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Jewish Museums – A Multi-Cultural Destination

Sharing Jewish Art and Traditions with a Diverse Audience

By

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Abstract

As American society becomes more diverse, issues of ethnic self-consciousness are increasingly prevalent. This can be witnessed by the national expansion and development of ethnic museums. At least twenty-five museums representing different ethnicities are located in New York City alone. These museums reach out to their own constituency as a celebration of heritage and culture. In an effort to educate others and foster a greater understanding and appreciation of their culture, they also reach out to a diverse multi-cultural audience.

Following suit, Jewish museums attract a diverse audience representing a variety of religions and ethnicities. *Jewish Museums – A Multi-Cultural Destination* explores how this audience is reached through exhibition and education initiatives. By creating broad based programming with multi-dimensional relevance and appeal, Jewish museums are able to engage the larger community. The following New York City museums were selected as case studies; The Jewish Museum, the Museum of Jewish Heritage and the Museum at Eldridge Street. The Jewish Museum is an art museum, the Museum of Jewish Heritage is a Holocaust Memorial and the Museum at Eldridge Street is a restored historic synagogue. Each museum has a different focus, yet they share common themes in an effort to educate a diversity of people about Jewish history and culture.

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Jewish Museums – A Multi-Cultural Destination

Sharing Jewish Art and Traditions with a Diverse Audience

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Introduction

Global interest in Jewish culture has increased dramatically over the past decade, particularly in the areas of music, theater and the arts. (“Foundation for Jewish Culture” 2008). Over two hundred cultural institutions with Jewish affiliations can be found throughout the world. As expected, many Jewish museums are located in the United States, Europe and Israel. Surprisingly, Jewish museums can also be found in places as diverse as India, Australia, China and South Africa (Grossman 2003). Each of these museums serves a distinct multi-cultural audience. In order to reach this audience, Jewish museums must engage community. They must relate to both Jews and non-Jews through exhibition, education and programming initiatives. This paper will explore three different types of American Jewish museums, each located in New York City, and how each successfully reaches a multi-cultural audience.

The Council of American Jewish Museums (CAJM), was established in 1977 with the goal of supporting the growing field of Jewish museums in America (“Foundation for Jewish Culture” 2008). CAJM’s membership has grown from seven original members to over eighty Jewish cultural institutions, including art museums, history museums, Holocaust centers, historic sights, children’s museums and synagogue museums.

The mission statement of CAJM emphasizes teaching a diverse audience about the Jewish experience:

“The Council of American Jewish Museums is dedicated to strengthening the Jewish museum field in North America. Through training of museum staff and volunteers, information exchange, and advocacy on behalf of Jewish museums, CAJM assists its institutional and individual members as they educate and inspire diverse audiences on all aspects of Jewish culture and history” (“Foundation for Jewish Culture,” 2008).

“Jewish Museums and the Challenge of Community”, the program theme for CAJM’s 2006 annual conference, is a direct reflection on the task that Jewish museums face today. In order to inspire diverse audiences, Jewish museums must reach beyond the Jewish demographic. Two distinct audiences exist for Jewish museums. For the Jewish community, these museums preserve and celebrate the Jewish experience. For the non-Jewish audience, Jewish museums seek to promote tolerance and increase understanding about Jewish culture.

Even among Jews the audience is quite diverse because Judaism is a religion, but also a culture, an ethnicity and a way of life. According to Rabbi Kertzer (1953), “Judaism has also been called “a civilization,” so that Jews are a cultural group, primarily religious, but not exclusively so, linked by a self-perception of enjoying a common history, a common language of prayer, a vast

literature, folkways, and above all, a sense of common history” (p.7). Accordingly, the word Jewish can be viewed in many contexts. This multi-faceted interpretation of Judaism has helped to develop the diversity of its people.

In 1975 – 76, The Jewish Museum in New York organized an exhibit entitled *Jewish Experience in the Art of the Twentieth Century*. The Museum was initially challenged as to what type of artwork to display. A simple solution would have been to exhibit a sample of twentieth century artwork by Jewish artists. According to Avram Kampf, curator of the exhibit, “Such an exhibition would at best show the wide participation and activity of Jewish artists in the twentieth century in all movements, but would have been sectarian without interpreting and clarifying the major and unique experiences which have marked the life of Jewish individuals and communities in this century” (*Jewish Experience in the Art of the Twentieth Century*, p.7). Ultimately, The Jewish Museum selected a variety of works for the exhibition. Some had religious content while others did not. Some were abstract; others were representational. According to Joy Ungerleider, Director at the time, the Museum “attempted to portray a generalized Jewish Experience and discovered that the complexity of the task, is almost beyond definition” (*Jewish Experience in the Art of the Twentieth Century*, p.5). Similarly, contemporary Jewish Museums must also decide how to best interpret the Jewish experience.

Preserving and celebrating Jewish heritage and culture is a large part of interpreting the Jewish experience. Equally important, however, is the task of educating a secular audience about Judaism in an effort to foster a greater understanding and appreciation of Jewish culture. This is done through exhibition, education and programming initiatives as well as non-traditional venues such as theater and music festivals. In order to successfully reach a broad demographic, Jewish museums must cross cultural boundaries and make programming relevant to the larger community.

One of the ways this is accomplished is by incorporating global themes into exhibition and education programming. Common topics explored include immigration, assimilation, community involvement and racism. These themes relate to both Jews and non-Jews, especially when considered in broader terms. Holocaust related exhibits serve as lessons about tolerance and hatred. Jewish immigration histories are used as channels to discuss cultural identity and freedom. In an effort to have far reaching appeal, themes such as lifecycle, nature and world religions are also explored. Rather than accentuate the uniqueness of the Jewish people, through inclusive themes, Jewish museums reinforce the similarities of humankind. A larger audience is also reached by showing the accomplishments of Jewish individuals within society. Through these methods, Jewish museums become relevant to the community at large.

The content summary of this thesis is as follows: Chapter 1 – Introduction, Chapter 2 – History of Jewish museums in America, Chapter 3 – The Jewish Museum (case study), Chapter 4 – Museum of Jewish Heritage (case study), Chapter 5 – Museum at Eldridge Street (case study) and Chapter 6 – Conclusion, followed by a glossary of terms. The case studies explore three very different types of Jewish museums; an art museum, a Holocaust memorial and a National Historic Landmark, each located in New York City. Although each museum has a different mission and a distinct audience, they are all engaging community through exhibition, education and programming choices.

History of Jewish Museums in America

Although the history of the Jewish people dates back to ancient times, Jewish museums were only recently established as the keepers of cultural, religious and artistic symbols of Judaism. By the end of the nineteenth century, many secular museums included sections devoted to Judaism as displays of mostly biblical and Palestinian antiquities. The first formal collection of Judaica¹ in the United States was acquired by the Smithsonian Institute of Washington D.C. in 1889, as part of an exhibition on comparative religion. This collection was established by Cyrus Adler Ph.D. (1863-1940), who was founder and president of the American Jewish Historical Society. According to Grossman (2003), Adler intended this collection of Jewish religious objects to be used as an educational tool in an effort to foster understanding and counteract anti-Semitic² sentiment (p. 245).

In the late nineteenth century, American Jews developed an interest in collecting, preserving and exhibiting objects reflecting their cultural and religious history. As with other art museums, the first Jewish museums developed from the collections of wealthy individuals who later donated them to synagogues or museums (Grossman 2003). In 1904, Judge Mayer Sulzberger (1843-1923) presented his collection of 8,000 books, 700 manuscripts and 26 Jewish ceremonial objects to the New York Jewish Theological Seminary Library. These

ceremonial objects eventually became the foundation for the first American Jewish museum, The Jewish Museum in New York. The second American Jewish museum, established in 1913, was the Museum at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. Although many synagogues and individuals continued to maintain collections of religious objects during this period of time, these two museums were alone in the field until the late 1940's, at which time other Jewish museums began to be established in the United States.

World War II had a significant impact on the development of Jewish museums in America. During the War, nearly all of the Jewish museums in Europe were destroyed. Many objects representing Jewish religion and culture were forcibly taken from individuals, public museums, galleries and religious and educational institutions (The Israel Museum, Jerusalem 1995-2008). Numerous private and public collections, hidden in hopes of later salvation, found their way to the United States and became the starting point for new museums or religious organizations. In the following decades, some Jewish museums were re-established in Europe. However, many were not. As a result, both the United States and Israel accepted a larger responsibility for the preservation and celebration of Jewish cultural objects (Grossman 2004).

After the War, the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization (JRSO) and the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc. (JCR) were established to represent Jewish organizations from around the world in the distribution of unclaimed,

heirless works of art and ceremonial objects. The JCR catalogued a large number of Torah³ scrolls, ceremonial objects, books and paintings that were to be distributed to Jewish organizations worldwide. Many of the more highly valued items were given to The Jewish Museum in New York, The Jewish Museum of Cincinnati and Yeshiva University (Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the US).

With the triumph of Israel in the Six Day War in 1967, a renewed sense of ethnic pride swept over American Jews. This brought about great change in the Jewish community, and increased concern for the survival of Israel and the preservation of Jewish culture (Israel 2007). Both World War II and The Six Day War had an impact on the establishment of Jewish museums in America. However the rate of development was slow. By 1977, a mere seven Jewish museums existed in the United States.

Since 1977, the field of American Jewish museums has grown significantly. As Jewish society continues to grow and evolve, the concept of the Jewish museum has expanded. Exhibitions of Judaica are often displayed in local synagogues, community centers or regional museums. New museums have opened throughout the country, some with a very small scope, others wider. Museums targeting specific demographics are also being developed. Holocaust and Jewish children's museums are two examples of more specific museum concepts. Although the scope of these museums is more focused, as with other

Jewish museums, they present exhibitions and programming with global themes in order to reach a diverse public.

Regional Museums

Coinciding with a renewed interest in local Jewish history, a large number of regional Jewish institutions were established during the 1980's and 1990's. Many of these museums, such as the Mizel Museum (Denver, Colorado) and the Oregon Jewish Museum (Portland) place great emphasis on speaking to a diverse audience. This is successfully achieved through integration of multi-cultural themes in programming, while serving to foster tolerance and greater understanding of the Jewish culture (Grossman, 2003). The Mizel Museum is an example of a regional museum embracing an extremely diverse audience through its exhibition and programming initiatives. "Bridges of Understanding", the Museum's award-winning educational program, explores a variety of ethnicities including Jewish, Asian Pacific, Native American, African-American and Muslim cultures, with a focus on developing understanding and mutual respect. (Mizel Museum Youth Education and Teacher Resources).

Local Museums

On a local level, community museums are often established in areas with a struggling Jewish population. In December 2007, The Jewish Museum of New Jersey was opened at Congregation Ahava Shalom in Newark, New Jersey. In

the 1930's, Newark had a thriving Jewish population who patronized sixty synagogues. Today, Ahava Shalom is the only remaining Newark synagogue, with a small congregation of twenty-five people. The Museum was opened in hopes of rebuilding a sense of Jewish community within Newark. According to Max Herman, Vice President of the Museum board, the Museum is "keeping the light of the Jewish community in Newark alive ... the synagogue and now the museum serve as a reminder that the light has not gone out, and the light is being renewed" (Diamant, 2007).

As was the case with Newark, the demographics of the Lower East Side of New York City have changed significantly over the years. In the early 20th century, the Lower East Side was known as a center for Jewish culture and according to historian Hasia Diner, as noted by Rothstein (2007), approximately 500,000 Jews lived there at the time. Although there are few remaining Jews in the area, the salvation of a historic synagogue in disrepair was the motivation for the opening of the Museum at Eldridge.

Family Museums

In addition to synagogue museums, exhibitions of Jewish art and ceremonial objects continue to be displayed in religious day schools, temples and community centers. These small exhibits are geared towards students and family members of these institutions. A number of Jewish museums specifically

targeting children and families have also been established throughout the country. In 2004, the largest Jewish museum for young people in the country, The Jewish Children's Museum (JCM), opened in Brooklyn, New York.

As demonstrated by its mission statement, JCM strives to reach a diverse audience in an effort to foster a greater knowledge about Jewish culture and increase tolerance and understanding.

The mission statement of JCM states:

"A Celebration of Jewish Life – its History, Culture, and Traditions

The Jewish Children's Museum provides exhibitions and programs for all children in an educational and entertaining format. Through contemporary technology and a hands-on approach to learning, visitors experience Jewish history, values and traditions in a manner that inspires an increased interest in Jewish culture. Primarily, the Museum serves elementary school-age children and their families, and is a resource and model, nationally and internationally, for interactive education on Jewish themes. The Museum is a setting for children of all faiths and backgrounds to gain a positive perspective and awareness of the Jewish heritage, fostering tolerance and understanding. (Jewish Children's Museum, 2006).

Holocaust Museums

Themes of tolerance and understanding are also the focus of the many Holocaust museums that have been established internationally. The MODIYA Project⁴ is sponsored by the Center for Religion and Media at New York University and explores themes relating to the Jewish religion and media. According to its website, Holocaust museums are the “most influential and prolific form of the Jewish museum to take shape in the past 20 years” (Modiya, 2008). The Holocaust has come to be seen as a universal symbol of hatred and prejudice, making these museums prime examples of Jewish museums with a global message.

Holocaust museums fall into a category defined as “thanatourism” or grief tourism. Museums exploring themes of loss fall into their own subcategory and visitors behave differently than they do at “less serious” museums. Visitor studies done at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum reinforce this theory. People tend to remain in the museum longer than expected. Conversation is limited and viewers appear to be more reflective and introspective, perhaps, imagining how they would have behaved in a similar situation. Viewers also read more text than in other museums and seem to treat fellow visitors with dignity and respect (Gurian 2005). According to Gurian (2005), after their visit, people who have visited Holocaust museums continue to

reflect upon the experience. Although six million Jews lost their lives during the Nazi regime, the Holocaust is not a solely “Jewish” topic, but an issue that affects all humanity. Many other people lost their lives during the Holocaust because of their religious or sexual preferences. The Holocaust touched the lives of many people during the Nazi era, and study of this historic event continues to be relevant today as individuals are more willing to contemplate cases of historic moral injustice (Richter 2005). A universal symbol of evil, Holocaust studies are often used as a catalyst for the promotion of tolerance and understanding. The term “genocide” was first conceived in 1944 after the planned decimation of six million Jews. Modern day genocides continue to exist. Because the emotions generated by such atrocities are cross-cultural, Holocaust museums have universal relevance.

Since the establishment of the first Jewish museum in America over one hundred years ago, the field of Jewish museums has continued to proliferate. Jewish museums have taken responsibility for preserving the culture, art, heritage and traditions of the Jewish people. Regardless of the specific type of museum, the majority of Jewish museums serve a diverse public, educating visitors about the Jewish experience.

The Jewish Museum

History

Founded in 1904, in the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, The Jewish Museum is now the largest Jewish museum in the country. The collection began modestly with a gift of 26 ceremonial objects given by Judge Mayer Sulzberger and now exceeds 26,000 objects. According to Grossman, (2003), Sulzberger donated these ceremonial objects along with 8,000 books and 700 manuscripts to the library to “serve as a suggestion for the establishment of a Jewish museum” (p. 263). Originally conceived as two display cases in the library room of the Seminary on West 123rd Street in Manhattan, the Museum remained at the Seminary for close to half a century.

The Jewish Theological Seminary, founded in 1880, is the academic and spiritual center of Conservative Judaism and still sponsors The Jewish Museum to this day. In 1925, The Jewish Museum received its first major private collection from Hadje Ephraim Benquiat. The Benquiat collection was purchased for the Museum by friends of the Jewish Theological Seminary, championed by Felix Warburg, whose Fifth Avenue mansion would later become the Museum’s home. In 1931, the Museum, which was still considered part of the library, opened as the Museum of Jewish Ceremonial Objects and was given its own room in the Seminary.

Political events of the time had a large impact on the development of the Museum's permanent collection. Prior to World War II, collections of Judaica were often sent to the United States for safekeeping and also to provide a financial source for Jews emigrating from Europe. In 1939, The Jewish Museum received the contents of the museum of the Great Synagogue of Danzig, Germany, through the American Joint Distribution Committee. The Danzig synagogue was destroyed by Nazis later that same year. After World War II, the offices of the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (JCR) were housed at The Jewish Museum. JCR was established to represent Jewish organizations from around the world in the distribution of unclaimed, heirless works of art and ceremonial objects. Stephen Kayser, founding Director of The Jewish Museum, and Guido Schoenberger, a curator, both worked very closely with the JCR in the effort to redistribute these objects (Grossman, 2003).

The post-war period under Kayser's Directorship was a period of tremendous growth for the Museum (Grossman, 2003). A large number of Jewish ceremonial items were for sale in New York, many of which were subsequently donated to the Museum by collectors and supporters. The grandest donation of that time was made by Freida Schiff Warburg who offered her family mansion on Fifth Avenue to the Jewish Theological Seminary for use as a museum. In 1947, The Jewish Museum opened in its current location, 1109 Fifth Avenue. Major expansions were completed to the Museum in both the

1960's and 1990's. In 1959, a sculpture court was added alongside the Museum and in 1963, the Albert A. List building was added to provide additional exhibition and programming space.

The Jewish Museum's primary concern in its early years was collecting and exhibiting Jewish ceremonial objects. However in 1962, an ideological shift occurred. The Museum realigned its goals and started to display secular, abstract contemporary art devoid of religious content. Artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and Robert Smithson were shown, as the Museum began to emphasize contemporary secular art with little regard for the religious or personal identities of the artists being shown (Berger).

By 1971, The Jewish Museum was facing financial difficulties and being criticized for neglecting its collection of Judaica (Glueck, 1989). Joy Ungerleider-Mayerson was hired as Museum Director and charged with the task of restoring the Museum to its original course of displaying and collecting objects with Jewish relevance. She renewed the Museum's focus on Jewish culture and identity, displaying exhibitions within a social context. The controversial exhibits of the 1960's were replaced with more popular exhibits of Jewish art and artifacts and a strong education department was established. Mrs. Ungerleider-Mayerson is credited with revitalizing The Jewish Museum and helping to establish its reputation (Pace, 1994). Today The Jewish Museum, under the Directorship of

Joan Rosenbaum, is considered one of the most prestigious Jewish museums in the country.

Mission

Today, the mission statement of The Jewish Museum reflects its current commitment to Jewish content:

“Located at the heart of New York’s Museum Mile, The Jewish Museum is the preeminent U.S. institution exploring the intersection of 4,000 years of art and Jewish culture. Using art and artifacts that embody the diversity of the Jewish experience throughout the world, from ancient to present times, the Museum is a source of inspiration and shared values for people of all religious and cultural backgrounds.”

In her Report of the Director, Joan Rosenbaum discusses teaching all people about Jewish culture through exhibitions and educational efforts (TJM Biennial Report, 2006-07). She stresses cultural understanding in exhibitions rather than a purely celebratory approach, noting that targeting a single demographic has limitations (Kimmelman, 1993). Rosenbaum states, “Although almost everything we do is about some aspect of Jewish life, we are a museum for all interests. We make a real effort to serve a general audience” (Glueck, 1989). The Jewish Museum achieves this by presenting Jewish culture in universal terms. The focus of The Jewish Museum is more cultural than religious (Glueck, 1989). Accordingly, the Museum examines a broad spectrum of

political, historic, social and artistic themes in an effort to reach a diverse audience on a multitude of levels.

Location

The Jewish Museum is located on “Museum Mile“ on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Museum Mile covers the area of Fifth Avenue between 82nd and 105th Streets and is home to nine prominent and extremely diverse museums. During the destitute times of the 1970’s, these museums formed a consortium in an effort to develop new audiences and increase museum awareness and support for the arts. The Museum Mile Festival, a major cultural event, welcomes over 50,000 local, national and international visitors annually.

Sharing its Fifth Avenue location with The Metropolitan Museum, The Guggenheim, El Museo del Barrio, as well as five additional museums, automatically provides The Jewish Museum with a diverse and continued museum audience. The environment caters to patrons of the arts. Regardless of its religious affiliation, The Jewish Museum of New York is considered a prestigious art museum and because of this, it reaches a diverse cultural audience.

Demographics

The audience of The Jewish Museum varies greatly and includes Jews and non-Jews, local visitors as well as national and international tourists. Current

demographic studies show that many visitors and members are over the age of fifty-five. According to Grace Rapkin, Director of Marketing, one goal of the museum is to create a younger audience for the museum, targeting the thirty-five to fifty-four age group. This is being accomplished by placing a greater emphasis on weekend family programming. Complying with the Jewish observance of the Sabbath⁶, the Museum is open for free visits on Saturdays. According to religious laws, observant Jews cannot carry or spend money on the Sabbath. By making the Museum free on Saturdays, Jewish people who observe Sabbath are able to visit. This very successful program has attracted a diverse audience of young people, families and tourists.

Sundays are family days at the museum. In addition to gallery tours, free art workshops and storybook readings are offered for children and parents. These activities cross cultural boundaries, exploring subjects that appeal to all races and religions. "Digging for Artifacts" lets children search for archaeological treasures, "Painted Impressions" explores colors and impressionistic landscapes and "Celebrate Spring" examines artworks with bugs, flowers and leaves (TJM Winter/Spring 20089 Family Program). These programs all relate to Museum collections and appeal to a diverse family audience. Musical concerts and children's theater performances are also offered on the weekends. With free Saturdays and family Sundays, The Jewish Museum is marketing itself as a weekend destination for families with children. For adults, the Museum also

offers non-denominational public programs including lectures, concerts and panel discussions.

Exhibitions

Culture and Continuity: The Jewish Experience was reinstalled in 2003 as the permanent collection of The Jewish Museum. This visually dynamic exhibit explores the evolution of Jewish culture and history over the past 4,000 years. Spanning two floors, the exhibition displays over 800 pieces; including art, archaeology, religious objects, video and photography. The exhibit is arranged chronologically in four distinct sections tracing the history of the Jewish experience. The installation is presented with a global focus (TJM Culture and Continuity, 2003). Upon entering the exhibition, visitors are offered a free audio guide that explains many of the objects displayed. The audio guide offers three levels of explanation - an adult tour, a children's tour and the Director's Selection. The Director's Selection, narrated by Joan Rosenbaum, features a more sophisticated tour with additional information. By offering three levels of audio guides, the Museum customizes this tour for its visitors, Jews and non-Jews alike. The exhibition thus becomes demystified, making the permanent collection easy to understand and accessible to all people. In an effort to reach further, part of this exhibit is also available in an online exhibit.

Although the permanent collection regularly receives a large number of visitors, as with other New York cultural institutions, special art exhibits at The Jewish Museum often attract an even larger audience. These shows appeal to a wide audience on artistic merit alone. The Jewish Museum is not making a special effort to reach a diverse audience. As with popular shows seen at neighboring museums, the shows simply have mass appeal. Examples of contemporary art exhibitions in 2006 – 2007 that reached a large and diverse audience include *Joan Snyder: A Painting Survey, 1996 – 2005*, *Eva Hesse: Sculpture*, *Alex Katz paints Ida*, and *The Sculpture of Louise Nevelson. Constructing a Legend*. Exhibitions such as these cross cultural and religious boundaries. These artists are considered “stars” in the art world, regardless of their religious affiliation, and crowds flock to see their work. Unlike the 1960’s, when artists were exhibited at The Jewish Museum regardless of ethnicity, the artists represented today are always Jewish. Although their art is often not religious in content, Jewish identity does play a part in exhibition selection.

Exhibits with popular themes also have mass appeal. *Superheroes: Good and Evil in American Comics* (September 15, 2006 – January 27, 2007) appealed to a wide range of individuals. While the show has no religious affiliation, it does relate to Jewish history. Many of the creators of superheroes were Jews who used the comic medium to explore real life issues about hatred and injustice (TJM Superheroes press release, 2006). Superheroes was presented in two

parts, in conjunction with The Newark Museum in New Jersey. Through this collaboration, The Jewish Museum was able to reach a wider audience than had the show remained in Manhattan alone. The two venues, by their very locations, helped both museums to reach a more culturally diverse audience.

Many of the shows mounted by The Jewish Museum address contemporary political themes. While these exhibits address some aspect of Judaism, they also universalize themes. *The Jewish Identity Project – New American Photography* (August 12 – October 23, 2005), explored issues relating to racism, prejudice and anti-Semitism in America through photography and video while examining the racial, social and ethnic diversity of American Jews. *Bridges and Boundaries: African Americans and American Jews* (1992), and *Morocco: Jews and Art in a Muslim Land* (2000-2001) also dealt with diversity and cultural issues. Each of these exhibits explores how the Jewish people relate to other cultural and religious groups, and people of all ethnicities can relate to these multi-cultural explorations. By globalizing concepts, The Jewish Museum makes its exhibits accessible to a varied audience.

Education/Programming

One of the most successful ways that The Jewish Museum reaches a diverse audience is through its educational programming. During the 2006-07 school year, The Jewish Museum hosted over 1,100 school groups. This number

includes over 25,000 students from elementary through high school age (TJM Biennial Report 2006-07). According to The Jewish Museum audit (2007), approximately 37% of the groups visited from New York City public schools. Less than 1% came from other public schools. 23% visited from private schools and 38% came from Jewish day schools. Although the largest sub-segment of school groups represents Jewish day schools, approximately 60% of the visiting groups did not have any Jewish affiliation (Rapkin 2008).

The school tours provided by The Jewish Museum reach out to a diverse audience and cover a wide range of topics. Educational programs offered by the Museum meet New York State learning standards in the following areas: social studies, arts, language arts, languages other than English and math. Learning standards are state mandated guidelines for public schools. By complying with public education guidelines, museum programming becomes relevant to the secular community. The programs are quite diverse and introduce a wide range of topics including archaeology, ancient civilizations, immigration and cultural identity. Several of the educational programs are limited to Jewish school groups and focus on Jewish holidays and ceremonies. However, the majority are geared towards a mixed demographic.

The Jewish Museum is making an effort to reach all types of school children through educational programming. The fee for group tours is extremely nominal, making tours financially accessible for most school groups.

Additionally, a number of free tours are provided annually for school groups with special needs. Tours can be adapted for special needs students to include touch tours and sign language guided tours (TJM).

Although all of the educational programs at The Jewish Museum have a connection to the Jewish experience, themes are universalized in order to speak to a diverse audience. For example, “Festival of Lights: A Multicultural Celebration” for grades 1 – 4 uses the symbol of light to teach children about three culturally distinct holidays – Hannukah, Christmas and Kwanza. In the pre and post visit materials for educators, provided by the Museum, the following are the goals of the program:

Examine the decoration, symbols and materials of the Museum’s diverse collection of Hanukkah lamps.

Understand that these decorations, symbols and materials are influenced by the culture of the country in which they were made.

Discover the commonalities among different ethnic and religious groups.

Learn that all cultures have rituals and traditions that are celebrated.

Understand the importance and symbolism of light in these rituals and the feeling of spirituality, energy and illumination it conveys (TJM Festival of Lights: A Multicultural Celebration).

The program teaches about the Jewish holiday of Hannukah and the seasonal holidays of other religions. Children explore the commonalities and

differences of varied religious groups through holiday themes. In this manner, children increase their knowledge about other religions and gain new insight into other cultures. This understanding helps to promote tolerance and acceptance of other religions.

Using art and artifacts from the Museum's collection, the program for young children (grades 3 – 5), "Immigration to America", teaches about the immigration experience. While the focus is primarily on the Jewish immigration story, comparisons are made to other cultures and ethnic groups. Children discuss the difficulties of moving to a new land, learning a new language and adapting to a new way of life. According to the pre and post visit materials for educators, students in this class will "realize the challenges of becoming American and the difficulty of adapting to a new culture while holding onto the traditions and values of one's heritage" (TJM Immigration to America). Program goals include "understanding the similarities among most immigrant groups" and learning the "many contributions of immigrants to this country (TJM Immigration to America). The story of Jewish immigration is explained in universal terms that relate to the lives of other cultures as well. Program activities involve children in telling stories about their own heritage or creating a multi-cultural cookbook.

For older children (grades 6 – 8) this program incorporates the same themes on a more analytical level. Prior to visiting the Museum, children in this age group are encouraged to examine the Statue of Liberty and the poem

inscribed on its base. Middle school students discuss community, freedom and our rights as citizens of the United States. The emphasis is on tolerance and respect for all people. The vocabulary listed in the educators' guide focuses on terms with universal relevance. Anti-Semitism, prejudice, racism, community, discriminate, foreign and stereotyping are all defined in an effort to address universal concepts of global concern (TJM Immigration to America).

The educational programs for middle and high school students deal even more directly with issues of cultural identity and tolerance. "Cultural Exchange: Jewish and Muslim Connections" (grades 6 – 12), explores common artistic and historical similarities between these two distinct religions. According to Jane Fragner, Assistant Director of Education and Project Coordinator for this program " It is (the hope of the Museum) that by exploring how Jews and Muslims shared artistic traditions and cultural practices in certain periods of history, students will recognize the possibility of working toward creating a community of tolerance and understanding in contemporary times" (TJM Cultural Exchange Curriculum Guide, p.3). With this program, the Museum explores a difficult and controversial contemporary subject, that of Jewish /Muslim relations. Such discussions can be translated into larger issues relating to themes of tolerance and acceptance of other religions and nationalities.

"Art, Identity and Change in the Modern World" (grades 9 – 12) employs art as a starting point for discussions about significant historical events. Students

analyze paintings, sculptures and photographs referencing themes such as World War II, the Civil Rights Movement and the Holocaust. They explore their own feelings about these events as well as the artists' intent in creating symbolic pieces of art. Art is a universal form of communication and can be used as a point of engagement for discussions about poignant topics such as cultural identity, prejudice and nationalism.

In summary, The Jewish Museum reaches a diverse audience through its exhibition, education and public programming initiatives. By universalizing themes, the Museum presents relevant programs in a manner that welcomes the secular population. Exhibits and educational programming explore Jewish themes in universal terms to which everyone can relate. The Museum celebrates Jewish culture while at the same time embracing the larger community and promoting a greater understanding of Jewish history and tradition. It is a "Jewish museum" for Jews and non-Jews alike.

Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

History

The Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust (MJH) is located on the Battery in lower Manhattan. Originally conceived in 1986, the Museum officially opened more than ten years later, on September 15, 1997. The six-sided, 30,000 square foot building was designed by the architectural firm of Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates. The unique geometric form makes reference to the Star of David, a symbol of Jewish strength and identity, as well as the commemoration of the six million Jews whose lives were lost during the Holocaust (MJH press release). The Museum roof has six tiers, echoing this same symbolism (Grossman 2003). The unique star shaped design has become immediately identifiable with this cultural institution.

In 2001, construction began on an 82,000 square foot addition to the Museum, also designed by Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates. The Robert M. Morgenthau Wing, named in honor of the Museum's Chairman and District Attorney of Manhattan (2003), includes a theater, lecture halls, classrooms, as well as a resource center and library. Also located in the new space are a café, an additional gallery, office space and a memorial garden. The memorial "Garden of Stones" designed by Andy Goldsworthy consists of 18 large

boulders, stones, trees and soil. This reflective space serves as a memorial to victims of the Holocaust as well as a commentary on the fragility of life (MJH press release). The Museum space is also used for performances, special exhibitions, memorials and events.

Mission

The mission of the Museum of Jewish Heritage states:

“Created as a living memorial to those who perished in the Holocaust, the Museum honors those who died by celebrating their lives – cherishing the traditions that they embraced, examining their achievements and faith, and affirming the vibrant worldwide Jewish community that is their legacy today.”

The Museum of Jewish Heritage defines itself as a living memorial to those who perished in the Holocaust as well as an exploration and celebration of Jewish life. Two biblical quotations are used to reinforce the Museum’s mission: “Remember...Never Forget (Deuteronomy 4:39) and “There is Hope for your Future” (Jeremiah 31:17). These quotes summarize the two distinct goals of the Museum of Jewish Heritage – exploring and remembering the past, while putting faith and hope into the future.

Location

The Museum of Jewish Heritage is located in Battery City Park, in Manhattan. As with Museum Mile, Battery City Park attracts a large number of tourists as well as local visitors. Originally conceived in the 1960's by Governor Nelson Rockefeller, Battery City Park is a planned community built on 92 acres of landfill covering dilapidated piers on the Hudson River. Today the Battery is a thriving development of commercial, residential and cultural life. A destination for residents and tourists alike, over four million people visit the park annually (Battery Park City).

The Museum of Jewish Heritage shares this location with a number of other museums, monuments and memorials. The Skyscraper Museum and the National Museum of the American Indian are both within walking distance. The Irish Hunger Memorial, commemorating the starvation of over one million people, is located in Battery City Park, as are the New York City Police Memorial, the East Coast Memorial (dedicated to World War II servicemen) and the New York Korean War Veterans Memorial. The Museum of Jewish Heritage benefits from its location among these monuments in this high tourist area.

In addition to the sites located in Battery City Park, it is also important to note the historic landmarks that surround the Museum, including the sight of the former World Trade Center. After the events of September 11, 2001, the

Museum of Jewish Heritage offered its presence to the surrounding community as a source of support. The Museum was closed for several weeks in the aftermath of the tragedy, eventually reopening on October 5. At that time, the Museum looked to one of its mission statements, “There is Hope for Your Future“, as inspiration for its reopening and the rebirth of Lower Manhattan (Grossman 2003). One year after the tragedy of September 11, the Museum of Jewish Heritage presented an exhibit entitled *Yatzeit*⁷: *September 11 Observed*, in memory of the historic event.

Opposite the Museum of Jewish Heritage, on the other side of the Hudson River, and clearly visible from the cafe and Garden of Stones, are the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. These iconic structures seem to serve as a backdrop for the Museum, sparking thoughts of justice and humanity. All of the monuments and museums in the vicinity of Battery City Park focus on humanitarian themes to which most people can relate. As with Jewish museums, Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty focus on universal themes such as immigration and freedom. In this manner, their message becomes relevant to a large and diverse audience.

The memorials in Battery City Park reach a diverse audience as well. As with the Holocaust, most individuals do not have a direct relationship to the events being commemorated, yet people can relate to these memorials on a humanitarian level. War memorials such as the East Coast Memorial and the New York Korean War Veterans Memorial in Battery City Park serve as symbols

of world peace and global freedom. Battery City Park's museums and monuments attract a large number of tourists and school groups daily. Many of these groups also visit Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty and the Museum of Jewish Heritage.

Demographics

The Museum of Jewish Heritage reaches a globally diverse audience. According to audience surveys (MJH, 2007), approximately 49,000 people visited the Museum in 2007. Of that number, close to 75% are from the United States. Although the majority of American visitors are from the New York metropolitan area (many are repeat visitors), tourists from many other states visited as well. Internationally, over fifty countries were represented in 2007. A large number of tourists visited from the United Kingdom (1,587), France (1372), Canada (974), Argentina (873) and Australia (873). Israel, Germany, and Brazil, also had a significant number of visitors. While the numbers are much smaller, tourists visited from destinations as far away as Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia. The Museum of Jewish Heritage is successfully reaching a diverse international audience. This is partially based on its location in a prime tourist area and partially in response to the Holocaust theme.

Exhibitions

The Museum of Jewish Heritage presents its message to a diverse audience through its exhibitions. According to Museum Chairman, Robert Morgenthau, “The high level of intense interest by Jews and non-Jews alike tells us our powerful and eloquent exhibitions say something important about the human experience” (MJH press release). The permanent exhibition is at the heart of the Museum and is presented in a very humanized manner. The collection consists of over 15,000 items including photographs, religious artifacts and everyday articles that were donated to the Museum over the past two decades. The Museum of Jewish Heritage is a collecting museum and continues to accept donations to this day. Donated items range from wedding and Bar Mitzvah⁹ invitations to Jewish cookbooks, Holocaust materials, visas, and posters advertising Jewish events. Donors are survivors, family members, immigrants and liberators. Each item is displayed with a photograph and personal information about its previous owner, thus the items have a personal history. Through this collection of artifacts, the Museum of Jewish Heritage tells its powerful story.

The Museum is divided into three distinct chronological themes, each displayed on a separate floor. The first is entitled “Jewish Life A Century Ago”, the second “The War Against the Jews” and the final section is entitled “Jewish Renewal.” According to the Museum’s press release, “the exhibition opens new

doors of understanding for people of all backgrounds about both the devastation wrought by ethnic and cultural intolerance and the power of hope” (MJH Press Release). The permanent collection stresses hope and renewal.

The Museum journey follows a specific path beginning reflectively in a quiet dark room with an introductory multi-screen video. The theme of the video is “tikun olam”, the Hebrew words for “repairing the world.” This film speaks of world peace and renewal, not just for Jews, but for everyone.

The first segment of the exhibit, “Jewish Life a Century Ago,” focuses on themes of family, home and tradition. Through the use of personal artifacts and photographs, the exhibit explores the vitality of Jewish life from the late 1800’s until the beginning of Nazi occupation. There is great emphasis on family rituals, celebrations and the cycle of life. Themes of education, vocation, community, and everyday life are examined. The exhibit feels very personal as music plays and family photographs, videos of personal histories and other memorabilia are explored. This section of the Museum teaches about the history of the Jewish people and how they lived. However, the themes that are presented are multi-cultural. Memories are everywhere. While these are not specifically your memories, such stories are universal. By presenting the history of the Jewish people through first person narratives, the exhibition speaks to its audience on both intimate and universal terms.

The second floor of the exhibition, "The War Against the Jews," focuses on themes of identity, resistance and survival. The rise of Nazism is examined on a human level, through the use of personal histories and everyday items. It is presented in such a way that the viewer realizes this saga of persecution is not only about the Jewish people. It is a narrative about evil and genocide that could have happened to any ethnic group. Through videos, photographs and artifacts, the personal histories of those who lived through the Holocaust are shown. This story is about Jews and non-Jews, survivors, victims, liberators, heroes and average people. Through this exhibition, the Museum of Jewish Heritage provides insight into how people fought to preserve their culture and humanity. The Holocaust is a universal theme portraying the dangers of prejudice and intolerance.

"Jewish Renewal", the third floor of the exhibit shares themes of resilience, hope and rebirth. The atmosphere of the final section is much lighter than the previous two floors, as the spirit of renewal is explored. This part of the exhibit speaks optimistically about the founding of Israel and the rebirth of the Jewish people. Themes of tradition, faith and hope are displayed. Although the tone is optimistic, poignant references are made towards current genocides such as the situation in Darfur. The overall message is that we must use the knowledge of past experience to save the world in the future.

“Remember... Never Forget” and “There is Hope for Your Future“. These themes are reinforced throughout the exhibition; the first floor, a celebration of life, the second floor, a reminder of the evils of past intolerance, and the third floor, a light at the end of the tunnel, a sign of hope and renewal. The journey through the core exhibit of the Museum of Jewish Heritage is a relevant experience to both a religious as well as secular audience.

Education/Programming

The Museum of Jewish Heritage is an educational institution committed to teaching the public about modern Jewish history and the Holocaust. A wide range of programs is offered for students, including museum tours and classroom speakers. Teachers are supported through educator training workshops and extensive pre- and post-training literature. Additionally, the Museum offers a variety of internships to high school and college students who are interested in furthering their education about Jewish heritage and the Holocaust. The high school apprentice program is geared towards New York public school students, and students of all races and religions are encouraged to apply. The Lipper Intern School Partnership Program provides college students the opportunity to work with high school students in the field of Holocaust studies. These young people are trained to work in the classroom and lead Museum tours. It is their

task to carry the Museum's message about tolerance, hope and redemption to others.

The education programs sponsored by the Jewish Heritage Museum support New York State Learning Standards in a variety of areas including geography, communities, immigration, and New York, United States, and world history. According to Maureen Keren, Manager of Education Services, approximately one-third of the Museum's visitors are school groups. Of this number, 68% come from public schools, 20% visit from Jewish schools and 4% visit from parochial schools of another denomination. The remainder is divided among private schools, youth and community groups and colleges and universities. Through its educational programs, the Museum has shown a great commitment to reaching a wide variety of schools with a diverse student body.

Although several tours at the Museum of Jewish Heritage are geared strictly towards Jewish students, the majority are non-denominational. Interestingly, one tour, "Our Jewish Heritage" is specifically designed for students in Catholic middle and high schools. This tour explores the similarities and differences between the two religions using history, culture and ceremony as points of comparison. The tours that are specific to Jewish students are entitled "Israel and the Diaspora"⁹ "Building a Bayit"¹⁰: "There's no Place Like Home" and "Coming of Age During the Holocaust – Coming of Age now." These tours focus

on Jewish heritage and identity, the Jewish Diaspora, Zionism¹¹, the State of Israel and the ritual of Bar and Bat Mitzvah¹².

An example of a tour being offered by the Museum of Jewish Heritage for grades 3 – 12 is “Love Thy Neighbor: Immigration and the U.S. Experience.” This tour focuses on the Jewish immigration experience in America. While the main point of reference is Jewish immigration; the Museum strives to make this class relevant to students of all backgrounds. Students are “encouraged to make connections with other immigration experiences, as well as to think about issues of acceptance and tolerance” (MJH Schools and Teachers Guide).

“My House to Your House: Community Life from Generation to Generation” (grades K – 6) uses the study of Jewish objects, traditions and rituals to connect with other nationalities and religions. The roles of family and community are also explored in this class. “This program is designed as an introduction to Jewish heritage as well as the broader theme of cultural identity, and it provides a useful supplement to multicultural studies” (MJH Schools and Teachers Guide). Time and again, Jewish museums are speaking to an audience of Jews and non-Jews. Educational programs are designed with a strong Jewish component that provides a sense of connection for students of the Jewish faith. Simultaneously, the programs globalize themes in an effort to communicate to a larger, more diverse audience.

Perhaps one of the strongest programs presented by the Museum, geared towards middle and high school students, is entitled "Meeting Hate with Humanity: Life During the Holocaust." This program is closest to the heart of the Museum's mission to promote tolerance and understanding. It echoes the themes of the permanent exhibition - "Jewish Life a Century Ago", "The War Against the Jews" and "Jewish Renewal." This class provides an opportunity for introspection and critical thought relating to subjects such as responsibility, prejudice and social justice. Students explore the Museum in relationship to their own lives and experiences. The Holocaust story is used as a starting point for discussion and reflection on themes of global importance.

The student workbook for "Meeting Hate with Humanity – Life During the Holocaust" teaches children in universal terms. Each part of the lesson begins with a specific Jewish value such as tzedakah¹³ (charity), and then connects that concept to the greater world. The tzedakah theme relates to contemporary concepts of philanthropy and how we, as individuals, can help change the world. Discussions about anti-Semitism encompass feelings about prejudice and discrimination. Each part of the lesson addresses some aspect of Jewish life and values before, during or after the Holocaust. These principles are then related back to the students in contemporary terms. In discussing Jewish culture, children explore their own heritage as well. They learn to define themselves as individuals and as members of a larger cultural group. In this manner, the lesson

becomes personal for students as they gain an understanding of the similarities of humanity (MJH Meeting Hate With Humanity, 2008).

The Museum of Jewish Heritage positions itself as a museum for all people. It is a museum about history, understanding and the renewal. It is a celebration of Jewish culture, a memorial to those who were lost in the Holocaust and a museum about redemption. The themes of the Museum – “Remember ... Never Forget” and “There is hope for your Future” are universal in nature. The Museum serves as hope for people of all ethnicities in their eternal search for world peace and tolerance.

Museum at Eldridge Street

History

Located in the heart of New York's Chinatown, the Museum at Eldridge Street is both the oldest and youngest of the three case studies being explored. The Synagogue was completed in 1887. The Museum at Eldridge Street opened its doors 120 years later, on December 2, 2007. It is impossible to discuss the history of the Museum without first detailing the history of the Synagogue itself. Built by Russian and Polish immigrants, the Eldridge Synagogue was the first great temple to be built by Eastern European Jews in America.

In the late 1800's, when the Synagogue was being constructed, a thriving Jewish population existed on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Approximately 500,000 Jews were living in this Manhattan neighborhood in the early 1900's. Most were poor and lived in tenements. There were many humble neighborhood synagogues, most located in storefronts or small converted churches. By contrast, The Eldridge Synagogue was an extraordinary architectural feat, both aesthetically and financially. Financed by successful Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, the original cost of construction was \$92,000 (Rothstein, 2007).

The Synagogue's exterior is Moorish in style and contains many references to Turkish design. An enormous stained glass rose window can be seen from both outside and inside of the Synagogue. On the interior, hand

stenciled wallpaper and a trompe l'oeil mural lead to a 70 foot vaulted ceiling. According to the Museum's website, this opulence was symbolic of the religious freedom and economic opportunity offered in America.

In its time, the Synagogue had a strong group of congregants including successful artists, performers and business people. The Synagogue was not only considered a house of worship, but also a community center providing social services to new Americans (www.eldridgestreet.org). However, this was short lived. As members began to move to other parts of the city and immigration laws changed, the Jewish population of the Lower East Side diminished. By the 1950's, the Synagogue was in disrepair and financially insolvent. In response, the main sanctuary was closed from 1955 - 1980, although worship continued in the smaller chapel on the first floor. To this day, the Museum shares its space with Congregation Kahal Adath Jeshurun, which has continuously offered religious services on Sabbath and the Jewish holidays since the Synagogue's founding.

The Synagogue continued to deteriorate until the late 1970's when New York University Professor, Gerard Wolfe, discovered the damaged building and founded the Friends of Eldridge Street Synagogue, a volunteer organization, to help restore the Synagogue to its former glory. As the scope of the work became realized, the Eldridge Street Project (a not for profit, non-sectarian group) was created to manage the process. The Project raised over \$20 million for the

restoration that began in 1989 and included extensive work to both the interior and exterior of the Synagogue. 120 years after the Synagogue's original completion in 1887, the Eldridge Street Synagogue stands fully restored. Today, The Eldridge Street Synagogue is a New York City Landmark and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In 1996, it was also designated a National Historic Landmark by the Federal government.

Mission

“The Museum at Eldridge Street, founded as the Eldridge Street Project in 1986, presents the culture, history and traditions of the great wave of Jewish immigrants to the Lower East Side, drawing parallels with the diverse cultural communities that have settled in America“.

Location

In the 120 years since the temple was first built, the Eldridge Street Synagogue has undergone a complete transformation. This is true for the surrounding neighborhood as well. The Lower East Side of Manhattan has always been a haven for immigrant families. This continues today, although the Eastern European immigrants of the late 1800's have been replaced by immigrants from China, Latin America and Eastern Asia. Many of the Jewish owned stores and restaurants have disappeared. The few that remain share the street with Chinese restaurants and Spanish bodegas. The majority of people

living in this neighborhood are of Chinese descent. The area is slowly being restored as other buildings are being renovated and luxury lofts and trendy boutiques are beginning to appear.

Demographics

The current demographics of the Lower East Side do not have a large enough Jewish population to support a synagogue as grand as Eldridge. In order to remain relevant to the community, the Eldridge Project needed to reinvent itself. According to Rothstein (2007), “the Eldridge Street Project turned the building into a symbol of a contemporary, secular faith”. He also states that the Project describes the Museum as a center “for historical reflection, aesthetic inspiration and spiritual renewal” (Rothstein, 2007). Eldridge Street has established itself as a museum exploring the immigrant experience. As was the case with The Jewish Museum and the Museum of Jewish Heritage, the Museum at Eldridge Street explores global themes in order to reach a larger audience.

The Museum at Eldridge Street has been open less than one year and is still working to increase awareness and develop its audience. To date, the Museum has had approximately 25,000 visitors. Of this number, school groups account for approximately 1,500 people. Approximately two-thirds of the students visited from private schools (including Jewish day schools) and one-third visited from public schools. The Museum is trying to increase schools visits

through secular programs that correspond to school curriculums. Social organizations, congregational groups and seniors also visit the Museum in significant numbers (Bader, 2008).

The Museum at Eldridge Street is also interested in attracting families. To this end, a family program geared towards children ages 5 – 10 has recently started, offering a tour and interactive art project on Sunday afternoons. In an effort to attract a diverse audience, generic monthly themes have been established. “Painting and Patterns” is a current popular activity. Children create stencil designs inspired by the wallpaper decorating the Synagogue. Another upcoming program is “Family Albums” and will relate to personal histories. By choosing topics with universal themes, the Museum makes itself relevant to a larger segment of the community.

Exhibitions

In order to visit the inside of the Synagogue, patrons must take part in an organized group tour. Well-informed docents, who speak about the history of the building as well as the Jewish immigrant experience and the Lower East Side, escort visitors through the Synagogue. Although the tour is the Museum’s central exhibit, there are smaller organized exhibitions as well. “Glorious Again! Restoring the Eldridge Street Synagogue”, the inaugural exhibition, tells the story of the restoration of this historic landmark. This exhibit speaks of community

involvement, volunteerism and the history of the Lower East Side. The restoration of the Museum at Eldridge Street celebrates the rebirth of an historic architectural sight. The building is a synagogue, but in the same way that the great churches of Europe reach the masses, the Eldridge Street crosses religious boundaries.

Education/Programming

Another way that the Museum is engaging community is through its educational programming. School programs play a large role in the educational programming at the Museum at Eldridge Street. According to Miriam Badar, Visiting Services Director, this is an area that the Museum hopes to cultivate further (Bader 2008). All school programs comply with New York City learning standards in the areas of social studies and language arts. School tours are led by historian-trained educators and focus on the political, social and spiritual history of the Synagogue and immigrants of the Lower East Side.

Annie Poland, Vice President of Education, takes many neighborhood children on museum tours. Visiting children are often children of immigrants or immigrants themselves. In order to make the curriculum relevant, she focuses on themes to which they can relate, such as coming to a new country. Discussions about the architecture and design elements of the Synagogue also generate interest among the children. According to Ms. Poland, as stated by Salamon

(2005), a group of young Chinese immigrants was very intrigued as they finished their museum tour and made plans to come back in the spring to learn about the Jewish holiday of Passover. The Synagogue at Eldridge Street was created as a Jewish institution; however the Museum at Eldridge Street has broadened its scope to reach a more diverse audience.

In order to sustain this audience, the Museum generates community interest through its programming initiatives. Public programs are an important part of the Museum's agenda and include walking tours, concerts, literary events, lectures and art installations. According to the Museum's brochure, the programs "illuminate Jewish heritage, the shared experience of America's immigrants, and architectural and historic preservation practices" (Museum at Eldridge Street). Jewish culture is celebrated along with the multi-ethnicity and history of the neighborhood.

The "Egg Rolls and Egg Creams¹⁴ Festival", celebrates two distinct cultures that share a common neighborhood. This annual festival incorporates elements from two very different worlds. The goal of the festival is to highlight and explore the traditions of both Chinese and Eastern European Jewish histories through music, art, games and food. There are performances by Chinese musicians and Jewish Klezmer¹⁵ artists. Art projects range from demonstrations by a Jewish Torah scribe to Chinese paper lantern making.

Yiddish¹⁶ games and Chinese games are played and of course egg creams and egg rolls are served.

The Eldridge Street Museum, located in the center of Chinatown, creates programs that serve the community. Neighborhood walking tours offered by the Museum explore the history of the Lower East Side and the immigrant experience. "Stoop, Synagogue and Soapbox" examines everyday life in the neighborhood during the early 20th century, while "Courtship, Love & Marriage" focuses on the romantic and social rituals of the times (Museum at Eldridge Street Brochure). These tours are historic, non-religious and speak to a diverse audience.

The Museum has also created an audience for itself by offering a wide variety of entertainment choices. Musical events at Eldridge Street celebrate many ethnic sounds. Art Bailey's Orkestra Popilar interprets Jewish Klezmer music. "Drum Fest!" celebrates the eclectic community of the Lower East Side with a concert of klezmer, Irish, Chinese and Puerto Rican drumming. "The Afro-Semitic Experience" combines Jewish and African American music for a distinct multi-cultural sound. These concerts attract a diverse audience reflective of the mixed demographics of the Lower East Side. The Museum at Eldridge Street is no longer strictly a Jewish institution, but a spiritual center serving visitors of all cultural backgrounds.

The demographics of the Lower East Side have changed considerably over the past 120 years. What was once a vibrant neighborhood of Jewish immigrants, is now a thriving culturally diverse community. The Eldridge Street Project was founded with the goal of restoring the deteriorating Eldridge Street Synagogue to its former glory. In order for the restoration to become a reality, the founders of the Project looked beyond the support of the Jewish community. To generate secular support, they focused their attention on the restoration of a historic New York landmark and the creation of an educational and cultural center that would serve a diverse audience. By focusing on themes with a broad appeal and involving the community, the Museum at Eldridge Street has become this institution.

Conclusion

The field of Jewish museums continues to expand in America and throughout the world. In order to proliferate, these museums must reach beyond the Jewish demographic, pursuing two distinct missions as well as two distinct target groups. For the Jewish population, the museums' goal is to help preserve and celebrate the Jewish experience. For a secular audience, Jewish museums must promote tolerance and increase understanding about Jewish culture. These goals are reached through exhibition, education and programming initiatives. In order to make programming relevant to the larger community, Jewish museums must speak to a diverse audience.

Each of the three museums, The Jewish Museum, the Museum of Jewish Heritage and the Museum at Eldridge Street, has successfully reached a multi-cultural audience. Museums must make exhibitions and programming popular and relevant to the masses in order to reach a diverse audience. They must also expand beyond typical museum offerings in an attempt to embrace community. Festivals, musical concerts, lectures and films are all part of contemporary museums' repertoires. These non-denominational events cross cultural boundaries and introduce the museum to a wider audience base.

Location also plays an important role in defining and creating a multi-cultural audience. The Jewish Museum is located in a prestigious cultural area

that automatically attracts an international upscale audience. In order to maintain this audience, The Jewish Museum must produce high-quality art exhibits with global appeal. The Museum of Jewish Heritage defines itself as a museum/memorial and is located in Battery Park among other such monuments. By nature of its location and the universality of the Holocaust theme, a diverse audience is reached. The visitors of Battery Park are looking for a meaningful experience, and the Museum of Jewish Heritage satisfies that need. The Lower East Side neighborhood of Eldridge Street has significantly changed over time. What was once a thriving Jewish community is now home to a largely Chinese population. In order to remain relevant to the current demographics, The Museum at Eldridge Street has altered its programming to embrace the diversity of its community. Museums are public institutions. In order to be successful, they must serve the audience of the surrounding community.

Educational programming is another important way in which museums reach a diverse audience. Museums strive to make programming relevant to students by complying with state approved learning standards. Program themes are universal and can be related back to students' curriculums. Each of the three museums has a different focus. The Jewish Museum is an art museum, the Museum of Jewish Heritage is a Holocaust Memorial and the Museum at Eldridge Street is a restored historic synagogue. Nonetheless, common themes occur in their educational programs. Immigration, cultural identity, history and

tolerance are all recurring themes. Each theme is related to a Jewish value, yet they all have secular relevance as well.

By using Judaism as a catalyst to discuss universal themes, a diverse audience is reached. In this way, Jewish museums are promoting a greater understanding of how the traditions and cultures of one ethnicity contribute to a larger more global community (Grossman, 2003). Jewish museums seek to share Jewish art and traditions with the world. They do not want to isolate the Jewish people, but rather link a diverse global audience through common themes and values.

Glossary

1. Judaica - things pertaining to Jewish life and customs, especially when of a historical, literary, or artistic nature, as books or ritual objects.
2. Anti-Semitic – discrimination against or prejudiced or hostility toward Jews.
3. Torah - a parchment scroll on which the first five books of the Old Testament are written, used in synagogue services.
4. Modiya Project - an open source resource for exploring the interrelation of Jews, media, and religion as an area of research and teaching sponsored by the Center for Religion and Media, New York University.
5. Genocide - the deliberate and systematic extermination of a national, racial, political, or cultural group.
6. Sabbath - the seventh day of the week, Saturday, as the day of rest and religious observance among Jews and some Christians.
7. Yahrzeit - the anniversary of the death of a parent, sibling, child, or spouse.
8. Bar Mitzvah - a solemn ceremony held in the synagogue, usually on Saturday morning, to admit as an adult member of the Jewish community a Jewish boy 13 years old who has successfully completed a prescribed course of study in Judaism.

9. Diaspora - the scattering of the Jews to countries outside of Palestine after the Babylonian captivity.
10. Bayit – (Hebrew) house
11. Zionism - a worldwide Jewish movement that resulted in the establishment and development of the state of Israel.
12. Bat Mitzvah - a solemn ceremony, chiefly among Reform and Conservative Jews, that is held in the synagogue on Friday night or Saturday morning to admit formally as an adult member of the Jewish community a girl 12 to 13 years old.
13. Tzedakah – (Hebrew) charity or giving of charity
14. Egg Cream - a cold beverage made with milk, flavoring syrup, and soda water.
15. Klezmer - a Jewish folk musician traditionally performing in a small band. Also, klezmer music – the type of music performed by such musicians.
16. Yiddish - a High German language with an admixture of vocabulary from Hebrew and the Slavic languages, written in Hebrew letters, and spoken mainly by Jews in eastern and central Europe and by Jewish emigrants from these regions and their descendants.

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