

## The Museum of Macedonia Jewish History

Written by Michael Berenbaum

Monday, 29 November 2010 10:10 - Last Updated Thursday, 03 October 2013 18:52

---

Michael Berenbaum is the Conceptual Developer of the Museum of Macedonia Jewish History. Schedule to open in stages, the Memorial and a Special Exhibition will open in March 11, 2011, the anniversary for the deportation of Macedonia Jewry to Treblinka.

A Children's Exhibition will open one year later, to educate a younger generation of Macedonia about the fate of the Jews who once lived among them and the Permanent Exhibition is to open in March 2013, the 70th anniversary for the Deportation.

### **Principles, Contextual Guidelines and General Observations:**

We believe that this Museum must be a storytelling Museum. Unlike most artifact-centered historical museums, which tell the stories of the artifacts they possess, we believe that this Museum -- both in design and exhibition -- must be driven by the story of that is told of the History of Macedonian Jews from their early origins to the contemporary times with special emphasis on the Holocaust and the destruction of Macedonian Jews under Bulgarian occupation. It is on the basis of the story that artifacts should be collected and exhibited, that photographs should be gathered and chosen, and the diverse media-- film, video, narrative tale, text, design and atmosphere -- should be shaped.

The Museum must address all audiences of diverse ages. The plural is deliberate as museums often make the mistake of considering but one audience. The exhibition must resonate with all its visitors.

The Museum and its exhibitions must be organic. Since we have a preexistent building into we must fit the exhibition, the exhibition must be made to cohere into the building with its three floors and open spaces. From the design of the building to the permanent exhibition, from the experience of the visitor to the "feel" of the place, the aim must be an integrated experience.

Design must reflect the various stages of the story that is being told. The materials must serve as an aid to storytelling and the media must be midwife to the visitors' experience. Thus, a visitor should be touched by the content of what he or she sees rather than marvel at the mode of presentation, no matter how sophisticated, how marvelous..

The goal is to layer the information and most importantly to create an exhibition that is intellectually informative and emotionally compelling. A museum is not an Encyclopedia on the wall, and few people take the time to read in depth while walking through a museum. This Museum must provide information on multiple levels. The result must be an experience that

## The Museum of Macedonia Jewish History

Written by Michael Berenbaum

Monday, 29 November 2010 10:10 - Last Updated Thursday, 03 October 2013 18:52

---

engages the casual visitor and more deeply informs the deeply engaged and even the specialized visitor.

We presume that the Museum is being created for visitors from throughout the Balkan region as well as tourists visiting Skopje. Particular emphasis will be placed on the experience of school children and the way in which they encounter this history. We also presume that the general visitor will know very little about the history of Macedonia during the Holocaust and far less than that about Jews, Judaism, Jewish history in Macedonia and the Balkan regions. This Museum must remedy this lack of knowledge and must inform the uninformed and create an atmosphere that invites inquiry and engagement.

The Museum should serve multiple purposes:

- A Museum
- A Memorial
- An Educational Center
- A Cultural Center
- A Place for Changing Exhibitions, which is the lifeblood of all museums.