

YOU DID **WHAT**
TO MY COMICS?!?

THE TWELVE TRIBES

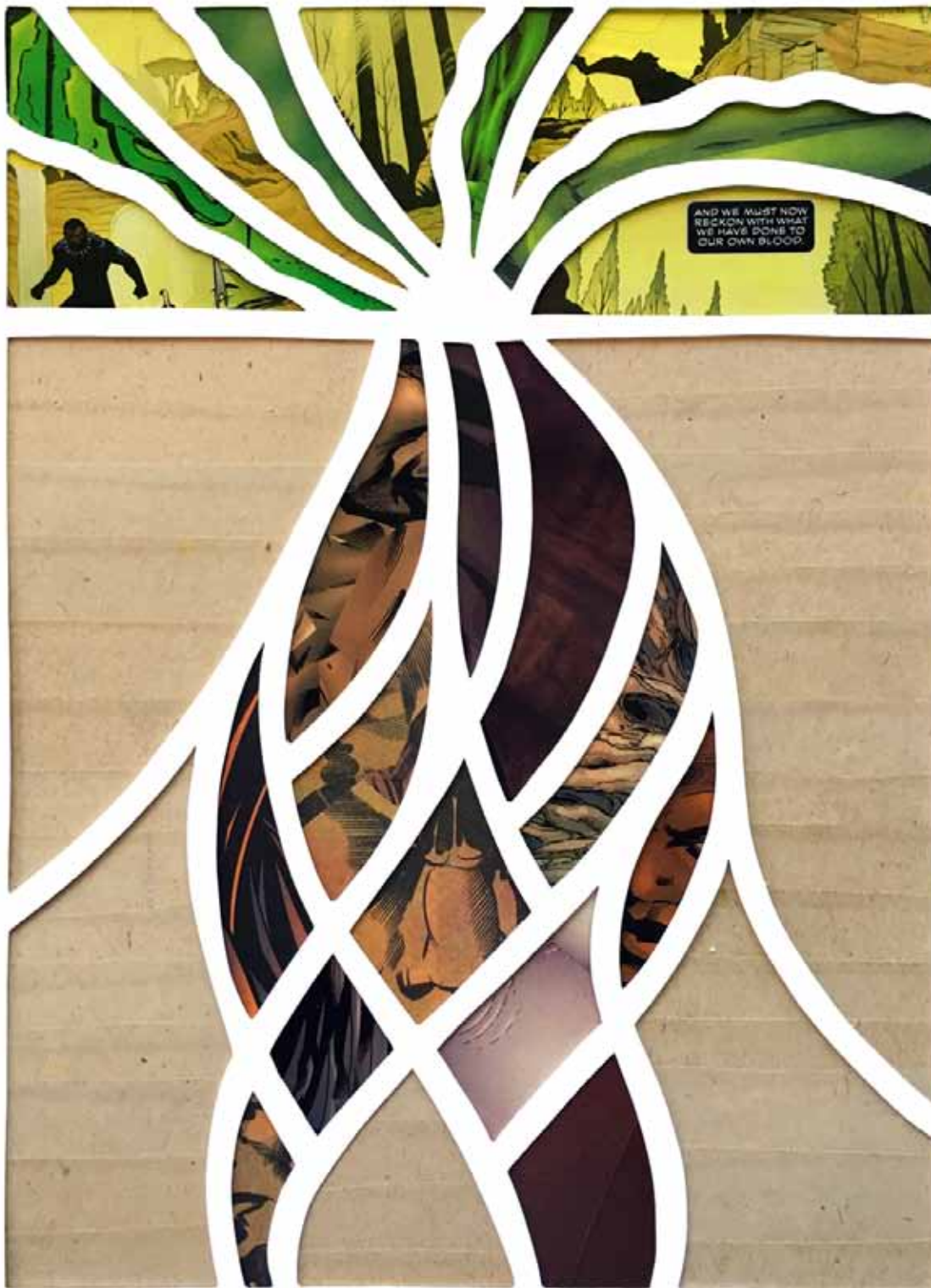
ISAAC
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BRAVE NEW WORLD COMICS
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My twelve tribes series is an exploration of diversity and family. Just as the tribes were different from one another in character and vision, so are the tribes that make up the United States — and our nation is at its best when we join together.

Each of the papercuts in the series is made from cut-up comics featuring a minority super hero, in an effort to focus on these less-frequently heard voices, and to celebrate them. At the same time, I think about this series as voices of American dissent, at a time when we must all stand together and speak up against evil to ensure that our vision of a more perfect union remains intact.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the letters 'J' and 'B' followed by a superscript '2'.



Our Own Blood (Reuben)

11" x 14"

Mixed media

The mandrake is the symbol of Reuben, first son of Jacob; he gave some to his mother Leah to help with her infertility. This cut is made from comics featuring the Wakandan King T'Challa, known as the Black Panther — the first black super hero in mainstream comic books. T'Challa's birthright makes demands on him that he must balance against his own desires, as Reuben must later choose whether to wage war alongside his brothers.

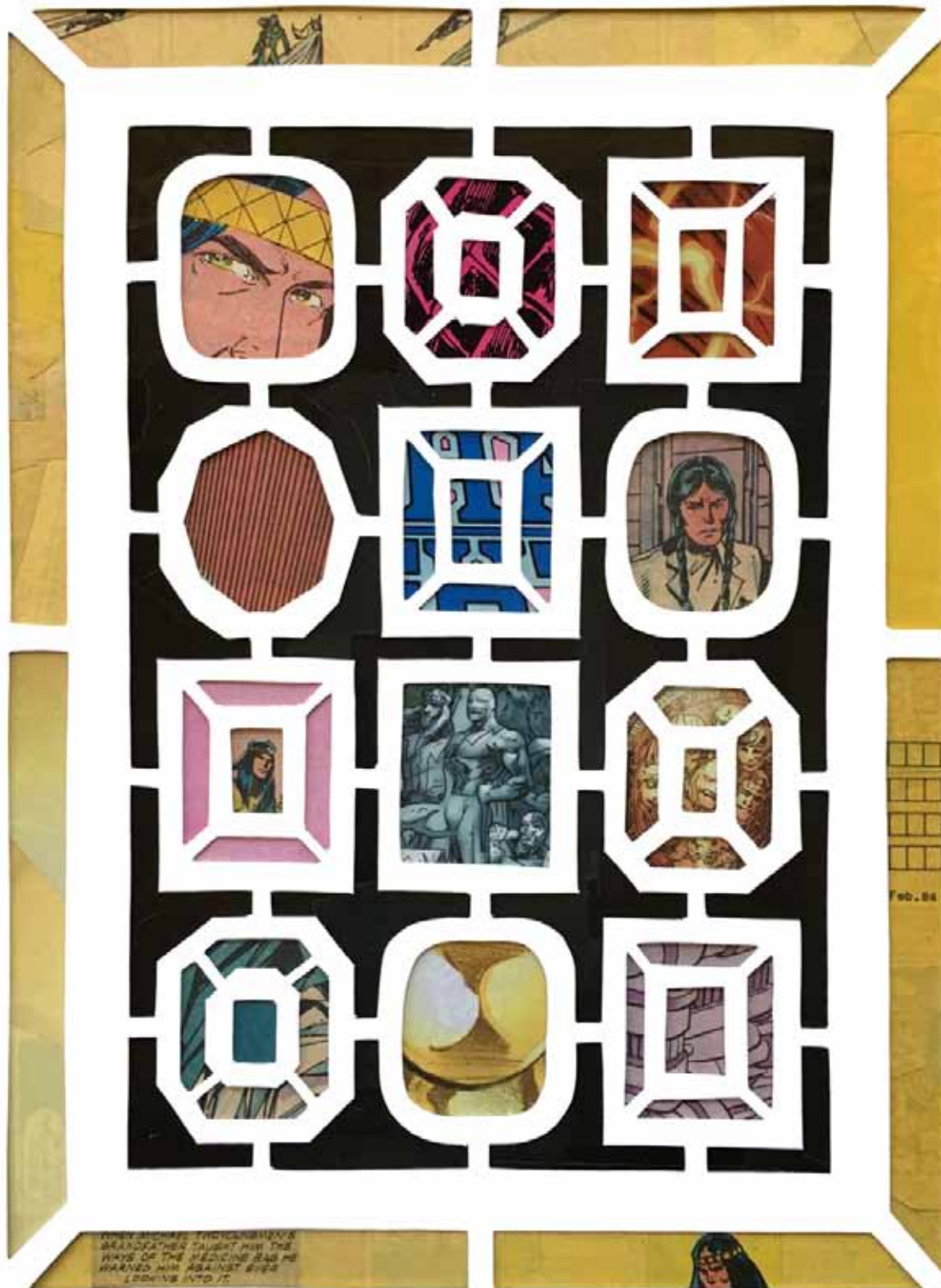


You're Nasty (Simeon)

11" x 14"

Mixed media

Simeon is represented by city gates, here made of comics featuring the Latina crimefighter White Tiger, Angela del Toro — a former FBI agent who inherited magic amulets from her uncle, and who now patrols the streets of New York as a super hero. The recontextualization of the word "nasty" is a reference to (then-candidate) Donald Trump's insult to Hillary Clinton, which was reclaimed by her followers as a show of resistance.



The Medicine Bag (Levi)

11" x 14"

Mixed media

The tribe of Levi is symbolized by the breastplate of the Israelite priests. A man of magic and ritual, Dr. Michael Twoyoungmen (a member of Canada's First Nations) takes the name Shaman and, as a founding member of the Canadian super team Alpha Flight, fights for good with his enchanted medicine bag. As Aaron's sons were trained to follow their father's ways but disobeyed him, so too does Shaman struggle with the life he has been born into.



Let Her Speak (Judah)

11" x 14"

Mixed media

The tribe of Judah is known by the symbol of the lion, here made of comics featuring African heroine Storm, leader of the X-Men. The daughter of a tribal princess from Kenya, Ororo Munroe was raised in Harlem and her mutant power enables her to control the weather. Like Judah, she is a natural leader, and is particularly sensitive to the plight of the downtrodden, having been homeless and victimized as a young girl.



Whatever the Cost (Dan)
 11" x 14"
 Mixed media

The tribe of Dan is represented as a viper, and sometimes scales of justice. This papercut is made from comics featuring the African-American hero Vixen (Mari Jiwe McCabe). She wears a totem that gives her all of the powers of the animal kingdom, as long as she uses them to protect the innocent. The scales of the viper are a bit of wordplay to underscore Vixen's quest for justice "whatever the cost."



When I Realize (Naphtali)
 11" x 14"
 Mixed media

The symbol of Naphtali is the gazelle, but its name comes from the Hebrew for "my struggle." This papercut is made from comics featuring Ms. Marvel (Kamala Khan), a teenage Muslim immigrant from Pakistan living in New Jersey. Still struggling to balance the demands of her traditional religious background with her desire to just "fit in" with the secular world, she mysteriously develops super powers and takes the name from her role model.



Bullets Won't Stop Him (Gad)

11" x 14"

Mixed media

Luke Cage comics form these tents, the traditional symbol of the tribe of Gad. Cage was wrongfully imprisoned and gained superhuman strength and unbreakable skin after being an unwilling experimental subject. As he deals with those who would oppress him (a black man with bulletproof skin being particularly poignant in present-day America), he finds love with Jessica Jones, and the tents represent his desire to build a home and family with her.



Beware My Power (Asher)
11" x 14"
Mixed media

The traditional symbol for Asher is the olive tree, a symbol of peace in many cultures. This papercut is made from cut-up comics featuring the first Muslim Green Lantern, Simon Baz. A Lebanese-American, he has a prominent Arabic tattoo (which reads "courage") and finds himself the object of suspicion and mistrust — though he is tasked with being a guardian of all life and advocate for peace on the planet.

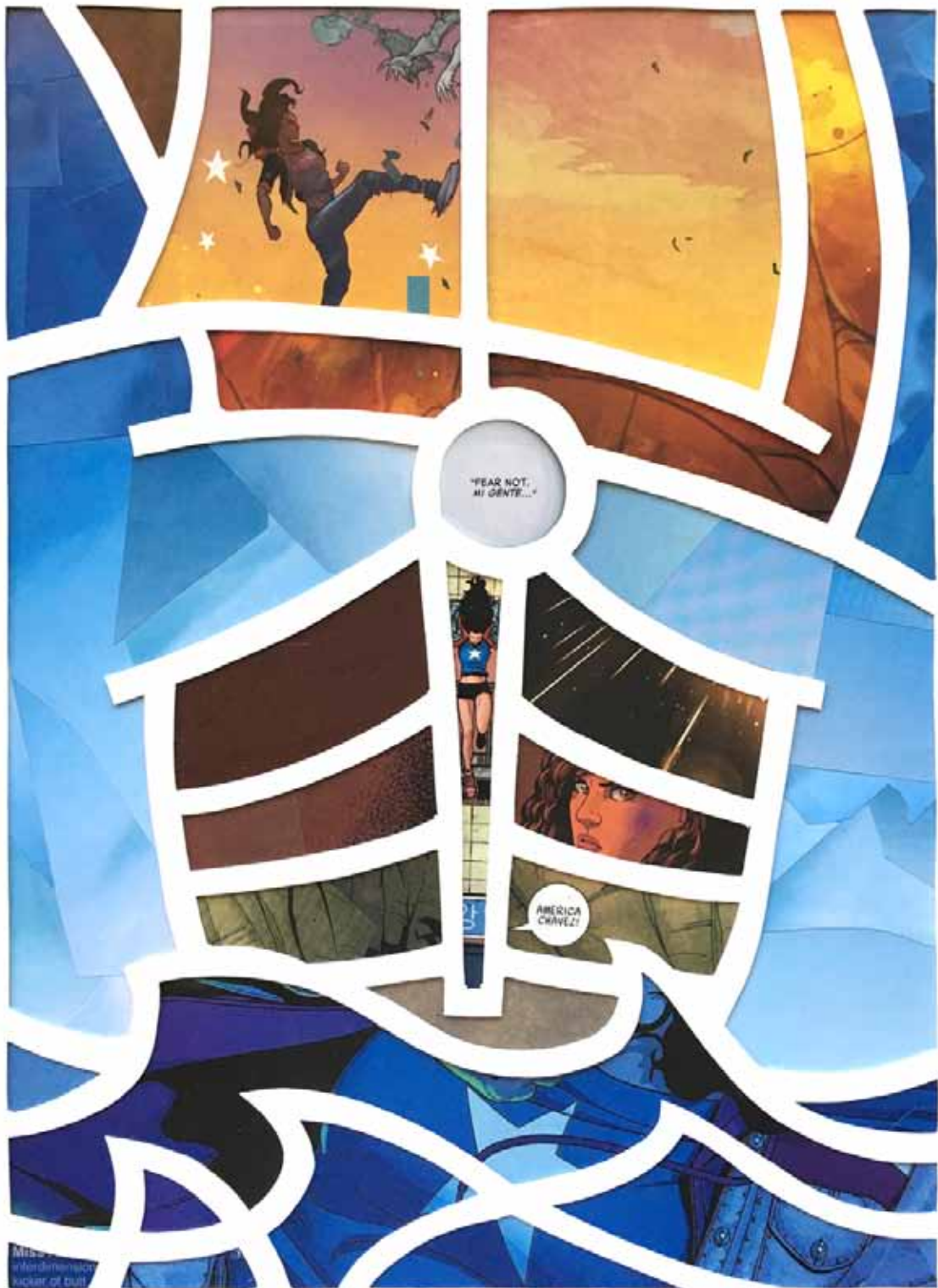


Sun and Moon (Issachar)

11" x 14"

Mixed media

Issachar is traditionally represented by the sun and moon, and so this papercut is made of cut-up comics featuring Japanese hero Shiro Yoshida, known as Sunfire, and Dani Moonstar, a Cheyenne Native American who uses the name Psyche. The name may be a portmanteau of "yesh sachar" — "there will be a reward" — but these heroes are both mutants, feared and hated for who they are; there is often no reward for their acts of selfish heroism.



Fear Not (Zebulon)
11" x 14"
Mixed media

America Chavez is the queer Latina hero whose comics make up the boat in this papercut, symbol of the tribe of Zebulon. She takes the name Miss America, and wears the stars and stripes. She has superhuman strength and durability, the power of flight, and the power to kick open holes in reality, allowing her and her teammates to travel through the multiverse and into other realities, which here alludes to the traditional view of Zebulon as travelers.



Fancy Clothes, Fancy Name (Joseph)

11" x 14"

Mixed media

Joseph is represented by the coat of many colors, and the land of Egypt. This cut is made of comics featuring Vibe (Paco Ramone), a Latino gang member-turned-hero from Detroit who wears flashy colorful clothes, knows how to breakdance, and can emit powerful vibratory shock waves. He can become too caught up in his image for his own good, and his "vibe" power sometimes gives him visions of the future.



Yes, My Love (Benjamin)

11" x 14"

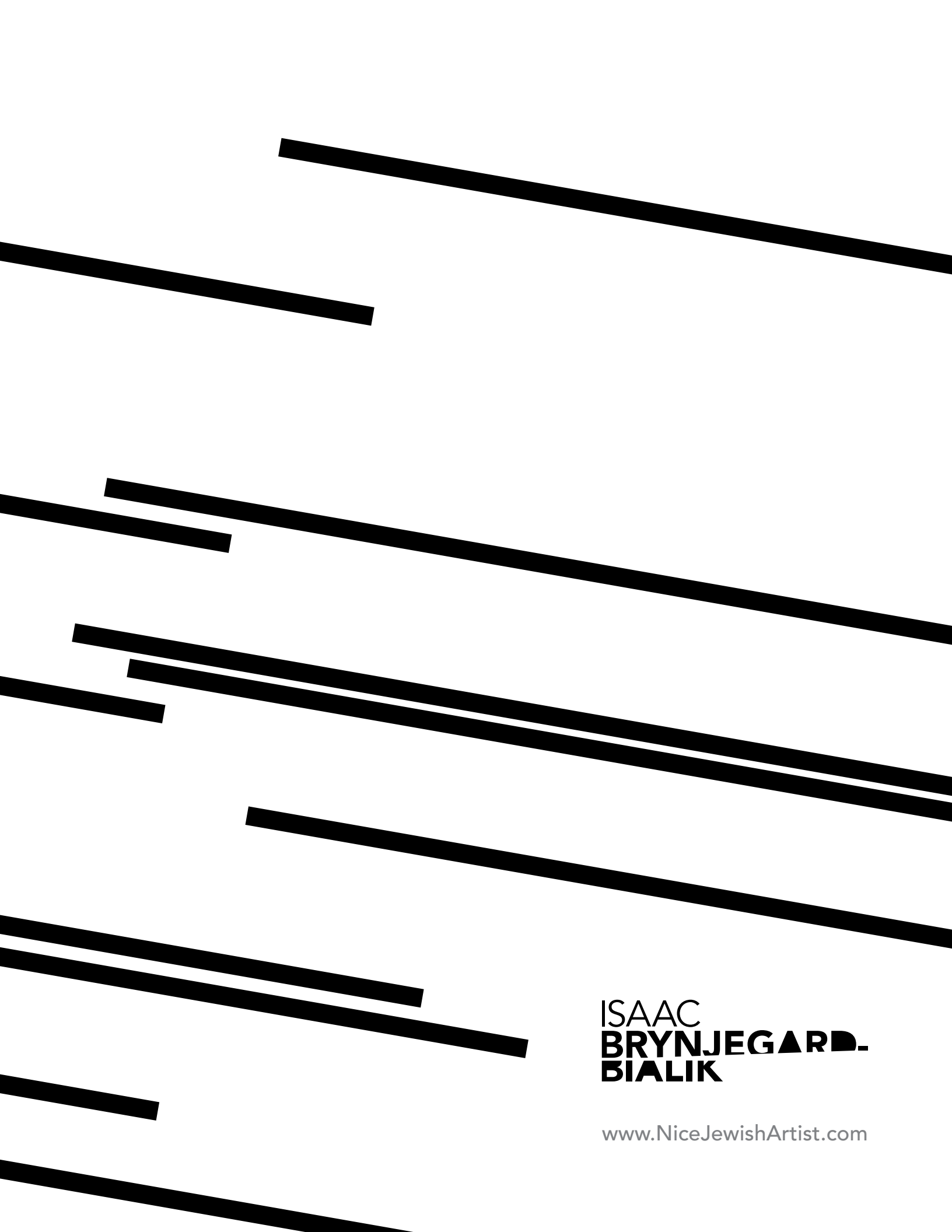
Mixed media

The traditional symbol for Benjamin, youngest son of Jacob and Rachel, is the wolf; his name literally means "son of my right hand." This papercut is made from cut-up comics featuring Japanese hero Katana (Tatsu Yamashiro), who takes her name from the type of sword she wields, which she believes is possessed by the soul of her husband. Just like Benjamin, her choices are often influenced by the perceived wishes of her family.



Lock Her Up (Dina)
11" x 14"
Mixed media

Dina is the daughter of Jacob and Leah, not traditionally counted as one of the twelve tribes. A midrash tells us that Jacob locked her in a box when she was young to protect her from curious men — she's criticized for leaving the box, and when she goes out into town with her arm exposed she is blamed for what happens next (see the tragic events of Genesis 34). The box is a symbol of all the ways women are held back by other people's words and expectations, made of comics in which women are "boxed in" by negative or misogynist comments, including a pointed reference to the last presidential campaign. Catwoman's cowl, and the pink throughout the papercut, represent the pussy hat.



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