

# Maine Jewish Museum

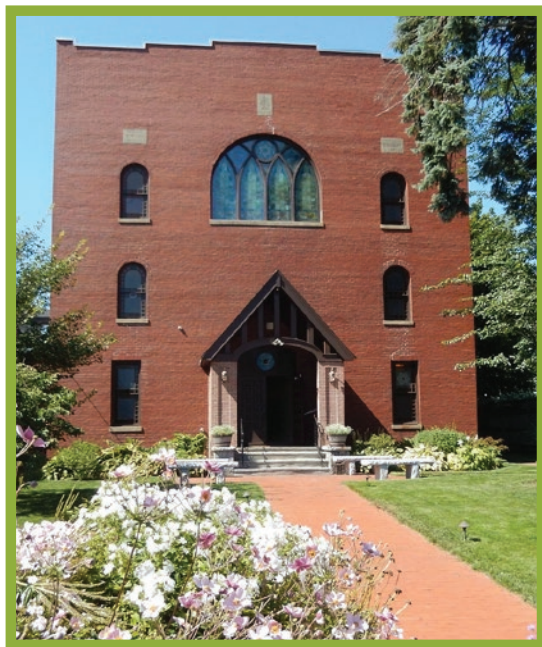
## ANNUAL REPORT 2024

MJM Friends:

We are writing to thank all who have supported our work this year, to highlight our robust schedule of exhibitions and programs, and to ask you to consider contributing to our Annual Appeal Campaign by mailing us a check, clicking [here](#), or using the QR Code at the end of this Report.

In a particularly fraught year of widening societal fault lines and record-high antisemitism nationally and in Maine, MJM has continued to serve as a gathering place for community and a forum for multifaceted cultures and viewpoints. Our mission calls on us to celebrate and honor the contributions of Maine's Jewish community members, past and present, and to use the Maine Jewish immigrant experience to foster appreciation and understanding among people of all backgrounds. Our art exhibitions, historical displays, and programs are designed around the conviction that only by preserving our shared history and tapping into our common humanity can we combat hatred and division.

Stories – the many stories that define, empower, and humanize us – are critical to this mission. Our Museum has a unique responsibility to document and tell the stories of Jewish life in Maine and how those stories fit into our increasingly diverse State. To this end, we are in the planning stage of an exciting 3–5-year Historic Exhibitions Refresh to ensure the Maine Jewish community and the individuals we serve feel seen, honored, and connected. We will be reimagining our displays to be inviting, interactive, and informative for all those seeking an orientation to Jewish life in Maine. We owe our visitors a powerful Core Exhibition about Maine Jewish life and why it is such an important thread in the tapestry of a healthy democracy.



The Maine Jewish Museum

Thanks to the generosity of MJM Vice President Bob Hirshon and the Wein-Hirshon Foundation, ***a \$25,000 Matching Grant is in place for all first-time and increased donations to the Annual Appeal, making your contribution doubly impactful.*** Matching funds will be used to offset the cost of our Historic Exhibitions Refresh. Now more than ever, the Maine Jewish Museum needs your help to meet the moment and make sure our stories become the building blocks of a kinder, more compassionate, and equitable society that reflects the Jewish and MJM value of *tikkun olam*. We look forward to partnering with you into the future to realize this goal.

Warmly,

Steve Brinn  
President

Dawn LaRochelle  
Executive Director

# CONGRATULATIONS!



## ANNUAL APPEAL HONOREE

Peanut butter and jelly, MJM and Steve Brinn — it is impossible to imagine the one without the other. To say that Steve “has done a lot for the Museum” is a massive understatement. Steve was integral to the founding of MJM, helping nurture it through its precarious first few years, keeping it going during COVID, seeing it through a fire and a complete interior gut and rebuild, and growing it into the vibrant institution we all know and love today. Steve took the concept of a hands-on Presidency to a new level, not only presiding over the Board and the books but also jumping in any time we were shorthanded, ready to roll up his sleeves and do whatever needed doing, no matter how menial the task. Now, after almost a decade as MJM President, Steve is passing the torch to our Vice President, Bob Hirshon.

What will MJM do without Steve?! Fortunately, we won't have to find out, as Steve will remain on the Board and the Executive Committee and has promised to stay actively involved with MJM's goings-on, including chairing our Hall of Fame Induction and Fundraiser. But we are happy that Steve can finally get a well-earned rest after ten years of singular and singularly devoted service. It is with love and gratitude that we dedicate this year's Annual Appeal to Steve. *Todah Rabah* and hats off to **Steve Brinn**!



## VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

As a small, thinly-staffed organization that consistently punches above its weight class, MJM is fortunate to have a core of devoted volunteers supporting our efforts. While we appreciate the hard work and dedication of all our volunteers, there is one who stands out for going well beyond the metaphorical extra mile in 2024 and always: **Tom Berman**. Tom is humble and never seeks the spotlight, but many of you know him as the man who, at any Jewish community function, is invariably swarmed by the tech-challenged hordes wheedling with him to take a look at their you-name-it device that is not working properly.

Tom first discovered he had a knack for technology during his tenure at the National Weather Service, where in addition to forecasting the weather, he had the opportunity to work with and maintain equipment just when the world was beginning to transition to computers. Fast forward to today, and everyone at MJM has Tom on speed dial. Our online exhibitions and slide shows, not to mention the Museum computer network, would not be possible but for the countless hours Tom has dedicated to keeping them up and running. And at any Museum event that requires sound tech, Tom is guaranteed to play a leading role. Mazel Tov, Tom, our 2024 Volunteer of the Year, whose invaluable contributions to MJM set a shining example for us all.



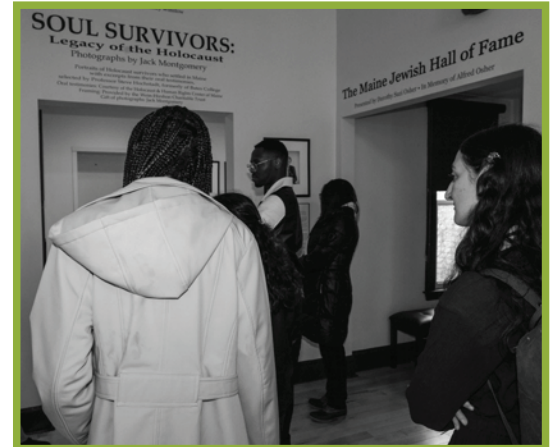


## CONNECTING PEOPLE TO THE MAINE JEWISH EXPERIENCE AND JEWISH MAINERS TO THEIR ROOTS

Illuminating the vibrancy and complexity of Maine's evolving Jewish community for a state, national, and global audience is at the heart of our Museum work. This year, as a precursor to our Historic Exhibitions Refresh, we made it easier to connect people to the Maine Jewish experience and Jewish Mainers to their roots with completely updated [Maine Synagogues: Past and Present](#) and [Maine Cantorial Music](#) online exhibitions. Now, on the MJM kiosk or on your own device, you can access our interactive map of Maine synagogues or listen to a broad array of spiritually uplifting Maine cantors with a simple click.



MJM Executive Director Dawn LaRochelle giving visitors a tour of our virtual exhibitions



Connecting visitors to the Maine Jewish experience with our historic exhibitions



"I'm a Jewish Mainer" Youth Art Contest winner sparkling in front of her masterpiece

We also launched our inaugural "I'm a Jewish Mainer" Youth Art Contest, inviting young people in grades K-12 to reflect on their experiences growing up Jewish in Maine and express their Maine Jewish pride through art. The eleven winners from across the state had their works exhibited at the Maine Jewish Museum last September and October. And we took advantage of our magnificent sculpture garden – one of only two public garden spaces in Portland's East End – to dine al fresco in the first-ever Maine Jewish Food Practitioners Potluck Dinner. A collaboration with the Center for Small Town Jewish Life and the Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine, the potluck brought Maine Jewish farmers, restaurateurs, caterers, bakers, picklers, cookbook authors, and passionate home cooks from their 20s to 90s together to feast, converse, and learn from one another. It was a magical evening full of warmth, *ruach*, and camaraderie.



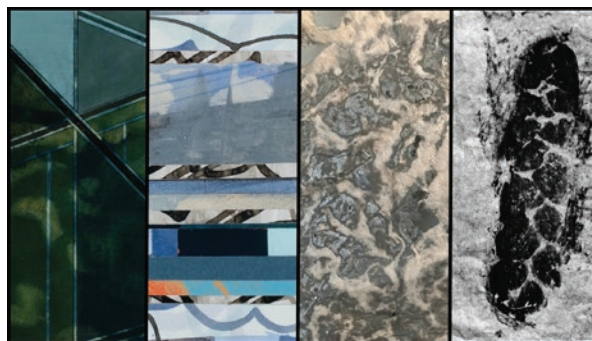
## EXHIBITING CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS WITH MAINE AND JEWISH CONNECTIONS



Photograph by Diane Hudson of MJM Preparator Kevin Callahan with William Zorach's "Head of Moses" sculpture

The Arts continue to flourish at MJM under the stewardship of our new Curator, Alison Gibbs, and our longstanding Curator of Photography, Nanci Kahn. Alison accepted the baton from Arts Program Founder Nancy Davidson, who moved on last Spring after eleven exceptional years (we are fortunate to still see Nancy often at the Museum, however). One of the highlights of 2024 was bringing in Guest Curator Rachel Walls for a "father-daughter" exhibition featuring original works by William Zorach and Dahlav Ipcar (plus two bonus works by Marguerite Zorach). The Zorach sculptures were all made as Zorach's response to the Holocaust, with many on display for the first time ever – and thanks to Rachel and Nancy's tireless advocacy and the generosity of numerous benefactors, MJM has procured one of these sculptures, "Head of Moses," for our sculpture garden, where it will be installed with a dedication ceremony and reception next Spring.

We were also humbled and honored to exhibit photography from the Steve and Judy Halpert collection showcasing more than 20 artists, including Berenice Abbott, Eugene Atget, Edward Curtis, Jim Daniels, Barbara Goodbody, Michael Kolster, Judy Glickman Lauder, Verner Reed, Todd Webb, and many more. Steve Halpert's untimely passing shortly after this exhibition ended was devastating and underscored how fortunate we were to have Steve and Judy at the Museum to discuss their collection while Steve was still with us. And in another tribute to an artist who left us too soon, *As He Saw It... Then* honored the life and work of Ted Arnold, a multi-talented artist who participated in the Portland art community for many years, showing work at Greenhut Galleries, Susan Maasch Fine Art, and Davidson & Daughters Contemporary Art. He had numerous exhibitions at the Maine Jewish Museum, where he was a beloved friend.



Collage by Penelope Jones, *Overlay* exhibition (September/October 2024)



Photograph by Adam Powers, *On Peninsula* exhibition (September/October 2024)

Other notable artists and photographers who exhibited at MJM in 2024 include **Adeline Goldminc-Tronzo, Roz Somner, Richard Wexler, Andy Rosen, Whitney River, Lisa Houk, Margie Patlak, Lin Lisberger, Joyce Ellen Weinstein, Adam Powers, Ruth Sylmor, Penelope Jones, Deborah Klotz, Arthur Yanhoff, Yvonne Maiden, and Don Peterson, among others.**





*Fashion, Food, and Fun(d)raiser models striking a pose with friends*



This video highlights reel gives you a feel for the positive energy and excitement the fashion show brought to the Museum.

## CULTIVATING COMMUNITY

Our Jewish core is a springboard for broader outreach, and our shared affinity with other marginalized communities inspires our programming. In August, *Fashion, Food, and Fun(d)raiser: A Celebration of Our Diverse Community* was back by popular demand for the second year in a row. Internationally renowned Black Orthodox Jewish designer Elisheva Rishon flew in from Los Angeles to give the keynote speech as the lead-in to a runway show spotlighting 38 Maine Jewish, immigrant, BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and disabled fashion designers and models from 15 different countries. The stories we wear were on full display, the common threads – literally and figuratively – that bind us were revealed to a packed crowd of over 200 attendees, and the event was featured on *WGAN A Healthy Conversation* and the Society Page of the *Portland Press Herald*.

“Delet” is the Hebrew word for “door,” and MJM’s Delet Program aims to open a door to greater understanding of Jews and Judaism among Maine middle and high school students. Thanks to the generosity of the Sam L. Cohen Foundation, the Glickman Lauder Foundation, the Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine, 100+ Women Who Care Southern Maine, and MJM friends and supporters Bob Willis and Nancy Winslow, we bring the Museum to schools and schools to the Museum to share the Maine Jewish experience and combat antisemitism. A memorable moment this past year was hosting 145 students from Telstar Middle School in Bethel and Oak Hill Middle School in Sabattus for a poetry reading and presentation by celebrated Maine poet Anna Wrobel, the daughter of two Holocaust survivors. With antisemitism at its highest point in over 30 years and brazen and hateful divisions playing out in almost every aspect of American life, this kind of outreach is vital — particularly among our youth, in whose hands our future lies.

New to MJM in 2024: themed pop-up dinners at the Museum! In March, we hosted a six-course reimaged charsoet and Israeli wine pairing dinner with Rabbi Yisroel Bernath, a Hasidic rabbi, actor, screenwriter, and podcaster from Montreal, Canada who also happens to be the foremost authority in the world on fine kosher wines. In September, we followed a book launch for Bowdoin professor Margaret Boyle’s eclectic new cookbook *Sabor Judío: The Jewish Mexican Cookbook* with a three-course Mexican-Jewish dinner and wine pairing. Gourmet dining and learning while surrounded by Maine Jewish-connected contemporary art exhibitions has proven popular with people of all backgrounds — we were quickly sold out for both events — and we plan to continue these dinners into 2025.



Showing the Torah to middle school students at a Delet presentation at MJM

## INSPIRING CREATIVITY THROUGH COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

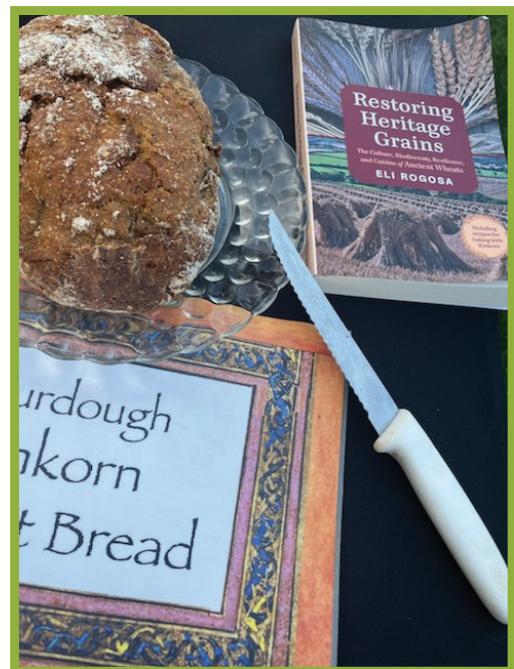
Maine has an outsized creative community, and when we collaborate instead of competing, we have an outsized impact. This year, our collaborative partners included the Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine, the Holocaust and Human Rights Center of Maine, the Center for Small Town Jewish Life, Portland Hadassah, Portland Ovations, Natural Helpers of Maine, Partners in World Health/Blue Wrap Project Runway, the Maine Irish Heritage Center, Victoria Mansion, and the Museum of Beadwork, among others. MJM also provides a free twice-weekly meeting space for the La Leche League of Portland – we always strive to pay it forward.



2024 Natural Helpers of Maine Cohort members show off their photo collages after participating in an MJM art workshop



Twilight falls on the Maine Jewish Food Practitioners Potluck in the magnificent MJM garden



Breaking bread at the Maine Jewish Food Practitioners Potluck at MJM





MJM Executive Director Dawn LaRochelle accepts a check from 100+ Women Who Care Southern Maine with co-recipient the Center for Grieving Children

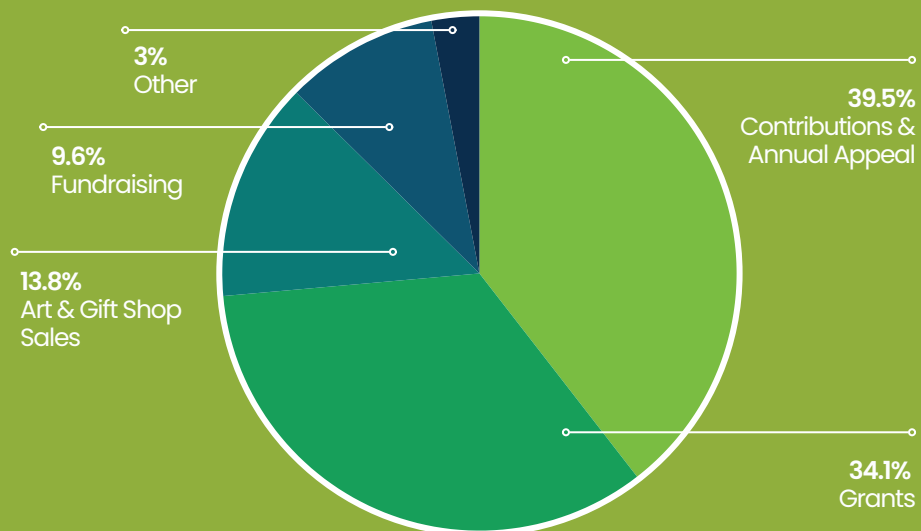
## MJM 2023 – 2024 REVENUE SOURCES

Our work is sustained by an appreciative public that engages with our exhibitions and programs, by the generous volunteers who give their time, by the businesses and foundations that sponsor us, and by the many individual donors like you who respond to our appeals.

*You can help us continue our mission by donating as generously as possible, and by putting us in touch with others you know who share your passion for Maine Jewish history, culture, and the arts.*

Thank you!

## 2024 MJM PROJECTED REVENUE SOURCES



2024

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