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LIS 258 – Museum Informatics
March 25, 2018

Museum Observation #1

The NMC Horizon Report challenges museums to develop effective digital strategies that reflect and respond to how audiences use technology. The Jewish Museum maintains the traditional goal of fostering a direct connection between the visitor and the object, but weaves technological tools in advancing this aim. This essay will focus on how the Museum's exhibition design, educational programming, and internet/social media presence use technology to enhance the audience's connection with the objects in its collection.

Exhibition Design

My chosen object, Moses Formstecher's *Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in a Bottle*, is currently on display as part of the *Scenes from the Collection* exhibition, a reinterpretation of the Jewish Museum's vast permanent collection. The exhibition encompasses the entire third floor of the Museum and includes nearly 600 objects, from antiquities to contemporary art. It is divided into seven different sections or scenes, each reflecting a different narrative of Jewish history and identity.

The *Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in a Bottle* is a part of the *Taxonomies* section of the exhibition. The objects in *Taxonomies* are displayed as a modern Cabinet of Wonders. Within a relatively small gallery space are bright pink shelves crowded with different types of objects, ranging from Torah ornaments, spice containers, and replicas of sailing ships. The juxtaposition of these objects reveals interesting ideas about the history of Jewish culture.


Wall label outside *Taxonomies* gallery.   Objects displayed within *Taxonomies* gallery.

The *Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in a Bottle* is located on a small shelf with other objects related to architecture. Because the objects in Taxonomies are crowded together on shelves in Cabinet of Wonders style, there is no space for individual object labels. Instead, an iPad is available in front of each wall of shelves for visitors to obtain more information about the objects. The iPad shows

how the objects are categorized on each shelf, and visitors can select a category to find more information about the objects within it. As such, the iPad provides the information that object labels normally would, while minimizing the use of space and maintaining the Cabinet of Wonders aesthetic.
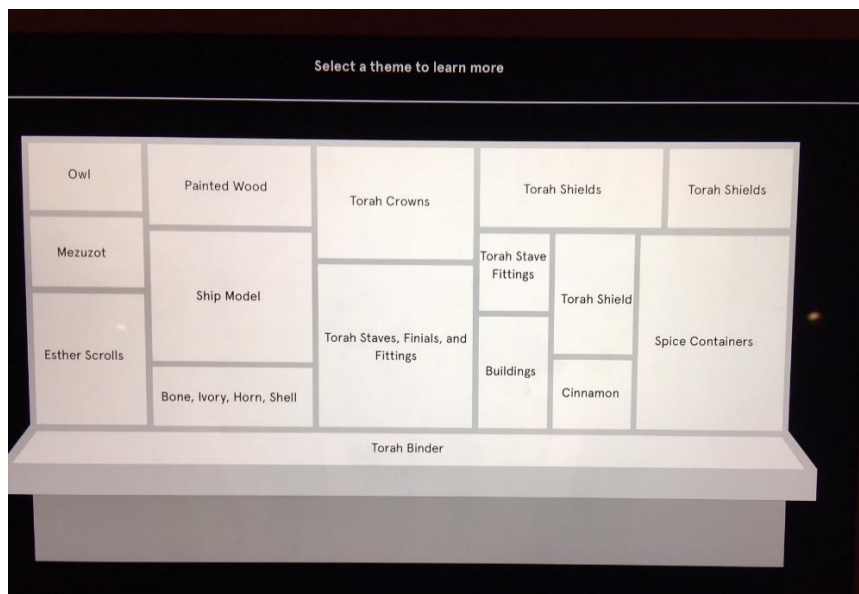
Left: *Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in a Bottle* displayed with a few other objects
Right: iPad screen showing the organization of objects. *Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in a Bottle* is within the "Buildings" shelf. Upon selecting a particular category, the iPad shows the specific objects on that shelf.
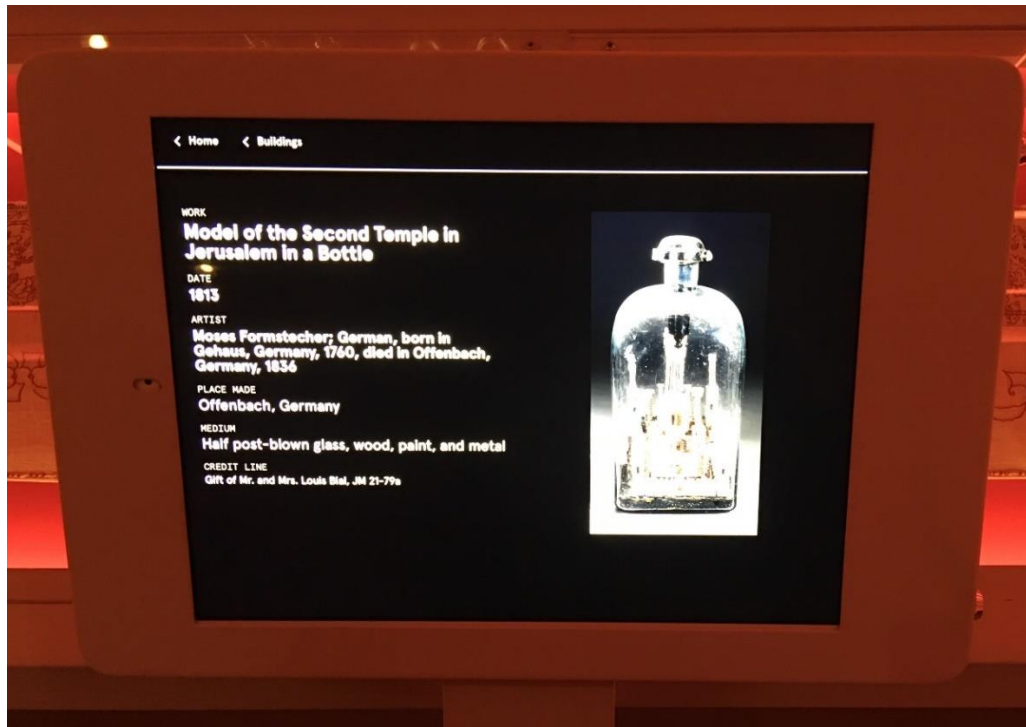
Visitors can then select which object they would like to learn more about. The image above shows the information provided for the *Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in a Bottle*: object name, date, artist, geographic origin, medium, and credit line.

Educational Programming

      According to the NMC Horizon Report, the purpose of enhancing digital technologies is to strengthen the relationship between museums and their audience by providing multiple opportunities for engagement. For many museums, the most compelling way that visitors can engage with the collection remains through personal visits and participation in the museum's programs.

      Every Friday afternoon, the Jewish Museum offers a gallery talk on selected works of art within the *Scenes from the Collection exhibition*. People can visit the Jewish Museum website to find details about these talks,[1] which can help them select which program(s) to attend. Upcoming gallery talks will discuss Nicole Eisenman's *Seder*,[2] Camille Pissarro *Portail l'église Saint-Jacques à Dieppe*,[3] and Lee Krasner's *Self Portrait*,[4] among others. Although it does not appear that any of these gallery talks focus on *Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in a Bottle*, these weekly gallery talks invite visitors to take a closer look at the exhibition.

Screenshot from Museum website on upcoming gallery talks relating to *Scenes from the Collection*.

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[1] Programs – Gallery Talks, Jewish Museum, https://www.jewishmuseum.org/calendar/category/gallery-talks
[2] Gallery Talk, "Why Is This Tour Different From All Others?" April 13, 2018
https://www.jewishmuseum.org/calendar/events/2018/04/13/gallery-talk-passover-041318
[3] Gallery Talk, "Impressionist Landscape to Domestic Interior," April 27, 2018,
https://www.jewishmuseum.org/calendar/events/2018/04/27/gallery-talk-impressionist-landscape-042718
[4] Gallery Talk, "Figuration and Abstraction," May 11, 2018
https://www.jewishmuseum.org/calendar/events/2018/05/11/gallery-talk-figuration-and-abstraction-051118

Website and Social Media

In addition to information about programming, the Jewish Museum's website has a webpage for each object in its collection, regardless of whether the object is on view. The page provides basic information such as the object's title, the artist/maker, date, medium, dimensions, geographic origin, and accession number. Most objects have a digital image, and if the Museum believes that the object is in the public domain, a high resolution image also would be available. The page includes a brief description of the object's significance, its known provenance, exhibition history, and published references (if any). A tagging system allows visitors to browse the collection for similar objects. The object's page would be a helpful resource for researchers who want to learn more about the object. Potential visitors also can see whether the object is currently on view.

Artist/Maker: **Moses Formstecher**

Bio: 1760-1836

Title: **Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in a Bottle**

Place Made: Offenbach (Germany)

Date: 1813

Medium: Glass: half-post blown; wood: painted; metal

Dimensions: 11 1/4 × 5 × 5 in. (28.6 × 12.7 × 12.7 cm)

Credit Line: Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Bial

Accession Number: JM 21-79a

Geography: Offenbach, Hesse, Germany, Europe

Tags: **Decorative Arts, Jerusalem Temple, Model, Scenes: Taxonomies**

On View

Submit Picture Request

No artifacts survive from Solomon's Temple, which probably lies under a later mosque and cannot be excavated. We can envision its appearance and ritual through the Bible's description of a magnificent building of costly woods and gilded decoration, with furnishings of pure gold.

Although the Temple no longer exists, Jews continue to pray that it be rebuilt in the messianic era. Artists through the ages have imaginatively interpreted the biblical description to recreate Solomon's Temple and its implements, as in this example.

Text Source

Blumenthal Web Text

Provenance

The artist, Offenbach, Germany; bequeathed through his family to Louis Bial, New York; Louis and Grete Bial donated to the Jewish Museum, New York, 1979.

Exhibition History

The Jewish Museum, New York, 75 YEARS OF COLLECTING, February 27, 1980-October 1981.

Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, Ohio, TREASURES OF THE JEWISH MUSEUM, September 24-November 5, 1989.

The Jewish Museum, New York, CULTURE AND CONTINUITY: THE JEWISH JOURNEY, June 13, 1993-February 12, 2017.

Information may change as a result of ongoing research.

Related Audio   Educator Resource   Related Exhibition

Screenshot of informational section of the collection page for *Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in a Bottle* on the Jewish Museum's website.

Some objects, such as *Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem*, have audio posts and/or are featured in an educational resource. The object's page has buttons that links viewers to the audio post (with a written transcript)[5] and the educational resource.[6] Therefore, the object page connects web visitors to other informational resources created by the Jewish Museum.
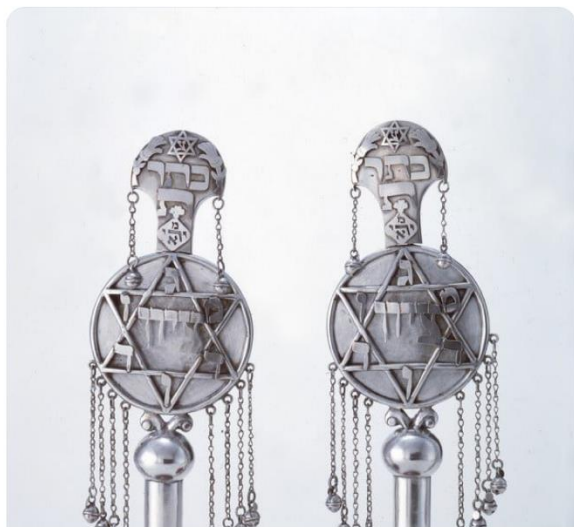
Through a link/button on the object page, web visitors can share objects in the Museum's collection on Facebook, Twitter, and send it by email. The Jewish Museum also maintains a robust social media presence. Social media posts promote objects in the *Scenes from the Collection* exhibition by tying them to current events and issues.

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[5] Soundcloud, The Jewish Museum – "Bottle Containing Model of Jerusalem Temple," https://soundcloud.com/thejewishmuseum/bottle-containing-model-of-jerusalem-temple?in=thejewishmuseum/sets/permanent-collection
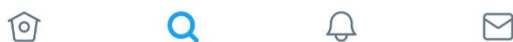[6] *Objects Tell Stories: Jewish Holidays*, http://assets.thejewishmuseum.org/programs_educator_resources_pdf/JM_JewishHolidays_CurriculumGuide.pdf
Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in a Bottle can be found on pages 35-36.

Recent posts on the Jewish Museum's Twitter and Instagram promoting *Scenes from the Collection*.

Conclusion

Through technology, the Jewish Museum enhances the way museum visitors connect with objects in the collection. Social media succinctly links objects to timely ideas and issues. The website provides helpful resources for both scholarly researchers and casual browsers. Educational programs offer focused, in-person study and discussion of an object. Much like how *Model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in a Bottle* is housed in a 21st century Cabinet of Wonders, the Jewish Museum integrates technology with the traditional goal of connecting visitors with the collection.

References

1. "Developing Effective Digital Strategies," NMC Horizon Report, 2016 Museum Edition, p. 22-23, accessed at http://cdn.nmc.org/media/2016-nmc-horizon-report-museum-EN.pdf

   (I was unable to access the NMC Horizon Report through the Blackboard link. Therefore, I have cited the webpage through which I found the report.)