

THE JEWISH MUSEUM OF GREECE

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THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF RHODES



An exhibition by the Jewish Museum of Greece and the Jewish Community of Rhodes

The Jewish Museum of Greece contributed to the series of cultural events dedicated to the history and memory of the Jews of Rhodes, which was organized on the island by the Jewish Community of Rhodes between 19th and 23rd June 2002, with the exhibition entitled "The Jewish Community of Rhodes".

The range of activities covered by the Jewish Museum, especially as far as exhibitions are concerned, has greatly increased since 1998 when it moved into its new premises. It has presented exhibitions based on history and ethnology, laying emphasis on social aspects. As the sole depository of Greek-Jewish history in the country, its activities focus to a large extent on the small, Jewish communities in mainland Greece and the Greek islands. It supplies material, organizes special educational programs and supports their efforts to promote their local history and traditions.

The Rhodes exhibition falls within this area of the Jewish Museum's activity. It is the fifteenth in the series and was produced with the support of the Jewish Community of Rhodes, following their invitation. All through the planning and production stages invaluable help and constant support came from the secretary, Mrs. Carmen Cohen, and especially the president, Mrs. Bella Angel-Resti, who is also one of the J.M.G.'s Great Benefactors.

The exhibition traces its subject through the long period of time from the first settlement of Greek-speaking Jews in Greece in the 3rd century BC until the present day. It aims to present the visitor with aspects of Greek-Jewish history and traditions on the island of Rhodes, which holds a unique position with respect to the traditions of the Jewish Diaspora. Greek-speaking Jews settled on Rhodes and established the first community there twenty-two centuries ago. As time went by the peculiar circumstances in this remote corner of Greece led to the creation of a unique cultural blend, incorporating Greek-speaking Romaniote, Spanish-speaking Sephardic, and local Greek traditions, as well as Ottoman and Italian elements. The Greek Community of Rhodes developed its own customs and traditions, music, dress and dialect, and flourished in this unique crossroads of peoples, languages and religions, creating its own peculiar stamp, which its Diaspora took and spread to the ends of the earth, where it still survives to this day.

The exhibition "The Jewish Community of Rhodes" was housed in the Eastern Tholos of the Hospital of the Knights, which is the Archaeological Museum of Rhodes. It ran from 20th June until the end of August 2002. It was inaugurated by Mr. Elias Kollias, Honorary Ephor of Antiquities, who has been involved in archaeological research and documentation on the island for a very long time. The opening ceremony was attended by representatives of local authorities, the Israeli Ambassador to Greece Mr. D. Sasson, representatives of the Jewish Community of Rhodes, the Museum's Board of Directors, as well as Jewish Communities and organizations from all over Greece.



THE EXHIBITION "THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF RHODES"



The Jewish quarter of Rhodes, the Juderia, as it is today.



From the exhibition inauguration.



Approximately one hundred Rhodesli Jews living abroad, who had travelled to their place of birth to attend the events, were able to recognize the faces of relations, classmates and friends in the exhibition photographs and spoke about how satisfied, moved and nostalgic they felt. Favourable comments were also made on how the exhibition blended aesthetically with the stone interior of the recently restored Tholos; a building initially used as a storage facility for the adjacent hospital. The J.M.G. would like to extend heartfelt thanks to Mr. Elias Kollias, Honorary Ephor of Antiquities, for his multiple contribu-

tion, the Archaeological Department of Rhodes and its Director, Mrs. Michaelidou, for hosting the exhibition in the impressive Tholos, the atmosphere of which inspired visitors to journey back into the past. The exhibition comprises three main areas; the historical course of the community, its religious traditions, and its everyday life, which are all presented on 18 exhibition boards. The areas cover such subjects as synagogal architecture and worship, costumes, religious observance in the home, community organization, professional life, education, language, and art and literature. It tries to shed light on as many aspects of human life, faith, activity and creativity as possible, with a view to presenting a true picture of the past and present life of the Jews of Rhodes.

The exhibition includes original material taken from the collections and archives of the Jewish Museum of Greece; many of the items are on display to the general public for the first time. Photographs showing typical examples of religious art and craft from Rhodes, people and places, scenes from every aspect of the life of Jews on Rhodes in the late 19th and 20th century, as well as charming engravings, were all called into play to create a living mosaic of this unique Mediterranean tradition and illustrate the bilingual, explanatory texts which accompanied the exhibition. The detailed research and authorship of the comprehensive texts was the work of researcher, Mrs. P.

Andrianopoulou, while Mrs. Kay-Elvina Sutton, one of the Museum's regular freelancers, was responsible for the outstanding translation into English.

The Jewish Museum once again took advantage of an exhibition opportunity, augmenting its photographic archive with new photographs from the island of Rhodes. Special thanks are due to Mrs. Bella Angel-Resti, Mr. Aron Hasson, Mr. Emanuele Pacifici, Mr. Gabriel Alhadeff, Mr. Iakovos Sakkis and Mrs. Anna Cohen-Kapeta for lending their treasured photographs. Without their significant contribution, the exhibition would not have been complete. As always, Mr. Leonidas Papadopoulos, head of the Museum's Photographic Archive, was responsible for processing both new and previously archived material.

The exhibition catalogue was a fitting complement to the presentation of a clear picture of the Jews of Rhodes. With abundant photographs and historical data arranged to coincide with the chronological setting of the areas covered by the exhibition, with corresponding chapters on religious and secular life, as well as the occupations of the Jews of Rhodes, the catalogue proved a comprehensive, accessible and well-presented publication, which helped the visitor to a deeper understanding of the subject. The design of the exhibition boards, the catalogue and other printed matter (posters and invitations) described as aesthetically well-rounded by informed individuals as well as the general public, was done by Mrs. Hayia Cohen, who edited and supervised their production, in co-operation with the design teams of "Athanasios Ioannides" and "Panos Tsiteros" printing works.

The Jewish Museum's aim was to lay before the inhabitants and visitors of the island of Rhodes the timeless character of the local Jewish community, illustrating a little-known aspect of the city's pluralistic past and present. The obligation to impress this on people's minds is always great; especially the obligation to those



The Ambassador of Israel, Mr. D. Sasson, while being guided through the exhibition.



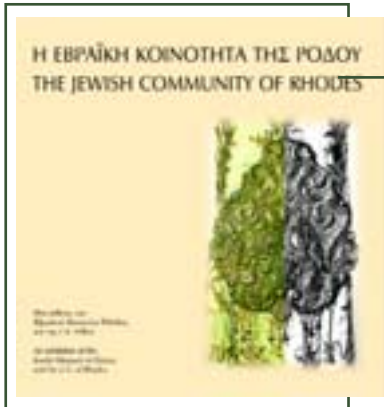
The Honorary Ephor of Antiquities, Mr. Elias Kollias and the Director of the Rhodes Archaeological Service, Ms. Michaelidou with the J.M.G. Director, during the inauguration ceremony.



who died needless and untimely deaths and are no longer able to speak for themselves. The Jewish Museum of Greece dedicated this exhibition to the memory of the people of Rhodes who were murdered during the Second World War and in honour of those who survived and mustered enough strength to bring their severely stricken community back to life.

Large numbers of visitors from all over Greece and from abroad came to see the exhibition and took the catalogue home with them, as well as printed matter which the Museum had placed at the disposal of the local community. The exhibition is shortly due to go on tour of other cities in Greece and abroad, and preliminary discussions about presenting it in Cape Town, South Africa are already in progress.

Congratulations are due to the small Jewish Community of Rhodes on the extraordinary initiative shown in organizing a series of events to honour the age-long presence and active contribution of its members to life on the island, while simultaneously paying tribute to the Jews of Rhodes and Kos who died during the Holocaust in the Nazi concentration camps. In addition to the exhibition "The Jewish Community of Rhodes" which was produced and presented by the JMG, there were cultural events featuring sacred hymns and Sephardic songs. Religious services were held in the island's historic Kahal Kadosh Shalom Synagogue, the Jewish cemetery was visited and a memorial service held there, and Mr. Kollias gave a talk on the history of the Jews of Rhodes. The series of events culminated in the unveiling of the Memorial to the Victims of the Holocaust in Jewish Martyrs' Square in the old city of Rhodes. We hope that the success of this initiative, coupled with the certainty of unflinching support and abundant help from the JMG, will inspire capable people in other Greek-Jewish communities to follow suit.



Interior of the Kahal Kadosh Shalom Synagogue of Rhodes, view to the east.

Serving the public

The first private function at the J.M.G.

According to the latest trends in museology, modern museums should be flexible, vital, friendly places, able to respond to the needs of their public.

On Sunday 9th June 2002, the Jewish Museum of Greece hosted its first private function, the naming ceremony (Fadario) of young Linda, daughter to Orietta Treveza and Zak Soussi. The Museum was decorated specially for the occasion with balloons, ribbons and flowers, taking on a completely different appearance and creating a cheerful atmosphere of celebration. The ceremony was conducted in the Patras Synagogue on the Museum premises by Rabbis I. Arar and I. Mizan. It was very moving to see the old Synagogue full of people once again.

Young Linda's aunt, Lilla Soussi, played well-known classical pieces on the flute before and after the ceremony in her honour, while the baby took delight in the celebratory atmosphere in the arms of her godmother, Elianna Konstantini. Linda's parents then held a reception for their guests, who relished the delicious food, soft drinks, and cool wine offered in the cold buffet in the library, the Art Gallery and on the Museum's small terrace.

The Jewish Museum of Greece extends its warmest wishes to young Linda for health, happiness and prosperity, and remains at the disposal of its public, ready to undertake the organization of other private functions and gatherings, provided there are no more than one hundred guests.



Educational Programs at the Jewish Museum of Greece

As a historical and ethnological museum, the Jewish Museum of Greece focuses its attention on presenting Jewish history and traditions through the ages, in the belief that conditions for the establishment of the community of the future are shaped by knowledge of the past. The J.M.G. always takes care to keep abreast of the latest developments in museology and to apply them in its premises and in the services it offers its public. It therefore tries to give equal weight to each of the museum's basic aims; to inform, to educate, and to entertain its visitors. Educational programs are a way of combining education and entertainment.

Education activities aim to make children feel comfortable in the museum so that their visit is a pleasant experience, to develop their learning and correlating abilities, their judgement, their qualities of observation and their appreciation of exhibits. It is important to arouse children's interest, not only in exhibits as such, but also in the time and place in which they originate. Educational programs aim to activate creativity through alternative teaching methods (direct contact with objects through the empirical approach, playing roles different from the familiar ones of modern every day life etc.) so that the child ceases to be a mere receptacle of passive learning.

The Jewish Museum of Greece has organized special educational programs for school children since 1996. They began as alternative educational tours designed to hold children's attention and interest without tiring them, as an ordinary tour designed for an adult audience would. Education at the Jewish Museum of Greece aims to make children familiar with the heritage and history of Greek Jewry, primarily through objects on display. Through understanding the use and appreciating the significance of the objects they see on display in the Museum's permanent exhibitions, as well as in the periodic exhibitions which are organized from time to time, the children glean valuable information about the people who produced and used them. We aspire to make the Museum an everlasting source of knowledge where children can focus on a different cognitive area each time they come. We want the provision of information and knowledge to seem as natural to the children as using a dictionary or an encyclopaedia. A museum should offer young visitors a variety of approaches to independent learning as well as active learning, while simultaneously developing their powers of observation and judgement. One of our basic aims is to relate the new information that the Museum provides, with what the children already know.

Educational programs take shape after study, design, evaluation of needs and determination of aims and content. From early on in its involvement, the J.M.G. has tried to take into account the requirements of the curriculum and the children's interests, as well as the inclusion of varied subject matter while designing its educational menu. The educational program entitled "Jewish Holidays" is a case in point as it teaches the relationship between Jewish and Christian festivals. This particular program is designed for children in junior high school and falls within the context of their Religious Studies.

For any educational effort to be successful it is necessary for both the potential and restrictions springing from the museum itself (height of showcases, maximum number of visitors etc.) to be taken into account. If an activity is to succeed, the children should feel at ease in the museum space, and if possible, they should already know a few things about the place and what it provides before they visit it. Relevant printed information and photographs have therefore been produced and are sent to teachers, providing them with everything they need to know to prepare children for their visit.

All J.M.G. educational programs are self-contained, thereby making it possible for schools to visit the Museum more than once, and participate in a different program each time.

Programs are designed in such a way as to be accessible to children at primary school, junior high school or senior high school. Programs for pre-school and very young children are designed around an empirical, hands on approach to the subject. Pre-school children were received for the first time in 2001. The program was entitled "Objects tell their story" and took the form of a leaflet with two stories and drawings of the objects for the children to colour.

A more adult approach, with discussions and exchanges of opinion, is adopted for groups of older children from junior high school or senior high school. For example, the educational program on the Holocaust, which is designed for senior high school children, comprises the screening of a documentary film and the distribution of printed matter, followed by a discussion.

In addition to designing programs for school children in Athens, the Jewish Museum of Greece devotes a lot of care and attention to designing activities and events specially for children from Greek-Jewish communities in other cities. During these visits



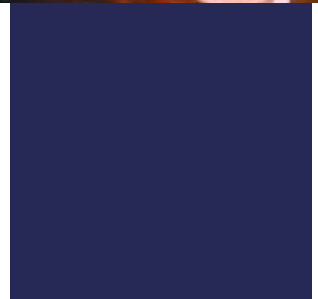
the children's parents are taken on a tour of the Museum while the children, who are not able to attend Jewish schools in their hometown, are treated to a specially designed educational program. The activities included in the program are designed to teach children about Jewish history and traditions and strengthen their sense of belonging to a community with a past, present and future.

The subject matter covered by the Museum's educational programs reflects the thematic grouping of the Museum's permanent exhibition to a greater or lesser degree. Specific programs therefore explore in detail *The Synagogue*, *The History of the Jews in Greece*, *Jewish Holidays*, *The Shoah*, *Costumes*, *The Cycle of Life*, and *Jewish Communities*. In addition to these programs, based on the permanent exhibition, a special one is designed for every periodic exhibition, directly linked to it and available for as long as the exhibition runs.

Multicultural education accounts for a large proportion of the work on educational programs. It is crucially important in this day and age that children should know about the traditions of Greek people of faiths other than their own and learn to respect and appreciate the diversity. This knowledge will help them to develop patterns of behaviour marked by tolerance, well-intentioned love of debate, the spirit of co-operation, and goodwill. Such programs are also run by the Jewish Museum in conjunction with other museums. A typical example would be the recent educational family activity entitled *«Easter and Passover»*, which was conducted in conjunction with the Children's Museum in the spring of 2001. Children and parents alike were able to use their knowledge of the Christian Easter to discover similarities with the Jewish Passover. This was the first in a series of programmes of this kind, which we hope will soon be realized and take our educational activities for families one step further.

Experimentation and renewal are a fundamental concern of the J.M.G. as far as educational programs are concerned. The new orientation makes new activities necessary in the Museum – activities which make use of drama, music and handicraft. It was such a quest on the part of the J.M.G. that led to the realization of a most unusual memorial event on the Jewish Museum premises, in conjunction with the sixth grade of the Jewish School of Athens in spring 2000. It was a dramatization entitled *"Alberto's Story"* and was about the fate of a family of five from Thessaloniki at the time of the Holocaust. The narrative was based on Albert's diary, a story created by combining the genuine memories of three people who were children at the time of the Holocaust. The play was acted out on various levels of the Museum. This theatrical game served its basic purpose. It gave the children some experience of what their contemporaries had to face during the war. It helped them realize how easily situations can be overturned, and how vulnerable happiness, peace, and even life itself, are. Additional positive aspects were the level of co-operation achieved, creative teamwork, the development of responsibility and the broadening of the children's horizons.

Many activities related to the Jewish Museum's educational policy are



Educational Programs at the Jewish Museum of Greece



in the design stage. Among them is the publication of illustrated story-books to present various aspects of Jewish history, tradition and every day life in an accessible and pleasant manner.

The production of special museum cases is also in the planning stage. Cases may be sent by post or sold directly to interested parties. Every museum case will treat one specific subject, and will be accompanied by informative literature and photographs and replicas of objects.

One of the J.M.G. innovations arising from its constant contact with young people, is the establishment of its Association of Young Friends. It is in fact the creation of a group of young volunteers who will help in the development of its educational programs.

The Jewish Museum of Greece believes that through the experience educational programs afford, and their constant improvement, they contribute to our understanding of ourselves and extend our experiences. Such activities mobilize every exhibition space, every showcase, every item on display, to change our perspective of the world around us and have become our tool in redefining the function and role of a museum.

Much has certainly been done, but there is still much more to do. It is our aim and intention to make the Jewish Museum of Greece a place where children feel at home, a place where games bring the past back to life and relate it to the present, rendering the uninterrupted continuity of civilization comprehensible.

(A more extensive version of this article was included in the volume "Museum and School", published by the Greek Chapter of ICOM and the Greek Ministry of Culture, Athens 2002).



«Young Curator»

A new educational program at the Jewish Museum of Greece

The annual visit of sixth-graders from the Jewish School of Athens took place on 17th April 2002. Education officer Mrs. Orietta Treveza-Soussi designed the program entitled "Young Curator" for these children, who had visited the Museum in the past. The program aimed to add depth and meaning to the children's awareness of museum procedures, in particular the management of the Museum's collection, by involving them in all stages in the acquisition of a genuine artefact, recording it, documenting it and placing it in the Museum's storage area.



The program began with a welcoming session to the educational space and a familiarization game. Then the potential and limitations imposed by any museum space were looked into and the meaning of the term "collection" was discussed.

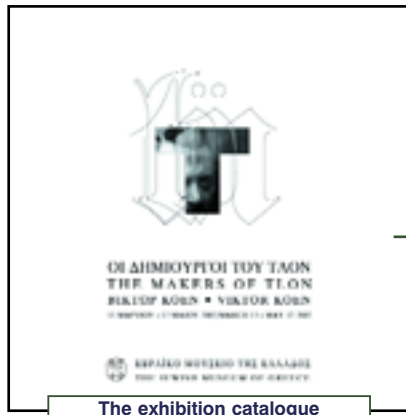
The activity was then led into with a game based on specially designed cards which acted as the children's guide to the acquisition process for new objects in the Museum's collection and how the stages in the process are related. When the cards had been placed in the correct order, they served as a plan around for the rest of the program.

The group then went up to the library where a brass Hannukah Menorah was "donated" to the Museum. Armed with suitable cleaning tools, measuring instruments, and record cards, the children themselves took the object through the standard acquisition process. Then, still under Mrs. Treveza's guidance, they searched the Museum display cases and the library and found similar objects, but also discovered documentation in books and photographs. The next step was to assign the Menorah a place in the special section for metal artefacts in the Museum's storage area.

Finally, the group assembled in the synagogue where questions were asked to evaluate the program and the impression it made. Every child went home with a booklet on the adventure of the brass Menorah in the Museum.

This program, conducted for the first time in the Museum, remains at the disposal of all interested schools.





The exhibition catalogue

«The Makers of Tlon»

An art exhibition



ο ηθικολόγος / 2001 / the moralist

The 13th March 2002 saw the opening of artist Viktor Koen's exhibition "The Makers of Tlon" in the Museum's Contemporary Art Gallery. This is the fifth in a series of art exhibitions, through which the Museum provides opportunities for the public to become acquainted with the work of contemporary Greek-Jewish artists.

Viktor Koen was born in Thessaloniki in 1967. He studied at the School of Fine Arts, Bezalel Academy of Arts & Design in Jerusalem and was awarded a second degree with honours by the School of Visual Arts in New York. He teaches at Parsons School of Design and is advisor in second degrees for the School of Visual Arts in New York. His paintings, engravings and books have won many awards and are on display in museums and art galleries in Europe, America, Japan and Australia.

"The Makers of Tlon" is a series of seven portraits created with a technique of carbonprinting on glass. They were produced for the exhibition entitled "A Vindication of Tlon – Photography and the Fantastic at the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art", which was held in Thessaloniki in February and March 2001. The theme is based on the short story 'Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius' by Jorge Luis Borges (1947). It was the main feature in the central thematic exhibition Photosynkyria 2001, organized by the Thessaloniki Museum of Photography, under the supervision of I. Stathatou and with A. Georgiou as art director. The Jewish Museum presented these works in its Art Gallery as a self-contained exhibition, curated by Manos Stephanides, art critic and curator at the National Gallery.

Carbon printing is a complex and arduous process, during which the image is initially projected onto paper coated with a film composed mainly of carbon. The image is then transferred onto the glass and developed in warm water. The shades of grey in the image are the result of differing thicknesses in the film and of its translucent nature. The final print is hardened in a solution of formaldehyde, thereby acquiring an archival quality, as it consists of a hard film with a clear, lightfast, tinting agent. The printing of images produced digitally in a procedure as time honoured as this, is rarely achieved and is the result of much experimentation, made necessary by the dearth of original models and relevant literature.

To the artist the "foul bureaucrats" of the imaginary world of Tlon are suggestive of others like them, who with disturbingly cold calculation and efficiency, tried to obliterate his race. In his mind a dark, ever-lasting thread ties together all those who have the opportunity or ability to do evil, and do it. The J.M.G. space has the ability to relate the underlying meaning of "villains" and "things to come, like they did before" with the legacy of memories of specific events; events which have left their indelible mark on the history of the Jewish people. Traces are unavoidably present in this testimony of spirit and soul.

The artist himself writes, "...the series presents of seven modular archetypes of evil, applicable to any stage or state of our history. That is why the revelation to me was not the quality of Borges's fiction writing, but his ability to describe these characters through the utopian universe they have created. A universe that functions as a warning for things to come, like they did before, and successions of events that initially look disconnected, random and enigmatic but eventually turn into meticulously orchestrated realities of nightmare like dimensions."

Originally due to close in mid May, the exhibition was extended until mid September 2002, thereby giving summer visitors from abroad the chance to see it.



The J.M.G. President, Mr. Sam Benrubi, with the artist, Mr. Viktor Koen.

With the art critic and curator of the exhibition, Mr. Manos Stefanidis.



The artist V. Koen and the exhibition curator M. Stefanidis in discussion with the public on the day of the inauguration.



Rica Benrubi

in memoriam...

Rica Benrubi, wife of the President of our Museum's Board of Directors, departed this life in July after a short illness.

Born in Athens in 1934, Rica was daughter to the Romaniote family of Sarfati. She studied at the American College and then worked for the World Council of Churches.

Rica married Sam Benrubi in 1957 and they had two daughters, Alice and Nora. She played an active role in women's organizations and in the social life of the Community. Vivacious, direct and genuine, generous, warm-hearted and charming, Rica was loved by all.

She always stood by her husband, a staunch supporter in his long years of work creating and promoting the Jewish Museum. She herself was a member of the Association of Friends of the Museum and took part in many initiatives to promote and publicize its work abroad. She supported the various events it organized with her unfailing presence and interest. Widely travelled and cultured, with a wealth of experience and keen intellectual ability, she showed particular interest in the Museum's periodic art exhibitions, as well as events related to literature, poetry and music.

The Museum's Board of Directors, the Association of Friends and the Association of American Friends, all passed resolutions expressing their deep sorrow at the unexpected and untimely loss of such a lovable fellow human being, an irreplaceable wife, mother and grandmother, and precious friend. A multitude of noteworthy donations has poured into the Museum, dedicated to her memory by friends and relations from Greece and abroad.

The noble figure of Rica Benrubi will be sorely missed by all.



During the inauguration of the Museum, March 1998.



At the opening of the exhibition "The Jewish Community of Volos", February 2000.

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