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## A Conversation with Loli Kantor about her exhibition "There was a Forest"

By Stacey Holzer

Loli Kantor's third FOTO FEST yielded an exhibition at the Temple Emanu El, in the Robert I Kahn Gallery now on view until May 21, 2010. Joan Morgenstein saw her work at the FOTO FEST Meeting Place in 2008, and chose her for this year's exhibition at the Temple Emanu El. The temple provides a reverent context for the images which are a photo documentary of Jewish culture in the Ukraine. "There was a Forest" is a body of work that developed over several years. Kantor travelled to Eastern Europe several times to photograph Eastern European Jewish communities especially the Central and Western parts of the Ukraine where families are not as wealthy as the Eastern portion of the country. Palladium prints are black and white printed in a hand made palladium process that originated in the mid 1800's. Kantor chose to use this antique technique to control the look of the image, she likes the brown tonal range that the process yields. The palladium prints look timeless yet they are now. A resonant emotional response to place is clear in Kantor's work. The small size of the print is similar to snapshots taken in the forties. Almost as if frozen in time, they carry an emotional resonance that is palpable at first gaze.



Mukachevo, Ukraine 2009 Loli Kantor.

Working intuitively, Kantor captures the spirit of the people in her work. Happy, or sad living as best they can after surviving the Holocaust and the post war Soviet era. This region has suffered a tremendous amount of loss, spiritual, personal and collective.

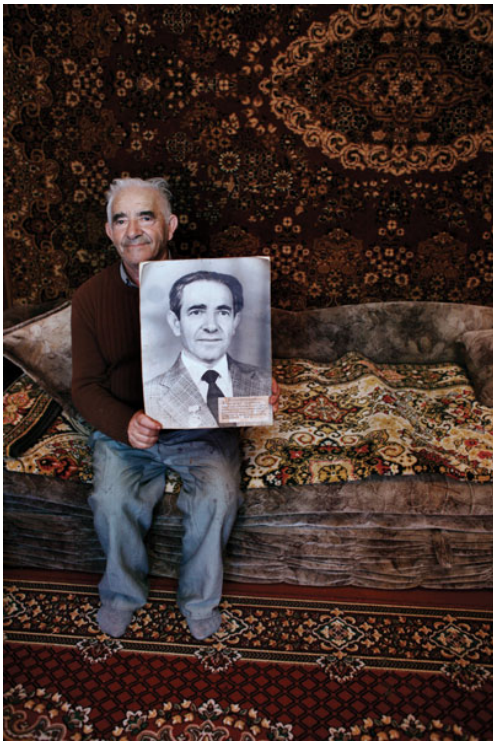
Part of the series includes images of places in Poland reflecting her personal background. Her family came from Poland surviving the Holocaust, her mother escaping with a false Arian identification card. She lived in Warsaw for three years. A photo taken of her address verified by the false id stirs memories of her own heritage.

*Kantor describes her work as: A glimpse into the past, looking at things as a memory of the future that has not yet arrived.*



*Kantor reflects: People who live with loss learn to live with it, making them wiser and more aware.*

Kantor produces photographs so that her people are remembered, a personal document with emotion attached. She thinks of what will happen to her images after the click. How they will be processed, displayed, curated and what implications the body of work will have as a remembrance of culture.



Pesya, Now and Then, Tulchin, Ukraine 2007 [ pigment ink print ]

Included as a part of her journey Kantor has photographed herself in various contexts. Celebrations provide a look into the universal language of sharing food and images of the kitchen, depict objects as a portrait of everyday life. Relationships developed as Kantor travelled back and forth to Europe, this gave her access to celebrations and events over several years time. Holidays would yield information about traditions observed, and food shared relative to cultural celebrations.



Kidush, Bershada, Ukraine 2007 [ pigment ink print ]

Because they were not allowed to practice Judaism during the Soviet Era, observation became a cultural awareness of the present attempt to reintegrate old beliefs, wisdom and traditions of Jewish identity that is slowly growing. The process of reinvention is occurring little by little as they are rebuilding cultural traditions and beliefs. Richly colorful prints are reminders of a cultural experience that has roots revived. It is also reminiscent of how food is a universal symbol of celebration and abundance. Her background in physical therapy and theatre is also an influence in Kantor's work. View more projects by Loli Kantor at [www.lolikantor.com](http://www.lolikantor.com)