

The Jewish Museum Presents a New, Major Collection Exhibition Featuring Over 650 Works from Antiquities to Contemporary Art

Scenes from the Collection **Opens January 21, 2018**

New York, NY, November 16, 2017 – For the first time in 25 years, a major, new exhibition of the Jewish Museum’s unparalleled collection will open on January 21, 2018. ***Scenes from the Collection*** will transform the third floor with over 650 works from antiquities to contemporary art – many of which will be on view for the first time at the Museum.

The Jewish Museum’s collection spans more than 4,000 years through nearly 30,000 objects, including painting, sculpture, photography, decorative arts, ceremonial objects, antiquities, works on paper, and media. Viewed through a contemporary lens, the collection is a mirror of Jewish identities past and present. In *Scenes from the Collection*, art and Jewish cultural objects are presented together, affirming universal values that are shared among people of all faiths and backgrounds.

Instead of a single narrative, *Scenes from the Collection* will be divided into different sections, or scenes, highlighting the diversity and depth of the collection. Each one reveals the ways in which the presentation of art and history are shaped by context and perspective. The dynamic installation will present the collection as a powerful expression of artistic and cultural creativity as well as a reflection of the continual evolution that is the essence of Jewish identity. This unique mix of art and ceremonial objects speaks of the many strands of Jewish tradition, culture, spirituality, and history. The stories the works of art tell will illuminate multiple perspectives on being Jewish in the past and present, how Jewish culture intersects with art, and how it is part of the larger world of global interconnections.

Sections in the exhibition include a scene featuring over 50 of the most significant works in the collection – from antiquities to the 21st century; a section examining the Museum’s large and rich collection of portraits and the nature of portraiture; and a contemporary *Wunderkammer* (Cabinet of Wonders) crowded with works of art and artifacts of various origins and materials arranged in unusual juxtapositions, among others.

The exhibition will also explore the history of the Museum’s collection itself over the more than 100 years of its existence. Key episodes in the origins of the collection will be highlighted in texts scattered through the galleries considering what, why, and how the Museum has collected and what this says about the changing identity of the institution, and evolving intersections of art, Jewish culture, and world events.

Unlike its predecessor, *Culture & Continuity: The Jewish Journey* (on view from 1993 to 2017), *Scenes from the Collection* will be flexible, with several scenes changing annually, and one changing every six months, so that different subjects can be examined while audiences are offered opportunities to see as much of the collection as possible, including new acquisitions.

The scenes are:

Constellations

Some of the most powerful works in the collection are those that express aspects of Jewish culture, history, or values, while also reflecting universal issues of art and its relationship to society. In “Constellations,” over 50 of the most significant works in the collection will be exhibited as individual gems but with thematic connections to one another. Works by such artists as Chantal Akerman, Mel Bochner, Nicole Eisenman, Eva Hesse, Anselm Kiefer, Lee Krasner, Camille Pissarro, Mark Rothko, Laurie Simmons, Joan Snyder, and Kehinde Wiley are included. A diverse selection of Hanukkah lamps and other ceremonial objects drawn from the Museum’s renowned collection, from the 3rd to the 21st centuries, and Europe, North Africa, Asia, and the United States, will also be on view. When these widely varied artworks are presented together, multiple meanings and conversations can emerge. Issues to be explored include transforming and transcending tradition, cultural distinctiveness and universality, and the ever-changing nature of identity.

Accumulations

This section will spotlight an aspect of museum collecting: the accumulation of multiple examples of a given work. The first iteration will feature a collection of 100 stereoscopic photographs of what was then called the Holy Land, including such sites as the Western Wall and the Dead Sea. These early examples of 3D technology were taken around 1900 when the popularity of stereograms was at its peak. Visitors will be able to re-create the experience of viewing the stereograms through individual stereopticons and see the originals displayed in cases.

Personas

The Jewish Museum’s collection includes portraits dating from antiquity to the present, most either by Jewish artists or of Jewish sitters. A selection drawn from the Museum’s large and rich collection of portraits from different times and places make up this section. Seen together, the portraits offer remarkable insights into a range of social, political, and historical circumstances. The first iteration will feature self-portraits by such artists as Nan Goldin, Louise Nevelson, Arnold Newman, Man Ray, and Cindy Sherman, among others. 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 each 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.

Taxonomies

"Taxonomies" will be organized as a contemporary *Wunderkammer* (Cabinet of Wonders), a historical style of display first popularized during the Renaissance and recognized as a precursor of today's museums. This scene will be crowded with works of art and artifacts of various origins and materials, revealing interesting relationships between objects in the collection. Objects on view will range from Torah ornaments made from ivory and a model of the ancient Temple of Jerusalem in a bottle to replicas of ancient sailing ships to a spice container by Lucy Puls (2006).

Signs and Symbols

This section will explore the significance of a particular iconic element or motif in a variety of works. The first iteration will examine the meaning of the Star of David within Jewish contexts as well as the various interpretations of the six-pointed star as a widespread motif in other cultures. Works on view will range from a Bohemian Hanukkah lamp (probably 18th century) that uses the star as an emblem for this Czech Jewish community to Persian and Indian Judaica that feature the symbol as an expression of late 19th and early 20th-century Zionist sentiment. A ceramic beer pitcher from the late 19th century decorated with the star will also be on display, attesting to secular use of the hexagram as a symbol for beer in Europe. Examples of post-Holocaust art will also be featured, including Morris Louis's *Man Reaching for a Star* (1952). And in Dana Frankfort's *Star of David (Orange)* (2007), the artist intends the star to be a symbol that anyone can make the subject of a work of art.

Television and Beyond

An important part of the Museum's collection will be explored in this section: the National Jewish Archive of Broadcasting (NJAB). With more than 4,000 holdings, the archive is the largest and most comprehensive body of broadcast materials on Jewish culture in the United States. A selection of television clips, rotating every six months, will examine how Jews have been portrayed and portray themselves, and how mass media has addressed issues of religion, ethnicity, and diversity. The first program, "Friends and Family," will highlight current television shows that disrupt previous norms of the family sitcom, expanding the notion of family to include invented and extended families and circles of intimate friends. Excerpts from such shows as *Broad City*, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, *Difficult People*, *Fresh Off the Boat*, *Grace and Frankie*, *Orange is the New Black*, and *Transparent* will be shown.

Masterpieces and Curiosities

"Masterpieces and Curiosities" is a series of installations focusing on single works from the Museum's collection. The first iteration in *Scenes from the Collection* will feature a bracelet of charms assembled by Greta Perlman (1904-1975) in Theresienstadt, a camp-ghetto in the former



Czechoslovakia that housed prisoners between 1941 and 1945. Over 140,000 Jews were deported there by the Nazis, including many artists and writers who struggled to maintain a vibrant cultural life. Despite horrific conditions, Perlman was able to gather the 20 charms and badges assembled into her bracelet, each steeped in personal memories. Intimate creations such as the bracelet gave some meaning to the lives of inmates in the ghetto. Additional works that were created in Theresienstadt will also be displayed. More recent images of the ghetto by contemporary photographer Judith Glickman Lauder will provide a stark contrast between the dehumanizing conditions imposed by the Nazis and the beauty of the pieces created by prisoners.

Scenes from the Collection is organized by a Jewish Museum curatorial team headed by Susan L. Braunstein and Jens Hoffmann, and including Shira Backer, Stephen Brown, Mason Klein, Claudia Nahson, Rebecca Shaykin, Kelly Taxter, and Aviva Weintraub.

The exhibition was designed by Tsao & McKown Architects.

Click [here](#) for link to video.

Support

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About the Jewish Museum

Located on New York City's famed Museum Mile, the Jewish Museum is a distinctive hub for art and Jewish culture for people of all backgrounds. Founded in 1904, the Museum was the first institution of its kind in the United States and is one of the oldest Jewish museums in the world. Devoted to exploring art and Jewish culture from ancient to contemporary, the Museum offers intellectually engaging exhibitions and programs, and maintains a unique collection of nearly 30,000 works of art, ceremonial objects, and media reflecting the global Jewish experience over more than 4,000 years.

Location: 1109 Fifth Avenue at 92nd Street, New York City
Hours: Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, 11am to 5:45pm;
Thursday, 11am to 8pm; and Friday, 11am to 4pm.
Admission: \$15.00 for adults, \$12.00 for senior citizens, \$7.50 for students, free for visitors 18 and under and Jewish



Museum members. Pay What You Wish on Thursdays from 5pm to 8pm. Free on Saturdays and select Jewish holidays.

Information: The public may call 212.423.3200 or visit TheJewishMuseum.org

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