

Scenes from the Collection

Wall Texts and Object Labels

Introduction

Why do we collect things? A museum is essentially an archive of art, not unlike a library. We collect objects of profound importance and beauty. We offer these works to the public, record their stories, and explore their meanings. A museum's collection is its heart and soul.

We also collect to preserve the past, in order to better understand the present. When we look back at our histories and traditions, objects help us see where we have come from—and suggest where we may go.

This is particularly important at the Jewish Museum, given the long, tumultuous history of the Jewish people. Our collection, viewed through a contemporary lens, is both a mirror of Jewish identities and a guide for the formation of new ones. The museum contains nearly thirty thousand objects in all media and across millennia. This unique mix of art and ceremonial objects speaks of the many strands of Jewish tradition, spirituality, and history brought into expression through artistic creativity.

The world has changed dramatically since the collection was established in 1904. In these Scenes from the museum's collection we present art and Jewish culture together, affirming universal values that are shared among people of all faiths and backgrounds. This display also acknowledges recent changes in curatorial approaches and the breakup of artistic canons that were dominated by the art of Western Europe and North America.

It accomplishes this in several ways: instead of a master narrative, the display is divided into seven Scenes—the name alludes to the dramatic and interactive qualities of theater. Each suggests a different filter through which we may understand art. Objects are thus set within overlapping and connected stories. The Scenes are punctuated with references to the history of the collection itself over its lifespan of more than one hundred years. Episodes in the origins and development of the museum expose some of the ways in which context is created by history, circumstance, and shifts in institutional mission.

Scenes from the Collection is not static: Scenes will change periodically to offer audiences the chance to see as much of the collection as possible, including new acquisitions. It presents our holdings as an ongoing evolution—reflecting an essential aspect of Jewish culture.

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CREDITS

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CONSTELLATIONS

Some of the most powerful works in the Jewish Museum's collection are those that express aspects of Jewish culture, history, or values, while they also reflect universal issues of art and its relationship to society. When widely varied artworks are presented together in Constellations, multiple meanings and conversations can emerge. Some of the resulting dialogues revolve around the reinterpretation of traditions and the ways in which they are maintained, transformed, or transcended. Others explore the pursuit of spirituality—whether in the performance of ritual, the study of mysticism, or the creation of an artwork—and the ever-changing nature of identity.



WORK Mizrah

ARTIST **Israel Dov Rosenbaum**, Austrian, dates unknown

PLACE MADE Podkamen, Austria-Hungary (now Pidkamin, Ukraine)

MEDIUM Paint, ink, and graphite on cut paper

DATE 1877

CREDIT LINE Gift of Helen W. Finkel in memory of Israel Dov Rosenbaum, Bessie Rosenbaum Finkel, and Sidney Finkel, 1987-136

A mizrah is a plaque for the east wall of a home or synagogue west of Jerusalem, indicating the direction of prayer toward that city. The elaborate scrollwork and vegetation, real and mythical animals, and *horror vacui* of this papercut mark it as a prime example of Eastern European decorative art. The artist's representation of a clock at the top of the building may hint at his profession as clockmaker to the local count. The mizrah is replicated as the background in Kehinde Wiley's painting at right.

BACKSTORY: Remained in the family of the artist until donated to the Jewish Museum by the wife of the artist's grandson.



WORK Torah ark from Adath Yeshurun Synagogue

ARTIST Abraham Shulkin, American, born in the Russian Empire (now Belarus), 1852, died in 1918

PLACE MADE Sioux City, Iowa

DATE 1899

MEDIUM Hand-carved, stained, and painted pinewood

CREDIT LINE Gift of the Jewish Federation of Sioux City, JM 48-56a-s

Abraham Shulkin, an amateur woodcarver, immigrated to the United States from the Russian Empire in 1897, in the wave of Russian Jews escaping oppression, anti-Jewish riots (pogroms), and economic hardship. He applied the woodworking vernacular of his homeland to this Torah ark, which he created for the synagogue in his new home in Sioux City, Iowa. A profusion of openwork whorls inhabited by animals and plants is common in churches and synagogues of Eastern Europe. These served as the inspiration for the wooden frame of Kehinde Wiley's painting at left.

BACKSTORY: Donated to the Jewish Museum in 1956 after Adath Yeshurun Synagogue merged with two other Orthodox congregations in Sioux City.



WORK Sarcophagus fragment

ARTIST Unknown

PLACE MADE Eastern Mediterranean

MEDIUM Carved marble

DATE Third or fourth century CE

CREDIT LINE Gift of Daniel M. Friedenberg, 2002-46

From the sixth century BCE until 70 CE, Jews worshiped in the Second Temple in Jerusalem, rebuilt after Solomon's Temple was destroyed. In its hall stood a large menorah, a seven-branch candelabrum that became a symbol of the Temple itself. On this fragment from the coffin of a Jewish child of the late Roman Empire, the menorah represents the memory of the Temple after its final destruction, and the hope for its restoration. The menorah also played a major part in the story of

Hanukkah, when the Temple was rededicated and a small jar of sanctified oil unexpectedly burned in the menorah for eight days.



WORK **Travel Light**

ARTIST **Arlene Shechet**, American, born in 1951

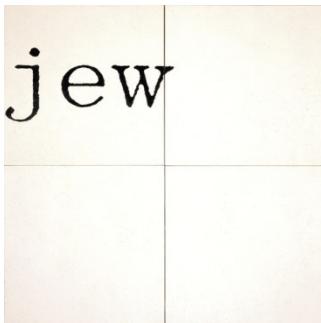
MEDIUM Gypsum and resin, first of a planned edition of four

DATE 2017

CREDIT LINE Jewish Museum commission; Purchase: Contemporary Judaica Acquisitions Committee and Judaica Acquisitions Committee Funds, TR 2015.51

In Arlene Shechet's sculpture past, present, and future are subtly intertwined. She begins with a pair of candlesticks that her grandmother brought from Belarus in 1920, the only material objects the family possesses from their country of origin. As she sought to learn more about them, Shechet uncovered long-forgotten family documents, from which she was able to track down previously unknown relatives.

Three more iterations of the work are planned. The artist has embedded an image of a page from her grandmother's passport in the sculpture and will ask each subsequent owner to give her a cherished family record, which she will also embed in the piece. Thus, *Travel Light* will continue to absorb new stories, embracing the future as well as the past.



WORK **Untitled (jew)**

ARTIST **William Anastasi**, American, born in 1933

MEDIUM Oil on canvas

DATE 1987

CREDIT LINE Gift of the artist, 1987-115a-d

This deceptively simple picture, composed of four canvases joined to form a cross, confronts the viewer with the multivalent term *jew*, placed to slightly overlap one quadrant as if transgressing the space allotted to it. The artist considers this the most charged word in the English language. The lowercase spelling evokes its use as a slur, an expression of bigotry. At the same time, its plain, assertive presence, black on white, is an affirmation of Jewish existence, Jewish history, the great intellectual

lineage embedded in Jewish culture. The painting is thus freighted with the linguistic, moral, and political meanings that emerged from the language-based Conceptual art of the 1960s and 1970s.



WORK The Joys of Yiddish

ARTIST Mel Bochner, American, born in 1940

MEDIUM Oil and acrylic on canvas

DATE 2012

CREDIT LINE Purchase: The Muriel and William Rand Collection Gift, by exchange, and Hyman and Joan C. Sall Gift, 2012-22a-b

The Conceptual artist Mel Bochner has worked in word-based visual art throughout his career. In 2003 he began making what he calls "thesaurus paintings," composed of collections of synonyms or other groups of terms. The title of this work refers to Leo Rosten's classic 1968 book *The Joys of Yiddish*, a compilation of Yiddish words that have entered the mainstream American vocabulary. They are typically disparaging and at the same time funny. Despite that levity, Bochner's canvas uses colors that refer to the tragic twentieth-century history of European Jews, echoing the yellow star with black text that they were forced to wear by the Nazis.



WORK Untitled, from the Little Images series

ARTIST Lee Krasner, American, born in 1908, died in 1984

MEDIUM Oil on canvas

DATE 1948

CREDIT LINE Promised Gift of Craig and Caryn Efron, P.1.2008

Lee Krasner was painting in a gestural Abstract Expressionist manner when, in 1946, she became interested in systems of writing and letter forms. The result was a series of thirty-one paintings called the Little Images, made over four years. To create them Krasner abandoned the easel and laid her canvas flat. She organized each work in a grid format, applying paint in dabs and controlled pours. Within this process, she explored the painterly possibilities between the extremes of order and chance. With allusions to both writing and pictography, the Little Images hover between pure abstraction and figuration.



WORK Return of the Mariner

ARTIST Adolph Gottlieb, American, born in 1903, died in 1974

MEDIUM Oil on canvas

DATE 1946

CREDIT LINE Anonymous Gift, 2005-24

Adolph Gottlieb was a member of the postwar New York art movement known as Abstract Expressionism. His early version of the style, seen here, is infused with touches of Surrealist imagery, and with what he called "pictographs," invented signs and symbols, often arranged in a grid. The meanings of these symbolic shapes and marks are not readily interpretable, but are intended to stir feelings and thus to form a kind of universal visual language. Gottlieb also had an interest in mythology. The title *Return of the Mariner* refers to the voyages of Theseus and Odysseus, heroes of Greek myth, as well as to his recollections of his youth in the merchant marine. Another Abstract Expressionist, Lee Krasner, also explored the visual nature of language and writing, as may be seen in her painting nearby.



WORK Crucifix

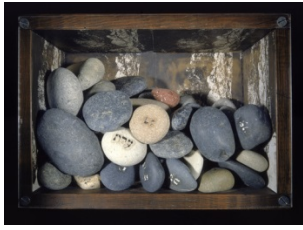
ARTIST Mark Rothko, American, born in Russia, 1903, died in 1970

MEDIUM Oil on canvas

DATE 1941 or 1942

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Gift of the family of Oscar and Regina Gruss in their memory, 2008-139

Mark Rothko, best known as a painter of ethereal abstractions, produced a series of powerful, Surrealism-inspired Crucifixion images in the late 1930s, after the rise to power of Adolf Hitler. During World War II he began to dismantle the crucified body into its component parts, alluding to the horror of the Holocaust, which began to be reported in the American press with images of mass burials and eyewitness accounts. The Crucifixion series, begun in 1940 and concluded in 1942, was among the last figurative works the artist painted.



WORK Untitled

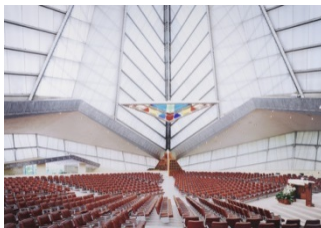
ARTIST Wallace Berman, American, born in 1926, died in 1976

MEDIUM Stone, wood, paint, plexiglass, and screws

DATE 1972

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Joshua Lowenfish Bequest, 1987-109a-vvv

This sculpture, an assemblage of stones in a worn box, resonates with obscure references—to the meager possessions of a poor person, or perhaps to the Jewish tradition of leaving a pebble on a grave as a mark of respect and remembrance. The partially effaced Hebrew letters painted on the stones do not form words, but suggest arcane messages difficult to interpret. Wallace Berman, a Beat Generation poet, was a student of mysticism and the Kabbalah—a text that requires a scholarly and creative deciphering of its many signs and symbols. Removed from meaning, these letters have a mysterious power, in that God is believed to have created the universe by means of the Hebrew alphabet. For Berman, the letters function as artifacts of a lost language, each evoking the primal and generative basis for all subsequent representation.



WORK Beth Shalom Synagogue Philadelphia I

ARTIST Candida Höfer, German, born in 1944

MEDIUM Chromogenic color print

DATE 2007

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Lore Ross Bequest and Photography Acquisitions Committee Fund, 2010-47

Candida Höfer's photographs investigate architectural interiors and public spaces, usually devoid of people. The spaces in her images are not empty, but filled with light, patterns, forms, and subtle traces of human presence. Beth Shalom Synagogue in suburban Philadelphia was designed by the architect Frank Lloyd Wright in 1959, the last project he completed before his death. It is one of four synagogues in the United States designated a National Historic Landmark. In Höfer's sweeping view of the interior, the intense light and endless rows of seats emphasize the building's function as a communal space for contemplation and prayer.



WORK Marriage contract

ARTIST ruby onyinyechi amanze, American, born in Nigeria in 1982

MEDIUM Graphite, photo transfer, ink, and metallic enamel on paper

DATE 2017

CREDIT LINE Purchase: the Mae and Max Sirkus Acquisition Fund and the Henry and Lucy Moses Fund, TR 2017.2

The traditional Jewish marriage contract, or ketubbah, is designed to protect the wife financially in the event of divorce or her husband's death. Ruby amanze's drawing retains elements of these documents, such as the decorative border and illustrations that refer to marriage, but expands on them. Her focus is on the diversity of peoples within Judaism, represented by an ambiguous central couple with not-quite-human skin color and pattern, and an elaborate hairstyle based on that worn by Igbo women in Nigeria. It is an Igbo tradition to claim descent from one of the ten lost tribes of Israel. Imagery that the artist uses repeatedly in her work appears as well: bird constellations, signifying connectivity, and houseplants as symbols of domestic permanence and home. Her original text in Hebrew and English constructs "a narrative of freedom within union and magic in intimacy."



WORK Seder

ARTIST Nicole Eisenman, American, born in France in 1965

MEDIUM Oil on canvas

DATE 2010

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Lore Ross Bequest; Milton and Miriam Handler Endowment Fund; and Fine Arts Acquisitions Committee Fund, 2011-3

Nicole Eisenman paints the human figure—friends, literary or historical figures, narrative scenes, and allegories. She often touches on the topics of queer identity, feminism, and the complexities of family and friends. Her style is intimate and tender, yet infused with wry humor. *Seder* presents a familiar holiday scene rendered with comic aplomb. The perspective of the viewer (and artist) is from the head of the table, the best vantage point to witness the tensions gathered around

the traditional Passover ceremony; children and adults are both attentive and bored, with expressions grotesque, distorted, charming, and affectionate.



WORK **Hard Sweetness**, from the **Stroke series**

ARTIST **Joan Snyder**, American, born in 1940

MEDIUM Oil, acrylic, and enamel on canvas

DATE 1971

CREDIT LINE Gift of Stephanie H. Bernheim, 2007-3

Hard Sweetness is one of Joan Snyder's Stroke paintings, a series in which abstract imagery and mark-making register personal and political struggles and decisions. Snyder began making art in the late 1960s, a time when men dominated the art world. Her sensibility and style were inspired by feminism, music, Expressionism, and her own life experience, as well as a dislike of the distilled, macho aesthetics of Minimalism. *Hard Sweetness* uses strokes of paint in soft stains, loose washes, and thicker scumbling to create rhythmic, almost musical passages of color across the canvas. As the title of this work suggests, Snyder blurs the distinctions between the senses of sight, taste, and perhaps even sound and smell. Like Eva Hesse, whose work is seen nearby, she balances a feminine palette with a muscular formal complexity.



WORK **Untitled**

ARTIST **Eva Hesse**, American, born in Germany, 1936, died in 1970

MEDIUM Oil on canvas

DATE 1963 or 1964

CREDIT LINE Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1983-234

This untitled work is one of the last paintings made by Eva Hesse before she switched to sculpture. Its deconstructed symbols, figures, and shapes evoke natural forms and bodies without ever being directly identifiable. Delicate brushwork, soft colors, and a light, witty touch lend this work a feminine quality that she intended as a rebuke to the masculinity of Minimalist art. Hesse was reading Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* at this time, and the text led her to question her own fragmented status as artist, woman, and wife. Her work, though not overtly political, explores these issues in poetic, expressive abstractions.



WORK *Untitled (Tears)*

ARTIST **Claire Fontaine**, Founded in Paris in 2004

MEDIUM Neon

DATE 2013

CREDIT LINE Gift of the artist, 2014-31.1-9

Claire Fontaine is a Paris-based artist who works under a pseudonym. The name translates literally as “clear fountain,” and may refer to Marcel Duchamp’s iconic 1917 Readymade sculpture *Fountain*, an inverted, signed urinal that is one of the founding works of radical modernism. Claire Fontaine makes art in a range of materials and formats—appropriation, sculpture, painting, writing, filmmaking—to address ethical and political crises. *Tears* is inspired by recorded memories of Ellis Island, New York City’s famous immigration station, which, beginning in 1892, welcomed (and also rejected) millions of people. The nine neon signs each read “isle of tears” in the languages most commonly spoken by the new arrivals: French, Polish, Russian, Yiddish, Greek, Italian, German, Spanish, and English.



WORK *Alicia, Ukraine*, from the series *Strangely Familiar*

ARTIST **Michal Chelbin**, Israeli, born in 1974

MEDIUM Chromogenic color print mounted on board

DATE 2005

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Gift of Nathan and Jacqueline Goldman, by exchange and Photography Acquisitions Committee Fund, 2009-8

Michal Chelbin, known for her intimate portraits of children on the cusp of adolescence, portrays Alicia, a young gymnast who performs publicly with a maturity beyond her years. Caught looking out from the protective confines of her father’s car, she is seen through two windows, one open and the other closed, a metaphoric threshold for her ambiguous status as a young adult.



WORK **Untitled (Mom Posing in Front of a Green Wall)**, from the series **Pictures from Home**

ARTIST **Larry Sultan**, American, born in 1946, died in 2009

MEDIUM Chromogenic color print

DATE 1984

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Ferkauf Fund, 1991-110

Larry Sultan's portrait of his Jewish parents in his childhood home in Brooklyn is both affectionate and wry, capturing their embrace of the secular American dream with a critical eye.



WORK **Untitled (Couple)**

ARTIST **Gert Wollheim**, American, born in Germany, 1894, died in 1974

MEDIUM Oil on canvas

DATE 1926

CREDIT LINE Gift of Charlotte Levite in memory of Julius Nassau, 1990-130

The setting here is a café in Germany during the Weimar Republic—a time and place where social boundaries were tested. The fashionable pair are self-absorbed and cool, depicted in a deliberately theatrical, almost grotesque manner. The painting is imbued with the period's dark uncertainties: economic instability, the lingering trauma of World War I, and the changing sexual mores of a society in transition from the traditional to the modern.



WORK **Alios Itzhak, from the series The World Stage: Israel**

ARTIST **Kehinde Wiley**, American, born in 1977

MEDIUM Oil and enamel on canvas

DATE 2011

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Gift of Lisa and Steven Tananbaum Family Foundation; Gift in honor of Joan Rosenbaum, Director of the Jewish Museum from 1981 to 2011, by the Contemporary Judaica, Fine Arts, Photography, and Traditional Judaica Acquisitions Committee Funds, 2011-31

Kehinde Wiley's global project *The World Stage* inserts images of people of color from around the world into the Western tradition of portraiture. Wiley uses a realist style for his figures but sets them against flat, densely patterned backgrounds. *The World Stage: Israel* is a suite of nineteen portraits of young Israeli men: Ethiopian Israeli Jews, native-born Israeli Jews, and Muslim Arab Israelis. Here, Alios Itzhak, of Ethiopian origin, stands before a background inspired by a traditional Jewish ceremonial object: a nineteenth-century Ukrainian papercut in the Jewish Museum collection. Itzhak's proud stance, with hand on hip and a direct, forward gaze, echoes the classic pose of noblemen and business leaders in commissioned portraits. With *The World Stage*, Wiley both globalizes the portrait tradition and claims a prominent space within it for people of color.



WORK **Hanukkah lamp**

ARTIST **Unknown, marked with the maker's initials G I**

PLACE MADE Venice

DATE Between 1712 and 1749

MEDIUM Mold-pressed and repoussé silver

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. Harry G. Friedman?, F 3579

This ornate lamp in the late Baroque style displays the techniques mastered by an unknown Venetian silversmith: the base is made in traditional repoussé (hammering

out from inside). The arms are formed with a newer, less expensive technique called mold pressing, in which front and back pieces are each hammered into a mold.



WORK **Hanukkah lamp**

ARTIST **David Heinz Gumbel**, Israeli, born in Germany, 1896, died in 1992

PLACE MADE Heilbronn, Germany

DATE Early 1930s

MEDIUM Hand-worked silver

CREDIT LINE Gift of Hannah and Walter Flegenheimer, 2002-9a-d

The silversmith David Gumbel was profoundly affected by the modernist aesthetic of the Bauhaus. This influential school of design, architecture, and applied arts, which existed in Germany between 1919 and 1938, aimed to bridge the gap between art and industry. The perfect geometric proportions, elemental form, and unadorned surfaces of this piece are hallmarks of its style, brought by Gumbel to metalwork in Israel, when he emigrated there in 1936.

BACKSTORY: Bought by the original owners from the artist in the early 1930s; brought to the United States when they fled the Nazis.



WORK **Hanukkah lamp**

ARTIST **Johann Valentin Schöler**, German, born in 1650, died in 1720

PLACE MADE Frankfurt am Main

MEDIUM Repoussé, engraved, parcel-gilt, and cast silver

DATE Late seventeenth century

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Norman S. Goetz, Mr. and Mrs. Henry A. Loeb, Mr. and Mrs. Henry L. Marx, Ira A. Schur, Lawrence A. Wien, Leonard Block, Gustave L. Levy, and Robert I. Wishnick Gifts, JM 19-64

The central scene on the backplate of this lamp depicts the biblical heroine Judith, who beheaded the enemy general Holofernes. Although the story originally had no connection to Hanukkah, medieval rabbinical reinterpretation associated her act with the ancient Jewish victory over Greek rulers commemorated on that holiday.

The tale was further seen by Western artists as an allegory of the triumph of virtue over evil. She is shown here with her maidservant, who holds a sack to carry away the enemy's head. The lamp's shape and early Baroque scrollwork were probably inspired by silver inkstands.



WORK Hanukkah lamp

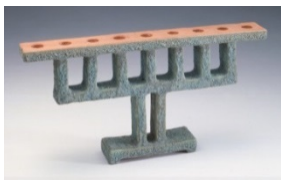
ARTIST Unknown, Orivit, Founded in Cologne- Braunsfeld, Germany, in 1898

PLACE MADE Cologne-Braunsfeld, Germany

MEDIUM Cast and silver-plated white metal and mold-formed glass

DATE Between 1905 and 1914

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. Harry G. Friedman?, F 3573



WORK Hanukkah lamp

ARTIST Otto Natzler, American, born in Austria, 1908, died in 2007

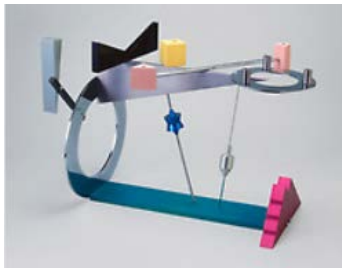
PLACE MADE Simi Valley, California

MEDIUM Slab-built earthenware with lava glaze

DATE 1956

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Judaica Acquisitions Fund and Gift of Mimi R. T., Ruth I. and Lewis D. Surrey in honor of Albert W. Surrey, 1988-30

Otto and Gertrud Natzler helped to redefine the craft of ceramics as a sculptural and artistic medium. Although the couple had little interest in ceremonial art, they were inspired to create memorial and Hanukkah lamps while serving as artists in residence at Brandeis Camp Institute in California between 1956 and 1960. Gertrud threw elegant, spare vessels on the wheel, noted for their refinement; Otto created more than a thousand different glazes, many of them highly textural, like the lava glaze seen here. This lamp by Otto takes a familiar form, with candles in a row, but reinvents it in a mid-century modernist style.



WORK Menorah #7

ARTIST Peter Shire, American, born in 1947

PLACE MADE Los Angeles

MEDIUM Painted steel, anodized aluminum, and chromium

DATE 1986

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Judaica Acquisitions Endowment Fund, 1989-20

In the 1980s Judaica artists began to reexamine the form of the Hanukkah lamp, which according to rabbinical prescription should have eight lights in a straight row and on the same level, with a ninth set off from them. Peter Shire typically takes familiar objects and reimagines their shapes, colors, and materials so that we barely recognize them. Here, a mixture of pastel and hot colors, industrial metals, and a cantilevered, swirling arrangement of parts challenge the modernist aesthetic of simplicity that had dominated design for a century. This "Post"-modernism was a key design principle of the Memphis design group to which Shire belonged.



WORK Hanukkah lamp

ARTIST Unknown

PLACE MADE Essaouira?, Morocco

MEDIUM Traced, appliqué, parcelgilt, and cast silver

DATE Nineteenth or early twentieth century

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Judaica Endowment Fund and the Nash Aussenberg Memorial Fund, 1996-46

This rare silver lamp from Morocco is decorated with incised and gilt appliqué rosettes characteristic of the jewelry in silversmithing centers in the north of the country. The images of a fish and bird on the sidepieces may be symbols of fertility, since these are creatures capable of laying large quantities of eggs. Birds, especially in pairs, often represent love in Islamic art, suggesting that the artisan borrowed the ornamentation from Muslim designs. This lamp may have been intended as a wedding gift, incorporating good wishes for many children.



WORK **Hanukkah lamp**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE Probably Berlin

MEDIUM Repoussé, engraved, and appliqué copper alloy and cast, gilded, and painted iron

DATE c. 1830

CREDIT LINE Gift of the Danzig Jewish Community, D 208

This Neoclassical lamp was probably made in Berlin, the capital of Prussia, after the defeat of Napoleon. In the wake of that war, the German Confederation was created—an uneasy alliance of many of the independent German states. In Prussia, where nationalist feeling was strong, the state's chief architect, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, promoted Neoclassicism as a Prussian national style. The use of iron, a local resource, for the two griffins flanking a classical-style altar, was encouraged to help stimulate the economy. This lamp, with its subtle patriotic references, suggests the high degree of assimilation of Prussia's Jews in the early 1800s.

BACKSTORY: Owned in the late nineteenth century by Lesser Gieldzinski, who donated his collection to form a museum in the Great Synagogue of Danzig in 1904; sent with the synagogue contents by the Jewish community of Danzig to the United States for safekeeping in 1939; donated to the Jewish Museum by the community through the American Joint Distribution Committee when the community was not reconstituted after World War II.



WORK **Hanukkah lamp**

ARTIST **Unknown, Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, Founded in Jerusalem in 1906**

PLACE MADE Jerusalem

MEDIUM Repoussé, traced, and pierced copper alloy with semiprecious stones

DATE Between 1909 and 1929

CREDIT LINE Gift of the Estate of Prof. and Mrs. Richard Gottheil and Eva Leon, JM 26-54

This lamp was made at the Bezalel School in Jerusalem sometime during its short existence. The school was established by Boris Schatz, a Lithuanian Jewish sculptor. At that time, European Jews interested in the idea of a national homeland were immigrating to Palestine, and the school aimed to give them training in craft production as well as to create a new Jewish style for the emerging nationalist

movement. Bezalel's style was a fusion of Art Nouveau, Arts and Crafts, and older Middle Eastern and European metalwork traditions. Motifs included plants and animals of the region, romanticized images of the Middle East, and stories and figures from the Bible.

BACKSTORY: The Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts opened in 1906 and closed in 1929; it reopened in 1936 as the New Bezalel School.



WORK **Hanukkah lamp**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE Possibly Fez, Morocco

MEDIUM Pierced, traced, and cast copper alloy

DATE Nineteenth century

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. Harry G. Friedman, F 3491



WORK **Hanukkah lamp**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE Netherlands

MEDIUM Repoussé, traced, punched, and cast copper alloy

DATE Eighteenth century

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. Harry G. Friedman, F 3553



WORK Hanukkah lamp

ARTIST Karl Hagenauer, Austrian, born in 1898, died in 1956

PLACE MADE Vienna

MEDIUM Cast copper alloy

DATE Designed between 1919 and 1928

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Gift in memory of Joseph B. Hornik and Elizabeth Cats, 2005-43

Karl Hagenauer studied with Josef Hoffmann, one of the founders of the Viennese modern design movement known as the Wiener Werkstätte. The modernist influence may be seen in the curved and fluted base, and the stylized flower buds.



WORK Marriage table top or wall panel

ARTIST Unknown

PLACE MADE Italy

MEDIUM Cut marble and other stones

DATE Early nineteenth century

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Gift in memory of Curtis Hereld; Edward and Helene Toledano Fund; Traditional Judaica Acquisitions Committee Fund; Dennis Stein Bequest; Judaica Endowment Fund; Phil and Norma Fine Fund; Gift in memory of Frieda and Felix Warburg and Edward M. M. Warburg; Gift of Dr. Harry G. Friedman, by exchange; Gifts of Alex Schmelzer, Lisa Rotmil and Family; Helen and Jack Cytryn Fund; Gifts of the Jewish Museum Volunteer Association, and The Ellis Goodman Family Foundation, 2007-1

This piece was probably commissioned for a marriage in the Sullam family of Italy, whose emblem, a ladder (in Hebrew *sullam*), is represented on the pediment of the Torah ark depicted in the center panel. Wealthy Italian Jews often adopted such unofficial coats of arms in imitation of local nobility. The representations of small cabinets on either side—one containing scrolls, the other books—are unusual in ceremonial art and are difficult to interpret. The work is inlaid with many pieces of colored marble and other stones in the technique called *pietre dure* (hardstones). **BACKSTORY:** Acquired in 1840 by the previous owner's family, who lived in Tiflis, Russia (now Tbilisi, Georgia); transported to Istanbul and then to London by the 1910s; passed down in each generation to eldest son upon marriage.



WORK **Reader's desk cover**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE Ottoman Turkey

MEDIUM Knotted wool

DATE Late nineteenth or early twentieth century

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. Harry G. Friedman, F 3409

Used to cover the desk on which the Torah is read during the service, this rug shares many elements with the Muslim prayer rugs from which they were probably adapted. The central portal symbolizes the gate to Paradise in both religions. The lamps on prayer rugs may embody the light of Allah, while in a Jewish context they probably represent the eternal light that is hung in the synagogue before the Torah ark. Rabbinical texts from fourteenth-century Spain indicate that congregants there hung Muslim prayer rugs in synagogues, despite their being forbidden.



WORK **The Grand Costume (El-Keswa el-Kbira)**

PLACE MADE Marrakech or Rabat

ARTIST **Unknown**

MEDIUM Silk velvet with gold metallic ribbon, passementerie, and gilt metallic embroidery; leather; silk chiffon with gold brocade

DATE Late nineteenth century

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Judaica Acquisitions Committee Fund, 1993-195a-e

The richly embroidered Grand Costume was worn by Moroccan Jewish brides of Sephardi (Spanish Jewish) descent during the henna ceremony that preceded their marriage. The act of donning and wearing it was highly performative, carried out in a series of ritualized steps supervised by someone knowledgeable in the prescribed ceremonies. After the wedding, the dress was worn again on special occasions and religious festivals. The splendor of the Grand Costume caught the eye of numerous foreign visitors to Morocco, who portrayed it in paintings, writings, and photographs.

BACKSTORY: Made for Mas'uda, the bride of David Ohaion of Marrakech; worn by her descendants in the twentieth century until sold to the Jewish Museum in 1993.



WORK **Golem**

ARTISTS **Robert Wilson** (American, born in 1941) and **Moidele Bickel** (German, born in 1937)

MEDIUM Papier-mâché made from Chinese and Japanese newspaper and glue, with metal frame support

DATE 1987

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Dr. Jack Allen and Shirley Kapland Fund, 1993-275a-f
According to Jewish legend, the Golem is an artificial being made from animated earth. Robert Wilson works in experimental theater, reinterpreting and deconstructing classic grand opera and dramatic literature. His *Golem* is at once a sculpture and a costume. It was worn by an actor in his 1987 play *Death, Destruction, and Detroit II*. The costume was designed to be cut and removed during the performance to reveal the living actor within. Detached from the stage and placed in a museum setting, the empty figure once again assumes its original hollow lifelessness.



WORK **Mortar**

ARTIST **Joseph de Levis**, Italian, born in 1552, died in 1611 or 1614

PLACE MADE Verona

MEDIUM Cast bronze

DATE 1605

CREDIT LINE Gift of Barbara and Benjamin Zucker in honor of Jean and Alfred Moldovan, 2005-7

Joseph de Levis and his family were Renaissance bronze founders in Verona, producing church bells, mortars, and andirons as well as the occasional Jewish ceremonial object.

It has often been proposed that Joseph de Levis was of Jewish origin, in part because of the similarity of de Levis to Levi, an ancient Jewish surname, and in part because of his foundry's production of objects with Jewish inscriptions and symbols. However, more research is needed to resolve this issue.



WORK Spice container

ARTIST Unknown

PLACE MADE Frankfurt am Main?

MEDIUM Traced, pierced, cast, and parcel-gilt silver

DATE c. 1550, repairs and additions 1650 or 1651

CREDIT LINE Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, JM 23-52

The Havdalah ceremony marks the end of the Sabbath and separates it from the work week. Aromatic spices have long been part of the ritual; the first mention of a special container for Havdalah spices is from a twelfth-century text. The container is filled with spices such as cloves, myrtle, or nutmeg and handed around so that all can enjoy the sweet scent and thus compensate for the passing of the Sabbath.

This sixteenth-century piece is the earliest known example. The first spice containers were in the form of miniature towers, similar to Christian incense censers. Later shapes include fruit and flowers and, in the modern era, a variety of whimsical designs. Other spice containers are on view in the Taxonomies gallery on this floor.

BACKSTORY: In 1650 or 1651 Rekhlah daughter of Eliezer Dayan added her name, possibly at the time of a repair. At some unknown date the container went to the synagogue of Friedberg, Germany. In 1938 or 1939 the Friedberg Jewish community donated it to the Frankfurt Jewish Museum; during World War II it went to the Frankfurt Historisch Museum; the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction organization recovered it after the war and gave it to the Jewish Museum in New York.



WORK Aquamanile (handwashing vessel)

ARTIST Unknown

PLACE MADE Northern Germany

MEDIUM Cast and engraved copper alloy

DATE Late twelfth century with later inscription

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Gift of The Kagan-Katz- Kivel Families, by exchange; Traditional Judaica Acquisitions Committee and Endowment Interest Funds; Henry and Lucy Moses Fund; Henry Herzog Family and Friends Fund in memory of Ruth Herzog; Helen and Jack Cytryn Fund; and Traditional Judaica Acquisitions Fund, 2013-16

In the twelfth century fanciful pitchers in animal and human form came into use for handwashing rituals in European churches and synagogues, and for home use. This vessel in the form of a lion bears a Hebrew inscription, probably added several centuries later: "This is a donation of the honored Berekhiah Segal." With these simple words, the ewer takes its place among those rare Jewish ceremonial works that have survived from the Middle Ages. The name Segal is an abbreviation for "Levitical assistant," identifying the donor as a descendant of the family of Levi, responsible for aiding priests. It likely was used during the synagogue service, when Levites wash the hands of the descendants of ancient priests before they recite the priestly blessing.

BACKSTORY: Made in northern Germany; most likely presented to a synagogue in Germany sometime after the mid-sixteenth century; the vessel's history is shrouded in mystery from then until the 1970s, when it was purchased in London by a private collector from New York.



WORK Passover set

ARTIST Ludwig Yehuda Wolpert, American, born in Germany, 1900, died in 1981

PLACE MADE Original: Frankfurt am Main; replica: New York

DATE 1930, reproduced in 1978

MEDIUM Silver, ebony, and glass

CREDIT LINE Gift of Sylvia Zenia Rosen Wiener, 2012-26a-m

The silversmith Ludwig Wolpert was one of the first designers to apply the principles of the Bauhaus to Judaica: form should reflect function, mass-produced objects

should have fine design, and objects should not have unnecessary ornamentation, especially of surfaces. This three-tiered Passover set exemplifies the sleek, streamlined work promoted by the Bauhaus with a single band of Hebrew inscription set on the central Elijah cup. The 1930 original, made in Frankfurt, was lost, so Wolpert later replicated the design in New York.



WORK Miriam cup

ARTIST Amy Klein Reichert, American, born in 1959

MEDIUM Cast and hammered silver

DATE 1997

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Gift of Lorraine and Martin Beitler Foundation and Judaica Acquisitions Fund, 1997-131

In the 1970s, a strong feminist movement arose within Judaism, calling for equal participation by women in leadership and ritual. In some denominations, new ceremonies and objects were adopted to meet this need. The Miriam cup emerged in the 1980s as a parallel to the Elijah cup used at Passover, honoring the biblical prophet Miriam, sister of Moses. The cup is filled with water and placed on the Passover table to refer to the movable well of fresh water that God gave to her, and that accompanied the Israelites through the desert until her death.



WORK Coffeepot

ARTIST Myer Myers, American, born in 1723, died in 1795

PLACE MADE New York

MEDIUM Repoussé, appliqué, and cast silver and wood

DATE Between 1770 and 1776

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Gifts of Dr. Harry G. Friedman, Samuel and Lucille Lemberg, Mrs. W. Salmon, Maurice Herrmann, and Mr. and Mrs. Sidney L. Quitman, by exchange; Traditional Judaica Centennial Acquisitions Fund; Traditional Judaica Acquisitions Committee Fund; Traditional Judaica Acquisitions Interest Fund; and Judaica Endowment Interest Fund, 2004-30

Myer Myers was born in New York before the American Revolution. While laws in England prevented Jews from joining the goldsmith's guild and selling their work, no such restriction existed in the American Colonies. The high level of Myers's craftsmanship and design attracted wealthy patrons and made him one of the most popular silversmiths in colonial and federal-period New York.



WORK Torah case with finials

ARTIST Unknown

PLACE MADE Probably Iraq

MEDIUM Stamped and parcel-gilt silver; ink on parchment; graphite, ink, and paint on paper; glass; and wood

DATE c. 1850–85

CREDIT LINE Gift of the International Synagogue, 2016–18

This Torah case exemplifies the global connections among Jewish communities that have existed for millennia. The silverwork is typical of Torah cases from Iraq, and the case was probably made there. Yet the dedicatory inscription indicates that it was used in a synagogue in Kolkata, India, home to a large community of Baghdadi Jews since the eighteenth century.

BACKSTORY: Donated to a synagogue in Kolkata in memory of his father by Simon Raphael Hyeem Isaac before his death in 1885; donated to the International Synagogue at the John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York probably in the late 1960s.



WORK Torah case with finials

ARTIST Maurice Mayer, French, active in 1860s–70s

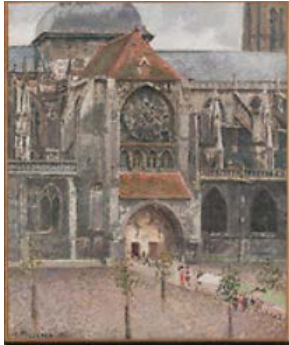
PLACE MADE Paris

MEDIUM Die-stamped, repoussé, cast, engraved, and parcel-gilt silver, wood, and textile

DATE c. 1870

CREDIT LINE The H. Ephraim and Mordecai Benguiat Family Collection, S 1456a–c

This Torah case was made by the Parisian Jew Maurice Mayer, who used the title “goldsmith to the Emperor” – that is, Napoleon III. His case combines the ornate decorative style of the French Second Empire with the type of hard housing for the Torah more commonly found in Italy, the Mideast, and North Africa. It bears a dedication to the memory of Hannah of the house of Shemama, a wealthy and influential family from Tunisia. One member, Nissim, was treasurer to the Bey, the Ottoman ruler.



WORK Portal of the Church of Saint-Jacques in Dieppe

ARTIST Camille Pissarro, French, born in Saint Thomas, 1830, died in 1903

MEDIUM Oil on canvas

DATE 1901

CREDIT LINE Gift of Judith and Thomas Iovino, 2016-163

In the summer of 1901 the Jewish painter Camille Pissarro visited Dieppe, on the Normandy coast, with his family. He had been impressed by Claude Monet’s 1895 series of paintings of the facade of Rouen Cathedral at different times of day, and set out to explore the idea in his own paintings of the local Gothic church of Saint-Jacques. Pissarro was a master of the urban scene; here he uses a high Impressionist technique that blends realism with acute sensitivity to the effects of climate and light. He painted nine canvases on this visit, including various views of the church and the bustling market square. The emphasis in the Jewish Museum’s painting is on the solid mass of the medieval building in contrast with the evanescent groups of people observed on the path, under a dull gray sky.



WORK NOW

ARTIST Chantal Akerman, Belgian, 1950–2015

Claire Atherton, image and sound editing and spatialization

MEDIUM Multichannel HD color video installation, 5 projections on plexiglass screens, 2 floor projections, 5 mono and stereo soundtracks, 2 fake aquarium light boxes, 3 color neon bulbs

DATE 2015

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Miriam and Milton Handler Endowment, Art Acquisitions Committee, Helen Rehr, Oscar and Regina Gruss Memorial, Henry and Lucy Moses,

Emmanuel and Riane Gruss, Abraham and Arlene Mayer Mitchell, and Ellen Flamm Funds, 2015-9

Running time: 41 min., 46 sec., looped

Chantal Akerman was both a film director and a video artist, known for deliberately blurring the distinctions between those categories. Many of her works dispense with typical film narrative in favor of meticulous compositions that use hypnotic pacing and long, steady takes to allow the viewer to become aware of the passage of time.

NOW is her final video installation, and perhaps her busiest and most kinetic. It has neither beginning nor end, but repeats continuously. Projections surround the viewer with fast-moving footage of an unidentified desert landscape. Each has a different, fragmentary soundtrack, so that sounds overlap in an impressionistic medley: muffled footsteps, traffic, birdcalls, farm animals, gunfire, helicopters, the voices of children and soldiers, a Jewish prayer, a distant muezzin singing a Muslim call to prayer, waves striking a shore. As these sounds accumulate, and the desolate land streaks by like a painting in time, the effect is increasingly ominous. Akerman constructs a complete visual and aural realm, fully occupying the space and creating an intense, immersive experience—a meditation on the power, meaning, and mystery of time.

This artwork has low light and objects on the floor. There are loud sounds, including gunfire.

This installation is made possible in part by Marian Goodman Gallery.

TAXONOMIES

A taxonomy is a method of ordering and classifying things according to shared characteristics. This Scene celebrates the eclectic variety of the Jewish Museum's many collections, from Jewish ceremonial objects such as Torah pointers, spice containers, Passover plates, and marriage contracts to tools, jewelry, games, and watches. Works are juxtaposed in nontraditional classifications according to activities such as marking time, praying, and travel, or by material. This display recalls the Cabinets of Wonders that were popular in Europe in the Renaissance. Such rooms brought together a mix of rare or curious objects, from preserved animals and plants to exotic shells and stones, gems, clocks, and weapons, often arranged in artful ways, to demonstrate their owner's social status and humanist erudition. These collections were the precursor of the modern museum, which assembles objects for study, public education, and pleasure.

[Texts for all objects available separately]

MASTERPIECES AND CURIOSITIES

The Jewish Museum's collection is vast and diverse. Some of the works are recognized artworks of great significance, beauty, and craftsmanship. Others are oddities—unexpected and eccentric creations that merit closer attention. This Scene focuses on a single piece, allowing us to reexamine and rethink it in light of other artworks and source materials. Even the most apparently peculiar work of art reveals complex histories and rich layers of meaning when seen in the larger context of cultural and social history.

Theresienstadt Bracelet

During World War II Greta Perlman (1904–1975) was a prisoner in the camp-ghetto of Theresienstadt, established by the Nazis in 1941 in what is now the Czech Republic. Despite horrific conditions, she was able to gather the twenty charms and badges assembled into this bracelet, each steeped in personal memories. Some 140,000 Jews were deported to Theresienstadt, many of them musicians, writers, and artists. Forced to produce decorative objects for the Nazis, prisoner artists also secretly made personal pieces such as many of these charms, which were smuggled out of the workshops and often exchanged for food. Greta Perlman survived Theresienstadt and, later, Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, but most of her fellow prisoners perished. Works such as her bracelet underscore their quiet efforts to preserve their individuality and humanity through the impulse to make and own art.



WORK Theresienstadt Bracelet

ARTISTS Unknown

PLACE MADE Theresienstadt (Terezín), Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic)

DATE 1941–43

MEDIUM Brass, porcelain, and cord

CREDIT LINE Gift of the Estate of Greta Perlman, JM 86-75a-t

This charm bracelet was assembled by Greta Perlman, a prisoner in the Theresienstadt concentration camp during World War II.

Very little is known about Perlman. She was a Czech Jew and was interned in Theresienstadt from late 1941 to late 1944. On October 4, 1944, she was deported to the Auschwitz death camp and later to Bergen-Belsen. She survived and immigrated to the United States after the war.

Theresienstadt, also known by its Czech name of Terezín, was originally a small town in Bohemia. Under the Nazi occupation in World War II, it was turned into a transit camp for Jews and other prisoners on their way to extermination sites. The Germans designed it to appear to the world as a “model settlement.”

Internees were sometimes able to make artworks clandestinely in the camp workshops, but a large group of charms like this is very rare. They were either given

to Perlman as personal mementos or collected by her in exchange for food, when she worked in the camp kitchen. She may have gathered the pieces into a bracelet later, in the United States.

Much of the art produced in the camp has come down to us because it was bricked up in walls or buried by prisoners before their deportation to extermination camps, and recovered after the Liberation. Although we do not know for certain, this is probably how the charms survived, along with the five watercolors on display in this gallery. They were made at Theresienstadt by prisoner artists and bequeathed by Perlman to the Jewish Museum in 1975, along with the bracelet.

The charms on Perlman's bracelet, made in secret and under duress, bear hidden meanings. To decode them sheds light on her life and her struggle to survive.



WORK Poster advertising a Theresienstadt workshop

ARTIST Peter Löwenstein

Czech, born in 1919, died in Auschwitz, 1944

PLACE MADE Theresienstadt (Terezín), Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic)

DATE August 31, 1942

MEDIUM Ink on paper

CREDIT LINE Collection of the Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York, Gift of Herman and Gerda Korngold

An engineering student at Prague Technical University, Peter Löwenstein was deported in the first transport to Theresienstadt in fall 1941. He was assigned to work at the Drawing Office of the Technical Department, where he produced charts and technical drawings for the Nazis. He also created a series of propaganda posters, including this one for the Galanteriewaren-Werkstätte, a leather-goods workshop. It features healthy people smiling as they work—an image disconnected from the harsh reality of camp life.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE

WORK Birthday card

ARTIST Ellen Wertheimer Wall, American, born in Germany, 1921, died in 1995

PLACE MADE Theresienstadt (Terezín), Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic)

DATE June 1, 1945

MEDIUM Watercolor and ink on paper

CREDIT LINE Gift of Klara Levi, JM 17-78b

Ellen Wertheimer and her friend Klara Levi were both survivors of Theresienstadt.

This card was given by Ellen to Klara shortly after the camp was liberated in May 1945.

The image is of camp barrack 9, where Klara lived. The German inscription reads, with a hint of wry humor: "And warm congratulations!" The card has two flaps with hidden pictures, shown here in reduced-size reproductions: in the first, dated June 1, 1945, a woman weighs potatoes from a well-stocked bin; under that, dated a year in the future, is the same woman at leisure under a palm tree. The back is inscribed in German: "With memories of Q418, Yours, Ellen, Terezín, June 1, 1945." Q418 was the café in Theresienstadt, a gathering place where inmates attended performances by the many talented prisoners. A. G. Adler, a survivor of the camp and its main chronicler, called it "the saddest coffeehouse in the world." The optimism reflected in this card is all the more palpable, given that both giver and recipient had just survived the horrors of the camp.



WORK Heart pendant

ARTIST Probably Manfred Ehrlich, Austrian, born in 1927, died in Auschwitz, probably 1944

PLACE MADE Theresienstadt (Terezín), Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic)

DATE May 9, 1943

MEDIUM Engraved brass

CREDIT LINE Gift of the Family of M. Ehrlich, 2008-4

Manfred (Fred) Ehrlich, a teenage prisoner at Theresienstadt, gave this pendant as a gift to his mother. The pendant is inscribed "Fred" on one side and "Muttertag Terezín 9.V.1943" (Mother's Day, May 9, 1943) on the other. Ehrlich was deported from Vienna to Theresienstadt on October 2, 1942, and on September 28, 1944, was sent to Auschwitz, where he perished, age seventeen. His mother survived.



WORK Birthday card

ARTIST Unknown

PLACE MADE Theresienstadt (Terezín), Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic)

MEDIUM Watercolor and ink on paper and ribbon

DATE June 1, 1943

CREDIT LINE Gift of Klara Levi, JM 17-78a

The young Klara Levi received this card while she was still a prisoner in Theresienstadt. It was given to her by a member of the Stutz family, all of whom were later deported to Auschwitz, where they perished.



WORK **Vase with Flowers**

ARTIST **Otto Theodor Wolfgang Stein**, Czech, born in 1877, died in 1958

PLACE MADE Theresienstadt (Terezín), Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic)

DATE 1943

MEDIUM Watercolor on paper

CREDIT LINE Gift of the Estate of Greta Perlman, JM 82-75



WORK **Cityscape**

ARTIST **Otto Theodor Wolfgang Stein**, Czech, born in 1877, died in 1958

PLACE MADE Theresienstadt (Terezín), Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic)

DATE 1943

MEDIUM Watercolor on paper

CREDIT LINE Gift of the Estate of Greta Perlman, JM 81-75

Since Theresienstadt was meant to look like a model camp, the Nazis interned numerous artists there. Professionals and amateurs, as well as children, created art. The official works encouraged by the Nazis, often to decorate their own homes, included floral still lifes, landscapes, and cityscapes. But prisoners also clandestinely made another kind of art, much darker in nature, documenting the grim reality of life in the camp or expressing their innermost fears.



WORK **Courtyard and Barracks**

ARTIST **František Mořic Na'gl**, Czech, born in 1889, died in Auschwitz, 1944

PLACE MADE Theresienstadt (Terezín), Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic)

DATE 1943

MEDIUM Gouache on paper

CREDIT LINE Gift of the Estate of Greta Perlman, JM 83-75

František Mořic Na'gl painted a large cycle of watercolors and gouaches depicting scenes of Theresienstadt's courtyards. He also illustrated the crowded barracks, where prisoners slept in triple-stacked bunks. One of the older artists in the camp, Na'gl had studied at the the School for Applied Art and at the Academy of Art in Prague.



WORK **Entrance to the Camp**

ARTIST **Otto Ungar**, Czech, born in 1901, died in Auschwitz in 1945

PLACE MADE Theresienstadt (Terezín), Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic)

DATE 1943

MEDIUM Watercolor on paper

CREDIT LINE Gift of the Estate of Greta Perlman, JM 84-75

Otto Ungar was one of the most prominent artists in Theresienstadt. He worked at the camp's Drawing Office, producing technical drawings and reports for the Nazis, along with other artists. At night they recorded the brutal living conditions and Nazi atrocities in secret sketches, which they buried or hid inside brick walls.

When the Nazis learned that a number of their drawings had been smuggled out of the camp, they were arrested. The artists and their families were held in the camp's prison and tortured. Ungar was sent to Auschwitz, where he perished. After the war another artist, Leo Haas, returned to Terezín and recovered the hidden art.



WORKS **New Arrivals**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE Theresienstadt (Terezín), Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic)

DATE Between 1941 and 1944

MEDIUM Watercolor on paper

CREDIT LINE Gift of the Estate of Greta Perlman, JM 85-75



WORKS

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT (ON THE GALLERY WALL):

The Eastern Fortress

The Only Exit from "Eruv"

The Small Fortress

All from the series In the Eruv of Theresienstadt

ARTIST **Bedřich (Fritz) Lederer**, Czech, born in Kynšperk nad Ohří in 1878, died in 1949

Kynsperg Press, printer

PLACE MADE Kynšperk nad Ohří, Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic)

DATE 1947

MEDIUM Engraving

CREDIT LINE Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest G. Pollak in memory of Maxim Kaplan, JM 4-79.3, JM 4-79.7, JM 4-79.22

Trained at the Weimar Academy of Fine Arts, Fritz Lederer designed sets for theater productions in Theresienstadt. These engravings are part of a portfolio of prints he created after the war, depicting oppressive scenes of the camp, including the infamous Small Fortress, the prison where many inmates were tortured and killed.

The term *eruv* refers to the symbolic boundary established in some Jewish communities, demarcating a space considered the shared private property of all members, within which certain practices normally forbidden on the Sabbath may be performed. Lederer's use of the term in the context of Theresienstadt is laced with irony. The only way out of this *eruv* was by death or deportation to an extermination camp.



WORK **Theresienstadt scrip valued at 50 and 100 kronen**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE Theresienstadt (Terezín), Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic)

DATE January 1, 1943 (date of issue)

MEDIUM Ink on paper

CREDIT LINE U 9707e, U 9706d

The Nazis constructed Theresienstadt as a sham model settlement whose purpose was to conceal their systematic destruction of Europe's Jews. The fraud was extraordinarily detailed. When officials of the International Red Cross, responding to rumors of extermination facilities, demanded to inspect a concentration camp, they were invited to Theresienstadt. They visited on June 23, 1944, and saw a site that had been temporarily beautified, where inmates played soccer and enjoyed a

classical concert. To disguise the camp's overcrowding, the Nazis had previously deported a large number of residents to the Auschwitz extermination camp. Theresienstadt had a fake bank and printed its own fake money, although there was nothing to buy.



WORK Hanukkah lamp

ARTISTS Arnold Zadikow (German, born in 1884, died in Theresienstadt 1943) and **Leopold Hecht** (Czech, born in 1912, died in 1994)

PLACE MADE Theresienstadt (Terezín), Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic)

DATE 1942

MEDIUM Carved wood

CREDIT LINE Private collection

This Hanukkah lamp with the Hebrew inscription "Who is like you, O Lord, among the celestials?" (Exodus 15:11) is a rare example of Jewish ceremonial art created during the Holocaust. The sculptor and architect Arnold Zadikow was deported to Theresienstadt in May 1942 and assigned to work in the Lautscher Workshop, which made decorative arts for the Nazis. With the help of a young woodcarver, Leopold Hecht, he created the lamp for the boys' residence at the camp to enable the children to celebrate Hanukkah and to teach them about Judaism, since Jewish instruction was forbidden. The lamp was hidden all year and taken out only during the holiday. Zadikow died at Theresienstadt, but his daughter Marianne and wife, Hilda, also an artist, survived. The lamp was found in the camp after the war.



WORK Decorated verses from the Psalms

ARTIST Hilda Zadikow, Czech, born in 1890, died in 1974

PLACE MADE Theresienstadt (Terezín), Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic)

MEDIUM Watercolor on paper

DATE 1943

CREDIT LINE Collection of Jan Lieberman, Boynton Beach, Florida

Like her husband, Arnold, the artist Hilda Zadikow worked in the Lautscher Workshop, which was active in Theresienstadt from March 1942 to September 1943. She created delicate floral still lifes and designs for small objects and souvenirs produced at the shop. The verses from the Psalms featured in this rare work are a profound affirmation of both communal and individual faith in the face of relentless threats. The texts were chosen by Rabbi Leo Baeck, who had presided over the Jewish community in Germany before the Holocaust, and was the spiritual leader in Theresienstadt. The artist created two originals, in the hope that at least one would survive. Her fellow inmates in the barracks took turns hiding the works in their clothing at night, ensuring the survival of both.



WORKS

Bohusovice Train Station

Arbeit Macht Frei

Cell

Gas Valves, Crematoria

Woman Mourning Her Grandmother, Crematoria

ARTIST **Judy Glickman Lauder**, American, born in 1938

PLACE MADE Theresienstadt (Terezín), Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic)

DATE 1991

MEDIUM Gelatin silver print

CREDIT LINE Judy Glickman Lauder

These images of Theresienstadt by the contemporary photographer Judy Glickman Lauder are part of an extensive series she created about the Holocaust. The years she spent working on the project have been described by the artist as her “most intense and life-changing photographic experience.” Her poetic images of empty spaces evoke the vanished lives of the thousands of people who were held in Theresienstadt in dehumanizing conditions, under imminent threat of death.

ACCUMULATIONS

Most museum collections are built over time, often somewhat haphazardly. Along the way, a museum may accumulate a large number of similar works, responding to serendipitous opportunities as well as the need to preserve cultural and artistic heritage and to maintain important research functions. Despite their seeming redundancy, such groups of works reveal important information on artistic and social processes. Usually, just one object of a type is selected for display, while its duplicates languish in storage. This Scene takes the opposite approach: instead of emphasizing the preciousness of the unique artwork or artifact, it revels in the collective visual impact of multiples, a method of presentation that reveals new insights which might otherwise remain hidden.

Traveling in the Holy Land through the Stereoscope

The stereograph is an early form of 3D technology. When these miniature double photographs are fitted into a special viewer called a stereoscope, they appear to be life-size and give the illusion of depth.

Most of the stereographs seen here depict sites related to the Bible. They were packaged in albums of one hundred images or more, arranged in a virtual tour, and accompanied by a hefty guidebook and maps. Looking at these immersive images in succession, an armchair traveler was meant to feel transported to the region and indeed back to biblical times. The albums were originally marketed to a Christian audience and intended for use in Sunday school or for private devotional study, yet the images hold significance for Jews and Muslims too. The one hundred stereographs in our collection, on public view here for the first time, were collected and donated by Jewish Americans. By the time the sets entered the museum's collection they were incomplete; the original tours remain as fragmented as the ruins they portray.



WORK To be within arm's reach of distant countries it is only necessary to be within arm's reach of the Underwood Stereograph Travel System

ARTIST Underwood & Underwood, American, active from 1882 to about 1940

MEDIUM Illustration from The Underwood Travel System

DATE c. 1907

CREDIT LINE Underwood & Underwood Glass Stereograph Collection, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC

A craze for 3D photographs arose after the first handheld stereoscope made its debut in 1851 at the Crystal Palace Exhibition in London. Soon, commercial studios across the globe were producing millions of stereographs of tourist destinations, geographic marvels, modern warfare, political figures, and cultural events, as well as scenes staged for comic or sentimental effect. Stereographs were enjoyed at home or used in classrooms as a popular form of entertainment and education.



WORKS Selections from Palestine through the Stereoscope

ARTIST **Keystone View Company**, American, active from 1892 to 1963

MEDIUM 57 from a set of 200 gelatin silver stereographs

DATE c. 1910

CREDIT LINE Gift of Shelley and David Garfinkel, 1990-67.1-1990-67.57

The Keystone View Company, like its rival Underwood & Underwood, produced an educational packaged tour of Palestine for American Christian audiences.

Keystone's photographs were printed in the crisp black-and-white of gelatin silver instead of the nostalgic sepia tone used by Underwood. Many of the two companies' images are similar; these merchants were, in a sense, the forerunners of today's stock photograph houses.

These stereographs may reveal more about the perspectives and tastes of Christian Americans at the time than about life in the Mideast. Through the magic of modern science, Americans could look not *at* the photographs but, in the words of the guidebook, "*through* them. Life-size models of stone and dirt of Palestine, so rich in historical memories, could not be more definite and solid to the eyes. We stand in the very presence of its hills and valleys."



WORKS Selections from Traveling in the Holy Land through the Stereoscope

ARTIST **Underwood & Underwood**, American, active from 1882 to about 1940

MEDIUM 40 from a set of 100 albumen stereographs

DATE c. 1900

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Norman Triege, 1988-68.1-1988-68.40

Underwood & Underwood, a leading American producer of stereographs, had a library of more than thirty thousand unique photographic views, including this set of images of Palestine, made when the land was still part of the Ottoman Empire. It was founded in Kansas by the brothers Bert and Elmer Underwood, who began modestly, peddling stereographic photographs door-to-door west of the Mississippi River. Within a few years, they had customers across the United States and around the globe.

Using a dual-lens camera, Bert Underwood traveled to the Mideast and photographed places linked to the Bible (sometimes inaccurate). The resulting armchair tour of the region was accompanied by a breathlessly worded guidebook and was wildly popular. The captions that accompany each view were written for the Christian educational market, with citations from the Bible and identifications that

are antiquated by today's standards. They are nevertheless an important record of how the region was commonly seen at the time.

Underwood was capitalizing on a mania for biblical themes that swept across nineteenth-century America, fueled by a popular view of the United States as the New Zion.

"Have you ever dreamed of visiting Palestine? Have you longed to know what it would mean to stand by the wall of Jerusalem? in Nazareth? by the Jordan? You many now know, by *the right use* of the stereographs, specially devised maps, and this book, what it is to stand in those very places." Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, D.D., *Traveling in the Holy Land through the Stereoscope*, 1900

"No single foot of ground in all Jerusalem or within its neighbourhood seems to be without a stirring and important history of its own. It is a very relief to steal a walk of a hundred yards without a guide along to talk unceasingly about every stone you step upon and drag you back ages and ages to the day when it achieved celebrity." Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad, or The New Pilgrims' Progress*, 1869



WORK Selections from Tripoli, Egypt, and the Middle East

ARTIST Charles Bierstadt, American, born in 1819, died in 1903

MEDIUM 3 from a set of 261 stereographs

DATE 1874

CREDIT LINE Gift of Mr. and Mrs. M. Eisenhandler, 1988-75-1988-77

Most producers of stereographs were little-known freelance photographers, but these three images were created by Charles Bierstadt, identified by his signature shield and banner logo in an orange frame. Bierstadt's brother Albert was an admired painter of monumental landscapes; his sweeping views of the American West were often based on stereoscopic photographs made by Charles.



WORK The Jews' Wailing Place, outer Wall of Solomon's Temple, Jerusalem, Palestine, from Traveling in the Holy Land through the Stereoscope

ARTIST Underwood & Underwood, American, active from 1882 to about 1940

MEDIUM Albumen stereograph, facsimile

DATE 1896

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Norman Triege, 1988-68.13

The Western Wall, a vestige of the Second Temple, destroyed by the Romans in 70 ce, is the most important pilgrimage site in Judaism. This photograph features women praying; the ability of Jewish women to pray at the Western Wall in the manner they

choose is a point of religious and legal contention in Israel today, but seems to have been unremarkable at the time.



WORK The “Dome of the Rock,” site of Solomon’s Temple,—from the northwest—Jerusalem, Palestine, from Traveling in the Holy Land through the Stereoscope

ARTIST Underwood & Underwood, American, active from 1882 to about 1940

MEDIUM Albumen stereograph, facsimile

DATE 1900

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Norman Triegeer, 1988-68.14

Perhaps Jerusalem’s most recognizable landmark, the Dome of the Rock stands on the site of what once was the Second Temple. The octagonal building, with its double-decker facade of marble and mosaic tilework, is one of the oldest examples of Islamic architecture still in existence.



WORK Colossal Remnants of the “Sun” Temple—the grandest of antiquity—Baalbek, Syria, from Traveling in the Holy Land through the Stereoscope

ARTIST Underwood & Underwood, American, active from 1882 to about 1940

MEDIUM Albumen stereograph, facsimile

DATE 1900

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Norman Triegeer, 1988-68.36

The guidebook laments: “What a glorious temple all this must have been seventeen centuries ago, when Rome ruled the world, and its emperor Antoninus Pius gilded these capitals! Who would have dreamed on that day that in less than three hundred years the insignificant sect of the Christians would destroy or transform every temple into a church of Christ!”

The ancient Roman Temple of Jupiter in Baalbek, Lebanon, was begun by Julius Caesar in the first century CE and completed in the late second or early third century, well after the reign of Antoninus Pius. (That emperor did, however, commission the nearby Temple of Bacchus.) The Temple of Jupiter, once thought to be dedicated to the sun god Helios, was indeed colossal, with columns more than ninety feet tall. Several of these were pillaged by the Christian emperor Justinian in the sixth century for use in his great church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople (now Istanbul).



WORK Syrian Travelers, near Lydda, Palestine, from Traveling in the Holy Land through the Stereoscope

ARTIST Underwood & Underwood, American, active from 1882 to about 1940

MEDIUM Albumen stereograph, facsimile

DATE 1900

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Norman Triegeer, 1988-68.3



WORK On the north Shore of the Dead Sea—looking southwest—Palestine, from Traveling in the Holy Land through the Stereoscope

ARTIST Underwood & Underwood, American, active from 1882 to about 1940

MEDIUM Albumen stereograph, facsimile

DATE 1900

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Norman Triegeer, 1988-68.18



WORK Picturesque Palestine, the Wilderness of the Scapegoat, Judea, from Traveling in the Holy Land through the Stereoscope, facsimile

ARTIST Underwood & Underwood, American, active from 1882 to about 1940

MEDIUM Albumen stereograph, facsimile

DATE 1900

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Norman Triegeer, 1988-68.17



WORK The lonely Convent of Mar Saba, Wilderness of Judea, Palestine, from Traveling in the Holy Land through the Stereoscope

ARTIST Underwood & Underwood, American, active from 1882 to about 1940

MEDIUM Albumen stereograph, facsimile

DATE 1900

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Norman Triegeer, 1988-68.16



WORK The princely Reception Room of a Pasha, Damascus, Syria, from Traveling in the Holy Land through the Stereoscope

ARTIST Underwood & Underwood, American, active from 1882 to about 1940

MEDIUM Albumen stereograph, facsimile

DATE 1900

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Norman Triege, 1988-68.40

This sumptuous image fed a popular fascination in the West with Orientalism, the depiction of the East as opulent, exotic, and mysterious. The room is the Hall of Grapes in Beit Nizam, a Damascus palace built in the late eighteenth century. Its ornate tiled walls, marble pavement, carved niches, and central fountain are all typical of the extravagant interior decoration of Ottoman palaces, as are the Europeanstyle sofas, chairs, gilt-framed mirrors, Victorian glass chandelier, and ormolu clock. The guidebook entry for this stereograph joked, condescendingly, "This Mohammedan has become so Europeanized that he has chairs and sofas for his reception room," but in fact the building was the British consulate at the time. It is now a luxury hotel.

Eames Walnut Stools are provided compliments of Design Within Reach.

SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

Signs and symbols are representations of an idea or concept, constituting a visual language that is recognizable within a social group. The meaning attached to a particular image is not fixed, but open to interpretation. Symbolism, when applied to objects, endows them with significance beyond their everyday use. In the Jewish Museum's collections, where ethnically based and religious art are important components, signs and symbols play a major role.

The Star of David

The six-pointed star, commonly thought to be an ancient symbol of Jewish identity, actually assumed this significance fairly late. In fact, the hexagram has undergone numerous changes in meaning over time as well as being a widespread motif in other cultures. Originally a decorative device and magical sign in both Jewish and non-Jewish contexts, it was probably first used as a distinctive Jewish emblem in the 1600s, when it was adopted by the Jewish community of Prague. By the nineteenth century it had evolved into the symbol of the Jewish people as a whole. With the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, the Star of David was placed on the Israeli flag and took on a specific national significance. Still, the six-pointed star remains a universal motif that appears in art worldwide.



WORK Lifeguard Towers – Serial I

ARTIST **Guy Raz**, Israeli, born in 1964

MEDIUM Chromogenic color print

DATE 2003

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Uzi Zucker Philanthropic Fund Gift, 2008-220.3

Guy Raz's photographs of lifeguard towers on empty Tel Aviv and Gaza beaches call attention to the two cities' shared Mediterranean coastline, and hint obliquely at their complicated, intertwined history. The flags on the towers—here, the Israeli flag with the Star of David—do not indicate safe or unsafe swimming conditions, but nationality. In their solitude, they suggest a series of menacing watchtowers, subverting the serenity of blue skies and picturesque beaches.



WORK Star of David (Orange)

ARTIST **Dana Frankfort**, American, born in 1971

MEDIUM Oil on panel

DATE 2007

CREDIT LINE Gift of the artist, 2009-37

"I like the idea that a star can't be original," Dana Frankfort comments. "It's a symbol that anyone can draw and have." Inspired by Morris Louis and other Color Field painters of the 1950s, who experimented with abstract forms and saturated colors, Frankfort stretches and distorts familiar letters and symbols, emphasizing their structure.



WORK **Untitled**

ARTIST **David Ortins**, American, born in 1955

MEDIUM Oil and beeswax on wood

DATE 1989

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Vera G. List Fund, 1989-140

The abstract painter David Ortins transforms seemingly plain compositions into nuanced, contemplative objects. Here, two interlaced Stars of David appear simple and benign, yet their placement, split over two panels, assumes a certain confrontational aspect, bursting out of the picture frame. The stars are smoothly painted, but the delicate, translucent beeswax surface is full of subtle imperfections and barely visible scars. "I am attracted to simple geometric forms," the artist has said. "These can be universally recognizable signs or symbols at any point throughout history. Some are obscure (a bar or rectangle) while others are more personal (the Star of David). I do not direct the recognition of these images."

IN THE CASE, LEFT



WORK **Skullcap**

ARTIST **Sol LeWitt**, American, 1928-2007

MEDIUM Leather

DATE Designed c. 2001, produced 2012

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Nash Aussenberg Memorial Fund, 2012-23

A pioneer of Minimal and Conceptual art, Sol LeWitt is known for large-scale geometric wall drawings, often using bold stripes of pure color to create rhythmic optical patterns. In 2001 he conceived the doors of a Torah ark for Congregation Beth Shalom Rodfe Zedek in Chester, Connecticut, with the design of a six-pointed star within a circle. The pattern was later repeated on this skullcap. The translation of LeWitt's signature Minimalist style into a multicolored item of Judaica is at once cheerful and graphically striking.

IN THE CASE, RIGHT



WORK **Star of David belt**

ARTIST **Isaac Mizrahi**, American, born in 1961

MEDIUM Brass and leather

DATE 1991

CREDIT LINE Gift of Sarah Haddad Cheney, 2017-13

The fashion designer Isaac Mizrahi has always operated at the intersection of high style and popular culture. In his fall 1991 collection he mixed cultural influences from his childhood in irreverent ways, from Native American to American Jewish. "If crosses are everywhere," he reasoned, "why not make the Star of David ubiquitous too?"



WORK **Window from a Sukkah**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE United States

MEDIUM Stained and colored glass with leaded comes and wood

DATE c. 1900

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. Harry G. Friedman, F 3667a

This window was probably once part of a communal *sukkah* belonging to an American synagogue, and may have matched stained-glass work in the sanctuary. A *sukkah* is a temporary booth built by observant Jews to celebrate the weeklong autumn harvest of Sukkot. The biblical verse mandating this practice is inscribed in Hebrew on the window: "In *sukkot* you shall dwell for seven days" (Leviticus 23:42). Ubiquitous in modern synagogue decoration, the Star of David is central to the window's design and is repeated in smaller sizes within the large star. Many synagogues were built in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, during the large wave of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe. As some of those congregations later consolidated or dwindled, their synagogue buildings were sold and repurposed or abandoned and sometimes destroyed. A number of works entered the museum's collection as a consequence.

TOP LEFT



WORK **Hanukkah lamp**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE India

MEDIUM Pierced, engraved, traced, punched, and cast copper alloy

DATE Late nineteenth or early twentieth century

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Sidney L. Quitman, by exchange, 1998-57

TOP RIGHT



WORK **Torah finials**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE Persia (now Iran)

MEDIUM Cast, hammered, soldered, pierced, and appliqué silver

DATE First half of the twentieth century

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. Harry G. Friedman, F 3325a-b

The Star of David is a frequent motif in Iranian Jewish ceremonial art of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In that context it is typically an expression of Zionist sentiment. These Torah ornaments bear several Hebrew inscriptions. At center of the star is the word "Zion," while the letters within the triangles read "Shield of David." A small Star of David on top of each finial has the first Hebrew letter for "Zion" within.

BOTTOM LEFT



WORK **Mamluk Revival bowl**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE Damascus, Ottoman Syria

MEDIUM Brass with silver, copper, and gold inlay

DATE 1904 or 1905

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. Harry G. Friedman, F 919

This bowl bears four-petal flowers with double interlaced Stars of David. It is inscribed with the date in Hebrew, "Damascus work, the year [5]665," and with Arabic proverbs—"Whoever is patient attains," "Deeds accord with intentions," and "According to a person's intentions, so is done unto him"—and a Hebrew Bible verse, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days" (Ecclesiastes 11:1). In the Mideast, the Mamluk Revival style (1878– 1914) arose to satisfy the tastes of European collectors and tourists. In Damascus, Mamluk-style metal inlay was done primarily by Jews. Their workshops became a training ground for artists of the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, founded in Jerusalem in 1906. A Hanukkah lamp in the Bezalel version of this technique is on view in the Constellations Scene on this floor.

BOTTOM RIGHT



WORK **Prayer shawl bag**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE Persia (now Iran)

MEDIUM Tulle with tinsel embroidery

DATE Late nineteenth or early twentieth century

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Judaica Acquisitions Fund, 1987-149

This delicately embroidered tallit bag, may have been a wedding gift for a man. The fragility of the materials suggests that it was to be used briefly, perhaps for the week following his wedding. The Hebrew inscription at the center of the Star of David reads "Zion," while the letters within the points of the star (one of which is unclear) are probably the customary inscription "Shield of David," found on the Torah finials displayed in this vitrine.



WORK **Torah ark curtain or reader's desk cover**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE Possibly the Ottoman Empire

MEDIUM Quilted cotton embroidered with silk thread

DATE Early twentieth century

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. Harry G. Friedman, F 4936

The motif of a portal shaped like a mihrab (a Muslim prayer niche) links this work to synagogue textiles made in the Ottoman Empire and influenced by Muslim prayer rugs. A history of repurposing may be detected in its details. The Star of David and Hebrew inscriptions were added later when the piece was converted for Jewish use. The upper band, reading, "May the Lord bless thee and keep thee" (Numbers 6:24), repeated twice, was embroidered over penciled floral decoration, some of it previously embroidered and later unstitched. The Star of David has the familiar word "Zion" at center, and the letters within its six triangles spell "Shield of David." Around the star are two abbreviated biblical inscriptions frequently found on amulets. Given the modest size of this textile, it may have been used either as a curtain for a small Torah ark or to cover a reader's desk.

BETWEEN THE WINDOWS



WORK Decorative hanging or banner

ARTIST Theodoros Kydonopulos, printer

PLACE MADE Probably Salonica (now Thessaloniki), Greece

DATE c. 1918

MEDIUM Printed linen

CREDIT LINE Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, JM 66-75

Salonica, in northern Greece, was home to a large Jewish population before World War II. This textile is one of four that may have been decorative hangings or banners in a Jewish public building or synagogue there. The design and color scheme imitate Macedonian embroidery. On November 2, 1918, Salonica's Jews celebrated the first anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, in which Britain endorsed the establishment of a Jewish home in Palestine. The banners may have been used in the citywide festivities, given the combination of the Star of David, a Zionist emblem, and the Macedonian style, conflating local pride with desire for a Jewish homeland.

BACKSTORY: One of a set of four textiles seized by the Nazis during the occupation of Greece; recovered at the war's end. As the Macedonian Jewish community had been destroyed, the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction organization placed three in the Jewish Museum; the fourth was inadvertently separated and is in the collection of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

Рисунки	Углы (градусы)	Площадь (см²)	Высота (см)	Масса (г)	Примечания
	0.7	0.7	100		
	1	1	57		
	1.5	1.5	33		
	2	2	30		
	2.2	2.2	28		
	2.5	2.5	22		
	3.5	3	16		
	37	35	16.5		
	56	6	9		
	76	7	8		

WORK **Untitled (Star of David)**

ARTISTS **The Peppers**

Ljudmila Skripkina (Ukrainian, born in 1965) and **Oleg Petrenko** (Ukrainian, born in 1965)

MEDIUM Enamel on Masonite, spackle, and glue mixture

DATE 1989

CREDIT LINE Gift of Vera G. List, by exchange, 1992-165

The Peppers, husband and wife, are members of the generation of Conceptual artists in Moscow who arose from the underground art movement in the late 1970s. This painting is about measuring, charting, and quantifying, but the precise scientific meaning of the tables is of less consequence than the whole represented by the Star of David. Implicitly confrontational yet partly concealed, the star is a metaphor for the emergence of Jews from near invisibility within the Soviet Union and at the same time a reference to its use by the Nazis as an anti- Semitic device.

In a similar fashion, the American painter Ross Bleckner draws layers of identity from the Star of David in his *Double Portrait (Gay Flag)*, on view in the Personas Scene on this floor.



WORK **Victims, Holocaust, from The War Series: Bombs and Helicopters**

ARTIST **Nancy Spero**, American, born in 1926, died in 2009

MEDIUM Gouache and ink on paper with collage

DATE 1968

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Milton and Miriam Handler Fund, 2005-48

Painted at the height of the Vietnam War, Nancy Spero's work invokes the Holocaust to indict America's brutal neocolonial militarism. Her Star of David has six screaming, spike-tongued death heads at its points, each bearing a yellow star—a reference to the badges Jews were forced to wear by the Nazis. Each is labeled with an early year of Hitler's regime, when the first extermination camps were built. The heads can also be read as helicopters, one of Spero's recurrent symbols of modern industrialized warfare. The helicopter is "a primeval (prime-evil) bird or bug wreaking destruction. I imagined that Vietnamese peasants saw it as a giant monster. I viewed the helicopter as *the* symbol of [the Vietnam] War." At the center of the

Star of David is a bent, howling human figure, an anguished expression of horror at the mechanized violence of contemporary war.



WORK *Man Reaching for a Star*, from the *Charred Journal* series

ARTIST **Morris Louis**, American, born in 1912, died in 1962

MEDIUM Magna on canvas

DATE 1952

CREDIT LINE Gift of Ruth Bocour in memory of Leonard Bocour, 1997-126

This work is one of seven largely abstract paintings from Morris Louis's *Charred Journal* series, created as a response to the book burnings carried out by the Nazis during World War II. Louis's only work to provide insight into his moral and political concerns, it is also unique in reflecting his Jewish identity. The blackened background is reminiscent of burnt paper, from which rise white letters, numbers, agitated swirls, a large abstracted figure, delineated in brown and yellow, and a Star of David. The artist described his white letters and symbols as rising like ashes from the charred page; they may also be seen as metaphors for resistance and survival. Created during the early 1950s, when the United States Congress was seeking to purge perceived Communists, leftists, and liberals from public life, the series can be further interpreted as a statement against censorship.

BACKSTORY: The orientation of this painting has been debated, as Morris Louis was flexible on this aspect of his work. At one time, it was displayed at the museum upside down and referred to as *Untitled (Jewish Star)*. During preparations for the present exhibition, arrows on the back were determined to have been made by the artist, and to indicate the orientation in which it is now shown. When it is hung this way, a figure emerges. The painting is now identified as Louis's *Man Reaching for a Star*.

LEFT TO RIGHT



WORK **Badge**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic)

MEDIUM Printed cotton

DATE c. 1941

CREDIT LINE Gift of Hermina Koblerova, S 1402a



WORK **Badge**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE France

MEDIUM Printed cotton

DATE c. 1942

CREDIT LINE Gift of Madame Juliette Stern, Paris, S 1403



WORK **Badge stamp**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE France

MEDIUM Cast brass

DATE c. 1942

CREDIT LINE S 1837g

Until the Holocaust, the six-pointed star had only positive connotations in Jewish tradition. It was used as a symbol of communal identity, a protective device in amulets, or a Zionist emblem. After the German occupation of Poland in 1939, the Nazis forced Jews to wear a yellow star as an identifying badge, often inscribed with the word "Jew." The lettering, seen here in German and French versions, was meant to resemble Hebrew. This measure deliberately turned a symbol of Jewish pride into an emblem of discrimination that singled out Jews, restricted their movements, and marked them as prey. Concealing the badge was an offense punishable by deportation to a concentration camp.

HANGING FROM THE CEILING



WORK **Sabbath and festival lamp**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE Cochin (now Kochi), Kerala, India

MEDIUM Cast brass and glass

DATE Twentieth century

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. David Hallegua and Fiona Hallegua in memory of their grandfather Shabdai Samuel Koder, 2000-69

Known as a *chattakam vilakku*, this type of hanging lamp with seven oil cups has been used by Jews in Cochin, at the southwest tip of India, since at least the late nineteenth century. The Star of David expresses an emergent Zionist sentiment. Lamps in this star form are also characteristic of the Bene Israel community around Mumbai, farther north on the west coast of India.

BACKSTORY: This lamp belonged to Shabdai (Sattu) Koder (1907–1994), leader for five decades of the Jewish community of Kochi, India, and warden of the Paradesi Synagogue, the only active synagogue there today. The Koder family was probably from Iraq and arrived in Kochi via Burma (now Myanmar) in the early nineteenth century.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE

WORK **Floor tile from El Tránsito Synagogue**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE Toledo, Spain

MEDIUM Tin-glazed earthenware

DATE c. 1360

CREDIT LINE Collection of the Hispanic Society of America, New York

This tile is from the pavement of the medieval El Tránsito Synagogue in Toledo, Spain. Its style was strongly influenced by Islamic artistic tradition; the six-pointed star motif probably had no Jewish significance. Local Muslim artisans made ample use of colorful tiles bearing hexagrams and other geometric patterns.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE

WORK **Mount for the shaft of a spear**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE Found in Vermand, France

MEDIUM Silver gilt with niello inlay

DATE Late Roman, c. 400

CREDIT LINE Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917, 17.192.145

This intricately worked silver mount was found in the grave treasure of a Germanic warrior who died in the Roman province of Gaul, today France. The hexagram is a decorative motif in both Roman and Germanic art.



WORK **Flask**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE Belleek, Ireland

MEDIUM Slip-cast porcelain with polychrome glaze and parcel gilt; cork stopper

DATE Between 1863 and 1884

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. Harry G. Friedman, F 2333

When this puzzling flask was acquired by the Jewish Museum in 1948 the six-pointed star was presumed to be Jewish. However, it may be Masonic. The flask was made by Belleek, Ireland's renowned porcelain manufacturer. The company's art director at the time, Robert Williams Armstrong, was a Freemason who designed dinnerware for Masonic lodges. Other decorations are equally symbolic: at center is the Belleek emblem, which makes reference to the Celtic Revival. Below it is a garland in which the English rose, Scottish thistle, and Irish shamrock are entwined, denoting the union of Britain.



WORK **Beer jug with brewer's star**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE Germany

MEDIUM Stoneware

DATE c. 1880

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. B. Rosenberg, JM 168-75

In medieval commerce, trade emblems were essential for a largely illiterate population. The *Brauerstern*, or brewer's star, was the symbol for beer brewing in southern Germany. It had no Jewish meaning, but in the eighteenth century German hops traders were often Jewish; later, Jewish artisans also made painted beer steins. Whether the star on this one is Jewish or not is therefore anyone's guess.



WORK **Belt buckle**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE Probably Essaouira, Morocco

MEDIUM Cast and engraved silver

DATE Early twentieth century

CREDIT LINE Gift of Eli Wilner in honor of Robert Hurst, 2003-20

This buckle has both the six-pointed star and another emblem often found in Islamic and Jewish cultures alike: the *hamsa* (known as the Hand of Fatima among Muslims), a protective symbol. Although the buckle was made in the early twentieth century, when the star was already recognized as primarily a Jewish symbol, it may have not have been created for Jewish use.

IMAGE UNAVAILABLE

WORK **Bowl**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE Probably Afghanistan

MEDIUM Cast, chased, punched, and engraved high-tin bronze

DATE Late Ghaznavid period, twelfth century

CREDIT LINE Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Louis E. and Theresa S. Seley Purchase Fund for Islamic Art and Rogers Fund, 2000, 2000.57

Given the prohibition against images in Islam, it is no surprise that geometric patterns, including the six-pointed star, abound in the decorative arts of the Mideast and Central Asia.



WORK **Tombstone fragment?**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE Mamluk Palestine

MEDIUM Marble

This star probably decorated the top of a gravestone. Below it is a mark that may be part of an Arabic inscription, suggesting that it commemorated a Muslim burial. In the Islamic world the Star of David was known as the Seal of Solomon (Suleiman), and was considered a powerful protective emblem. Solomon is revered in Islam as in Judaism for his wisdom and kingship. In early magical traditions, Solomon had a seal ring that could defeat demons, but the emblem on the seal was not identified.



WORK Stamp Seal

ARTIST Unknown

PLACE MADE Eastern Mediterranean

MEDIUM Fired clay

DATE Between the sixth and tenth century

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. Harry G. Friedman, F 4328

In antiquity the hexagram was often a magical device, protecting against demons and other threats. Clay stamps were used to mark ritual bread or identify a maker's products - oil or wine jar stoppers, for example. Whether this stamp came from a Jewish, Muslim, or Christian context remains unknown.



WORK Plate, possibly for Passover

ARTIST Unknown, marked with the maker's initials L Q R

PLACE MADE Vienna

DATE c. 1900

MEDIUM Glazed ceramic

CREDIT LINE Gift of Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Doran, 1984-49

The hexagram at the center of this platter suggests a Jewish connection, as do its six shallow compartments. If it is a traditional Passover plate, these hold the ritual foods discussed at the holiday's meal, or seder. But seder plates usually have Hebrew inscriptions identifying each of the symbolic foods. This plate's blue-and-white glaze and pattern of vines, blossoms, and birds perched in branches are inspired by Chinese porcelain and give no hint about the dish's purpose.

BACKSTORY Probably manufactured by Wächtersbach, founded in Brachttal, near Frankfurt am Main, 1832



WORK Seder Plate

ARTIST Unknown

PLACE MADE Bohemia (now the Czech Republic)

MEDIUM Pearl-glazed porcelain with gold paint

DATE 1900-1938

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. Harry G. Friedman, F 895

This dish, with its six tear-shaped depressions, borrows from the design of an oyster plate. The manufacturer adapted the form, adding a Star of David and the names of the ritual seder foods so it could be marketed as a Passover plate. It was probably originally sold in the famous spa town of Karlsbad (now Karlovy Vary) in Bohemia, where Jewish tourists flocked at the turn of the last century to enjoy the mineral waters and meet and greet. The repurposed dish is startling, since oysters are not kosher. Further, by the time this plate was made, the oyster had almost died out in Europe.

RIGHT



WORKS Two amulets

ARTISTS Unknown

PLACE MADE Ottoman Empire

PLACE MADE Safed, Ottoman Palestine

CREDIT LINE Gift of Harry G. Friedman, F 3718

DATE Late nineteenth or early twentieth century

MEDIUM Ink on parchment

MEDIUM Cast pewter

CREDIT LINE U 9927

We think of amulets as trinkets to be worn, but a protective amulet may be written on paper or parchment. This one shields Refkula, known as Merkada, daughter of Gioia, from fear, sickness, and harm inflicted by demons. The name Merkada was given to a girl whose parents had suffered the loss of one or two consecutive infants. It means “sold” in Judeo-Spanish, and indicates that the child “was not theirs” and thus could not be taken from them by death. The text begins with a customary invocation of divine help, followed by several of the names of God. The hexagram was adapted in medieval Jewish mysticism as a protection against evil forces. Called the Magen David (Shield of David) and accompanied by divine names, incantations, and biblical verses, it appears often on Jewish amulets. This pewter amulet is inscribed with a number of kabbalistic expressions.



WORK Hebrew clock

ARTIST Probably Philipp Happacher, German, born in Friedberg, 1784, died in Vienna, 1843

PLACE MADE Vienna

MEDIUM Silvered, cast, chased, and engraved copper alloy

DATE c. 1818–43

CREDIT LINE Bequest of Elizabeth Cats in memory of her father, Leopold Silberstein, 1997-144a-b

Designed to grace the mantelpiece of a prosperous bourgeois Viennese home, this clock declares its Jewish identity robustly. The dial bears a Star of David; the hours are marked with the Hebrew letters that correspond to numerals, and the whole is crowned with the Tablets of the Law. In style, the clock has the elegant, simple lines of the Biedermeier era in Vienna (1815–48), a period characterized by an embrace of family, order, and tradition. Other Hebrew timepieces are on view in the Taxonomies Scene on this floor.



WORK **Hanukkah lamp**

ARTIST **Unknown**

PLACE MADE Probably Bohemia (now the Czech Republic)

MEDIUM Repoussé copper alloy

DATE Eighteenth century?

CREDIT LINE Gift of Dr. Harry G. Friedman, F 3273

The Jews of Prague were the first community to use the Star of David as their emblem, in the early seventeenth century. The Prague star, like the one on this lamp, had a hat in the center. Originally Jews in Bohemia were required to wear this distinctive headgear to differentiate themselves from Christians; eventually they embraced it as a symbol of Jewish identity.

TELEVISION AND BEYOND

Television has been shaping and reflecting our perceptions since its rise as a mass medium in the 1930s. In 1981 the Jewish Museum established the National Jewish Archive of Broadcasting, a collection of television and radio materials related to the Jewish experience. At that time, it was a bold statement to align television with other art forms in a museum. The Archive is a record of how Jews have been portrayed and have portrayed themselves on American TV over the decades. Inspired by the Archive, *Television and Beyond* draws on other programs and materials to further explore these issues.

Friends and Family

18 min., 12 sec., continuous loop

Depictions of identities—religious, cultural, gender, and others—are a recurrent preoccupation of Jewish artists and thinkers, as seen in many artworks in these galleries. On television, the presentation of ethnic identity has become more diverse and complex over time. The family sitcom has always been one of the medium's most popular genres and provides an instantly recognizable setting in which to explore identity, including Jewishness. It has also, traditionally, established the white, middle-class, nonethnic nuclear family as the American norm. *Friends and Family* highlights current television shows that disrupt this tradition, reflecting the ongoing conversations about identity that inform our present moment. These programs expand the notion of family to include invented and extended families and circles of intimate friends who become family. By including transgender and queer characters, multiethnic and interfaith families, and actors who do not conform to stereotypes, they alter embedded assumptions about what the American Jewish family looks like. The clips shown here capture defining moments for the characters, whether at home, in school, or even in prison.

"The Courage of a Soldier," *Difficult People*, season 1, episode 4

Hulu, 2015

Julie Klausner, creator and writer; Jeffrey Walker, director

Fred Armisen, Billy Eichner, Jackie Hoffman, and Dahlia White, cast

3 min., 15 sec.

In *Difficult People* the eponymous heroes, Julie and Billy, are aspiring yet embittered performers who take snark to an extreme level, alienating most of the people they encounter. Here, Billy joins his brother, Garry, for a tension-filled meal to break the fast of Yom Kippur. The scene presents the backstory of the brothers' secular upbringing, framed by Garry's newfound adherence to Jewish rituals and Billy's equally zealous worship of show business.

"My Mom, Greg's Mom and Josh's Sweet Dance Moves!" *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, season 1, episode 8

The CW, 2015

Rachel Bloom and Aline Brosh McKenna, creators; Steven Tsuchida, director;

Rachel Specter and Audrey Wauchope, writers

Rachel Bloom and Tovah Feldshuh, cast

2 min., 8 sec.

The musical series *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* is the story of Rebecca, a high-powered New York lawyer who leaves her job to chase after her summer-camp boyfriend from high school in California. This unlikely premise is the basis for exploring the identity crisis of a twenty-something who upends the life her Jewish mother planned for her. The presence of the Broadway legend Tovah Feldshuh as the mother, Naomi, nods to the history of the musical format as a New York tradition with strong Jewish roots. In this segment, Naomi sings her displeasure at Rebecca's lifestyle, pointing out her flaws and provoking guilt.

"Knockoffs," *Broad City*, season 2, episode 4

Comedy Central, 2015

Abbi Jacobson and Ilana Glazer, creators and writers; Lucia Aniello, director

Susie Essman, Ilana Glazer, and Abbi Jacobson, cast

47 sec.

Broad City uses the traditions of Jewish humor—sometimes observational, sometimes raunchy—to portray the friendship of Ilana and Abbi, two young women trying to make it in New York. This episode explores the bond between mother and daughter. Ilana and her mother, Bobbi, discuss the upcoming shiva (mourning period) for Bobbi's mother while engaging in their own ritual: a pedicure in a nail salon. Though both are Jewish, Ilana distinguishes between higher-and lower-class Jews by making specific references to Abbi's upbringing in the tony suburbs of Philadelphia.

"Phillip Goldstein," *Fresh Off the Boat*, season 1, episode 8

ABC, 2015

Nahnatchka Khan, creator; inspired by the book by Eddie Huang; Phil Traill, director;

Jeff Chiang and Eric Ziobrowski, writers

Albert Tsai and Hudson Yang, cast

2 min., 26 sec.

Fresh Off the Boat is a sitcom loosely based on the memoir of Eddie Huang, the American-born son of immigrants from Taiwan. In this segment Eddie's school principal assigns him to be the buddy of a new kid, also of Asian descent. The program's humor plays on Asian and Jewish stereotypes, highlighting the boys' differing tastes in popular culture. As the new boy's surname is Goldstein, it also reflects contemporary trends in Jewish demographics and offers a critique of assumptions based on appearances.

"Kina Hora," *Transparent*, season 2, episode 1

Amazon Studios; 2015

Jill Soloway, creator, director, and writer

Jay Duplass, Gaby Hoffmann, Amy Landecker, Judith Light, and Jeffrey Tambor, cast

3 min., 10 sec.

Transparent, regularly called the most Jewish show on television, bakes Jewishness into everything from Maura's gender transition to food to family history. A photography session at Sarah and Tammy's wedding brings out many of the issues explored in the series and takes the term "extended family" to another level. Members of the family readily include spouses and children from past relationships,

with differing religions and sexual orientations, in the “family only” photograph. But the photographer, an outsider, stumbles from one awkward moment to another. The segment illustrates how the definition of family morphs and expands.

“The Vows,” *Grace and Frankie*, season 1, episode 13

Netflix, 2015

Marta Kauffman and Howard J. Morris, creators; Dean Parisot, director; Alexa Junge, Marta Kauffman, and Howard J. Morris, writers

Ethan Embry, Lily Tomlin, Baron Vaughn, and Sam Waterston, cast

2 min., 12 sec.

Grace and Frankie is an “odd couple” series that pairs Lily Tomlin with Jane Fonda as older women whose husbands have fallen in love with each other and married, leaving the ladies to one another. Here, Frankie, Sol, and their two sons light Sabbath candles for the last time as a family. While the scene does not explicitly refer to the circumstances that led to this moment, it casually notes that lifestyles still usually seen as unconventional are nevertheless utterly consistent with a desire to observe Jewish rituals.

“Trust No Bitch,” *Orange Is the New Black*, season 3, episode 13

Netflix, 2015

Jenji Kohan, creator; Phil Abraham, director; Jim Danger Gray and Jenji Kohan, writers

Jamie Denbo, Adrienne C. Moore, Yelena Shmulenson, and Eric Zuckerman, cast

3 min., 34 sec.

Orange Is the New Black is an ensemble series set in a women’s prison, dedicated to telling the stories of diverse women who together form a temporary family. The arc of the third season traces the conversion of an African American prisoner, Cindy, to Judaism. Initially played purely for laughs, the story line evolves to emphasize the value Judaism places on argument and learning and what this comes to mean for Cindy. Rabbi Alan Tatelbaum may be the most obviously Jewish character, but as the segment acknowledges, the other manifestations of Judaism in the four individuals around the table are equally valid and meaningful. And while a prison is far from a cheerful setting, the episode ends on a hopeful and uplifting note, as Cindy completes her conversion with a ritual immersion and is welcomed to the faith with an enthusiastic “Mazel tov!”

PERSONAS

Among genres of art, portraits offer the most direct connection between subject, artist, and viewer, and no art form is more profoundly concerned with the core question of identity. In this museum, portraiture provides perspectives on the individual and on Jewishness at a particular moment and from a specific view.

The Jewish Museum's collection includes portraits dating from antiquity to the present, most either by Jewish artists or of Jewish sitters. It thus offers a historical view of Jewish identities in all their many facets, addressing religion and secularity, ethnicity and universality, fantasy and materiality, otherness and self-assertion.

Self-Portraits

A self-portrait is an opportunity for self-reflection, perhaps with a hint of theatricality. The artist's decisions about style, form, background, expression, and dress are all carefully chosen components in the project of self-representation. An artist may stage a self-portrait in ways that mask, hide, or construct his or her identity.

Moritz Daniel Oppenheim's early nineteenth-century canvas shows a man proud of his academic training. Lee Krasner, a century later, depicts a young woman whose firm gaze expresses her determined self-definition as a painter. The feminist artists Hannah Wilke and Joan Semmel rework the tradition of the nude to propose a self-possessed female sexuality. In works by Ross Bleckner and Deborah Kass, the self is evoked through symbolic forms associated with the artists' identities as queer Jews.

On reflection, might one not consider the entire cultural and artistic range of *Scenes from the Collection* as a kind of self-portrait of the Jewish Museum?



WORK Double Portrait (Gay Flag)

ARTIST **Ross Bleckner**, American, born in 1949

MEDIUM Oil on canvas

DATE 1993

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Francis A. Jennings Bequest, in memory of his wife, Gertrude Feder Jennings, 2000-15

As its title suggests, this self-portrait raises the conceptual issue of doubleness. In the 1980s Ross Bleckner made a number of vertical stripe paintings that referred to earlier art movements such as Color Field abstraction. Here, the stripes form the gay pride flag, referring to the artist's own identity as a gay man. His Jewishness is symbolized by the Star of David, in subtle low relief at upper center. It, in turn, is divided in half by the yellow and green fields, signaling, perhaps, Bleckner's sense of duality. "AIDS and fear made me make the images more personal and more political,"

the artist recalled. "It was oddly liberating. You identify yourself more as a gay man, or whoever you are, and it helps you to realize who you are as an artist."



WORK Sunlight

ARTIST **Joan Semmel**, American, born in 1932

MEDIUM Oil on canvas

DATE 1978

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Fine Arts Acquisition Fund, 2010-35

After studying at the Cooper Union, Pratt Institute, and the Art Students League of New York, Joan Semmel began as an abstractionist, but turned to figurative work in the 1970s. The complexity of *Sunlight* hinges on the act of self-observation—the artist bends her gaze upon herself, resulting in the visual fragmentation and disorienting angle of the close-up. Giving intimate attention to her own body, Semmel inverts the Western artistic tradition in which the female nude is the passive object of a male gaze. Her confident reclaiming of the nude is an indication of changes in the representation of female identity and sexuality over the last half century. "Our connection to the flesh is, for better or worse, always with us," the artist notes. "Our primary emotions emanate from that source and drive most other pursuits, art and politics among them. The flesh permits us to fully experience our common humanity. The canvas becomes the tender skin of fragile thoughts."



WORK Subject Matters

ARTIST **Deborah Kass**, American, born in 1952

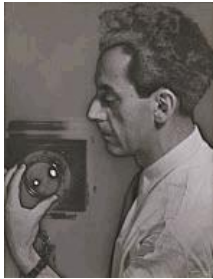
MEDIUM Enamel, gold leaf, and acrylic on canvas

DATE 1990

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Barbara S. Horowitz and Joan C. Sall Gifts, 1992-38a-b

"During the time I painted *Subject Matters* in the late 1980s," recalls Deborah Kass, "I had been reading a great deal about identity and representation. But while race, gender, and sexuality were sanctioned sites of these explorations, as was photography and installation art, ethnicity and painting were not. At the same time, I was obsessively reading book after book about the Holocaust. Consequently, I started thinking about my Jewishness along with my gender and sexuality. And I was considering the possibility of incorporating these complex issues into the language of painting. Could painting, the sign for modernism, even address issues of specificity and identity? Was Jewishness 'different' enough even to be considered part of the 'politics of difference'? I thought so."

Here, Kass aims “to address subjectivity and objectification, naming and anonymity, seeing and invisibility.” To do so she sets several borrowed images side by side: a repeated comic-strip motif of a headless little girl, the spectacles of an art critic with mouths instead of eyes (after a sculpture by Jasper Johns), and a painted evocation of the iconic photograph of an immense pile of eyeglasses taken from Jews killed at Auschwitz. These are all placed under the sign of the assertive self: a big letter I like the initial in an illuminated manuscript. As the wordplay of the title suggests, the artist rejects modernist abstraction in favor of a new kind of history painting, expressing her own identity as a woman and as a Jew.



WORK Untitled (Self-Portrait with Camera)

ARTIST Man Ray (born Emmanuel Radnitzky), American, born in 1890, died in 1976

MEDIUM Solarized gelatin silver print

DATE 1930, printed c. 1935

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Photography Acquisitions Committee Fund, Horace W. Goldsmith Fund, and Gift of Judith and Jack Stern, 2004-16

In this self-portrait, the Surrealist artist Man Ray presents himself in elegant profile, adjusting the aperture of the camera, although the lens through which he is portrayed remains unseen. The sensuality of lines and tones is achieved by solarization—exposure of the film to light in the darkroom—a process that the artist called a “rayograph,” a pun on his own invented name. The image reflects on the double meaning of the photographic self-portrait, where the artist is at once the subject and object of the camera’s eye.



WORK New York—Me and the Elevated

ARTIST Ilse Bing, American, born in Germany, 1899, died in 1998

MEDIUM Gelatin silver print

DATE 1936

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Mr. and Mrs. George Jaffin Fund, 2000-7

Ilse Bing was a virtuoso of artful framing. Here, in striking forced perspective, the Elevated train platform and the line of row houses frame the skyline of Midtown Manhattan, dominated by the spire of the recently completed Chrysler building. At the exact point of convergence of the lines of perspective, a convex platform mirror

reflects the photographer's image—the sole human note in the dynamic camera-eye view of the metropolis.



WORKS

Untitled (Pit with Veil) (IMAGE ABOVE)

Ringl with Glasses (IMAGE UNAVAILABLE)

ARTISTS **Ringl + Pit**, Founded in Berlin in 1930

Grete Stern (German, born in 1904, died in 1999, active in Argentina after 1937) and

Ellen Auerbach (American, born in Germany, 1906, died in 2004)

MEDIUM Gelatin silver prints

DATE 1931, printed later

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Photography Acquisitions Committee Fund, 2001-51

DATE 1929, printed 1985

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation Fund, 2017-27.10

Ringl and Pit were the childhood nicknames of Grete Stern and Ellen Rosenberg Auerbach. In the 1920s, the two women studied with Walter Peterhans, director of photography at the Bauhaus. Peterhans favored a geometric, machine-inspired modernist aesthetic. In 1930 Stern acquired Peterhans's commercial photography studio in Berlin and together with Auerbach began to specialize in portraiture, still life, advertising photography, and magazine illustration. The team signed their work Ringl + Pit; the studio acquired a reputation as one of the most innovative in Germany, producing clear, precise, and haunting imagery in the spirit of what was then called the "new photography." In this pair of portraits the two explore various aspects of the portrait photograph: Ringl (Stern) is shown as a close-cropped bespectacled face, so that the focus is on the artist's inner concentration on her work. Pit (Auerbach), with exaggeratedly stylish veil and feathered headgear, suggests the idea of the portrait as disguise or theater: the costume and expressionless, sidelong glance toward the viewer seem at once performative and distanced.



WORK **Self-Portrait in Blue Bathroom, London**, from the series **The Ballad of Sexual Dependency**

ARTIST **Nan Goldin**, American, born in 1953

MEDIUM Silver dye bleach print

DATE 1980

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation Fund, 2002-28

In 1976 the photographer Nan Goldin began a series that culminated in her publication ten years later of *The Ballad of Sexual Dependency*, the artist's visual journal of her life and that of her friends in the counterculture of New York's East Village, Boston, London, and elsewhere. The photographs—intimate, seemingly casual in style, and marked by glowing light and deep colors—capture her friends' youthful engagement with sexuality and drugs, set against the backdrop of the AIDS crisis. This haunting self-portrait is the first in the series to view figures through a mirror. Juxtaposed with the agents of hygiene that surround the bathtub, the face refracted from the corner of the darkened glass is vulnerable and yet transcendent—an apparition hovering within an encompassing field of luminous blue.



WORK **Ancestor**

ARTIST **Cindy Sherman**, American, born in 1954

MEDIUM Chromogenic print

DATE 1985

CREDIT LINE Commission: Vera G. List New Year's Graphic Fund, 1985-316a

Cindy Sherman is a member of the Pictures Generation—artists of the 1970s and 1980s who grew up in a world saturated with images. They are concerned with consumerism, mass culture, and the role of imagery in society. Sherman upends the idea of the self-portrait by photographing herself in a multitude of personas, dressed in costumes and staged in invented settings. Her art is an inquiry into photography's claim to tell the truth.

As the model in these works, the artist is subject to a dizzying variety of self-portrayals. Here, she appears in the guise of a biblical patriarch, garbed in generic robes, lit from below as though by a campfire at some remote desert oasis under a starry night sky. It is less an authentic recreation of the ancient Middle East than the Hollywood version of an imagined Holy Land. The glow of the fire is a studio lamp, the constellations are a backdrop, and the bearded man is a woman. In other words, the image is the impossible photographic evocation of a figure from long, long ago, before photography. Sherman's portrait is a multiplicity of fictions, an exploration of her own innumerable identities.

BACKSTORY: This work was commissioned as the Vera List graphic for the Jewish New Year 5746 (1985-86).



WORK Self-Portrait

ARTIST Theresa Bernstein, American, born in Poland, 1890, died in 2002

MEDIUM Oil on canvas

DATE 1914

CREDIT LINE Gift of Girard Jackson, 1991-32

Theresa Bernstein was born in Cracow and emigrated from Poland to the United States as a child. She graduated from the Philadelphia School of Design for Women (now Moore College of Art) in 1911 and studied at the Art Students League in New York with the American Impressionist painter William Merritt Chase. In the male-dominated art world of her time, Bernstein often signed using just her surname. Against the earthy tones and rugged painterly handling, the artist turns to face the viewer with a sense of immediacy, defiance, and questioning.



WORK Self-Portrait

ARTIST Lee Krasner, American, born in 1908, died in 1984

MEDIUM Oil on linen

DATE c. 1930

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Esther Leah Ritz Bequest; B. Gerald Cantor, Lady Kathleen Epstein, and Louis E. and Rosalyn M. Shecter Gifts, by exchange; Fine Arts Acquisitions Committee Fund; and Miriam Handler Fund, 2008-32

A powerful rendering by the artist in her twenties, this picture was made with a practical purpose: it was painted as a reception piece for admission to the life-drawing course at the National Academy of Design. While Krasner is best known for the personal style that she developed within the movement of Abstract Expressionism in the 1940s, this self-portrait is a rare example of her early work, using the thick brushwork and high color of the Impressionists and Realists of the previous generation. Strikingly, the artist depicts herself at work in nature. She eyes the viewer, who stands on the spot where, presumably, a mirror hangs on a tree. Her expression and strong handling of light and shade evoke the resolve of a young woman rising to the challenge of her artistic vocation. An example of Krasner's later work is on view in the next gallery.



WORK Self-Portrait

ARTIST Louise Nevelson, American, born in Kiev, Ukraine, 1899, died in 1988

MEDIUM Oil on board

DATE c. 1935

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Fine Arts Acquisitions Committee Fund, 2015-10

Louise Nevelson emigrated as a child from Ukraine to Maine in 1905. Though known primarily for her powerful abstract, geometric sculpture, she painted a number of portraits in the 1930s. At the time she was inspired by the work of Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse and was developing an interest in rhythmic surfaces. Here, raw colors, blocklike forms, patterning, and angular lines produce an energetically expressionistic whole. As in her other self-portraits, Nevelson describes herself in grotesque terms, with bulbous nose, crooked eyes, and a rather dour mien. Her image offers a stimulating dialogue with several other self-portraits by Jewish women seen on these walls.



WORK Self-Portrait

ARTIST Moritz Daniel Oppenheim, German, born in 1800, died in 1882

MEDIUM Oil on canvas

DATE Between 1814 and 1816

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Anonymous Gift in memory of Curtis Hereld; Esther Leah Ritz Bequest; Fine Arts Acquisitions Committee Fund; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. George Jaffin, by exchange; and Abraham Aaroni and Ruth Taub Bequests, 2008-137

Painted in Neoclassical style, this is one of the earliest self-portrayals by an academically trained Jewish artist. The young, fashionably dressed painter, no more than sixteen, self-confidently faces the viewer, palette, brushes, and mahlstick in hand. He surrounds himself with symbols of his intellectual attainments and artistic training: at right a plaster model of the *Medici Venus*, a celebrated classical sculpture (used for study) and a painting of Cupid in the manner of Raphael. Behind him is a sketch of himself between his two influences: his painting master, Conrad Westermayr, representing the world of images, and his father, representing the world of words. At left is a landscape scene on an easel—nature represented as the source of artistic inspiration. Oppenheim recalled this self-portrait in his memoirs:

"In a self-portrait that I had painted, I placed Westermayr in the background holding a drawing pen and also my father holding out to me a writing pen, a play on his esteem of fine writing."

BACKSTORY: The career of Moritz Daniel Oppenheim epitomizes German Jewry's journey from traditional life to modernity. He was born to Orthodox Jewish parents in the ghetto of Hanau (Hesse), Germany, attended the Munich Academy of Arts—an opportunity previously unavailable to Jews—and settled in Frankfurt. There he established a reputation as a portraitist, receiving commissions from both Jews and non-Jews, and enjoyed the patronage of the Rothschilds.

IN THE CASE



WORK **Venus Pareve**

ARTIST Hannah Wilke, American, born in 1940, died in 1993

MEDIUM Acrylic and plaster of Paris, nine units from a larger series

DATE 1982–84 (series)

CREDIT LINE Purchase: Lillian Gordon Bequest, 2000-20-a-i

Hannah Wilke was a leading artist of the feminist art movement that began in the 1970s. Her primary subject was her own body, explored in sculptures, drawings, photographs, and performance as part of a larger investigation of femininity and sexuality. *Venus Pareve* comprises twenty-five sculptural self-portraits, hand-modeled and then cast in plaster of Paris or edible kosher chocolate.

Wilke often presents herself in the role of Venus, the Roman goddess of love, sex, and fertility. These figures, like many celebrated classical sculptures of the goddess, lack arms and legs—their beauty is without agency; they are helpless objects of desire. The title, too, mimics the names of famous Greek and Roman statues: *Venus de Milo*, *Venus Pudica*, *Venus Genetrix*. *Pareve*, however, is a Hebrew term from Jewish dietary law, signifying food that contains neither dairy nor meat and that therefore may be eaten without restriction. *Venus Pareve* critiques the perception of women's bodies as objects of consumption.