

## Program

- **Dates:** June 21 - July 2, 2024
- **Theme:** *Gilgul* – The Concept of Reincarnation and Cycles
- **Language:** Polish & English
- **Number of Events:** 18
- **Duration:** 10 days

## Participation

The jury for this year's event represents a diverse group of accomplished artists and cultural figures, each bringing a unique perspective to the evaluation process. Patrycja Dołowy, a writer, multimedia artist, and social activist, is known for her deep engagement with identity and memory, often working with oral histories and testimonies. Her artistic works have been featured in over sixty exhibitions worldwide. Rachel Libeskind, a multidisciplinary artist, explores the construction of history through collage, installation, and performance. Her works have been showcased in renowned institutions such as Harvard University and the ZKM Center for Art and Media. Jacqueline Nicholls, a London-based visual poet and artist, draws inspiration from Jewish texts and has exhibited internationally, with her works held in prestigious collections like the ANU Museum in Tel Aviv. Natan Kryszk, a saxophonist, sculptor, and composer, is an active participant in Warsaw's improvised music scene and a co-founder of the Pokusa trio, performing at major festivals across Europe. Lastly, Michael Rubinfeld, an award-winning actor, playwright, and producer, brings extensive experience from his work in Canada, the U.S., and Europe, where he is also a co-director of FestivALT. Together, this jury embodies a broad range of artistic disciplines and cultural insights, ensuring a thorough and thoughtful selection process.

The diverse pool of submissions—71 in total—came from countries around the world, including South Africa, the USA, Czech Republic, Spain, Argentina, Israel, the Netherlands, France, Poland, Lithuania, Norway, Italy, Sweden, Austria, Germany, Mexico, Canada, the UK, Hungary, Morocco, Denmark, Iran, Zimbabwe, and Finland. This unprecedented geographic diversity speaks to the global relevance and appeal of FestivALT's programming. In the end 8 projects were selected for presentation, featuring 16 artists.

FestivALT 2024 attracted over 1000 participants from across 11 EU countries (Poland, Germany, France, Sweden, Greece, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Hungary, Spain, Austria, Netherlands) and 15 non-EU countries (including the US, Canada, Israel, and Australia). The festival garnered significant attention, both locally and internationally, reflecting its growing impact on the cultural and activist landscape. Several projects featured in the festival were later picked up and presented by prestigious institutions, including Resursa Kultury in Radom, the Polin Museum in Warsaw, and UC Irvine in California, signaling the wide-reaching influence of FestivALT's programming.

The festival's exploration of *Gilgul* provided a thematic thread that connected various events and performances, inviting participants to consider cycles of history, identity, and memory in personal and communal contexts. By engaging with these cycles, FestivALT fostered conversations about the role of Jewish culture and activism in response to contemporary challenges such as rising nationalism, antisemitism, and the refugee crisis.

### June 21 (Friday):

The festival opened with a bold statement of cultural and artistic exploration. *Blinder Schnee*, a fusion of low rock and free jazz, offered new arrangements of classic Yiddish songs, performed by an international trio from the US, Germany, and Argentina. Following this, Maria Ka captivated the audience with her solo outdoor concert *Di szajchesn*, blending contemporary Yiddish songs with modern visual effects to explore personal heritage and memory.

### June 22 (Saturday):

The concert titled *Trzaska/Kryszk*, led by Natan Kryszk and Mikołaj Trzaska, was a highlight, pushing the boundaries of sound while inviting the audience to experience a deep connection to the Jewish musical tradition. This concert exemplified FestivALT's commitment to fostering artistic experimentation within the Jewish cultural framework.

### June 23 (Sunday):

The festival took an interactive turn with *The Long Table*, an experimental public forum that encouraged participants to engage in a respectful dialogue on the war in the Middle East. Moderated by Polish-Palestinian Alina Palichleb and Poland-based Jewish artist Julie Weitz, this session created a space for nuanced conversations about the war, identity, and community. Later, *Searching for Myself*—Anna Rabbit's exhibition—invited viewers to reflect on personal memory and identity through a series of evocative illustrations, setting the tone for the introspective nature of the festival.

### June 25-27 (Tuesday-Thursday):

A one-on-one performance *IN // TENT* by Dominika Laster, was offered over three days and explored themes of hospitality and sanctuary through ritual washing. This was followed by the *Chewra Tehilim Workshop*, a re-imagined *beit midrash* (study hall) led by Sabrina Cegła and Aleksandra Janus, focusing on innovative approaches to Jewish learning and communal engagement. The outcomes of this workshop were presented to newly elected city officials, including the vice-Mayor, in a post-workshop meeting. The screening of *Scouts & Spirits* by Hungarian artist Klara Cserne bridged the gap between historical and imagined realities, highlighting the unique intersections of memory and modern life.

### June 26 (Wednesday):

Performance art took center stage with *Our Blood Is Red To Let Us Know*, a deeply moving piece by French artist Elif Cadoux that wove together familial folklore and Jewish longing through a combination of storytelling, cinema, and movement.

### June 27 (Thursday):

The *Other Worlds* workshop, which blended sci-fi writing and movement, encouraged participants to explore Jewish longings for sanctuary in a speculative and creative space. The day closed with a performance by the Berlin-based Minori-Tease Cabaret, whose multi-genre show *Jews! Jews! Jews!* celebrated Jewish identity through humor, art, and unapologetic self-expression.

### June 28 (Friday):

A performance of *The Knife*, based on a Sholem Aleichem story and presented by Radio Uziemienie, showcased the festival's dedication to reviving Yiddish literature and culture in innovative ways.

### June 29 & 30 (Saturday / Sunday):

A particularly provocative highlight was *Jeszcze Polska*, a satirical performance by Dorota Abbe and Michael Rubinfeld that imagined a future Poland with a Jewish majority. This event, along with the *Body Positivity Workshop* led by Betty Q, offered attendees opportunities to engage critically with Jewish identity, culture, and the politics of the body.

### June 30 (Sunday) & July 2 (Tuesday):

The festival closed with Julie Weitz's performance *Holy Names for Our Dybbuk*, a re-imagining of Yiddish folklore through site-specific rituals and movements. This piece epitomized the theme of *Gilgul*, as it invited the audience to participate in the cyclical process of remembering, performing, and reclaiming Jewish identity.

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FestivALT 2024 was a rich and dynamic exploration of Jewish arts, culture, and activism. With its diverse programming and emphasis on cycles of memory, identity, and engagement, the festival successfully created a platform for meaningful dialogue, artistic innovation, and cultural expression. The festival's ability to attract participants from across the globe underscores its relevance and growing influence in the field of contemporary Jewish art and activism.

FestivALT 2024 successfully fostered a space for meaningful dialogue and artistic expression around Jewish history, culture, and contemporary issues. For more details and updates, visit [FestivALT 2024 Program](#).