture or word I inherited from my mother, or part of a prayer I learned as a young girl — if I change just the physical aspect, would it change the essence or the root of it all as well?

I intend my work to be a prayer; it must be just right. The materials I work with in my videos and installations are very much a reflection of my encounters and struggles in real life. I strongly believe that there are meanings and implications to everything we do and every gesture we make. As an artist, these implications create an obligation to get every line, every nuance in my work just right — to create a *tikkun*, a mend, so the right things will be mended and life might become a little better. 



Hadassa Goldvicht
Honey Plumbing System
kinetic installation

Hadassa Goldvicht is a video and installation artist and a current fellow in the Six Points Fellowship for Emerging Jewish Artists program. Her recent piece "The Lullaby Project" is on view in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. More of Goldvicht's work can be seen at hadassagoldvicht.com.