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Artist James Carpenter Illuminates Harbor View with New Installation at Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

MacArthur Fellow and architectural artist James Carpenter will unveil a site-specific installation Thursday, June 22 entitled *Reflection Passage* for the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in Lower Manhattan. In this work, Carpenter captures New York Harbor’s ephemeral qualities of light and water and re-presents them inside a main passageway of the waterfront Museum, creating a shimmering and ever-changing reflection.

The external events of the harbor displayed within the Museum environment are seen as a “mirroring of reality,” capturing the daily seasonal light and weather cycles. Andy Goldsworthy’s *Garden of Stones* sits one level below the Carpenter installation, and like the garden, *Reflection Passage* relies upon changes in the natural world to complete the artistic process.

“The *Reflection Passage* offers an opportunity, a space of repose and rest to the Museum visitor. It is a space of transition that seeks to capture the ephemeral qualities of sky and water, the subtle movement of light experienced through reflection off the surface of the harbor. The depth and texture of the real-time captured image is revealed upon a floating plane of glass, presenting the viewer with an abstracted view of the world beyond. This interplay of light and sky reflected on the water complements the earthbound qualities rising from the Goldsworthy garden below,” says James Carpenter.

Ivy L. Barsky, Deputy Director of the Museum, says, “The Museum ushers a visitor through Jewish life before, during, and after the Holocaust—a journey from light, through darkness, reemerging into the light. Carpenter creates a transitional space between the Core Exhibition and the Morgenthau Wing. Through the perception of light, *Reflection Passage* instills in visitors a heightened awareness of the present—which is really at the essence of our mission as a history museum.”

The Art Work

Transposing phenomena of light, wave motion, and harbor traffic activity, the artwork will enhance the visitor’s awareness of the natural and man-made activities of the harbor using a live video feed from the roof of the Museum. This video feed consists of a motorized camera, a computer, photo-sensitive tracking software, and programmable LED circuit boards that project light onto a 12’ x 6’ diffused glass viewing surface.

During both day and night the photo-sensitive tracking software is programmed to direct the camera toward the shimmering reflections of the sun and moon in the waters of New York Harbor, highlighting the points of contrast as well as the harbor activity. The camera sends a signal to the LEDs, providing the color information to the LEDs, each of which registers a different color. Each LED becomes a pixilation of what the camera sees. The diffused glass plane in front of the LEDs reflects the recomposed image.

More

The shimmer-following algorithm is an offspring of an image processing technique for spotting bubbles in liquid, devised by Dr. Jakub Segen while he worked at Bell Labs, where it was used to detect leaky seals in electrical components.

At any time a viewer can see the actual view as well as the re-formatted observation. As the framed events are transposed onto a pictorial plane of 12' x 6', they appear disconnected from reality despite existing directly beyond the artwork. With this installation, visitors will be able to enjoy their own view of the Statue of Liberty and New York Harbor, along with Carpenter's reflected one.

Reflection Passage is a Gift from The Gruss Lipper Foundation. The Gruss Lipper Foundation has supported the Museum's education programs since 1998 with the creation of the innovative Lipper Internship, which brings together graduate and undergraduate students from across the Northeast to train in New York City for a semester-long internship, beginning with an intensive two-week training session to learn how to teach public middle and high school students about the Holocaust. Following training, interns visit several middle and high schools in their college communities to give an introductory lesson in the classroom followed by a guided tour at the Museum. Interns then return to the classroom one last time to facilitate a discussion about the lessons learned during the course of the program.

About James Carpenter

James Carpenter is an artist and sculptor with a strong background in developing new and emerging glass and material technologies. His interest in architecture began at the Rhode Island School of Design, where he received a BFA in sculpture in 1972. He formed James Carpenter Design Associates in 1978 after completing an extended consultancy with the Corning Glass Works. His interest in architecture and structure has evolved into a unique design practice which ranges from technical glass and materials consulting to curtain walls, roofing systems, bridges, and sculptures.

In addition to being a foremost innovator in materials technologies, James Carpenter and his studio (James Carpenter Design Associates) have worked collaboratively with major architects and engineers in the United States and abroad on significant building projects and have received many important public arts commissions. He completed the tower podium enclosure for Seven World Trade Center with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. Carpenter's other New York City projects include the Fulton Street Transit Hub in Lower Manhattan, the Ice Falls at the entry of the Hearst Building, the Cable Net Glass Walls at the entry to the Time Warner Center, and the Dichroic Light Field on the Upper West Side. Among his international commissions is a major project at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem; other projects appear in Berlin, London, and Sydney.

About the Museum

The Museum's three-floor Core Exhibition educates people of all ages and backgrounds about the rich tapestry of Jewish life over the past century--before, during, and after the Holocaust. Current special exhibitions include: *Ours To Fight For: American Jews in the Second World War*, which explores the lives of Jewish men and women who served during WWII. The Museum offers visitors a vibrant public program schedule in its Edmond J. Safra Hall. It is also home to Andy Goldsworthy's *Garden of Stones*, a contemplative space dedicated to the memory of those who perished in the Holocaust and honoring those who survived. The Garden is his only permanent installation in New York City. The Museum receives general operating support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and is a founding member of the *Museums of Lower Manhattan*.

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