

humble arts foundation

dina kantor

artist statement

In January 2006 I began photographing the members of the small Jewish community in Finland. In addition to providing a visual record, the images function as a sociological document exploring how Finnish Jews live, work and practice their religious traditions.

How does Judaism survive in a country where there are only two synagogues? In a nation of 5.3 million people, how do 1,500 Jews maintain their cultural identity. How do they keep a voice? This project is also of personal significance. My mother was born in Finland and moved to Minnesota as a child. When she married my father (a Jew of Polish/Russian heritage), she converted to Judaism. What does it mean that my blood is both Finnish and Jewish?

With these pictures, I am investigating the ways photography contributes to the construction of identity and community. Today's society is increasingly complex and multi-cultural. As our heritages blend, our identities are no longer definable by a generic social stereotype of community, but by our unique experiences and backgrounds. Intrinsically, photography has an ability to capture details; I am recording cultural signifiers and traditions as they blend, depicting the physical characteristics of a hybridized community.

biography

Dina Kantor is a Brooklyn based photographer who began her career photographing for the Minneapolis City Pages. She received her MFA in photography from the School of Visual Arts in May 2007. She teaches photography at a private high school in Manhattan and has held a TA position at ICP for three years. Dina is currently working on a new series documenting the Jewish community in Finland, entitled Finnish and Jewish. Her photographs have been exhibited nationwide.
dinakantor.com