

**Department of History**

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Dear Colleagues:

I am an Assistant Professor of History and the Coordinator of the Public History graduate track in the Department of History at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. As the only dedicated public history faculty member in my department, I am particularly committed to creating opportunities for interdisciplinary inquiry. Such opportunities help illuminate the ways in which pressing social problems can be addressed effectively, by combining an exploration of their historical roots and historical precedents with an effort to quantify and comprehend their contemporary impact and emotional dimensions as well.

Jonathan Fein's eloquent documentary, "Objects and Memory"—a meditation on the extent to which everyday objects were transformed by the violent events of September 11, 2001—provides a perfect platform for engaging students and faculty from a variety of disciplines in a lively discussion about the meaning of artifacts, the historical value of personal experience, the problem of quantifying memory and the challenge of identifying, preserving and interpreting current events. Further, Jonathan Fein himself—a sculptor turned film maker—stands as an example of the visionary power of interdisciplinary thinking and expression.

I invited Mr. Fein to lead a discussion of his film on the UMBC campus in the fall of 2009. In preparation for this event, we hosted a free screening of the film on campus, and worked with faculty members in the American Studies, History, and Media Studies Departments to integrate the event with their classroom teaching. Rather than presenting a prepared lecture, Jonathan Fein drew attention to the questions raised by the visual elements of his film and by the informants. The overflow audience was well-prepared to raise interesting questions about artifacts, museum collections, historical interpretation and media reporting. Mr. Fein engaged in thought provoking dialog with students and faculty alike, punctuating his talk with additional film clips that had been edited out of the final documentary.

Although "Objects and Memory" focuses on the immediate, visceral response to the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York, the film raises broader questions and Mr. Fein's passion for his subject matter helps keep the material fresh for students.

I recommend Jonathan Fein and his film highly, and I would be more than happy to answer any specific questions you may have about bringing him to your campus or museum. I can most easily be reached by email: [ddm@umbc.edu](mailto:ddm@umbc.edu)

Sincerely,

Dr. Denise Meringolo  
Assistant Professor of History  
Coordinator of the Public History Track