



# **Tobi Kahn, Selected Work**

**Text by Tobi Kahn**

**from “The Meaning of Beauty,”  
*Tobi Kahn: Sacred Spaces for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

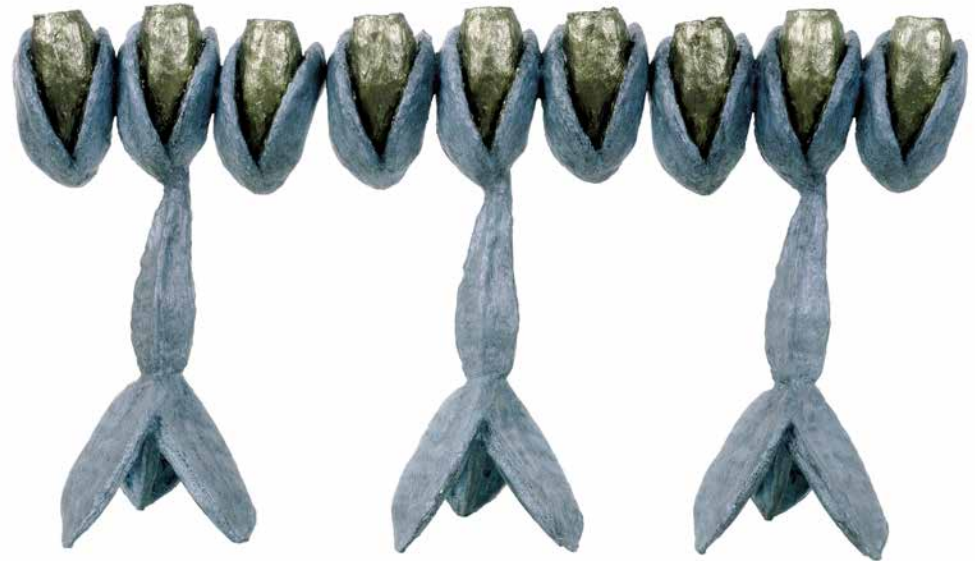
***Tokah, Apple & Honey  
Dish, 1998, acrylic on  
wood, 13.5 x 14 x 6 in.***

**“To create art is natural, an act in the image of the Creator, whose materials are light and darkness, generative and reflecting luminosities, and their attendant color and shadow. Art begins in the capacity to see, a made of knowing the world and its Maker that is indispensable to the religious and cultural expression of a people.”**



**Quya, Menorah, 1996,  
bronze, 11.25 x 21 x 4.5  
in.**

**“By the time I was six, I knew  
I would be an artist. Born  
into a Jewish life saturated  
with both richness and  
tragedy, I could not in those  
early years distinguish  
between my vision and my  
Judaism.”**



***Rkadh*, Miriam's Cup,  
1998, acrylic on wood,  
9 x 3.5 x 3.25 in.**

**“In the Jewish way, the  
divine presence is abstract,  
incorporeal, without  
beginning or end. How, then,  
can God be made manifest in  
the material world?”**



**Havdalah Set, 1991 and  
1994, bronze and  
acrylic on wood, 14.25  
x 23.5 x 11.5 in.**

**“The commandments by  
which Jews express their  
awe and love of God are  
*performed*; their fulfillment is  
often tactile.”**



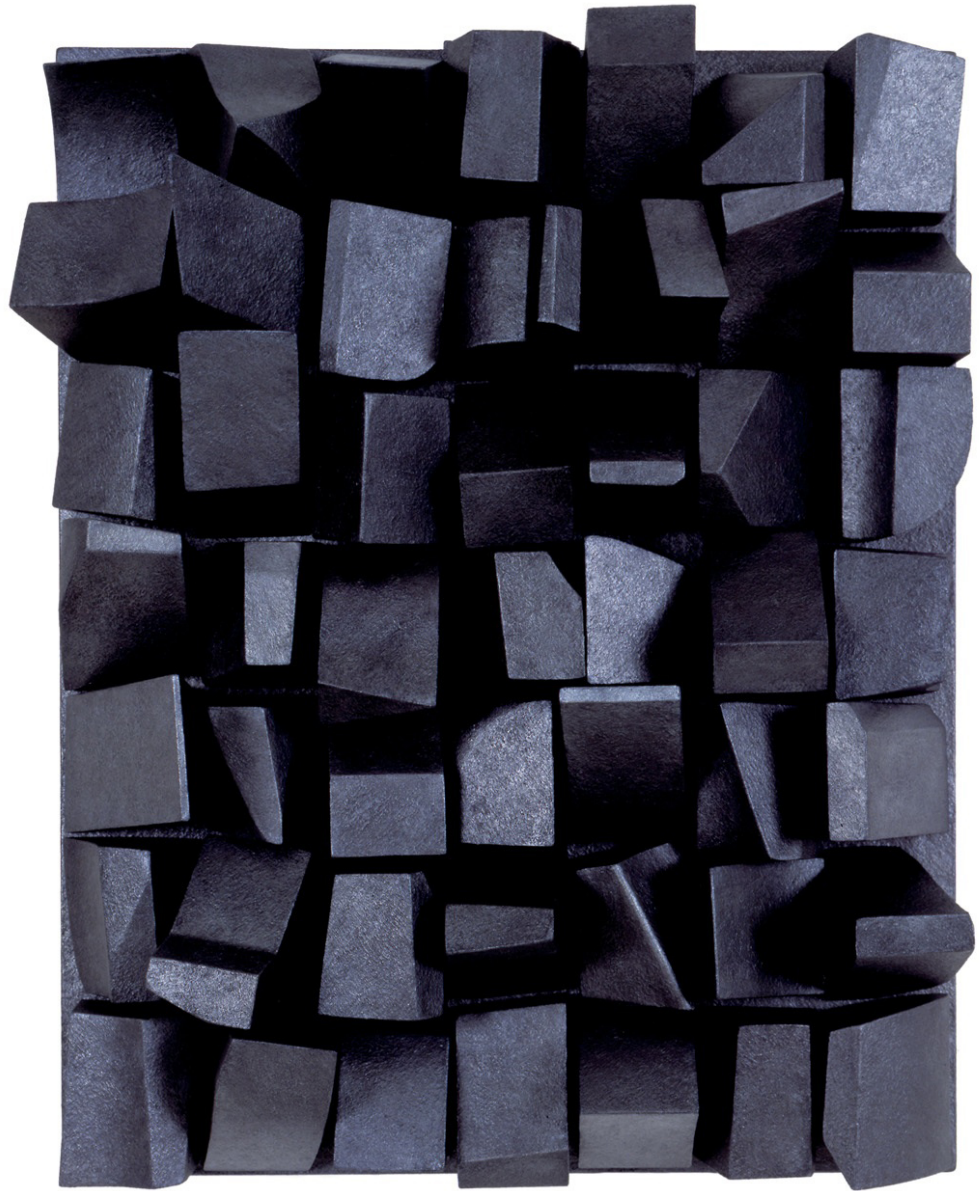
**Aruga I, Besamin  
(Spice) Container,  
1987, acrylic on wood,  
13.5 x 6 x 6.75 in.**

**“When the soul of the  
Sabbath departs, we breathe  
in the fragrance of  
cinnamon, of cloves...  
Intrinsic to every  
commandment is the  
prospect of *hiddur mitzvah*,  
of amplifying the  
commandment’s sacredness  
with beauty.”**



**Saphyr Sefirat, Ha-Omer Counter, 2002, acrylic on wood, 27.5 x 22.25 x 9.5 in.**

**“I was born in the middle of the *omer*, the seven-week period between the season of our liberation and the festival that celebrates the giving and receiving of the Torah at Sinai. Traditionally, Jews count each of the forty-nine days by reciting a *brakhah*, blessing, and then naming the day’s number and its place within the week... By a daily act, the viewer becomes a participant in the changing work, a celebration of measured time. One by one, the gold-lined spaces of our inner lives are inhabited, each miniature structure refracting the other’s light until the work is complete—and we have counted our way once more to revelation.”**



**Ahran, Yahrzeit  
(Memorial) Light, 1997,  
bronze, 14 x 11 x 7in.**

**“My parents and grandparents, refugees from Germany, honored my making art. They took my sister and me to museums, concerts, and walks in all seasons in Fort Tryon Park. My sister was named for our murdered aunt and I for our uncle, a medical student and artist who, in 1933, was one of the first three Jews killed by the Nazis. The knowledge that European Jewry was annihilated continues to shape my being... The tribute that the dead ask of us is not only to mourn their irreplaceable existence, but to live with joy and fruitfulness.”**





***Orah*, Aron Kodesh,  
1987, acrylic on wood**

**“The Torah...is replete with the word *re’eh*, with the glory of sight as a unique medium for exalting the Creator. Extended passages are devoted to the visual elements of the portable Sanctuary in the desert...The lush portrayal of the Tabernacle’s exquisite detail, in a text that privileges brevity, teaches us how inextricable beauty is from holiness.”**



**Natyh, Shalom Bat  
Chairs (chairs for  
welcoming a baby girl),  
1987, acrylic on wood,  
70 x 21.5 x 12 in.**

“In the beginning, chaos became luminous, newborn...the chairs for the naming of a daughter are new ritual architecture... These... chairs on which mothers, grandmothers, and other wise women who transmit the power of the tradition are seated before the welcoming community— invoke the vision of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, ancestral women seers...Art confers on newest life the hallmark characteristics of the biblical mothers: the laughter, strength, tenderness, and fertility we seek to bequeath to our daughters.”



***Sky and Water***  
**installation, 2003**  
**Neuberger Museum of**  
**Art, Purchase, NY,**  
**acrylic on canvas over**  
**wood**

**“These paintings...are in  
communion with those who sit in  
their midst, awakening new and  
renewed ways of seeing,  
deepening ways of doing, and  
revealing beauty in light dazzling  
and evanescent.”**



**United Jewish Appeal  
installation, UJA  
Federation of New York  
Headquarters**

**“The infinite and mortal can  
meet in spaces designated  
as liminal, dwelling places  
that invite our spirit, made in  
the Image, to encounter the  
ineffable God in both  
splendor and intimacy.”**



**Shalev, 1993, granite and bronze, Blatford Owen Trust, New Harmony, Indiana, 150 x 98 x 44 in.**

**“In...sacred space, we are porous to each other and to God.”**



## **Holocaust Memorial Garden in Memory of All Who Perished, JCC, San Diego, California, 2000**

**“...the memorial...recognizes the severance from humankind of those in grief, even as they most require the solace of community. It reflects our longing, faced with the irrevocability of death, to resume our place in an infinite, benign universe composed only of the most enduring elements—the vast sky, the healing bestowed by light, the gold desert in which we were forged as a chosen community. Anguish can be contained in a larger, embracing world.”**



***Ba'at*, 2001, bronze,  
100 x 47 x 29 in.**

**“The media for the  
engagement between  
transcendence and  
immanence are the same as  
those with which the world  
itself was created: Light,  
horizon, breath, pattern, the  
holiness of distinctions.”**

