

Why You Should Go To Governors Island Art Fair

by Gabriela Vainsencher

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Joshi in action. (Screenshot from vimeo.com/mayaciarrocchi)

Of Maya Ciarrocchi (<http://www.mayaciarrocchi.com/>)'s video interviews (<https://vimeo.com/66359753>) of ex-orthodox Jews, I found two especially riveting: the first is Joshi, who chops chicken and vegetables for the camera, cooking show-style, while referring to his old community as “monkeys”. His unapologetic disdain and frank derogation for the community he was raised in initially made me uncomfortable, but then it made me think that we all talk about our own communities in ways we would never tolerate from outsiders. Maybe Joshi’s hostility actually illustrates how you can never truly leave your roots behind.

Another video captures Melissa (formerly Malki) telling a story of how her intellectual curiosity got her in trouble growing up as a Satmar Hasid: after going some extra miles in her pursuit of her Torah studies and asking the Rabbi too many questions, he told her to stop “wanting to be like a man”- a sentiment that goes mostly unsaid (but not unthought) in secular culture.