

# COMMAND J

Jewish Laws, Digital Arts



Helène Aylon

Simon Glass

Jeffrey Shaw

Melissa Shiff

Exhibition Conceived and Organized by Louis Kaplan

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Helène Aylon, *The Digital Liberation of G-d*

Simon Glass, *The Ten Commandments/Prohibited Weapons*

Jeffrey Shaw, *The Golden Calf*

Melissa Shiff, *Gender Cuts/The Jew Under the Knife*

Exhibition Conceived and Organized by Louis Kaplan

Curatorial Selection Committee: University of Toronto Professors Louis Kaplan, Andrea Most, and Anna Shternshis

Dates: October 21 – November 20, 2005

XPACE

303 Augusta, Kensington Market

Toronto

As part of *ReJewvenation: The Futures of Jewish Culture*

[WWW.REJEWVENATION2005.COM](http://WWW.REJEWVENATION2005.COM)

## Command J: In Brief

by Louis Kaplan

The impact of the Ten Commandments and of Jewish laws in general permeates the fabric of Western civilization and Judeo-Christian culture, and the ethical ideals of Judaism have motivated the desire for social justice throughout the centuries. Featuring work by four internationally recognized contemporary artists Helène Aylon, Simon Glass, Melissa Shiff, and Jeffrey Shaw who work in digital photography, video, multimedia, and installation art, *Command J: Jewish Laws, Digital Arts* examines important issues related to Jewish laws, ethics, and the ongoing demand for justice.

The four artists in the *Command J* exhibition confront difficult and important philosophical and social questions in their interrogations of Jewish law. The Second Commandment (the prohibition against idol worship and graven images) is at the heart of Jeffrey Shaw's interactive computer installation *The Golden Calf* (1994) as he asks us to consider whether we are setting up technology as a new idol in our own time. Meanwhile, Simon Glass' series *The Ten Commandments/Prohibited Weapons* (2005) consists of ten giclée prints 44" x 22" embellished with gold leaf. Containing the Hebrew text of the Ten Commandments coupled with images of actual prohibited weapons, these images meditate on both the possibility and impossibility of justice and the necessary violence of the law.

It is the questioning of the covenantal commandment to circumcise the male at eight days that motivates the feminist inquiry of Melissa Shiff's video installation, *Gender Cuts/ The Jew Under the Knife* (2005). Building a circumcision tent

featuring a video projection, Shiff turns the viewer's gaze to this normally occluded rite of male initiation and to an audio track where religious and cultural leaders discuss the pros and cons of this hotly debated issue. Finally, it is the comprehensive desire to confront and transform the patriarchal legacy of Jewish law when it is informed by sexism and/or misogyny that drives Helene Aylon's interactive computer installation, *The Digital Liberation of G-d* (2004). The installation allows users to respond directly to questionable passages from the sacred Torah that are highlighted by the artist. While both these feminist inspired works address legal issues internal to the Jewish covenant (i.e., ritual circumcision or the rules of patriarchy), they also address the place of women in religious orthodoxy and traditional communities more generally.

These are thoughtful and provocative works by four contemporary artists in technologically based media who are raising important questions for traditional Jewish laws and commandments whether it be Jeffrey Shaw on the Second Commandment, Melissa Shiff on the rite of circumcision, Simon Glass on the Ten Commandments, or Helène Aylon on the Torah in general. But, even more importantly, these artists and their works are delving into Jewish laws, ethics, and ideas of justice in order to help us to think about and imagine possible Jewish futures.

I want to thank all of the artists – Helène Aylon, Simon Glass, Jeffrey Shaw, and Melissa Shiff – for their creative visions and for all their cooperation in the many facets of bringing this



project to fruition. I also want to acknowledge the help of Luc Courchesne and Marc Lavallée in Montreal, and Steve Jaycox and Peter Samis in San Francisco who offered technical support for the two artists in the exhibition not based in Canada.

Bringing Jewish culture back again to the historic Kensington Market area in Toronto where it once thrived, *Command J* has found its place at XPACE (<http://www.xpace.info>) on 303 Augusta Avenue. I want to thank the administrative team at XPACE for all their coordinating efforts – and especially Kadija da Paula, Pat Colesimo, and Elle McLaughlin -- for their help.

*Command J* is held in conjunction with the international conference and mini-festival *ReJewvenation: The Futures of Jewish Culture* at the University of Toronto (October 28 – 31, 2005) co-organized by Professors Andrea Most (English), Anna Shternshis (German/Yiddish), and myself. Andrea and Anna also worked with me to constitute the selection committee for the exhibition and I thank them for their efforts. I also wish to acknowledge the hard work and creative input of curatorial assistants Heather Diack and Romi Mikulinsky as well as conference coordinator Paul Halferty, conference administrator Luella Massey, and our web and catalogue designer, Daniel Ehrenworth. Finally, I extend thanks to my colleagues for their contributions to the catalogue and to the Visual Arts panel devoted to the exhibition – Dot Tuer (Ontario College of Art), Carol Zemel (York University), Jessica Wyman (Ontario College of Art), Norman Kleeblatt (The Jewish Museum, New York), and Pierre Lévy (University of Ottawa).

We are very grateful for the generous support that we have received from the Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council as well as many sponsoring programs and departments at the University of Toronto including the Chancellor Jackman Program in the Arts, the Department of Fine Art, and the Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies.

- October 2005/Tishri 5766

Louis Kaplan is Associate Professor of History and Theory of Photography and New Media in the Graduate Department of the History of Art at the University of Toronto and an associate faculty member in the collaborative Ph.D. program in Jewish Studies. He also coordinates the Visual Culture and Communication program at the University of Toronto at Mississauga where he is a member of the Centre for Visual and Media Culture. Professor Kaplan has published widely in the fields of art history, visual culture, photo studies, and in Jewish studies where he has published essays on such topics as Wallace Berman, Frederic Brenner, Clement Greenberg, Holocaust humor, and Walter Rathenau. He curated the contemporary art exhibition *Distinguishing Jewish* dealing with issues of Jewish identity held in Boston in 2000. He is the author of *Laszlo Moholy-Nagy: Biographical Writings* (Duke, 1995) and *American Exposures: Photography and Community in the Twentieth Century* (Minnesota, 2005).

Webpage: <http://www.fineart.utoronto.ca/faculty/kaplan.html>



# Helène Aylon

From an orthodox upbringing and schooling, but with an awakened feminist consciousness, I began in 1990 to highlight the problematic passages of The Five Books of Moses (over transparent vellum that covered each page.) As explained in my Proclamation, "I highlight over words of vengeance, deception, cruelty and misogyny; I do not change the text, but merely look at this dilemma..." (*The Liberation of G-d: 1990-1996*)

I came to realize that the patriarchal proclivity was interwoven into every passage, and I was ready to give up by simply gluing the overlays so that the book (albeit highlighted) became too stiff to open. Thus, it was relegated to a sacred object. (*The Book That Will Not Close, 1999*)

But I was bereft without my habit of highlighting, and I reversed my stance and resumed highlighting. Now the book format became a wall format – every page edged with grout, covering a freestanding wall one-side, Hebrew – the other, English. (*My Wailing Wall, 2002*)

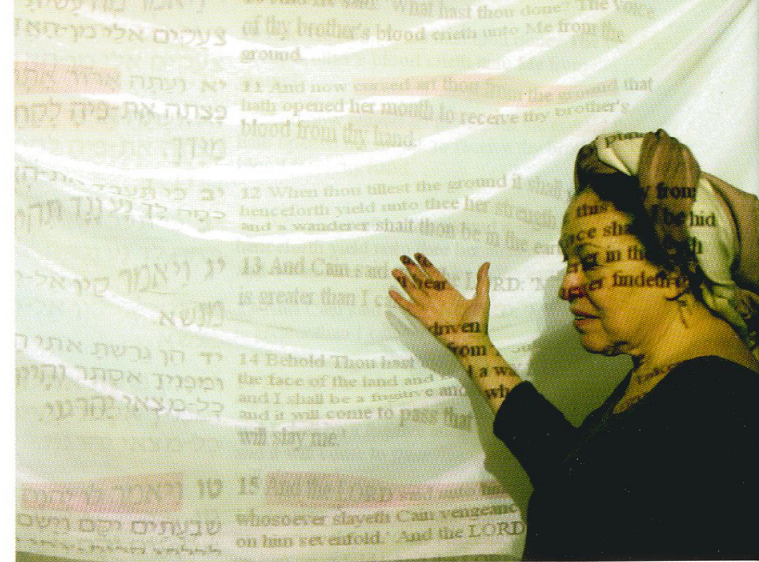
Then came a magnifying lens to highlight specific words (*I Look into the Passages, 2003*)

I can say that highlighting has been cathartic for me. But now the dilemma requires the participation of many minds: With the help of Peter Samis, curator of Technology of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, a computer station includes a questionnaire to ascertain the barometer of feelings, a way for you the viewer to read other comments and write your own. Perhaps many minds will resolve this perplexing dilemma – what I have come to perceive as a betrayal of the sacred. Meanwhile, The Five Books of Moses ought to continuously scroll with the computer-generated pink shading that is the highlighting of the texts for all to ponder. (*The Digital Liberation of G-d, 2004*)

- Helène Aylon

"The work makes everyone a Midrashist. I am not saying anything; I am just highlighting. It's for everyone else to add the Midrash, the commentary."

-Helène Aylon



Helène Aylon, *The Digital Liberation of G-d*, 2004

"Aylon's *The Digital Liberation of G-d* is an interactive media installation that questions what she considers misogynist, homophobic and violent phrases in Judaism's sacred Torah. To those who have followed the past decade of Aylon's 34-year career, it seems natural that technology has been added to her original effort to "rescue" God from words inserted in the mouth of the divine by men."

- Hillary Abramson, "Is Nothing Sacred? Not in Aylon's Art," *San Francisco Gate*, March 28, 2004



I ask  
when will  
G-d  
be rescued  
from ungodly  
projections  
in order  
to  
be  
G-d?

- Helène Aylon

"It's a poignant and powerful image of someone haunted by a tradition that would exclude her, and of the ephemeral, infinite process of reading the Book of Life."

- Leslie Camhi - Village Voice, April 2, 1996

## On The Liberation of G-d

"Helène Aylon's *The Liberation of G-d* is a deliberately contemplative work about reading the Hebrew Bible from a feminist vantage point. Her project was first proposed over a decade ago when the issue of women's places within certain sects of Jewish religious tradition was more contentious. Raised an Orthodox Jew, Aylon found that only through her art could she articulate her critique of Jewish male authority.

It is, in particular, process and performance that intersect in *The Liberation of G-d*. The work incorporates Hebrew Bibles, overlaid with translucent paper on which Aylon highlighted the "offending" passages that speak to and for a patriarchy. Using repetitive, time-consuming techniques of such performance/process artists as Linda Montano, Aylon is able to diffuse her anger and use it productively through the contemplation of text and her "corrective" notations. She assumes the "male" role of

Torah student and scholar, at the same time creating a personal place for herself and all women in this historic text. Like other feminist artists who insert themselves, either through image (Cindy Sherman) or text (Jenny Holzer) into representations of male authority, Aylon posits feminist concerns onto the ur-text of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

On the other hand, the spirit of Aylon's installation derives from the age-old rabbinic tradition of midrash: rereading, questioning, and reinterpreting the Bible, thereby ensuring its relevance to contemporary life. While the text cannot be altered, interpretations and emphases can. Aylon's longtime fascination with change is closely allied with the process of midrash, and the manipulation of the immutable text through interpretation reflects Aylon's preoccupation with change itself."

- Norman Kleeblatt, "'Passing' into Multiculturalism" in *Too Jewish?: Challenging Traditional Identities*, 1996

Helène Aylon, *The Liberation of G-d*, 1988-96





# Simon Glass

*The Ten Commandments/Prohibited Weapons* is a suite of ten giclée prints, 44"x22", embellished with gold leaf. They show the full Hebrew text of the Ten Commandments combined with visual imagery: illuminated Hebrew manuscripts. Each of the first five commandments, which represent transgressions against God, is paired with one of the latter five commandments, which represent transgressions against others.

A given idiom will not always, or perhaps ever, convey the same thing to any two individuals. The illusion of denotation that is essential to language determines that both the possibility and the impossibility of justice are mitigated because there can be no justice without law yet no law will always be just. Each of us who has been exposed to the Ten Commandments, or to any law, has to decide according to circumstances whether or not to abide. Free will is thrust upon us.

In this suite, the language of the Ten Commandments is combined with photographs showing skin, floral tapestries and prohibited weapons, pistols and knives. The im/possibility of justice is juxtaposed with imagery suggesting destiny, comfort and its most grave consequence: violence.

- Simon Glass

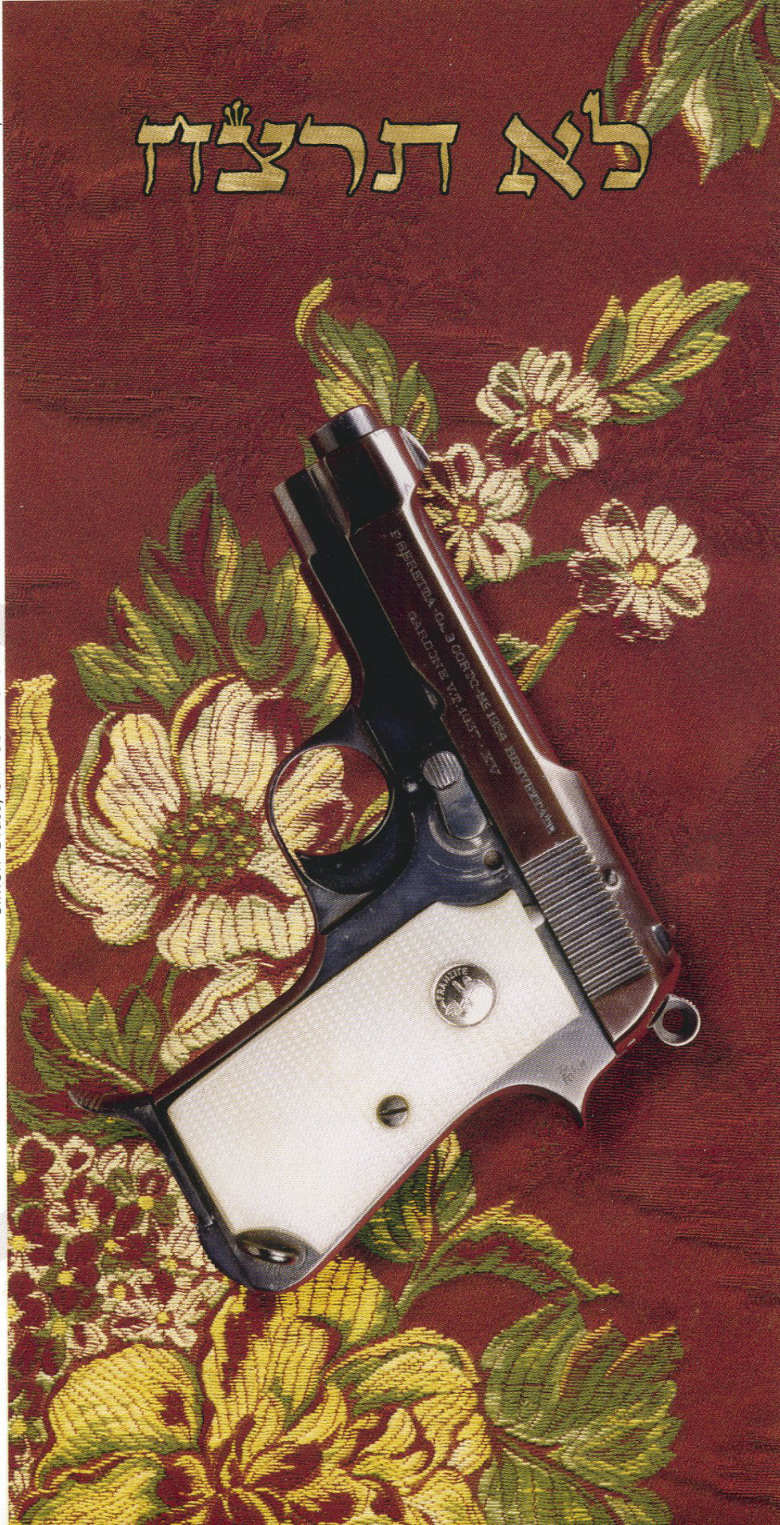
## On the Sixth Commandment

For the question "May I kill?" meets its irreducible answer in the commandment "Thou shalt not kill." This commandment precedes the deed, just as God was "preventing" the deed. But just as it may not be fear of punishment that enforces obedience, the injunction becomes inapplicable, incommensurable, once the deed is accomplished. No judgment of the deed can be derived from the commandment. And so neither the divine judgment nor the grounds for this judgment can be known in advance. Those

who base a condemnation of all violent killing of one person by another on the commandment are therefore mistaken. It exists not as a criterion of judgment, but as a guideline for the actions of persons or communities who have to wrestle with it in solitude and, in exceptional cases, to take on themselves the responsibility of ignoring it. Thus it was understood by Judaism, which expressly rejects the condemnation of killing in self-defense.

Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence"  
(1921)

Simon Glass, 6th Commandment from the suite *The Ten Commandments/Prohibited Weapons*, 2005





אֶתְכִי



יהוה אל ה'ך אשר  
הוצאתיך מארץ  
מצרים מבית עבדים



## Image Text Translations (Simon Glass)

- "I am Yahweh, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." (left)
- "You shall not kill." (previous page)

## On the First Commandment

It is important to remember that the Ten Commandments do not begin with something prescriptive that is written in the imperative (do this, don't do that). Rather the first commandment asks the Jewish people to remember who was, is, and will be responsible for their liberation – in whose hands they were delivered from the land of Egypt and in whose hands they can extricate themselves from the narrow places by means of ethical actions that follow from these commandments. The first commandment belongs to the Unnamable One in a declaration of the children of Israel's incalculable indebtedness. "I am YAHWEH your God who delivered you from the land of Egypt and from the house of bondage."

The ten plagues through which YAHWEH smote the Egyptians are thereby invoked in a direct connection to the Ten Commandments. The extensive arsenal of divine violence by which YAHWEH smote the Egyptians is hinted at here in Glass' tiny stiletto knife that spells out who's number 1. It becomes the prohibited weapon of choice to stage the opening scene that gives the two tablets of the Law (twice over). Even as it announces itself as primary and primal, the stiletto stages the cut that brings binary oppositions into play -- dividing the left side from the right side, good and evil.

For these "Laws of Glass", the First Commandment also signals that it is a matter of palm reading – of the prognostication of fate and destiny -- of coming into contact with mysterious ways and powers that are acknowledged to be over and beyond human comprehension and knowability. Yet this is coupled with the need to make sense of YAHWEH's commandments. Even if the source is divine, there remains the question of how to read and interpret the law. Midrash goes hand in hand with palm reading and this is the job of rabbis, lawyers, scholars, artists, as well as chiromancers.

- Louis Kaplan "Laws of Glass", 2005

*For the laws are very ancient; their interpretation has been the work of centuries, and has itself doubtless acquired the status of law.*

- Franz Kafka, "The Problems of Our Laws", 1914



# Jeffrey Shaw



Jeffrey Shaw, *The Golden Calf*, 1995

This work is constituted by a white pedestal on which there stands an LCD colour monitor connected to computing machinery by a cable running through the pedestal. The viewer of this work picks up and holds this monitor in his hands. The screen shows a representation of the pedestal with a computer-generated image of a golden calf on top. By moving the monitor around the actual pedestal, the viewer can examine this golden calf from above and below and all sides. Thus the monitor functions like a window that reveals a virtual body apparently located physically in the real space.

The golden calf has a shiny mirror-like surface in which the viewer sees reflections of the actual venue of the installation. These are previously digitized photographs of the room that are "reflection-mapped" onto the calf's skin. While the viewer himself is not included in this digitized reflection of the environment, he does see himself reflected on the glass surface of the LCD screen. The immateriality of this golden calf is further emphasized by the fact that only its outer surfaces are modeled, so that if the viewer moves the monitor screen into the calf's body none of its interior surfaces are visible.

In *The Golden Calf*, the body is no longer a corporeal object but instead the immaterial subject of a specifically physical process of disclosure. When moving the monitor screen up, down and round the pedestal, the viewer performs what looks like a ceremonial dance around a technological pilaster construing an almost tangible phantasm.

- Jeffrey Shaw

## **On The Golden Calf, 1996**

Not far from the basilica of Saint-Denis, which contains the funerary monuments of the former kings of France, *Artifices*, an exposition devoted to digital technology, is held every two years. In November 1996 the feature artist was Jeffrey Shaw, a virtual arts pioneer and director of an important German institute devoted to "new media."

When you enter the exhibit, the first thing you see is an installation of the golden calf. In the center of the first room, a pedestal, obviously designed to hold a statue, sits empty. The statue is missing. A flat screen rests on a table next to the pedestal. When you turn the screen toward the pedestal, you discover a beautifully sculpted and shining statue of the golden calf. The sculpture is visible only through the screen; its "existence" is virtual.

What does the installation mean? It is primarily a criticism; the virtual is the new golden calf, the new idol of our time. But it is also classical. The work enables us to concretely experience the essence of any idol: an entity that isn't really there, an appearance without consistency, without interiority. The idol has no existence other than that assigned to it by those who worship it. The relationship to the idol is enacted through the mechanics of the installation, since the golden calf is visible only through the visitor's actions.

It isn't a calf, worshiped in a material that we hold precious, that the installation presents to us, but the very process of representation.

- Pierre Lévy, *Cyberculture*, 1997



## Indexing Virtuality

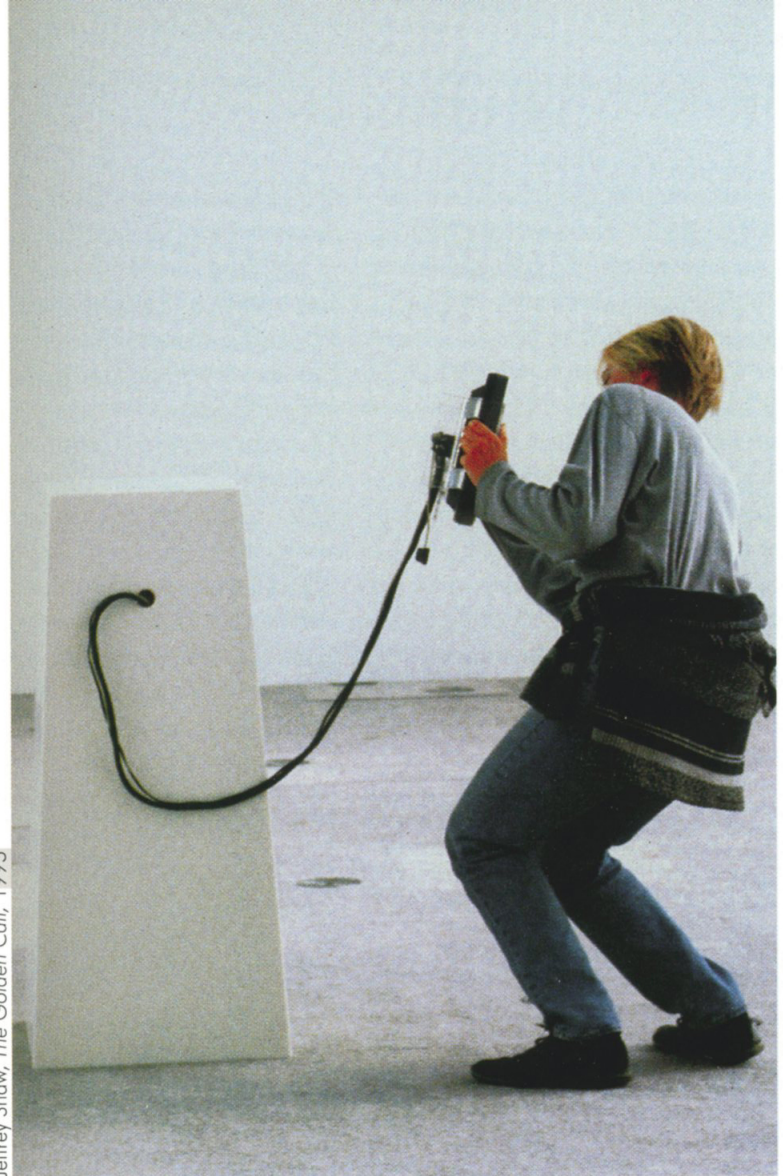
It is no longer the photographic signifier that bears an indexical relationship to the physical referent or the signified object of which it is the direct emanation or trace. Through the looking glass of *The Golden Calf*, it is the virtual signifier on the LCD screen that bears an indexical relationship to the absent referent or the object that should be there but that has split the scene. With this conjuring act and its interactivity, Shaw stages a meta-commentary or a parable for post-modern representation where the virtual calf refers to a reality from which the referent or the signified has vacated. *The Golden Calf* re-presents that which does not present itself and it is in this way that it literally indexes virtuality.

But what if we were to become obsessed with this alluring and shimmering *Golden Calf* and if we were to place it on a pedestal? What would happen if and when this virtual signifier became the transcendental signified itself? It could be argued that it is this very move that constitutes idol worship in the Biblical sense and illustrates how and why the Second Commandment and its prohibition against graven images was inscribed into the two tablets of the Jewish Law. This temptation to transmute the calf into a deity explains how and why the aniconic traditions of the monotheistic religions (whether Jewish, Christian, or Muslim) were instituted in the first place.

Jeffrey Shaw's provocative installation exposes the ethical risks posed by virtual technologies usurping the place of the transcendental signified. The ethical challenge remains one of indexing virtuality without idealizing and/or idolizing it. But rather than resolving the iconoclasm of *The Golden Calf* in terms of its "immaterial representation" in the virtual realm, the Jewish negative theological point would be to keep pointing at the empty pedestal of transcendental meaning whether real or virtual.

- Louis Kaplan, "Indexing Virtuality:  
On Jeffrey Shaw's *The Golden Calf*", 2005

Jeffrey Shaw, *The Golden Calf*, 1995



"*The Golden Calf* thus weaves a set of subtle paradoxes into a web of virtualization and actualization, similar to the crystal image described by Gilles Deleuze as a 'bifacial image, real and virtual all at once'. Two faces that cannot be collapsed into one but remain in constant touch."

- Anne-Marie Duguet, "Jeffrey Shaw: From Expanded  
Cinema to Virtual Reality", 1997



# Melissa Shiff

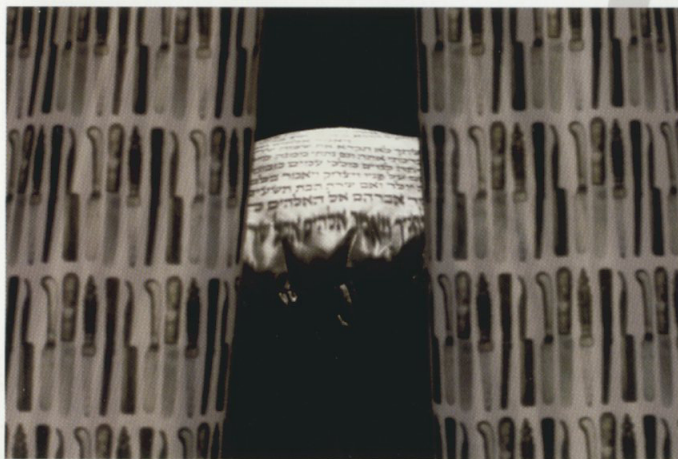
In the video installation *Gender Cuts/The Jew Under the Knife*, I take up how religious/cultural identity is inscribed onto the body. In *Gender Cuts*, a ceremonial pillow hovers over an Elijah Chair while imagery of a Jewish ritual circumcision is projected onto the pillow. The Hebrew text that commanded Abraham and every male Jew after him to be circumcised at the age of eight days is superimposed over the baby so that the text is written on the body. In Hebrew this ritual is called Brit Milah -- The Covenant of Circumcision. The viewers are invited into a ritualistic space (that simulates an Abrahamic tent) to watch the procedure, while an audiotape of my own voice as well as prominent leaders of the Jewish community from Toronto, Prague, and New York accompany

the video and express their different views with regard to this most contentious issue. By juxtaposing the image of the circumcision with the audio discussion, I strive to get the viewer to engage in his/her own critical inquiry.

The title of this piece alludes to two cuts -- the male is literally cut with a knife, while the female is cut out from this covenantal relationship with her God on account of her gender. Therefore my installation is not merely an inquiry into the ethics of this most ancient blood rite, but it also exposes how this ritual sets up gender hierarchies from the age of eight days in Jewish cultural/religious practice.

- Melissa Shiff

Melissa Shiff, *Gender Cuts/The Jew Under the Knife*, 2005



Melissa Shiff, *Gender Cuts/The Jew Under the Knife*, 2005

## Circumquestions

"Walk before me and be whole"  
Genesis 17  
A hole of wholeness  
A cut of continuity  
A commandment of covenant  
A Judaism of gender

A discourse of  
Purity, Sanctity, Blood, Sacrifice,  
Appeasement,  
Protection, Violence, Fertility  
Land given to

Abram—Abraham  
Male remembered Zakhar  
What of Sarai—Sarah?  
How is SHE inscribed into the covenant?  
Does the covenant demand  
circumcision?  
What of a Judaism without Gender  
Beyond Gender—Differentiation  
Distinguishing Gender,  
Distinguishing the Other  
A Jew under the Tent  
A Jew under the Knife  
CUT

- Melissa Shiff



"The power of the piece lies in, of all things, its clever subtlety...For all its shocking immediacy, you still get to make up your own horror."

- Christopher Millis, *The Boston Phoenix*, January 28, 2000

## Ethics, Aesthetics, Violence

Melissa Shiff takes up the controversial issue of circumcision in her video installation *Gender Cuts: The Jew Under the Knife*. In this work, Shiff presents documentary footage of a circumcision ceremony projected onto a ceremonial pillow. Her astounding video zeroes and zooms into this primal scene. She shoots the point at which being under the knife provides the constitutive cut of entering into the covenant for Jewish male members. The title of the work reminds us that this cut is also a way by which gender is demarcated and inscribed in Jewish culture and religion from the first week of birth. A feminist reading of *Gender Cuts* would be to say that her work is an interrogation that puts the Jew under the knife for defining Jewish covenant in such a phallocentric and exclusionary way -- in a way that inscribes Jewish identity via the penis to institute hierarchical gender valuations.

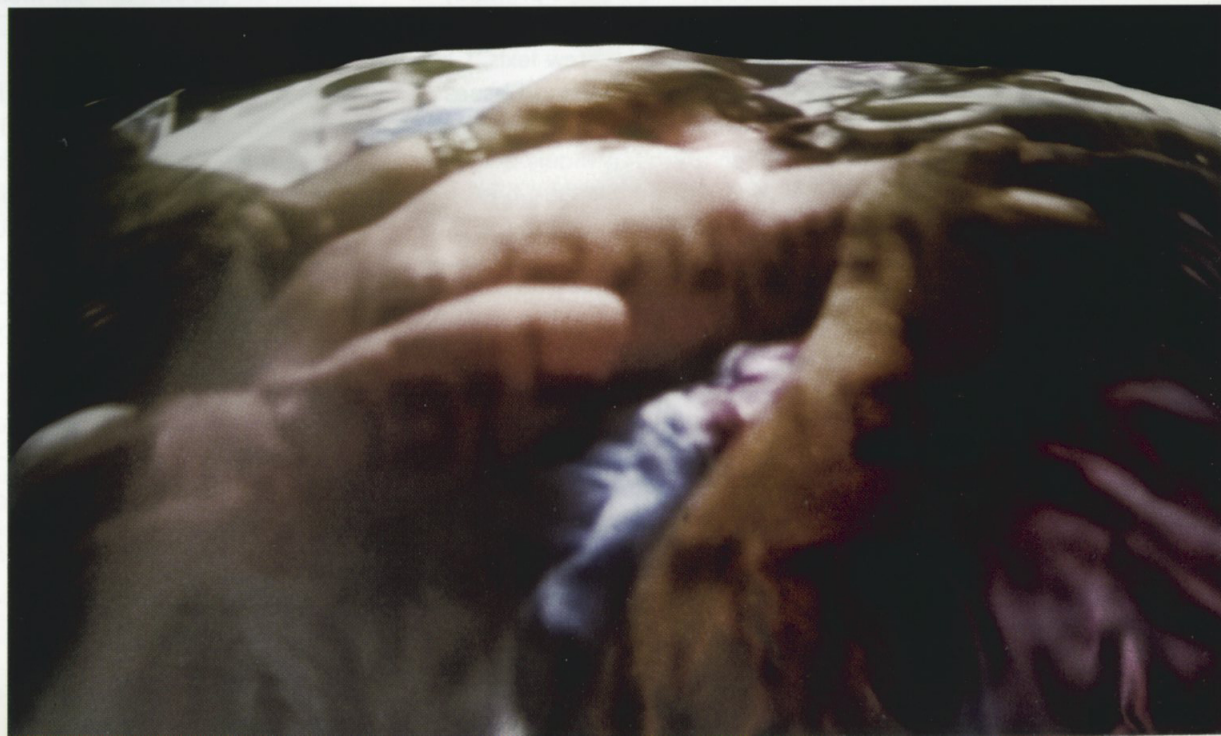
Shiff's work makes us privy to an intimate scene normally hidden or taboo from the camera's gaze whether anthropological or aesthetic. There is no denying that this crossing of the line from the public to the private and the graphic nature of what she shows here may cause discomfort for some viewers and that it has some degree of shock value. It is possible to argue that the ethical dimension of Shiff's piece is to foreground our discomfort or our being horrified by what we see in order to have second thoughts about or even to abolish this ritual practice. *Gender Cuts* involves the paradox that one might have to inflict pain in some circumstances in order to raise the possibility of ending such pain. (This might be referred to as a kind of "ethical violence.") But if there is pain or even violence here in the first place, the fault seems to lie with the ritual and not with its video documentation.

- Louis Kaplan, *Distinguishing Jewish: Six Contemporary Artists*, 1999.

Melissa Shiff, *Gender Cuts/The Jew Under the Knife*, 2005

Many expressed apprehension about drawing attention to circumcision as if any close look, no matter how historical or scholarly or textually based, just might undermine the vigorous YES that Jews have given this sign of the covenant over the millennia.

- Elizabeth Wyner Mark,  
*The Covenant of Circumcision*, 2003





## Helène Aylon

Helène Aylon is an internationally renowned visual artist based in New York who works at the crossroads of women's issues and Jewish ritual and who also has a strong interest in environmental art and peace activism. Her installation, *The Liberation of G-d*, first shown in the Jewish Museum's *Too Jewish?* exhibition in 1996, was subsequently acquired by the Museum in 2000 and shown for one year in their Culture and Continuity Core Exhibit. Aylon spent six years covering every page of The Five Books of Moses with transparent parchment and highlighting (over the covering) the problematic passages -- e.g. homophobia and the exclusion or degradation of women. The interactive computer installation *The Digital Liberation of G-d* premiered at the San Francisco Jewish Community Center in the spring of 2004. Other recent projects have included *The Women's Section* and *My Notebooks*. Helène Aylon was honored as the recipient of the Visual Arts Award of the National Foundation of Jewish Culture in 2002.

Webpage: <http://harvestworks.org/creativec/index3.html>

## Simon Glass

Simon Glass graduated from the Ontario College of Art (1983) and he recently received a Master of Arts in Communication from The European Graduate School (2005). His work is primarily photography and digital media and combines photographic imagery with Biblical, liturgical, and mystical Hebrew texts. Over the course of the last 15 years, such works have addressed issues related to the Holocaust, personal issues of loss and anthropomorphic ideas of God. His work has been exhibited widely across Canada and internationally. Simon teaches in the Art and Art History Program of the University of Toronto at Mississauga and Sheridan College and at the Ontario College of Art and Design. He is a founding member of Gallery 44 Centre for Contemporary Photography and is the recipient of numerous awards from the Toronto Arts Council, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Canada Council for the Arts. All three of these granting agencies have generously supported his new body of work on the Ten Commandments.

## Jeffrey Shaw

Since the late 1960s, the internationally renowned new media artist Jeffrey Shaw has pioneered the use of interactivity and virtuality in his many art installations. His works have been exhibited worldwide at major museums and festivals and include such well known works as *The Legible City* (1988-1991), *The Virtual Museum* (1991), *EVE*

(Extended Virtual Environment), and *Web of Life* (2002). From 1991 till 2003 he was the founding director of the Institute for Visual Media at the ZKM Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, Germany. In 2003 he was awarded the prestigious Australian Research Council Federation Fellowship and returned to Australia to establish the Center for Interactive Cinema Research (iCinema) at the University of New South Wales in Sydney. He is the subject of the monograph *Jeffrey Shaw - A User's Manual: From Expanded Cinema to Virtual Reality* edited by Anne-Marie Duguet, Heinrich Klotz, and Peter Weibel (Edition ZKM, Cantz, 1997).

Website: <http://www.jeffrey-shaw.net>.

## Melissa Shiff

Melissa Shiff works in video, performance, and installation and at the intersection of art and activism. Shiff reinvents and reformats Jewish rituals and analyzes Jewish culture making links to contemporary social problems with the aim of bringing social justice back to Judaism. Her multi-media Passover installation *The Medium is the Matzo* (2005) was shown at the Art Gallery of The Bronfman Center for Jewish Student Life at New York University. Her other work includes *Times Square Seder: Featuring the Matzoh Ball Soup Kitchen* (2002), a multi-media art activist event for the homeless. Her video sculpture *Elijah Chair* is in the permanent collection of the Jewish Museum in New York and it was featured in a special exhibition in 2004. Her real life multi-media reinvention of the Jewish wedding was made into a short film *Avant-Garde Jewish Wedding* (2004) and has shown at Jewish film festivals around the world. Shiff recently has been selected to be the keynote artist by the Jewish Museum in Prague ([www.jewishmuseum.cz](http://www.jewishmuseum.cz)) who will feature three of her works for their Centennial Celebration in 2006. The Toronto Arts Council has generously supported *Gender Cuts*. Website: [www.melissashiff.com](http://www.melissashiff.com)

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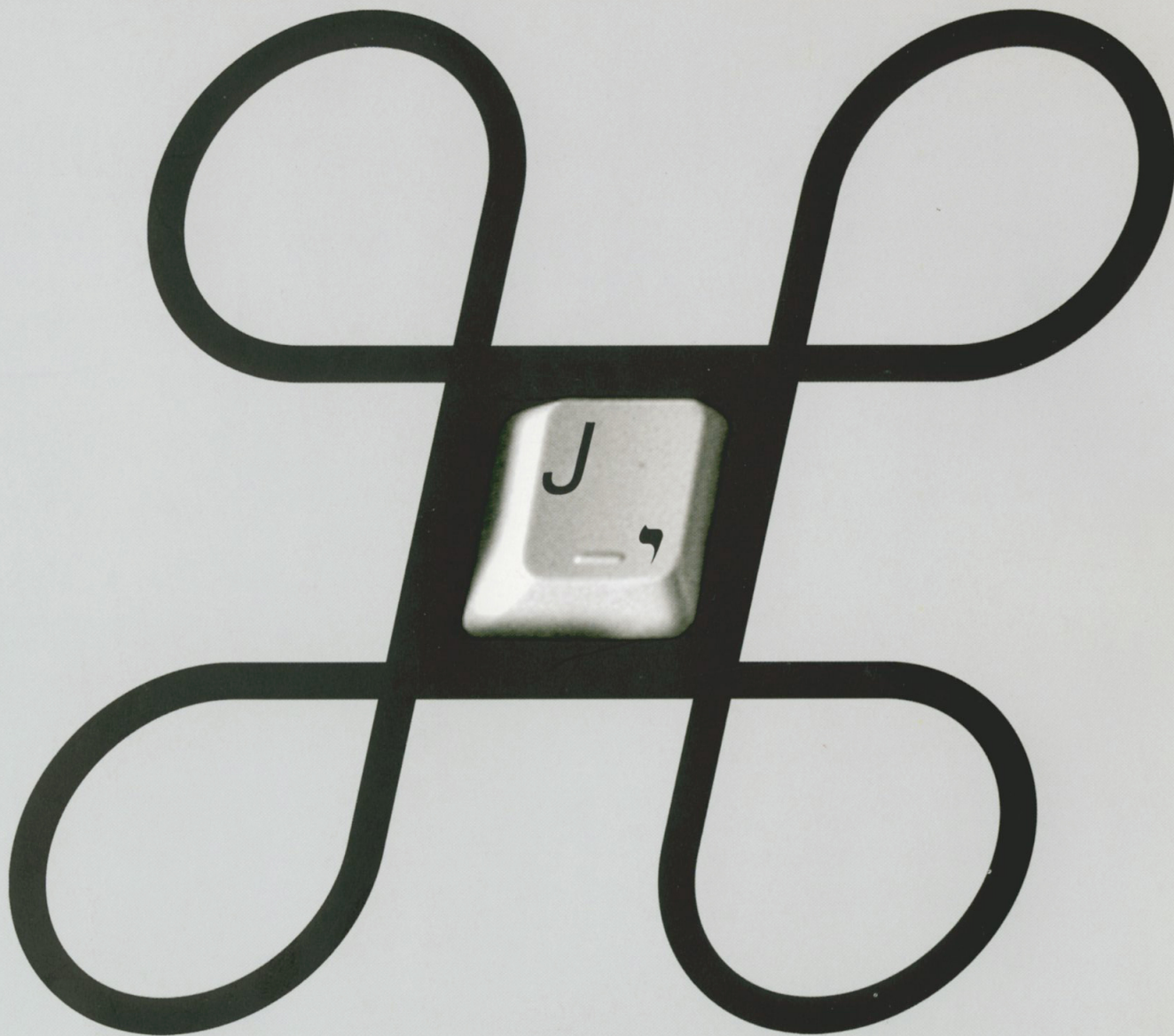
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