The Holocaust Project Exhibit

By Judy Chicago & Donald Woodman

Preliminary Comments

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Isaiah --

My own experience with the Holocaust, as a gentile and as an observer, has to be, I think observant, but respectful. And, it's important for me to recall that this is a contemporary witness to the horror of human evil.

Having had some experiences -- reading and visiting concentration camps in Germany -- it seems the "brute facts" and artistic representations of the Holocaust have an impact like no other. It seems worthy of Judy's work for it to have a permanent home.

I can't help but think that this would be, in Indianapolis, an example of "the other." Something that is somewhat foreign to the community. Something that doesn't immediately integrate. And yet, I suspect that in any setting, a reflection on the Holocaust is "the other" -- something foreign to our day to day living. And, well it should be...

So, how does, could it relate to the Temple Project?

One of the main questions we've had is how the Project could become a destination and self-sustaining both as a conceptual as well as financial entity.

Being the permanent home of the Holocaust Project would, as they say, "put this on the map" and make it a destination of local, regional and national significance.

Of course, that would come with responsibilities -- for curatorship, installation, teaching. Those could be explored in any proposal developed. My main concern was the physical installation not interfering with the integrity of the sanctuary. From the images on Judy's website, it appears that this could work in the basement, or perhaps in a building created specifically for the installation.

Here's the link to the Holocaust Project at Judy's website.

<http://www.judychicago.com/gallery.php?name=Holocaust+Project+Gallery>

Thanks for the update, Isaiah

Isaiah,

Is the building a historical display or a house for a holocaust exhibit ? No sure I am stating it correctly but would there be confusion as to the purpose of what would seem to be dual projects?

Finally, a permanent holocaust display in Indianapolis and a heritage museum both make great sense.

Regards,

Dear Isaiah:

This is my first exposure to Judy Chicago and the Holocaust Project, but I like it!

I'll dig around more online, as you suggest, but it strikes me as a fine idea.

Shalom.

While I'm not a fan of Chicago's work, I recognize its importance in the development of several art and social movements and think its inclusion in the Temple Heritage Center is probably a good idea. The holocaust theme, while off-putting to many, is relevant to the social-justice issues presenting themselves in the mid-north neighborhoods and could become the centerpiece of many fruitful conversations about the social, economic, ecological, etc. issues facing mankind at this point in our species' history. The Chicago Holocaust Project could even become its own destination point, bringing visitors to the temple and the neighborhood just to view it.

For these reasons, I support serious consideration of this idea.

Co-incidentally -- for those who believe in coincidence -- I came across this grant opportunity just a few moments ago; it may have relevance to bringing the project here and constructing dialog around it. Here's the link: <http://foundationcenter.org/pnd/news/story.jhtml?id=415200023>

Hi Isaiah,

A couple of thoughts:

1) I tend to try and think thru the objective early on. What is the objective? Or you might say mission statement. Tell me in 30 words or less what you would like this Center to accomplish. Destination Fall Creek: ***Transform Fall Creek into a residential, recreational and commercial destination with access to art, nature and beauty for every citizen, every day***. 22 words. I would think “preserve the building” would be in it. “share heritage”?

2) I kinda need to see it. I found some images. <http://www.judychicago.com/gallery.php?name=Holocaust+Project+Gallery> How much of the total space do you think this exhibit will consume?

3) One idea would be to focus on Jewish history in Indianapolis or at least Indiana. Make it local.

See you tomorrow.

Just my thoughts,

Isaiah,

I apologize that I haven't responded more quickly. It's an idea I wanted to let sit for a bit, and I've been out of the office quite a lot.

From the description of the exhibit, I think it has tremendous potential. It sounds like it would have a broad appeal to be a springboard for discussions of social justice and genocide around the world, as well as having a national reputation that might attract visitors from outside of Indianapolis. Incorporating a major artwork also expands your potential audience in a major way.

One question to consider is what kind of new perspective the Temple space would bring to the art work - if you can really express to people who have seen the exhibit already why it would be worth it to visit it in the new location.

Another question is to ask what additional permanent or rotating exhibit would help continue the message of hope. I think there could be lots of ways to work with local artists and community groups to create a series of temporary exhibits with messages of hope and justice that would keep it a living space.

Finally, if you intend for this space to be one for school groups, I think you really need to get some local middle and/or high school teachers to look at the work and see if they think there could be a compelling-enough curriculum developed around it to justify field trips. Field trips are growing more and more scarce, so there has to be a lot of bang for the buck, I'm afraid.

I think this exhibit - if complimented by global responses to genocide and social justice movements - helps expand the potential audience for the space to include both the current local community and a more regional, national and potentially international audience.

In one final note, I wonder if the group has considered the new Heritage Center's relationship to some of the other Indiana Jewish heritage organizations: Indiana Jewish Historical Society (out of Fort Wayne), CANDLES (out of Terre Haute) and the Michiana Jewish Historical Society (out of South Bend). If the Temple Heritage Center is to take on this broader role (broader than Indianapolis), you might want to start working with these other groups in the near future.

I look forward to hearing what your group decides, and I hope that I can be of further assistance in the future.

Best,

Stacy Klingler