



May 3, 2000

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Honorable Judah Gribetz  
Special Master  
Richards & O'Neil LLP  
885 Third Avenue  
New York, NY 10022

Dear Judge Gribetz:

*Under the auspices of  
The Jewish Theological  
Seminary of America*

The Jewish Museum is the premier museum of Jewish art and culture in the United States and one of the leading institutions of its kind in the world. Should a portion of the Swiss bank settlement remain after funds have been distributed to Holocaust survivors, the Museum respectfully submits this proposal in support of its continued mission to preserve and interpret the cultural history of the Jewish people from ancient times to the present.

The Jewish Museum is distinguished by the uniquely faceted cultural prism it offers to audiences of all ages, both inside and outside the Jewish faith. Through the collection, exhibition and interpretation of art and artifacts, the Museum not only safeguards a precious legacy for the Jewish people, but also explores the universal human themes embodied in the Jewish experience. The hallmark permanent collection, representing 4,000 years of Jewish culture in almost 30,000 paintings, sculptures, photographs, ceremonial objects, and other works of art and artifacts of unparalleled quality and significance, symbolizes a spiritual continuity that has lived on and thrived despite the devastation of the Holocaust.

Informed by a belief in the power of art and artifacts to communicate not only aesthetic values, but also the beliefs, aspirations, and identity of a people, The Jewish Museum embraces the broad history of Jewish communities throughout the world. The Museum therefore is a unique source of secular and religious identity and understanding for all Jewish people. The Museum now approaches its second century during a time of renewed interest and vitality in Jewish culture and ideas. We believe that our means of communicating the Jewish experience contributes to this cultural renaissance in a particularly powerful and inclusive way that explores our collective history throughout four millennia, as it looks forward into a strong future.

**History and Mission of The Jewish Museum and its Precious Legacy**

The Jewish Museum is dedicated to the preservation, understanding, and enjoyment 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 the 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. Equally as importantly, it serves as a special touchstone of identity for all Jewish people. The Museum reaches out to national and international communities as it interprets and preserves Jewish art and culture for current and future generations.

The Jewish Museum was founded in 1904, when Judge Meyer Sulzberger gave twenty-six Jewish ceremonial objects to the Jewish Theological Seminary. His wish was for this collection to “serve as the suggestion for the establishment of a Jewish museum” that would enhance the Seminary’s work, and also facilitate communication of Jewish culture and history to the general public. In subsequent years, several other major collections expanded the original holdings significantly. The H. Ephraim and Mordecai Benguiat Collection, purchased in 1925 from a Turkish art dealer, includes outstanding examples of Ashkenazi and Sephardi art. Gifts of more than six thousand works in all media from Dr. Harry G. Friedman until his death in 1965 also enabled the Museum to build and broaden its collection. Samuel J. Friedenberg and his son, Daniel, helped establish the numismatics collection with gifts that began in 1948 and have continued into the present.

In 1947, the Museum moved to Frieda Schiff Warburg’s Fifth Avenue home, which she donated for the Museum's exclusive use. The Museum subsequently broadened its collection into other subject areas in addition to Judaica, and developed a Fine Arts collection that now includes more than 6,000 paintings, sculptures, prints, photographs, books, and drawings by well-known artists such as Marc Chagall, Elie Nadelman, Max Weber, and Moritz Daniel Oppenheim. In 1981, the Museum established the National Jewish Archive of Broadcasting to collect radio and television material on subjects reflecting issues of Jewish history, religion, culture, and personalities. The Museum's collection of almost 30,000 works of Fine Arts and Judaica and 3,000 radio and television programs is now one of the finest and largest of its kind in the world.

While a repository of art and artifacts relating to all of Jewish culture, the Museum's collection also reflects the devastation of the Holocaust, and three important components of the holdings are the direct result of the destruction of European Jewry during World War II. The Jews in Danzig were the only community with the foresight to save their treasures of ceremonial art, which they sent to The Jewish Theological Seminary in 1939. These objects now comprise the Danzig Jewish Community Collection. The Benjamin and Rose Mintz Collection, brought to New York in 1939 for exhibition at the World's Fair and acquired by the Museum in 1947, includes some of the finest cultural artifacts of Polish Jewry. The Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, an organization that recovered cultural and religious property that had been looted by the Nazis, presented 120 of these objects to the Museum in 1952.

The Museum also believes that art about the Holocaust is a powerful means for artists and viewers to confront and understand their indescribable emotions about this rupture in

our history. We therefore have actively collected and exhibited works in all media on the subject of the Holocaust. For example, the Museum's collection includes a series of paintings from the 1950s by the Catholic artist Rico Lebrun, who based these devastating

works on photographs of Holocaust victims published in Life magazine. The great American sculptor George Segal's installation, *Holocaust*, is one of the most well known pieces in our collection, and frequently visitors come to the Museum exclusively to see it. Michael David's *Warsaw Ghetto* is an extraordinarily powerful image of an oversized yellow Star of David that visitors see immediately upon entering the Prologue Gallery of the Museum's permanent exhibition, *Culture and Continuity: The Jewish Journey*.

In 1993, the Museum re-opened after a three-year capital expansion program that included larger galleries and increased collection storage, facilitating the continued growth of the collection and an expanded exhibition program. A major goal of the expansion was the installation of *Culture and Continuity: The Jewish Journey*, the Museum's "core" exhibition, which thematically explores Jewish culture throughout the world in secular, religious, and historical contexts. It also is a frame of reference for topics and themes explored in temporary exhibitions, education and public programs. Almost 200,000 people from New York, the United States, and around the world now visit the Museum annually.

#### **The Jewish Museum's Exhibitions, Education, and Public Programs:**

##### **Communicating the Jewish Experience through Art**

The Jewish Museum is known for its popular exhibitions that present art and artifacts in their cultural and social context, offering not only the works themselves, but also larger frameworks in which to examine and evaluate them. In developing temporary exhibitions, the Museum chooses subjects and themes that offer specific perspectives on aspects of the broader Jewish experience, treating each exhibition as a different chapter in an immense volume stretching over time and place. A diverse and accessible array of education and public programs for individuals, groups, families, students and their teachers complement the exhibition schedule.

Recent and upcoming Museum exhibitions exemplify the diversity and breadth of the Jewish experience. The Museum just finished the four-month run of *Berlin Metropolis: Jews and the New Culture, 1890-1918*, an exhibition that explored the flowering of Jewish modernist culture in Berlin prior to the Holocaust. The catalogue for this exhibition has received this year's National Jewish Book Award for History. Next fall the Museum will open a show about the rich and varied art and culture of the Jews of Morocco, as well as an exhibition of the remarkable paintings of Charlotte Solomon, a young German refugee who perished in the Holocaust. Additional past examples of the Museum's diverse exhibition program include *An Expressionist in Paris: The Paintings of Chaim Soutine*; *Promise and Redemption: A Synagogue Mosaic at Sepphoris*; *Russian Jewish Artists in a Century of Change, 1890-1990*; and *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History*. Many of the Museum's exhibitions travel to other venues

throughout the United States and abroad, thus expanding the community that the Museum serves.

Through its education and public programs, the Museum offers its resources as a springboard for discussions about identity, diversity, tolerance, immigration, art history, global studies, and the Holocaust. The Museum creates education programs that use object-based learning to meet the needs of diverse student constituencies, including public, private secular, and Jewish day school students, as well as students at different grade levels. Programs offered to elementary school students include hands-on archaeology programs and opportunities to explore immigration, global studies, and holidays. For example, *Immigration to America* allows students to explore the experiences of Jewish immigrants and other ethnic groups. Programs for middle and high school students focus on social activism, tolerance, art history, and the Holocaust. Two of these programs include *Bridges and Boundaries: African Americans and American Jews*, which examines the complex relationships between these ethnic groups throughout the twentieth century; and *Understanding the Holocaust*, which explores the origins of the Holocaust, the impact of Nazi tyranny, and the power of prejudice.

Family programs at the Museum enable children and their families to explore art, Jewish heritage, and culture interactively. Activities include arts and crafts workshops; gallery talks and story time; and special programs such as live theater by the Peter and the Wolf Musical Theater Pushcart Players and an annual Purim Pageant in the spring. The Museum organizes an interactive children's exhibition approximately every two years; the current show, *Pickles and Pomegranates: Jewish Homes Near and Far*, familiarizes children with cultural traditions and values in two late nineteenth-century homes in Persia and New York's Lower East Side.

Educational and public programs for adults include film screenings, lectures, readings, performances, panel discussions, and book signings. These programs complement both the permanent and special exhibitions by relating them to a broader cultural tradition of literature, philosophy, and the performing arts. Ongoing programs include *Live! at the JM*, a performance series for young adults, and the *New York Jewish Film Festival*, presented each year at Lincoln Center's Walter Reade Theater.

#### **The Need for a Stronger Foundation**

The Jewish Museum is dedicated to the fulfillment of its mission to preserve and interpret the Jewish experience through art, and continually strives to reach its community through the most ambitious programming schedule possible, both logistically and financially. However, only 9% of the Museum's annual operating budget is secure, through an endowment currently valued at approximately \$25 million. The remaining funds must be raised on an annual basis through gifts and grants, special events, admissions, and earned income activities. The Jewish Museum's current endowment size is clearly insufficient to attain its ambitions for broadening its service to its community, or even to sustain its current operating profile.

With the dramatic decrease in federal exhibition funding, and a growing number of worthy Jewish and cultural institutions requesting support from the same sources, the current level of the Museum's endowment puts mission-essential programs—exhibitions, family activities, educational partnerships, community outreach—profoundly at risk in

the *immediate* future. Increased endowment income is essential for allowing the Museum to achieve its vision, rather than continuing to focus on year-to-year survival and compromising the quality and impact of its programming. A prudent level of endowment income – 30% of operations – will require building a corpus of \$100 million over time.

The Museum therefore respectfully requests \$25 million of the Swiss bank settlement fund, should any sum remain after survivors have been compensated. This grant would create in perpetuity a fund that would enable the Museum to continue fulfilling its important mission, and double the level of its current endowment. As the Museum moves towards its second century, we envision many exciting new ways that we can accomplish our goal to further our history of service to the Jewish people. Given a secure financial footing, this vision will be well within our reach:

- Acquisition of outstanding works from world-renowned Jewish artists and collectors will transform the Museum's permanent collection, elevating the Museum's place as a top-tier destination for audiences in New York and from around the world;
- Hundreds of museums and literally millions of scholars, students, and "virtual" visitors will explore the Museum's rich collection, renowned scholarship and educational resources through technologically sophisticated, web-based portals to the treasures of The Jewish Museum;
- An expanded traveling exhibition program will share the Museum's collection and program of special exhibitions with an even broader national and international public;
- Educators throughout the City of New York and around the world will enrich their curricula in partnership with The Jewish Museum, bringing new perspectives on universal issues including cultural diversity and assimilation, religious and secular coexistence, personal identity, and artistic expression. Expanded Jewish arts education and teacher training programs – many of them on-line – will expand family and multicultural learning opportunities for audiences of all ages;
- Improved public spaces and expanded facilities will enable The Jewish Museum to host and co-curate the most important and ambitious art exhibitions in the world focusing on, and emanating from, the Jewish experience

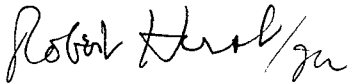
For nearly a century, The Jewish Museum has illuminated the Jewish experience, both secular and religious, demonstrating the strength of Jewish identity and culture. Art, interpretation, and education are the tools through which The Jewish Museum provides an invaluable public service. The oldest institution of its kind in this country, the Museum is a pervasive community presence, which nurtures and enhances the strengths of community-based Jewish organizations, and providing the resources and inspiration for

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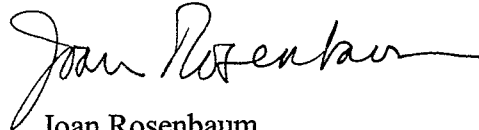
the constant renewal of Jewish tradition. It is our responsibility to ensure that this institution survives and prospers for centuries beyond its first.

On behalf of the Trustees and staff of The Jewish Museum, we thank you in advance for your consideration of this request. Please let us know if we can provide you with any additional materials or information.

Sincerely,



Robert J. Hurst  
Chairman



Joan Rosenbaum  
Helen Goldsmith Menschel Director