

ARARAT: MOBILITY AND REVERSE DIASPORA IN THE SENTIENT CITY

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In the absence of a richly documented history, Jewish culture and heritage yearns collectively for a place where deep archival vaults of tangible heritage – architecture in particular – might provide the material evidence of lost individual and collective Jewish nationhood. What if, through the analytical lens of inventiveness, subversion and irony, a heritage tour could visit and build on the ruins of failed attempts at constructing a homeland?



This paper will consider how we imagine reverse diasporic flows in the now porous, sentient city by paying special attention to the evolving conversation between architecture as a fixed physical place and the digital interventions in urban space. At the heart of this discussion, I will present “Mapping Ararat: An Imaginary Jewish Homelands Project” by artist, Melissa Shiff, an architecturally augmented reality project based on the 1825 manifesto, *Ararat*, by Major Mordecai Noah, for a Jewish homeland – “a city of refuge for the Jews” for Grand Island, New York. Shiff’s project deploys situated technologies (augmented reality and simulated geo-spatial mapping specifically) to imagine the failed homeland project. As a result, this project raises important questions that complicate and theorize considerations of material culture, imagined homelands and cartography and ultimately, the notion of the fixity of identity and place.