

12-1-2010

JEWISH LANDSCAPES ROOTED,
EMBEDDED, ENSHRINED, AND
TRANSCENDENT: METAPHOR AS
COMMUNICATED IN JEWISH MUSEUMS
IN NEW YORK, JERUSALEM, AND SAN
FRANCISCO

Judith Stauber

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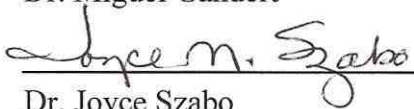
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BY

JUDITH F. STAUBER

B.S., Communication, Ithaca College, 1989
M.A., Women's Studies, The Ohio State University, 1993

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy
Communication**

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

December, 2010

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am incredibly grateful and fortunate to have had the enormous support and encouragement of colleagues, family, and friends who have listened and laughed in ways that helped bring this project to fruition.

Each member of my committee understood and supported my desire to contribute a Jewishly meaningful document to the field of Communication. Very special thanks to Karen Foss and Jack Condon who have on numerous occasions invited me into their homes and spent many hours talking with me about ideas and goals. Thank you to Miguel Gandert and Joyce Szabo for their time, creativity, openness, and to all of my committee for their interest in knowing me as a person beyond my academic pursuits.

Thanks to the museum professionals who have extended great generosity to me especially; Yehudit Inbar, Lou Levine, Noman Kleeblatt, Anne Scher, and Connie Wolf. *Toda raba* [thank you] for site access, providing resources, permission to photograph, and welcoming me into your workspaces for thoughtful and enjoyable conversations.

Sincere appreciation and love to my mother and father, Shirley and Martin Stauber in this their 58th year of marriage, for instilling a deep sense of Jewishness, supporting my wanderlust and individuality from an early age, and expressing pride in my accomplishments. May this work bring you both *naches* [joy].

Albuquerque, New Mexico
April, 2010 / 5770

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ABSTRACT

As public places, museums negotiate authenticity and re-presentation, fact and ideology, memory and the present confronting a basic question for museums directors, curators, and visitors alike: what is the truth here? In this dissertation, the content and form of four Jewish museums are examined rhetorically: The Jewish Museum, and the Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, both in New York City; the Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem; and the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco. Four metaphors—rootedness, embeddedness, enshrinement, and transcendence—capture the ways each of these museums conceptualizes and presents Jewish culture.

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Chapter One: Introduction

*Inside the brand-new museum there's an old synagogue.
Inside the synagogue is me. Inside me my heart. Inside my heart a museum.
Inside the museum a synagogue, inside it me, inside me my heart, inside my heart a museum.*

-- Poem Without an End by Yehuda Amichai

When I was twelve, my parents and my Romanian-born grandfather took me on my first trip to Israel where we visited, among other places of historical interest, Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust Memorial Museum. It was actually my mother, grandfather, and me who visited Yad Vashem, since my father, who despite being a history buff with a strong Jewish identity, tends to distance himself from the Holocaust except for a stick-it-to-the-Nazis consciousness that gave life to me and my three older brothers. In his preference for a lived sense of Jewishness over more constructed museum experiences, he opted out of entering Yad Vashem. I can remember feeling my father's absence as I looked around at twisted metal sculptures with, a sense of discomfort that heightened my own consciousness that it meant something to be there even if those meanings were not yet clear.

Since then, Jewish museums have played a meaningful role in my life. For thirteen years, I worked as a Jewish staff professional at universities in New York and New Mexico, creating Jewish student communities, fostering identity, and promoting intercultural and interfaith relations across campus. On each campus, I developed trips to Jewish museums as a part of education programs about the Jewish experience. While at Cornell University, in Ithaca, New York, a Unitarian-minister colleague and I developed an annual multicultural interfaith dialogue trip to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., which we facilitated for several years. Each time we would select 45 participants through an

application process, board a bus on Saturday at midnight, arrive at the museum by 9 a.m., spend five or so hours in the museum, debrief in small groups, and then head back on the bus to arrive back on campus by midnight. As the dialogue planners, we knew this would be an emotionally and physically draining 24-hour experience. We also knew it was in keeping with the intense campus culture and one of the ways we could entice students to take the time to participate in an extracurricular activity out of town. Often, it was the first time many international students, particularly those from Germany or China, learned anything firsthand about Jewish people, and this placed the Jewish students (and leaders) on the trip in a position to have aspects of their culture reflected back to them in ways they had not anticipated or previously experienced.

For nine years, between 2000 and 2009, I led annual (and some years more frequent) ten-day Jewish students trips to Israel, and each time there was no question that Yad Vashem would be on the itinerary. Typically, groups spend one entire day experiencing Israel's memorial practices and splitting time between Yad Vashem and the adjacent Har Hertzal national cemetery that share the same Jerusalem mountainside. Most students (and staff) found that day to be the most emotionally charged in an already content-packed and intensely paced tour of the country.

My differing experiences at museums—with my family and with students over many trips—inspired my interest in studying Jewish museums as a dissertation topic. My background in organizational and intercultural communication adds another piece to these interests, and I have come to explore some of the issues I could not always articulate. In this sense, I am a typical visitor to Jewish museums but also more than that, since I have always had to see these museums from several standpoints at once—whether through the eyes of my

family as well as myself, through the eyes of the Jewish and non-Jewish students who participated in the many trips to such museums, and through the Jewish histories collected in these sites.

In the past, museums typically have been sites for examination by art historians or anthropologists; however, communication scholars have come more recently to the study of museums, and scholars across disciplines are recognizing that there are important communicative functions that involve the rhetoric of museums as public places that frame, present, and interpret the past in impactful ways for visitors (Blair, 1999; Blair & Michel, 2004; Foss, 1986; Katriel, 1993; Noy, 2008).

As the scholarship about museums increases, analyses of museum practices and processes are explored in multifaceted ways that hold different meanings and compete for attention among those who visit museums, for scholars of museums, and museum professionals (Karp & Lavine, 1991; Karp, Kreamer, & Lavine, 1992; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). Museums are sites of public communication whose exhibition practices have the potential to shape, empower, and engage viewer participation in the direction and progression of the information presented. As repositories of cultural history and memory, museums are places designed to communicate culture, foster community, promote education, and encourage interaction. Museums function within particular contexts and provide visitors with a backdrop to experience a region, city, or place. As sites of entertainment, museums frame a particular view of a culture and people for local citizens as well as for travelers visiting museums on the heritage tourism trail (Alexander, 1996; Bennett, 1995; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998).

As a bridge to a particular reality, museums bear witness to specific histories; and they “do not simply issue objective descriptions or form logical assemblages; they generate representations and attribute value and meaning in line with certain perspectives or classificatory schemas which are historically specific” (Hall, 2001, p. 160). Despite perceptions of the museum as an authoritative institution producing knowledge and culture, museums do not possess meaning about their contents in essential, fixed, or monolithic ways against which all can be measured. Museums function like texts and participate in the construction of identity and ideology by engaging with new ideas and reinforcing what the public thinks it already knows. In this way museums are recursive spaces that contribute to the social construction of reality and influence representations by communicating identity in the organization and reception of exhibition content.

These are many of the functions of the museum, and I am interested in the form and content of stories that revolve around a number of the different functions. Museum-going experiences are of interest to me because no matter the subject or object presented, museums are authoritative spaces in which stories are told. In addition, against the stories told at the museums, contemporary museum visitors have expectations that the museum will present certain “truths” in order to generate cultural memory. This is especially salient for museums that present content about living cultures whose audiences have various motivations for visiting museums and different degrees of relationship to the stories that are on display. This phenomenon is illustrated in a National Public Radio program, “Life Stories: Descended from the Holocaust,” narrated in 2005 by the 41-year-old son of survivors who recorded his parents and a group of their friends aboard a rented bus to visit the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. They went on the trip not to remember and grieve but “on an

inspection tour to see if it had been done right.” They wanted to know if “curators had honestly fulfilled their contractual obligation,” and they “moved through the museum as if they owned it” (retrieved from <http://hearingvoices.com/special/2005/shoah>). .

Louis Levine, Senior Advisor, Collections and Exhibitions at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York, offers a context for how museums go about communicating stories specifically in regard to Holocaust museums. Levine recalls that Bet Hafusot [diaspora Museum, in Tel Aviv] was one of the first museums dedicated to a primary or dominant narrative:

Not that museums didn't tell stories before then but I think that the standard before that was for museums to say “okay, we have this group of artifacts, what story can we tell around them?” And what Shaika [Weinberg, founding director of Bet Hafusot, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum] did was to say, “to hell with the artifacts: what's the story we want to tell?” and then...in D.C. he said “what's the important story to tell and what artifacts do we have to tell it with.” This is a reversal of the other, which is, what artifacts do we have and what story can we tell from them. I think that is an important distinction. (L. Levine, personal communication, August 4, 2008)

There are various narratives, then, that emerge from museums—the stories the museum architects and curators choose to tell, the stories visitors expect to find, the stories that provide the motivation to visit museums, the stories told by the museum sites and cities themselves. And these are only some of the layers of stories; there are also many stories that go untold, either because they are forgotten, dismissed, judged unimportant, or the like. The choices museums make leave many stories out, but so do visitors' stories. My father's story about why he does not go to Jewish museums is but one example of such untold stories. I am

interested in both told and untold stories, a distinction that is especially important for Jewish museums in the representation of a people whose history is punctuated by lost lives and lost stories. Stories that are told or remain untold are also a reflection of the museum's ideological stance and what exhibition planners deem as central, peripheral, or controversial messages.

The stories that are told in museums vary according to location, type, and the goals of the museum organization and are part of the processes that generate meaning. The museum visitor is a reader of a text that contextualizes communication in both words and images to offer a multiplicity of meanings. What is communicated by exhibits, displays, and labels is as significant as the objects collected in a museum and subject to interpretation in terms of what is articulated and what is not. Hooper-Greenhill explains, "although museums and galleries are fundamentally concerned with objects, these objects are always contextualized by words...spoken language creates a worldview not only through what is said but also by what is not said. The gaps and omissions in speech reveal values, opinions, assumptions and attitudes. The same is true of course for written language" (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, p. 115).

Approaches to museum study, and the museums themselves, have undergone a shift in meaning over the past two decades as the character and perceptions of museums have been in a process of evolution (Alexander, 1996; Bennett, 1995; Genoways & Andrei, 2008; Weil, 1990). Nineteenth-century notions of the museum as objective, authoritative, and indicted as an elitist exhibitor of culture continue to be reframed alongside new strategies to recast the museum as a public institution that participates in community dialogue and engagement (Carbonell, 2004; Karp & Lavine, 1991; Watson, 2007).

In the early 1990s, the American Association of Museums instilled the notion that museums could provide visitors not only with a way of understanding the world but also serve as a vehicle to inspire and transform museum goers through meaningful experiences (Hughs & Wood, 2009). From the perspective of visitor experience the museum maintains the position of communicator engendering differing perceptions as a complex, alienating, or accessible public institution (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994; Ravelli, 2006).

As museums face a postmodern climate change, questions are raised about the role of the museum, the nature of exhibition content, and the resultant representations of culture. As an arena for preservation, contemplation, and education, museums are “places uniquely situated at the intersection of objects, ideas, and public space” (Conn, 2010, p. 5). Some questions concern the perspective from which museum stories are presented, which aspects of a culture are on display, and for what intended audience. Influenced by architect Rem Koolhaas’s writings about New York, one museum scholar frames the relationship between the museum and the city as a “Delirious Museum,” understood as “a place overlaid with levels of history, a multiplicity of situations, events and objects open to countless interpretations” (Storrie, 2006, p. 2).

In these ways, the museum can be seen as an institution not distinct from, but part of, the fabric of a place woven with stories, lives, and artifacts functioning together in communication and interaction with visitors. From mission statements to exhibition practices to architecture, how the museum communicates has power to generate meaning about culture, knowledge, and the institution, all of which ultimately influence the museum experience. These shifts in understanding have resulted in a resurgence of new museums, many of which are grappling with new ideas about and images of what museums should be.

More than ever before, museums are now a place to foster community, entice new audiences, and, especially as new buildings emerge, museums articulate a consciousness of how they are positioned within the cultural imagination and infrastructure of a city.

Museums are not just changing in terms of what they present and their reasons for exhibiting what they do. Architecturally too, museums are changing, and museums built in recent years have made noticeable shifts away from the Beaux-Art neoclassical style common in the U.S. and Britain that have been prominent since ancient Greece (and which greatly contributed to the public perception of the museum as authoritative or unapproachable). The 1990s marked an architectural move toward a new design scheme with the emergence of high-profile museum building projects designed by renowned architects such as Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Bilbao, the impact of which has added the terms *Bilbao-effect* and *starchitect* to the museological lexicon. The present decade has seen a proliferation of new art, history, science, and ethnic museum building projects in major cities around the world including Daniel Libeskind's Berlin Jewish Museum and his new Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco.

In fact, new Jewish history museums presently are being built at a particularly rapid pace. Scheduled to open in 2010 (also designed by Libeskind) is the New Center for Arts and Culture. This museum curiously is not referred to as "Jewish," but is sponsored by the Boston area Combined Jewish Philanthropies and the Jewish Community Centers of Greater Boston and expected to house contents typical to a contemporary Jewish museum institution. Scheduled for completion in 2011 is the new National Museum of American Jewish History that will be housed in a five-story, 100,000-square-foot facility on Independence Mall in Philadelphia. Also opening in 2011 is the new Museum of the History of Polish Jews, built

on the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto. More than 80 museums across the U.S. are member institutions of the national Council of American Jewish Museums (CAJM) and include Jewish museums in locations such as Miami, New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles and other perhaps less likely places from Anchorage to Tulsa.

As the museum landscape broadens, several questions arise and serve as a starting point for my study. What accounts for the recent production of specifically Jewish new museums and building expansion projects? Are new museum projects driven by cultural tourism, politics, donors, or by generations further removed from historical events? Are new Jewish museums positioning history and culture in new ways? While visiting Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, I spoke to museum scholar and director Yehudit Inbar about these questions and the recent increase of Jewish museums particularly in the U.S. Inbar responded:

Just this week I had three come to meet with me, everyone in the States is doing a Jewish museum, a Holocaust museum, this is an interesting thing. It is something people are not exploring. There is not enough information about how and why it is happening. I'm not so sure it's a good thing. I did research about museums on kibbutzim many years ago. All the museums on the kibbutzim were flourishing. Now it's a different thing because the kibbutzim have totally changed. What I realized actually was that when the museums on the kibbutzim flourished, actually the kibbutz was already almost dying. And I don't know what is in the states but something weird is going there with all these museums. Maybe it's the changing of generations, I don't know. Maybe people feel that's why they need now to document but it sounds in a way desperate. This is an interesting phenomenon. So why do we

want all the time to document? Yourself actually. (Y. Inbar, personal communication, July 29, 2008)

Yes, indeed: myself actually. I am particularly interested in Jewish museums and communication in terms of the rhetoric with which museums engage in order to represent culture. I want to better understand how Jewish museums in different locations position Jewish history and in turn position Jewish people. How my culture is organized and experienced in the context of the museum has a relationship with how I and other Jews are understood both historically and in contemporary situations. More specifically, my research seeks to interpret the ways Jewish museum communication strategies take the form of narratives, stories, and metaphors that communicate symbolic worldviews by and about Jewish people.

This study will look at the way four Jewish museum sites tell stories about Jewish life and culture. The sites include The Jewish Museum in New York City; The Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem; The Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in New York City; and the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco. All four museums present exhibitions about Jewish life, heritage, and history in different ways, and all are housed in architecturally distinct buildings positioned amid unique urban landscapes.

The Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust is located in Lower Manhattan's Battery Park City directly across New York harbor from the Statue of Liberty. In 1953, Israel's Knesset (parliament) established Yad Vashem: Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority as a national memorial museum located in Jerusalem with the new Holocaust History Museum completed in 2005. The Contemporary Jewish

Museum in San Francisco opened in June of 2008. The Jewish Museum, located in New York, has been housed in its present location since 1947 with a collection that dates to 1906.

With an emphasis on communication and storytelling, there are several reasons why I chose these four particular museums, one of which has to do with cultural concepts of place and landscape. My argument is that museums communicate stories from inscribed senses of place. That is to say that the historical, cultural, and geographic understandings of place shape the museum's content of, and context for, communication and meaning making.

Cresswell (2004) explains the relationship between place and memory:

One of the primary ways in which memories are constituted is through the production of places...the very materiality of a place means that memory is not abandoned to the vagaries of mental processes and is instead inscribed into the landscape—as public memory. (Cresswell, 2004, p. 85)

Therefore while all the museum sites in this study are not memorial museums, all four nevertheless can be understood as publicly inscribed markers in the landscape that represent place and memory in the United States and Israel where Jewish populations migrated to at various points in history, and for different reasons, in the creation of new lives. As east and west coastal cities, New York and San Francisco serve to a certain extent bookend the United States. In the history of European and other emigration to this country, New York City is a place of entry whose population remains one of the nation's most culturally diverse and represents the highest density of Jews in the United States. Manhattan is a living laboratory of Jewish life, so much so that two specifically Jewish museums are located at the northern and southern parts of the island, in addition to Jewish history centers, Jewish university museums, and dozens of Jewish art-filled galleries. San Francisco, too, offers a high degree

of ethnic diversity marked by myths of westward expansion as a place where people could define their own selves and it remains a place of uniqueness, and possibility. San Francisco is also home to a sizeable Jewish population. The larger socio-cultural diversity built into these locations offers the potential of understanding the complexity of Jewish culture as self-perceived and as it exists and is perceived in relation to other cultures.

As both a real and imagined place, Israel holds complicated and multiple meanings for different Jewish populations and serves as a conceptual marker for Jewish life inside and outside of the diaspora. Israel is a Jewish state and is perceived by many as a homeland and holy place for different religions and cultures. In my study, the museum site in Israel positions itself not only as a national museum and memorial but also as *the* worldwide authority on the documentation of the Holocaust experience as evidenced in its name: Yad Vashem: Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority. To explore how museum narratives emerge from sense of place is in part to consider culturally symbolic values of where the story is told. In regard to Holocaust narratives Young (1993) states:

in Israel martyrs and heroes are remembered side by side, both redeemed by the birth of the state. As the shape Holocaust memory takes in Europe and Israel is determined by political, aesthetic, and religious coordinates, that in American is guided no less by distinctly American ideals and experiences-such as liberty, pluralism, and immigration. (Young, 1993, p. 2)

Another reason for the choice of studying these four particular museums has to do with the types of museum in terms of the content presented. Many people, Jews and non-Jews, make assumptions about what a Jewish museum is and what a Jewish story is about, often conflating Holocaust museums and Jewish museums. Of the four museum sites, two

consider the Holocaust experience from the different perspectives afforded by locations in New York, and Jerusalem. The two other museums—those in New York and San Francisco—position themselves primarily as art museums within a context that celebrates ethnicity and heritage. While each site offers a certain measure of distinctiveness, they also share some overlapping organizational goals, and this study will also consider how museum’s self-perceptions intersect with the way they tell Jewish stories.

In order to help distinguish how museums tell stories in different ways, my study compares traditional (or older) and new Jewish museums as way to understand shifts in museum philosophies and the role of communication in this shift. Through this lens, the museums under study represent a continuum established during various stages while perceptions of museums were, and perhaps still are, in flux. In their different designs and missions, the evolution of museum spaces can be charted rhetorically to better understand the various presentations that the museums negotiate.

A caveat is in order here: The study of these four museums is not as discrete and tidy as it seems. For example, new museums do not necessary convey contemporary content, Holocaust content is displayed in museums that are not specific to that historic atrocity, and the concept of heritage cuts across various museum typologies. Jewish museums and Holocaust museums both display art and offer different and overlapping histories of a people who maintain multiple-identity standpoints that include culture, ethnicity, spirituality, sexual orientation, and religion, along with race, class, and geographic distinctions among others. Jewish life and culture is diverse and dynamic and encompasses historical and contemporary contexts; it is a broadly defined living culture.

Therefore, choosing Jewish museums as artifacts for study is especially significant—they are not just cultural repositories, as all museums are, but are politically charged living cultural repositories with powerful connections to recent and ongoing events. The founding of the State of Israel in 1948 is inextricably linked with the events of World War II and the Holocaust. Conflict in the Middle East long predates Israeli statehood, resumed immediately after the state was declared, and regrettably continues today. Four thousand years of Jewish history have been fraught with consistent hatred of Jewish people, and around the world, anti-Semitism continues to exist in both subtle and egregious forms. Jewish people have experienced assimilation, migration, diaspora, and genocide. Jewish museums offer the potential to expand cultural literacy and historical memory for generations of Jews and non-Jews to bear witness to the past and to celebrate and enlighten the present. Certainly, too, Jewish history is not only about tragic events that position various victim-identified standpoints; in fact, history illustrates continual resistance to oppression.

As a communication researcher, I have been interested in the ways museums participate in cultural discourse and engage in the processes of meaning making about Jewish people and culture. My primary research question is to understand the way Jewish museum narratives function to generate and negotiate meaning about Jewish life and culture. I am interested especially in what is and is not communicated about Jewish culture and the significance of that construction for contemporary audiences, each generation of which is further removed from significant cultural events.

My objective is to examine and interpret through the collection of qualitative data, including observations, interviews, and textual analysis, what is being communicated about Jewish culture at the four museum sites. These levels address the museum in the context of

its organization, exhibition, and architecture to interpret the landscapes of narrative that communicate symbolic worldviews.

Chapter Two will review scholarship in the areas of Museum Studies, Cultural Geography, Communication, Rhetoric, Visual Culture, and Narrative Theory. Chapter Three will explain the methodological framework for the study. Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven provide separate detailed site analyses for each museum. Chapter Eight presents a discussion of the site analyses across museums and offers conclusions based on data findings.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Throughout the following pages a discussion of scholarship from the fields of museum studies, cultural geography, communication, rhetoric, narrative theory, and visual culture are explored in order to inform my own study of Jewish museum communication. This review of literature will provide an interdisciplinary backdrop for my objective to understand the way Jewish museum narratives function to generate and negotiate meaning about Jewish life and culture.

Museum Studies Scholarship: An Overview

The past two decades have witnessed a rise in scholarship exploring the changing role and perceptions of museum practices across disciplines with a range of theoretical inquiry into museological contexts. In 2005, historian Randolph Starn created a comprehensive overview of museum studies scholarship and “divided his historiographic survey into four broad sections: the genealogy of museums; the shifting status of the museum object; the politics of museum culture from the ideal of universality to ‘museum wars’ over cultural difference; the past and future of ‘museum experience’” (Conn, 2010, p. 3).

The following pages present an overview of scholarship that has emerged from the field of museum studies and connects to my own intercultural communication research on Jewish museums. The key aspects of museum practices and processes that follow address the shifting functions of the museum pertaining to collections, exhibition politics, community, new or post-museums, and museum communication.

Function of the Museum

Alexander (1996) explains that until the 18th century with the establishment of the British Museum in 1753, the earliest collections of the “beautiful and curious...chiefly works

of art, historical rarities, or scientific specimens” primarily had been housed in private spaces (Alexander, 1996, p. 9). Once public, these collections became the objects of biological research catalogued in zoos, natural history museums, botanic gardens, and aquariums; art and architectural history and socio-cultural ethnological study in anthropological and archeological museums (Alexander, 1996).

In the United States, the museum concept took hold in Philadelphia in 1794 with Charles Willson Peale as the first American director of his own museum WHAT WAS THE NAME OF HIS MUSEUM? ; the Smithsonian Institution was formed in 1846, and the American Museum of Natural History and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts were founded in 1870 (Alexander, 1996). Conn (1998) argued that these and other late 19th-century museums used objects to tell stories trying “to reproduce the world” through the use of an “object-based epistemology” and were at the forefront of American intellectual life until research universities became the central place for the production of knowledge by the early part of the 20th century (Conn, 1998, p. 4).

Still, museums are educational institutions that generate knowledge about culture through the stories that are expressed in the organization of objects. With objects at the center of museum work, the act of collecting is a primary function of the museum institution. Clifford (1988) explains that “the critical history of collecting is concerned with what from the material world specific groups and individuals choose to preserve, value, and exchange” and illustrates the decision-making phenomenon that considers what is (or is not) meaningful (Clifford, 1988, p. 221).

As public institutions, the role of collecting the past also meant that museums would become the keepers of material culture for present-day audiences. The shift from private

collections to public museums brought much change as it emphasized the institutions' educational function, introduced the challenge of security regarding the handling or theft of objects, and, importantly, "once the museum admitted the public, its exhibition function became predominant" (Alexander, 1996, p. 10).

The following section will outline the emergence of an interpretive turn in museum studies scholarship and highlights the shift in focus from the object to the communities and cultures represented through the display of those objects in the museum.

An Interpretive Turn

In many ways museological scholarship that emerged over the past twenty years increasingly has to do with museum exhibition practices that center around the function of museums as keepers of culture. This interpretive turn challenged museums in the task of interpretation and presentation of culture by asking what it would mean to tell a more "authentic" story and questioning what perspective or whose voice informs exhibition politics (Karp & Lavine, 1991).

The role of museums is not just as places of art and culture but also as social-cultural institutions. Weil (2003) has noted that the measurement of the museum has shifted from a focus on internal possessions such as collections to also take account of "an external consideration to the benefits it provides to the individuals and communities it seeks to serve" (Weil, 2003, p. 42). The awareness of this internal/external dialectic can be seen as an extension of exhibition politics as well as part of a larger paradigm shift currently taking place as scholars and museum leaders think in new ways.

The basic premise of exhibition politics is the notion that exhibitions draw on the cultural assumptions of curators and designers (Karp & Lavine, 1991). This insight (perhaps

more commonly understood today than in the past) marks a shift in understanding of and communication about museum practices that presuppose the museum as authority. Karp and Lavine (1991), in one of the first studies about the nature of exhibitions as “contested terrain,” discuss exhibition strategies that exoticize “the other” and highlight potentially faulty dichotomies in regard to the positioning of we/they, insider/outsider, and the subjects/objects of museum display (Karp & Lavine, 1991, p. 1).

Representation is the major issue involved in exhibition politics. Who decides what is included and how objects are displayed raises central issues for scholars of museums and for museum professionals who manage the collection and interpretation of those objects for display. Following the publication of their influential text on the politics of exhibitions, Karp, Kreamer, and Lavine (1992) expand their work to the topic of public culture and the role of community involvement in the museum.

In the following, both the Chinatown History Museum and CARA (Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation) exhibition illustrate the way two museums sought to achieve more authentic cultural representations beyond the framework of “subculture” and loosened control of their authoritative voice over the originators of their collections through community involvement (Gaspar de Alba, 1998). In 1990, the Chinatown History Museum in New York City began discussion of what would develop into a “dialogic museum” as a way to bring together museum professionals and cultural activists to envision new ways of representing and meeting the needs of the communities they serve (Kuo Wei Tchen, 1992, p. 286). As notions of cultural authority shifted to include multiple community voices, the dialogic museum planning process brought to the forefront understandings that “the identity of a Chinese resident of New York has been formed by many layers of influences—the self is

intricately tied to ‘others,’ and that to tell the story of the history of Chinese Americans also meant to address the history of New York, and the development of American identity” (Kuo Wei Tchen, 1992, p. 294).

Interest in broader presentations of culture facilitated the process of dialogue and exchange in museum design, and logically this would also call for the inclusion of new voices to tell stories in new ways from those that had not been previously represented. In a study of the CARA (Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation) project at the Wight Art Gallery at the University of California, Los Angeles, an advisory group worked to achieve inclusiveness through a “shifting and blurring in the perception of who ‘we’ and ‘they’ are” by mixing objective third-person with first-person language in their mission statements and, in doing so, “subtly emphasizes the shift between the observer and the observed” (Gonzalez and & Tonelli, 1992, p. 263). Throughout the development of a national exhibition (and accompanying publications and programs) one of the primary goals of CARA was “a reevaluation of the process for organizing museum presentations of artworks of living cultures (especially those cultures not represented in museums by a critical mass of professional personnel) so that the organizational process reflects the spirit and values of the culture itself” (Gonzalez & Tonelli, 1992, p. 265).

For museum scholars, the term *source communities* “refers both to these groups in the past when artifacts were collected, as well as to their descendents today” (Peers & Brown, 2003, p.2). The recognition of (and collaboration with) source communities repositions the museum from the primary authoritative voice towards stewards of the collection while also highlighting an issue significant to my own study, that is the function of narrative in telling museum stories.

A new museology brings a shifting perspective to this discussion of the relationship between objects and storytelling and informs my research of Jewish museums and the process of communicating narratives inside (and outside) the museum. New museological frameworks include a rethinking of the meanings that objects maintain in exhibitions.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2000) notes:

in addition to exhibiting collections, which has historically been their role, museums create exhibitions for which there are few artifacts. Exhibitions driven by a concept or story, a legacy of expos, refuse to limit themselves to what is in a collection. They may, as a matter of principle refuse to form collections or exhibit real things or...they may use things as props to support a story. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2000)

If the collection and display of objects from a permanent collection no longer is considered a primary function of the museum, both the form and content of museum storytelling has dramatically changed. An aspect of my study of museum narratives will explore the ways, if any, this phenomenon has implications for Jewish museums.

Not surprisingly, along with new museological practices, new theories have developed to better understand changes taking place in the museum world. Hooper-Greenhill (2000) widely is seen as the founder in the development of the “post-museum,” or new museum theory. Hooper-Greenhill explains that “the development of the post-museum will represent a feminisation of the museum. Rather than upholding the values of objectivity, rationality, order and distance, the post-museum will negotiate responsiveness, encourage mutually nurturing partnerships, and celebrate diversity” (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, p. 153). The new museology is a paradigm shift away from the museum as objective authoritative voice to an institution where museum staff work to facilitate creative inquiry, foster inclusive

strategies to increase communication and interaction with visitors and source communities, share power with other institutions, and participate in local community networks. Marstine (2006) develops the theory to claim

the post-museum does not shy away from difficult issues but exposes conflict and contradiction. It asserts that the institution must show ambiguity and acknowledge multiple, ever shifting identities. Most importantly, the post-museum is a site from which to redress social inequalities. (Marstine, 2006, p. 19)

Evident within the framework of the post-museum is a more personal and by extension a more political function of the museum. These ideas will be explored in my study of Jewish museum narratives to see whether and how these phenomena are communicated in both new and traditional Jewish museums.

Museum Communication

Over the last decade or two museum scholars have come to study the dynamics of communication as they relate to museum processes and practices. Hooper-Greenhill, the creator of post-museum theory, is at the center of the body of work about museum communication. Hooper-Greenhill (1994) explores communication with museum visitors among various topics such as language and museum texts. She explains:

although museums and galleries are fundamentally concerned with objects, these objects are always contextualised by words...spoken language creates a worldview not only through what is said and how it is said, but also by what is *not* said. The gaps and omissions in speech reveal values, opinions, assumptions, and attitudes. The same is true of course for written language. (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994, p.115)

Studies concerned with the perception of museum visitors represent another shift in museums from the collecting and keeping of objects to a concern for what people think about those objects. In other words, there has been a shift from a focus on the objects themselves to the context and contradictions around “readings” of those objects by various audiences.

Understanding the interconnectivity between visitors, objects, and texts is useful for the study of Jewish museum narrative where the communication of intended and unintended meanings will be explored across multiple storied forms and contexts. Hooper-Greenhill (1995) suggests that museums are interpersonal and face-to-face communicators as well as mass communicators, explaining “many exhibitions share the major characteristic of most forms of mass communication in that they involve a one-way process, a single message source with a large group of receivers, and the messages themselves are in the public domain” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1995, p. 6).

Finally, museum communication occurs as a part of larger set of social meanings, as Hooper-Greenhill (2000) notes. As a symbol of the modern period, the museum has been a participant in “the construction of master narrative, grand narratives, universal stories that were intended to stand as valid outside the context of the site from which they were spoken” as ways to make sense of a complicated world (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, p. 24). My study will look at the ways museums craft stories in order to make meaning about Jewish life with particular interest in the ways dominant narratives are expressed and their potential to influence and shape perceptions.

As this overview of museum studies scholarship suggests, there is much to explore about the Jewish museum in terms of communication and storytelling. My study has the potential to reveal meanings and perceptions that have as much to do with Jewish people as

with the places in which the museums are located and the intersections of space and place as expressed through narrative. The following exploration of scholarship about the phenomena of space and place will further help to inform such a study.

Cultural Geography: Museum Space and Place

Concepts of space and place resonate with notions of human interaction and with communication. Museum spaces are designed to generate meaning and, as such, architects and planners seek to convey an experience for the visitor to move through the building and exhibitions. The following exploration of literature seeks to identify what is communicated by space and place and how these concepts can contribute to understandings of the way Jewish museum spaces convey meaning about Jewish culture.

Place and space are multifaceted and interrelated, and here I set forth several conceptions in order to broaden understandings of the relationship between these and Jewish museum communication. While a place can be understood as a tangible location it can also be defined as a feeling. For example, Lippard's (1997) definition of place is the "locus of desire"; in her view, the concept is one that is "lived, visited, or imagined" (Lippard, 1997, p. 4). In this way, a place, a city, a building, or a museum can communicate and elicit strong reactions when one feels a connection to or distancing from it. Similarly, place has been described as "something that we ourselves create in the course of time. It is the result of habit or custom" (Jackson, 1994, p. 151). Tuan (1977) argues that one cannot consider the conception of space without also discussing notions of place because they "require each other for definition" (Tuan, 1977, p. 6). Tuan further explains, "if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause," and it is in these pauses that the transformation of a location into a place is created (Tuan, 1977, p. 6).

Michel de Certeau (1984) has written that “space is a practiced place” and offers an understanding of space as socially constructed whereas place is situated as more of a geographical orientation (de Certeau, p. 117). In regard to my study of Jewish museum narratives, Toon (2005) offers a unique connection from de Certeau’s ideas to the visitor who “transforms” museum place by their use and their movement through it made more meaningful when “connections to their own identities” are possible to be made (Toon, 2005, p. 35). For my study, these concepts of space and place have the potential to bring the institution’s goals together with visitors so that senses of community and identity might interact through museum narratives.

Beyond their collections and exhibitions, museums are located in specific communities, and in this way, museums can be reflectors of place in terms of regional narrative expressions. Goffman (1959) defines region as “any place that is bounded to some degree by barriers to perception,” and understandings of the meanings maintained by the museum’s city and regional location offer useful aspects to explore cultural space and place (Goffman, 1959, p. 106). My study looks at the ways in which space and place shape museum narratives and, for example, how the museum site and location offer a rhetorical understanding about Jewish people amid other communities in that place.

More recently, scholarship emerging from the field of Jewish studies helps inform the study of Jewish museums from the point of view of literature about Jewish topography. Among the questions addressed by Jewish topographic studies are, “how do Jewish spaces emerge? Who is involved in the process of their emergence? How are Jewish spaces contested, performed, and used? And which features render a Jewish space at all?” (Brauch, Lipphardt, & Nocke, 2008, p. 2) These questions inform my study of Jewish museums as

“lived Jewish spaces” where multiple stories of Jewish history and ethnicity are organized and communicated to the public as a part of the “cultural narrative of the Jewish experience” (Brauch, Lipphardt, & Nocke, 2008, p. 2).

Emerging from a decidedly communication perspective, my study explores the ways concepts of space and place intersect with museum narratives to express understandings of the Jewish experiences. The following pages look to the ways communication scholars have addressed questions that pertain to the museum.

The Field of Communication and the Study of Museums

The relationship between museums, meaning, and culture has not gone unnoticed in the social sciences and in the communication discipline. Scholarship in the field has been most prevalent in regard to cultural memory as well as memorials and monuments. The growing body of literature specific to cultural heritage museums and narrative provides analyses pertinent to this study of museum communication and Jewish culture. The following provides an overview of museum-related literature in the field of communication and includes a discussion of public memory and interconnected issues of rhetoric, authenticity, and representation that play out in narrative studies of museums.

The study of site-specific public memory in communication has been a relatively recent addition to the scholarship on rhetoric and visual communication. One of the earliest, Foss (1986) studied the Vietnam Veteran’s memorial as a site that generates ambiguity of meaning, thus appealing to visitors across the spectrum of support for and opposition to the Vietnam War. The initial interest in specific public sites was followed by Tamar Katriel’s work on museums generally (1994, 1997), which systematically defined museums as productive for communication study. In her work, she clearly laid out the parameters, critical

concepts, and agendas for the rhetorical analysis of museums. One of Katriel's primary contributions was to raise issues about how "the past" is conceptualized and historicized and "re-presented" for the future in rhetorical terms. Specifically, she distinguishes between history and memory, arguing they comprise a "dialectically related orientation to the past rather than independently defined, antithetical ones" (p. 16). She suggests that narratives about the artifacts of the past serve as a "powerful memory-building strategy" (1994, p. 16), creating memories that may no longer serve the present. Katriel followed up with a 1997 study focused specifically on the ways museums are structured to guide the viewers' experiences of the museum. She discussed how "frame narratives" function to bridge the objects themselves with interpretations of those objects. Visitors, in other words, are asked to assess the objects themselves as well as the "stylized display strategies" (1997, p. 456) such as tools of classification and mimetic reconstruction that bring those objects to life. Ultimately, then, the museum offers a "cultural agenda" (p. 456) or particular reading balanced between factual and experiential knowledge that creates a particular presence for visitors to the site.

More recently, Blair (1999) theorized symbolism and the "materiality" of rhetoric in regard to U.S. memorial sites, arguing "no text *is* a text, nor does it have meaning, influence, political stance, or legibility, in the absence of material form" (Blair, 1999, p. 18). Zagacki and Gallagher (2009) apply Blair's notion of the materiality to a sculpture park at a North Carolina museum to understand how the text acts on persons and with other artifacts within the physical landscape. Blair and Michel (2000) conducted a rhetorical reading of Maya Lin's Civil Rights Memorial in Alabama that studied the memorial's "representation and enactments of racial dynamics" (Blair & Michel, 2000, p. 31). Blair (2001) studied five U.S.

public sites including the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, positioning herself as a rhetorical critic writing in a narrative form of the “personal critical encounters” she refers to as “parables” (Blair, 2001, p. 272). Blair and Michel (2004) also conducted an analysis of Mount Rushmore, revealing the contradictions around a national *ethos* present in the making of Mount Rushmore as well as in its uses and reuses or appropriations after its construction. Blair and Michel (2007) studied the public and private rhetoric of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, the Oklahoma City National Memorial, and September 11, 2001 projects. These studies offer ways that communication is negotiated in the interplay between public display and personal story. Visitors to these sites confront contested artifacts from multiple identity standpoints and experiences with which to read the text.

More often than not, the cultural reading that emerges from rhetorical analyses of museums and other public memory sites entails or creates contradictory narratives or themes. In other words, the tension between authenticity and re-presentation, between fact and ideology, between memory and the present, from a rhetorical perspective, constructs a basic tension that confronts museum directors, curators, and visitors: what is the truth here? Gross uses the notion of presence from Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) to show the contrasting ideological positions in an exhibit commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Nazi takeover of Austria. Like Katriel, Gross suggests the use of a rhetorical framing can productively get at the many, often contradictory layers functioning in museums and other sites of public memory.

The contradictions involved in the framing of museums also emerge in Scott’s analysis of the Mormon museum in Temple Square in Salt Lake City, where interactive exhibits blur the line between “what is authentic and what is contrived” (2007, p. 107).

Leinhardt and Knutson (2004) frame the problem as “the indefinable power of authentic artifacts to resonate with us” at the same they “present narratives, explanations, hypotheses—interpretations—about what we know about our world” (2004, p. 45).

As is apparent in both the fields of museum studies and communication, the contradictions between authenticity and interpretation have become especially problematic when contested issues, such as culture and race, are part of the museum’s focus. Dickinson (2005) studied the Buffalo Bill Museum in Cody, Wyoming, for retellings of the Buffalo Bill myth to create a particular version of the West—one that privileges certain imagines of masculinity and Whiteness over Native American perspectives. The Tamastlikt Cultural Institute, an Indian-owned interpretation site, tells the story of the Native American experience with the Oregon Trail.

The Civil Rights Museum, a memorial to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., also has been analyzed rhetorically (Armada, 1998), revealing issues about what should be memorialized but also who gets to do the memorializing. In this case, Jacqueline Smith, a woman who formerly lived in the Lorraine Hotel and gave informal tours of the rooms where King was shot, was evicted when the motel became a formal museum. She protests daily at a site visible from the formal one, offering up contradictions of class in addition to race. Armada’s analysis asks that we become “active co-creators of public memory” (Armada, 1998, p. 242) in order to negotiate the presence of Jacqueline Smith along with the memory of Dr. King at the Memphis site.

Other communication studies seek to manage the contradictions of the museum experience by incorporating active participation on the part of the viewers to make the history their own, in their own way for the present day. For example, Dicks (2000) argues

for a “vernacular aesthetic” that consciously constructs “the people” through its exhibits, encouraging its visitors in turn to position their lives in relation to the past in a particular way. The trend toward interactive engagement and embodiment of the museum experience represents, then, the latest iteration of the issues of contradiction that are becoming more fully acknowledged in studies of public memorializing. With strategies of enactment, visitors are asked to derive their own meanings and to come to terms in their own way with the histories being offered.

Tota summarizes this debate in her 2004 examination of what she labels “cultural translation” (Tota, 2004, p. 201). She asks whether there might be some museum displays that could be considered more valid and reliable than others as well as asking about the strategies adopted by art museums to sustain “the fiction that the set of objects displayed somehow constitutes a coherent representational universe” (Tota, 2004, p. 201).

This exploration into communication-specific research related to the study of museums grounds my own approach to questions about the presentation and organization of Jewish museum narratives in my field of study. In the following, I turn to research conducted specifically about Jewish museums that has emerged from multiple disciplines.

Communication Scholarship on the Jewish Museum

Beyond the studies previously mentioned by Katriel and to a certain extent Blair, there are relatively few scholars in the field of communication who have endeavored to study Jewish museums. Hasian’s (2004) rhetorical study of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum suggests that the elements of the museum’s design serve to “Americanize” the Holocaust. Prorise (2003) analyzed the Simon Wiesenthal Center’s Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles and offers an excellent example that conveys how the Museum of Tolerance takes

audiences through a process of breach, liminality, and reintegration to encourage personal responsibility around such unthinkable devastation as the Holocaust. Noy (2008) studied an Israeli war commemoration museum visitor book and explores both the written content and spatial location as a medium of communication that mediates social meaning, discovering that visitor comments connect to and help sustain national chains of discourse about Jewish experiences. The gap in communication literature that this study intends to fill centers around my exploration of multiple narrative layers across different types of Jewish museums to offer a broader understanding of the interplay between communication and culture.

Outside the field of communication several scholars are well known for their work on the subject of Jewish museums. From the fields of performance studies and Judaic Studies, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) discusses “the agency of display” through exhibition objects and techniques (1998, p. 1). Professor of English and Judaic Studies, Young (1993) presents detailed site-specific research on public memory and cultural history, mapping shifting meanings about the Holocaust through memorials in Europe, Israel, and the United States.

Jewish museums, the focus of my study, are highly contested sites for many reasons that include the many ways stories can be told in relation to Jewish history and culture due to multiple layers of narrative present in the museum environment. Greenberg (2002) locates Jewish museums as a type of ethnographic museum and sees these places “as paradigmatic sites for testing the limits of tolerance of, for, and within minority cultures” (2002, p. 125). Her work explores new or reopened Jewish museums in Europe such as The Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam (1987), the Jewish Museum in Frankfurt (1988), The Jewish Museum in Vienna (1995), the Museum of Jewish Art and History in Paris (1998) and the Jewish Museum in Berlin (2001), all of which, while not Holocaust museums, understand

their existence and narratives to be inextricably linked (Greenberg, 2002, p. 127). Greenberg (2002) speaks to the experience of otherness often represented in Jewish exhibitions that are of interest to my research for several reasons including the consideration of the recent proliferation of Jewish museums and the cities in which they are being built.

On a related note, in February, 2009, the curator of the Jewish museum in Vienna spoke in New York about his surprise that the Jewish museums he visited in the United States told stories primarily about European Jews and his disappointment that he learned little about the communities in the places where the museums were located (Hanak-Lettner, 2009). Among the curiosities that underlie my study are the ways in which understandings of place intersect with the stories told in museums. In my view, the narratives expressed in Jewish museums are crucial to understanding Jewish culture in that they reveal intended and unintended meaning about the institution and about Jewish people in those locations and, by implication, in places beyond. Therefore, museum storytelling is a meaningful communicative act.

Narrative and the Rhetoric of Museums

Museums are storytelling places in part because stories resonate with everyday life. As rhetorical modes of human understanding (Foss, 2009), narratives offer insight into events, characters, and plots in both form and function to make meaning and create social worlds. Fisher (1987) argues that humans are essentially storytellers who use narrative to make sense of our lives, in order to be understood, and we maintain a meaningful relationship to the stories we tell as a tool for understanding.

Bruner (2002) sees both culture and narrative as being about the dialectic between “expectation-supporting norms and possibility-evoking transgressions” and explains the use

of narrative as “an instrument not so much for solving problems but for finding them” (Bruner, 2002, p. 15).

Reissman (2008) provides a distinction between how individual and group narratives function to serve different uses. She explains: “individuals use the narrative form to remember, argue, justify, persuade, engage, and even mislead an audience. Groups use stories to mobilize others, and to foster a sense of belonging. Narratives do political work” (Reissman, 2008, p. 8). Skolnick (2005) explores the role of narrative specific to museum design and architecture. He argues that narrative-design strategies are developed to “integrate site, architecture, and exhibition” and contribute to the visitor’s ability achieve a rich museum experience (p. 118). My study of Jewish museums will explore various forms or layers in which stories are expressed such as through architecture, building design, exhibitions, catalogues, and by museum directors and curators to establish how museum narratives function to generate meaning about Jewish people.

Visual Culture and Rhetoric

Multiple dimensions of visual communication and culture take place in the museum in regard to the presentation of the institution, exhibition interpretation, and in terms of spatial tactics that move visitors through a story-driven experience. Museum spaces are designed to tell visual stories and “the visual is central to the cultural construction of social life in contemporary western societies” (Rose, 2001, p. 6). Attention to the relationship among museum texts and ways in which visual data is presented offers an awareness of how images and words accomplish different communicative ends. Rogoff (1998) explains:

visual culture opens up an entire world of intertextuality in which images, sounds, and spatial delineations are read on to and through one another, lending ever-accruing

layers of meanings and subject responses to each encounter we might have with film, TV, advertising, art works, buildings, or urban environments. (1998, p. 24)

Foss (2004) suggests that there has been a “pictorial turn” in the work of rhetoric (Foss, 2004, p. 303). The relationship between meaning, representation, and interpretation in the life of museum texts is important in the development of a vocabulary to understand the visual rhetoric of discursive images. As a viewer the museum visitor engages in an active relationship with various texts producing meanings that do not necessarily reside in the text but with the viewer (Barthes, 1977). In this study of Jewish museums, the reading of the museum as a layered cultural text is a negotiation well suited to a visual and rhetorically driven communication-based inquiry.

In summary, this literature review tells a story that begins with the shifting functions of the museum and the way object/subject positions increased the need for multiple voices in exhibition practices. The fundamental role of story as illustrated by an interpretive turn brought about a broadening of museological processes. In unique ways, concepts of space and place bring the museum mission and vision together with the museumgoer thereby highlighting the interplay between community and identity, a place where narrative resides. Scholars in the field of communication have covered important ground looking at various interpretive aspects of museums and memorials. Taken together these interdisciplinary areas have the potential to inform a study of museums and communication in order to make new contributions that fill an important cultural gap.

For many reasons Jewish museums are always contested spaces and, therefore, they are realms with an abundance of meaning, intended or not. My research emphasis on multiple layers of narratives that function at different types of Jewish museums and in several

locations will illuminate and raise new questions to offer perspective on stories of Jewish people and culture as communicated through the museum.

Chapter Three: Methodology

In this study, I seek to understand Jewish life through the strategies of self-presentation museums engage in order to represent Jewish culture and Jewish worldviews. My primary research question is to understand the way Jewish museum narratives function to generate and negotiate meaning about Jewish life and culture. I am interested especially in what is and what is not communicated about Jewish culture in order to interpret the ways Jewish museum narrative strategies, stories, and metaphors communicate symbolic worldviews by and about Jewish people. I am interested in understanding how Jewish museums, as repositories of the past, differ in their constructions and presentations of Jewish culture. This study is framed against a backdrop of museum studies, with shifting understandings of the functions of museums, as well as rhetorical studies, in which the symbolic presentation of the museum is viewed as a strategic choice.

The assumptions that ground this study stem primarily from an interpretive paradigm. My research philosophy is premised on the assumptions present in Bruner's (1988) argument that "worldmaking is the principle function of the mind" and can be applied to the museum as a public institution where many ideas about culture are organized and presented and ultimately made meaningful in different ways (Bruner, 1988, p. 575).

As a researcher, qualitative methods best fit my assumptions about research. Because qualitative research is "characteristically exploratory, fluid and flexible, data-driven and context-sensitive" it enables me to look comprehensively at all aspects of the museums as symbolic constructions (Mason, 2002, p. 24). Since qualitative research "is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter" it is well suited to the living and complex nature of culture-based research questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998,

p. 3). In addition, as Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, and Sechrest (2000) detail, qualitative methods present opportunities for the investigator to amass layers of data acting as a participant observer.

In this study of four Jewish museums, I will make use of rhetorical methods in particular to understand how these museums see and present themselves to their publics. Rhetorical methods provide tools to examine contexts that create discourses and allowed me to focus on the texts (Foss, 2009). In line with contemporary understandings of rhetoric as involving any kind of symbolic texts or artifacts, I see Jewish museums themselves as cultural products, or texts, to which communication frameworks can be applied. Looking at museums through a communication or rhetorical lens allows us to understand how complex symbolic processes and systems generate meanings and create worldviews that may or may not align with the intended meanings of the creators of the symbols. In other words, the messages and meanings about Judaism offered by these four museums may take on quite different forms in manifestation than what originally was intended. Judaism itself is not a fixed identity construct and presents multiple social, cultural, religious, political, and ethnic constructions at times simultaneously. It is my assumption that Jewish museums also juggle various positions in the presentation of tradition and culture and this complexity is aptly addressed by rhetorical methods which provide a way to know, experience, and explain the world (Foss, 2009).

Data Collection

In order to advance understanding of the worlds of Jewish culture this research was conducted at four Jewish museum sites located in Jerusalem, San Francisco, and New York that will serve as artifacts for this study. Two of these museums, in New York and

Jerusalem, are organized to focus on the Holocaust, and two in New York and San Francisco are Jewish art museums. As comparative artifacts, these museums can offer an understanding of patterns of beliefs that determine the ways cultural institutions participate in the presentation and interpretation of Jewish life both past and present.

Between June 2008 and December 2009, I collected multiple layers of qualitative data from visits to these museums that provided a rich mixture of sources. For each museum, I made use of observations obtained from spending many hours if not days in the museums, watching visitors, attending events, taking tours, and generally being in the museum space. In addition, I collected texts and artifacts that informed my investigation, including museum brochures, exhibition guides, catalogues, visitor guides, press releases, organizational histories, architectural designs, floor plans, and Internet pages from museum websites. Combined, these texts and artifacts allowed me insight into how various museum concepts were being framed for the public.

Interviews with directors, curators, and the like who have responsibility for the image presented of the museums were another important piece of my data set. In most cases, I conducted extensive e-mail correspondence with my interviewees after the interviews in order to clarify and obtain additional information about the museums. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

There is also a significant visual aspect to the observation and data collection work I conducted that includes my own photographic study of the museums and surrounding spaces to support a more descriptive and visual analysis. During site visits I created more than 1,200 photographs in order to document the museum architecture, landscape, interior spaces, and, when possible, exhibition spaces.

Finally, during visits to the sites, I was aware of my own positionality in relation to the sites. Observation and participation by the researcher at a site introduces new elements and changes dynamics. I am aware, then, that my presence was a component in the interactions that comprised the museum sites. Furthermore, I myself am Jewish, so my observation of and understanding of the sites was filtered through my own Jewish experiences. Because of my subjective positionality within this research, I have chosen to introduce each analysis section with a kind of story or parable (see Blair, 2001) that acknowledges my connection to the site. In other words, I have located myself in the story as an additional data layer because I was conscious of my role in observing people and exhibitions and as a visitor entering each museum with my own history and perspective.

I also participated in two meetings of the Council of American Jewish Museums, held in Denver, Colorado, in 2008 and in New York City in 2009. This gave me access to the most up-to-date thinking about museums, their designs and functions. This research project is further informed by my experiences carrying out a pilot study during the design and construction phases of a new New Mexico State History Museum in Santa Fe. I conducted interviews, sat in on planning meetings, and generally observed the design process to understand the decision making involved in the presentation of a mission when a new building is in process. Together, these myriad experiences, observations, written texts, and interviews provided me with a comprehensive sense of each museum's particular self-presentation and of museum practices in general. Below, I detail the particulars of data collection for each museum.

The Jewish Museum, New York City. I visited The Jewish Museum on 10 different occasions between 2008 and 2010. These visits occurred across seasons, so I could observe

the museum during the height of the summer tourist season and during slower winter months in order to experience various visitor settings. At the Jewish Museum, I interviewed Senior Curator Norman Keeblatt and Director of Communications, Anne Scher.

The Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York City. I visited the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York at the same time that I visited The Jewish Museum; thus, I also visited it on 10 occasions and at different times of the year. At the MJH, I interviewed Louis Levine, Senior Advisor of Collections and Exhibitions; I also e-mailed with Abby Spilka, Director of Communications at the Museum of Jewish Heritage.

The Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem. I traveled to Jerusalem soon after the HHM opened in 2005 and two additional times between 2005 and 2007. On a fourth visit in July 2008, I conducted interviews with Museum Director, Yehudit Inbar and with renowned museum consultant, Yitzchak Mais; I spoke with him at his home in Jerusalem. My research in Israel is further informed by 10 visits (prior to the opening of the museum in this study) to the Yad Vashem campus between 1999 and 2004 as a staff leader for North American university student groups.

The Contemporary Jewish Museum. I traveled to the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco twice in 2008 (soon after the CJM opened) and 2009, visiting the museum for four consecutive days on each visit. I interviewed Director and CEO of the museum, Connie Wolf, and e-mailed with Executive Assistant Kim Olsen.

Data Analysis

I began the process of data analysis by systematically reading and coding all collected data, looking for clusters of concepts that stood out because of frequency or intensity. Through this clustering process, it became clear that there were several salient umbrella

categories through which the museums could be seen and understood. I came to understand these as stories told by the various facets of the museum experience. There were the stories told by museum staff and the organizational materials produced by the staff; these captured the sense of the museum's mission or self-presentation from the vantage point of the museum itself. The museum building offered a second set of stories; these included stories told in the architectural design elements of the museum's interior and exterior as well as the exhibits themselves. The categories in which I organized data included: entrance and exit experiences that function to communicate the beginning and ending points of each museum's story; the museum's self-presentation, leadership and institutional mission; exhibition practices primarily concerned with the core or permanent collection; and the architecture, landscape, and place in order to consider the form that museum stories take as well as the significance of the museum building in the context of the surrounding landscape.

Once I clustered the data according to these categories I could see that, when combined, the categories created the basis for a metaphoric interpretation. From these sets of stories, in other words, dominant metaphors emerged for each of the four museums. Using the sorted data and the stories that emerged from them, I identified metaphors that functioned narratively to help characterize each museum's presentation of Jewish culture.

The decision to use metaphors provided a way to map the dominant Jewish museum narratives and determine in what ways Jewish museums organize culture to express a particular rhetorical vision. Lakoff (1992) explains "the generalizations governing poetic metaphorical expressions are not in language, but in thought: they are general mappings across conceptual domains" (Lakoff, 1992, p. 203). Metaphors, in other words, can offer important clues to worldviews. In the case of my study, the four metaphors that emerged

offer insights about the different Jewish cultural worldviews expressed in contemporary U.S. culture and in Israel. The metaphors of rootedness, embeddedness, enshrinement, and transcendence provide an interpretive framework that helps to identify and understand the function of museum stories and a way to understand how Jewish heritage, art, the Holocaust, and culture are presented by contemporary Jewish museums.

In the four chapters that follow, I describe and analyze the four different metaphors, drawing on the levels of narrative that make up the museum experience: organizational self-presentation, architecture, landscape, and exhibition practices. In Chapter 8, I summarize the overall study, discuss the implications of these metaphors as containers of Jewish experience, and discuss contributions to communication theory.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

The Jewish Museum

New York, New York

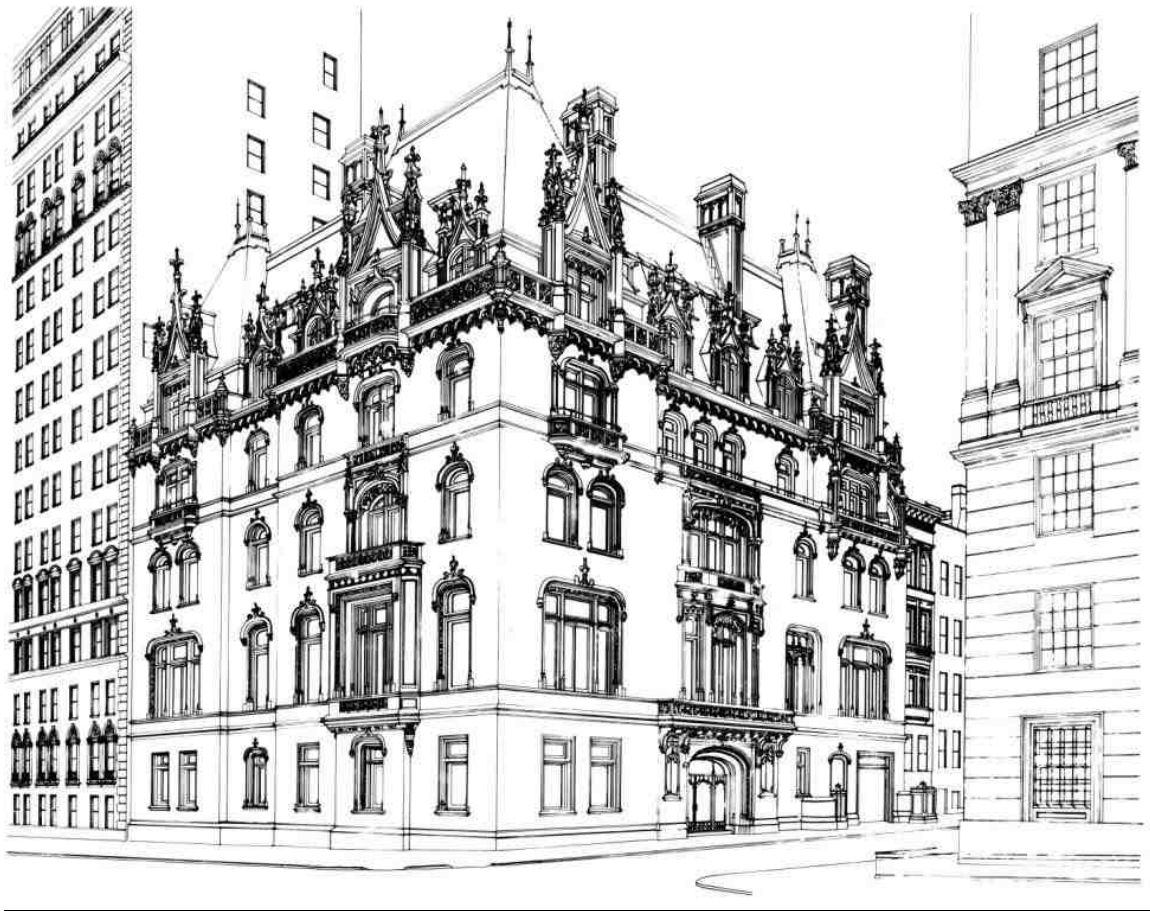
Rootedness

Moving from New York to New Mexico, a place with so few obviously Jewish faces and visible structures, was partially a catalyst that led me to research Jewish museums. I am not sure I would have conducted research on Jewish museums had I stayed rooted in the place where I was raised—within a family and a culture where the experience of everyday life is so Jewish it is easy to take the presence of Jewish institutions for granted. In some ways, it took being uprooted for me to negotiate the phenomena of what is apparent, assumed, spoken, or not when it comes to Jewish identity and culture. Who really needs to go to a Jewish museum in a place like Manhattan where Jewish culture is ubiquitous?

In this chapter, I will analyze what is communicated by The Jewish Museum in New York City. Interested in how Jewishness is presented in these four museums, The Jewish Museum is the oldest and most traditional of the museums I am studying. I will argue that the metaphor of *rootedness* captures the essence of the story or narrative this museum tells. As applied to The Jewish Museum, the metaphor of *rootedness* is defined as holding a position or voice of authority and well as having an established, long-standing history. In other words, the metaphor of *rootedness* suggests that this museum contains or holds what is most important about Jewish culture. The following analysis will illustrate the various ways that *rootedness* functions and is communicated in the museum's organization and self-understanding, architecture, landscape, sense of place, and exhibition practices.

Organization and Self-Presentation

Since 1947, The Jewish Museum (TJM) has occupied a historic 1908 mansion and former residence of the Warburg family on Manhattan's upper-east side on the corner of 5th Avenue and 92nd Street. Located three blocks north of the Guggenheim Museum and near other significant cultural institutions along Museum Mile, the TJM is housed in a somewhat quieter private residential neighborhood adjacent to Central Park.



Courtesy: The Jewish Museum

Figure 1. The Jewish Museum building line drawing.

The founding of the TJM is the first aspect of the museum that communicates a narrative of rootedness and dates back to 1904 when a donation of twenty-six ceremonial objects was made to the Manhattan-based Jewish Theological Seminary; this donation initiated the establishment of what would be the first Jewish museum in the United States and remains among only a relatively small number worldwide.

In 1939, conscious of the imminent Nazi threat, the community of Danzig (Gdansk), Poland sent additional ceremonial objects important to families and to the community to New York City for safekeeping. After the Holocaust, 350 of these objects became part of TJM collection. In 1952, 120 objects that had been looted by the Nazis and recovered by U.S. military were given to the museum by the organization Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, established in 1947 to function as a trustee for Jewish cultural property whose owners or heirs could not be located after the war. In preserving memory and history through these various collections of objects, the museum in New York became rooted to Jewish communities in Europe—a rootedness that further connects immigrants and survivors to the museum wherever they call home—but especially poignant for those living nearby with their own relationships to lost worlds (TJM, “Culture and Continuity: The Jewish Journey,” April, 3, 2003). This story of the Holocaust objects housed in the TJM permanent collection play a central historical role in reinforcing this museum’s sense of rootedness to history and the global Jewish community. While the presence of the Holocaust is not at the center of the core exhibition, the theme is an ever-present backdrop represented in artifacts now rooted in their home at the museum.

The objects that comprise the heart of TJM were kept by the seminary until 1944, when Frieda Warburg donated her family’s mansion for use as the museum. Frieda was the

daughter of Jacob Schiff a German-born New York banker and philanthropist, who helped finance, among other efforts, the Japanese military actions against Tsarist Russia.

Frieda was a member of the Board of Directors of the seminary to which the 26 objects were donated; her husband Felix was a prominent banker and chairman of the Joint distribution Committee that sent aid to Europe's decimated Jewish communities after the war. Many of these communities were so decimated that only their objects remained to tell their stories. Both Frieda and Felix Warburg, then, saw firsthand the need to preserve the few objects that remained from the extermination of the Jews in Europe.

The Warburg's connection with the Jewish community in New York coupled with their direct involvement with the preservation of Jewish artifacts and their subsequent donation of their family's mansion offer a powerful testament to the rootedness of every aspect of the museum in the city and its Jewish heritage—from the artifacts from Europe brought to the city for preservation to the mission of the museum itself and ultimately the donation of the mansion from among the Jewish elite of the city. The established nature of the Warburg family in all aspects of the Jewish community in the U.S. and abroad helped foster the sense of rootedness communicated by TJM.

Since its founding, TJM has continued to operate under the auspices of the seminary, and both the formal and long-standing relationship with the seminary serves to communicate a sense of rootedness. At the core of this rootedness, of course, is that the sacred artifacts sent to the U.S. by European Jews for safe-keeping were sent to the seminary for preservation. This preservationist mission is critical, then, to the connection between the seminary and TJM. Furthermore, the museum's origins in the seminary and thus the sanctioning of the museum by religious authority communicates the metaphor of rootedness

at yet another level; the seminary is the city's training ground for religious leaders and thus preserves and yet extends the Jewish tradition as it trains future Jewish religious leaders in the practices of the faith. It is not only the objects at the center of the museum's founding and its connection to the seminary where the objects originally were given that suggest the metaphor of rootedness for TJM. Also important is its eventual home in the Warburg mansion.

The Warburg mansion also functions to root the museum to the city and New York's German-Jewish educated, wealthy, and philanthropic community. Frieda Warburg donated her family's mansion for use as the new Jewish Museum in 1944, and it was inaugurated in 1947. Frieda was the daughter of Jacob Schiff and, among other accomplishments, was a service as a member of the board of directors of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America until her death. Frieda's husband Felix was a prominent banker who, as chairman of the Joint Distribution Committee, sent aid to Europe's decimated Jewish communities after the war. Some, like the Polish community, were so decimated that only their objects remain to tell their story in what would become The Jewish Museum. The established nature of the Warburg family help foster the sense of rootedness communicated by TJM, and the Warburg mansion provides a permanent home for the rescued objects that can be witnessed by contemporary visitors.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 2. The Jewish Museum Dedication plaque.

The organizational language communicated by TJM functions to present the museum as rooted through notions of exclusive authority and historical scope is apparent in the museum's mission. The mission statement for TJM states:

The Jewish Museum is dedicated to the enjoyment, understanding, and preservation of the artistic and cultural heritage of the Jewish people through its unparalleled collections, distinguished exhibitions, and related education programs. Using art and artifacts that embody the diversity of the Jewish experience from ancient to present times, throughout the world, the Museum strives to be a source of inspiration and shared human values for people of all religious and cultural backgrounds while serving as a special touchstone of identity for Jewish people. As a vital cultural resource for New York residents and visitors of all ages, the Museum also reaches out to national and international communities as it interprets and preserves art and Jewish

culture for current and future generations. (Retrieved from <http://www.thejewishmuseum.org>)

The privileging of the notion of preservation in this mission statement communicates the ways in which the objects that were foundational to the museum's origins are at the heart of the museum's mission. Although education, inspiration, and interpretation are values that emerge from this starting point, they all rest on the basic fact of preservation of Jewish heritage through the preservation of Jewish cultural artifacts. Finally, from the perspective of the organization an additional sense of rootedness is reinforced over time by Museum Director Joan Rosenbaum who has been on staff since 1981 and who, for nearly thirty years, has worked to position the TJM as a preeminent institution.

From the founding and mission of The Jewish Museum the metaphor of rootedness moves to the following exploration of the architectural design of the museum building and its position in the urban landscape. In the next section I will discuss how rootedness is communicated by the building's formal design features, physical location, and sense of place created by the museum in the context of the neighborhood and city.

Architecture, Landscape, and Place

Architecturally different from other prominent buildings along the territory of museum mile, such as the neo-classical Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Guggenheim's ultra-modern design, TJM is the only building site discussed in this study that was not intentionally designed as a museum. The light-colored stone French Gothic building presents a grand, smooth, austere facade with subtle signs or indicators of its role as a public institution. TJM occupies seven floors, with four floors for exhibits, two for administration and staff, and a lower-level kosher café and street-level gift shop and entrance. The

architecture of TJM communicates rootedness primarily as an anchor for the block situated on the corner and presenting two facades—one that faces 5th Avenue and Central Park and the other faces the more residential 92nd Street. While the façade itself is not particularly imposing, the mere fact that it is at a corner communicates a stronger presence than if it were wedged between other buildings.

The museum also is rooted in Manhattan's history, located as it is inside the Carnegie Hill Historic District, an area whose development took place between the late 1870s and early 1930s. Designated in 1974 and named for Andrew Carnegie, the district includes approximately 400 buildings situated from 86th and 98th Streets and between 5th and Lexington Avenues on the city's east side (retrieved from <http://www.friends-ues.org/historic-districts-and-landmarks/carnegie-hill>). Both its placement on the block where it resides and the neighborhood in which it is located communicate a strong, ongoing historical presence in line with its roots.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 3. The Jewish Museum building from 5th Avenue/Museum Mile.

Over time and in scope, the TJM communicates institutional rootedness to the city because it was the first Jewish museum in the city, and it continually affirms its mission of the preservation and presentation of Jewish history and culture. So rooted as a cultural organization, TJM has been referred to as the “granddaddy” of all Jewish museums by a staff member at The Museum of Jewish Heritage; it has served as a training ground for Jewish professionals now working at prominent museums across the country. Furthermore, the name of the museum itself—The Jewish Museum—signals its exclusive status in the city in two ways. First, it is not qualified by its location in New York—it is not The Jewish Museum of

New York, for example. The word “the” also suggests its singular presence—it is not “A” Jewish Museum but “The” Jewish Museum.

Anne Scher, Director of Communications discusses how the museum continually seeks to assert its pre-eminence and original status in relation to the other museums related to Jewish culture that have been developed since its founding:

When I came here in 1994 it was *The Jewish Museum*. And there wasn't anything significant in terms of Jewish cultural institutions—any other significant competition. Now the whole competitive environment has shifted dramatically, and there are other museums who may have been very small before or didn't even exist twenty-five years ago. It creates confusion among the public if a person hasn't been to The Jewish Museum or the Museum of Jewish Heritage downtown—It is hard for them to differentiate from the outside what the differences are and people get confused sometimes. So that makes it more important for us to find ways and messages to put out there that differentiate ourselves from the other institutions, the Museum of Jewish Heritage, the Center for Jewish History, Yeshiva University Museum, etc. For us we define ourselves by being a museum of Jewish art and culture and feel that we are the preeminent institution exploring the four-thousand years of Jewish culture. (A. Scher, personal communication, February 4, 2009)

Scher illustrates how TJM reinforces a sense of its rootedness throughout Manhattan with a reputation that stands alone in relation to other Jewish museums.

Like all buildings, the Jewish Museums participates in dialogue with the landscape around it, and the museum's sense of rootedness to the city further is communicated by the Warburg family mansion's location. Situated on Museum Mile, TJM is in close proximity to

a number of internationally recognized museums. Institutions along Museum Mile include the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum (Smithsonian Institution), the El Museo Del Barrio, the Museum of the City of New York, the Neue Galerie New York, and the Goethe-Institut/German Cultural Center. In the context of this landscape, Jewish art and history are positioned on a cultural axis that functions to legitimize TJM as an art institution. Here the narrative of rootedness communicated by TJM functions as a public connection between Jews and other cultures, ethnicities, and broader art communities.

The Jewish Museum also communicates rootedness to the city by engaging in activities beyond its walls, activities that seek to present it as an essential element in the city of New York. Since 1992, for example, the museum has presented the annual New York Jewish Film Festival with the Film Society of Lincoln Center at theaters across Manhattan. The film festival illustrates a significant way in which The Jewish Museum deliberately cultivates its connections to the larger environment of New York in a network that mimics a deep root system.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 4. The Jewish Museum sign on 5th Avenue.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 5. Carnegie Hill Historic District sign on 92nd Street.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 6. Corner of Museum Mile and 92nd Street sign.

The following moves the metaphor of rootedness from the outside of the museum and its placement in the city of New York to the experience of the museum itself. In demonstrating how the interior of the museum also communicates a sense of rootedness, I will take readers through the museum experience as if they were visitors, encountering firsthand the various elements of the museum space.

Entrance Experience

Approaching the entrance to the building a visitor will notice the ornate entrance doors made of cast-iron and glass. Perhaps not initially obvious is the fact that the front doors comprise the building's only reflective surface with which the public is able to see inside and out. The ground floor windows to the left of the main entrance would see into the museum shop if not covered with opaque screens depicting images of objects from the collection as well as showcasing displays of items inside the shop. The glass windows on

upper floor windows are connected to private administrative offices, and those associated with the exhibition floors are covered to block natural light from coming into the galleries. That the upper windows are covered contributes to a cave-like environment—the museum is encased in rock and kept from the light, an image that literally resonates with roots and where and how they grow.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 7. The Jewish Museum entrance from street.

It is significant that the main entrance doors are the only transparent surface which the public experience. The reflective surface of the entrance doors communicate a connectedness to the city in that the visitor can see into the museum lobby from the street.

So the museum is not totally apart from the landscape. Yet the reflective surfaces also reveal that by contrast the visitor cannot see through to any other part of the building's surface whether inside or outside. That some light clearly gets in hints at possibilities, just as a root growing and sending plants toward the light does. Roots are solidly planted but also reaching and spreading out often in narrow or restrictive spaces and reaching for the light. These hint at the Jewish experience of diaspora, of the Jewish community having to constantly negotiate restrictive elements that kept them searching to both preserve their culture of the past and to continue into the future, into the light.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 8. Inside entrance of The Jewish Museum.

Once inside the entrance doors visitors will find themselves immediately confronted with security apparatus and personnel. To some degree or another, all museums confront issues related to security primarily in regard to the safeguarding of the building and its valuable contents. In the case of Jewish museums, security takes on a different tone, and it is common for bags and visitors to be screened through metal detectors to ensure that anyone coming into the building does not pose a threat to the building or its occupants. Some visitors may be put off by the act of the security guard looking through personal items or the experience of being physically screened. Jewish visitors might be more accustomed to this experience than others, and some may feel a sense of personal protection rather than invasion. For me as a visitor, the security-screening practices serve as reminders of how strongly rooted acts of hate against Jews have been and continue to be.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 9. The Jewish Museum lobby information desk.

After moving through the requisite security checks, the visitor is inside the lobby and can go left into the museum shop without needing an admission ticket but will need to stop at the information desk before proceeding into the exhibition spaces. The lobby presents a somewhat cold environment with smooth monochrome surfaces and marble floors. The long, high-walled information desk presents a kind of visual barrier for the visitor entering the museum, which, after the security experience, extends rather than negates that experience. Even if the staff on duty that day happen to be friendly greeters, the barrier imposed by the desk serves as yet another reminder of something strong, solid, set apart, and grounded. One must make an effort to get into this space, to get to where the origins or roots of something

can be experienced. These features contribute to the way the entrance experience functions to communicate the metaphor of rootedness.

Exhibition Practices

Having negotiated the entrance experience, the visitor then encounters the museum's permanent exhibition. Here again, we can see the metaphor of rootedness in operation. In presenting a global story of Jewish culture, TJM constructs itself as a container for all of Jewish history. At the heart of this container is the museum as a traditional (and literal) keeper of culture whose permanent collection includes 27,000 items that present expressions of Jewish history from ancient ceremonial objects to contemporary art. Just as the museum originated with 26 items sent from Europe for preservation during World War II, that the museum continues to collect and preserve additional such items offers testament to this ongoing mission.

In addition to its preservation of actual objects, the museum preserves Jewish history with a chronology that spans two floors of the museum and presents a linear history from the beginning of time to the present day. Through audio and video installations, writings, paintings, sculpture, and artifacts, the chronology depicts stories from ancient times to the modern day. The permanent collection also is home to various depictions of Jewish history in the form of video installations, paintings, sculpture, and artifacts divided into four sections. "Forging an Identity" tells the story of ancient times from 1200 BCE to 640 CE and the transition from Israelite to Jew, "Interpreting a Tradition" explores Jewish life in the diaspora from 640 CE -1800, "Confronting Modernity" begins with eighteenth-century Jewish encounters with modern life between 1800-1948, and "Realizing a Future" presents

contemporary expressions of Jewish identity. In a press release, the permanent exhibition is described as tracing

the dynamic interaction among three catalysts that have shaped the Jewish experience: Jews constant questioning and reinterpretation of their own traditions; the interaction of Jews and Judaism with other cultures; the impact of historical events that have transformed Jewish life. (TJM, “Culture and Continuity: The Jewish Journey,” April, 3, 2003).

The story of the permanent exhibition is communicated primarily through the display of objects, and while communities of origin are located by TJM throughout the exhibition, emphasis is placed more on Jewish personhood rather than the individual.

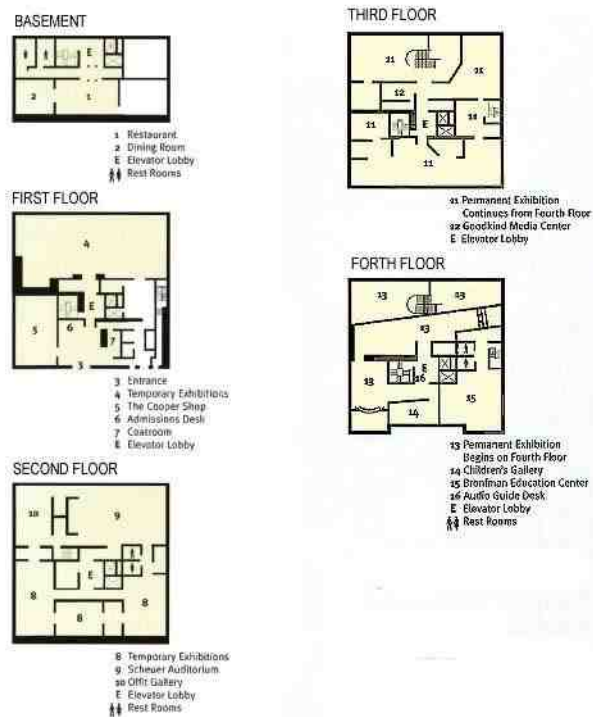
Senior Curator, Norman Kleeblatt explains the rationale for the museum’s exhibition practices,

What The Jewish Museum tries to do is ask certain contemporary questions about history, culture, and art, not necessarily in that order. And we basically use art as the medium of discourse. So, we’re answering a lot of questions, and I think the closest we come to narrative is what we call the core exhibition, Culture and Continuity, because there is a narrative it takes you through, and it is at once chronological and with an overlay of the thematic, there are the punctuations of the thematic. (N. Kleeblatt, personal communication, February 4, 2009)

The permanent exhibition chronology presents a linear history from “the beginning” to the contemporary with large scale, sweeping themes such as modernity and diaspora that seek to present the whole of Jewish history on two floors of gallery space. The exhibition brochure explains, “the preeminent U.S. institution exploring the intersection of 4,000 years

of art and Jewish culture. The museum is admired widely for its exhibitions and educational programs that inspire people of all backgrounds” (TJM, “Art, Culture, and Discovery,” n.d.). This first line from the brochure communicates the metaphor of rootedness not just across time and space but also in reinforcing the museum’s supreme status and relevancy. Despite its rootedness in preservation, then, the museum maintains its status, stature, and relevancy into the future, evidenced by its ongoing inspirational capacities. The exhibition brochure demonstrates the ways in which the museum seeks to extend its sense of rootedness in history into the future.

The two-floor permanent exhibition entitled “Culture and Continuity: The Jewish Journey,” occupies the third and fourth floors. The visitor to TJM is able to take stairs or the elevator from the lobby up to where the story begins on the third floor and moves clockwise around the entire floor and continues up to the fourth floor. While the circulation path is not prescribed for the visitor who can choose to begin on the fourth floor or move through the exhibition in any direction they decide, most visitors begins at the beginning and move in a clockwise direction through the exhibit. The clockwise flow of the exhibition communicates rootedness in ways that are consistent with the movement of history over time and the museum does not deliberately ask the visitor to do something that is inconsistent with the flow of space and time.



Courtesy: The Jewish Museum

Figure 10. The Jewish Museum building floor plan.

As part of the permanent collection, the “Confronting Modernity” section includes a significant component that highlights the founding of The National Jewish Archive of Broadcasting at TJM in 1981, which further roots the museum as exhibition authority in the collection of popular culture and television-and-radio works. Housed in the “New Directions” section of exhibition, the visitor will see five video monitors that display multiple (and continual) excerpts of images that include David Ben-Gurion’s declaration of the State of Israel in 1948; Abraham Joshua Heschel and Martin Luther King, Jr. in Alabama in 1965; performance clips of Gilda Radner and Lenny Bruce; a New York same-sex wedding ceremony in 1996; and an Iranian Bar Mitzvah in 2001.

The display of these and other “New Directions” images help to position the museum as a place rooted in the understanding of the diversity of Jewish culture and that communicates that Jewish identity is not a fixed construct. “New Directions” position the visitor as a witness to Jewish people as characters who played a part in historic events that impacted not just Jewish history but also important aspects of the larger culture. In other words, Jewish is rooted in the larger U.S. culture; it is not an isolated identity.

Finally, the core exhibition raises the central question of how Judaism has managed to flourish despite continual efforts exerted by oppressive forces throughout history, and it is through objects and text that the museum communicates that “survival as a people has depended upon both the continuity of Jewish ideas and values and the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances” (TJM, “Culture and Continuity: The Jewish Journey,” April, 3, 2003). The permanent exhibition communicates a profoundly deep and rooted sense of Jewish culture and history. Grounded in one of the most Jewish cities in the United States, the museum’s exhibition practices offer a comprehensive global history that while contextualized by the local efforts that established the institution—nevertheless are stories that remain untold in the exhibition narrative along with the stories of New York’s numerous Jewish communities.

After the exhibition experience, the visitor exits The Jewish Museum through the same doors as the entrance. The visitor again is presented with the glass doors through which New York can be seen. Entering and exiting through the same doors reinforces the sense that you enter into something solid, deep, and historical—that there’s only one way in and out of it.

Rootedness as a metaphor communicates a solid, entrenched, grounded entity, and that is precisely what The Jewish Museum is. It stands as the original Jewish museum in New York, rooted in the history of Europe, of the Holocaust, and of New York City. And like roots do, TJM spreads into the surrounding area and into the future as well, offering an image that is both grounded and solid and future looking.

In the next chapter, I will turn to the Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem, a museum captured in the metaphor of *embeddedness*. As I will show, it stands in stark contrast to The Jewish Museum and communicates a very different sense of itself as a museum.

Chapter Five: Data Analysis

The Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem

Jerusalem, Israel

Embeddedness

At the beginning of our discussion, Museum Director Yehudit Inbar suggested I study museums in the states or maybe the new museum in Warsaw. Among other reasons she said, “people should really do something about their local place. It is very hard to understand from there what we are doing here. And there you can do it much better than anyone else who comes from the outside.” I explained that I do not think I am able to tell the whole story about anything here or there, and I am interested in Jewish museum stories so for all the more reason I cannot consider doing so without looking in some way at Israel. No, I may not be able to completely understand, I am not an insider. But I am also not on the outside.

In this chapter, I will analyze what is communicated by the Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem, located in Jerusalem. Interested in how Jewishness is presented in these four museums, the Holocaust History Museum is a new museum on the Yad Vashem national memorial complex, and it is the only museum in this study located outside the United States. I will argue that the metaphor of embeddedness captures the essence of the story or narrative this museum tells. As applied to Holocaust History Museum, the metaphor of *embeddedness* is defined as set in, inserted, and implanted. In other words, the metaphor of embeddedness suggests that this museum brings together what is most important about Jewish culture. The following analysis will illustrate the various ways that embeddedness

functions and is communicated in the museum's organization and self-presentation, architecture, landscape, sense of place, and exhibition practices.

Organization and Self-Presentation

In many ways, and in part due to the history of the establishment of Yad Vashem itself, the nature of the story told at the Holocaust History Museum (HHM) is one of embeddedness. The Second World War ended in 1945, Israel declared statehood in 1948, and in 1953, Yad Vashem was established by an act of the Israeli *Knesset* [parliament]. As a national Holocaust memorial museum essentially “conceived in the throes of the state's birth and building Yad Vashem would be regarded from the outset as an integral part of Israel's civic infrastructure” (Young, 1993, p. 243). The proximity of these historic dates creates an inextricably link between the Holocaust and Israel, a place where the embeddedness of the *Shoah* [catastrophe] is manifest in particular ways.

HHM's Director Yehudit Inbar shared with me that several times a week, people from Europe, the United States, and elsewhere, want to meet with her to find out how to create a Holocaust museum in their towns. Inbar says they always disapprove when she tells them to “focus on one thing, one story. They want to know how to tell the whole story of the Holocaust as though they are looking for the formula” (Y. Inbar, personal communication, July 29, 2008). Yad Vashem, and by extension the new HHM, are positioned as the memorial authority on the subject of the Holocaust, and it is not surprising they are frequently sought out as an embedded expert in the planning process for emerging Holocaust museums.

The HHM opened in 2005 and “presents the story of the Shoah from a unique Jewish perspective, emphasizing the experiences of the individual victims through original artifacts,

survivor testimonies and personal possessions” (retrieved from http://www1.yadvashem.org/new_museum). The emphasis on uniqueness is multi-layered. Yad Vashem is positioned as the world’s Holocaust research institution, so it is no surprise that Inbar and her staff are sought out for answers as to how to go about representing absence and doing justice to the history of the Holocaust. Inbar explains that the goal of the HHM is “to tell the Jewish story, this is our mission. It is a different mission than Washington [The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum]. Washington in a way is telling a Jewish story but it also tells an American story. And each place has its own point of view” (Y.Inbar, personal communication, July 29, 2008).

Both Yad Vashem and its new HHM are unique in relation to Israel’s imagination as a place where remembrance is intertwined and embedded with a national sense of self-determination. Jewishly unique, as the mission statement states, is its position as the national memorial museum in the world’s only Jewish state with the task of presenting stories of a thriving Jewish European world that no longer exists. The Yad Vashem logo, in which barbed wire is entwined with an olive branch, is symbolic of the embeddedness that describes Yd Vashem: the horrors of the past cannot be separated from hopes for peace but literally are embedded in them. In contrast to most Israeli museum settings, then, where “the theme of the Holocaust and the theme of Zionist revival are kept apart, symbolically charting disparate Jewish trajectories, the one dealing with destruction of Jewish life in the diaspora, the other with its renewal in the Land of Israel” (Katriel, 2001, p. 199), in Yad Vashem they are intertwined in a way that captures how both are intricately a part of Jewish life and history. The following section will discuss the ways in which the metaphor of embeddedness

addresses these divergent narrative trajectories in regard to architecture, landscape, and the sense of place created at Yad Vashem and the Holocaust History Museum.

Architecture, Landscape, and Place

Yad Vashem was established in Jerusalem as Israel's national Holocaust memorial museum in 1953. Serving as a core to the Yad Vashem experience, the new Holocaust History Museum (HHM) at Yad Vashem is situated near the main entrance just behind Yad Vashem's visitor center. Located on a hillside near the center of Jerusalem, Yad Vashem maintains multiple memorial experiences across a 45-acre campus. *Yad Vashem*, a Hebrew phrase translated to mean both a monument and a name, resides on a forested area of the Jerusalem landscape overlooking the *Ein Kerem* Valley and is located off of a city boulevard minutes from the central bus station. In contrast to the HMM which presents an indoor and primarily underground experience mostly embedded into the earth, Yad Vashem as a memorial site, was designed largely as an outside experience, and the site includes outdoor sculptures, memorials, tree-lined pathways, contemplative spaces, and multiple buildings that host artifacts, research databases, library, archive, administration, classrooms, auditoriums, museum shop, cafeteria, and visitor center.

The new Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem opened in 2005, designed by the architectural firm Moshe Safdie and Associates. With offices in Toronto, Boston, and Jerusalem, Israeli architect Moshe Safdie has designed a range of projects that among many others includes the Washington, D.C headquarters of both the United States Institute of Peace; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives; the Asian University for Women in Bangladesh; and the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands. Safdie designed two other structures at Yad Vashem in addition to the HMM—the

“Children’s Holocaust Memorial,” and the “Memorial to the Deportees,” an elevated cattle-car situated beyond the bounds of any visitor physical interaction which juts off the edge of a cliff on severed train tracks and is positioned towards Hadassah hospital, a place where thousands are born each year.

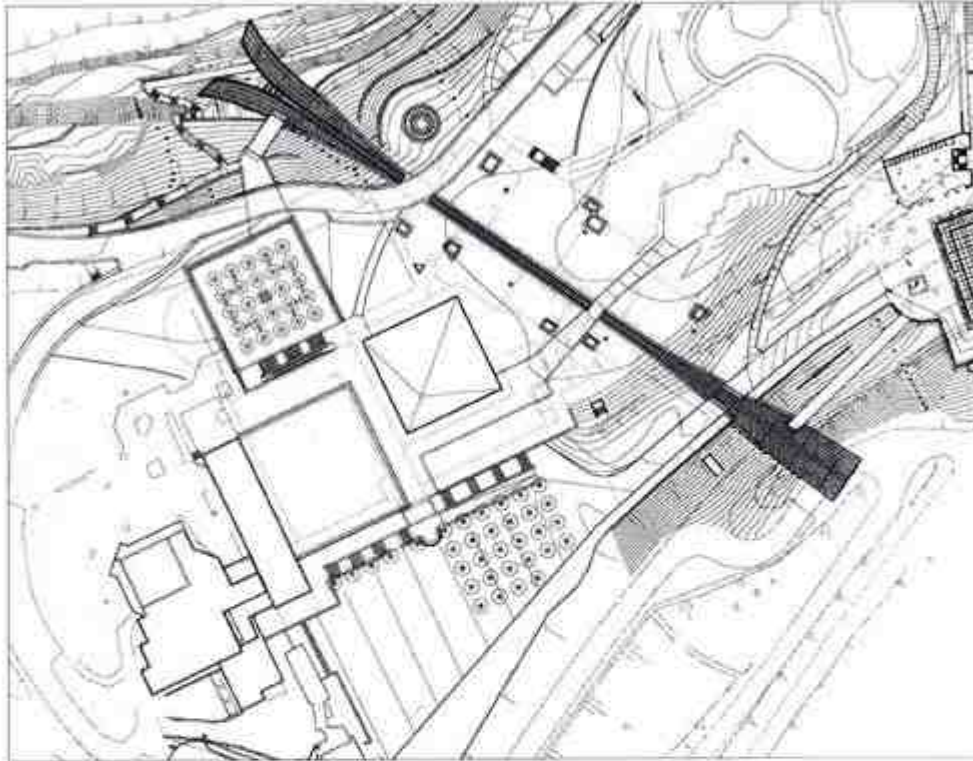
The HHM occupies a 40,000 square-foot building whose entrance is accessed across a bridge into an angular, cantilevered, triangular, prism-shaped structure with a skylight that runs the length of the narrow sixty-foot ceiling. The building was designed as a narrow, linear space that changes somewhat in elevation but remains on one main floor and contains only exhibition content; museum staff occupy offices in the administration building and in other facilities on the grounds.

The design scheme of the HHM is unpainted gray concrete with exposed holes in grid patterns that are architectural “form ties” that show evidence of construction the result of and presents an unfinished, undecorated, cold, and raw state. Safdie “chose the triangular form as one structurally stable enough to support the pressure of the earth upon the prism, as well as one that would dramatically bring light from above onto the floor below” (Omer, 2004, p. 93).



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 11. Holocaust History Museum building scale model.



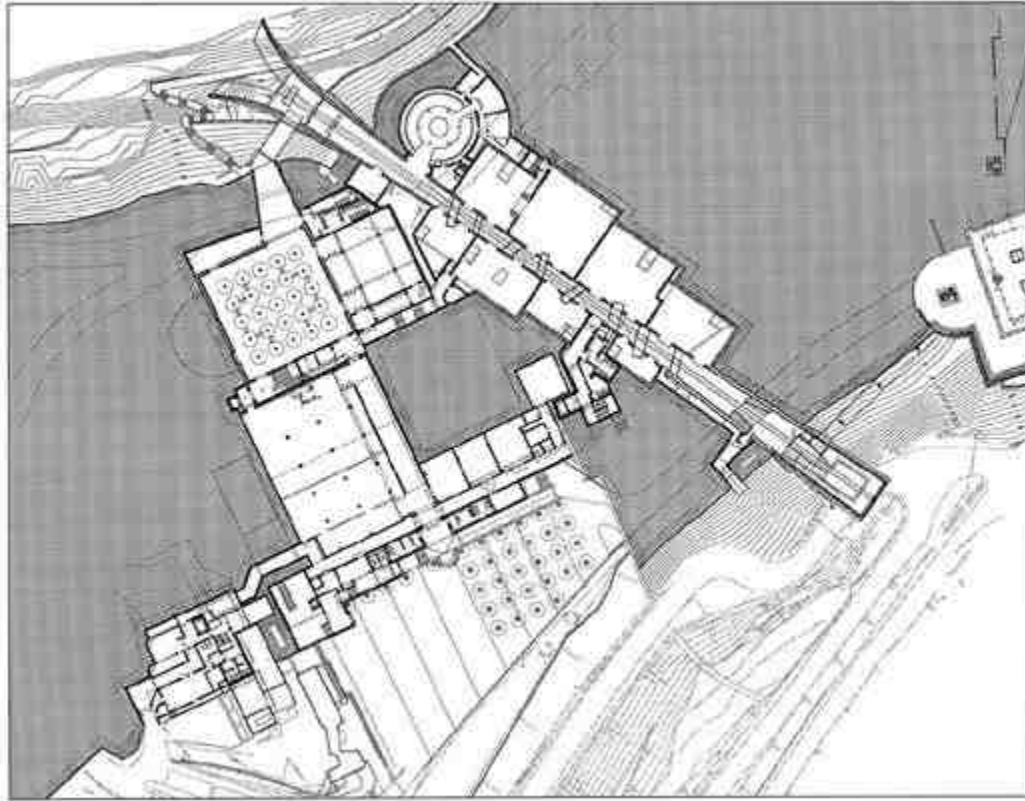
Site Plan



Longitudinal Section

Courtesy: The Holocaust History Museum

Figure 12. Holocaust History Museum building site plan and longitudinal section.



Courtesy: The Holocaust History Museum

Figure 13. Holocaust History Museum floor plan.

The metaphor of embeddedness first is communicated in the form of the building itself as a visitor walks up to it. The building is cantilevered, creating the illusion of descent into the ground and rises up and out towards the end. The HHM provides the visitor with a highly controlled experience where it is possible to visually see to the far end of the building, but not to walk through the center of the structure. That you cannot walk through it to the end only reinforces the sense of embeddedness—it is embedded in the ground in such a way that free passage is inhibited.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 14. Holocaust History Museum interior roofline.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 15. Holocaust History Museum exterior cut through walkway.

The exterior and the interior of the HMM building communicate embeddedness in ways that intersect with the landscape. A narrow ceiling skylight runs the length of the roofline offering a thin band of natural light into the exhibition space. The exposure of sunlight from the triangular frame exit is visible but not yet reachable from the entry point of the building. Mid-way through the building, a cutout presents two different visitor experiences. From the perspective of inside the HMM, the use of glass windows for this cutout creates a transparency between inside and outside while establishing a connection to landscape and place for the visitor. Outside, the use of a cutout in the architectural design

allows the building to mimic the adjacent tree-lined walkway that serves to link the HHM to an intersecting pathway and larger site of the Yad Vashem complex. These building features communicate a narrative of embeddeness into the natural landscape and, by extension, into the land of Israel.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 16. Holocaust History Museum exterior roofline and grounds.

Outside the HHM many of the memorials at Yad Vashem are embedded in the natural world and offer different experiences depending upon the time of day, the weather, the season, and changes to the light. These qualities are in some sense a measurement of time, a quality that is integral to a memorializing and reflects healing through time. The tree-lined

path that cuts through the HMM directs the visitor around the territory of Yad Vashem in a manner that is not strictly prescribed. Movement through the site is organized for more than a singular experience and can be connected to in various ways allowing for multiple visitor narratives to emerge. The narratives woven and embedded with Yad Vashem's content have the potential to be both sites of personal meaning and collective consciousness.

The architecture of the HMM and landscape communicate a narrative of mutual embeddedness in relation to both nature and nation. Embedded into the nation state by its being a nationally created and sanctioned museum, Yad Vashem was built on the same hillside as Israel's national cemetery Har [Mount] Hertzal, and although two physically separate entities, the hillside is called Har Hazikaron [Mount of Remembrance]. As the site that holds both the national cemetery and the national museum, this is the memorial sector of the city of Jerusalem. The Mount of Remembrance suggests the symmetry of historical memory and illustrates a central struggle in Israeli society that attempts to balance the "simultaneous need to remember and to forget" (Young, 1993, p.211). The intentional placement of both sites on the same hillside memorializes the victims of the Holocaust in a manner that grants them the status of Israeli citizenship and represents their martyred status and inclusion as a people embedded into the foundation of the Jewish state. Thus, even though the museum and cemetery are two separate entities, the HMM is contained or embedded within the cemetery; those who lost their lives in the Holocaust are said to be "buried" in Israel. From this exploration of the metaphor of embeddedness in regard to architecture, landscape, and sense of place I move to an analysis of the ways the metaphor functions as the visitor enters the building and experiences the HMM exhibition.

Entrance Experience

The visitor enters the HHM across a bridge that symbolically transports the visitor between worlds, from present into the past contained in a memorial structurally embedded into the land of Israel. The sloping landscape of the Jerusalem mountainside is emulated in the building's form and evoked in its elevated placement above the winding pathway below. The bridge functions to situate the building as an embedded memorial where neither the entrance nor the exit physically touches the ground, creating a sacred space for the grounded objects and stories of lives lost. Yet the building itself does touch the ground and appears to be embedded in it, suggesting a human act that disrupted the purity of the sacred.

The following section moves this metaphor in related ways from the form of the museum to the subject of the museum's content.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 17. Entrance bridge to Holocaust History Museum.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 18. Holocaust History Museum building entrance.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 19. Holocaust History Museum exterior entrance elevation view.

To the left of the entrance in the triangular section of the building the visitor will notice a video installation that serves as an entry encounter and sets the tone for the museum experience. Created by Israeli artist Michal Rovner, the video entitled “Living Landscape” presents black-and-white images of life before World War II screened onto the 30-foot triangular wall section of the building.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 20. Holocaust History Museum entry video with visitors.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 21. Holocaust History Museum entry video.

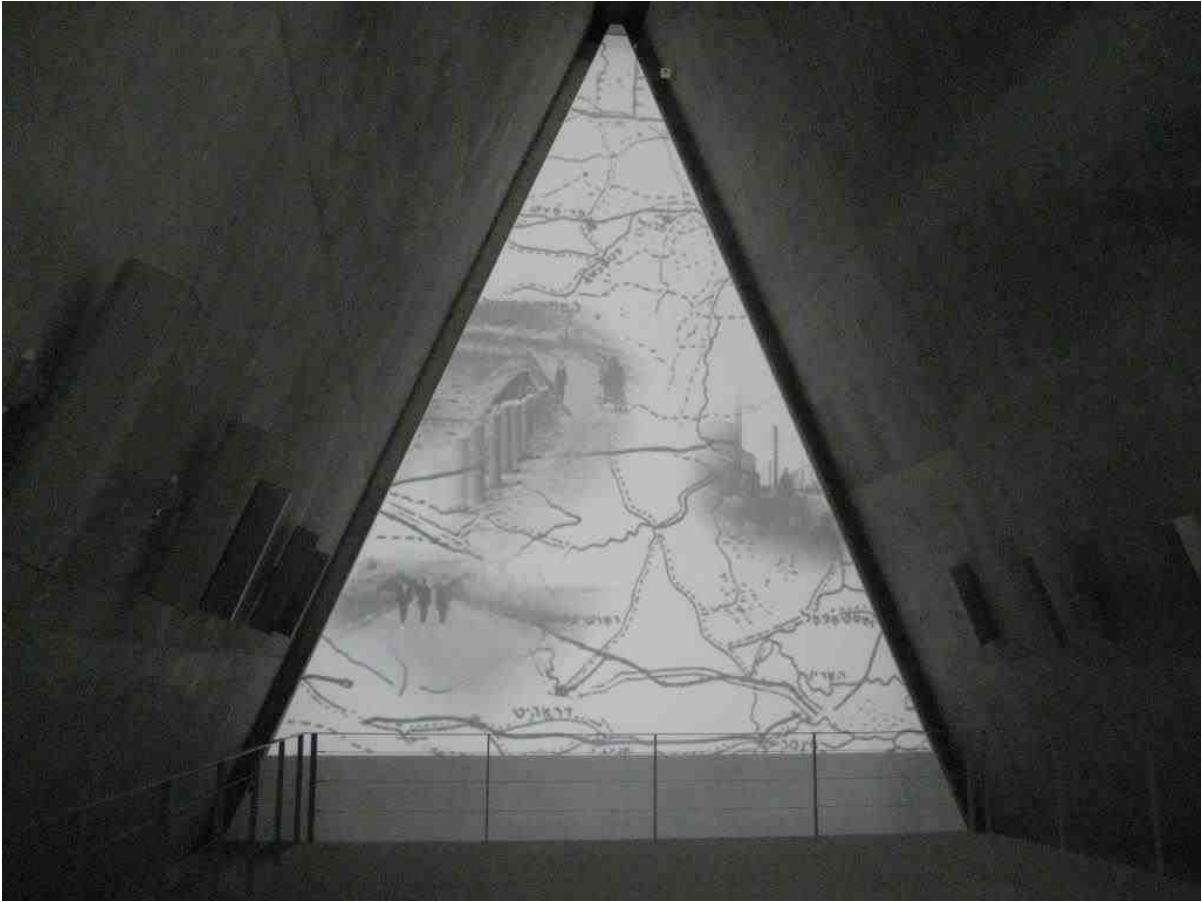


Figure 22. Holocaust History Museum entry video map image.

Photo by Judith F.
Stauber

The slow lateral scroll of the video simultaneously creates a newsreel effect and the feeling of a torah, with a montage of images of children singing *Hatikva* [the hope]; street scenes of men and women, young and old, dancing, smiling, waving, holding hands; and a grid of apartment building windows, each depicting people engaged in different activities such as playing musical instruments, praying, and singing. Maps are projected onto the triangular frame with place names marked in Yiddish, a language that when written, is done so in characters that resemble Hebrew letters. Because of this, or because the HHM is located in a Hebrew-speaking country, or because the artist is Israeli, and many of the exhibit

labels are printed in both English and Hebrew, the visitor's perception might be that the place names on the video actually are in Hebrew. With just three small black, cushioned seats located near the back corner of the exhibition, most visitors experience the video positioned on the gray-colored open floor plan of the darkened triangular space. The soundtrack combines original recordings from the period with a composition by Phillip Glass.

This video functions to communicate the embedded narrative of the HHM in several ways in its position as an entrance piece that serves to contextualize the museum-visitor experience. With just one exhibit label, the video is described as depicting images that “interweave living surroundings and everyday moments setting out a mosaic of the landscape of the Jewish world that was lost...based on archival film footage and original photographs from the many places where Jews lived at the beginning of the twentieth century” (HHM, “Living Landscape,” 2005). It is significant that, on the one hand, the visitor is able to experience and interpret the installation without being guided by detailed supplementary text and therefore able to bring multiple possible points of view; at the same time, the video is a kickoff installation for the HHM story.

That the information presented to visitors is not clear or historically grounded in this video speaks to the sense of embeddedness the video helps communicate. Even if the visitor is able to decipher the map's Yiddish place names, the scrolled images set to music reinforce a nostalgic depiction and unified concept of Jewish people despite photographs of citizens of various countries with different expressions and understandings of Jewish life. The overall impression is of a single sense of Jewishness, embedded in Israel, no matter the diverging histories of Jews across the world. As Louis Levine, Senior Advisor, Collections and Exhibitions at New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage says, “it doesn't give you any

information unless you bring all that with you” (L. Levine, personal communication, August 4, 2008). The sense of Israel and the Jewish people as embedded there in the video, while outsiders look on, creates a sense of exclusion and isolation.

Exhibition Practices

After viewing the entrance video, the visitor moves into the linear building space that contains the museum’s permanent exhibition. The following discussion will highlight the interpretation of objects, the exhibition space and circulation path, as well as the content and characteristics of the exhibition that function to communicate the metaphor of embeddedness.

The exhibition route moves the visitor chronologically through pre-war, war, and post-war detail about historical events and the treatment of the Jews. Several aspects of the HHM exhibition communicate the museum’s dominant narrative of embeddedness in different ways. Among the collection is an exhibit of numerous pairs of shoes intended to communicate the number of Jewish lives lost in the Holocaust. It is not unusual for Holocaust museums to represent millions of people through everyday familiar objects such as piles of shoes, eyeglasses, and items of clothing. Rather than the mound of shoes such those displayed at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the HHM buries the shoes into the floor of the building under glass for the visitor to see down onto, thus embedding the memory of those who walked in them into the foundation of the building and the ground upon which it was built.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 23. Holocaust History Museum building interior.

Inside the HHM, the path causes the visitor to move on a zigzag path through a series of chronologically organized exhibition galleries that cuts into, and out of, the open and physically inaccessible center of the building. This exhibition-design practice provides the visitor with no choice as to the direction in which to experience the exhibition, and the path moves visitors only in one direction. The way the path has been created reinforces the sense of embeddedness in that there is only one way to traverse this very solid, embedded structure one sees ahead.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 24. Holocaust History Museum interior.

A second way that embeddedness is revealed in HHM is in how visitors are taken through the museum. How visitors experience the exhibition route varies as to whether they are on their own, in a small group, or visiting the museum as a part of a larger tour group traveling around Israel. I told Yehudit Inbar, Yad Vashem's director, about the numerous groups I have brought to the HHM, and that each time it is presented to us as a requirement to be led through the museum with a guide. Speaking to visitors through individual remote earpieces, the visitor experience is completely narrated by the guide who is not always in the line of sight. I found the experience to be oppressive and invasive. Not only are there large

numbers of groups going through the HHM simultaneously, each guide is leading by whispering in my ear a litany of facts and details increasingly horrific as the story builds. As a group leader with my own understanding of how individuals learn in museums, I would walk up to students and tell them they could remove their earpiece and walk at their own pace. Many, of course, did not, and I could see that in the process of exchange for the guide's narrative authority, they gave up their individuality and ability to experience the museum for themselves. The process by which visitors are led through the museum is, in fact, counter to the original design for visitors. Inbar shared:

We built the museum not for groups but for individuals to go by themselves. A museum is a place where you can look for yourself, for contemplation, it's a place that takes you out of the craziness of the world and you can gain from it something more than just getting information. I was very upset when I found out that people need to go in groups and to listen to a guide and I don't understand it, I don't understand why. (Y. Inbar, personal communication, July 29, 2008)

My assumption is that visitors would be surprised to learn that this was not the intention of HHM planners but became perhaps a way to manage large numbers of group visitors or to impress upon certain groups of visitors that being taken through the museum communicates some measure of their status. Inbar alluded to both of these possible scenarios, the latter of which serves to further embed the HHM (and Israel) into the minds and hearts of visitors (and donors) from abroad as a place of sophistication in taking care of VIP guests.

This guided-group experience has a significant impact on how the museum is experienced and perceived as a controlled environment, an ironic indictment given the

oppressive history the HHM presents. Here the HHM communicates a narrative of embeddness in the way groups are managed. By limiting the freedom of group members and the possibility to experience the museum as individuals, the HHM participates in embedding groups of visitors into the particular story sanctioned and controlled by the tour guides.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 25. Holocaust History Museum Hall of Names.

Near the exit of the building, the visitor will find a third way that embeddness emerges in the museum's Hall of Names. Located after the exhibition's chronological history and the "Hall of Names" are the archives of the names of those who were murdered in the Holocaust. The circular dome-roofed hall is set off from the more linear design of the

rest of the HHM with rows of folders lining the wall that contain the “Pages of Testimony,” an archive with names and biographical detail of the millions of lives lost. Above the folders, photographs curve mid-point around the walls up to the ceiling. At the center of the hall, a railing marks off space for visitors to reflect into a pool of water and the exposed bedrock below. The bedrock captures the sense of embeddedness here; the sense communicated is of all of these words and photographs of lives lost are now embedded in something much deeper, much stronger—they are embedded into the land of Israel itself.

Two related concepts are central to Jewish culture in the meaning-rich, if not-so-subtle narrative of embeddedness communicated in the “Hall of Names”: bearing witness and the significance of names. Bearing witness is a Jewish imperative tied directly to the Holocaust—traditionally an element of the act of remembrance that is intended to ensure such an atrocity is never again repeated.

In terms of names themselves, Jews traditionally do not name children after the living but only in memory of the dead. At the HHM, the names of the dead are displayed and archived in memorial into the walls of the building (as well as logged into the archives). There is the sense, then, of the dead being named here, in ironic reversal of naming children after the dead. That visitors’ reflections become embedded with the reflection of the photographs of Holocaust victims and into the exposed ground on which the structure stands demonstrates a kind of bearing witness. In the Hall of Names exhibition, then, Jewish culture is demonstrated and maintained while it is simultaneously embedded in the past and connected to the present in the state of Israel.

There is a third concept important to Jewish culture—that of responsibility—that emerges not in the permanent exhibition in the Hall of Names but in a traveling exhibit

developed after the museum was finished. Museum Director Yehudit Inbar explained that she realized, after its completion, that the story of women in the Holocaust had not been explicitly told:

I made an exhibit [Spots of Light: To be a Woman in the Holocaust] about women in the Holocaust after I finished the museum, and in my opinion really the important story is about the women—even we don't tell the story enough in the museum in the way they carried on their backs the story of the Holocaust—and it is a very human story. (Y. Inbar, personal communication, July 29, 2008)

According to Inbar, the women's story is the story of responsibility, again a concept embedded in Jewish tradition and practice: "Because what you saw in their behavior they took a vow of responsibility for the others and even though they were on their way towards death they still were human and this is the most important thing" (Y. Inbar, personal communication, July 29, 2008).

And this sense of responsibility and humanity manifest yet a fourth notion embedded in the stories told at HHM: a choice about victimage. Inbar noted about the women: "They decided not to be victims. And you understand that to be a victim is a decision" (Y. Inbar, personal communication, July 29, 2008). Inbar's comments communicate an embeddedness in the way victimage traditionally is framed. Jewish history illustrates a certain distancing from victimhood and instead emphasizes forms of resistance, celebrations of life, and how lessons gleaned from tragedy can become translated into ways of enacting social-justice values. In other words, for many Jews (and especially Israelis) despite the facts of history a victim identity is not embedded into Jewish life and culture.

Unlike the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Yad Vashem manifests a certain distancing from the perception of a “victimized” European Jewish experience that functions to embed the history of attempted genocide into a new world. There are tensions that emerge from the embedded metaphor here in representing hope and renewal for the Jewish people, Yad Vashem functions within an Israeli cultural context that overturns the image of the Jew as a victim while at the same time also memorializing. As the representation of exhibition content intersects with Israeli cultural values, it becomes clear that the metaphor of embeddedness functions at many levels at the HHM.

Finally, in both expected and unexpected ways, the metaphor of embeddedness functions in the HHM to communicate a certain tension in regard to the exhibition content. As the remains of those who perished, shoes as objects naturally are expected in a Holocaust museum. That the shoes are embedded in the ground here is unexpected, however, providing a sense of buried personal effects. That women originally were neglected in the original telling also suggests a particular narrative that features or privileges men as most important in Jewish history. Women essentially were an afterthought, not a necessary and embedded part of the Jewish experience but something generated later, something ephemeral, something traveling. Even the experience of navigating the museum, where tour guides insist on leading all visitors through, embeds the visitor in a singular telling of the story at odds with the many stories suggested by the museum content itself. The architecture affirms this tension, offering an embedded structure that floats in places and disavows its own embeddedness.

Exit Experience

The triangular-shaped sections of the building house the entry and exit points for the visitor experience. After the “Living Landscape” video in the entrance, the visitor moves through a pathway designed to create the illusion of a slow descent into the ground. This downward path continues throughout the exhibition space, and only after the “Hall of Names” does the path rise up again to allow visitors to exit the building onto an outdoor balcony overlooking Jerusalem. The exit design communicated by the HMM functions to embed the memory of those murdered in the Holocaust into a new Jewish reality, a strategy that also embeds the visitor as a witness to both the past and the future.

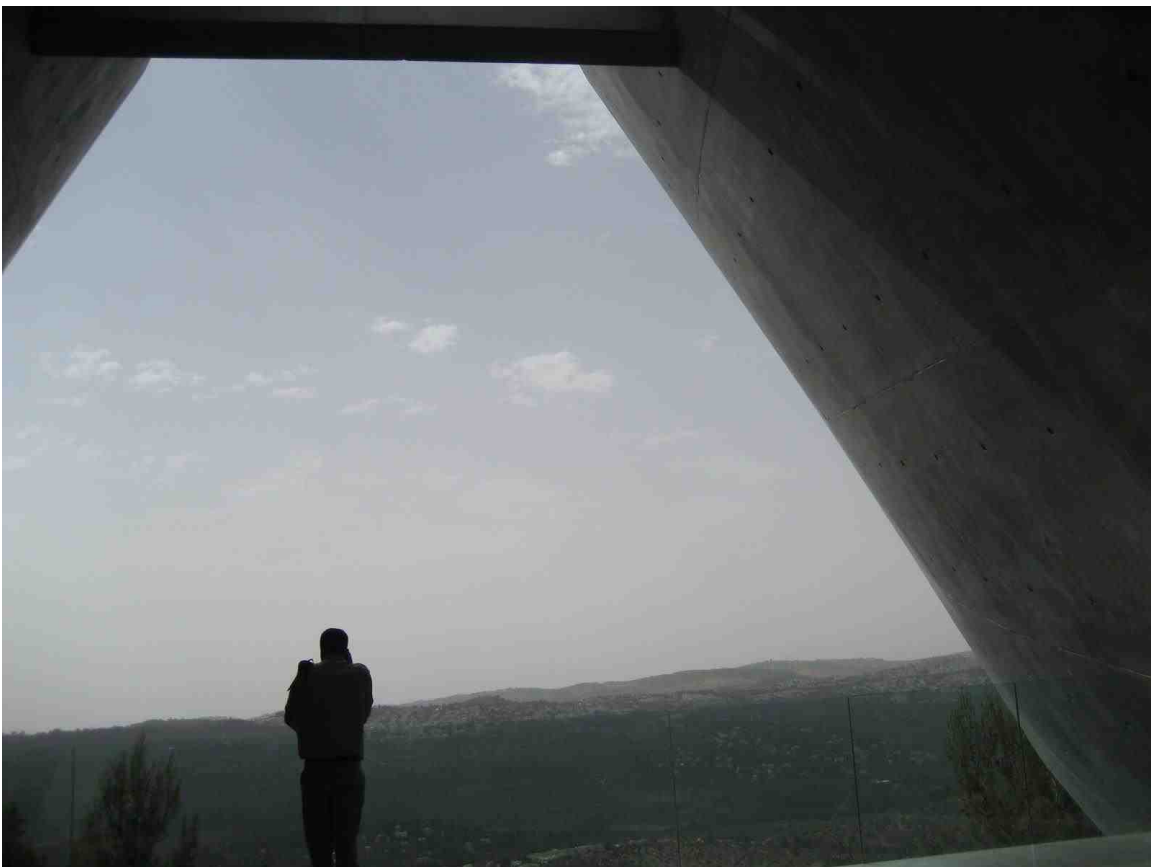


Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 26. Holocaust History Museum building exit from interior.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 27. Holocaust History Museum building exit from exterior.

Embeddedness as the metaphor that captures the Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem reveals a museum solidly grounded in Jewish history, events, and practices. That the building goes into the ground communicates both the solidity of Jewishness but hints at its disruption as well. When something is embedded in the ground, there is a sense of force so strong that it was pushed into the earth. The HHM conveys this sense: it communicates a Jewish history as well a history forcefully pounded into the earth by destructive and disruptive forces. That the entrances and exits float about the embedded portions of the museum signal the ways in which a sacred place still exists and lives apart from the

destruction wrought by the Holocaust. Situated in Israel, too, and overlooking Jerusalem, the ultimate sense offered by this museum's embeddedness is hope and optimism for a future that is solid and strong and no longer subject to disruption.

Chapter Six: Data Analysis
The Museum of Jewish Heritage
A Living Memorial to the Holocaust
New York, New York

Enshrinement

Together people, community, and environment (both natural and built) create tangible senses of place. In his novel, The Colossus of New York, Colson Whitehead notes the frequency with which places in the city disappear and how New Yorkers talk about what was in a particular space before the present occupants arrived and turned it into a new and different place. Not only to me, but also for many others, before September 11, 2001 the World Trade Center buildings served as markers that helped orient direction while moving through the narrow and winding streets of lower Manhattan. Buildings house stories and serve as markers for memory in as many and different ways as there are stories to tell. When the people are lost, how do buildings foster memory and community?

In this chapter, I will analyze what is communicated by the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City. Interested in how Jewishness is presented in these four museums, the Museum of Jewish Heritage is unique as both a Holocaust and living heritage museum. I will argue that the metaphor of *enshrinement* captures the essence of the story or narrative this museum tells. As applied to the Museum of Jewish Heritage, the metaphor of enshrinement is defined as being memorialized, protected, and enclosed together. The following analysis will illustrate the various ways that enshrinement functions and is

communicated in the museum's organization and self-presentation, architecture, landscape, sense of place, and exhibition practices

Organization and Self-Presentation

The Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust (MJH), open since 1997, is positioned as both a Holocaust and heritage museum. The framework of the MJH is in the Jewish tradition of *Zachor* [Remember, Never Forget] the concept of remembrance as obligation within a context of renewal rooted in messages of hope and social justice (MJH, “A Powerful Cultural Attraction, Century of Remembrance, n.d.).

From the outset, the qualifying name of the museum positions a metaphor of enshrinement that is communicated by the MJH mission statement: “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 embrace, examining their achievements and faith, and affirming the vibrant worldwide Jewish community that is their legacy today” (MJH, “A Powerful Cultural Attraction, Century of Remembrance, n.d.).

In addition to the site in New York, the MJH operates the Auschwitz Jewish Center in Oswiecim, which opened in 2000 and merged with the MJH in 2006. From an organizational standpoint, the MJH communicates the metaphor of enshrinement across time and space, linking the past and contemporary worlds of Auschwitz with the MJH community in New York.

Architecture, Landscape, and Place

Built on the waterfront in Lower Manhattan in 1997 (with an east wing added in 2003), the museum was designed by the New York architectural firm Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo & Associates, who are known for prominent local projects that include the United

Nations Plaza Hotel, the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum, and the Central Park Zoo. Built in the Battery Park area on the southernmost end of Manhattan, the Statue of Liberty can be seen from the MJH site.



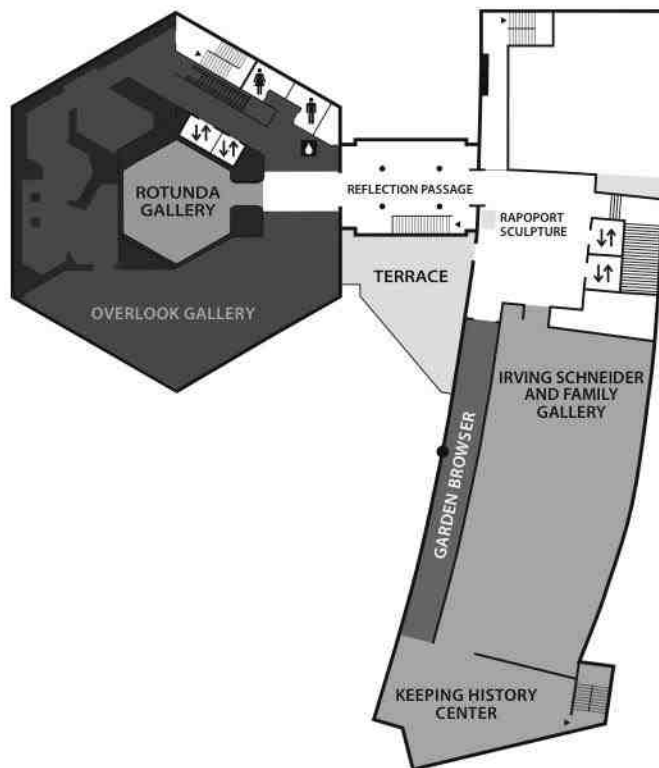
Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 28. Museum of Jewish Heritage exhibition building exterior.

The core exhibition building is designed to resemble a six-pointed Star of David; inside, three floors are dedicated to exhibition content. The adjacent east wing is positioned as the museum entrance and houses the main lobby, welcome desk, and museum shop on the street level. Located on the upper floors of the east wing are a kosher café, auditorium, gallery spaces for temporary exhibitions, and administrative offices.

On multiple levels, the building design communicates a narrative of enshrinement through both architectural symbolism and structural detail. The MJH core-exhibition building was designed as a six-sided symbolic shape to represent both the six-pointed Star of David and the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust. The Star of David is easily

the most iconic symbol representing the Jewish people, utilized by the State of Israel on its national flag and seen throughout history as an expression in messages of pride and of hatred for Jews. From certain angles, the MJH building resembles a pyramid, and the smooth textured monochrome exterior built using light-colored stone with a tiered-roof present an overall fortress-like feeling that serves as a shrine for the exhibition content. The building also bears some resemblance to Chinese and Japanese temples. The various types of “shrines” the building calls to mind are testament to its “enshrined” nature. A static-grid pattern with a few small surface cutouts for windows are positioned along the roofline and add to the impression of the structure’s shrine-like quality.



Courtesy: Museum of Jewish Heritage

Figure 29. Museum of Jewish Heritage building complex floor plan.

The building was designed for visitors to enter the MJH at street level through the east wing and, once inside, connect to the exhibition building through the lobby. Moving up each level through the three floors of exhibition space, visitors exit across a passageway that connects back to the east wing. The design of the building complex and the circulation path reinforce the metaphor of enshrinement of the exhibition content in that it is not a causal gathering space connected directly to the street but one that is entered intentionally from the lobby that serves as a buffer between interior and exterior worlds.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 30. Museum of Jewish Heritage building complex view from terrace.

Near enough to the World Trade Center site that the MJH closed for several weeks after September 11, 2001, the museum provides a narrative backdrop to the landscape of the MJH that communicates themes of enshrinement all the more so after 2001. Further back in history, this part of the city served as a port of entry for immigration to the U.S. Lower Manhattan is also home to cultural institutions that focus on various American stories,

including the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, the Museum of American Finance, The New York City Police Museum, and the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of the American Indian. In the context of these museums, the MJH can be seen as enshrined in the cultural and historic fabric of this particular part of the city and in its history of immigration in particular. Lower Manhattan maintains a unique sense of place that was, of course, first inhabited by Native Americans; it became the landing place for new immigrants who settled into nearby ethnic and cultural neighborhoods such as Chinatown and Little Italy, and the place from which the Island of Manhattan developed and extended north.

As seen from the water aboard the Staten Island Ferry or other boats, the building sits at the southern tip of the island with a backdrop of skyscrapers that climb upward and stretch for miles beyond the museum. Situated directly across the harbor from the Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island Immigration Museum, the MJH is positioned symbolically to “face” the incoming immigrants and enshrine the suffering of old worlds into a new place free from religious persecution. The MJH joins together with structures that collect stories, memories, and histories of many ethnic and cultural groups whose enshrinement in turn facilitate the “freedom and justice for all” backdrop of the U.S. national imagination. From this exploration of the metaphor of enshrinement in regard to architecture, landscape, and sense of place I turn to an analysis of the ways the metaphor functions as the visitor enters the MJH building and experiences the exhibition.

Entrance Experience



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 31. Museum of Jewish Heritage entrance plaza.

The visitor approaching the MJH will become aware of the wide plaza that surrounds the entrance to the museum with a reflecting pool memorial sculpture. The plaza is named for Edmond J. Safra, a Jewish Lebanese banker, philanthropist, and trustee of the MJH, who also has an auditorium in the museum's east wing (and a New York City synagogue) named in his memory. The entrance plaza area communicates the MJH metaphor of enshrinement in interesting ways and provides a territory around the museum that functions as a transitional space between the MJH and the city. For the visitor entering the museum, the sense of space created by the plaza is peaceful and contemplative, an experience furthered by the park-like quality of the trees and water that surround the MJH..



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 32. Museum of Jewish Heritage entrance doors.

At the entrance to the Museum of Jewish Heritage, the visitor is presented with unornamented transparent glass doors and visible signage that communicates what the building is to the public. The museum (and major donor) names are screened onto the glass doors and flanked by two brightly colored banners with the word “open” that presents an accessible and friendly entrance for what might be perceived as a building containing potentially painful and challenging contents. Between the transitional space of the plaza and the interior of the museum, the entrance doors do not communicate enshrinement but rather an open and transparent entry from the world outside into the museum space.

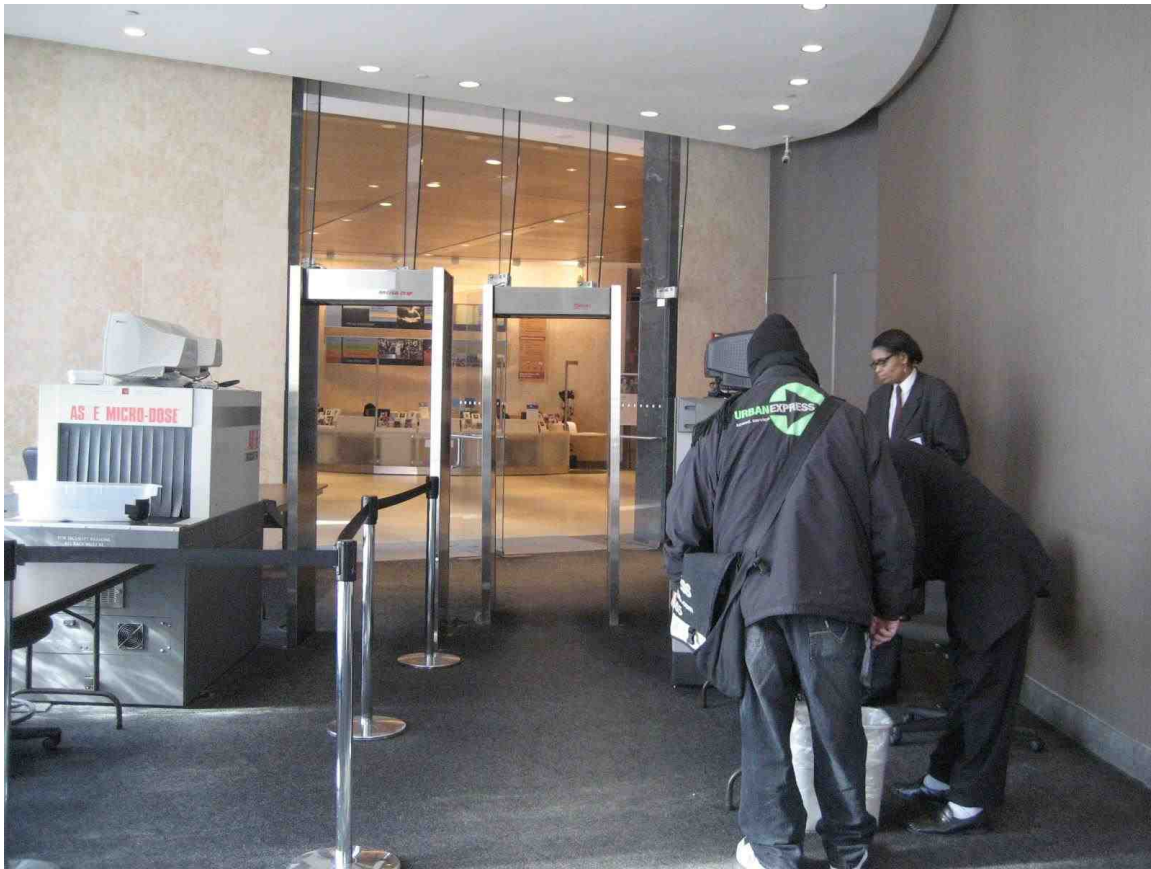


Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 33: Security entrance into the Museum of Jewish Heritage.

Once inside the visitor is confronted with the issue of security before being able to move into the museum lobby. Here again, as will be evident in all four museums, the experience of entering Jewish institutions is mediated by bag searches and metal detectors. This necessity is perhaps a contemporary reminder that the events memorialized in the past in these museums are as real today as ever.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 34. Museum of Jewish Heritage information desk.

The visitor next sees the information desk, which sits on its own in a grand lobby. This desk continues the sense of openness and largesse communicated by the exterior entrance. The desk appears slightly translucent, as if there is nothing to hide. Its curved shape, like the bright colors of the entrance, softens the images of what is to come. This entrance also fosters a sense of approachability, which, at first, seems to belie its shrine-like exterior. But many shrines, no matter how elaborate, are designed specifically to encourage visitation, and this museum is no exception. And, the grandness and openness of the lobby and entrance space suggest the grand narratives of justice that will characterize the exhibits in

this museum as well. The following section moves the metaphor of enshrinement to the subject of the museum's content and the strategies implemented in the presentation of the core exhibition.

Exhibition Practices

The MJH exhibition places an emphasis on presenting narratives of Jewish lives with a collection that contains “more than 2,000 photographs, 800 artifacts, and 24 original documentary films on display, the Museum uses personal stories and artifacts to present 20th century Jewish history and the Holocaust to people of all ages and backgrounds” (MJH, “A Powerful Cultural Attraction, Century of Remembrance, n.d.).

The MJH exhibition begins and ends by highlighting the concept of social justice. This is a unique emphasis for a museum that considers itself both a Holocaust and a heritage museum and, in doing so, contextualizes the past in the present and future of Jewish people. This exhibition strategy communicates the metaphor of enshrinement by connecting the future and the past through the enshrinement of values of social justice into the exhibition--strategies that repeatedly contrast with the experiences of history, hatred, persecution, and mass murder. The overall message communicated is that the experiences of the past are all the more reason to live justly in interactions with others and in ways that bring healing to the world.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 35. Museum of Jewish Heritage Grand Foyer.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 36. Entrance to Museum of Jewish Heritage core exhibition.

In form and content, the core exhibition entrance experience communicates varied narratives of enshrinement. The initial exhibition experience for the visitor is a nine-minute multi-screen video montage projected around a circular space that presents a series of first-person narrative voiceovers on the subjects of Jewish migration, ritual life, family, and social justice. This video emphasizes in particular values of time and place, concepts related to Jewish community and identity. The marking of time through commemoration of Shabbat and holidays, for instance, is an example of the value of time, and listing the names of places from where Jews have come symbolizes the value of place. The video explains that

throughout history, Jews have interacted with different cultures, and different voices recall “growing up fourth generation in the deep south, the only Jewish family in town,” while another explains that as Jews from Frankfurt they “considered themselves Germans first, and Jews second.” The voices reference Russia, South America, and places around the world, ultimately (and ironically) framing the United States as one of the first places where a Jew could “cease being Jewish.” The video content communicates the enshrinement of the Jewish people within a community where the notion of personhood holds significance regardless of place or status and voices of authority narrate over a collage of images.

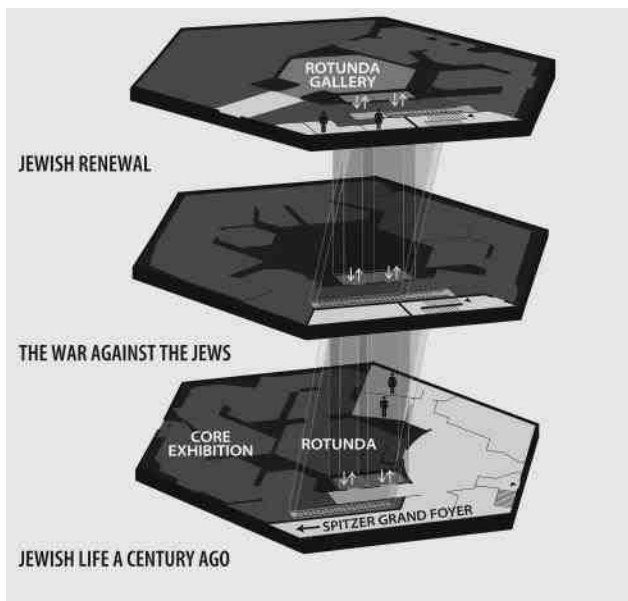


Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 37. Museum of Jewish Heritage exhibit entry video.

A central function communicated by the metaphor of enshrinement at the MJH is in bringing together multiple Jewish stories and the video enshrines traditional Jewish values together with American ideals. The video establishes the MJH as a distinctly American storyteller and functions to enshrine old and new worlds in the exhibition narrative.

In the next segment of the video, images of Hebrew text fill the screen as Hebrew songs play. The narrator explains that Torah study happens in *chevruta* [pairs] for a reason, for study and also for action, reminding visitors that Jews have a history as slaves and should therefore identify with oppressed people today. The Jewish concept of *Tikkun Olam* [healing the world] through justice for Jews and all people is explained in a sequence that precedes the concept of liberty and the notion that Jewish people identify with “underdogs” and so “Jewish hearts” should resonate with those oppressed. The narration shifts to the topic of migration and “people without a home place, with no sense of belonging.” The video closes with a Hebrew quote that translates to “justice, justice you shall pursue.”



Courtesy: Museum of Jewish Heritage

Figure 38. Museum of Jewish Heritage core exhibition floor plan.

The core exhibition presents a linear history that unfolds in an upward spiral as the content moves up one floor, with each thematic progression organized around three basic themes. On the first floor, the theme is “Jewish Life a Century Ago”; on the second floor, the

theme is “The War Against the Jews”; and on the third floor, “Jewish Renewal” is the focus. Here the emphasis is on Jewish life after the Holocaust primarily in the United States and Israel. For the visitor, the narrative of hope and rebirth is communicated by the upward climb of the exhibition floors, notably different from the despair communicated by the downward circulation path taken by the designers of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. Both design elements are intentional and serve to emotionally influence the visitor in the reception of exhibition content.

At the MJH the upward spiral of the exhibition circulation path is predetermined for the visitor in order to communicate the experience of ascending up towards a hopeful future. The path functions to communicate enshrinement across time by enshrining the future into the exhibition narrative. In this way, the MJH presents a vision of possibility and optimism that raises up the voice of an enduring people.

In 2009, the MJH expanded the core exhibition to include the “Keeping History Center,” a new interactive digital visitor experience overlooking New York Harbor. Visitors have the opportunity to “explore our stories and collections, and to understand that we are all participants in, as well as custodians of, our history” (retrieved <http://www.mjhnyc.org/>). The initial phase of the Keeping History Center offers two interactive audio installations. The video titled “Voices of Liberty,” is described as follows:

Voices of Holocaust survivors, refugees, and others who chose to make the US their home. The sometimes emotional, often humorous, always meaningful testimony tells us the stories of arriving on these shores from the point of view of those who sought to build new lives here (retrieved <http://www.mjhnyc.org/>).

The recorded stories are organized around the themes of “liberty, dreams, first impressions, adapting, home, leaving, the trip, object lessons, and lost in translation.” The audio stories describe personal anecdotes in the process of acculturation and assimilation, learning a language and encountering difference in the daily life in a new country. Stories range from the challenges of job hunting, finding one’s way around the city, to initial confusion (lost in translation) that the U.S. had a Jewish president named “Abe Lin Cohn,” and starting a new life without families intact.

In referring to these personal stories of transition as “testimony,” the MJH enshrines the shared experiences of new Jewish arrivals in New York regardless of the reason for their emigration in a thematically unified way. Not only are the stories captured and presented in a certain way, the visitor is encouraged to enact the role of witness. In this way the Keeping History Center enshrines the visitor into the exhibition experience as a listener-witness to the audio testimonies. The visitor has a role to play in the stories; they are as important to the stories as the stories themselves.

Aspects of visitor enshrinement also are evident on the MJH website where virtual visitors can choose a theme, listen to stories, and add their own story for inclusion in the exhibition. While at the museum, visitors listen to stories through headphones surrounded by large picture windows that look out onto the harbor and the Statue of Liberty reinforcing another level of the metaphor of enshrinement into the ideals of the country evident in the symbolic landscape.

The other installation in the Keeping History Center focuses on Andy Goldsworthy's first permanent commission in New York City, the “Garden of Stones,” a Holocaust

memorial and contemplative outdoor space positioned between the core exhibition building and the adjacent wing where visitors enter and exit the museum.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 39. Goldsworthy's Garden of Stones at the Museum of Jewish Heritage.

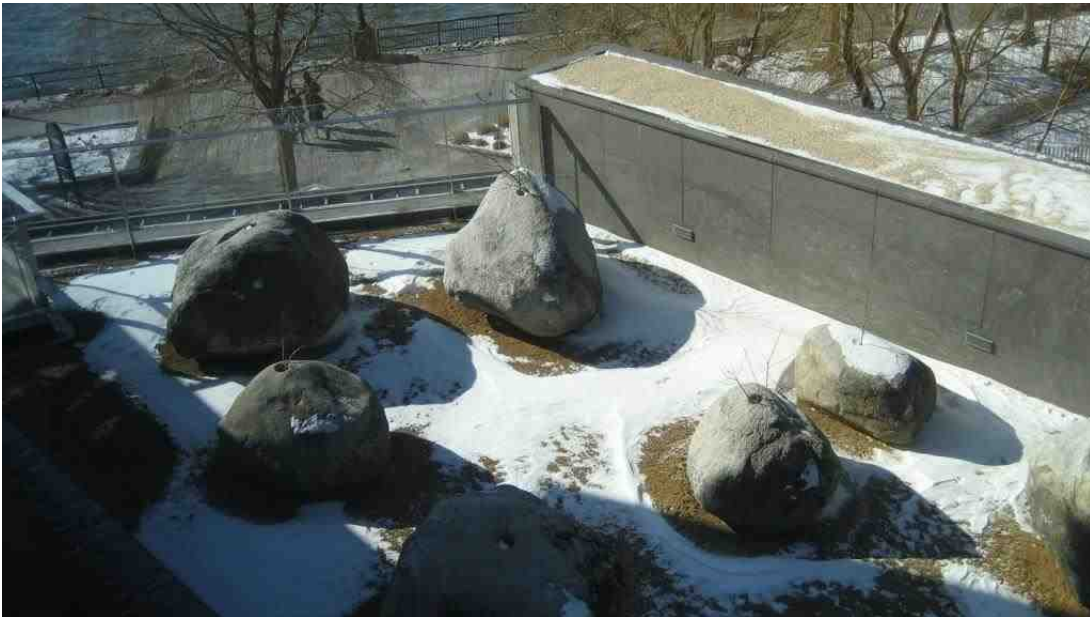


Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 40. Garden of Stones in snow at the Museum of Jewish Heritage

The Garden of Stones makes use of natural elements to communicate enshrinement and memorialize in symbolic ways:

Goldsworthy worked with nature's most elemental materials—stones, trees, and soil—to create a garden that is the artist's metaphor for the tenacity and fragility of life.

Eighteen boulders form a series of narrow pathways in the memorial garden's 4,150 foot space. A single dwarf oak sapling emerges from the top of each boulder, growing straight from the stone. As the trees mature in the coming years, each will grow to become a part of the stone, its trunk widening and fusing to the base (retrieved from <http://www.mjhnyc.org>).

The new Keeping History Center blurs the line between Goldsworthy's exhibition outside the museum with the exhibits within in an interactive exhibit entitled "Timekeeper." This exhibit talks about how the outdoor exhibit came to be and visually traces the growth and change of the now six-year old living installation through different seasons and conditions. Outside, Goldsworthy's installation enshrines the memory of those lost in the Holocaust into the unlikely natural setting inside a stone base with allusion to Jewish burial and memorial stones. Inside, the "Timekeeper" moves the MJH metaphor of enshrinement across time and space for the visitor to participate in the growth of the trees as a witness to the past. Both the outdoor installation and the indoor representation of it provide visitors with symbolic contemplative experiences to witness history.

There is an everydayness to certain aspects of the exhibition practices at the MJH that reinforce the metaphor of enshrinement that communicate an accessible and non-threatening tone to visitors and locate the museum as keeper of multiple life histories as suggested by the "living memorial" title of the museum. The use of first-person narratives in the introductory video, in the stories at the Keeping History Center, and in the visitor book adds a personal sense of enshrinement to the museum. Each visitor, in other words, creates a shrine of his or her own, adding to the larger preservation and memorializing of Jewish culture. This personalized sense contrasts with the murdered millions of the Holocaust—numbers hard to

imagine. When stories are brought down to a personal level, and visitors add to those stories, history becomes manageable and more meaningful.

Where the story begins and ends as well as which stories are enshrined in the MJH exhibition offer insight about institutional priorities and worldview. Louis Levine, Senior Advisor, Collections and Exhibitions at the MJH explains:

What the museum said was that we are a Jewish museum. We are a Holocaust museum but we are also a Jewish museum. Unlike Washington which is national Holocaust museum, and unlike Yad Vashem which is a national Holocaust museum that happens to be in a Jewish state—but I don't think Yad Vashem would identify itself as a *Jewish* museum. We called ourselves from the very beginning, the title was reversed at first, A Living Memorial to the Holocaust: Museum of Jewish Heritage. So it was right out there in front that we are a Jewish museum. And in order to tell the story Jewishly one thing that is quite remarkable is that the story doesn't begin in 1933. It doesn't start with Jews as victims. It starts with Jews as a living culture...so you have the context in which 1933 occurs. This museum does not end with simply saying the Holocaust ended. It goes on to talk about Jewish responses after the Holocaust. Which again is virtually absent in both Washington and Yad Vashem. (L. Levine, personal communication, August 4, 2008).

Levine's comments illustrate how the MJH intentionally enshrines the story of the Holocaust in the context of Jewish history, both past and future. The MJH presents the Jewish future as a response to the Holocaust and illustrates this with exhibition images that celebrate life primarily in the U.S. —but also in countries around the world, including Israel. Levine emphasizes that the Jewish future positioned at the endpoint of the MJH story is not

as constrained as the exhibition practices of Yad Vashem. He takes on a Talmudic (debate-oriented) internal dialogue with the museum in Israel to challenge the narrative authority of embedding Holocaust storytelling chiefly into the land (and imagination) of Israel:

And what Yad Vashem can say is “what are you talking about, you walk out on to the balcony you see the response.” It is this view that only their (Israeli) response is the response—that the two-thirds of the Jews in the world who don’t live in Israel don’t count. “What do you mean they don’t count? They have Jerusalem too, it’s all of our Jerusalem.” OK. We tried to say the end of the Holocaust was not the end of Jewish history, Jewish history continued. At least the idea is there in the visitor’s mind that there was something that happened after the Holocaust to Jews that didn’t involve death. (L. Levine, personal communication, August 4, 2008)

Exit Experience

Adjacent to the exit of the core exhibition on the third floor, the museumgoer comes upon a visitor-book installation. The book presented on a podium for visitors to write thoughts about their museum experience is another way in which enshrinement is communicated by the MJH. Positioned above the book is a video recording of the actual visitor book that literally projects history and runs in a continual edited loop illuminating images of quotes, pages of handwritten text, and visitors. The MJH facilitates dialogue between visitors and the exhibitions with the visitor book, and its placement near the exit provides the visitor with a participatory role to contribute before leaving the museum experience. As Noy (2008) explains, “located on the borderline between the inside and outside domains, it is a transformative communicative medium that facilitates a shift from impression to expression” (Noy, 2008, p. 185). The MJH the story ends with visitors

enshrined into the core exhibition where their opinions and reactions are recorded and collected into the museum's presentation of history and kept available as another sort of exhibit for others to see.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 41. Museum of Jewish Heritage visitor book at exit.

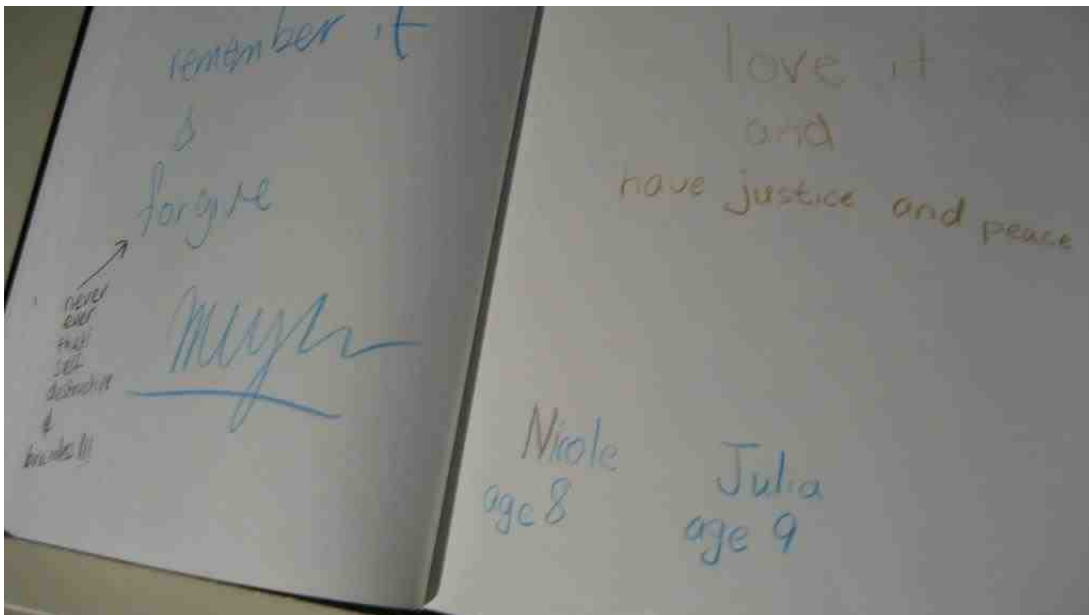


Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 42. Museum of Jewish Heritage visitor book with comments.

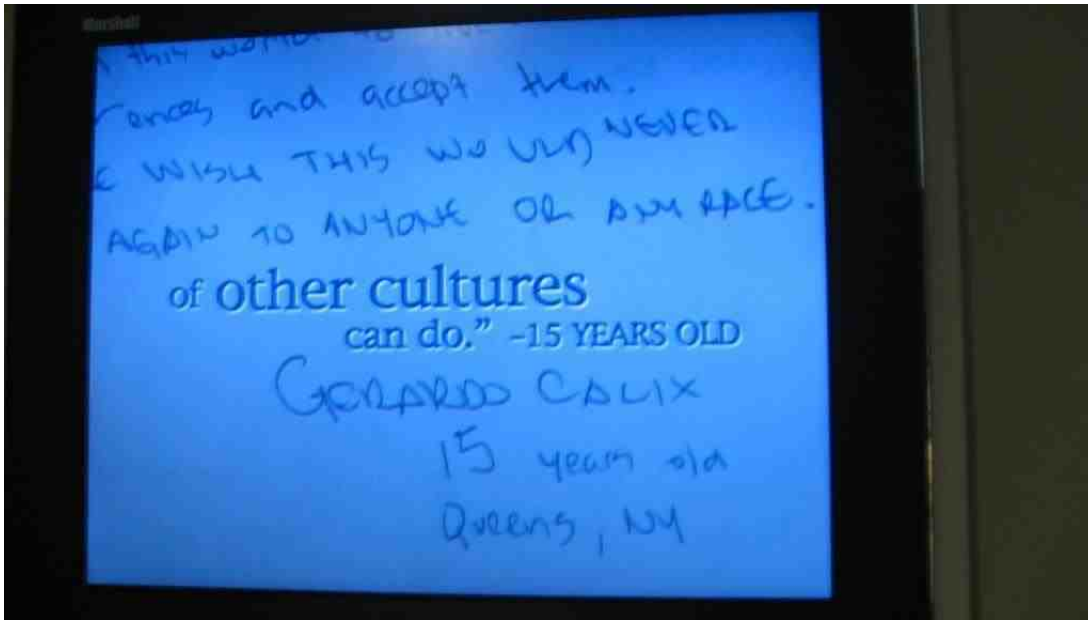


Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 43. Museum of Jewish Heritage visitor book on video.

After entering the museum from the wing at street level, visitors move through the upward spiral of the story and exit the low-light core exhibition space from the third floor across an elevated passageway with the bright LED light of an art installation and the natural light from windows that look onto the harbor. From dark to light, the MJH story begins and ends communicating a narrative of enshrinement of the visitor from pre-war, through the Holocaust, and ultimately to a new world.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 44. Museum of Jewish Heritage core exhibition exit.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 45. Museum of Jewish Heritage view from exhibition building exit.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 46. Museum of Jewish Heritage building complex view from exit to street.

Chapter Seven: Data Analysis

Contemporary Jewish Museum

San Francisco, California

Transcendence

Sitting in her office, museum director Connie Wolf told me a story about walking a friend of a friend, a seventy-ish year old man from San Diego, through the first-floor exhibition space that is about local Jewish communities in the San Francisco Bay area. Wolf explained, “he goes to Jewish museums all around the world wherever he travels, and he stopped, and he sort of had tears in his eyes and said, “you know I’ve been to so many Jewish museums and I’ve never seen a wall of living people. I only see walls of dead people.”

In this chapter, I will analyze what is communicated by the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco. Interested in how Jewishness is presented in these four museums, the Contemporary Jewish Museum is the newest and most unconventional of the museums I investigated. I will argue that the metaphor of *transcendence* captures the essence of the story or narrative this museum tells. For the purpose of this analysis the metaphor of transcendence is defined as growing out of but not limited by history in the creation of new ways of being. This chapter will illustrate the various ways that transcendence functions and is communicated in the museum’s organization and self-understanding, architecture, landscape, sense of place, and exhibition practices.

Organization and Self-Presentation

The Contemporary Jewish Museum (CJM) is the most recently built museum site discussed in this analysis. Moving to a new location in downtown San Francisco in 2008, the

museum has been an institution for 25 years. It was previously known as The Jewish Museum of San Francisco and located in a less-visible lobby space of the Jewish community federation building downtown on Steuart Street.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 47. Contemporary Jewish Museum building exterior.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 48. Contemporary Jewish Museum building dedication plaque.

Since its inception, the mission of the Contemporary Jewish Museum has been to be a non-collecting institution, and today, the CJM maintains no core permanent collection. Connie Wolf, director and chief operating officer, explains the origins of the CJM’s contemporary vision:

When the museum was founded 25 years ago it was the decision of the founders of the museum. There was a Jewish historical museum across the bay in Berkeley—and they thought that the museum is something that is very contemporary and should not be held by the limitations of a collection but be open to the opportunities that

collections from all over the world and that museums all over the world afford. (C. Wolf, personal communication, July 20, 2009)

Architecture, Landscape, and Place

Open since 2008, the new Contemporary Jewish Museum (CJM) in San Francisco was built by the architectural firm Studio Daniel Libeskind. The building was designed to represent symbolic Jewish concepts through the modern adaptation of a historic reuse of the downtown Pacific Gas and Electric power substation that remained intact after the city's infamous 1906 earthquake. The entire organization of the CJM occupies the two-floor building with exhibitions on both levels, a kosher-style café and museum shop on the first floor, and administrative offices on the second floor. These administrative offices are beyond public view, accessible through a security entrance behind the building. The Jessie Street Square leading up to the CJM entrance is a wide city space shared with the church next door; the square provides a park-like setting for this busy urban downtown setting. A reflecting pool is situated parallel to the front of the building and between the building and the street. Located near Union Square and south of Market Street in San Francisco, the CJM is part of a downtown-revitalization project in the Yerba Buena cultural district.

The CJM building was designed by American-born, Polish architect Daniel Libeskind, whose numerous high-profile projects include the Jewish Museum Berlin, Danish Jewish Museum in Copenhagen, the MGM Mirage City Center in Las Vegas, and a new wing for the Denver Art Museum. As an adaptive reuse of the Pacific Gas and Electric power substation that restored energy to San Francisco after the devastation of the 1906 earthquake the CJM retains the brick façade of the original substation designed by architect Willis Polk. Polk was designing buildings at the beginning of the 20th century when the city's beautiful

architectural movement was taking place, a style marked by the terra-cotta detailed ornamentation seen around the CJM windows and doorways. In the reuse project, Libeskind created, as a CJM docent explains, an architectural “conversation” between his work and the previous life of the building (personal communication, December 27, 2009).

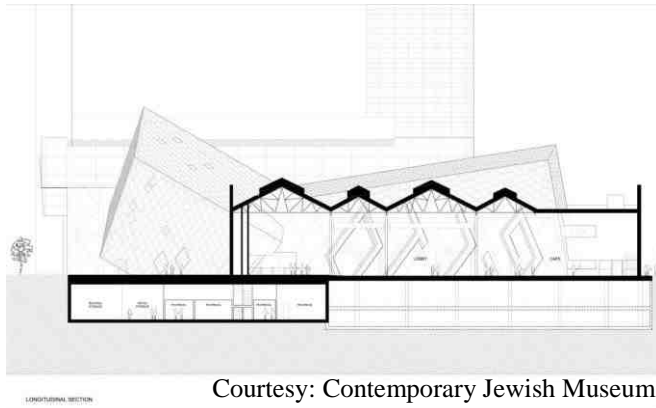
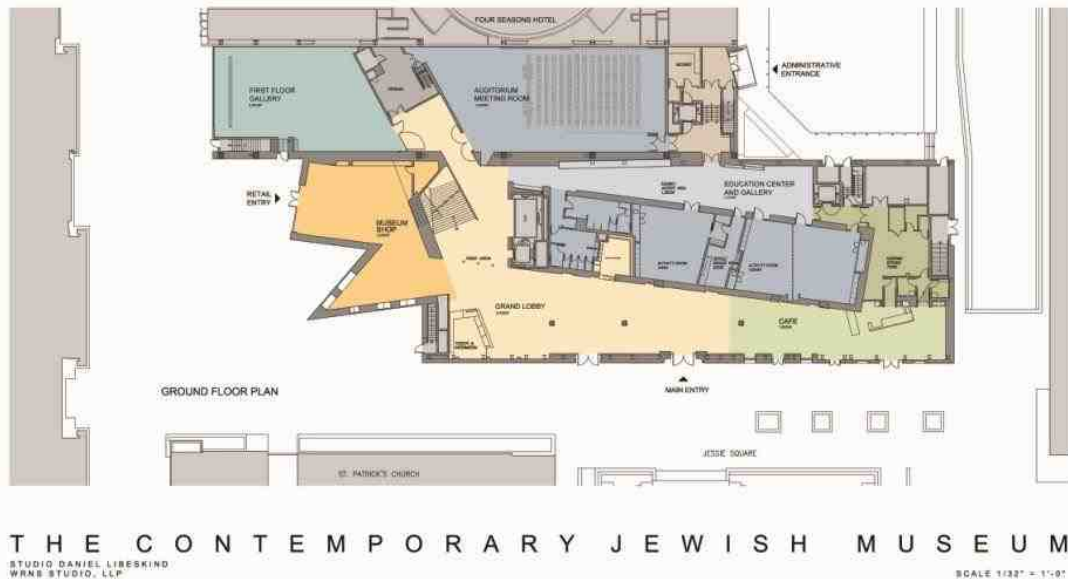


Figure 49. Longitudinal section of the Contemporary Jewish Museum building.



Courtesy: Contemporary Jewish Museum

Figure 50. Contemporary Jewish Museum first floor plan.

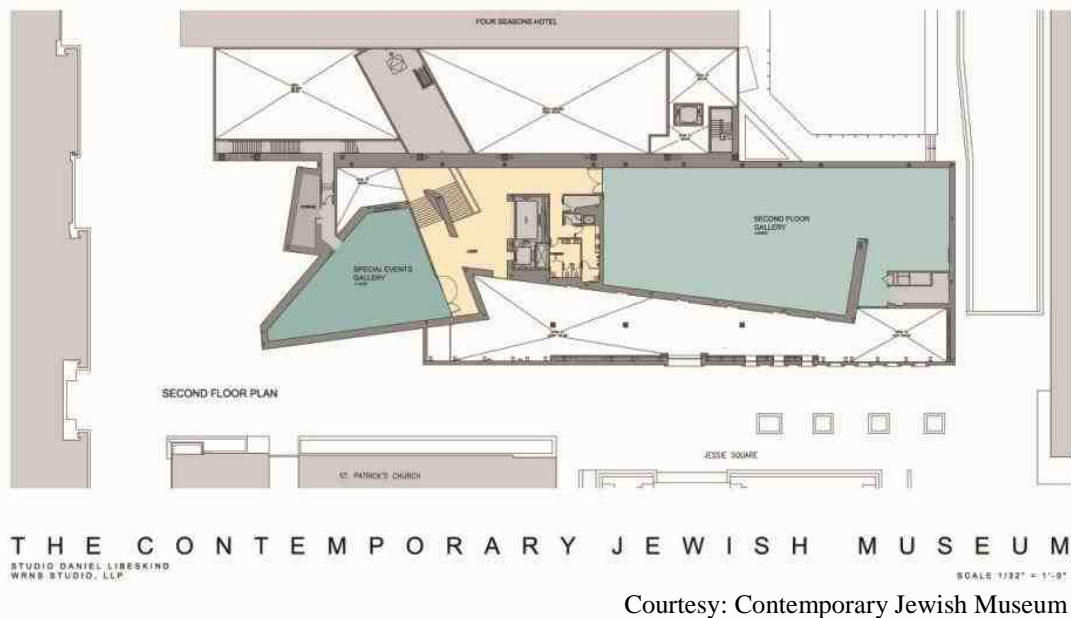


Figure 51. Contemporary Jewish Museum second floor plan.

Themes of old and new worlds are evident in the adaptive reuse not just of the façade but also in the lobby’s exposed structure—an emblem of postmodern design. What is exposed in the lobby tells fragments of a story; the double-tracked geared crane system and triangular trusses that moved equipment from one end of the building to another are part of the past and were repainted a solid industrial gray color. Glazed terra cotta tiles look old but are new and are as close to the original as Libeskind could locate. The bricks are original; the brown metal seismic bracing on the brick is new. The famous façade was stabilized in order for the construction to take place below and around it. These aspects of old/new are synthesized into the CJM, transcending time and space concurrently.

Inside, on the lobby wall, the symbolic *Pardes* design takes the shape of Hebrew letters in fluorescent lights. An ancient Persian word, *Pardes* in Hebrew means *orchard*, and

is also the basis of the English word paradise. In Kabbalah, *Pardes* [levels of meaning] is actually an acronym for the Hebrew letters (*pey, resh, dalet, samech*) each of which, according to Jewish mysticism, represents levels of meaning (literal, allegorical, personal, and mystical) achievable through *Torah* [five books of Moses] study. The *Pardes* design form continues to the floor in tile and is illustrated in the longitudinal section of the building in Fig. 49 and evident in photographs Fig. 52 and Fig. 53. This symbolic Hebrew letter lobby design is described in a press release about the museum:

Each letter is embedded into the structure of the wall and illuminated, creating a visually dynamic atmosphere in the grand lobby...and embodies the Contemporary Jewish Museum's philosophy of embracing multiple interpretations and layers of meaning through its artistic and educational programs. (CJM, "Symbolism in the Building," n.d).

In the lobby, too, the four levels attributed to *Pardes* in the understanding discussed in the *Torah* exhibition also apply. Through the use of symbolic design, Libeskind wanted visitors to dig deeper beyond the literal appreciation of the building and connect with the multiple levels of experiences possible at the CJM.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 52. Contemporary Jewish Museum Pardes lobby wall.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 53. Contemporary Jewish Museum Pardes lobby wall.

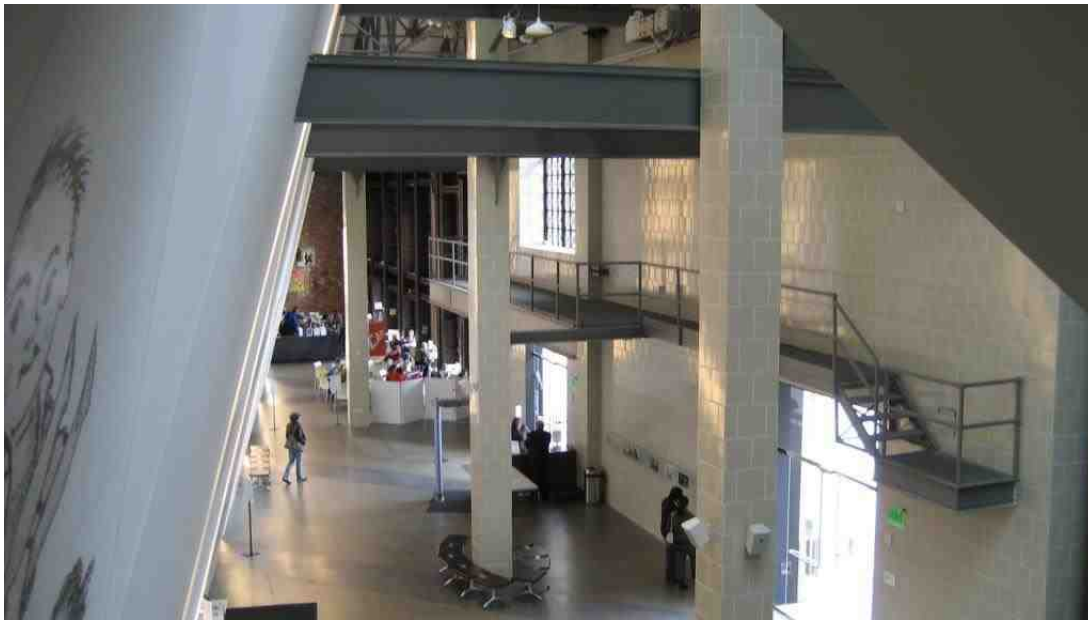


Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 54. Contemporary Jewish Museum lobby view from second floor.

In addition to the *Pardes* lobby, Libeskind, (who is Jewish), designed the CJM to reflect both the past history and present use of the building around another central conceptual Jewish symbol. The first, *L'Chaim* [to life], is comprised of two letters, *Chet* and *Yud*, whose *gematria* [mystical letter combination] add up to the number eighteen and are representative of life. This symbol is designed to infuse the CJM with a sense of vitality and life force. The *Chet* is visible only from an aerial perspective while the *Yud* grabs the attention of passersby (who frequently take photographs of one another in front of it) with its blue steel exterior cube form (replicated in much of the museum's press material and on key chains, neckties, and magnets in the gift shop). The portion of the cube that juts into the interior space is used as a second-floor gallery. The "Yud Gallery" maintains a sixty-foot high ceiling, no forty-five degree walls, and thirty-six (double *Chai*) diamond-shaped skylights. Wefing (2004) explains that the metaphor of *Chai* can be interpreted in several ways:

It describes the intent to revitalize the defunct power plant by giving it a new function; it reflects the curator's hope that the planned museum would invigorate the debate on the significance of Jewish tradition for the present and future; and it was part of the project to revive the power plant's surroundings, the rundown area south of Market by establishing cultural institutions such as Mario Botta's San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Not least of all, *L'Chaim* represented a further example of Libeskind's art of providing his buildings with a superstructure of ideas. (Wefing, 2004, p. 87)

While the wall angles and numerous skylights of the "Yud Gallery" are not ideally suited for hanging and viewing art in a typical manner, it does offer a non-traditional space for exhibitions such as the "Jews on Vinyl" listening room, which is guest-curated and based on the book "And you Shall Know us by the Trail of our Vinyl." Libeskind located the skylights at various points around the space with several placed such that visitors can stand and look out onto the pedestrian walkways or to the rear of the neighboring church where I saw altar boys in white robes peeking out the back door.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 55. Contemporary Jewish Museum Yud Gallery window to church.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 56. Contemporary Jewish Museum Yud Gallery ceiling.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 57. Contemporary Jewish Museum Yud Gallery space.

From the perspective of the visitor inside or outside the building, the Jewish concepts central to the design may not be immediately apparent. Certainly literal meaning or even transparency is not the goal of design symbolism. Reinforced by museum-press materials and news coverage of the building's opening that publicized details of the new museum, many visitors are aware of the CJM architect and of the Jewish concepts that he used as an organizing principle for design. I spoke with the CJM Director Connie Wolf about how visitors engage with the conceptual aspects of the building. Wolf explains,

it actually confuses visitors because they want it be literal, they say, "I don't see the Hebrew letter." It's conceptual and not at all tangible. Whereas in the lobby we have the *Pardes* letters in the lobby and those are very literal, so the people get confused by the literalness on one side and the conceptual or principle on the other. But the reason Daniel was chosen was because he really does imbue his architecture with

meaning and with symbolism. So you walk in and visitors may not understand what's on the *Pardes*; you may not understand that those are actually Hebrew letters and that's ok. But you feel a sense of history, I would hope people feel a sense of history and a sense of something moving forward and how history and contemporary life are always in dialogue. People say, "where's the *Chai*? I don't see it." But that doesn't worry me because that wasn't intended to be that way, they are looking for something more tangible, which it's not. (C. Wolf, personal communication, July 20, 2009)

The CJM building communicates transcendence in multiple ways consistent with the museum's philosophy. Informed by its power-substation history, the cultural (and environmental) conservation factors of structural reuse, and architectural design, it is possible for the visitor to translate museum experiences in symbolic and tangible ways and generate meaning on partial and multiple levels.

Beyond the building itself there are noteworthy factors that resonate with the communication of transcendence for the CJM. In the vicinity of skyscrapers in downtown San Francisco and near the Moscone Center and Union Square, the CJM participates in an urban landscape "not wholly visible from anywhere, but seen from everywhere in context with its neighbors" adjacent to the historic St. Patrick's Catholic Church, and as part of the Yerba Buena Cultural District that includes a Martin Luther King Memorial, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), pedestrian areas, gardens, and fountain (Young, 2008, p. 58).



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 58. Contemporary Jewish Museum with blue steel Yud and church.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 59. Contemporary Jewish Museum view from Jessie square.

Architecturally, the metaphor of transcendence is furthered by the context of Libeskind's Berlin Jewish Museum project that is frequently referenced in comparison to the Contemporary Jewish Museum as does the 2008 CJM catalogue *Daniel Libeskind and the Contemporary Jewish Museum: New Jewish Architecture from Berlin to San Francisco*, edited by museum Director Connie Wolf. In addition, transcendence is communicated when one contrasts the CJM landscape of the city of San Francisco with Berlin's landscape and "German discourses of guilt and compulsory public memory" (Rogoff, 1998, p. 34). In the context of Libeskind's previous museum project for the Berlin Jewish Museum, a space designed to communicate absence and disorientation, the CJM has been seen as an architectural move away from the narrative confines of representing German Jewish history. Schwarzer explains,

Libeskind seized on the positive opportunity presented by the California Jewish experience. "Especially as an architect who has dealt with a lot of dark history that affected the Jews," he reflects, "I realized we could create a building that celebrated life in San Francisco, in the Bay Area, which was a life of possibilities, of beauty, of openness, really of America in its most vibrant and aspiring state." (Schwarzer, 2008, p.49)

Because it is located in San Francisco, the CJM transcends Jewish history as it merges with the United States mythology of the West and the new lives made possible through westward expansion. The myth is furthered by notions that situate San Francisco in relation to ancient civilizations and in doing so reinforce the CJM narrative landscape and discourse of transcendence. Schwarzer adds,

Nowhere else in the world—not Babylon nor Rome nor Sepharad nor Ashkenaz—had so many Jews participated in the commercial development of a city and not been consigned to lasting second-class status. It must be said that amid the long history of worldwide Jewish persecution, San Francisco and California stand as blessed anomalies. (Schwarzer, 2008, p.48)

The uniqueness of San Francisco notwithstanding, Jewish communities in other U.S. cities (such as the existence of a Jewish mayor and state senator in New York) would also be considered lasting examples of Jewish integration into “dominant” culture. Nevertheless new Jewish worldviews in California provide a highly relevant landscape in which the CJM communicates a narrative of transcendence in the creation of new worlds seemingly unconstrained by history. From this exploration of the metaphor of transcendence communicated in regard to architecture, landscape, and sense of place I move to an analysis of the ways the metaphor functions as the visitor enters the building and experiences the CJM exhibition.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 60. Contemporary Jewish Museum view from Mission Street.

Entrance Experience

At the entrance to the Contemporary Jewish Museum visitors will notice a silver metal building shaped *mezuzah* [doorpost] mounted on the right side of the doorframe that is a miniature of the building design. In Judaism, the mezuzah is not considered a good-luck charm but actually is meant to be a reminder of the commandments, and traditionally Jews kiss their fingers and touch them to the mezuzah upon entering and exiting the home (or other Jewish facility). It is the building shape of this mezuzah that communicates the metaphor of transcendence as symbolic replica of the very building upon which it is placed.

In this sense it is transcendent of time and space when one considers the visitor touching the mezuzah while walking into the life-sized image of it.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 61. Contemporary Jewish Museum building shape mezuzah.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 62. Contemporary Jewish Museum entrance and lobby.

The security entrance at CJM is somewhat played down and presented in a less imposing way with welcoming (and almost apologetic) guards than at many other museums I have visited. After the visitor moves through the secured entrance, he or she is in the main lobby of the museum with the information and ticket desk located in the corner to the left, adjacent to the museum shop and nestled under the white interior walls that jut inside from the building's exterior blue steel Yud cube.

The lobby presents the most visible aspects of the historic restoration of the building; visitors can see in a mixture of surface textures and materials that include original brick, new tile, steel seismic bracing, and concrete. It is a bright space filled primarily with natural light, white walls, and light gray floors. The lobby communicates the ways the new museum has transcended the old building as well as the old function of the building.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 63. Contemporary Jewish Museum lobby and information desk.

Exhibition Practices

At the 2009 convention of the Council of American Jewish Museums (CAJM), held in New York City, a then-CJM curator referred to the new museum as a “non-narrative” institution, which caused reactions among the audience of museum professionals from curiosity to skepticism at the *chutzpah* [absolute nerve] of such an idea. Wolf explains:

I’m not interested in visitors leaving with a story. We often use and refer to a phrase we have kind of worked with over the years—the phrase is—come with answers leave with questions—so I’m much more interested in the element of questioning,

discussion, debate, examination, reflection...just the idea of questioning and questioning one's own role in contemporary life. (C. Wolf, personal communication, July 20, 2009)

With the exception of only one ongoing exhibit entitled "Being Jewish: A Bay Area Portrait," the museum presents only temporary exhibitions organized by CJM staff and guest curators. While the telling of stories through objects or exhibition is a common function of the museum, the dominant narrative communicated by the leadership of the CJM transcends that of a typical museum.

"Being Jewish: A Bay Area Portrait" is a diorama-style collection of photographs, solicited from Bay Area communities, groups, and individuals. These are mounted behind glass on a wall and show people engaged in Jewish rituals, lifecycle events, bar and bat mitzvah ceremonies, and the like. Among the images is one of four bearded, *tzitzit*- [fringes or tassels] wearing orthodox men carrying a surfboard. Positioned in the case with the photographs are objects that include political-campaign and slogan buttons, a *tzedakah* [charity] box, *kiddush* [sanctification] ritual wine cup, and *menorah* [candelabra]. More than 200,000 Jews populate the Bay Area, and the exhibit presents a "dialogue, the objects and the photographs present a portrait, with room for interpretation and elaboration, of the many different ways of "being Jewish" in the Bay Area today" (retrieved from <http://www.thecjm.org>).



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 64. Contemporary Jewish Museum “Being Jewish” exhibit.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 65. Contemporary Jewish Museum “Being Jewish” exhibit objects.

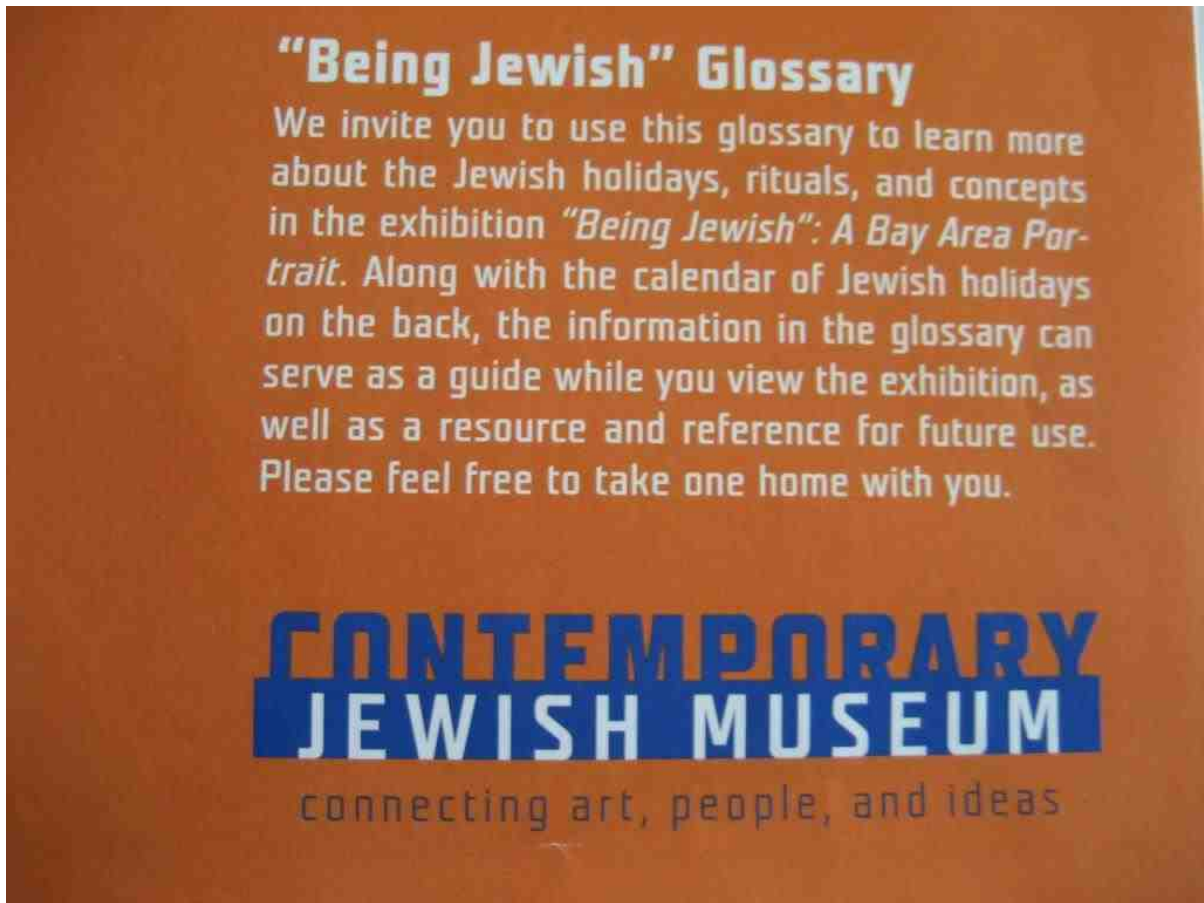


Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 66. Contemporary Jewish Museum "Being Jewish" exhibition guide.

With "Being Jewish" the metaphor of transcendence is communicated by the CJM through the act of soliciting community input in order to "collect" themselves. In this way the museum extends interest in self-expression and self-representation as well as in regard to visitor reception of the display with a wall sign requesting feedback placed above a visitor book adjacent to the exhibit.

Accompanying the display is the "Being Jewish" Glossary exhibit guide that includes definitions of Jewish concepts and places of significant to Jews in the Bay area from Ashkenazi to Yosemite. The exhibit guide defines holidays and ritual objects, and includes

entries for Levi Strauss, a Bavarian Jew who immigrated to the U.S. during the Gold Rush to open a dry goods business in the West; and Camp Towanga, a Jewish summer camp located near Yosemite National Park. The guide explains the Bay Area is the third largest urban Jewish population in the U.S. after New York and Los Angeles and also includes a multi-year calendar of Jewish holidays. The CJM demonstrates transcendence with the exhibition guide by presenting not only a fact sheet of Jewish customs and concepts but moves beyond the space of the museum to connect visitors with resources to the living history of the Bay Area and their own Jewish consciousness.

A visitor book for comments is positioned adjacent to the exhibit, and two recent entries are noteworthy to explore as part of this analysis. One comment written by a visitor in December 2009 states, “I do not appreciate the pictures glorifying the lesbians marrying. Did you have to show the picture twice? This is not celebrating life. This is not *L’chaim!* What does the Torah say?” It is interesting that the visitor invokes *L’chaim*, the museum’s symbolic framework for celebrating life in the intolerance for the representation of the diversity of sexual orientation. The comment also seeks to instruct the CJM by invoking the Torah as a way to suggest that the image of the lesbian wedding is incompatible with Jewish law (there is no mention of lesbians in the Torah) and therefore not kosher for representation (even in San Francisco). Another visitor comment expresses, “It’s apparent from all these photos that there are no disabled Jews in the SF Bay Area! We’ll send photos.” It is interesting that visitors who do not see themselves represented are provoked to give voice to their identities and even to offer their own images for inclusion in order to expand the truth of the exhibition. The visitor comments are interesting in the illustration that people are paying attention and feel free to speak up about what they find offensive. The exhibition

seeks to present a dialogue between photos and object but transcends this dialogue to facilitate interaction between visitors and the museum, and among other visitors who read the entries as well as contribute their own.

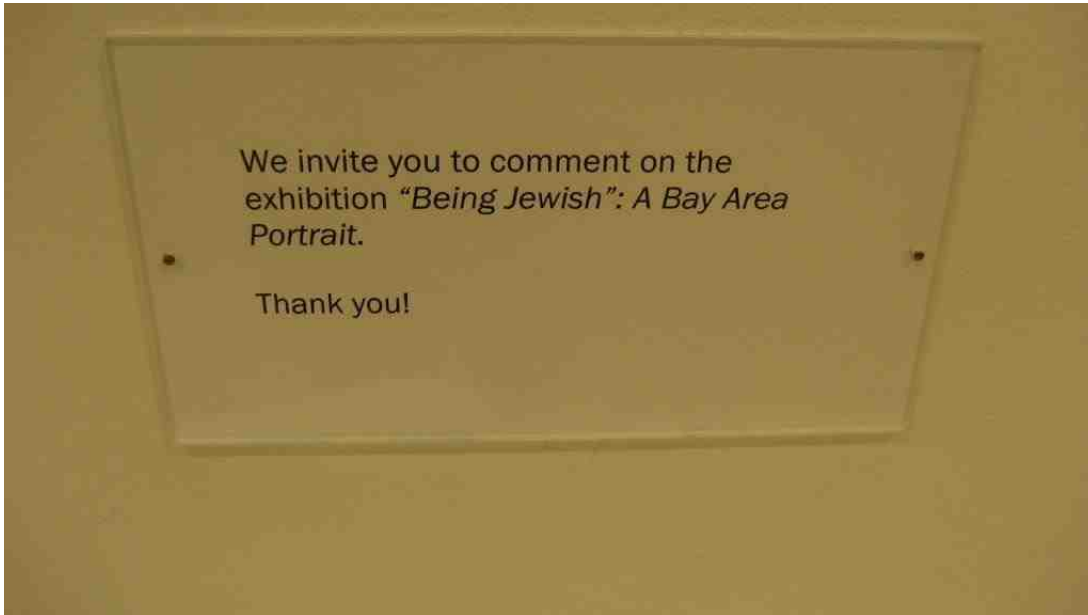


Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 67. Contemporary Jewish Museum visitor book label.

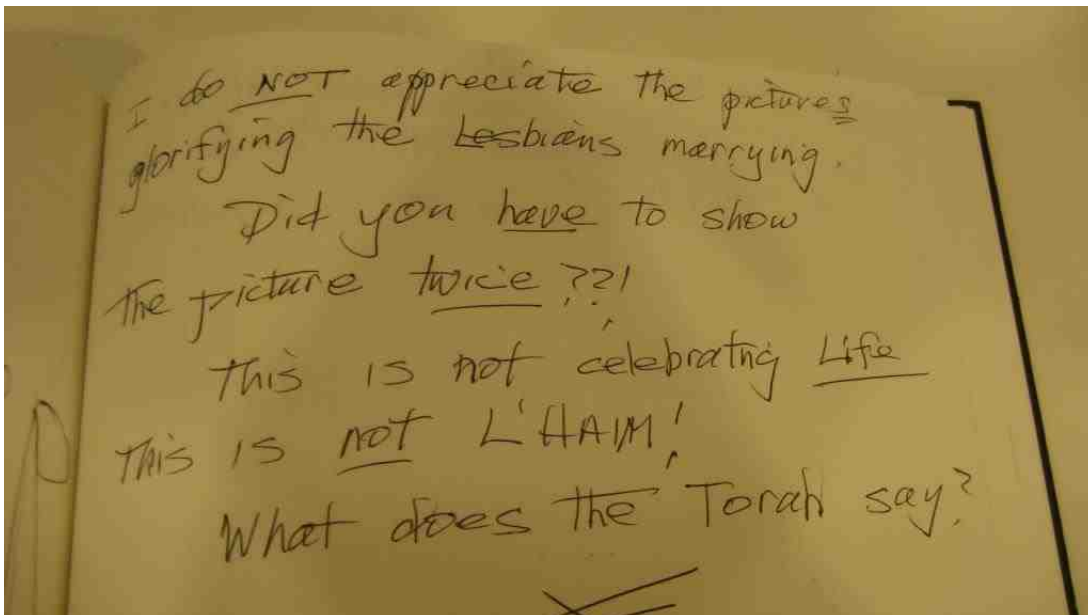


Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 68. Contemporary Jewish Museum visitor book entry.

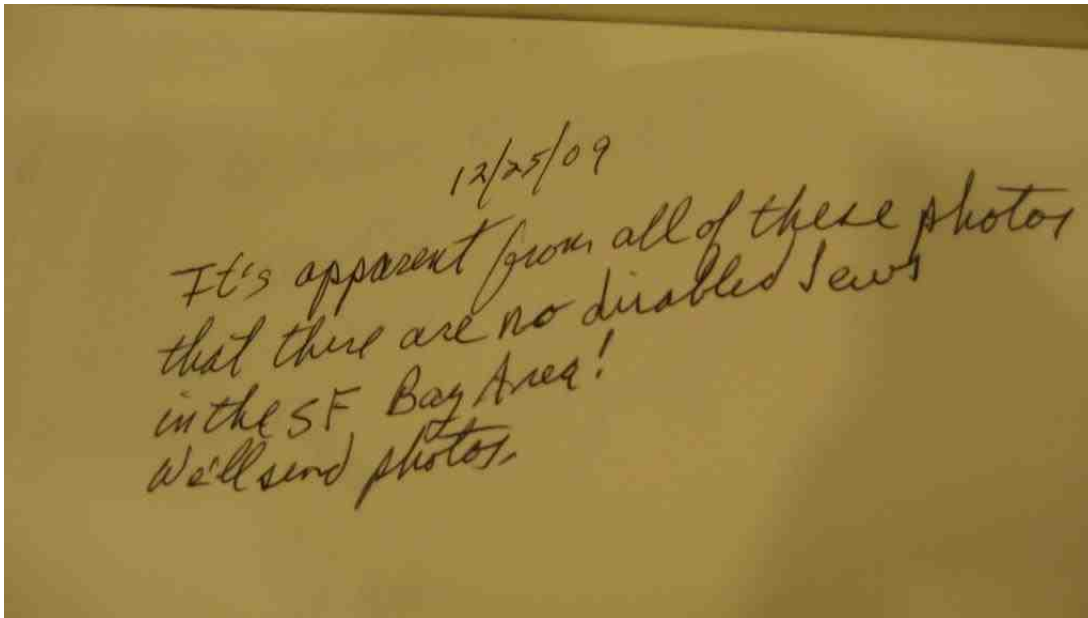


Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 69. Contemporary Jewish Museum visitor book entry.

Temporary or traveling exhibitions offer museums the opportunity to present art and ideas beyond their own collections, put forth controversial concepts for short periods of time, or reframe collected objects in new ways. Since the CJM is a non-collecting institution, their entire exhibition agenda centers on time-limited rotating presentational tactics. Among the temporary exhibitions on display, the CJM was the first museum in the country to host Storycorps, a traveling national oral history project heard on National Public Radio and seen traveling across the states in a silver airstream trailer. The Storycorps was explained in a press release about the CJM:

Since 2003, StoryCorps has brought together thousands of people from across generational, professional, socio-economic, and cultural divides to share their life stories, history, and hopes. Aired each Friday on National Public Radio's Morning Edition, StoryCorps' award-winning broadcasts touch millions by illuminating our

common humanity through personal experiences that reflect contemporary American culture. (CJM, “StoryCorps Storybooth”, n.d.)

Exhibited at the CJM, the Storybooth is an active recording booth where museum visitors are able to tell their Jewish life stories that will be archived at the Library of Congress to become part of the American historical record. The Storycorps project itself is transcendent as an oral history and self-expressive endeavor taken to the streets, and the Storybooth exhibit takes the project to another level. For two years the CJM is the physical host to an otherwise moving project transcending the role of the museum as a facilitator of real-time oral history. The visitors move through the CJM space and to the Storybooth to record present-day voices and stories for inclusion into part of a permanent national historical record. In addition, the Storybooth exhibit communicates the transcendence of traditional research subjects where the everyday, ordinary person is the focus—the CJM has transcended definitions of proper research and appropriate research subjects.



Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 70. StoryCorps Storybooth at the Contemporary Jewish Museum.

Another temporary exhibit communicates the metaphor of transcendence in a number of significant ways. The exhibit, “As It Is Written: Project 304,805,” curated by the CJM, presents multiple levels of content about the Torah, which is considered the holiest of Jewish texts. The Torah consists of the first five books of the bible commonly referred to as the “Old Testament.” In the traditional form for ritual use, a Torah is a hand-lettered scroll written on multiple pieces of parchment and sewn together, but it is also widely printed and bound in book form for reference and study.

The exhibition title refers to the commission of a Torah scroll by the CJM where exhibit visitors can experience the live action public ritual of the writing Torah, all 304,805 letters. Over the course of one year Julie Seltzer, a *soferet* [scribe] will complete the writing of a Torah as one part of the exhibition while a close-up real-time camera feed projects the process onto a wall nearby. Just two years into the business of writing sacred Jewish text, this will be Seltzer’s (and the CJM’s) first Torah project.

As a public ritual, this exhibit communicates a narrative of transcendence since traditionally the Torah is kept scrolled and covered up when not in use during ritual functions. Unless participating in the service for the reading of the Torah, few people see one laid open or close enough to observe the detailed ornamentation of the hand lettering or the texture of the parchment.

Significant in the communication of transcendence, too, is the relationship of women to Jewish ritual life. In traditionally observant modes of Jewish practice as is the case in virtually all Orthodox community circles (but also common to the Conservative movement’s religious communities), women do not have direct access to the Torah. There are certainly thriving observant *and* progressive communities, mostly in the U.S. and Israel, but also

around the world who welcome women as full participants in Jewish ritual life; prestigious theological seminaries exist that also honor women rabbis with *smicha* [ordination]. Yet when Jewish law is interpreted through conventional, conservative points of view, women typically are not trained to become rabbis, women do not read from (or are not called to) the Torah in synagogue, and in these traditionally defined realms women certainly do not write sacred texts. In a “Conversations with the Scribe” program at the CJM, Seltzer explained, “there are maybe eight to ten women who are scribes worldwide in England, Canada, Brazil, Israel, and the U.S.” Julie Seltzer’s teacher is Jen Taylor Friedman who, at age 30, may be the only woman to date who is known to have completed an entire Torah.

The impact of the CJM exhibition and discussion programs for the museumgoer is significant as it relates to the transcendent nature of the narratives communicated. When I asked Seltzer what one of the most interesting questions she has been asked by a visitor was she replied, “Are men also scribes?” New normative notions are being fixed in the minds of CJM visitors in regard to gender and Judaism. One wonders if the transcending of normative boundaries in regard to Torah through the public display of a female scribe would take place in New York- or Jerusalem-based exhibitions.

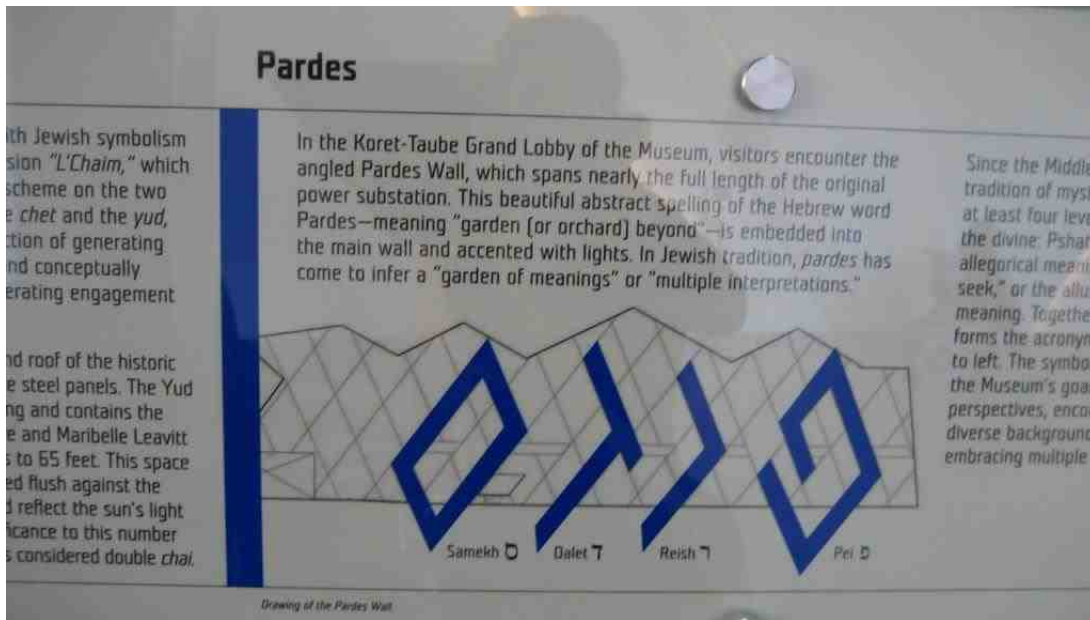


Photo by Judith F. Stauber

Figure 71. Logo of Pardes lobby in the Contemporary Jewish Museum.

Additional aspects of the exhibit “As It Is Written: Project 304,805” are significant in the communication of transcendent narratives specifically in regard to the shifting of subject/object positions for the visitor in the museum, and for the museum itself. Located between the gallery entrance and the scribe’s area, positioned horizontally on a long wall above the length of an un-scrolled, glass-encased torah is the printed phrase “Interpreting the Torah.” Beneath this headline various printed words position historical contexts of the Torah in an undated timeline-like framework. The contexts represented include the words “*Halacha*” [Jewish law], “*Kabbalah*” [Jewish mysticism], and “*Gematria*,” [Kabbalistic system assigning numeric value to individual Hebrew letters] in addition to “Holocaust Torahs,” a reference to the few not burned by the Nazis, and “Rescuing Torahs,” accompanied by a photograph of men carrying a Torah through waist-deep water out of a flooded New Orleans synagogue in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Here again, one

wonders if an exhibit that describes and contextualizes Torah for visitors rather than assumes implied audience knowledge would be curated in Jerusalem or New York.

Also listed among the contexts that interpret the concept of Torah is the word “*Pardes*.” Unlike all the other text screened directly onto the wall under the title “Interpreting the Torah,” the word *Pardes* is printed in Hebrew characters on a raised rectangular board and is the exact copy of an image used in the lobby timeline that describes the history of the CJM building as a “new landmark” for San Francisco. One floor below the exhibit, the *Pardes* Torah timeline image is not just a copy of an image in the historic timeline of the museum, but also a one-dimensional logo version of a symbolic three-dimensional design for the lobby created by architect Daniel Libeskind. At first glance the exhibition wall presents an uncomplicated (and in doing so offers a non-threatening) approach to contextualize the Torah for a variety of museum audiences. The decision to include the representation of the CJM building design into the framework of the exhibition timeline communicates the museum’s narrative of transcendence by positioning both the visitor (and the museum) inside the timeline. The inclusion of the logo communicates transcendence on multiple levels in terms of time and space, and subject and object. The visitor becomes a character in the museum’s narrative, and the museum becomes part of Jewish history not, just as a contemporary Jewish art institution designed by a Jewish architect, but also in the sacred context of Torah.

Exit Experience

The visitor to the CJM leaves the museum through the same doors by which they entered. The visitor returns to the lobby, a site of transition between the celebration of Jewish culture and the city of San Francisco itself. The references to the old power substation remind

visitors of the ways transcendence continually operates in a culture—a building that once functioned to provide power is transformed into a museum; a religion that traditionally limited the access of women highlights a female scribe copying the Torah. There is the suggestion here that anything and everything is subject to transcendence; there is always another level or perspective or lens through which something can be viewed. In the case of the CJM, they have transcended specifics of Jewish experience to encompass both Jew and non-Jew, male and female, culture and contemporary in their view of Judaism.

Chapter Eight: Discussion and Conclusions

Back at home in New Mexico after travel to the four museum sites in this study—I know the desert is a place of significance for Jews as a landscape of placelessness where Jewish wandering began—and in the Southwest this “other” desert is uniquely suited for a Jewish museum. New Mexico is located at a crossroads of the Jewish experience in the United States—a place where Ashkenazi movement from east to west intersects with Sephardic migration from south to north. In many ways New Mexico’s Jewish cultural history is interconnected with Native, Hispanic, and other populations around the state contributing to the state’s uniqueness of place. Place and passage are contained in the concept of diaspora—and no matter how grounded or integrated into dominant culture it is a common thread that weaves in between all sorts of Jewish people.

In this chapter I will summarize highlights of the findings discussed regarding the way four Jewish museum sites tell stories about Jewish life and culture. The sites include The Jewish Museum in New York City; The Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem; The Museum of Jewish Heritage--A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in New York City; and the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco. Each museum presents Jewish life, heritage, and history in different ways, and all are contained in architecturally distinct buildings positioned amid unique urban landscapes. Following the discussion, I will present implications of the findings in terms of understanding broader conceptions of Jewishness and what the stories told by these museums communicate about Jewish culture. I will also indicate what these findings illuminate about the future directions of museums. I

then will present the implications of this research in terms of the contributions it makes to the field of communication and finally propose areas of research for future study.

Throughout this study, I have sought to understand Jewish life through the strategies of self-presentation in which museums engage and how the representations of Jewish culture communicate Jewish worldviews. My main research question has been to understand the way Jewish museum narratives function to generate and negotiate meaning about Jewish life and culture. I have been interested in what is and what is not communicated about Jewish culture in order to interpret the ways Jewish museum narratives, strategies, stories, and metaphors communicate symbolic worldviews by and about Jewish people.

In this study I have made use of rhetorical methods in order to understand how these four museums see and present themselves to their publics. In keeping with contemporary understandings of rhetoric as involving any kind of symbolic text or artifact, I have situated Jewish museums themselves as cultural products, or texts, to which communication frameworks are applied. From the clustering of data that emerged from the many texts I examined, I identified metaphors that functioned narratively to help characterize each museum's presentation of Jewish culture.

The metaphors of rootedness, embeddedness, enshrinement, and transcendence provide an interpretive framework to help identify and map the function of museum stories and understand the ways Jewish heritage, art, the Holocaust, and culture are presented by contemporary Jewish museums in the U.S and in Israel. For each site, I described and analyzed the four metaphors that characterize each site, drawing on the levels of narrative that make up the museum experience: organizational self-presentation, architecture, landscape, and exhibition practices.

Each metaphor—rootedness, embeddedness, enshrinement, and transcendence—represents a container for aspects of Jewish culture that, when taken together, provides a broader view of Jewish lives, values, and history as they function in contemporary culture than any one metaphor does on its own. *Kabbalistic* [Jewish mystical] thought conceptualizes vessels, or in other words, containers as that which allows forms to come into being. Jewish mysticism understands that “the function of consciousness and knowledge is to produce vessels” (Bonder, 1999, p.13). As containers, the metaphors set forth in this study have illuminated the ways the museums hold some stories of Jewish culture and also serve to limit, control, and even ignore the telling of others.

As containers, the metaphors become embodiments of Jewishness itself highlighting a directionality and movement that resonates with the diasporic experience of Jewish history. It is in this way that the stories told by these four Jewish museums function to generate and negotiate meaning about Jewish life and culture and taken together all four metaphors tell a story about Jewish diasporic history in a broader scope than each can accomplish on its own. The following presents a brief summary of the findings identified through the use of metaphors that serve to offer understandings and answer this research question.

Museums and Metaphors

In regard to The Jewish Museum in New York, rootedness was defined as holding a position or voice of authority as well as having an established, long-standing history. Examples of rootedness communicated by The Jewish Museum (TJM) include the story of the founding of the museum as being grown from the Manhattan Jewish Theological Seminary and in a sense from Jewish religious authority. TJM also is connected to the history of German-Jewish elites housed in the historic former mansion of the Warburg

family. In various ways, TJM communicates rootedness to the city particularly in the location anchored to the corner of 5th Avenue along the cultural axis of Museum Mile. As a keeper of global Jewish culture TJM communicates rootedness to all of Jewish history while paradoxically ignoring stories of the local Jewish communities in the vicinity of the museum.

In regard to the Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem in Israel, embeddedness was defined as being set in, inserted, and implanted. Examples of embeddedness communicated by the Holocaust History Museum (HHM) include the containing of the memory of lives lost through the diasporic entry video images that scroll and blend into the museum walls. Architecturally, the communication of embeddedness is enhanced by the elevation of the entrance and exit that do not touch the ground while the exhibition content about the lives lost and the Holocaust story itself is set into the earth.

In regard to the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York, enshrinement was defined as being memorialized, protected, and enclosed together. Examples of enshrinement communicated by the Museum of Jewish Heritage (MJH) include the shrine-like fortress design of the stone exhibition building as well as its location positioned symbolically to “face” the Statue of Liberty and the incoming immigrants and enshrine the suffering of old worlds into a new place free from religious persecution.

The MJH stories enshrined the values of social justice into the exhibition that served as strategies to contrast with the experiences of persecution throughout history. The MJH communicated the enshrinement of visitors with interactive exhibits to listen to stories, and add their own story for inclusion in the exhibition—as does the visitor book display. Finally, the MJH story communicates enshrinement across time enclosing together of the present-day visitor pre-war, Holocaust, and life in new worlds.

As applied to the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco transcendence was defined as growing out of, but not limited by history in the creation of new ways of being. Examples of transcendence communicated by the Contemporary Jewish Museum (CJM) include the mission of the museum as a non-collecting institution. The only ongoing exhibition about the local Bay Area communities communicates transcendence in the museum's act of "collecting community" by soliciting objects and images of local communities to display. In a related way, as a two-year host of a Storycorp Storybooth, the CJM transcends definitions of proper research by collecting everyday stories of visitors into the canon of American history. Presenting only temporary exhibitions, the museum transcends typical ways of presenting history through changing and innovative exhibits that redefine ways of presenting Jewish culture such as the normative gender- inclusive understanding of Jewish life with the live exhibition of a female ritual scribe writing a Torah in public. Finally, the CJM building communicates transcendence in ways that include the historic reuse of a former power station and the highly symbolic design elements that suggest concepts related to new life.

Dialectics and Diaspora

As a narrative device the metaphor offers a tool with which to communicate larger worldview expressed in stories. In order to help make sense of the enormity of Jewish life and history presented at each museum, the metaphors provided an overlay to map the stories told and untold. Cultural theorist Michel de Certeau connects the metaphor to the way stories move meaning in relationship between people and places.

De Certeau explains:

In modern Athens, the vehicles of mass transportation are called *metaphorai*. To go to work or come home, one takes a “metaphor”—a bus or a train. Stories could also take this noble name: every day, they traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories. (de Certeau, 1984, p.115)

Here too, in this study of modern Jewish museums, the metaphors serve to transport Jewish culture across time and function to communicate movement particularly in regard to a pattern of dialectics that emerge from an analysis of data across all museum sites. More specifically, the metaphors illuminate the frequency of particular dialectical pairings across the sites that communicate movement and illustrate trajectories of space and place that underscore the position of diaspora in Jewish culture and history.

In other words, it is in the mapping of dialectical pairings that emerge from the narrative frame of the metaphors that manifestations of diaspora become most visible and serve to answer my research question to understand the way stories told by Jewish museums function to generate and negotiate meaning about Jewish life and culture. Where the single metaphor gives coherence and shape to disparate elements of museum narratives; the dialectic allows not just for noting tensions but these pairs—*inside/outside*, *east/west*, *old/new*, *dark/light*, *past/future*, and *time/space*—contained in the stories the four museums tell each suggests senses of movement and change between their endpoints. In the following section I will highlight some of the findings identified in the data chapters that correspond to the dialectical pairs.

Inside/Outside. As an overarching theme suggested by the container metaphors, the stories that are included or not included in the larger narrative of the museum are the focus of this pair. This dialectic invites questions of inclusiveness that extend to gender, Jewishness, and relations with nature. First, inviting entrances at all museum sites beckon visitors inside. Visitors are specifically included in the story at MJH with a visitor book and interactive exhibits. Women are not inside the center of the story at HHM but were introduced in a temporary exhibition after the permanent exhibit was completed. The CJM includes women in the context of Torah, a place where they traditionally are not included. As a non-collecting institution the CJM communicates that over time potentially all stories can be included as traveling exhibitions come and go. Lesbian and gay Jews are included in the story of Jewish history at CJM and TJM.

The concept of inclusiveness in what is contained is also a related phenomenon and multiple groups of people are included into the bigger story of Judaism across all museums in different ways. The CJM communicates inclusiveness of Jews into American history, and women into torah study and Jewish history. The story of the Holocaust is included at the HHM, TJM, and MJH, and just recently the CJM opened an exhibit exploring this history. The biographical data and names of victims are included at the HHM and the cantilever design of the HHM includes victims and visitors into the story of a new Jewish future in Israel.

Language is a communication phenomenon that relates to inclusiveness and as a national museum the HHM does not mirror the common Hebrew, Arabic, and English trilingual road and street signs apparent around the country. Signage around the Yad Vashem grounds as well as the HHM exhibition labels are presented in Hebrew and English, while

Arabic is available only in a supplemental audio tour of the museum. Here this dialectical pairing highlights an untold story in regard to the museum's intended visitors.

On a structural level the inside/outside dialectic is apparent at several sites that interplay the outdoors and indoors with the museum narratives as with the building designs and circulation paths at MJH and HHM that allow visitors to process the museum experience through nature. The common use of glass entrance doors at all sites provides a certain measure of transparency and connects to the movement from outside to inside. Finally, Jews are included in the creation of new worlds at the HHM, MJH, and TJM.

East/West. As a geographic orientation, concepts applicable to the pairing of east/west function to communicate meaning and raise questions about Jewish life and culture in different ways. In one way, the museum sites move east/west in the presentation of Israeli Judaism, two related New York Judaisms, and a distinctive California Judaism. The way in which exhibitions are framed functions to address my initial argument that narratives emerge from place and the senses of Jewishness communicated by each location are place specific. Would the museums located in New York or Israel highlight a woman writing Torah, as is the case in San Francisco? Are New York or San Francisco able to position themselves as a new Jewish future in the same way the Jewish state of Israel can? In n different ways Israel is a reference point for museums in the U.S (and around the world) as expressed by the HHM director who sees a proliferation of new museum planners seeking "the formula" for Holocaust storytelling. Here, the geographic orientation places Israel as an authority on Jewish matters as is illustrated in the MJH Senior Curator's internal dialogue.

Old/New. The interplay between new/old functions in ways that communicate differently about Jewish worlds and worldviews. As the newest of the sites, the CJM

addresses old and new in regard to its mission, architecture, and exhibition content. For example, when a visitor asks the female scribe “so do men also write Torahs?” a new normative vision of Jewish life is in the process of being created. Architecturally, the CJM building reuses the old in the creation of the new as is the case with TJM’s reinvention of an old family mansion. With the “Keeping History Center” the MJH contains new voices of contemporary immigrants along with Holocaust stories and those that pre-date World War II. Across all sites, Israel and the United States maintain different positions in the global Jewish imagination as places of renewal where Jews are potentially free from the oppressive forces of history.

Dark/Light. This pairing is evocative of the act of creation, and the move from darkness to light is evident in the circulation paths at both HHM and MJH—an exhibition design strategy that resonates between each of the museum’s metaphors of embeddedness and enshrinement in different stories about Jewish life in New York and Jerusalem. In both of these museums in particular, there is a strong sense of Judaism as emerging from the darkness. The Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco might be considered the epitome of this move. As a former power station, there is literally transformation from dark to light, and the refurbished museum is open, airy, and light—testament to transformation’s possibilities.

Past/Future. In many ways, Jewish history looks back as it plans for the future and where Jews have come from as central to issues of identity and community. The past and the future interplay at the MJH in various ways that include the Garden of Stones with saplings that grow up towards the future out of cold stones that represent the past. In different ways the exhibition narratives at MJH and HHM are framed through pre-war, war, and post-war

contexts such that a Jewish response to the Holocaust is contained in different ways that connect to nationhood. The MJH contains representations of past Polish (and other devastated European communities) in NY too as a memorial for present and future visitors to view along with contemporary art. Importantly, it is from the experiences of the past that Jewish culture understands social justice values as essential for the future betterment of the world as evident in the CJM Torah exhibit highlighting the saving of Hurricane Katrina Torahs and contained in the MJH opening video that frames a context for the entire museum experience.

Time/Space. The emergence of this dialectical pairing communicates the different ways in which Jewish history is concerned with and sometimes transcends time and space. This dialectical pair may also be what is necessary for the metaphor of enshrinement to exist. There are paradoxes evident in that some museum stories cross physical boundaries of time and space, shift ground for visitor, and cross boundaries as in the example of Holocaust victims who are enshrined (MJH) or embedded (HHM) into places where the destruction of life did not occur nor where human remains are buried. Contained in the pairing of time and space, the indoor MJH “Timekeeper” video installation tracks the time and growth of the outdoor Garden of Stones exhibit. Across all sites, the museums’ Internet presences function as an extension of the physical sites. Interactive exhibits at CJM and MJH contain visitors into history beyond time and space. As a non-collecting institution the CJM presents Jewish stories with no beginning or end.

Certainly there are interrelationships among the dialectical pairings—time/space relate to past/future as well as east/west and inside/outside are connected to new/old. It is also true that there is resonance and relationship across all four museum’s metaphors in that

Jewish culture is all of these things—rooted, embedded, enshrined, and transcendent.

Overall, these metaphors manage to communicate movement of depth and of breadth. For instance both rootedness and embeddedness suggest depth and a downward trajectory while enshrinement and transcendence evoke an upward-oriented path. Rootedness and embeddedness tend to be oriented toward the past; enshrinement and transcendence are future orientations. The movement communicated by the height and depth of all four metaphors speaks to the vastness of Jewish history and the need to continually conceptualize how to present it for future generations.

While communicating stories of embeddedness, rootedness, transcendence, and enshrinement, these metaphors also suggest untold museum stories, stories caught in the inbetween of the dialectics playing out here. These Jewish museums communicate a need to maintain Jewishness but they do not necessarily offer clarity about what that is. The notion remains open, making the concept of Jewishness an ongoing one. Their task is to preserve history while making Jewishness a notion vital for the present and future. Ultimately, what that identity is may be up to the visitors of the museums as much as it is to the directors and curators themselves.

The findings of the stories told at these four different Jewish museum sites, then, communicate a broader meaning about the history and continuity of Jewish life and culture. In fact, all four metaphors of rootedness, embeddedness, enshrinement, and transcendence present no beginning or ending points. The metaphors move across the dialectical pairings of inside/outside, east/west, old/new, dark/light, past/future, and time/space, each of which also communicates movement between their respective endpoints—movement that calls to mind the phenomenon of diaspora. Diaspora, the Jewish search for a homeland, is contained in

these museums and in the contradictions they contain. In the context of diaspora, Jewish Museums can be seen as containers that symbolize community and home for Jewish culture at the same time that Jews are encouraged to be out in and of the world. In addition, all museum sites seek legitimacy and a sense of belong, another important aspect of the diaspora. Each museum makes strong claims of belonging to the site in which it is positioned and argues for its legitimacy on that side. That each museum has “ways out,” paths that move elsewhere beyond where one is, whether these are literal paths, cutouts, or rooflines that point upward, one is always left with the sense that there is somewhere else to go, someplace else one can go if one must. Again, this can be seen as a response to the diaspora, to the Holocaust: There is a sense of Jewishness on the move as well as insurance that the Holocaust will not repeat itself.

Overall, a clear understanding that emerged from these museums: Jewish museums are on the move. As one moves east to west, or from old to new, there is a feeling of contemporaneous reinvention about Jewish museums, best captured at the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco. Not only is the museum itself a reinvention from a power station, but the museum contains no permanent exhibitions and thus is in the process of continual updating and renewal. That this is the museum, then, in which a female scribe is writing the Torah is no surprise; this museum is reinventing gender roles for Jews as well. The Jewish diaspora, then, is ongoing; it consists of an every-changing notion of what Jewish identity is. And in these museums, Jews and non-Jews are invited along on the journey.

As a final note, the question was raised in the introductory chapter to this study about why a proliferation of Jewish museums is presently taking place with such intensity—particularly in the United States. I would argue that as interest in Jewish cultural life

increases Jewish museums offer public access to multiple expressions of heritage and history. Few public options exist for Jews (and non-Jews) who are eager to experience senses of Jewishness beyond bagels with lox, and for those who search for Jewish education find religiously oriented institutions that function to a certain extent in a private realm and often rely on a membership structure in exchange for participation. Within this U.S. Jewish cultural milieu the museum offers not just less commitment for visitors who wish to involve themselves in Jewish learning but importantly Jewish museums are not limited by denominational orientations and welcome people of all backgrounds and levels of understanding. Therefore the ways in which Jewish museums communicate to their publics and what stories they choose to tell (or not to tell) has enormous impact not only in the documentation of Jewish culture for the future but museums are present day public containers for the education of all people to access multiple realms for Jewish connection and community.

Scholarly Contributions and Future Research Directions

Museums, as containers of the past and possibilities for the future, are inscribed by human norms and cultures to tell us how things are. This study of four Jewish museums suggests that Jewishness, as communicated by museums, is both rich and deep, static, and changing. The metaphors I discovered as representative anecdotes of these museums together offer a comprehensive sense of Jewishness today. It encapsulates all four metaphors, giving rise to a matrix that is historic and contemporary, traditional and innovative. Jewishness as practiced at these museums can include any audience it wishes to address.

This study not only helps how identity ways Jewishness functions, it also suggests some contributions to the field of communication. Looking at stories across multiple sites that have commonalities is a way to provide a larger cultural angle to understand a broader scope of issues. This study makes contributions to communication theory in the study of a people and culture not often researched in the field, and does so by addressing the complexity of culture through the intertextuality afforded by multiple layers of narrative and visual data. Metaphors capture essence and provide an overlay to understand not only each museum, but the global phenomenon of museums. In contrast to many communication studies, then, that analyze a particular visual or memorial site, my work provides a case study of how to look across cultural phenomena to better view its larger functioning in terms of communication.

Future studies that also could achieve these ends include an investigation into the ways smaller, local Jewish museums communicate about Jewish life and culture. My study examined large museums in metropolitan centers with prominent Jewish populations. Also interesting would be to compare these findings with those of smaller museums in small towns in the Northwest, the South, and other regions of the U.S. In addition the new museum presently under construction in Philadelphia is positioned as a National Museum of American Jewish History, and a study of the stories told and untold there would provide insight into the presumptive and established perceptions of Jewish life and history throughout the United States.

Furthermore, studies that deal specifically with visitor reactions to these museums would enhance our understanding of whether the metaphors described here are apparent to/accessible to the museum visitor. What do visitors take to and from these museums? In what ways do their visions match or deviate from the story the museum wishes to tell? Does

it matter if a museum's story is not being received as intended by visitors? How do visitors shape a museum's story?

That New Mexico is a place with few visible Jewish institutions and is without a Jewish museum (except the under-resourced downtown Albuquerque Holocaust and Intolerance Museum) suggests other possible research possibilities. In New Mexico, there is only an occasional traveling exhibition dealing with Jewishness, such as one curated about the history of "Pioneer Jews" held in Santa Fe in 2003, or the 2010 city-initiated Anne Frank exhibition located at a shopping mall in Albuquerque (where I attended the opening reception positioned (and disoriented) between the Victoria's Secret and Sephora stores). Curiously there has never been a local exhibition that explores the experience of Crypto-Jewish populations who fled the Spanish Inquisition to Mexico and have created new lives in New Mexico for over 500 years. Therefore in addition given the limited public exhibitions about Jewish life and history in New Mexico, I would particularly like to undertake the development of an exhibition about the Crypto-Jewish history of New Mexico—one of those untold stories that many around the state (and in other places) are unwilling to even discuss. Yet this history has much to say about adaptation, accommodation, and survival—ongoing Jewish themes.

In response to the decision-making around the New Mexico Anne Frank exhibition, I also would like to facilitate the presentation of the HHM temporary exhibition "Spots of Light" about women in the Holocaust, the exhibit curated after the HHM at Yad Vashem was completed, in a location in New Mexico that communicates respect for the subject matter. That the Anne Frank exhibit was displayed at a shopping mall, the center of consumer culture, seems to shroud the message of the exhibition in unnecessary ways. I would not

only like to bring an exhibit about women's roles in the Holocaust but find a way to present it that resonates with its surroundings. In other words, I would like to finish this project by practically engaging the issues I discovered here—issues of rootedness, embeddedness, enshrinement, and transcendence—by bringing to New Mexico an exhibit that demonstrates the profound sense of responsibility and agency women demonstrated during the Holocaust.

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