

Masterpieces & Curiosities: Memphis Does Hanukkah **Features Designer Peter Shire's Menorah #7**

**New Exhibition in Series
Exploring Works from the Jewish Museum
Opens September 16, 2016**

New York, NY – *Masterpieces & Curiosities: Memphis Does Hanukkah* showcases designer and artist Peter Shire's colorful and playful *Menorah #7* (1986), and is part of a series of exhibitions focused on individual works in the Jewish Museum's world-renowned collection. Shire was an original member of the Memphis design collective, an international group initiated by Italian designer and architect Ettore Sottsass, active between 1981 and 1987. Shire reimagined the Hanukkah lamp as a set of odd geometries, composed in wood, aluminum, and chrome, and finished in speckled, pastel paint. Surrounding *Menorah #7* will be pieces by other members of the Memphis group, images, and ephemera related to both Shire and the collective, as well as a selection of images and objects from the Jewish Museum's collection. *Memphis Does Hanukkah* opens up a conversation about the relationships and dissonances between art and design, tradition and innovation, ceremony and interpretation, and the importance of iconoclasm. The exhibition will be on view at the Jewish Museum from September 16, 2016 through February 12, 2017.

Memphis Does Hanukkah also examines the brief history and long resonance of Memphis design, known for its impishly radical furniture, textiles, lighting, and objects inspired by Art Deco, Pop art, cartoons, toys, and 1950s kitsch, among other influences. The gallery will come alive with pattern, color, and imagery, featuring photo blow ups of Memphis interiors set against objects by the designers, and shelving and pedestals covered in Memphis-designed plastic laminates. Judaica objects and artworks from the Museum's collection, resonating with the expansive approach of Shire and his fellow designers, will be exhibited alongside objects and ephemera relating to Shire and the Memphis movement.

Peter Shire's fascination with the Hanukkah lamp began when a friend invited him to tour a collection of Judaica. It was the first time he had encountered Jewish ceremonial objects and noticed the way the designs incorporated cultural markers. When his friend commissioned him to make Hanukkah lamps for her family, he used shapes and colors that evoked his Southern California roots. Shire would make several more menorahs, each unique, but sharing the same aesthetic sensibility. In addition to the Jewish Museum in New

York, his menorahs are in the collections of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem and the Skirball Museum in Los Angeles.

Peter Shire (b. 1947) lives and works in the Echo Park neighborhood of Los Angeles. His pottery, sculpture, paintings, drawings, and furniture deliberately confuse and intertwine art and design. His aesthetic is informed by art historical movements such as Bauhaus and Russian Constructivism, as well as the irreverent and often humorous rebuke of modernist doctrines that came to define the history of West Coast art and artists, and its social and cultural politics. Intrinsic to this spirit is a disregard for the status quo, and a full embrace of the pluralist and idiosyncratic impulses that motivated Memphis, a visionary moment in design history that continues to resonate today.

Over the course of the *Masterpieces & Curiosities* series, which runs from 2013 to 2017, the Jewish Museum's curators are exploring objects that highlight the breadth and diversity of the collection. These intimate exhibitions provide new insights into works from the Museum's collection – contextualizing, examining, and rethinking the piece on view by surrounding it with other artworks, documents, and source materials.

Masterpieces & Curiosities: Memphis Does Hanukkah is curated by Kelly Taxter, Associate Curator, the Jewish Museum. The *Masterpieces & Curiosities* series was organized by Jens Hoffmann, Deputy Director, Exhibitions and Public Programs, the Jewish Museum.

About The Jewish Museum

Located on Museum Mile at Fifth Avenue and 92nd Street, the Jewish Museum is one of the world's preeminent institutions devoted to exploring art and Jewish culture from ancient to contemporary, offering intellectually engaging and educational exhibitions and programs for people of all ages and backgrounds. The Museum was established in 1904, when Judge Mayer Sulzberger donated 26 ceremonial objects to The Jewish Theological Seminary as the core of a museum collection. Today, the Museum maintains a collection of over 30,000 works of art, artifacts, and broadcast media reflecting global Jewish identity, and presents a diverse schedule of internationally acclaimed temporary exhibitions. Visitors can now also enjoy Russ & Daughters at the Jewish Museum, a kosher sit-down restaurant and take-out appetizing counter on the Museum's lower level.

The Jewish Museum is located at 1109 Fifth Avenue at 92nd Street, New York City. Museum hours are Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, 11am to 5:45pm; Thursday, 11am to 8pm; and Friday, 11am to 4pm. Museum admission is \$15.00 for adults, \$12.00 for senior citizens, \$7.50 for students, free for visitors 18 and under and Jewish Museum members. Admission is Pay What You Wish on Thursdays



from 5pm to 8pm and free on Saturdays. For information on the Jewish Museum, the public may call 212.423.3200 or visit the website at www.thejewishmuseum.org.

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Press contacts:

Anne Scher and Alex Wittenberg

The Jewish Museum

212.423.3271

ascher@thejm.org

awittenberg@thejm.org

pressoffice@thejm.org (general inquiries)

