



JIM WINTERS: PRESENCE

December 5, 2013–February 21, 2014



Philadelphia Museum of Jewish Art

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In *Presence*, San Francisco-based artist Jim Winters explores human connection and consciousness. The exhibition's portraits—more than sixty reduction screenprints—evoke friendship and influence, memory and mourning, and the vast sweep of people, ideas, and emotions that sometimes simmer, sometimes spark in our cognizance.

Shown in the first group of portraits—grey figures on black backgrounds—are members of Winters' far-flung network of family, friends, and acquaintances. Many of these portraits are based on photographs Winters shot well in advance of this project with the intention of serving as sources for future work. Others represent those with whom Winters reconnected via Facebook and other means after the deaths in 2012 of his father and, later in the year, of the artist's best friend and former partner.

The second—brown on black—are drawn from Winters' experience of visiting Auschwitz in 2013. At Auschwitz, he encountered a wall covered with photographs that were confiscated from those who suffered and died in the notorious concentration camp.

The third group—blue figures on black—are Jewish artists, filmmakers, writers, and performers who captured Winters' imagination and shaped his own creativity. Among those honored by Winters are artists Diane Arbus, Alex Katz, Cary Leibowitz, Roy Lichtenstein, Louise Nevelson, Cindy Sherman, and Weegee; gay-rights activist and politician Harvey Milk; performers Jake Gyllenhaal, Scarlett Johansson, Gilda Radner, and Shelley Winters; musicians Philip Glass, Kenny Mellman (The Julie Ruin, Kiki and Herb), Peaches, and Lou Reed; writer Gertrude Stein; and filmmakers Woody Allen and Todd Haynes (*Mildred Pierce*, *I'm Not There*, *Far From Heaven*, *The Velvet Goldmine*).

Seemingly disparate, these portraits are united in the great personal meaning they hold for Winters and the opportunity for those who explore *Presence* to contemplate and consider anew their own human connections and consciousness. The portraits from Auschwitz, and those of notable and influential Jewish-Americans, are charged with associations that are likely to strike the emotional and intellectual chords of viewers. Those of Winters' family, friends, and acquaintances remind us of those who share our own love and lives.

In the context of the PMJA and its home synagogue, Congregation Rodeph Shalom, Winters' work speaks to the Jewish people's singular history of loss and renewal. Also evoked is Judaism's distinctly structured approach to death and mourning, as exemplified in practices such as *shiva* (communal visiting with the deceased's family in the days after burial) and *yahrzeit* (the recitation of *Kaddish*, the mourner's prayer, in the synagogue on the anniversary of a loved one's death, and the lighting of a candle that burns for twenty-four hours in the mourner's home, among other practices).

Though hung in precise grids, the specific location of the portraits in *Presence* is determined by chance. Intermingled, they conjure the complex web of associations that we call "consciousness"; the chance nature of life's joys and sorrows; and the coexistence of near and far, past and present, absence and presence, and love and loss in our personal and collective psyches.

Presence includes a video showing the exhibition's portraits, accompanied by music composed and performed by Kenny Mellman. The video was produced by Winters' partner, Jeff Stallings.

Matthew F. Singer
Curator

FROM THE ARTIST

Last spring I began a series of reduction screen-print portraits of friends and family. I had amassed a collection of photographs with the intention of "someday" making portraits from them. The stinging realization that time was passing rapidly compelled me to begin the series, an awareness that grew more vivid when both my father and my best friend Gregory died in 2012 within seven months of each other. The gray-on-black prints in this show emerged from that period. Some of these subjects are no longer with us, but for me they live on via the portraits.

In May, my partner and I took a hiking trip through Poland, the Slovak Republic, and Hungary. This trip had been scheduled months earlier; Gregory was to have met us in Krakow. Despite his absence, we visited the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial as planned and were captivated by an exhibit of personal photographs confiscated from arriving deportees. We are accustomed to seeing images of Auschwitz prisoners in their striped uniforms; viewing photographs of these same people from happier times had a profoundly unsettling effect.

I took pictures of the photographs at Auschwitz to use as the source for the sepia portraits, which act as a bridge between the groups of my familiars and the third component of this exhibition: my Jewish influences. The third component of this exhibition represents these Jewish influences; well-known people who have inspired me: artists, musicians, writers, actors, directors and civil-rights leaders. I didn't even realize some were Jewish until I began work on this show, yet they have shaped my point of view from childhood to the present.

When creating these portraits, I feel I am visiting with the subjects. An image of a person is no substitute but it can reinforce feelings of connect-edness, an impulse akin to displaying family photographs. Due to the consistent format of the printed portraits, there is an equalizing effect at work. Barriers of time, and of life and death, dissolve. In making the portraits I link myself with the subjects, and thus they all become family photographs. This is the work of mourning and renewal, of recalling those who have had—and who still have—a lasting resonance in my life.

THANK YOU:

Mary Winters, Matt Singer, Jeff Stallings, Kenny Mellman, Monique Jenkinson, Dorothy Connelly, Tony Meredith, and Wendy Moffat.

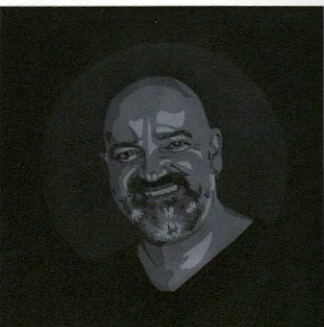
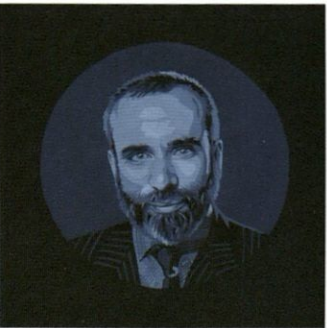
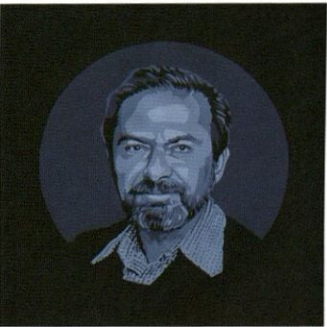
I also wish to acknowledge those I photographed whose portraits are included in this show:
All my love, respect, and heartfelt appreciation.

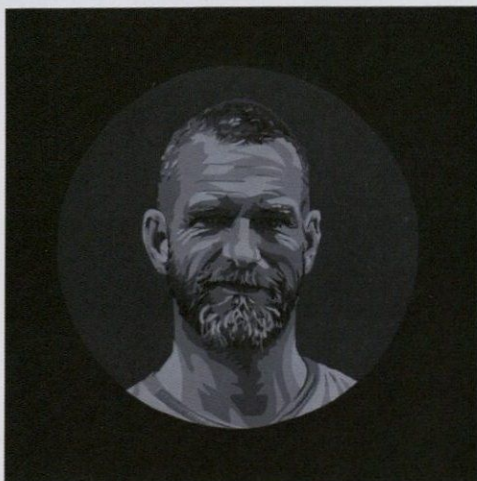
"A little artist has all the tragic unhappiness and the sorrows of a great artist and he is not a great artist."

GERTRUDE STEIN, *THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ALICE B. TOKLAS*



COVER, FROM TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: Gregory, Linda Lavin, Name Unknown (for Frank), Shelley Winters, Dee, Michael, Lou Reed, Name Unknown, Philip Glass, Elisa, Weegee, Chris Stein, Aaron, Gilda Radnor, Name Unknown, Justin. INTERIOR, FROM TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: Cindy Sherman, Elizabeth Taylor, Carol Kane, Jerilyn, Mary, Erica, Gertrude Stein, Artur Huppert, Nikos, Maurice Sendak, Alex Katz, Roy Lichtenstein, Karen, Kenny Mellman, Eli, Name Unknown, Ross Bleckner, Cary Leibowitz, Isabel, Louise Nevelson, Matt, Name Unknown, Ron. THIS PAGE, FROM TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: Scarlett Johansson, Monique, Woody Allen, Jake Gyllenhaal, Name Unknown, Steven, Harvey Milk, Jeff, Todd Haynes, Name Unknown, Joshua, Sarah Silverman, Diane Arbus, Vinsantos, Name Unknown, Nan Goldin, Christoph, Joan Rivers, Karis, Peaches, Timmy/Babs, Name Unknown. All images: Jim Winters, 2013.





ABOUT JIM WINTERS

Jim Winters' visually arresting and intensely human art is informed by interests that range from vintage graphics and ephemera to portrait painting, photography, textiles, and wallpaper. The images he creates are equally bold and enigmatic, nostalgic and contemporary, playful and contemplative.

Winters attended Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia, earning his BFA in Sculpture in 1988, and augmented his education with a year of study at the Maryland Institute in Baltimore as part of the East Coast Art

School Consortium. Following graduation, Winters worked at the Lawrence Oliver Gallery in Philadelphia—installing artwork by luminaries such as Richard Serra, Louise Nevelson, and Matt Mullican—and embarked on an eleven-year freelance relationship with Urban Outfitters. While there, he introduced a method of screenprinting graphics on store windows—a technique still employed today. He moved to San Francisco in the fall of 1992 and became involved with the seminal art gallery Kiki, where he had his first solo show. In addition to exhibiting at various artist-run galleries, his work has been featured in group shows at larger venues, including New Langton Arts and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, and the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia.

A street-art sticker project led to a commissioned illustration used in the Levi's 501 Reasons campaign in the mid-1990s. He has created wall paintings for corporate and residential contexts. He has painted lampshades, wall finishes, and other graphic elements and objects for an array of San Francisco's leading interior designers, and continues to be involved with the acclaimed Bay Area decorative painters at Stancil Studios. *Men's Health* magazine currently commissions Winters to create portraits that complement its editorial content.

Winters was an artist-in-residence at Denison University (Granville, Ohio) in fall 2011, which included exhibition of his series of landscape silkscreen prints, entitled *Travelogue*. Earlier this year, Winters and his friend, illustrator Michael Wertz, had a two-person show at San Francisco's Dolores Park Café. In spring 2014, Winters' work—including some of the portraits in *Presence* and its accompanying video—will be presented in a four-person show at Denison University.

Jim Winters lives with his partner, Jeff Stallings, and their pup, Otis, in San Francisco's Diamond Heights neighborhood.

To learn more about Winters and his art, visit jimwinters.com.

PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF JEWISH ART at CONGREGATION RODEPH SHALOM

615 N. Broad Street (at Mount Vernon Street)

Philadelphia PA 19123

Entrance and parking on Mount Vernon Street

Monday–Friday, 10:00–4:00 p.m.

Hours subject to change; please call (215) 627-6747 to confirm

The Philadelphia Museum of Jewish Art is dedicated in memory of Jacob C. Gutman