CURATOR'S STATEMENT

Today, stories of human displacement are ubiquitous, exacerbated by conditions such as climate change, increasing environmental disasters, political or sexual violence, transnational crises, and wars. People are forced to relocate to attain human rights or economic stability or to occupy a healthier or safer space, often to save their own life or the lives of their families. While global mass migration is overwhelming, every single individual has a uniquely personal narrative that must be heard, not only to remind us of how dire this issue has become but also so they can begin to heal from the trauma of their dislocation.

Jenny Yurshansky | Rinsing the Bones is a multi-layered, process-oriented, community-based project that explores the embodied, intergenerational trauma of dislocation and displacement. Born stateless to Soviet refugees, Yurshansky's own experiences led her to organize a year-long series of workshops in the greater Los Angeles area with 300-plus participants from diverse geographic locations. Participants worked with Yurshansky in different media to recount their migration stories through drawing illustrations, making hand-held paper sculptures, sewing quilts with their designs transferred onto fabric, recording their audio testimonials, and sharing their most meaningful family keepsakes.

Yurshansky's collaborative process has culminated in the works in this exhibition that transfer, translate, and transform the original workshop materials to construct a new meaning or metaphor. The family migration stories sewn into quilts become *Unfolded Narratives*, a monumental-scale, möbius-shaped installation suspended in the main gallery that reveals cumulative and similar migration patterns. Recorded testimonials engraved onto X-ray film called *Generation Loss* overlay audible memories onto shadowy fragments of the human body, where we retain trauma. In the Soviet Union, these *bone records* were a homespun recording method used to copy and share prohibited materials. While listening to these recordings, visitors may embroider the convoluted lines of Soviet sewing patterns transferred to linen in *Wayfinding*, an analogy to trying to locate oneself in a new country or foreign culture. Scans of participant's treasured mementos are replicated in bone-like 3D printed sculptures in *Rinsing the Bones (Reliquary)* and installed in a mirrored, metal and glass vitrine, conveying how these archival models are but an ossified reflection of familial lineage and history. Photograms on fiber-based paper of the 3D scanned keepsakes, *The Fugitive Archive*, hang on the walls surrounding the vitrine. The title references not only how one is forced to flee a country but also the unstable, fleeting history inherent in an archive, while the fiber material connotes the fuzzy condition of our memories. A symbiotic relationship exists between the form, content, and titles of Yurshansky's work to convey metaphors and construct particular meanings in this new context.

The title of this exhibition, *Rinsing the Bones*, is an expression that originates from an ancient Slavic reburial rite that involved exhuming the deceased and ritually cleansing the body in sacramental wine or water while recounting the totality of their actions, good and bad. The belief was that if decomposition was incomplete, an unrepentant sinner could become a ghoul or vampire. The family's duty was to ensure this horror did not happen by "rinsing the bones" to release their soul. As Yurshansky has noted:

> *The phrase and custom deeply resonated with me because, without understanding who we are through the lens of our displacement, the generations of trauma we carry will haunt us. We are bound to live in reaction to these buried triggers without understanding their reasons unless we acknowledge the complexities and nuances of who we are through what our families have endured. As I have experienced in my family, these conversations are extremely difficult and sometimes require an outside catalyst of a trusted facilitator to break the silence. Through this project, I hope to do this for others.*

A crucial aspect of Yurshansky's process is how she orchestrates a multi-layered, intimate, dialogical, and participatory experience for her collaborators—she wants the opportunity to provide safe spaces for visitors to share histories, excavate memories, and explore intergenerational trauma. She strives to share, heal, empathize, and hopefully create deeper connections within the community and the diverse personal histories of migration.

Ultimately, Yurshansky's *Rinsing the Bones* examines the patterns of migration's repercussions and offers ways for people to connect themselves to that ordeal by recounting family stories. Some critical questions she asks are: "What are the indelible impacts on generations whose history is one of being forcibly cast out? What are the long-term consequences felt by those who continue to live in places that forced "others" out? What are the voids left in the wake of these ruptures? How have the losses in cultural memory been manifested?" Yurshansky focuses on the gaps resulting from displacement and the complexity of the word "home" as an uncertain, unstable space located outside the frame of nostalgia.

—Karen Moss



CHECKLIST OF WORKS

Gallery A
(main gallery)

Jenny Yurshansky and Collaborators

1 ***Unfolded Narratives*, 2023**
Original printed cotton fabric, batting, thread, plexiglass, steel cable wire
84 x 300 x 66 in.

Jenny Yurshansky's *Rinsing the Bones* project began with the *Unfolded Narratives* workshops, where the artist first facilitated discussions of family migration narratives. Participants told their stories and made small, hand-held paper "fortune tellers." Yurshansky translated the designs onto the fabric that workshop attendees collaboratively sewed together as whole cloth quilts that, at first glance, appear to be patchwork. As they sewed, the intergenerational participants shared their stories. They found the patterns between each other's histories, adding their voices to the "unfolding narratives" they may have discovered through this social fabric. The centerpiece of this gallery is Yurshansky's *Unfolded Narratives*, where the artist has produced a monumental-scale, möbius-shaped installation of these community-created quilts.

2 **Workshop Area**
(northeast corner of the gallery)

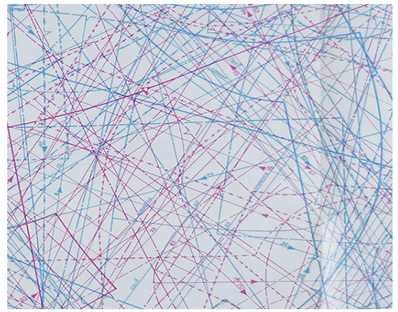
With a table and chairs, this area invites visitors to contribute their stories to *Unfolded Narratives*. This space will also be where the workshops, *Unfolded Narratives* and *Rinsing the Bones*, will take place on four Saturdays during Yurshansky's exhibition: August 5, September 16, October 21, and November 11. Each from 1-4 PM.

Gallery B
(southeast gallery, through the curtain on the left)

Jenny Yurshansky

3 ***Generation Loss*, 2023**
Modified record player, LEDs, acrylic, steel, wood, 61 X-ray film records, audio recordings of interviews with *Rinsing the Bones* workshop participants
13 x 31-½ x 17 in.

Generation Loss, 2023 is an audio work where visitors may listen to "bone records" through headphones as they play on a modified, illuminated turntable reminiscent of Soviet-era record players. These mediocre but viable substitutes wear out with every play, just as our memories degrade the more we recall them.



4 ***Wayfinding*, 2023**
Five Soviet sewing patterns printed on linen, embroidery thread, aluminum
35-½ x 54 in. each

For Yurshansky's *Wayfinding* series, she printed complex Soviet sewing patterns onto linen panels that visitors can view on the wall and embroider while sitting on a couch, listening to "bone records." As the title implies, as they sew, they trace pathways through the profusely overlapping lines, like using an unfamiliar map to find their way through an overload of nearly incomprehensible information.

Gallery C
(southwest gallery, through the curtain on the right)

Jenny Yurshansky

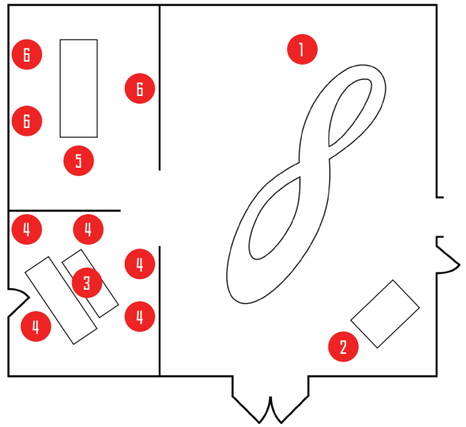
5 ***Rinsing the Bones (Reliquary)*, 2023**
3D resin prints, alcohol ink, glass, mirrors, aluminum, steel, and shadows. Reliquaries of
family keepsake objects selected by *Rinsing the Bones* workshop participants
35 x 70 x 27 in.

In the *Rinsing the Bones* workshops, Yurshansky also invited participants to share a small, treasured family keepsake that survived their family's journey. During the session, each object was scanned, then later, the artist used a 3D printer to make 1:1 scale reproductions. Installed in a large mirror and glass vitrine, the delicate replicas range from mundane objects, such as a toy ballerina, scissors, and a book, to valuables, such as jewelry made from precious metal and stones. The vitrine is like a reliquary, a container for the relics of saints, often bones or pieces of clothing.



6 ***The Fugitive Archive*, 2023**
Three photograms on fiber-based paper
20 x 24 in. each

Yurshansky made the three photograms hanging in this gallery without a camera by placing her grandmother's suitcase, from when she escaped the Soviet Union as a refugee, and all of the family keepsake facsimiles onto photo-sensitive paper and exposing them to light. A companion to the 3D-printed sculptures, the ghostly shapes float in negative space, similar to an airport X-ray scan, simultaneously evoking what is as much as what is not there. As Yurshansky has noted: "The images hold echoes of the talismanic mementos related to generational loss, stand-ins for all the objects that could not be carried. Bleached of color and presented devoid of their context and the people they belong to, they are whispers of these experiences."



ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Jenny Yurshansky received her MFA in Visual Art from UC Irvine in 2010 and was a post-grad in Critical Studies at the Malmö Art Academy. Her previous solo exhibitions include: *There Were No Roses There*, American Jewish University (2022), *Blacklisted: A Planted Allegory*, Harvard-Westlake School in Los Angeles (2020), and *Blacklisted: A Planted Allegory* in the Emerging Artist Series, Pitzer College Art Galleries (2015), and the Stockholm Royal Institute of Art (2015). Recent projects include a new commission *We are all guests here* for a group exhibition at Bridge Projects (2021) and a series of over 40 virtual workshops during COVID hosted on behalf of the American Jewish University, Fulcrum Arts, Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, the Museum of Art and History in Lancaster, Pitzer College, and other institutions offering the public a way to maintain a sense of community, connect to the issue of social justice, and participate in somatic activities that focused on breath and landscape.

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July 8

Nov 30



Curator
Karen Moss

Propeller Gallery

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Jenny Yurshansky thanks the following individuals, partners, and in-kind contributors:

Frida Cano, former Director of Exhibitions and Residency Programs, who invited Jenny Yurshansky to create *Rinsing the Bones* at 18th Street Arts Center

Karen Moss, art historian, and independent curator, who brought the exhibition to fruition

The 18th Street Arts Center staff: Michael Ano, Jazmyn Beauchan, Sydney Brundige, Kevin Gonzalo Cervantes-Salazar, Kim Russo, and Jan Williamson

The Running Stitch (active members: Jane El Farra, Anjum Khan, Aida Osman, Ramza Saliefendic, Tahereh Sheerazie, and Sobia Shehzad), exhibition guest artists and workshop partners

The people and institutions who hosted *Unfolded Narratives* & *Rinsing the Bones* Workshops:
Michael Balot-Garza, James Canto, Andrew Hartwell, and Cara Megan-Lewis at The Wende Museum, Culver City; Rotem Rozental, USC Roski School of Art and Design, Los Angeles; Zanita Kelly, Westridge School, Pasadena; Nara Hernandez, Heart of Los Angeles

Fabrication and Production: Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, Crystal Forge, and Metropolitan Community College Lab; Omaha, Nebraska; California State University Fullerton, Prototyping Lab; California State University Long Beach, 3D Design Lab; Meep Records, Denver, Colorado; University of California, Irvine Studio Art Department 3D Design Lab; Westridge School Steamworks and Photography Labs, Pasadena

Installation: Rigoberto Melendez and his crew and SmArt Handling Services

The generous humans who made personal contributions:
The generous humans who have been involved in these institutional and personal contributions are Michael Balot-Garza, Adam Baumeister, Tanya Brodsky, Frida Cano, Manny De Santiago, Evelin Eigler, David Familian, Andy Fedak, Kenneth Heinze, Nara Hernandez, Abel Horwitz, Jesse C. Jackson, Linh Mac, Cara Megan Lewis, Henry Littleworth, Benjamin Lord, Mick Lorusso, Marlenn Luna, Stacie Martinez, Stefan Meyer, Rachel Adams Miller, Karen Moss, Alexandra Pacheco-Garcia, Charlie Pyott, Britt Ransom, Roy Regev, Rotem Rozental, Tanya Rubbak, Josh Schaedel, Vicki Phung Smith, and Lorraine, Rima, and Michael Yurshansky

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RINSING THE BONES

ПЕРЕМЫВАТЬ КОСТОЧКИ

Jenny Yurshansky

Title and logo (spills over)

Acknowledgement + logos

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Front logo (spills over from cover)

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