



Vilde Verter–Wild Words

Seattle Yiddish Fest presents an exhibit by L.A. based artist Benny Ferdman

From March 6-10, 2024 Seattle Yiddish Fest, brings the world's leading creators and instructors of Ashkenazi music, art and culture to Seattle to present workshops, concerts, the 'Just Say Nu' lecture series and other community events.

This year, Seattle Yiddish Fest is excited to also host its first visual art exhibition, '***Vilde Verter-Wild Words***' featuring the work of Los Angeles-based artist Benny Ferdman. The art opening - Seattle's first Yiddish gallery show - takes place Thursday, March 7th from 7:30-11:00 pm at Love City Love (1422 Seneca St) and includes a brief artist talk, live music, local art and a community Klezmer jam. The exhibition opening is free and open to all. The gallery is also a venue for art workshops and other festival events including the Seattle Klezmer Showcase on March 9th. Details and tickets at www.seattleyiddishfest.com

Ferdman's artwork has taken him through broad explorations of diverse cultures, to a more intimate engagement with Ashkenazi history. Benny explores a deeply personal symbol-scape infused with the expressive qualities of Yiddish, his first language, as well as Jewish folk art traditions that were once widespread across Poland and Ukraine: including wooden synagogue murals, tombstone carvings and illuminated manuscripts. The exhibit title ***Vilde Verter—Wild Words*** was inspired by a memory his father related, recalling his life before the war in Lutsk, Poland: *"I once saw a wolf floating down the river on a haystack."* That one sentence presaged a precarious world about to be swept away during WW2. That image continues to reverberate in light of the calamitous events in the world today. "In this exhibit I'm setting us all afloat – a journey down a river of time, collecting and uncovering a carousel of symbols, images and wild words that once circled through the lived-life of past ancestral places. That perilous river of wild words is still with us, crashing over the threshold of this present moment."

Ferdman's work has expanded off the canvas into installations, sculptures and place-based art. His art and symbolic lexicon emerge in conversation with the wild places he spends time - many of the sculptures in this exhibit are made from the clay he harvests in the nearby Santa Monica Mountains. Focusing on the nexus between nature and culture, Ferdman strives to reclaim wonder in daily life. He is a lifelong collector, gathering objects, memories, words, family mementos and chance encounters, which converge in his artwork in eclectic and surprising ways. He was described by NY art critic John Perrault "as a visual storyteller who fills up his canvases to present his experiences as autobiography, myth and remembrance."

After attending Massachusetts College of Art, Ferdman set up his studio on the Bowery in New York's Lower East Side in the 1980's. He lived and worked in France, New Mexico and Jerusalem before resettling in his native California. His work has been shown in galleries across North America and he has received commissions for large sculptures, museum exhibitions, stage sets, installations and the redesign of synagogues. Recently, he has been artist-in-residence at KlezKanada and the Ashkenaz Festival in Toronto. A lifelong educator, Ferdman is Co-Founder of [Camp Wildcraft Art and Nature Camp](#) and [Creative Ways](#), an L.A.-based organization cultivating connections across cultures, generations and communities through the arts.

www.bennyferdman.com

The exhibition can be viewed during Festival events, including workshops. See Benny's workshops below and additional details on our website. To arrange a gallery visit outside of workshop times write to seattleyiddishfest@gmail.com

Other engagements at SYF – Ferdman will be presenting a series of talks and workshops during Seattle Yiddish Fest. Details at <https://www.seattleyiddishfest.com/>

Artist's Talk by Benny Ferdman

Saturday, March 9th, 11:45-1:15 at Love City Love

Metal Amulet Making for Luck and Blessings

Saturday, March 9th, 3-4:15

The Lost Art of Wooden Synagogues– two part talk and workshop

Sunday, March 10th, 11:30-12:50 & 2:00-3:15

Tea, Talk and Tales of Wonder

More details on Seattle Yiddish Fest <https://www.seattleyiddishfest.com/>

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