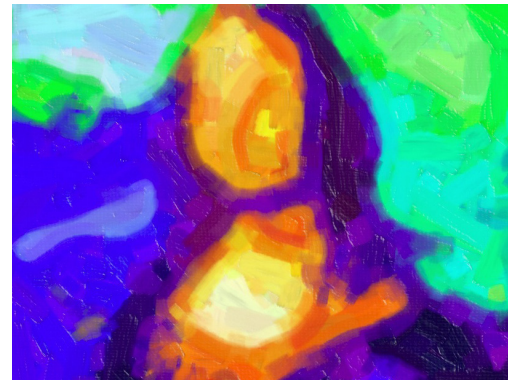


The STORIES THAT PORTRAITS TELL



Hanoch Piven's traditional portraits tell amazing stories about famous people. By using an astounding array of found objects (some people might call it "junk") to create likenesses of people as diverse as Steve Jobs, Theodor Herzl, Barack Obama, and Saddam Hussein, his work offers insights into the lives, values, and achievements of characters who dominate history books and headlines.

In this workshop, participants will be introduced to Piven's work and will assess the objects used to create portraits of prominent Israelis. Then they'll have an opportunity to create their own self-portraits using Piven's methodology.

Piven created a [video](#) for you, recorded in his studio in Jaffa, Israel, describing his methodology and sharing stories. You may want to show it to participants; at the very least, you should watch it before leading any Piven Workshop activities. It's bursting with energy and ideas!

PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

In order to have a workshop based on found objects, you'll need to gather random objects. Lots of random objects. Everything from buttons, labels, packaging, and keys to stickers, stamps, and small toys will come in handy as participants create self-portraits. Preparation is key: Gather copious amounts of "junk" to ensure that everyone finds what they need.

Begin by introducing Piven. Refer to the [video by Piven](#), or to the [Piven Workshop](#) program for more about the artist.

Help your participants understand Piven's methodology—and hear some cool stories about Israel—by introducing them to three portraits: Moses, David Ben-Gurion, and Yitzhak Rabin.



Tip

*This program can have even more impact if you connect it to Jewish values that your participants may be exploring in other settings. Here are some that may work well: **Confidence, Kindness, Loyalty, Perseverance, Integrity, Conviction.***



Tip

Bring everyone into the process of collecting "random objects." Give participants some time at the beginning of the activity to collect random objects to use, or ask them to bring from home. Encourage participants to gather as much (clean and safe) junk/stuff as possible. Natural materials such as leaves and twigs are good as well. Collecting and sorting materials allows participants to imagine different uses for the objects they find.

1. Moses

This portrait allows participants to interact with the technique using a story that they are probably familiar with (Moses and the Exodus). Holding up the Moses portrait, ask participants to identify materials or objects and think about what they symbolize. They will likely find matza, gefilte fish, sand/desert, handcuffs, chicken leg/shank bone, matza balls, etc. Help them notice that each object is central to Moses' story and the Passover story!

2. David Ben-Gurion

This picture will be a bit harder for participants because they may not recognize Ben-Gurion, but that's OK! In this case, tell participants that this is a portrait of David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister. Like with Moses, ask participants to identify materials or objects in the portrait and think about what they symbolize. Here are a few things in the Ben-Gurion portrait your participants might notice:

- > Face made of **sand, twigs** as hair/eyebrow: Ben-Gurion was a big believer in the importance of making the desert bloom. After he stopped being the Prime Minister, he retired to Kibbutz Sde Boker in the Negev. The major university in southern Israel is Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Be'er Sheva.
- > Nose made of **boxing glove**: He was always considered a fighter.
- > **Newspaper**: He is holding a copy of Ha'aretz (literally "the land" and also the name of a major Israeli paper) announcing the creation of the State. This portrait shows a moment in his career when he declared independence for the Jewish State on May 14, 1948.
- > **Photograph of people dancing**: This is an actual photograph of people who danced and celebrated after the announcement of the Jewish State.
- > **Bathroom**: This is a question you can throw back at them—why do you think Ben-Gurion is depicted in the bathroom? Some reasons we've heard and come up with include that it humanizes him, that it's where he did his best thinking, and that perhaps the only place where he could get some peace and quiet to read the newspaper was in the bathroom!

3. Yitzhak Rabin

This is an example of a portrait that relies on the story of a single moment. While participants can try to guess who is in the picture and what it represents, chances are they won't know, so they'll need you to tell the story.

Piven created this portrait just after Rabin's assassination. If necessary, fill in information about his assassination—including the presence of candles all over Rabin Square immediately after the event:

On the evening of November 4, 1995, Rabin was assassinated by a radical Jewish man who opposed the signing of the Oslo Accords. Rabin had been attending a mass peace rally in what is now known as Rabin Square, located in the heart of Tel Aviv. When the rally ended, Rabin walked down the city hall steps toward his car, at which point he was assassinated. Rabin's assassination came as a great shock to the Israeli public and much of the rest of the world. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis came to the square to mourn his death by lighting memorial candles and singing peace songs.

Ask participants: Can you figure out why Piven created the portrait in this way? What do you think Rabin's face is made of? (**Candle wax.**)



Tip

It's up to you to fill in some information for your participants. The [Israel Resource Cards](#) can come in handy here, for such topics as [Rabin and his assassination](#).

READY? SET. CREATE!

Once your participants understand the way Piven uses objects to tell stories, they're ready to create their own self-portraits!

Place a wide array of random objects on a table in front of your group. Invite them to browse the objects and select items they want to include in their self-portrait. Let them decide which items to include based on what they want to share about themselves in their portraits.

Allow everyone to work independently on their own portraits—visiting the “junk” table as often as they like—or guide the first part of the work time (approx. 15 minutes) with tasks like these:

- > Select one item that symbolizes something you like a lot. Invite everyone to share what they chose and their reasoning.
- > Select one object that you feel represents something about yourself, and one item that represents something about your connection to Israel. Stress that you don't need to have visited Israel to have a connection to the land, people, and country, and encourage everyone to find something.

Allow 30–45 minutes for everyone to create their own portraits, and glue down objects, and another 15 minutes for everyone to share their work with the group.

When you are done, encourage participants to reflect on the experience:

- > What did you learn about yourself?
- > What did you learn about your friends and other people in your group?
- > What did you learn about the people depicted in the portraits you explored?
- > How would you describe Piven's style if you were talking on the phone to someone who could not see the portraits?
- > What's the funniest object you saw in someone else's portrait?



Tip

Navigate this conversation carefully, with an eye toward making everyone feel comfortable sharing and eager to express themselves through these and other objects.



Fun fact

When he was a child in Uruguay, Piven loved to draw horses, cows, and soccer players. After his family moved to Israel when he was 11, he began to draw fighter aircraft and basketball players.



Taking it home

Facilitate discussion on the activity by helping participants reflect on the objects they used and the meaning behind them. The takeaways from this activity should include the tangible pride that comes from seeing one's work on display. Encourage participants to snap photos of their portraits and share with their friends and family, or let them put their portraits up in different areas of your setting for others to see!

WAYS TO USE AND ENHANCE

If you want to do this with a deeper Israel focus, select a few People cards from the set of [Israel Resource Cards](#) and have participants create portraits of those Israeli figures.

Have participants write about the portrait they created after they've completed it. This is another great way to provide an opportunity for sharing, and works well if time in the studio is short.

Ask everyone to caption their portraits, making it easy for them to share on Social Media.

Create a display wall in a prominent location where these portraits can be visible for all to see.

DETAILS

- > **Materials:** Poster board, glue guns, glue, tape, and lots and lots of small random objects
- > **Age:** All ages
- > **Size of group:** Ideal for 8–15 participants
- > **Duration:** 1 hour

