

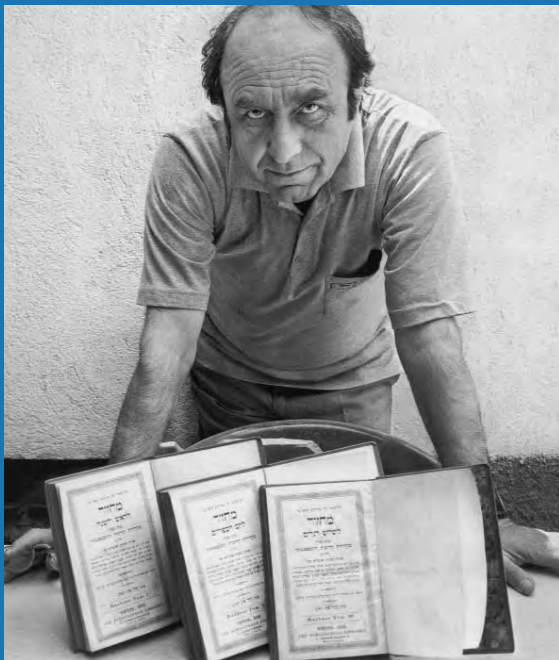
# artworks on line



Newsletter of the American Jewish Museum of the JCC of Greater Pittsburgh

Fall 2011

## 2011–2012 AJM Exhibition Season



Norman Gershman; Rexhep Rifat Hoxha, with Hebrew books left behind by a Jewish family, image courtesy HUC.

**BESA**  
**Albanian Muslims Who Saved Jews**  
**During the Holocaust**  
**October 3–December 30, 2011**



Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, *Funnyman* #4 (May 1948), *Medieval Mirthquake*, image courtesy Adam Parfrey.

**SUPER SILLY!**  
**Superman Creators' Funnyman**  
**Fights Crime with Shtick**  
THE ANNA L. AND IRENE V. CAPLAN EXHIBIT  
**January 10–March 28, 2012**



Margot Zemach for Singer's *Alone in the Wild Forest* (1971), image courtesy HUC.

**Isaac Bashevis Singer and**  
**His Artists**  
**April–June 2012**

# BESA: Albanian Muslims Who Saved Jews During the Holocaust

October 3–December 30, 2011  
Fine Perlow and Weis Gallery, Berger Gallery

Opening Reception Monday, October 3 • 7 pm

**Keynote Presentation:**  
**Stuart Huck, BESA Assistant Photographer**

*Reception sponsors*

JCC: Bernard & Marsha Marcus

Holocaust Center: Rogal Family in memory of Leora Rogal

*BESA: Albanian Muslims Who Saved Jews During the Holocaust* is an exhibition comprised of black and white photographs taken by Norman Gershman. The photographs illustrate how an altruistic, positive relationship between Jews and Muslims resulted in the rescue of approximately 2,000 Jews during the Holocaust. The portraits, paired with narratives that recount personal experiences, suspend the poise of these heroes in time. Gershman partnered with his friend and photographer Stuart Huck for over six years to interview and photograph individuals and families in Albania. Huck will speak at the exhibition's opening reception at the JCC on October 3 at 7pm.

Israel's Yad Vashem, a memorial for Jewish victims of the Holocaust, sponsors this traveling exhibition. As of January 2011, Yad Vashem's Righteous Among the Nations program recognizes 23,788 individuals from 45 nations who risked their lives to save

Jews during the Holocaust. Albania, with 69 Righteous, ranks above the median for number of Righteous per nation. Yet, this number leaves out many Albanian rescuers, like the Kurti family, who have not sought recognition for their heroism. Instead, the Kurtis say, "To do good is to get good from God."

Under a code of honor called *besa*, Albanians commit themselves to aiding anyone in danger, even at the risk of their own lives. *Besa*, which means "to keep the promise," is a traditional principle that Albanians developed through their interpretation of Islam. Living up to one's *besa* is fundamental to Albanian ethics; protecting another person, regardless of racial, religious or political differences is an honor.

During the German occupation of Albania (1943–44), Albanians risked their own lives to abide by *besa*. Prime Minister at the time, Mehdi Frashëri,



Norman Gershman; Merushe, with letters from Israel; image courtesy HUC.

ordered: "All Jewish children will sleep with your children, all will eat the same food, all will live as one family." Albanians rescued nearly all the Jews, citizens and refugees alike, in the country; members of only one Jewish family were not saved. Albania, the only European country with a Muslim majority, was also the only occupied country to have a larger Jewish population after World War II than before. Albanians saved an estimated 2,000 Jews from the Nazi atrocity.

Kujtim Civeja, a teacher and imam (leader in Islamic worship), recalls that his family sheltered ten Jewish families: "Our father wrote that when he had the opportunity and privilege to shelter so many Jewish families it gave him joy to put into practice his Islamic faith. To be generous is a virtue."

Like that of the Civeja family, the integrity of many other Albanians has been captured in *BESA: Albanian Muslims Who Saved Jews During the Holocaust*, an exhibition that evokes bold sentimentality. Sadly, as a result of the communist rule that forbade Albanians from communicating with anyone outside of the country from 1946 to 1992, many of the Albanian rescuers lost all contact with those they welcomed into their homes and risked their lives to save.

The Albanians who grace Gershman's photographs describe themselves as being traditional, secular, devout, or religious Muslims. Every one of them expresses compassion for the Jews they sheltered, and Gershman as well as Yad Vashem extend gratitude to the heroes by sharing their stories with the world.

# More about Albania

Albania is located in a region of southeastern Europe called the Balkans. Along Albania's west coast, 50 miles of the Adriatic Sea separate it from southern Italy. Albania is north of Greece, west of Macedonia, and south of Kosovo and Montenegro. Albania is slightly smaller than the state of Maryland, and the terrain is mostly mountainous, with small coastal plains.

Albania's population is under three million people, and the life expectancy is 77.4 years. Albania is the only European country with a Muslim majority, which is estimated to comprise 70% of the population. Statistics on religious affiliation, however, are not conclusive. Although private religious practice is currently allowed, the government forbade religious observance from 1967 to 1990, when Albania was officially declared to be an atheist state.

From 1946 to 1992, communist rule promoted self-sufficiency and limited international relations, which cut Albania off from the globalizing world. Recent developments include joining NATO in 2009. In 2011, travel guide Lonely Planet ranked Albania first on its list of top ten travel destinations in the world. Lonely Planet describes the country's authenticity: "Raised on a diet of separation and hardship, Albania is distinctly Albanian."

Albania excluded itself from the Olympic Games in the summer of 1972, and did not return until 1992. Having competed in a total of eight Games, Albania has yet to win an Olympic medal.

Famous Albanians include Catholic missionary and humanitarian Mother Teresa, daughter of Albanian immigrants, and brothers Jim and the late John Belushi, a pair of successful comedians, born of an Albanian immigrant father and first generation Albanian-American mother.

Today, between 150-160 Jews live in Albania, most in Tirana, the capital.



Norman Gershman; Sali and Gugash Kurti; image courtesy HUC.



Norman Gershman; Avdul Haxhiu and granddaughter; image courtesy HUC.

The exhibition is brought to Pittsburgh through the collaboration of the Holocaust Center of the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Area Jewish Committee, and the American Jewish Museum. Collectively, they share this story of interfaith success that occurred at an extremely trying time.

Community Partners include Classrooms Without Borders, Congregation Dor Hadash, J-Site, Light of the Age Mosque, Muslim Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh, Muslim-Jewish Discussion Group, National Catholic Center for Holocaust Education, SFH Islamic Interfaith Network and Turkish Cultural Center Pittsburgh.



Funnyman #2 (March 1948), *The Kute Knockout*, image courtesy Adam Parfrey.

# Super Silly! Superman Creators' Funnyman Fights Crime with Shtick

THE ANNA L. AND IRENE V. CAPLAN EXHIBIT  
January 10–March 28, 2012  
Fine Perlow and Weis Gallery

Opening Reception Saturday, January 14 • 6 pm  
Reception sponsored by Miriam and Jim Leib



Funnyman #4 (May 1948), *Medieval Mirthquake*, image courtesy Adam Palfrey.

A comic hero named Funnyman may sound like a joke. Well, he is, almost. Keep in mind he is the creation of Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, the two Jewish men who created Superman®—the first superhero, the ultimate superhero—whose ideal physique, character, and exceptional humility gives way to only one flaw, weakness in the presence of kryptonite.

Funnyman, created one decade after Superman's debut in 1938, fits into a category all of his own. Instead of royal blue spandex and a ruby red cape, he wears baggy polka-dot pants and a plaid jacket with a flower lapel. His everyday profession is a comedian, and his name is Larry Davis.

*Super Silly! Superman Creators' Funnyman Fights Crime with Shtick* is an exhibition featuring the complete set of original Funnyman storyboards. The exhibition highlights Siegel and Shuster's transition from creating a supernatural figure to developing an ordinary character whose heroism protects people in his community.

As a comic hero, Funnyman's role is to lighten tension with humor. In the book *Siegel and Shuster's Funnyman: The First Jewish Superhero, from the Creators of Superman*—published by Feral House, which is helping develop this exhibition—authors Thomas Andrae

and Mel Gordon explain that Funnyman is grounded in the unique aspects of Jewish humor. Funnyman's wit and quirky charm pay homage to his creators' Jewish heritage, and the character overtly resembles the real life Jewish comedian Danny Kaye (Daniel David Kaminsky, 1919–1987).

The Funnyman comic, which lasted for merely six issues in 1948, chronicles the adventures of comedian Larry Davis, who wears clown garb to fight crime with laughter. Originally motivated by the prospects of gaining publicity, Davis realizes that doing good deeds is worthwhile, even fun. So the act he intended as a joke takes a sincere turn when he proceeds to defeat villains out of good will. Still, his persona as Funnyman eases the edges of seriousness.

Although the Funnyman series was short-lived, Siegel and Shuster created a character whose selfish motivations transform into heroism as he guards his neighbors from harm. Maybe his red hair and clown guise, complete with the shoes and nose, lack an appeal comparable to that of Superman, and the name Funnyman will never be as recognizable as the "S" across Superman's chest. Yet, Funnyman's unique status as an ethnic, comic hero who lacks supernatural powers

strikes a note that resonates with the ordinary.

When Siegel and Shuster created Funnyman in 1948, America grappled with what defined heroism. The nation experienced a trying time, simultaneously full of hopeful prospects, as it regrouped from the World War and rounded out its identity in a world of varied ideologies. The struggles of maintaining peace seemed more apparent than ever: the United Nations was only three years old, America sided with Britain and France to face the Berlin Blockade crises against the Soviets, and 21 countries of the American continent adopted the Charter of the Organization of American States as it still stands today.

The ultimate goal of achieving world peace is a challenge that may never be realized. Striving for peace at any level, though, is heroic. In real life, heroes are not distinguished by capes or muscular build, and they ease tension by applying their own skills to situations at hand. Funnyman exemplifies this principle with his use of comedy. The AJM is organizing various public outreach programs based on humor, heroism and Jewish symbolism in comics while *Super Silly! Superman Creators' Funnyman Fights Crime with Shtick* is on display. Stay tuned for event updates.

# Artists Included in this Exhibition

**Des Asmussen (1913–2004)**

My Father's Courthouse (1963)  
The Prodigal Fool (1966)

**Eric Carle (1929– )**

Why Noah Chose the Dove (1974)

**William Pene DuBois (1916–1993)**

The Topsy-Turvy Emperor of China (1971)

**Leonard Everett Fisher (1924– )**

The Wicked City (1972)

**Antonio Frasconi (1919– )**

Elijah the Slave (1970)  
Yentl the Yeshiva Boy (1983)

**Nonny Hogrogian (1932– )**

The Fearsome Inn (1967)

**Julian Jusim (1946– )**

The Topsy-Turvy Emperor of China (1996)  
Fools of Chelm (1997)

**Irene Lieblich (1923–2008)**

A Tale of Three Wishes (1976)  
The Power of Light: Eight Stories for Hanukkah (1980)

**Ira Moskowitz (1912–2001)**

The Hasidim (1973)  
A Little Boy in Search of God (1976)  
Reaches of Heaven (1980)  
Satan in Goray (1981)  
The Penitent (1983)

**Larry Rivers (1925–2002)**

The Magician of Lublin (1984)

**Maurice Sendak (1928– )**

Zlateh the Goat (1966)  
Yash the Chimney Sweep (1968)

**Symeon Shimin (1902–1984)**

Joseph and Koza or the Sacrifice to the Vistula (1970)

**Uri Shulevitz (1935– )**

The Fools of Chelm and their History (1973)  
The Golem (1982)

**Raphael Soyer (1899–1987)**

A Young Man in Search of Love (1978)  
Lost in America (1981)  
Love and Exile (1984)  
The Gentleman from Cracow (1970)

**Phero Thomas (1922–1984)**

Gimpel the Fool and Other Stories (1980)

**Roman Vishniac (1897–1990)**

A Day of Pleasure: Stories of a Boy Growing Up in Warsaw (1969)

**Margot Zemach (1931–1989)**

Mazel and Shlimazel or the Milk of a Lioness (1967)  
When Shlemiel Went to Warsaw and Other Stories (1968)  
Alone in the Wild Forest (1971)  
Naftali the Storyteller and his Horse, Sus (1976)



Raphael Soyer for Singer's *The Gentleman from Cracow* (1970), image courtesy HUC.

## Isaac Bashevis Singer and His Artists

**April–June 2012**

**Fine Perlow and Weis Gallery**

**Opening Reception:**

**Monday, April 23 • 7 pm**

*Reception sponsored by Ellie Baker Feldman*



Maurice Sendak for Singer's *Zlateh the Goat* (1966), image courtesy HUC.

Isaac Bashevis Singer (1902–1991), a towering figure among modern Yiddish writers in America, wrote his entire oeuvre of 86 books and numerous stories in the authentically Jewish language. Many of his books and stories, steeped in his Jewish and Polish heritage, have been translated into English, and over 30 of them have been illustrated.

*Isaac Bashevis Singer and His Artists* features illustrations by fourteen men and three women who produced artwork for Singer's stories. Often, publishing companies selected an artist whose work they saw fit for a particular book, so Singer did not personally know most of these artists. Singer sought the work of only five artists in the exhibition: Irene Lieblich, Ira Moskowitz, Uri Shulevitz, Raphael Soyer, and Roman Vishniac.

Many of Singer's artists have been recognized with prestigious awards including the Caldecott Medal, Newbery Award, Pulitzer Prize, and the Hans Christian Andersen Medal. Singer himself received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1978, marking the capstone of his career as well as a notable success for Yiddish literature.

Although Singer was fluent in Polish, Hebrew, and English when he moved from Poland to New York City in 1935, he wrote solely in Yiddish. His journalism, novels, and short stories appealed to scores of Jewish immigrants, but not without criticism, as some readers found his works evaded the realms of moral propriety.

Born to religious Jews in Poland at the turn of the 20th century, Singer grew up surrounded by the influences of Hasidic Judaism, a devout movement disposed toward Jewish mysticism. Encouraged to

pursue a career as a religious scholar, Singer spent two years in a rabbinical seminary before deciding to follow the path his older siblings forged in writing.

While writing fulfilled his creative ambitions, Singer's subjects continued to reflect concerns rooted in his religious upbringing. Singer's stories often heed the moral struggles of reality while harkening folklore and the supernatural. This blur between the real and the fantastical meshes with characters who face a dichotomy between sin and piety.

Singer often attributed superstitions and uncertainty to his characters; illustrations by Maurice Sendak, who asserts that imagery should embellish a work's mystery, are well-suited to Singer's writing. Sendak illustrated two of Singer's works: a collection of children's stories titled *Zlateh the Goat*, and a story that appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1968, "Yash the Chimney Sweep." Sendak marks his work with an acute interest in expanding the reader's imaginary world. His most prominent work, *Where the Wild Things Are*, won him the Caldecott Medal in 1964 and was recently adapted for the big screen by Spike Jonze.

Larry Rivers (born Yitzroch Loiza Grossberg), another of Singer's artists, had creative talent that extended far beyond illustration. He established himself as a writer, teacher, sculptor, musician, filmmaker, and actor. His legacy of work nods to Dada and Surrealist Art, skips among the Beats, and advances onto the Pop scene. Rivers has a lasting reputation as a founding father of Pop Art, and the eccentric Andy Warhol hailed Rivers as an influential figure. Rivers drew on his Jewish heritage for some of his works, including a commission titled "History of

Matzoh: the Story of the Jews," and for his illustrations in Singer's *The Magician of Lublin*.

Eric Carle illustrated Singer's *Why Noah Chose the Dove* and is best known as the author and artist of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Another author and artist, William Pène du Bois, sold his first book immediately out of high school. This success dissuaded du Bois from attending Pittsburgh's Carnegie Technical School of Architecture, which had granted him a scholarship. A successful writer and illustrator, his work for Singer's *The Topsy-Turvy Emperor of China* is part of this exhibition.

Nonny Hogrogian, illustrator of Singer's *The Fearsome Inn*, has the merit of being one of just five people to win the Caldecott Medal two times. She actually studied under another of Singer's artists, Antonio Frasconi, whose art appears in over 100 books, including those by Chilean legend Pablo Neruda and American luminary Langston Hughes.

*Isaac Bashevis Singer and His Artists* features seventeen artists who interpreted one man's writing. The exhibition not only reveals two layers of storytelling, words and images, but also presents the audience with a variety of styles. Photography, painting, graphic design, and wood-block prints are a few modes of representation that artists chose to translate Singer's words into lasting images.



Eric Carle for Singer's *Why Noah Chose the Dove* (1974), image courtesy HUC.



William Pène du Bois for Singer's *The Topsy-Turvy Emperor of China* (1971), image courtesy HUC.

The American Jewish Museum of the Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh is a non-collecting contemporary Jewish art museum located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Projects explore contemporary art in as wide a scope as possible, augmented by multi-disciplinary programs to facilitate dialogue about Jewish art, philosophy and culture.

Replacing the paper version of *ArtWorks*, AJM's annual publication, *Artworks Online* includes photo galleries, links to artist videos, lectures, exhibits guides and curriculum, and lets readers know about events happening at the AJM. The AJM has added several online features to make visiting the AJM website fun. Check out the AJM website or Facebook page for updates on exhibition details, photo galleries and videos.



# Thanks to our donors

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A *Painter's Legacy* docent tour, photo by AJM.



Mask making workshop at the East End Cooperative Ministry with Ann Rosenthal, photo by AJM.

## Highlights of the AJM 2010-11 Season

Last season's ambitious exhibition season offered a dizzying array of rousing programs that made an impact on diverse audiences, including a traveling itinerary throughout Southwestern PA of photographer Charlee Brodsky's *I Thought I Could Fly* project, a successful docent program for *A Painter's Legacy: The Students of Samuel Rosenberg*, and edifying public programs for *Too Shallow for Diving: the 21st Century Is Treading Water*, guest curated by Carolyn Speranza. *Too Shallow for Diving* received National Endowment for the Arts funding, enabling

the AJM to support four artists—Vanessa German, Richard Harned, Maritza Mosquera and Ann T. Rosenthal—in conducting art-making workshops with low-income youth from Gwen's Girls, the East-End Cooperative Ministry and the Boys and Girls Club of Pittsburgh. The workshops used visual art to consider issues around art, ecology and self-empowerment and incorporated performance, dance, drawing and discussion. Ann Rosenthal's workshop included a scientific cruise on the Allegheny River with RiverQuest. The

driving force was to foster the value of self-development, accountability and self-expression.

In addition to making a positive—sometimes provocative—impact on different kinds of audiences, the AJM's internship program supports emerging arts professionals. The thoughtful *Artworks Online* features have been written by Jaclyn Sternick, AJM intern from the University of Pittsburgh.

—Melissa Hiller



Shadow puppet workshop at the East End Cooperative Ministry with Richard Harned, photo by AJM.



Loved Water® workshop at the Boys and Girls Club of Pittsburgh with Maritza Mosquera, photo by AJM.



Write to Right workshop at Gwen's Girls with Vanessa German, photo by AJM.

# Art is indeed not the bread but the wine of life

—Jean Paul Richter

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A copy of the official registration and financial information of the Jewish Community Center of Greater Pittsburgh may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania (800) 732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

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5738 Forbes Avenue • Squirrel Hill • 412-521-8010 • Admission is free

**Gallery Hours:**

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