

The Stamp-Related Designs of Michelle Shalmiev

“Putting Your Stamp on History”

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Canadian Association for Israel Philately (CAFIP)
A Chapter of Society of Israel Philatelists, Inc (SIP)

www.tinyurl.com/CAFIP-StampClub

www.israelstamps.com

Forward by M. Elias, May14/2025, Toronto.

One of the exhibitors at the recent Yom HaAtzmaut celebrations in Toronto was Israeli artist Michelle Shalmiev, who tells the history of Israel in mosaic artworks fashioned from authentic Israel postage stamps.

Her work has been reported in the CJN by David Matlow – see

<https://thecjn.ca/arts-culture/treasure-trove-an-israeli-stamp-reflects-the-complex-mix-of-emotions-about-oct-7/>

https://thecjn.ca/arts-culture/yom-hashoah/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=yom-hashoah

Our gratitude to Michelle and to David who have provided this material.

If you would like to arrange for these artworks for display at a function or event, please reach out to David Matlow at DavidMatlow@icloud.com

Artist's Statement.

A little girl, born in the city nestled within the vast Caucasian mountains, was raised amidst diverse mentalities. She dreamt of relocating to the Holy Land of Israel, feeling a deep connection to her roots and homeland. On a beautiful day during her visit to Jerusalem, she placed a note in the Western Wall's crevice, fervently praying for her dream to materialize.

Years later, her dream became a reality. With a single suitcase, myriad dreams and goals, and a glance of fear towards the unknown mingled with an insatiable desire to find her place under the sun of the Holy Land, the 14-year-old girl stood barefoot on the kibbutz's grass. Taking deep breaths, she hoped to be embraced in the place she felt she belonged.

Her journey commenced with achieving language proficiency, mastering fluent Hebrew in just six months, followed by three years to complete her education, two years in the Israel Defense Forces, and college graduation. She then entered into an endless working routine to establish financial stability, gradually integrating into society's social

Artist's Statement (continued).

stratum independently. Day by day, step by step, she embraced an independent lifestyle, learning from her mistakes, experiencing highs and lows, until she gained a new perspective on familiar things.

The most challenging aspect of her journey was maintaining balance across various spheres of life and overcoming fears that lingered in her mind. An open-minded and optimistic outlook granted her numerous opportunities. Inspired by the development of positive thinking and a belief in goodness—as shared by all the country's residents—she eventually found her identity as an Israeli.

On that significant day, I believed in myself and realised that nothing could prevent me from achieving every goal and fulfilling every dream, guided by positive thinking. I found happiness in the minutiae: a smile given, support offered, casual conversations with friendly strangers, and unconditional love. Life provides all we need for happiness, asking for nothing in return but gratitude for the experience, in all its vibrant colours.

Artist's Statement (continued).

This perspective inspired me to create stamp artworks that tell the story of the Israeli people, the history of the Holy Land, and significant events that have shaped the future of Eretz Israel. Despite the challenging times following the events of 7.10.23, which turned reality on its head, I found inspiration to create art amid adversity. I marvelled at the limitless power of the Israeli people to express support, assistance, and care through volunteering and donations. Every soldier stood for their homeland; citizens lined up to donate blood; businesses contributed their services; famous musicians and artists created art to support citizens in a spiritual way; psychologists offered support to maintain mental health. Children across the country sent their video messages to soldiers, encouraging their safe return, showcasing a united effort for peace in Israel. I took pride in participating in this process, drawing inspiration to share my story through stamps and spread the message of optimism and belief in goodness, regardless of circumstances.

Artist's Statement (continued).

The country to which I always felt connected welcomed me warmly, allowing me to build a life, create unforgettable memories, and lay the foundations for my future and that of my future children in Israel. I found my place in the Holy Land, echoing the sentiment, "I HAVE NO OTHER COUNTRY, EVEN IF MY LAND IS BURNING..."

I expressed gratitude for the opportunity to share my art with Canadians and the younger generation, aspiring to inspire others to pursue their calling, express their feelings, and believe in the attainability of their dreams through positive thinking. I remain hopeful that Israel will recover from recent events and stand ready to welcome everyone to discover the generosity, diverse experiences, and the warm embrace of its positive and optimistic culture. There is no other choice but optimism, the very essence of our existence.

Putting Your Stamp on History

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Note:

The pictures in this section are low-resolution, so you may not clearly see the stamps in the background. To see somewhat higher-resolution, zoomable pictures – go to <https://tinyurl.com/2ya927xw>

"Vision of a Nation" – Portrait of Theodor Herzl.



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This artwork is a tribute to Theodor Herzl, the visionary of the Jewish state, created entirely from authentic Israeli postage stamps. The background features repeating 200-shekel stamps bearing Herzl's portrait, symbolizing his foundational role in Zionism. His figure is formed using a blend of various stamp types, colors, and textures, portraying him deep in thought or writing — a nod to his iconic image on the balcony in Basel. This stamp collage reflects how Herzl's dream was built step by step — just like this artwork, made from countless tiny pieces that come together to form a powerful whole.

"Roots of the Land" – Tribute to the Jewish National Fund.



"Roots of the Land" – Tribute to the Jewish National Fund.



This artwork pays homage to the Jewish National Fund (JNF), a cornerstone of the Zionist movement responsible for land development, afforestation, and building the physical foundation of the State of Israel. Created entirely from authentic Israeli stamps featuring the JNF logo, trees, and historical motifs, the piece symbolizes the deep connection between people, land, and vision. Each stamp represents an act of giving, a tree planted, a future nurtured. Through this layered mosaic, the artwork tells the story of how generations came together to turn a dream into land — and land into a home.

"Faces of the Dream" – Zionist Leaders.



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This vibrant mosaic brings together the faces of key Zionist thinkers, writers, and leaders who helped shape the Jewish national revival. Each portrait is hand-drawn and overlaid on authentic Israeli stamps that reflect their era, influence, or values. The composition resembles a stained glass window — a tribute to the many ideological streams, debates, and dreams that merged into the Zionist movement. The ink and quill symbolize the power of the written word in shaping a national consciousness.

"Faces of the Dream" – Zionist Leaders.



Featured figures include:

- **Raoul Wallenberg** – the heroic diplomat who saved thousands of Jews during the Holocaust.
- **Ze'ev Jabotinsky** – founder of Revisionist Zionism.
- **Theodor Herzl** – father of political Zionism.
- **David Ben-Gurion** – first Prime Minister of Israel and a founding father.
- **Chaim Weizmann** – first President of Israel and leading Zionist diplomat.
- **Golda Meir** – Israel's first female Prime Minister.
- **Meir Dizengoff** – first mayor of Tel Aviv and a pioneer of urban Zionism.

"The Moment of Birth" – Ben-Gurion and the Declaration of Independence.



"The Moment of Birth" – Ben-Gurion and the Declaration of Independence.



This artwork captures the historic moment of Israel's founding through the image of **David Ben-Gurion**, the nation's first Prime Minister and the man who read the Declaration of Independence aloud in 1948. His portrait is composed of vintage Israeli stamps, with his determined expression emerging from a backdrop that features stamps commemorating the 25th anniversary of independence and a reproduction of the declaration itself. The golden tones and ceremonial emblems surrounding the piece evoke a sense of legacy and nationhood. This collage is a tribute to leadership, vision, and the written word that gave birth to a state.

"Mother Israel" – A Tapestry of Diversity.



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This symbolic piece depicts a maternal figure — “Mother Israel” — composed entirely of Israeli stamps, embracing the many cultures, identities, and backgrounds that form the nation’s social fabric. The different colors, shapes, and stamp themes represent Jewish communities from across the globe, gathered in a visual embrace of unity and inclusion. Traditional head coverings and motifs reflect Sephardic, Ashkenazi, Mizrahi, Ethiopian, and other diasporic heritages. With her hands open and her face serene, she represents protection, nurturing, and the quiet strength of a country built by many, for all.

A celebration of multicultural Israel — stitched together, stamp by stamp.

"A Year in Symbols" – Celebrating the Holidays of Israel.



This vibrant collage captures the essence of the Jewish calendar through hand-drawn holiday symbols layered over authentic Israeli stamps. From Rosh Hashanah's apples, honey, and shofar, to Hanukkah's menorah and dreidel, to the Torah scroll of Simchat Torah, each element represents a tradition that shapes Jewish identity. Passover's matzah, Tu B'Shvat's fruits, Lag BaOmer's bonfire, Purim's masks, and Sukkot's lulav and etrog — all come together to form a visual cycle of memory, celebration, and faith. The use of stamps adds historic and cultural depth, turning each holiday into a living part of Israel's story.

"We Shall Remember" – Holocaust Memorial in Stamps.



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This powerful collage serves as a visual tribute to the memory of the Holocaust and the six million Jews who perished. The Star of David at the center, constructed from memorial stamps, encloses the Hebrew word (“זכור” Yizkor – “Remember”). The surrounding composition includes barbed wire, striped prisoner uniforms, yellow stars, and camp numbers — evoking the pain, resilience, and historical weight of the Shoah. Authentic stamps commemorate liberation, fallen heroes, and moments of silence. Together, they form a mosaic of national and personal remembrance — where history is preserved one stamp, one face, one flame at a time.

"From Mourning to Celebration" – Yom HaZikaron and Independence Day.



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This moving artwork captures the emotional transition between two of Israel's most significant days: **Yom HaZikaron**, the Memorial Day for fallen soldiers and victims of terror, and **Yom HaAtzmaut**, the celebration of Israel's independence.

A child in festive dress reaches upward to wave the Israeli flag, while above her, a soldier in remembrance stands in salute — a silhouette made from memorial stamps. A lit memorial candle symbolizes the lives lost, while the flag that connects them flows upward in unity.

Built entirely from Israeli stamps, this piece reflects how grief and pride are woven together in the fabric of national identity — remembrance giving rise to resilience, and sacrifice giving birth to freedom.

"And the Wall Wept" – The Six-Day War and the Return to Jerusalem.



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This emotional collage honors the iconic moment in 1967 when Israeli paratroopers reached the Western Wall during the Six-Day War, reuniting the Jewish people with their holiest site. The artwork, created from Israeli stamps, portrays soldiers in prayer, awe, and tears — side by side with civilians and spiritual figures. The Kotel (Western Wall) itself is rendered as a backdrop of longing, history, and divine connection.

The unity of past and present, faith and defense, is expressed through this visual tribute — where memory and identity are eternally etched into stone and stamp alike.



"1973" – Yom Kippur War.



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This stamp collage captures the emotion, turmoil, and leadership of the **Yom Kippur War** — one of the most defining moments in Israeli history. At its center stands **Golda Meir**, then Prime Minister, surrounded by the chaos and bravery that marked the surprise attack on Yom Kippur in 1973.

Soldiers are shown saluting, marching, and raising the Israeli flag — representing resilience in the face of devastation. Each element is created from authentic Israeli stamps from the period, bringing layers of memory and meaning into the composition.

This piece reflects not only the cost of war, but also the spirit of a nation that, even when caught off guard, rises to defend itself with strength and unity.

"Operation Thunderbolt" – The Entebbe Rescue.



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This vibrant stamp collage honors one of Israel's most daring and heroic military missions — **Operation Entebbe (1976)** — in which Israeli commandos rescued hostages from a hijacked plane in Uganda. The aircraft dominates the upper half, symbolizing both the hijacking and the dramatic flight of redemption. Below, soldiers march with determination, assembled from stamps of strength, resilience, and national pride. The contrasting blue skies and golden terrain reflect both the danger and triumph of the operation.

Through stamps, this artwork preserves a story of courage, sacrifice, and the unbreakable commitment to protect Jewish lives — anywhere in the world.

"Hands of Peace" – Israel, Egypt & Jordan.



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This stamp collage reflects the hope and complexity of peace in the Middle East, with a focus on the **historic peace agreements between Israel, Egypt, and Jordan**. At its center lies the map of Israel, gently supported by two open hands — a symbol of protection, responsibility, and shared future.

Surrounding the scene are **doves carrying olive branches**, representing the universal aspiration for peace. The **flags of Egypt and Jordan** appear as reminders of courageous diplomacy and long-standing agreements. Above, the **U.S. Capitol Building** symbolizes the role of international support in enabling dialogue and resolution.

Crafted entirely from authentic stamps, this artwork is a visual prayer — for peace that is not only declared, but upheld and nurtured.

"1995" – In Memory of Yitzhak Rabin.



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This powerful collage pays tribute to **Yitzhak Rabin**, Israel's Prime Minister and a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, who was assassinated in 1995 for his efforts toward peace. His portrait, formed from historic Israeli stamps, is surrounded by symbolic elements: the **Nobel** medal, the **Rabin Memorial** in Tel Aviv, a memorial candle, and a **black ribbon of mourning**.

The repeated flame stamp background evokes both remembrance and resilience. This artwork stands as a visual moment of reflection — honoring a leader who gave his life for a vision of peace, and a nation forever marked by his legacy.

"Startup Nation" – The Spirit of Israeli Innovation.



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This striking collage celebrates the creative, technological, and cultural force of modern Israel. At its center is a stylized human figure, surrounded by floating screens and logos representing **science, medicine, technology, defense, agriculture, and media** — from Teva Pharmaceuticals to Iron Dome, to Israeli television and tech.

Built entirely from historic Israeli stamps, the background reflects the rich cultural heritage from which innovation emerges — combining ancient tradition with cutting-edge progress.

This piece captures the identity of Israel as a “Startup Nation,” where bold ideas, resilience, and ingenuity continue to shape the future.

"The Abraham Accords" – A New Flight Toward Peace.



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This artwork honors the **Abraham Accords**, signed in 2020–2021, which opened a historic path of peace and diplomatic relations between Israel and several Arab countries. At its heart, two hands shake in agreement — symbolizing dialogue, recognition, and hope.

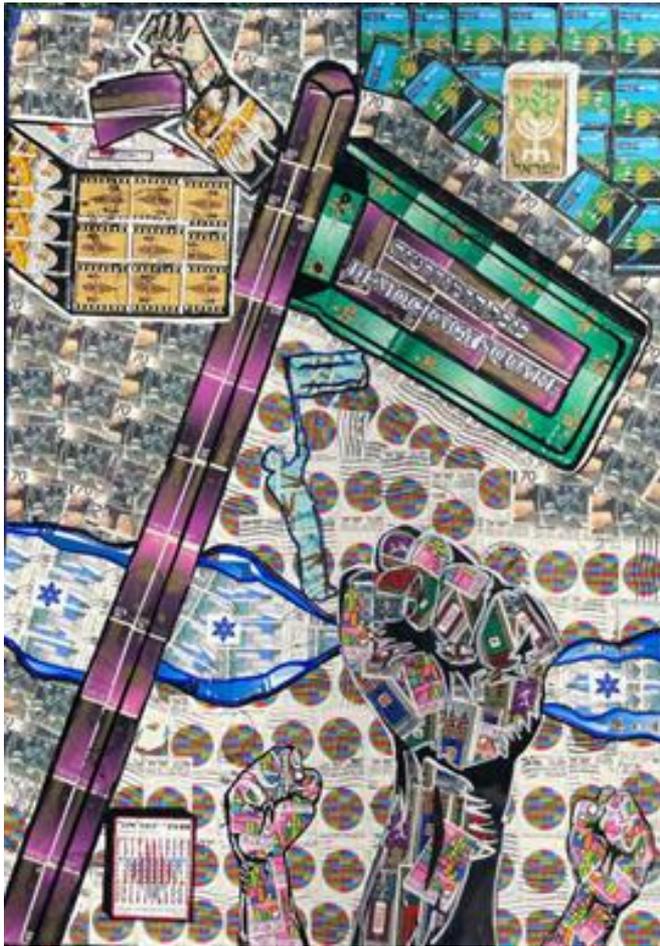
To the side stands the figure of **Avraham (Abraham)**, the shared patriarch of Judaism and Islam, evoking the spiritual and ancestral bond that connects nations. The Israeli emblem and the **crescent moon with a mosque** represent both identities. Above, a soaring **eagle symbolizes the United States**, which played a central role in facilitating the accords.

Composed entirely from Israeli stamps, the piece weaves history, faith, and diplomacy into a single visual statement of reconciliation and shared future.

"Democracy Square" – The Power of Protest and the Vote.



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This artwork reflects the spirit of civil resistance and the ongoing fight to preserve **Israeli democracy**. In the upper left corner, a **ballot box with a hand casting a vote** reminds us that democratic power begins not with protest, but with participation. At the heart of the piece stands the sign “**Democracy Square**”, referencing the Tel Aviv plaza that became a symbol of public demonstration.

Across the canvas, **raised fists, the Israeli flag**, and visual elements inspired by media and freedom of expression capture the energy of a nation defending its values.

Constructed entirely from Israeli stamps, the piece is a bold call to action — a visual statement that democracy must be lived, voiced, and fiercely protected.

October, 7th.



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Through this artwork, as an artist I pay tribute to the resilience of a nation, honouring its past while remaining deeply connected to its present struggles and hopes for a peaceful future. The combination of traditional symbols with those of modern-day Israel creates a narrative that is both timeless and immediate, celebrating the enduring spirit and unity of a people bound by history, faith, and a shared longing for peace

Other Pictures

Michelle's Exhibit at the Israeli Consulate's Yom HaAztmaut Celebration.

Held in Toronto at Temple Sinai. (May 18, 2025).



Michelle's Exhibit at Mizrahi Canada's Yom HaAztmaut Celebration.

Held in Toronto at the Schwartz Reisman Jewish Community Center (April 30, 2025).



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The Herzl Project

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Michelle's work is part of David Matlow's "Herzl Project", the world's largest private collection of Theodor Herzl memorabilia (over 5,000 items) – see www.herzlcollection.com .

Through this website David hopes to inspire people to be a little like Herzl and pursue their dreams while working to improve the future of the Jewish people and the State of Israel and help to build a better tomorrow for everyone.

The Herzl Project.



The End