

# TANYA FREDMAN

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I am captivated by the complex connections that form between others and ourselves. Based on my experiences confronting diverse cultures, I paint, sew and sculpt collages that use elements of the body – physical gestures and fabric garments – to bring together different traditions. Having lived and worked in four continents over the last eight years, I rely upon my ability to access other cultures through nonverbal movement. I depict various styles of movement and traditional patterns to create points of contact for distinct identities. My hybrid constructions combine stories of different traditions, while demonstrating that encountering the other is ultimately about discovering the self.

In my sculpted canvas paintings, I investigate the role of tradition in modern society, based on my experiences with Ethiopian Israeli culture. These works depict the dialogue between tradition and modernity as expressed in dance and clothing. The way in which the painted patterns adapt to the sculpted surface of the canvas parallels the interaction between contemporary society and traditional culture, whereby traditions shift in order to adapt to a modern context.

I exemplify cultural interaction through dance in my series of paper cut mobiles. Influenced by theories of dance notation, this body of work evokes connecting with the foreign through body position and movement and incorporates forms of dance that I studied in the United States, Italy, Rwanda, Ghana and Israel. Light and shadow are integral to the work; the illuminated intervals between the shadows allude to the spaces we create, sometimes scripted, often unscripted, between one another.

Transformed by a powerful experience working in a youth village in Rwanda for 9 months, I combine traditional African fabrics with oil paint in collages that merge Rwandan culture with my Jewish background. These painted fabric works demonstrate my confrontation with a foreign way of life. They evoke my life in a foreign country – celebrating the Jewish Sabbath while dancing to Rwandan music, observing Jewish mourning rituals while wearing traditional Rwandan garments. The sharing of customs, religions and histories defines, strengthens, and reinvigorates my own beliefs while giving me an appreciation for other ways of living. In my fabric collages, visual symbols from these two cultures come into contact and reimagine each other.

Integral to my studio practice is a mosaic-like technique of creating large works out of many smaller elements – painted patterns, cut paper, and fabric scraps. The combination of these tiny elements into human body sized works tells of diverse traditions coming together, using movement to communicate, and finding oneself in the other.