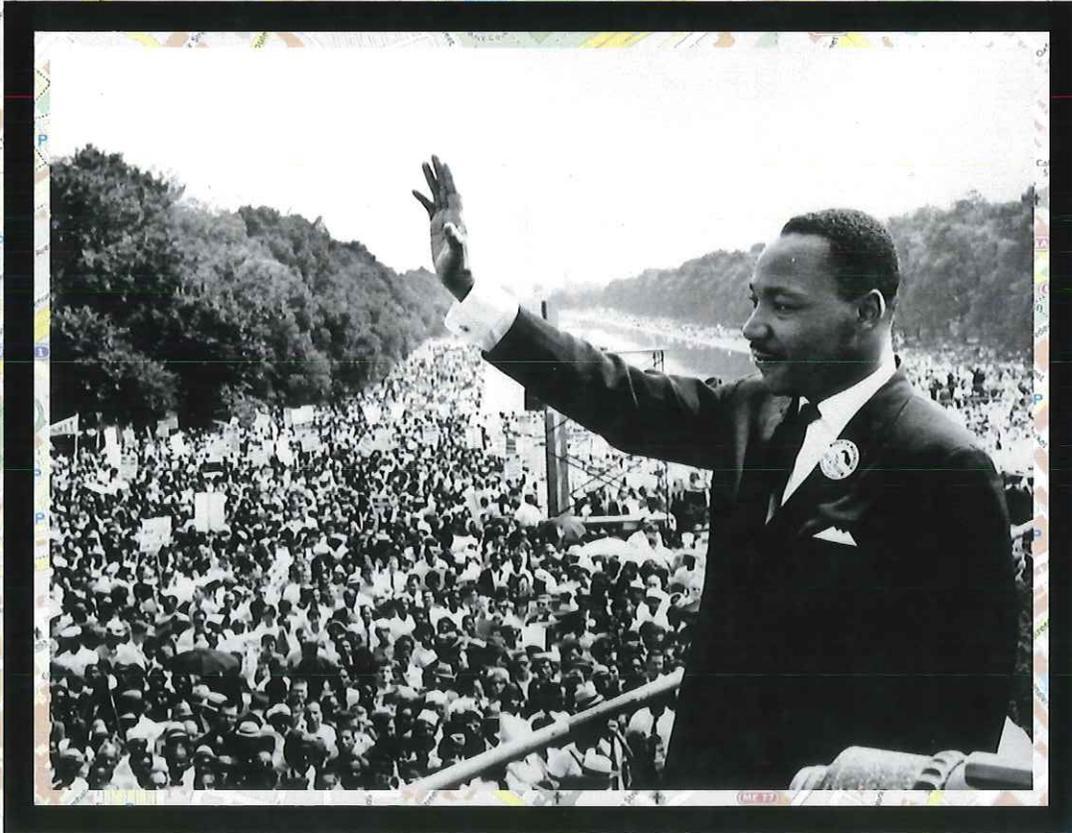


MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. MEMORIAL COMPETITION FOR THE CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE

Stage One: Proposal Document



Submitted by Robert Katz

rkatz@maine.edu

June 25, 2019

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MARTIN LUTHER KING MEMORIAL COMPETITION FOR THE CITY OF PORTLAND, MAINE

INTRODUCTION

In 1795, while the people of Europe were reeling from the unrest and violence of the French Revolution, the German poet and physician Friedrich Schiller wrote, *“Humanity has lost its dignity, but art has rescued and preserved it in stone”*.

Over two centuries later, the City of Portland will select a public art project to commemorate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) whose life’s mission was to confront, heal and inspire an imperfect and flawed society. Through non-violence and civil disobedience, MLK and many others in the civil rights movement, worked to eradicate racial inequality and economic disparity, and to reclaim the dignity of America.

Through creative and critical expression, we have the ability to construct a bold and transformative memorial that serves as a template for understanding this period of our nation’s history. Specifically, our proposed design will focus upon the contributions of MLK whose courage and determination continues to provide us with a road map in our collective quest for social justice for all people.

Innovative design concepts do not necessarily come through the vision of one individual, but rather through the collaborative efforts of a team whose members possess various capabilities and sensibilities. Design solutions thrive in partnerships that allow for the uncensored brainstorming of ideas and options.

Our team consists of designers, architects and historians with varied, but complementary, expertise. Each member has contributed to our proposed concept and will continue to work in partnership if we have the opportunity to move forward with this project.

As requested in the RFQ, this document provides the selection committee with insight into our concept and vision, as well as an overview of the diverse skills and knowledge of our design team.

Robert Katz 2019

THE TEAM: BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARIES

Robert Katz, Artist and educator. (www.robertkatzsculptor.com)

Robert Katz is the principal designer of this project. Thirty-eight years ago, he established a studio in Central Maine, and, since then, has created a body of work that has been exhibited throughout the country and the world. In addition to his welded steel sculptures, he has worked on numerous large scale public art projects. Recently, he was one of seven North American artists to be invited to exhibit his work at the prestigious Jiangsu Art Academy in China. In 2018, his sculptural installation entitled *The Five Books of Moses* was added to the permanent collection of the List Visual Arts Center and installed on the campus of MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

For three decades, Robert has taught 3-D design and sculpture classes at the University of Maine at Augusta. He also has served as a visiting artist/educator at various institutions in the United States, Europe and China, including at the Seeds of Peace International Camp in Otisfield, where he worked with young adults from the Middle East.

Robert has experience successfully navigating and incorporating the needs of local communities in his public art. His outdoor projects often include students and community in collaborative efforts. He has received three Maine Percent for Art commissions, the results of which can be seen at schools in Waldoboro, Fairfield and Auburn. In an international design competition in 1989, Robert was awarded a commission to design and build an outdoor Holocaust memorial in New York. This project was fabricated at the TW Dick Steel Company in Gardiner and assembled at its New York site. He also designed and built the *Slivka Holocaust Memorial* at Temple Beth El on Deering Street in Portland.

Robert's seminal work was the creation of *Were the House Still Standing*, an indoor installation project that took four years to complete for the newly constructed Michael Klahr Center (the Center) in Augusta. This collaborative project includes the design of an indoor theater, four video streams, illumination, audio and text, weaving together the testimony of sixteen Maine citizens who were witness to one of the darkest moments in contemporary world history. This project has been viewed by thousands of educators and students in Maine, as well as in England, Poland, Israel and China. Last year, it was featured at the Nexus Center

for the Humanities in Newfoundland, at the Canadian Immigration Museum in Halifax, and again this past spring at the World Affairs Council in Vermont.

“Katz’s art challenges us to explore our emotional reaction to events. It is an artwork that utilizes symbols and a rich visual language enabling us to join our inner humanity with intellect, so as to overcome paralysis and make possible a communal quest for moral imperative”.

Laura Petovello, Program Director of the Education Institute, Holocaust and Human Rights Center of Maine.

Douglas Quin, Digital/sound designer and educator.

Douglas brings a unique and personal perspective to this project. When he was a young boy, his father was a diplomat. MLK’s parents, Martin Luther King, Sr. and Alberta King, stayed with Douglas’ family in Stockholm, Sweden, while their son was being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 2002, Douglas reconnected with the MLK family through his work as the designer of the exhibition, *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* at the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site in Atlanta. He had the opportunity to spend considerable time with Coretta Scott King, reminiscing about their families’ connection and her husband’s legacy.

Douglas earned his MFA degree from Tufts University and a PhD in acoustic ecology from the Union Institute and University. He is currently an associate professor at Syracuse University in the S. I. Newhouse School of Communications. He is a world-renowned sound and multimedia exhibit designer, composer and educator. He has created the sound design for numerous films including: Werner Herzog’s Academy Award nominated film *Encounters at the End of the World*; *Jurassic Park 3* and *Lord of the Rings*. He has also created the soundscapes for exhibitions at the Smithsonian Institute and the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. His compositions have been performed at the Kennedy Center in Washington and at the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, South Carolina. He is the recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Science Foundation.

Douglas’s contribution to our MLK Memorial design will allow us to integrate an innovative and interactive digital component that will establish a programming dimension and access beyond the physical site.

Chris Myers Asch, Civil Rights Historian, Author, Educator and Community Activist

Chris is the co-founder and director of The Capitol Area New Mainers Project. His efforts and commitment have resulted in the safe and successful resettlement of numerous immigrant families in Central Maine. In 1998, after serving with Teach for America in the Mississippi Delta, he cofounded The Sunflower Country Freedom Project, a successful education and leadership program for youth in rural Mississippi, which now has three sites across the state. He has taught history at the University of the District of Columbia and currently teaches history classes at Colby College. He earned his PhD from the University of North Carolina.

Chris is the author of two acclaimed books about civil rights in America that include *The Senator and the Sharecropper*; *The Freedom Struggles of James O. Eastland and Fannie Lou Hamer* and, most recently, *Chocolate City: Race and Democracy in the Nation's Capital*.

Chris has a deep understanding of the civil rights struggle in America and the role that MLK played in the movement. His knowledge and experience will ensure the accuracy of the narratives that we develop for this memorial.

Ben McDorr, Graphic Artist and Designer

Ben has lived and worked in Portland. His pen and ink renderings of Portland neighborhoods and architecture reveal a keen understanding of the Portland landscape. He is currently a designer and draftsman at Bath Iron Works.

In addition, Ben has considerable experience in 3-D modeling and visualization, as well as the fabrication and installation of graphic signage.

Arielle Cousins and Benjamin Stoodley, Architectural Designers.

Arielle and Benjamin both earned their Bachelor of Architecture degrees from the University of Maine at Augusta. Benjamin is currently employed by WBRC Architects/Engineers in Portland. Arielle is employed by Priestley and Associates Architecture located in Rockport. As a team of young architectural designers, they will bring to this project their software skills as well as their ability to develop schematic plans and construction documents. They also have substantial experience in civil engineering and landscaping.

THE SITE ON THE BAYSIDE TRAIL

We have had the opportunity to spend considerable time at the site.



Four observations will influence the memorial design:

1. *The openness and infusion of sunlight.* The landscape of Maine is often filled with dense forest or urban congestion. The site on the Bayside Trail is not encumbered by these elements and allows for a sense of airiness and light. Our memorial design will maintain this sense of openness and will be infused with natural sunlight.
2. *The traffic flow.* At any time of day, joggers, bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages, some with dogs or carriages, move through this juncture. Our design proposal will not place obstacles on this path, but will allow pedestrians to move seamlessly through the memorial site. The memorial will create a visual dialogue and engage with the viewer without overshadowing the existing function. It will be a destination and serve as a gateway to the trail.
3. *A refuge.* The site is used as a refuge from the proximity of the busy streets of the city and a quiet repose from the challenges of urban life. Our memorial design will provide greater access and establish more areas for rest, reflection and stillness. The design will also be sensitive to children visiting the site and will incorporate forms and space in a way to encourage exploration and play.

4. *A gathering place.* The topography of the site lends itself to a natural gathering place for performances, music and discussion. Our design enhances this unique characteristic and will encourage a continuum of community gatherings. In particular, we envision numerous school groups visiting the site to be inspired and to gain a greater insight into MLK's life and achievements.

THE MEMORIAL CONCEPT

Written by Robert Katz, Chris Myers Asch and Douglas Quin

As a port city, Portland welcomes the world to Maine's shores. People, goods, and ideas from all over the world come to Portland to create a vibrant, diverse community unlike any other in Maine. Portland prides itself on being a welcoming, inclusive city on the forefront of universal struggles for human rights and social justice. In this public artwork, we build (quite literally) on this rich Portland heritage by transforming the site into an amphitheater with its focal point directed towards a "welcome table," a symbol of equality that will bring people together to learn, reflect, and share experiences.

Utilizing the existing topography of the site, the semicircular amphitheater will echo its existing contours and be constructed with blocks of granite, creating a natural curve of seating areas.



Possible source of granite blocks

This feature of the memorial is inspired by the ancient Greek word for amphitheater ("theatric") meaning a "place for viewing," as well as the Greek origin of the word "democracy," ("democratia") which literally means "rule by

people”, essentially through voting. That powerful act of voting continues to be a cornerstone of western democracy and a fundamental fairness principle for which MLK fought throughout his years as a civil rights leader.



Theatre of Dionysos Eleutheros, Athens

For MLK in particular, and civil rights activists in general, the “welcome table” (also called the “table of brotherhood”) was an ongoing motif used to evoke a model of freedom and equality, an aspirational goal to be enjoyed after the struggles of the movement had been won. The idea of a “welcome table” has its roots in the New Testament as a place where all of God’s children would sit and share equally in the bounty. Enslaved African Americans expressed this hope for heavenly justice in the spiritual, “I’m Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table”:

*All God’s children going to sit together
All God’s children going to sit together
One of these days, hallelujah
All God’s children going to sit together
God’s children gonna sit together one of these days.*

*I’m going to sit at the Welcome Table
I’m going to sit at the Welcome Table
One of these days, hallelujah*

*I’m going to sit at the Welcome Table
Sit at the Welcome Table one of these days.*

During the civil rights movement, activists reshaped the lyrics to express hopes for more earthly rewards that could be achieved through nonviolent direct action:

*I'm gonna sit at the welcome table,
I'm gonna sit at the welcome table one of these days, Hallelujah!
I'm gonna get my civil rights one of these days.*

*I'm gonna sit at the Woolworth counter,
I'm gonna sit at the Woolworth counter one of these days, Hallelujah!
I'm gonna sit at the Woolworth counter one of these days.*

MLK often invoked a table to symbolize equality. Though known for his speeches and protest marches, MLK argued that the point of nonviolent direct action was to force recalcitrant leaders to sit down at the negotiating table. He first vaulted into national prominence as a 26-year-old minister in Montgomery, Alabama, when he led a series of protests demanding an end to racial segregation on city buses. His primary demand to city leaders was to sit down together around a table to negotiate an amicable settlement; when they refused, MLK pursued a boycott that lasted more than a year and ultimately led to the movement's victory in the Supreme Court.

In his famous "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, MLK used the image of an egalitarian table as part of his stirring vision of a welcoming, inclusive America:

"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.' I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood."

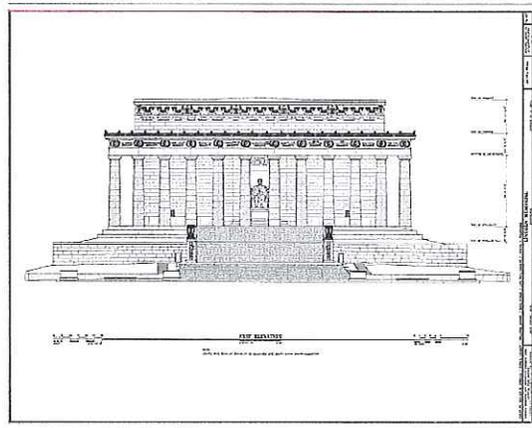
This segment of MLK's speech will be engraved into the granite blocks encircling the amphitheater. This idea symbolized his understanding of the basic equality of all humanity. As he said in his last Christmas sermon at Ebenezer Baptist Church:

"One day somebody should remind us that, even though there may be political and ideological differences between us, the Vietnamese are our brothers, the Russians are our brothers, the Chinese are our brothers; and one day we've got to sit down together at the table of brotherhood."

The welcome table that we design will be fabricated from corten steel. On its surface, there will be a topographic pathway that guides us through MLK's journey from his birth in Atlanta in 1929 to his significant engagements with the civil rights movement starting in 1955. The path then follows his route to the

Montgomery bus boycott; the founding of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference 1957; the Albany movement in 1961; the Birmingham campaign in 1963; the 1963 March on Washington; the St. Augustine movement in 1964; the Selma voting rights movement of 1965; the Chicago open housing movement 1966; his anti-Vietnam War speech at New York's Riverside Church; and the Poor People's Campaign and his assassination in Memphis, 1968. Markers will be placed along this tabletop trail.

In the center of this pathway will be a minimalist, sculptured replica of the Lincoln Memorial sitting on top of the eighteenth step on which MLK gave his most stirring speech to a crowd of 300,000 people.



Our memorial design does not include a representational likeness of MLK because our focus is upon his achievements. However, surrounding the welcome table, there will be thirteen columns that will stand 5'7" tall, the height of MLK himself. Each column represents one of the thirteen years that MLK dedicated himself to the civil rights movement. Additionally, these columns, fabricated with black, polished granite and steel, will symbolize the lunch counter stools on which African American activists staged peaceful demonstrations, seeking recognition of their equality, humanity, and dignity in an unwelcoming and segregated South. These courageous acts then became the impetus for the sit-in movement, providing momentum for MLK's nonviolent campaigns.



The memorial site will be embellished with natural landscaping that will heighten the visual and emotional experience. This will include sustainable gardens of perennial flowers, shrubs, and an array of blossoming trees creating a rich oasis of natural beauty within a commercial and industrial area.

As a complement to the permanent, physical and sculptural memorial, we propose developing a multimedia, application-based (“app”) or a smart phone-friendly website. This technology is conceived as an audio-visual tour companion to the site where visitors can stop at various milestone moments on MLK’s journey from Montgomery to Memphis. This content will be organized thematically and include brief historical media artifacts, including short excerpts of radio and television speeches and interviews with MLK and his circle, as well as news reports covering the civil rights movement—both past and present. By including this media aspect in the memorial, content can be renewed and refreshed with new and topical Quick Response Code information and, as such, reflect the enduring legacy of MLK.

Of equal importance, we propose having young people read passages from MLK’s writings and possibly share some of their own journeys and reflections on the idea and reality of “the welcome table.” The young readers will be drawn from a cross-section of Portland and neighboring communities, including recent immigrants.

Another important consideration for this technological component is to allow people to explore themes and ideas both individually and collectively. The intersection of the physical experience of place and virtual ephemera are key to our idea of making this a living memorial rather than a static monument.

The app would be designed with simplicity and broad accessibility in mind. Smartphones are increasingly ubiquitous as is internet connectivity. Content would be cloud- or server-based and accessed via the internet—both on-site and off. As visitors explore the memorial site and moments in MLK’s life, the app can either

or page when in a given area of the site, or b) function via the Quick Response Code (QRC), where a choice can be made to launch the app. Our vision for this component of the design is to provide visitors with mediated moments to enrich their visceral appreciation and experience of the site while prompting inquiry, conversation and connection. Links to more resources will be included for post-site exploration and learning.

CONCLUSION

Professor James Young from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, articulates the relevance of a memorial:

The usual aim in any nation's monuments, is not solely to displace memory, or to remake it in one's own image; it is also to invite the collaboration of the community in acts of remembrance. To the extent that the myths or ideals embedded in a nation's monuments are the people's own, they are given substance and weight by the reification and will appear natural and true; hence, an inescapable partnership grows between a people and its monuments.

It is not to monuments as such that we turn for remembrance, but to ourselves within the reflective space they both occupy and open up.

In these troubled times, when our country remains divided by political, racial and religious differences, the lessons that we learn from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. remains more important than ever. The MLK memorial, in the City of Portland, will ensure that his legacy continues to inspire current and future generations of the people of Maine and beyond.

REFERENCES

Shenna Bellows: shenna.bellows@maine.edu

Former Executive Director of the ACLU.

Executive Director of the Holocaust and Human Rights Center of Maine.

Member of the Maine State Senate, District 14

Bobbie Gottschalk: bobbie@seedsofpeace.org

Co-Founder of Seeds of Peace

Woodrow Wilson Fellow

Aaron Rosen PhD: aaron.matthewrosen@googlemail.com

Professor of Religious Studies and Visual Culture

Director of the Henry Luce Center for the Arts

Wesley Theological Seminary

Washington, D.C.

SELECTED PUBLIC ART PROJECTS BY ROBERT KATZ

Dwelling of Remembrance 1989

Welded steel and granite.
Scarsdale, New York

The Slivka Holocaust Memorial 2003

Corten steel, granite, concrete, brick and trees.
Permanently installed at Temple Beth El, Portland, Maine.

The Five Books of Moses 2018

Mixed media sculpture.
Permanently installed at MIT. Cambridge, Massachusetts

The Imperfection of Man 2013

Welded steel, granite and concrete.
Permanently installed on the campus of the University of Maine at Augusta.

The Peace Wall 1996

Plaster and wood.
Exhibited at the Washington Project for the Arts and the
Seeds of Peace International Camp, Otisfield, Maine.

Were the House Still Standing 2007

Multimedia installation
Permanently installed at the Michael Klahr Center.
Augusta, Maine.

Dwelling of Remembrance

by

Robert I. Katz

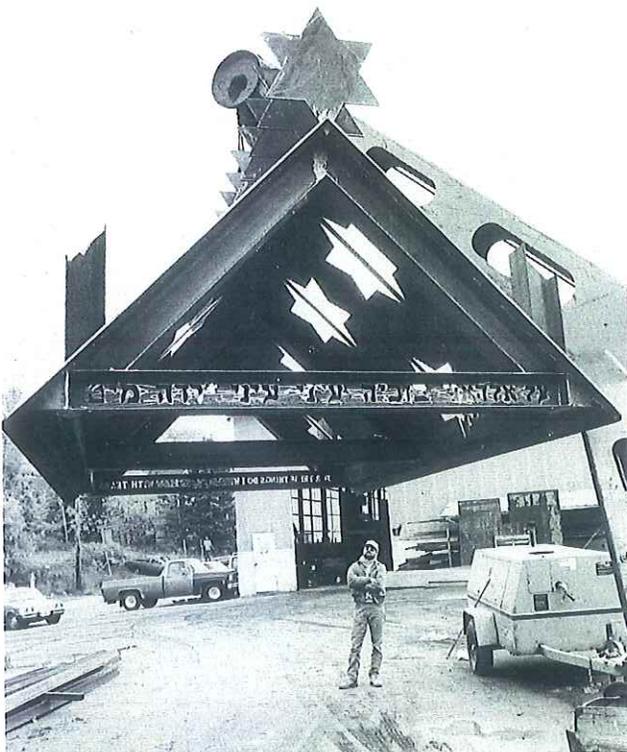
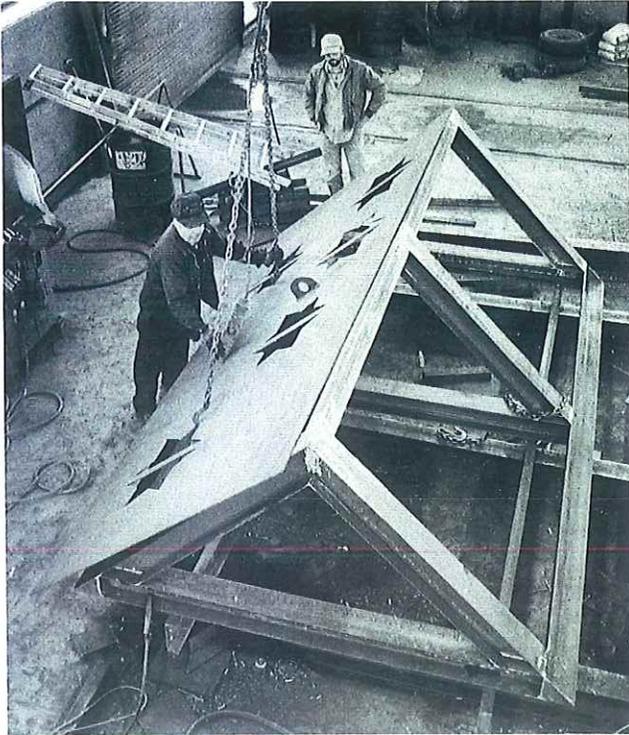


a holocaust memorial
donated by
Steven and Lorrie Strauss
and commissioned by
the Scarsdale Synagogue-
Tremont Temple
2 Ogden Road
Scarsdale, New York

"...to children of a generation who may regard the holocaust as remote and difficult to understand... In short time the survivors will have joined its victims, and that great catastrophe will be but a footnote in history. Let us pass on to a new generation the memory of the holocaust as a living experience."

Gerda Haas
Survivor

dedication April 30, 1989



Fabrication views at the T.W. Dick Steel Company, Gardiner, Maine. Photos by Bruce Armstrong





Temple Beth El

Carolyn Braun
Rabbi

August 14, 2003

Mr. Robert Katz
29 Academy Street
Augusta, ME 04330

Dear Bob,

I can't thank you enough for your insight, foresight, artistry and sensitivity in connection with the Slivka Memorial. I think one of the most poignant moments of the day for me was seeing those sparks of light flowing from the Magen David with the survivors watching in the background. Your creation has brought together and moved many people of many different faiths and backgrounds. It will be remembered as a space for tikkun olam – repair of the world.

I hope our paths cross many more times.

B'Shalom

Rabbi Carolyn Braun



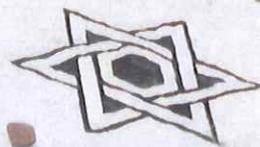


דנה בלעמן וז'רר סלע
התאבדו בשואה בשנת ה'תש"ד
בטרנסניסטריה. נולדו בשנת ה'תר"ם
בברוקלין, ניו יורק.

Donated by
**Rochelle (Blechnan)
and
Jerry Slivka**
In memory of their families
martyred in the Holocaust
in the Ukraine, Lithuania
and Poland.
Memorial Award by Jewish War 2000

לזכר ששת מיליון
מאבדים שניספו בשואה
הגדולה שנפלו בקרב
נגד הנאצים

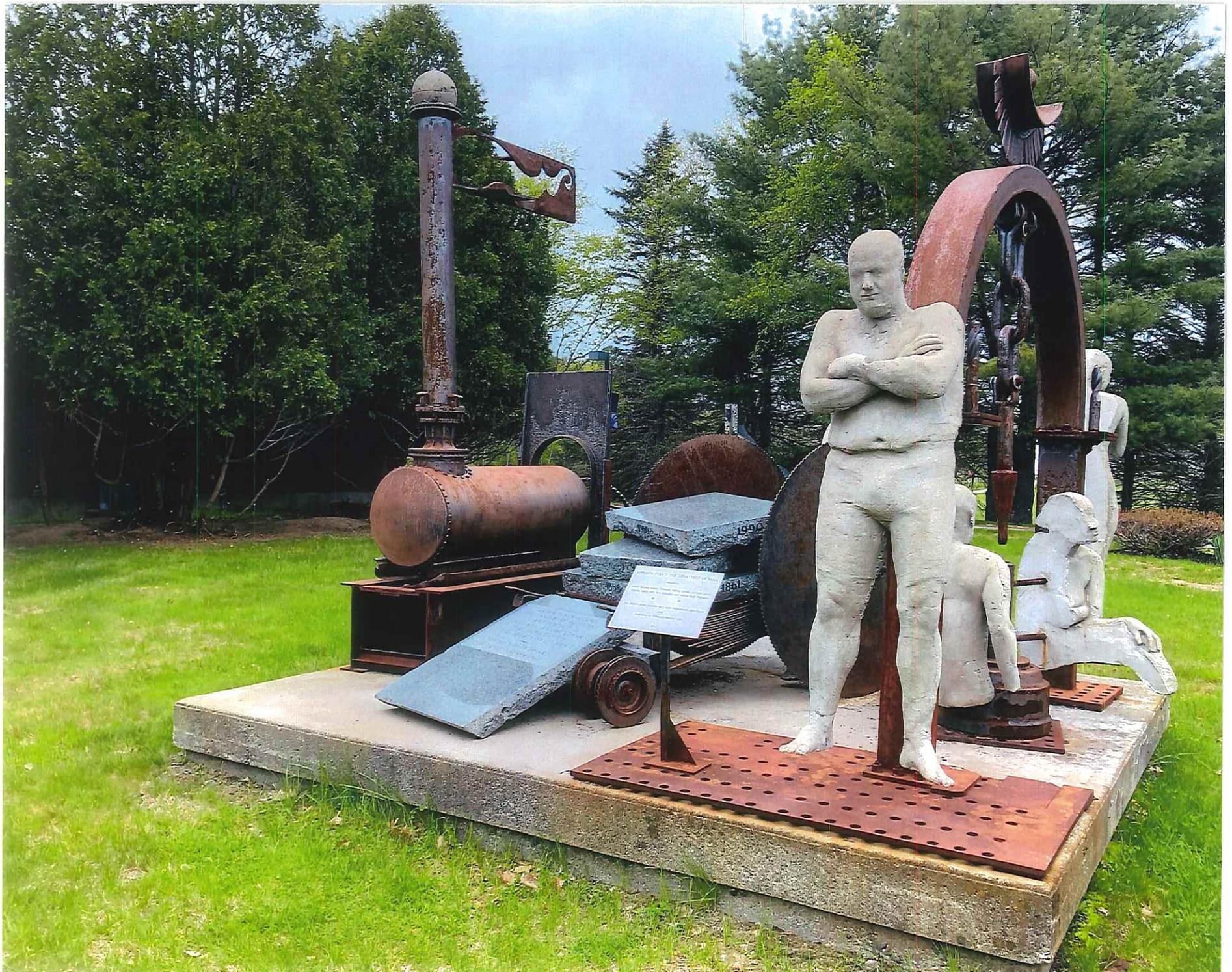
IN MEMORY OF
THE SIX MILLION
MARTYRED
IN THE HOLOCAUST
AND THOSE WHO FELL
IN BATTLE
AGAINST THE NAZIS



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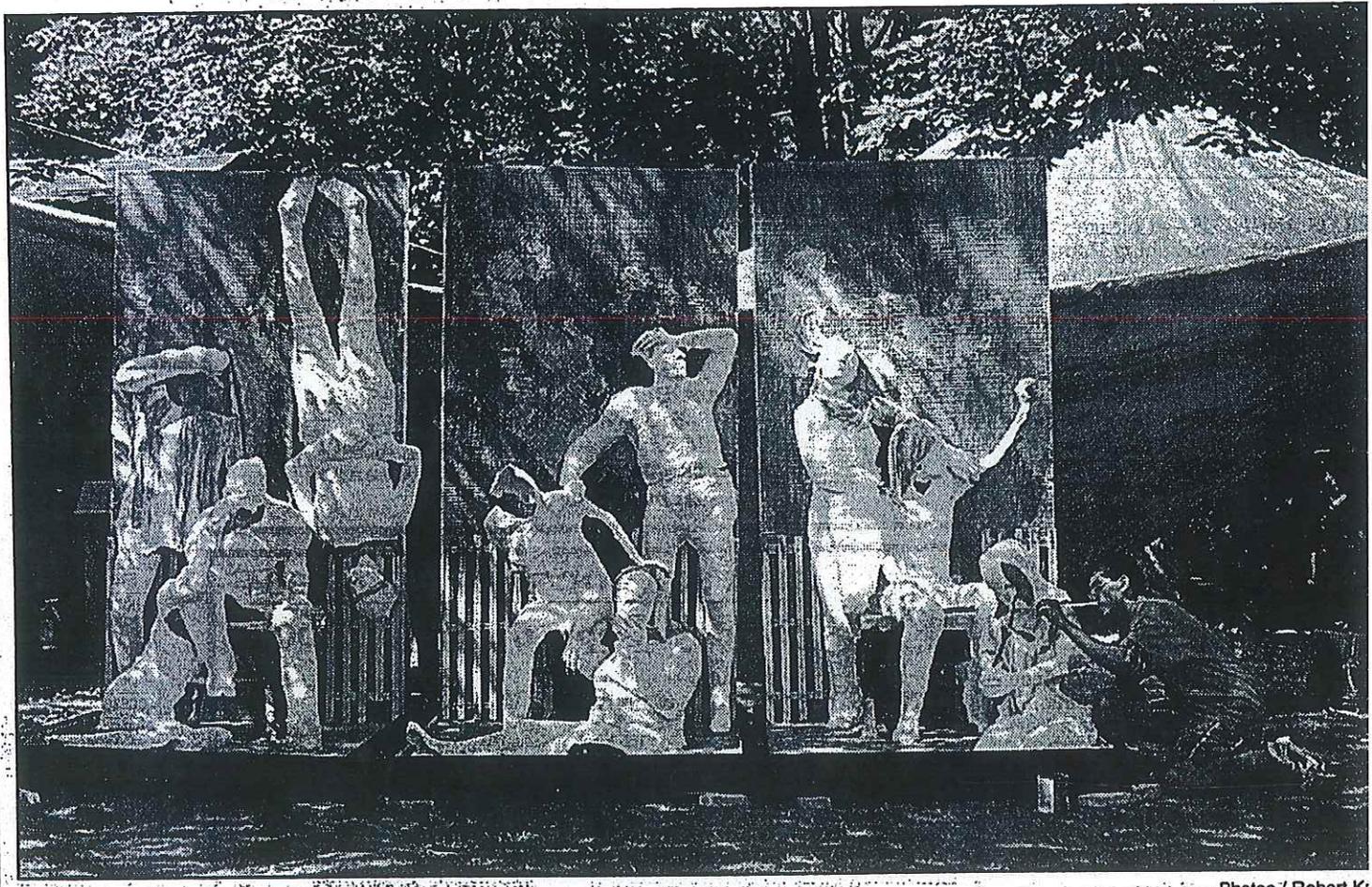




1861
1890



Peace Wall takes form



Photos / Robert Katz



Above, Michael Ramzy Faltas of Egypt works on a section of the 8- by 14-foot Peace Wall created by campers at the Seeds of Peace Camp in Wayne this summer. At left, Nira Mohannad Qudah from Jordan paints a detail of the wall. A creation of Robert Katz, an art professor at the University of Maine at Augusta, the Peace Wall was made by casting the bodies of the 14- to 16-year-old campers from Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Palestine and the United States. "The Peace Wall depicts the horror of warfare and conflict, the transition into the peace process where uncertainty is prevalent," Katz said in a release. The third panel depicts the hopes and aspirations of peace in the Middle East, he said. The sculpture was dedicated on Sunday and has been moved to Washington, D.C., where it will be on display during the week when participants of the program will meet with President Clinton and the secretary of state.



Were The House Still Standing: Maine Survivors and Liberators Remember the Holocaust: Digital technology and new media as a means of storytelling in creating an imaginative template to preserve Holocaust testimony

Robert Katz
Professor of Art
University of Maine at Augusta
&
Douglas Quin
Associate Professor of Television, Radio and Film
Syracuse University

When visitors come to see our multi-media installation, they notice the words of Rabbi Nachum Yanchiker illuminated on the back wall of the exhibition hall. The Rabbi, who was the Headmaster of the Slabodka Musar-Yeshiva near Kovno, Lithuania, supposedly stood up and told his students to save themselves among screams that “...the Germans are coming.” Students who survived recollect that his last words were these:

*...and do as our holy sages had done. Pour forth your words and cast them into letters. This will be the raging wrath of our foes and the holy souls of your brothers and sisters will remain alive. These evil ones schemed to blot out our names from the face of the earth but a man cannot destroy letters. For words have wings and they endure for eternity.*¹

Were the House Still Standing: Maine Survivors and Liberators Remember the Holocaust is a project that is inspired by words and became the focus of an illustrated presentation that took place at the 2009 Legacy of the Holocaust Conference in Krakow, Poland and the Fifth International Women and the Holocaust Conference at Beit Berl College, Israel. The project is currently installed in a round exhibition space located in the Michael Klahr Education Resource Center on the campus of the University of Maine at Augusta, which is located in proximity to the state capitol, three hours north of

Boston. This newly constructed educational resource center is the home of the Holocaust and Human Rights Center of Maine (HHRC), and is named for a child survivor of the Holocaust (see figure 1). Premiering in 2007, *Were the House Still Standing* incorporates an innovative approach to storytelling through images, text, sound and space. Advances in digital technologies augment traditional art forms, enabling us to construct a documentary and visually poetic experience in which individual testimony, collective memory and history merge within a three dimensional format.



Figure 1. Michael Klahr Education Resource Center home of the Holocaust and Human Rights Center of Maine, Augusta, ME. Architects: Harold Hon and Sam Wooten of Shepley Bulfinch Richardson and Abbott, Boston, MA. Photo courtesy of Harold Hon.

Karen Kelly, a student at the university viewed the project and commented that:

...[E]verything echoed; footsteps, the rustle of people's clothing as they walked to their seats as well as the murmuring of voices hushed in an expectation of secrecy. Against the back wall were the words of Rabbi Yanchicker. As it begins, a haunting melody from a flute and the echo of waves and the mournful call of the loon cry out and surround me. There is a feeling of peace. And then the sirens begin. The rushing of

*water projected onto the screen on the floor contrasts with the gravestones projected onto the walls. A cacophony of voices imposed upon the images of the stones, each voice trying to be heard over the din of others, souls crying out to be saved. As I watched the story unfold from my seat in the back of the theater, my heart began to break. Tears fell silently from my eyes in helpless frustration.*²

Through their words, this generation of Holocaust survivors is leaving us a powerful insight into history. As we bear witness to their life stories and become stewards of their testimony, we have a responsibility and opportunity to engage and educate those who come after us in the language and forms of our time: digitally-enhanced video, photography and audio. This project conveys the Holocaust journey of individuals who chose to settle in Maine, where they raised families, built careers, and contributed to the civic activities in their neighborhoods while maintaining their religious traditions.

In 1985, a rally took place in a rural town in central Maine. Individuals wearing hooded robes spewed their venomous rhetoric of hate and challenged the residents of this peaceful community. In the crowd that gathered on that overcast afternoon to protest the words of intolerance were Jewish survivors of the Nazi genocide. These courageous individuals emerged at the front of the crowd to confront the hooded speakers in an impassioned stand for tolerance. Motivated by this rally, a core group of Holocaust survivors, educators and concerned Maine citizens met and founded the Holocaust and Human Rights Center of Maine (HHRC).

Since the founding of the HHRC in 1985, a dedicated group of citizens has traveled the length and breadth of the state to visit schools and civic organizations. Some in this group are Holocaust survivors and others are World War II veterans who took part in the liberation of Nazi concentration camps. They have shared their extraordinary stories of survival and bearing witness to one of the darkest

periods of human history with thousands of Maine students, teachers and community organizations.

Today, many of these individuals can no longer endure the rigors of long distance travel and others have passed away. Their stories, nevertheless, must be told. In an attempt to preserve these testimonies as a significant resource and contribute to the educational mission of the organization, the HHRC Board of Directors commissioned Robert Katz to create an installation that weaves together a rich fabric of narrative, sound, and imagery for future generations. To create this installation, the University of Maine at Augusta granted Katz a Trustee Professorship Award in 2004 that relieved him of my teaching responsibilities and provided him uninterrupted time to conceptualize and research this project.

Katz collaborated and consulted with educators on the HHRC's education committee who first deliberated with him on various titles for the installation until we selected *Were The House Still Standing*. These suggestive words come from a poetic narrative that he found in a High Holiday supplement at a local synagogue.³

The title of this installation suggests the loss of individual and collective memory of family and friends, as well as the loss of whole communities. In a fuller context, the title refers to the possibilities that were lost as a result of the Holocaust. In the epilogue of *Were the House Still Standing*, we listen to actors recite the words of a young child speaking to his father. This narrative comes from a paragraph found in Chaim Potok's novel, *My Name is Asher Lev*. The child asks his father why the Torah considers the killing of an individual as if a whole world has perished. The father responds that the killing of one person is like killing a whole world because one also kills all the children, and the children's children, who might come to that person.⁴ This reaffirms the understanding that this great tragedy goes well beyond the eleven million victims of the Nazis, including some 1.5 million Jewish children.



For Katz, it was an honor to be asked to develop the concept and direct this project. For the past twenty-five years, he has been deeply involved on a personal and professional level with Holocaust

memorials and issues of remembrance. In 1989, Katz was awarded a commission to design and build a large outdoor Holocaust memorial for the Jewish community in Scarsdale, New York, which is called, *Dwelling of Remembrance*. Since then, Katz has traveled to Eastern Europe over a dozen times to explore his family's roots, walk the paths in his grandfather's *shtetl* in Poland, and to learn of the fate of his ancestors. These journeys contributed to his understanding of the Holocaust, and from these experiences Katz fabricated a series of installations, including a project called *Fragments of Dispersion*, which was exhibited at the Charter Oak Cultural Center in Hartford, Connecticut. The art critic Sal Scalora wrote about this art piece, "...Katz's 'sparrow song' is replete with grief, pain, sadness, discovery, respect and yes, even healing.... Katz has traveled the rails of his own history within the great pool of human experience."

When Rochelle and Jerry Slivka, Holocaust survivors who settled in Maine in the aftermath of the Holocaust, wanted to have a memorial built in Maine to commemorate their losses, they approached Katz for a vision. After reviewing numerous drawings, they settled upon a minimalist sculptural design. The *Slivka Holocaust Memorial*, composed of granite, steel and dogwood trees, is now permanently installed on the grounds of Temple Beth El in Portland, and is the only Holocaust memorial in Maine.

To create *Were the House Still Standing*, Katz soon realized that he would need to consult with a Holocaust historian and bring together an experienced design team in multi-media exhibitions, as well as engineers who would be able to fabricate a delivery system.



Douglas Quin is the co-creator of this project. He is the founder of **dqmedia** and is primarily responsible for fabricating a harrowing and insightful soundscape. Quin holds a doctorate in Acoustic Ecology,

and has worked on multimedia exhibit designs for numerous venues including the Smithsonian Institution and *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* for the Martin Luther King Jr. Historic Site. He was the sound designer and mixer for Werner Herzog's 2009 Academy Award® nominated film about Antarctica called *Encounters at the End of the World*. Quin traveled extensively throughout Europe to collect sound recordings for this installation.



Matt Dibble of Dockyard Media, a documentary filmmaker based in Oakland, California, was the videographer for the project. His work on installation projects has been exhibited at the National Gallery of Art, the Whitney Museum, The Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and many other

museums throughout the country. His most recent film, which he shot, edited and co-directed with Y. David Chung, is *Koryo Saram, The Unreliable People*, a one-hour documentary about the fate of Koreans who, in 1937, were ethnically cleansed from Russia by the Stalin regime and re-located to desolate regions of Central Asia. In 2008, the film won a Best Documentary award from the National Film Board of Canada.

Robert Bernheim, Ph.D., served as historical consultant, and wrote the historical overview displayed at the entrance of the exhibit area. Bernheim received his Ph.D. from McGill University, and served as Interim Director of the Leonard and Carolyn Miller Center for Holocaust Studies at the University of Vermont. He is currently the Executive Director of the Holocaust and Human Rights Center of Maine.

Katz challenged the team to weave together an artistic vision that would seamlessly integrate both storytelling and documentary. This was accomplished through 4 synchronized video streams projected onto 3 wall-mounted screens, and a sculptural ramp located at an inclined angle on the floor of the exhibit space (see fig. 2). In addition to narrative testimony from Holocaust survivors, soundscape and music provide a key role in drawing visitors into the installation's space and its message. The sound design takes advantage of 16 channels of audio, which can be assigned to any one of 16 loudspeakers, mounted in the wall and ceiling of the exhibit hall (see fig. 3). Finally, the exhibit includes 15 large-format photographic portraits of the Maine survivors. These are illuminated at various points during the presentation, requiring synchronization with sound, video and a 24-channel lighting plot



Fig. 2. *Were the House Still Standing: Maine Survivors and Liberators Remember the Holocaust*, view of the installation.

In creating a complex and innovative approach to digital storytelling, **dqmedia** and its technology partners, BBI Engineering, Inc., worked with Katz and Matt Dibble to provide a flexible and elegant turn-key solution for the Holocaust and Human Rights Center of Maine (see fig. 4).

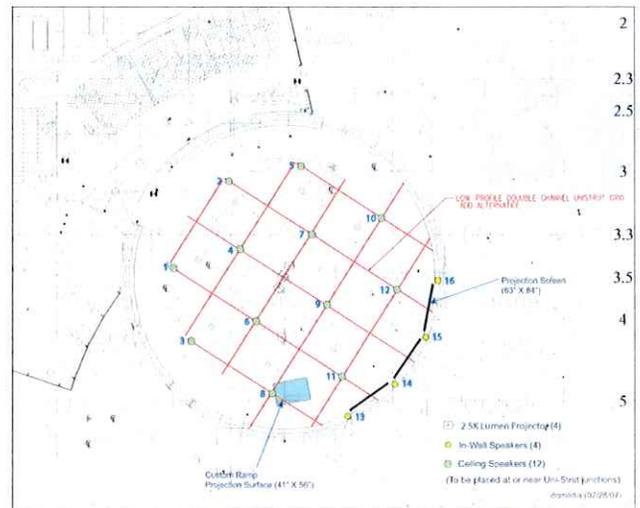


Fig. 3. *Were the House Still Standing: Maine Survivors and Liberators Remember the Holocaust*, reflected ceiling plan of the installation.

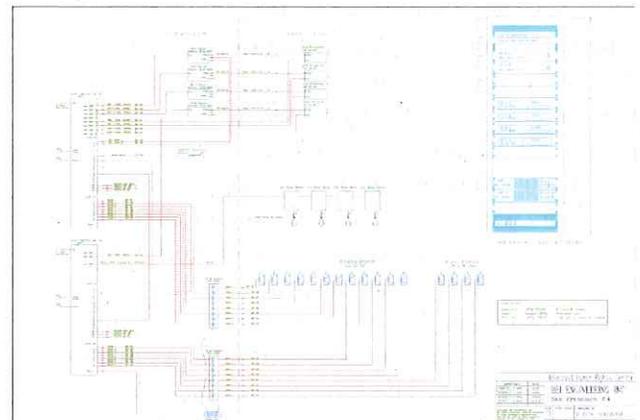


Fig. 4. *Were the House Still Standing: Maine Survivors and Liberators Remember the Holocaust*, system block diagram.

Sound effects and music were considered central to the visitor experience from the outset of planning for *Were the House Still Standing*. In considering the range of possibilities, we worked toward what Matt Dibble described as "an ethic" of image selection—both with regard to archival still and motion picture images and appropriate audio. The team felt that every aesthetic choice needed to

be informed by ethical and moral consideration and deliberation.

The first decision we made was to use available audio testimony from the survivors themselves, as opposed to studio readings of written transcripts by actors. This posed numerous challenges given the varied quality of recordings that had been made over a period of two decades. We recognized that few of the interviews had been professionally recorded and that they were, for the most part, simply a means to an end; namely, a written transcript.

Once this material had been identified and the decision had been reached, our work turned to extracting, restoring, editing and conforming audio from more than 30 hours of videotaped interviews. In the case of Alfred Kantor, an artist and survivor whose story is included in the installation and who had passed away, we only had access to his written testimony. His words are read by Kirby Wahl, an actor and theatre professor at Elon University.

The survivors' testimony was of primary importance and guided all other choices with regard to soundscape, music and effects.

The various soundscapes and effects that visitors hear include site-specific recordings made in the United States, Poland, Holland, and France, as well as archival audio recordings. These were integrated into the project to illustrate the narrative and, through the visceral experience of sound, to reveal complementary truths and bring visitors into the heart of the stories. It is perhaps useful to share some of the conceptual framing and thinking that went into the sound design.

We wanted to establish a clear role for music and to use musical selections sparingly and thoughtfully. The main music passages for the installation comprise themes and improvised variations on several *niggunim*, melodic instrumental compositions, including *Sholem Niggun*. Excerpts include short phrases and longer melody lines played by Cantor Judy Ribnick on solo clarinet was recorded in New York City. At one point, toward the end of Act I, some of her phrases are reworked using a digitally sampled cello. A noted rabbinical scholar, Melitzer Rebbe Shlita,

once commented that a *niggun*, "speaks to the heart's deepest emotions and it is more expressive than words."⁵ He further suggests that a *niggun*, "rises higher and faster than words" and that, as a wordless prayer, it, "facilitates the wonderful emotional release of tears and laughter."⁶

Another solo features Stacey Mondschein Katz who chants a prayer in Hebrew over the traditional lighting of the Shabbat candles on a dark, wintery Maine night. The last word in the prayer is *Shabbat*, where a chorus of harmonies suggests the voices of those who are no longer with us.

The intention behind featuring a solo instrument was also a way of focusing attention on one person and on singular experience—as we listen to individual testimony and memory and try to understand and weigh individual and collective action and responsibility. In contrast with the solo clarinet, there are two selections of music performed by ensembles.

Choosing music from Johann Strauss's overture in the comic operetta, *Die Fledermaus*, involved a number of ideas. On the one hand we wanted to communicate something of carefree gaiety and cultural vibrancy before the war—as survivors Kurt Messerschmidt and Gerda Haas reflect on their youth. In addition to the waltz meter, tempo and mood, there are a number of other reasons behind the choice.

The work premiered in 1874 and has enjoyed widespread popularity to this day. Vienna was still, for many who perceived themselves as culturally literate in the 20s and 30s, the cultural seat of Central Europe—albeit through the now-faded lens of the Habsburg Empire. Strauss was Austrian, like Hitler. However, he was also part Jewish. This fact seems to have been overlooked by the Nazis in their relentless drive to purge German culture of "degenerate" influences. As an aside, we note that Hitler twice failed to gain admittance to the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, in 1907 and 1908. The Nazi *Anschluss*, or Annexation of Austria, in 1938 and Hitler's triumphal entry into the city perhaps had a special significance for him, as he envisioned a Reich to rival the Habsburgs—one lasting a thousand years.

Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Minister of Propaganda, issued personal invitations to the International Handicrafts Exhibition in Berlin. The invitation, dated May 30th, 1938, featured a special gala performance of *Die Fledermaus*. Furthermore, at the close of the war, as Hitler retreated to his bunker in the heart of Berlin, he is said to have consoled himself by listening to *Die Fledermaus*.

Thus, there are a number of complementary, and sometimes contradictory or not ironic, aspects to the music selection here. We are reminded of Kurt Messerschmidt who witnessed *Kristallnacht* and who is featured in the installation. He became a cantor in Berlin and continued his illustrious career in the United States. His background in music and what he describes in the epilogue as some of the ironies and contradictions of Nazi belief, dogma and practice, kept him resolute throughout his ordeal.

The other central piece of music is an archival recording of the *Horst-Wessel-Lied*, or *Horst Wessel Song*. The anthem's lyrics were written by Horst Wessel who was a Nazi militia commander in Berlin. He was assassinated in 1930 and became a "martyr" or folk hero for the Nazi cause. With the Nazi ascent to power in 1933, the song evolved into something of a double national anthem of Nazi Germany, where it was combined with part of *Das Deutschland Lied*. The song was banned at the end of the war.

Finally, in the epilogue, Cantor Kurt Messerschmidt sings a hymn, *Ani Ma'amin*. This affirmation of faith in the coming of the Messiah was, "sung by Nazi victims," as they were led to the gas chambers.

The installation is structured around a prologue, four acts and an epilogue, with five *entr'actes* (literally, "between acts"). The acts are organized more or less chronologically: Act 1 covers the pre-war period; the second act includes the period from 1938 through the outbreak of the war on September 1, 1939 and the early war years; Act 3 covers concentration camp experiences and/or survival; and, the final act features accounts of liberation and subsequent emigration.

The prologue soundscape includes a *niggun* followed by ocean waves. The motif of water, both

in image and sound, symbolizes the journeys undertaken by survivors as well as the flow, or passage of time. The ocean waves subside as visitors see a triptych of a brilliant sunrise in the Belgrade Lakes region of Maine. The dawn chorus includes a loon—which is heard both here and in the epilogue.

From this peaceful place, the soundscape dissolves into the still mid-morning of a forest scene, also in Maine, before shifting to a Jewish cemetery in Lutowiska, in Eastern Poland, near the Ukrainian border. It was in Lutowiska, in either June or July of 1942, the Gestapo murdered 800 of the town's approximately 1,300 Jews in the marketplace. Insects and ravens recorded near this area are heard as distant thunder rolls across the Bieszczady Mountains and a train passes by. This is the first of many train recordings that visitors hear during the course of the narrative.

As the train subsides, an air raid siren sounds a warning and fades into the dialogue of Esther van Peer, a 12-year-old Dutch girl, who reads from Anne Frank's diary entry of Saturday, July 15, 1944, "...I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness, I hear the ever approaching thunder, which will destroy us too, I can feel the sufferings of millions..."⁷ Thunder booms and the soundscape dissolves into the cacophony of a police car siren, mobbing rooks and church bells recorded in Krakow, Poland and archival recordings of goose-stepping German troops.

The prologue audio concludes with waves and the view of the ocean at Pemaquid Point, a rustic setting of granite outcroppings along the Maine coast.

Act 1 soundscapes and sound effects include a variety of recordings from Poland and Holland—restaurants, public squares and marketplaces in Krakow, Zamosc, Kazimierz Dolny and Amsterdam. We wanted to reinforce and animate Julia Skalina's comment about wanting to show her grandchildren something of life before World War II through her photograph album.

The first *entr'acte* begins. We hear Julia Jakubowska introducing herself in Yiddish. The recording is from an interview conducted in

Warsaw. Julia Jakubowska was born in Vilna and suffered imprisonment and forced labor at the hands of the Nazis and the Soviets before ending up in a Jewish orphanage at the end of the war. We next hear from Tadeusz Jakubowicz, another Polish survivor who escaped from Plaszow concentration camp near Krakow as a child and hid with his parents in the nearby forest for more than two years. Plaszow is the camp that many associate with the film, *Schindler's List*. Krystyna Budnicka is heard introducing herself, again in Polish. She is the sole surviving member of her extended family of 14 who went into hiding beneath the streets of Warsaw during and after the period of the Warsaw Ghetto. As these people speak, we hear the names and camp numbers of people who perished at Auschwitz-Birkenau, being read in Polish by Ewa Norek and Jacek Lachendro. This builds into a chorus before fading into the crash of waves that "wash us ashore" at the back door of Julia Skalina's house—our first Maine survivor to speak. The idea behind the *entr'acte* soundscape was to remind visitors that all those who made their way to Maine came from different countries and spoke many different languages. The names are recited to give names to the nameless and faces to the faceless.

The second *entr'acte* begins with a *niggun* passage against which we hear the sounds of breaking glass—a reference to the events of November 9, 1938, the so-called *Kristallnacht* ("Crystal Night" or "Night of Broken Glass"), an evening of rioting and retribution against Jewish shops and institutions in Berlin, that came in the wake of the assassination of a German diplomat in Paris by a young Polish Jew. From the sounds of destruction we hear the voice of Adolf Hitler addressing a Hitler Youth rally, from an archival recording made in 1933. He is heard exhorting the crowd that responds with, "*Sieg Heil*" ("Hail [to] Victory"). The din of the crowd ebbs, as the sound of a flamethrower is heard, along with the roar of fire and falling debris from burning buildings.

In Acts 2 and 3 the emphasis is placed on the survivors' individual narratives, with minimal sound design. The echo of a train is heard and an occasional phrase of the clarinet.

The third *entr'acte* focuses our attention on what Robert Bernheim describes as, "industrial killing on an unprecedented scale," as trains appear to crisscross the space. The motif of the train is repeated, sonically and visually, throughout the presentation, from the photograph of the tracks near Belzec—site of one of several extermination camps—at the entrance to the exhibit hall, to the image on the floor ramp screen of the railroad tracks going into the complex at Auschwitz II (Birkenau) and train and track imagery on the wall screens. The Nazis relied on a vast transportation network of railroads throughout Europe and the Soviet Union in executing their Final Solution to the Jewish Question—carrying millions of souls to their deaths. The sounds of trains recorded in Poland and elsewhere are heard from various perspectives. These dissolve into the screeching of gurneys and their tracks leading to the ovens of the crematoria at Auschwitz I. The oven doors groan on their rusty hinges and are heard slamming shut. A match strike, fire crackling and roaring fade to wind. The single match, like the solo clarinet, the reading of individual names, the emphasis on each person's story and, later, the solitary cricket, are sonic gestures that serve as reminders of individual or singular identity and primacy of individual experience.

The fourth *entr'acte* is another *niggun*, placed here as a contemplative musical respite and time for reflection, as we emerge from the core experience of the camps and survival.

As survivors and liberators recount their experiences in Act 4, moments and memories are illustrated with the sounds of battle and liberation. American Sherman tanks are heard and a B-17 bomber appears to fly over as Joe Poulin writes his letter home to his fiancée describing his visit to the Ohrdruf concentration camp. Note the date of the letter: April 12, 1945 is the day President Roosevelt died and also the day that General Eisenhower visited Ohrdruf.

The fifth and final *entr'acte* was inspired by survivor Charles Rotmil's comment in Act 4 that he remembered hearing bells ringing as the allies liberated his area. The bells include several

recordings from different locations in Europe. We hear the large bell from Westminster Cathedral in London. This was often used as the signature sound at the start of BBC radio broadcasts—a key source of information throughout the war. There is also the ringing of bells from Westerkerk (Western Church) in Amsterdam. The clock tower was just visible from the Achterhuis where Anne Frank and her family hid. In her diary she often noted the bells, and on Saturday, July 11, 1942, she wrote, "Daddy, Mummy and Margot can't get used to the sound of the Westertoren clock yet, which tells us the time every quarter of an hour. I can. I loved it from the start, and especially in the night it's like a faithful friend."⁸ We also hear bells from the Church of St. Mary and the Cathedral of Saints Stanislaw and Waclaw in Krakow.

Throughout *Were the House Still Standing*, we placed an emphasis on the sounds associated with modern warfare and, as noted, "industrial killing." Tanks, rockets, airplanes, machine guns, flame throwers, trains, crematorium ovens and doors are heard, both alone and juxtaposed with the appropriate imagery and narrative passages.

Sirens and horns figure prominently in the installation audio, including vintage air raid sirens and Doppler shifting horns of German police cars, sounds of the battlefield and blasts of a ship's steam whistle.

Julius Ciembroniewicz, M.D., a highly respected neurosurgeon, describes the outbreak of the war, the sounds of Stuka dive bombers are heard overhead. The Stuka, or Junkers Ju87, was a key weapon in Hitler's *Blitzkrieg*, or Lightning War. The airplane was equipped with wind-driven sirens mounted under the fuselage or wings of the aircraft. These instruments of psychological warfare were designed to inspire fear and terror, emitting a piercing, screaming sound, as the planes hurtled out of the sky toward the ground on bombing runs. The designer of the Stuka, Hugo Junkers, called the sirens "The Trumpets of Jericho"—a reference to the Battle of Jericho, as described in the Old Testament (Joshua 5:13-6:27).

Later in the narrative, sirens of battle are revisited as Alan Wainberg, another survivor,

describes the end of the war and the Russian (Soviet) liberation and occupation. Here a battery of Katyusha multiple rocket launchers howl through the battlefield soundscape. The Germans dubbed these weapons "Stalin Organs"—a reference to Joseph Stalin and to their distinctive sound.

In reviewing the installation, Professor David Scrase from the University of Vermont wrote,

...As each individual begins to speak, a portrait of that person lights up. At the same time pictures of the survivor or liberator appear on the screens. Such pictures are sometimes from the dark days of the events - a small child, a young adult... We accordingly see people in their gardens, with their grandchildren, sitting at home. In addition, there are scenes from the Maine landscape, scenes of the lakes, rivers and streams, of the sea, of islands, of trees and flowers. Sometimes it is winter. Sometimes it is spring, summer or fall. One overall effect is of continuity. The generations reflect what a grandfather explained to a child, that one human life is never just one being but always contains the lives of future generations. The seasonal changes also reflect the continuity and renewal of life. The water beneath the icy surface of a frozen stream continues to flow and, after the thaw, is revealed as living water in motion.

*We hear Yiddish, Hebrew prayers, and the sounds of nature. Again, the effect is of continuity as well as devastation. Were the House Still Standing is a tour de force, a work of art.*⁹

Through the medium of modern technology, we have crafted a collage of oral histories leading the viewer through a prism of stories that recall youthful dreams, memories of shattered communities, lost friends and families. These stories also reveal acts of courage, faith, survival, dispersion and reconstruction. We bind together stories told to us by our neighbors who once faced a

world of indifference, silence and collective reluctance to help save millions of Jews and other innocent victims of Nazi genocide. By embracing and pushing postmodern boundaries, new technology allows us to explore and preserve Holocaust testimony, create unexpected forms of storytelling and connect with the next generation.

Notes

¹ Seidler, Victor. *Shadows of the Shoah: Jewish Identity and Belonging* (New York: Berg Publishers, 2000) 95-96.

² Exhibit exit survey, 2007.

³ High Holiday reading supplement of Temple Shalom, Auburn, Maine. 2003.

⁴ Potok, Chaim. *My Name is Asher Lev* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1973).

⁵ Yitz. "The Power of a Niggun." 16 February 2006. <<http://heichalhanegina.blogspot.com/2006/02/power-of-niggun-our-friend-lazer-of.html>>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Frank, Anne. *The Diary of Anne Frank: The Revised Critical Edition* (New York: Doubleday, 2003) 716.

⁸ Ibid. 236.

⁹ Scrase, David. "Were the House Still Standing: Maine Survivors and Liberators Remember the Holocaust Review." Newsletter of the Holocaust and Human Rights Center of Maine, Winter 2008.