

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Michael Levin "Jews of Today" exhibition/book launch, opening at 7 Dunham, July 20, 2013, 7-10pm, curated by 109

Jews of Today

A Primer on Hasidic Dress
new book by Michael Levin

Jews of Today

works on paper from Michael Levin

Book release:
Saturday, July 20, 2013, 7-10pm

Opening Reception:
Saturday, July 20, 2013, 7-10pm

published by 109

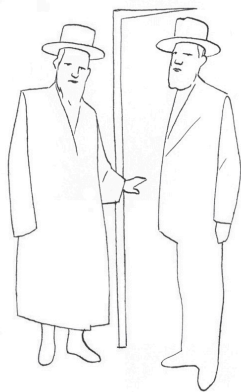
curated by 109

at 7 Dunham, South Williamsburg

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109 presents *Jews of Today*, a new book from Brooklyn-based artist Michael Levin exploring the nuances and contradictions of Hasidic ritual dress through a series of elegant drawings and explanations, delving into larger issues of Jewishness and cultural identity in the process. The launch of the book will be accompanied by an exhibition of the same name featuring a collection of Levin's ink drawings and paintings. Please join us Saturday, July 20th, at 7 Dunham for the celebration of both. There will be a light reception and signed copies of the book for sale.

"What is yiddishkeit?," the book asks early on. It's as much question as provocation. Ostensibly an introduction into the fashions of the Hasidic community in which he lives, the book's narrative quickly veers into the psychological, cultural and historical issues that cut into Jewish identity today. By focusing on dress – from such universal elements as the black hat and sidelocks, to the many deviations that occur amongst the various sects – Levin is able to engage with an audience whose understanding of Hasidim can be fairly superficial. And since each piece of clothing the Hasid wears is steeped in symbolism and significance, this approach allows Levin to go far deeper.



These two men are Hasidic Jews—*khsidim*.
Their clothing is similar, but not altogether alike.



This is because not all *khsidim* are altogether alike.



Jews of Today both celebrates and problematizes the totemic image of the Hasidic Jew. By investigating notions of authority and authenticity, Levin confounds the outsider's perception of the Hasidic community as a sociocultural monolith. Part paean and part subversion, Levin's work confronts head on his own thorny relationship with Judaism. It is the inescapability of Levin's own Jewishness that plagues and pleasures him, and forces the reader to consider their own relationship to faith, religion and identity in the 21st century.

Michael Levin is an artist living in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. He was born in Los Angeles, California in 1984, and received his BA in Classics at the University of Chicago in 2006. This fall he will begin his MFA in Printmaking at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn.

Located within sight of the Williamsburg Bridge, 7 Dunham is the newest studio space to open its doors to the community. Serving local artists, photographers, musicians and crafters, 7 Dunham is a center for the growing community of artists in Brooklyn, providing a hub for creative enrichment and conversation.

109 Gallery was established in the fall of 2012 by Ryan Krause, Kenny Komer and Adam Wissing. Since then, they have organized more than a dozen exhibitions and hosted regular concerts and performances. *Jews of Today: A Primer on Hasidic Dress* is their first publication.