

Between the Lines

with Martin C. Winer

... seeing through the media you view

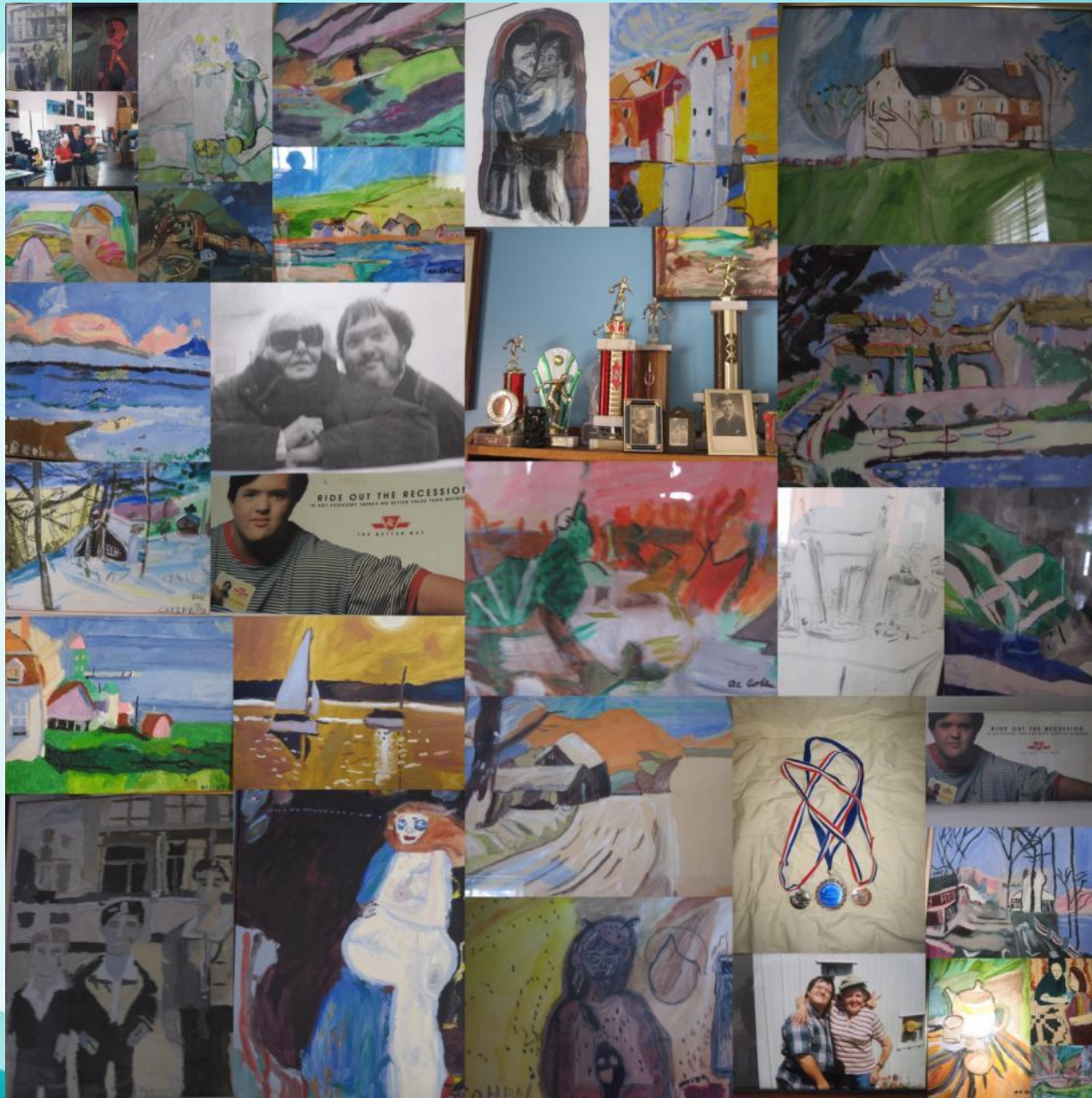
Marcel Cohen



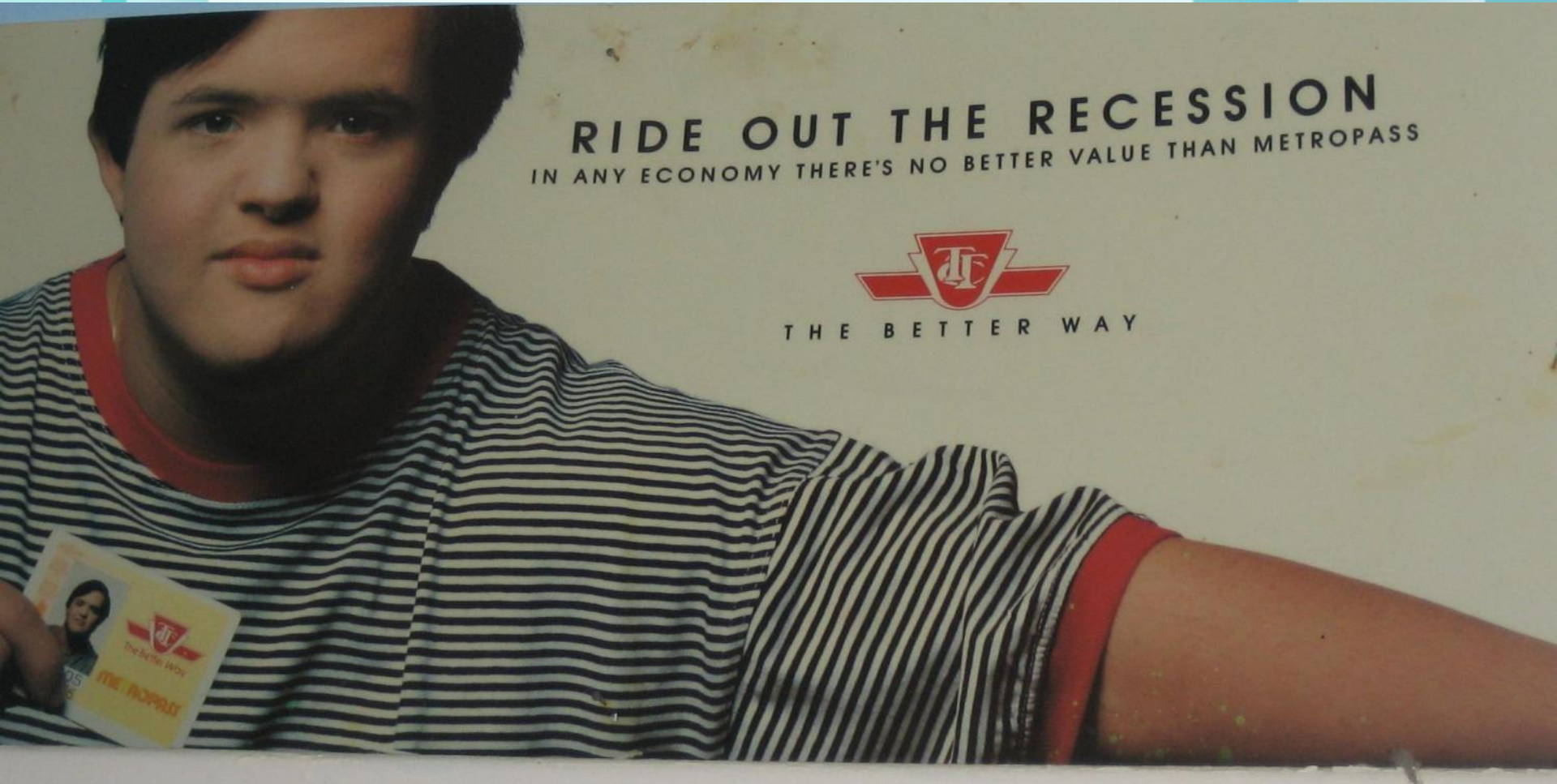
Aaron Paul Cohen

- **The following slides have details about Aaron Paul Cohen, Marcel's Brother who recently passed away.**

Aaron Paul Cohen



Aaron Cohen - TTC



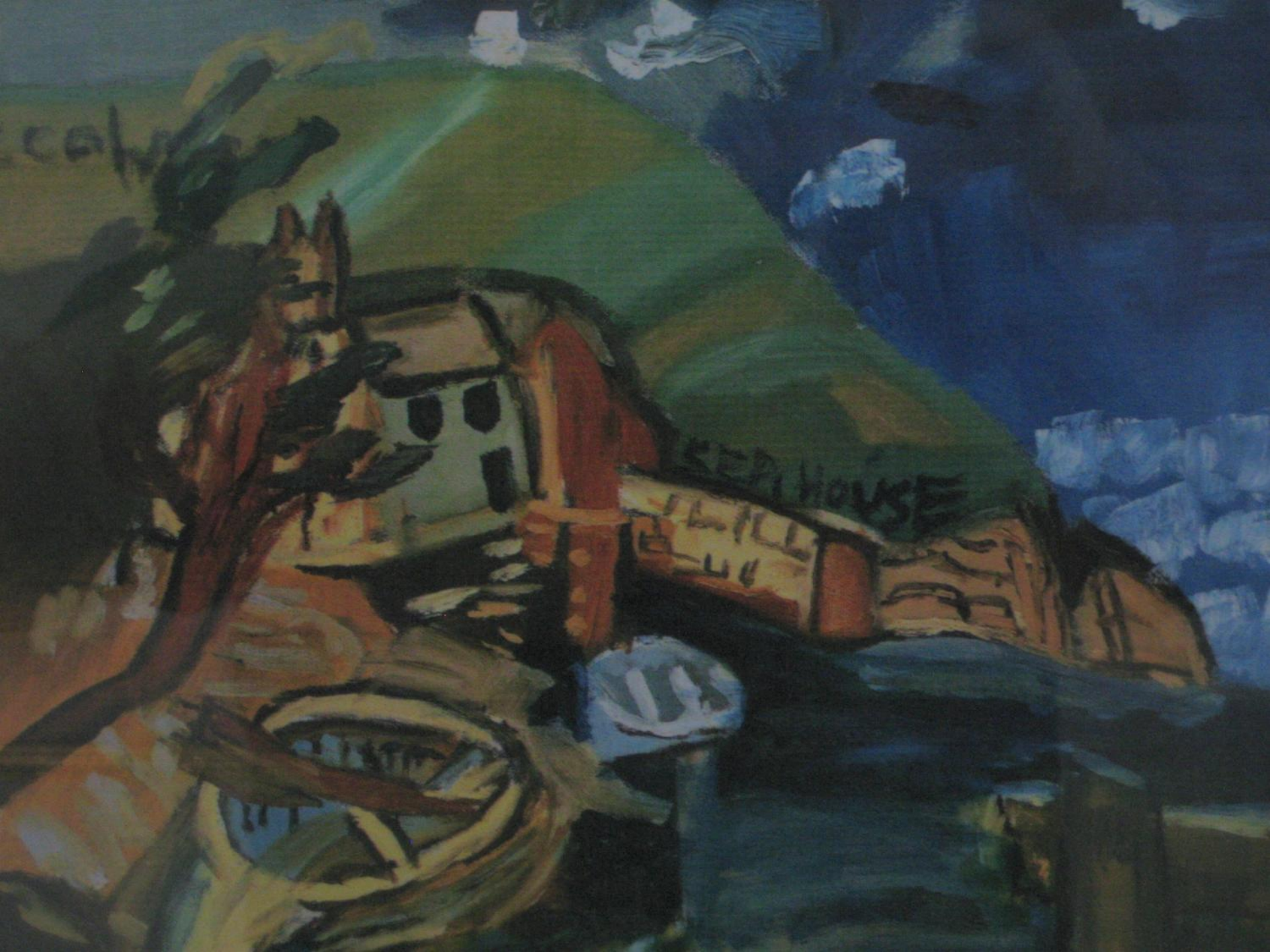






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Aaron Cohen At Muki Baum



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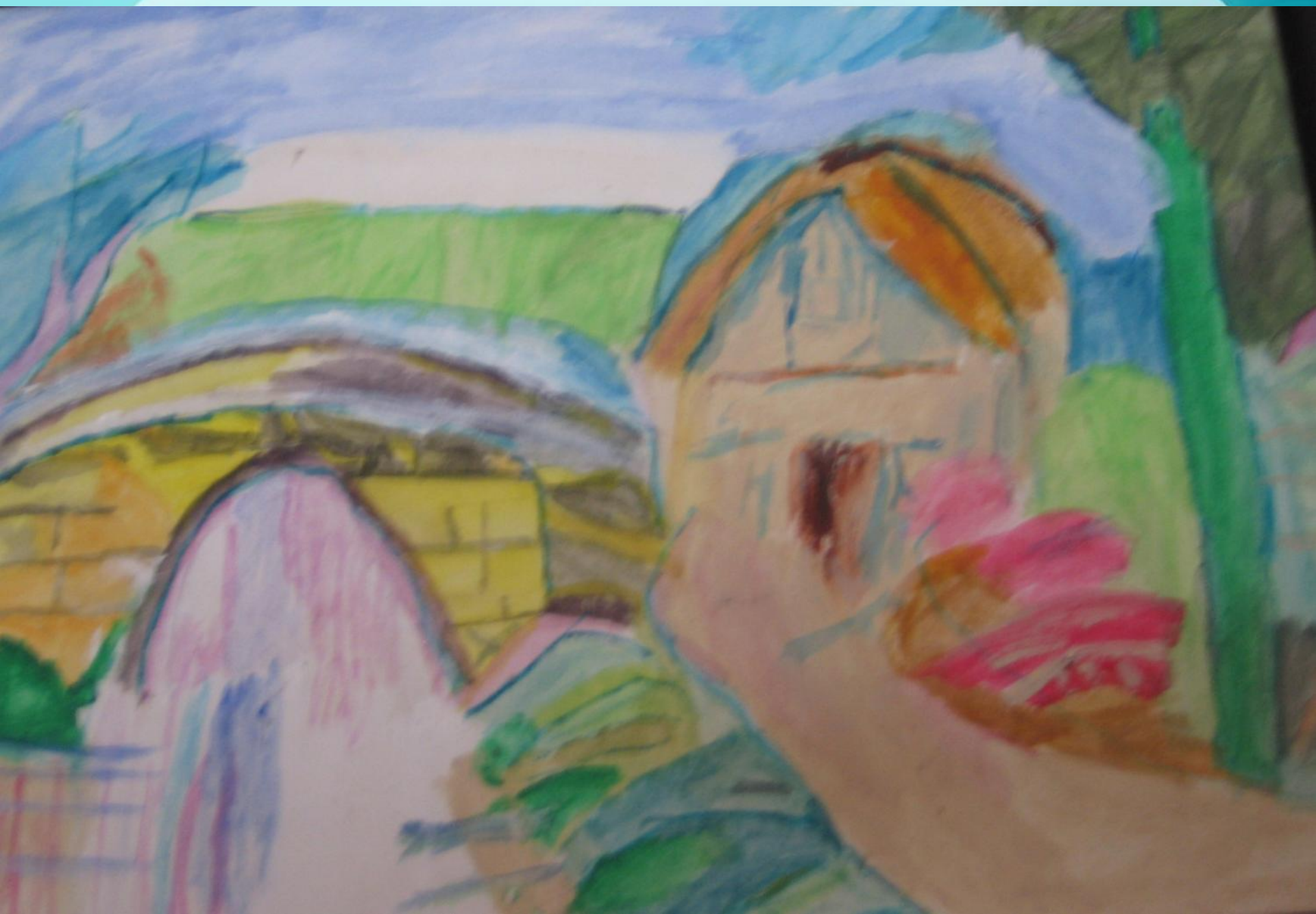
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Martin C. Winer

This is what happens when Martin gets tired of sending mass emails.

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Aaron Paul Cohen

February 14, 2011 mcwiner

No comments

Aaron Paul Cohen



Marcel Cohen discusses the remarkable achievements of his brother Aaron who passed away in December of 2010.



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Marcel Cohen – YONA Talent

- **The following slides have details of Marcel's Work with YONA Talent**

YONA unites Jews, Muslims

By SHERI SHEFA, Staff Reporter

Thursday, 30 April 2009



Using Music to Resolve Sour Notes of Campus Discord

Marcel Cohen's shy and soft voice is the lone sound capable of drowning out the cacophony of racial intolerance on university campuses

MARTIN C. WINER

When I first met Marcel Cohen he had a mantra of using music and the arts to promote peace in the Middle East. While his doe-eyed optimism was admirable and occasionally infectious, I looked at him cynically. Middle East peace, after all, is one of the great unsolvable problems, the purview of statesmen and long negotiated treaties. I was often tempted to offer Marcel a paternal pat on the head, subconsciously saying, "Cute kid, you go ahead and try."

It was only a few short years later, indeed just recently, that

news trickled in about Marcel's new organization YONA (Your Outreach Network for the Arts) and the success it had achieved in bringing harmony, both musical and social, to racially divided university campuses. With an increasing appetite for more news of Marcel's success, I was happily forced to eat those doubting words I had uttered under my breath.

"The opportunity exists not only to import Middle Eastern music in the cause of peace, but further to manufacture Jewish-Muslim peace externally and export it back"

In my defense, at first glance Marcel Cohen, by his own admission, is anything but what

one would picture as a community leader. Shy, clinically humble, and soft spoken, he stands a stark contrast to what we have come to expect of an "alpha male," yet refreshingly so. Over the course of our discussion it occurred to me that Marcel possesses a certain geological power — a quiet yet determined exertion of pressure over time, which eventually yet inevitably will raise mountains and alter the landscape around him.

In his university days, he noticed that student cultural programs designed by both Palestinian and Israeli groups only managed to fan the flames of intolerance. He found that "people were talking at each other instead of to each other." He continued: "Jews and Muslims are quite similar in culture, especially in their music and food. They are quite curious about one another but they need a safe medium, such as the arts, in which to explore their similarities."

When he heard of the recent upswing in racial discord at Concordia and York University he felt supremely powerless. But just then, an Israeli spiritual band was looking to start a North American tour. The Concordia conflagration was at its worst; Marcel knew exactly where their first show would be held.

That show was one of many to follow that saw Jews and Muslims



Marcel Cohen speaking to students about the potential for peace

was shown to be correct: students could find commonality in music and the arts when they could not be united by an exchange of words. Subsequent concerts were held at York University and at the University of Toronto, featuring Neshama Carlebach, a famous Jewish spiritual singer. Marcel noted that in such concerts "the opportunity exists not only to import Middle Eastern music in the cause of peace, but further to manufacture Jewish-Muslim peace externally and export it back."

At the end of one concert, Marcel was invited to offer some parting words.

"I am a Special Education Tutor in the Hebrew School System. As such, every day I teach the Hebrew alphabet which begins with the letter 'aleph'. If you change one vowel, you get 'eleph' which means 1,000, and if you change a vowel again, you

I've put together this concert such that Jews and Muslims can begin to eat and sing together. It is my hope that this will spread to a thousand other campuses and become the chief way that Muslims and Jews interact."

Marcel had come up with the perfect antidote to hate and dissension: humility in the face of ego, persistence in the face of cynicism, and creative communal expression instead of protracted and counterproductive debate.



Martin C. Winer is a freelance writer in Toronto. He enjoys writing articles about social action. More details can be found on his blog:

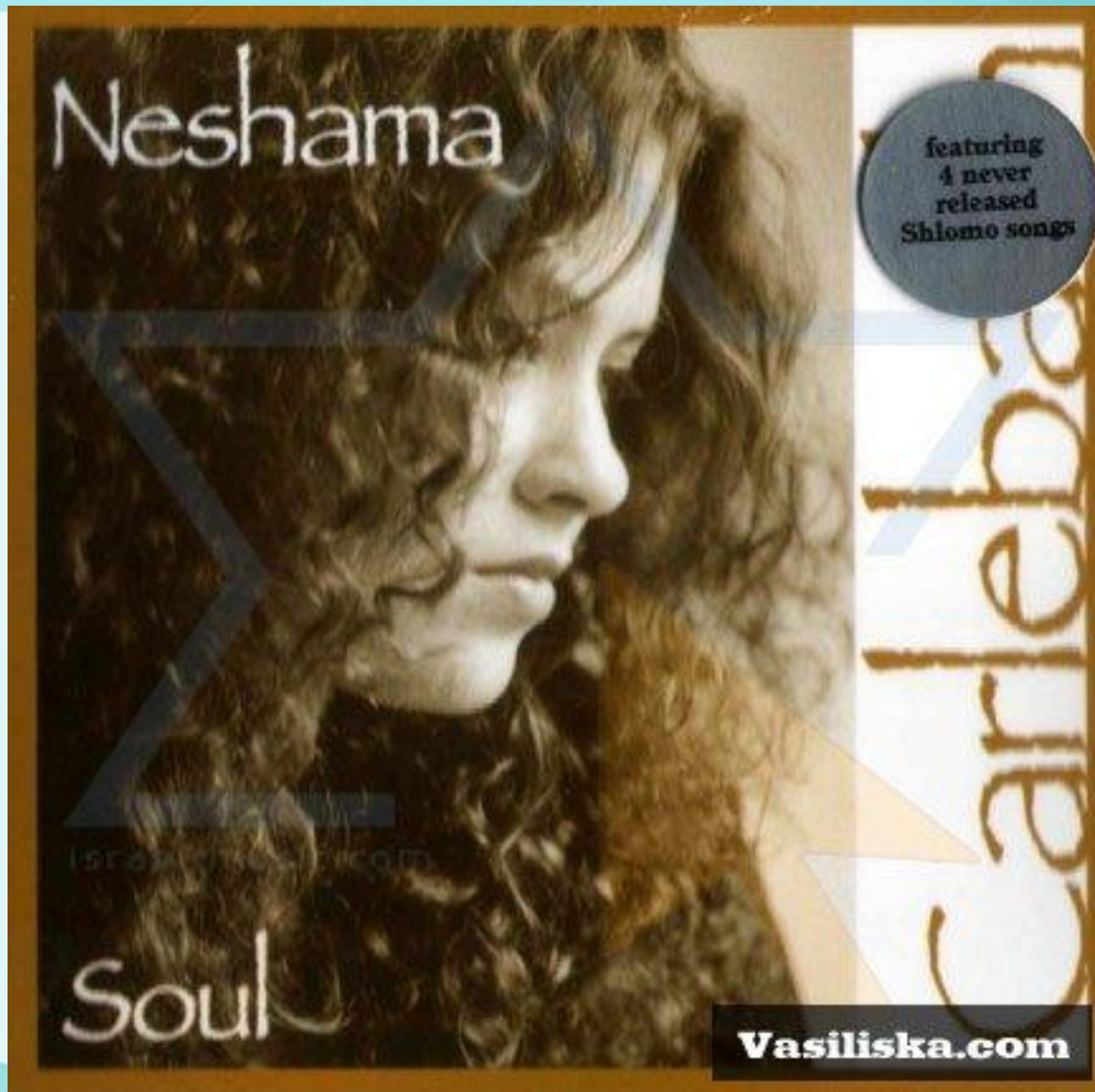
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YONA Talent Endorsed by Neshama Carlebach



February 17, 2005— 8 Adar, 5765

YONA using music to promote Israel on campus

By Doris Strub Epstein
Tribune Correspondent

Israel has been losing the PR battle at universities. Major universities talk about divesting in companies that support fear and intimidation on campus, and university administrators, professors and student groups support and sympathize.

A conference likening Israel to apartheid South Africa was recently held on U of T premises. A Stop the Wall movement on campuses worldwide, which compares Israel to the former Soviet Union.

So what to do?

Marcel Cohen has an answer – use the arts to promote Israel on campus.

“The arts are effective because they have a powerful way of affecting people in a visceral way that no speech can. It’s apolitical, and therefore, how can the Arabs confront a non-confrontational program? It takes the wind out of them and walk away frustrated.”

Cohen who has a degree in arts administration, calls himself a “cultural activist.” He believes if we combine Israel’s culture “they cannot win and we cannot lose.”

He cites the example of the recent concert of the Israeli band Shemesh Ve Kochavim at Concordia University, where

“When the Jews and non-Jews got up to dance, the head of the Palestinian Student’s Association – the man who was there when Benjamin Netanyahu came to speak – attended the concert to spy on us, Cohen said. “When he saw the outcome he got up and left.”

He had come for a fight and walked away frustrated. And that’s why this method is so powerful,” he continued. “They can’t compete with our cultural programs. We can overwhelm them with positive and accurate culture since culture is what universities are supposed to promote, there can be no legitimate opposition to booking these groups.”

Shemesh Ve Kochavim is an Israeli rock group who also sings and tells inspirational and spiritual stories of Jewish life.

YONA Event at York University





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Using Music to Resolve Sour Notes of Campus Discord

March 1, 2010 — marcelcohenyona

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September 2009

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MARTIN C. WINER

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