My Grandparents were Jews who were forced from Germany during the Second World War. Mexico welcomed them ambivalently, and they, in turn, spent their lives in permanent nostalgia for their lost homeland. Paradox, alienation, pre-occupation with time and with loss run through our family history, and create my need to lavish large-scale paintings with detailed symbolism and with layers of imagery and text. No one artistic or cultural tradition dominates my background, but the ritual labor of activities such as writing, embroidering, painting and drawing have become a meditative method that I employ to express reverence for the power in language and image to illuminate experience within the imagination. Just as my family has had to put various cultural traditions together to create a sense of home, so also have I tried to bring the expansive possibilities inherent in oil painting together with less traditional techniques such as stenciling, stitching and stippling to create my own artistic sense of place.

My work combines an obsessive dedication to technical precision and to traditional materials with a growing belief in the visual impact of collaged and painted text. Words have a visual presence. They are actual gestures, printed marks upon a two-dimensional surface. My artwork attempts to bridge the gap between what is perceived as a book and what is perceived as a piece of visual art. At its most elemental, a book is a series of words upon a receptive surface. And at its most elemental, a piece of art is the expression in visual form of an idea, feeling or thought. I try to fuse prose that is narrative, with images that are visual to create an entity that is simultaneously a story and an image and not purely either of the two. It is important for me to use phrases that move through time, so that the viewer experiences reading one of my paintings as they would experience reading a book. And I try to use the same “characters” over and over, except that my characters are recurrent symbols and/or fragments of language that change in scale and coloration as they are juxtaposed over or under various significant narratives.

I have always been fascinated by the traditional techniques available to the artist, and I have mixed many of my own materials, including my oil paints, in the last five years. When I paint or draw, I try to be engaged with process and with craft from the inception of the piece. Memory, and its translation into words intrigues me, and I enjoy contrasting robust and lush surfaces, with texts and images that describe the persistent and inescapable throb of sensual and spiritual recollection and regret.

The physical substance that is oil paint can be used as a metaphor to express our corporeal and emotional realities. Thus, I allow the paint a physical life on the canvas that is separate from my narrative intentions. Often, when the paint drips or clumps, I leave it, and allow these inchoate passages to evoke associations in the viewer. A drip of paint can be a secretion, sweat, tears, blood. But it can also remain a passage of liquid pigment. A clot of paint can be a birthmark, a tumor, a conflict, a blockage. But it can also remain an area of pigment that is heavy and raised. Incised passages of thick paint can evoke graffiti, wrinkles or wounds. Or, they can remain simply, paint that has been cut into with line. Paint is an organic substance with an animated tactile reality. Its unpredictability is the poetry that I depend upon to make the stories that I wish to tell secondary to the history, power, and truth of paint applied to canvas.

Four ongoing series of works have dominated my creative life for the past five years. An installation-in-progress, An Imagined Survival/A Conjured Identity will locate the viewer within an atmosphere of words. The installation will address the interplay between writing as a container for memory and writing as a series of loops and lines that elicit non-verbal emotional responses. I hope that the creation of an installation that functions like an encompassing memoir that the viewer can walk through and experience physically will be a visual expression of the reverent, abstract space that any great narrative contains. My relatives used words to reinvent themselves after the Second World War. Language also helped them to interpret and to understand the nostalgia for home and preoccupation with memory that the war engendered.
Other ongoing series of works include a collection of meticulously detailed large-scale oil paintings, *In My Spanky-Wanky World*, and two series of drawings in ink, watercolor and stitching on paper, *Words and Pictures* and *From The Nursery*. I tried to create environments with these works, either by surrounding the viewer with four walls of thematically linked drawings, or by overwhelming the viewer with the enormous scale of the paintings. Each drawing in the series is made entirely by hand. The images are never traced, nor are they transferred. Sewing into paper, writing and recollecting upon paper, stippling paper, and agitating paper with ink and needle, creates an obsessive surface quality that acts as a metaphor for memory itself, and for memory’s tendency to agitate, to poke and to be embellished.

The intimate, daily details of living outside of a dominant culture reverberate for me, and I would like to bring the beauty of memoir and the craft of painting into unexpected arenas such as hospital pavilions, prison waiting rooms, Christian seminaries, Jewish Yeshivas and the settlement houses of New York’s Lower East Side. I believe that the most receptive audience for my work are viewers who know the potent alienation of homesickness and cultural disorientation, but is it my hope that my work is inclusive enough to speak to anyone who has found himself or herself observing.

The interaction between drawing and painting, installation and display, large and small, and words and images helps to evoke my perception that the need to express certain facts about history is equal to the need to express the convoluted fantasies that we each carry about the meaning of our own unique histories. Though my works are about the upheavals experienced by just one family, it is my hope that through the language of common image and utterance, I can speak to many diverse viewers.