In Spring 2014 I received an Otis Faculty Development Grant, which covered the cost of mounting 26 light jet prints on 8x10” wood panels.

“26 Passports” is a series of digitally manipulated scans of my expired passport in which I edited out my face, surname and signature replacing them with a social-media-like avatar and common surnames (with new signatures to match) from a range of cultures around the world, one for each letter of the English alphabet. This involved extensive anthroponymastic research in the global practices of family naming, and detailed PhotoShop work including recreating the colors, textures and font from the original passport. The project invites viewers to imagine how their perceptions of what this person looks like might change based on her surname. It was conceived of in response to often being told "You don't look Jewish; your last name isn't Jewish," but also references the racial profiling of our post 9/11 era.
Michele Lynn

United States of America

12 Mar/Mar 75

New York, U.S.A.

11 Sep/Sept 95

Miami

24

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0444461386USA7503120F05091010C

scan of original passport
one of 26 digitally altered passports, light jet print, 8x10”

I worked on this project in 2009, but due to budget constraints waited to have the prints properly mounted until I had the opportunity to exhibit it. Over the past four years I’ve submitted this work to several curators and galleries and was met with little interest until Isabelle Lutterodt, Director of Visual Arts at Angeles Gate Cultural Center came to my studio. She was visiting to consider some of my videos for a
series of exhibitions she was curating. According to her call for proposals she was “seeking artwork that contains strong narratives, ranging from issues of culture and identity to diversity and adversity;” and when she saw “26 Passports” thumb-tacked to the wall in my studio and learned more about the piece she decided to show it instead of my videos.

“26 Passports” installed in my studio

The exhibition *Gettin’ Off The Ground: Contemporary Stories from An American Community* opened February 9, 2014 at Angels Gate Cultural Center Gallery, and runs through April 11, 2014. At the end of Fall semester I began researching how and where to get these 26 photos mounted on wood. After collecting quotes from a few vendors I selected one who would mount the prints to pre-made panels I would provide. Although this brought the cost down it caused some challenges due to the fact that the store bought panels were not all precisely the same size and the fact that the French cleats made by the vendor were a bit crooked, requiring the gallery to add D-rings, picture hanging wire and museum wax to each panel in order for it to hang in a precise grid. Ultimately I was very happy with the result, although the challenges caused much stress at the time and it is unlikely I will use that vendor for photo mounting again.

I am very excited about this exhibition because it is a new venue for me, and a chance to exhibit work that has not yet been shown in public. This grant allowed me to exhibit the project in the most professional way possible and greatly contributes to my professional achievement as an artist. I look forward to sharing this work with my Otis colleagues at an upcoming Academic Assembly and invite everyone to see the exhibition before it comes down.
“26 Passports” installed at Angels Gate Cultural Center’s Main Gallery II
detail of “26 Passports” installed at Angels Gate Cultural Center’s Main Gallery II