



## Artist Archie Rand Named 2020 Farash Fellow

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*Farash Foundation/MAG News release*  
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Celebrated painter and muralist Archie Rand has been named the next Farash Fellow for the Advancement of Jewish Humanities and Culture, sponsored by the Max and Marian Farash Charitable Foundation.

As he begins his Rochester residency in the summer of 2020, the University of Rochester's Memorial Art Gallery will mount an exhibition of Rand's magnum opus called "The 613" (2001–06). This 1,700 square-foot multi-panel painting depicts emotional and intuitive—and, to some, surprising—responses to the 613 Biblical commandments. Images for each of the commandments are mounted as a contiguous grid; each image is rimmed by formal gold edging with the Hebrew number of the commandment. The enormous body of work is an example of Rand's groundbreaking achievements in the construction of a contemporary Jewish iconography.

"The 613" explores both traditions of biblical interpretation and of artistic expression. Interrogation is a common strategy among the individual panels, as the images may underscore, contradict, and very often obscure the teachings of the referenced commandments. Quoting masterworks by artists such as Paul Cézanne and Edouard Manet and enlisting imagery from Jewish comic artists, Rand interweaves visual culture and Scripture which, ironically, has been interpreted historically to forbid the creation of idols, images, and even art more broadly.

On another level, "The 613" also challenges commonly held distinctions between abstraction and representation. By linking the Bible's commandments with oftentimes seemingly unrelated pictures, Rand undermines how people usually expect words and images to function when they are juxtaposed with each other. His loose, pulp fiction-inspired, almost cartoon-like painterly style is as irreverent to the history of painting as it is to the religious traditions it purports to document. The complexity of it all encourages an investigation of both systems of knowledge, that of art history and of Judaism, and demands an engaged viewing on the part of its audience. "The 613" is fundamentally a study of how meaning is made.

Rand has an acclaimed history of pioneering Jewish visual projects, among them a commission to paint the entire interior of the B'nai Yosef synagogue in Brooklyn (1974–77) covering 11,000 square feet of wall space, making it the only thematically mural-painted synagogue in the world since Dura-Europas in third century Syria.

"We are honored to have this wonderfully inventive artist join us in Rochester as the recipient of the 2020 Farash Fellowship, and greatly pleased to collaborate with the Memorial Art Gallery for a display of this immersive, stunning work," said Holli Budd, executive director of the Farash Foundation.

MAG's Mary W. and Donald R. Clark Director Jonathan P. Binstock added, "Archie Rand's fluid, highly sophisticated illustrational style belies a philosophical approach that challenges viewers to rethink preconceptions of how words and images interrelate, and what we mean when we say that a picture is worth 1,000 words." Binstock continued, "MAG is thrilled to help bring 'The 613,' an extraordinary

artistic accomplishment by any measure, to Rochester.”

Farash Fellows is a residency program bringing some of the world’s leading Jewish artists, philosophers, and thinkers to Rochester. Each Fellow receives a \$100,000 award. In 2018, the widely acclaimed Israeli author Amos Oz served as the inaugural Farash Fellow.

Archie Rand’s work is displayed around the world and is included in the collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Art Institute of Chicago, Victoria and Albert Museum in London, Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, and the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. There have been over 100 solo exhibitions of his work. He has created collaborative projects with many poets, among whom are Robert Creeley, John Ashbery, Kenneth Koch, Clark Coolidge, David Plante, John Yau, Bill Berkson, David Lehman, Bob Holman, Lewis Warsh and David Shapiro.

Rand was awarded, among numerous honors, the Achievement Medal for Contributions to the Visual Arts by the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, and he received the Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship. Formerly chair of the Department of Visual Arts at Columbia University, he is currently the Presidential Professor of Art at Brooklyn College, in the City University of New York. His home and studio are located in Brooklyn, New York.