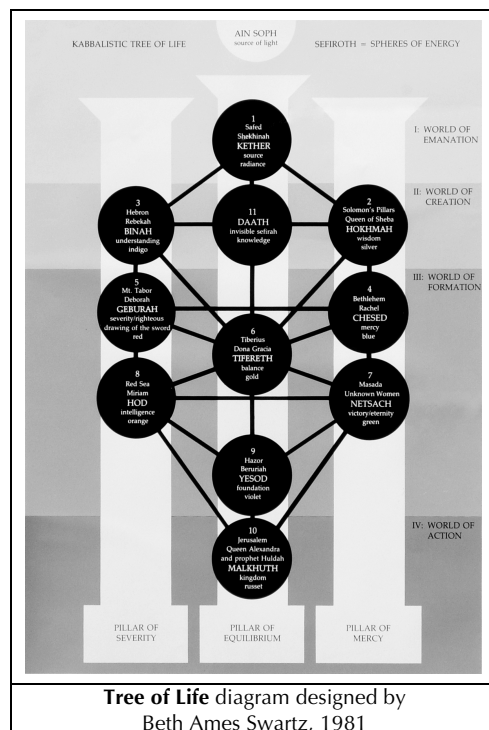


About: **ISRAEL REVISITED**

Art history professor Matthew Baigell says, “*Israel Revisited* is, to my knowledge, among the first, if not the first, contemporary, large-scale feminist project in which the Jewish subject matter is derived from the Bible and kabbalah, and, as such, it is among the most historically significant Jewish American artworks of the 1980s.”

I conceived this project after reading Gershom Scholem’s *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*. Scholem writes about the Cabalistic concept of the feminine aspect of God known as the *Shekinah*.

I chose to honor ten women from history by creating artwork inspired by them. I associated each woman with one of ten historic sites in Israel as well as with a number, color, and an attribute of God (e.g., understanding, wisdom, mercy) that also was associated with one of the ten nodes or *sephiroth* on the Tree of Life.



At each sacred site I dressed in white, spoke words to honor the women and, then, performed ritual, eventually using fire.



In this use of fire, my friend, **George Land** (1932 – 2016), had influenced my thinking with his book, *Grow or Die: the Unifying Principle of Transformation*. At the root of his principle lies a single concept: growth, the most basic and universal of drives through which all biological, physical, chemical, psychological, and cultural processes are intrinsically equivalent. I did not like this “either/or” aspect of *Grow or Die*; I chose to subscribe to what I perceived as a more optimistic a philosophy of life, death, and rebirth; of ordering, disordering, and reordering.

After site-specific ritual, I proceed to make art, rolling out scrolls of paper, gluing multiple pieces together, ordering them. Next, I used a screwdriver to gouge into the pristine paper followed by applying fire. I began a reordering process by applying paint as well as earth from the sacred place. Typically, I went through several cycles of this process-ritual, adding new paper, destroying more with fire, and adding paint again.



Jerusalem, 1980 (orange flame, center)



Solomon's Pillars, 1980



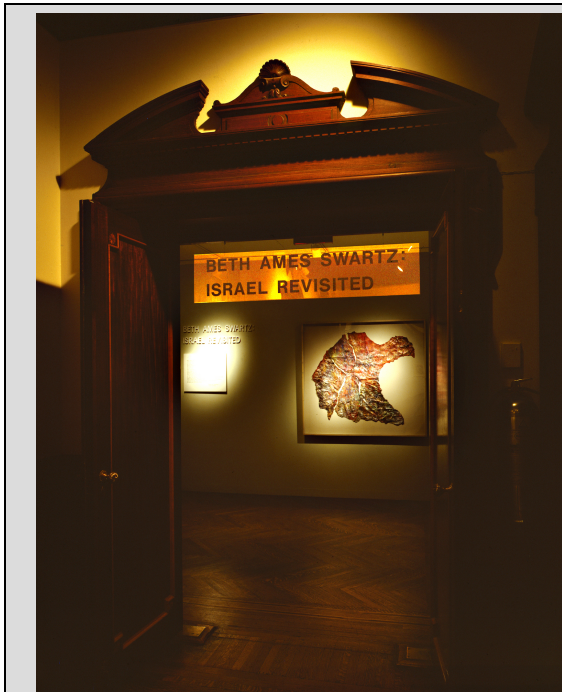
Jerusalem, 1980



Solomon's Pillars, 1980 (orange flame)

The paper scrolls were rolled-up and mailed from Israel to my home where I continued my Shiva-like creation process by ripping them into pieces and collaging them back together. Several of the works create a letter of the Hebrew alphabet using the negative space within them.

A traveling museum exhibition of these works began at The Jewish Museum, New York on September 21, 1981.



Entrance to Beth Ames Swartz **Israel Revisited**
Exhibition at The Jewish Museum, New York, 1981



Exhibition Room, **Israel Revisited**
The Jewish Museum, New York, 1981

ISRAEL REVISITED SITE MAP



SITE:	WOMAN HONORED:	DATE VISITED:
Mount Tabor	Deborah	April 9, 1980
Tiberius	Dona Gracia	April 9
Safed	Shekhinah	April 10
Hazor	Beruriah	April 11
Hebron (The Cave of Machpelah)	Rebekah	April 13
Bethlehem	Rachel	April 13
Jerusalem	Huldah Queen Alexandra	April 14
Masada	Unknown Women	April 15
Red Sea	Miriam	April 17
Solomon's Pillars	Queen of Sheba	April 18

SCALE
1 inch to 80 miles