Jewish Art... A Celebration of Life!

The Gershon & Rebecca Fenster Museum contains the finest collection of Jewish art and artifacts in the Southwest. Its treasures span 4,000 years and reveal the depth of the Jewish heritage. The museum’s goal is to foster understanding between people of all religions through an appreciation of their common history and values.

Celebration of the Law

The most sacred items in the Fenster collection are the Torah scrolls—the five books of Moses—painstakingly handwritten on parchment. Collected from many communities around the world, they include one treasured scroll rescued from the Nazi Holocaust.

Celebration of the Lifecycle

From birth to death, uniquely Jewish objects mark life’s significant events. A wimple, made from swaddling cloth, covers a baby boy during the bris or circumcision on the eighth day of his life. Decorated with relevant details of his birthdate, the wimple is bound around the Torah when, at age 13, the young man celebrates Bar Mitzvah, the rite of passage to adulthood.

Celebration of Holidays

The Museum displays objects associated with observance of the Jewish holidays; among these the shofar or ram’s horn used on Rosh Hashanah to sound in the new year, seder plates with their symbols of the feast of Passover, kiddush cups and candlesticks for the observance of the Shabbat or Sabbath, the eight-branched candelabra, or menorah for Hanukah—the Feast of Lights that often coincides with Christianity’s celebration of Christmas.

The Southwestern Jewish Heritage

A growing collection of historic documents, photographs and artifacts reflects the Jewish influence in this region. The Oklahoma Jewish Archives Project, housed in the Museum, chronicles the Jewish experience in Oklahoma, including the life of Gershon Fenster, a Lithuanian immigrant who came to Oklahoma in the early 1920s to work for the Sanditen family’s embryonic Oklahoma Tire & Supply Company. He earned a national reputation for Jewish and civic leadership and as a patron of art.

The exhibits explore the history of the diaspora—the scattering of Jews to the corners of the earth—from Biblical times to the present. The objects displayed include both the sacred and the mundane—those associated with worship, those marking significant lifecycle events, and distinctive items used in everyday activity.

Oil lamps from the time of the exodus from Egypt, a sampler cross stitched by a Jewish Canadian pioneer woman, and paintings by contemporary Israeli artists are but a few examples of the breadth of this extraordinary collection. The visitor may enjoy a self-guided tour enhanced by well-labeled displays.

Museum Hours

Open Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Sundays, 1 to 4 p.m. Closed Mondays, Saturdays and all Jewish Holidays.

Location

Two miles southeast of downtown Tulsa at 1223 E. 17th Place at Peoria, in the B’nai Emunah Synagogue.

Admission

Admission is free. The museum is a non-profit organization funded through endowments, memberships and gifts.

Guided Tours

Free docent guided tours for student and adult groups are available with two weeks advance notice. Please call 582-3732 or write the Museum for reservations.

Special Exhibitions

The museum organizes special exhibitions of its permanent collection and hosts touring exhibitions. Members are notified of these through a free newsletter.

You are invited to call for a current schedule.

The Fenster Museum is affiliated with the Council of American Jewish Museums and American Association of Museums.