

THE 2015 DOROTHY SAXE
INVITATIONAL

THE CONTEMPORARY
JEWISH MUSEUM

TZEDAKAH

PAST INVITATIONAL PRESENTATIONS

*Do Not Destroy: Trees, Art, and Jewish Thought,
An Exhibition and The Dorothy Saxe Invitational*
February 16–September 9, 2012

New Works/Old Story: 80 Artists at the Passover Table
February 27–June 2, 2009

Scents of Purpose: Artists Interpret the Spice Box
May 4–September 5, 2005

Making Change: 100 Artists Interpret the Tzedakah Box
November 14, 1999–January 23, 2000

L'Chaim: A Kiddush Cup Invitational
October 19, 1997–February 8, 1998

Light Interpretations: A Hanukkah Menorah Invitational
November 12–December 25, 1995

International Purim Mask Invitational
February 7–March 28, 1991

Purim Mask Invitational I
March 16–April 25, 1989

The Sukkah Competition
October 10–November 9, 1984

The 2015 Dorothy Saxe Invitational
Tzedakah Box

THE CONTEMPORARY JEWISH MUSEUM

SAN FRANCISCO

PAST INVITATIONAL PRESENTATIONS

*Do Not Destroy: Trees, Art, and Jewish Thought,
An Exhibition and The Dorothy Saxe Invitational*
February 16–September 9, 2012

New Works/Old Story: 80 Artists at the Passover Table
February 27–June 2, 2009

Scents of Purpose: Artists Interpret the Spice Box
May 4–September 5, 2005

Making Change: 100 Artists Interpret the Tzedakah Box
November 14, 1999–January 23, 2000

L'Chaim: A Kiddush Cup Invitational
October 19, 1997–February 8, 1998

Light Interpretations: A Hanukkah Menorah Invitational
November 12–December 25, 1995

International Purim Mask Invitational
February 7–March 28, 1991

Purim Mask Invitational I
March 16–April 25, 1989

The Sukkah Competition
October 10–November 9, 1984

The 2015 Dorothy Saxe Invitational
Tzedakah Box

THE CONTEMPORARY JEWISH MUSEUM

SAN FRANCISCO

Published on the occasion of
The 2015 Dorothy Saxe Invitational: Tzedakah Box
April 9–May 17, 2015

The 2015 Dorothy Saxe Invitational: Tzedakah Box is organized by The Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco. An endowed sponsorship for this exhibition is provided by Dorothy R. Saxe. Major support has been provided by an Anonymous donor, Ascent Private Capital Management of U.S. Bank, Phyllis Cook, Dana Corvin and Harris Weinberg, and Gaia Fund. Participating support has been provided by Wendy and Richard Yanowitch.

Additional support is provided by members of The 2015 Dorothy Saxe Invitational Celebration Host Committee, including additional contributions by Marcia and John Goldman, Susan and Joel Hyatt, Barbara and Ron Kaufman, Rosanne and Al Levitt, Phyllis Moldaw, Barbro and Bernard Osher, Lisa and John Pritzker, Ruth Seiler, Esther and Barry Sherman, Roselyne Chroman Swig, Marilyn and Murry Waldman, and Ron and Anita Wornick.

Major support for The Contemporary Jewish Museum's exhibitions and Jewish Peoplehood Programs comes from the Koret Foundation.

Chief Curator
Renny Pritikin

Exhibition Curators
Claire Frost
Kathryn Wade

Design and Art Direction
Brad J. Aldridge

Photography
Johnna Arnold

Copyediting
Melanie Samay

Production Design
Devin Cornwall

Print Advisor
Celeste McMullin

Printed and bound in
the USA by Hill and Sons
Press, San Leandro, CA

Set in Franklin Gothic
and Benton

Ascent
PRIVATE CAPITAL MANAGEMENT
of U.S. BANK



Gaia Fund

KORET
FOUNDATION

ISBN 978-0-991611-1-6 First Edition

© Copyright 2015 by The Contemporary Jewish Museum 736 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103. All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system now known or to be invented, without written permission.

Contents

06	Letter from Dorothy R. Saxe		
07	Executive Director's Foreword		
09	Introduction to the Exhibition		
14	Gale Antokal	52	Dana Hemenway
16	Anzfer Farms	54	Mildred Howard
18	Rick Araluce	56	Stephen Kaltenbach
20	John Bankston	58	Steve Klein
22	Tony Berlant	60	Lisa Kokin
24	Terry Berlier	62	Deborah Lozier
26	Harriete Estel Berman	64	Cybele Lyle
28	Mark Bulwinkle	66	Liz Mamorsky
30	Randy Colosky	68	Andy Paiko
32	Julia Couzens	70	Leah Rosenberg
34	Yvonne Escalante	72	Maha Saab
36	Bella Feldman	74	Zachary Royer Scholz
38	Amy Franceschini	76	Kay Sekimachi
40	Erik Geschke	78	Nancy Selvin
42	Rebekah Goldstein	80	Richard Shaw
44	Matthew Gottschalk	82	Michael Stevens
46	Johanna Grawunder	84	Paul Taylor
48	Beth Grossman	86	Caroline Thomas
50	Trisha Hassler	88	Gail Wight
91	Checklist		

Letter from Dorothy R. Saxe

For *The 2015 Dorothy Saxe Invitational*, The Contemporary Jewish Museum (The CJM) invited West Coast, contemporary artists to create original works of Judaica focusing on the *tzedakah* box—the container often on display in a Jewish home and filled with coins on *erev Shabbat* and other holidays when families gather. As a ritual object, the *tzedakah* box embodies the Jewish ideal and obligation to provide for those in need. The *tzedakah* box was originally featured in the *Invitational Making Change* in 1999; *The 2015 Dorothy Saxe Invitational* revisits the *tzedakah* box to recognize the contemporary significance and eclectic practices of these two traditions—*tzedakah* and art—in society today. Every generation reinvents ritual for its own time. And the Jewish calling to be righteous, which is the Hebrew meaning of the word *tzedakah*, is a living tradition across millennia. The way contemporary artists envision the ritual object that represents this tradition is ever changing and being reinvented as the works in this *Invitational* attest.

As a long-time fine art collector, it has been my great pleasure to encourage the elevation of fine studio craft through The George and Dorothy Saxe Collection of Contemporary Craft at the de Young Museum of San Francisco, which includes prominent West Coast and nationally

known artists, many of whom utilize craft materials, such as Robert Arneson, Dale Chihuly, Nicolas Africano, and Kiki Smith. Consonant with practicing *tzedakah*, it is both the responsibility of and an honor for the collector to share access to contemporary artists and their work with the community. The *Invitational* was the portal through which George and I became involved with The CJM. At that time The Museum was located in the Jewish Community Federation on Steuart Street in San Francisco. This involvement flourished as I became a very active member of The CJM Board of Trustees, engaged on many committees over the years, and encouraged my family to get involved as well.

I would like to thank the thirty-eight participating artists and The CJM curatorial staff who worked most closely with them. The works of art in the exhibition will find homes through the silent auction taking place on the evening of May 12, 2015. It will give all of us pleasure to know that, in keeping with The CJM's mission to make the diversity of Jewish life relevant for a twenty-first century audience, the *tzedakah* boxes will touch the lives of many.

Sincerely,
Dorothy R. Saxe
Endowed Sponsor

Executive Director's Foreword

I'm thrilled that The CJM is presenting *The Dorothy Saxe Invitational* again, the tenth iteration of our ongoing commitment to this unique project. Through the Invitational we advance The CJM's core purpose as a forum for diverse audiences where new perspectives on Jewish culture, history, art, and ideas thrive. Inviting artists to consider a Jewish ritual object—in this instance a humble one, the *tzedakah* box—we engage artists in 5,000 years of Jewish history and ideas, generate new works of fine studio craft for others to own and enjoy, and mine the meaning of *tzedakah* (Hebrew for “righteousness”). In March 1944 Anne Frank mused, “How lovely to think that no one need wait a moment before making the world better. We can start now slowly changing the world. You can always, always, always give something, even if it is only kindness. Give, give again, don't lose courage. Keep it up and go on giving.”¹ There is a hopefulness around the *tzedakah* box as it reminds us of our common humanity.

Here we build upon the tradition of past Invitationals that have focused on Purim masks, Hanukkah menorahs, *Kiddush* Cups, the Passover Seder plate, spice boxes, and trees. In this iteration we revisit the subject of the *tzedakah* box, the Invitational theme

in 1999. At The CJM, we reinvent from generation to generation.

Jewish people are called upon to give to others. The Hebrew Bible delves deeply into this calling and talks at great length about setting aside a portion of one's field so that those less fortunate may come and eat. The *tzedakah* box is a popular object of Judaica. If you were raised Jewish like I was, you might recall as a child collecting *tzedakah* in a tin box for various causes; you might remember walking the box around on *erev* Shabbat so your elders could contribute. You might have been holding the box as your parents placed their hands on your head and blessed you, for that is a Jewish tradition too. The twelfth century philosopher Maimonides listed eight levels of giving, with one being the lowest, and eight being the highest, as follows:²

1. Giving begrudgingly
2. Giving less than you should, but giving it cheerfully
3. Giving after being asked
4. Giving before being asked
5. Giving when you do not know the recipient's identity, but the recipient knows your identity
6. Giving when you know the recipient's identity, but the recipient doesn't know your identity

7. Giving when neither party knows the other's identity
8. Enabling the recipient to become self-reliant

Whatever the level of giving may be, the *tzedakah* box acts as a physical reminder of the obligation.

Someone who gives of herself selflessly is Dorothy Saxe, who sets the example for others. She is someone who represents a love of art and a love of Jewish tradition. We thank her and those who have contributed to the exhibition and this publication including an Anonymous donor, Ascent Private Capital Management of U.S. Bank, Phyllis Cook, Dana Corvin and Harris Weinberg, Gaia Fund, and Wendy and Richard Yanowitch. I would also like to acknowledge The 2015 Dorothy Saxe Invitational Celebration Host Commit-

tee for their support of the Invitational and celebration event.

Much gratitude is owed to the generous Board of Trustees of The CJM whose names appear on page 95, particularly Chairman Mark Schlesinger. And many thanks to our curatorial and preparatory team headed by Chief Curator, Ren-ny Pritikin. We were delighted to have Claire Frost, Curatorial Associate, take the lead on this exhibition ably assisted by Kathryn Wade, Curatorial Intern. Also thank you to Brad Aldridge for his catalog and exhibition design.

Finally, we are so appreciative for our ongoing partnership with the Koret Foundation, which provides major support for all of The CJM exhibitions and Jewish Peoplehood programs.

Lori Starr
Executive Director

1. Anne Frank, *Anne Frank's Tales from the Secret Annex*, ed. Gerrold van der Stroom, trans. Susan Mossoty (New York: Bantam, 2003), 131
2. Tracy R. Rich, "Tzedakah: Charity," *Judaism 101*, February 20, 2015, <http://www.jewfaq.org/tzedakah.htm>

Introduction to the Exhibition

CLAIRE FROST, CURATORIAL ASSOCIATE

Obligation is a word with gravitas. *Tzedakah* (Hebrew for “righteousness”) refers to the Jewish obligation to give to the poor. Unlike other forms of giving, it is not a choice, but a requirement of every member of a community; this context suggests the alternative meaning: indebtedness, the gratitude one feels when supported. The *tzedakah* box is a receptacle for this support, a reminder of this obligation and the subject of *The 2015 Dorothy Saxe Invitational: Tzedakah Box*. Since its inception over thirty years ago, the Invitational has provided an opportunity for The Contemporary Jewish Museum (The CJM) to invite local, national, and international artists to connect with Jewish culture, history, art, and ideas through interpreting a Jewish ritual object. For *The 2015 Dorothy Saxe Invitational: Tzedakah Box*, thirty-eight West Coast artists have created unique interpretations of the traditional Jewish alms container that explore many facets of the Jewish charitable commitment.

The Invitational is a progressive nineteenth century museum practice meant to free artists from the competition of an open call. Although it fell out of favor, mainly to be replaced by the thematic exhibition, in the 1960s the Invitational was repurposed by Conceptual art practice. For his exhibition *March 1969*, curator Seth Siegelau requested respons-

es from thirty-one artists: one for each day in the month. Their responses were then on view during the assigned days and compiled in a catalog. This format critically explored the parameters of curatorial practice in relation to the new approaches championed by Conceptual art. *The 2015 Dorothy Saxe Invitational* is a hybrid form in which artists have been curated but the work is determined by the artist.

Unlike Siegelau’s invitation which requested that artists “kindly confine [their] replies to just verbal information,”¹ in the case of *The 2015 Dorothy Saxe Invitational*, the artists were asked to respond to the form, function, and tradition of the *tzedakah* box, rather than a set of directions. The works refer strongly to the cultural and religious obligation of *tzedakah*, but also the idea of a box itself. Allan Kaprow and Wallace Berman drew on Jewish ritual to invoke a formality and mysticism in the development of Happenings and Funk art respectively.² Alternatively, the Invitational artists use art historical and critical discourses that grew out of the Conceptual art movement to reflect on or extend the Jewish tradition of *tzedakah* boxes.

There is a further dialectical tradition in the Invitational’s inclusion of artists who are associated with fine studio

craft and others who are not. Like San Francisco's Crown Point Press, which often invites non-printmakers to work in that form, the Invitational seeks to resolve the distinction between fine art and craft. While functionality and the presence of the artist's hand have been the rallying cries for a traditional distinction between craft and fine art, in recent decades such differences have largely fallen away. Ceramic artists working in the second half of the twentieth century such as Peter Voukos, John Mason, and Robert Arneson obliterated the boundary by bringing abstraction and conceptual approaches to the field. These *tzedakah* boxes' theoretical grounding and their basis as functional ritual objects situate them within this shifting ground.

The *tzedakah* boxes are elements of material culture, defined as "objects used by humans to cope with the physical world, to facilitate social intercourse, and to benefit our state of mind."³ Jewish scholar Vanessa Ochs writes about material culture and ritual objects, calling objects of material culture "vessels of identity and memory."⁴ One can infer that a ritual object, with its distinct cultural ties and meanings, is even further implicated in her definition. That said, the *tzedakah* box is *reshut*, an optional ritual element, that is not required to complete the ritual.⁵ *Reshut* objects are not sacred in and of themselves, but take part in *hidur mitzvah*—the beautification of a *mitzvah* (Hebrew for "commandment")—a

religious concept of valuation that parallels the secular esteem in which art objects are held.

While the *tzedakah* boxes exist between concept and functional object, ritual and material culture, art and craft, their form is ultimately indebted to the varied interpretations of the artists. All but two of the boxes are functional or refer to functionality, with a vessel into which one can physically deposit money, whether through a slot, a hinged opening, or a lid. Lisa Kokin, Gail Wight, Randy Colosky, Zachary Royer Scholz, Erik Geshke, and Caroline Thomas' works take on streamlined shapes. Gale Antokal and Matthew Gottschalk incorporate hands that infer the agency taken in the act of giving and receiving. Several works refer to other real world objects very literally: in the shape of a house (Tony Berlant, Nancy Selvin, Rick Araluce); a tin hospital (Harriet Estel Berman); or repurposing or replicating actual objects (Richard Shaw, Yvonne Escalante, and Mildred Howard). The simple forms and re-creations maintain a tightness grounded in representation while other boxes embrace a gestural quality such as Rebekah Goldstein's *Casual Separates (Box)*, and Maha Saab's *Geneva*.

The variability in the interaction between giver and receiver are represented in *Variation on Soma Cube: Empty Center* by Terry Berlier, a wooden version of the seven-piece, three-dimensional puzzle with a variation that leaves the center unit missing to hold

coins, and Escalante's *Your Turn* that is modeled after a toy dispenser that accepts credit cards, charging an undisclosed amount with each swipe, and delivering the prize from the back so that the recipient and giver remain anonymous. Both works are ruled by permutations. Berlier literally adjusts the format, as well as the way that structure limits the original cube's 240 unique solutions to allow it to become a vessel. Escalante also modifies the traditional form of the machine making it the mediator between the giver and a string of unknowns: the donation amount, the gift, and the recipient.

Rather than exploring the relationships of giving, both Stephen Kaltenbach and Amy Franceschini's interpretations of the *tzedakah* box emphasize the gift itself. In *Eternal* by Kaltenbach three rusted steel boxes call out "Last Act, Last Word, Last Thought," evoking the concept of *carpe diem*, or in the Hebrew, "if not now, then when?". *Flatbread Society Seed Archive: Vavilov Collection: Rye* by Franceschini consists of a bottle of seeds with an accompanying seed card. The card explains that these seeds are from the first test field sown from seeds that were preserved, despite their edibility, through the siege of Leningrad in which half a million people died of hunger. The scientists who protected the seeds made an absolute decision to sacrifice their lives for future biodiversity.

Berlier and Escalante approach the forms of giving through play, lightening

the obligation with chance. On the other hand, Kaltenbach and Franceschini use words to set giving within time, outlining the *gravitas* and sense of necessity that accompanies the obligation of *tzedakah*. These approaches parallel the legacy of conceptual exploration and the important cultural function of the objects and the Invitational itself. These legacies also hold weight in The CJM's obligation to Jewish culture, art, history, and ideas. As *The 2015 Dorothy Saxe Invitational* excavates the meanings encompassed by the *tzedakah* box while supporting the artistic community, the conversations it engenders both sustain and broaden the communities of which The Museum is a part. As these dialogues reach outwards the new perspectives they bring allow these legacies to evolve from bound contract, to a debt of gratitude.

1. Primary Information, "March 1969 a.k.a. One Month," accessed February 24, 2015. www.primaryinformation.org/files/March1969.pdf
2. Daniel Belasco, *Reinventing Ritual: Contemporary Art and Design for Jewish Life* (New York: The Jewish Museum and Yale University Press, 2009), 4–5
3. James Dietz, *In Small Things Forgotten* (New York: Anchor Books, 1977), 35
4. Vanessa L. Ochs, *Inventing Jewish Ritual* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2007), 92
5. *Ibid.*, 100

The 2015 Dorothy Saxe Invitational
Tzedakah Box

Terry Berlier

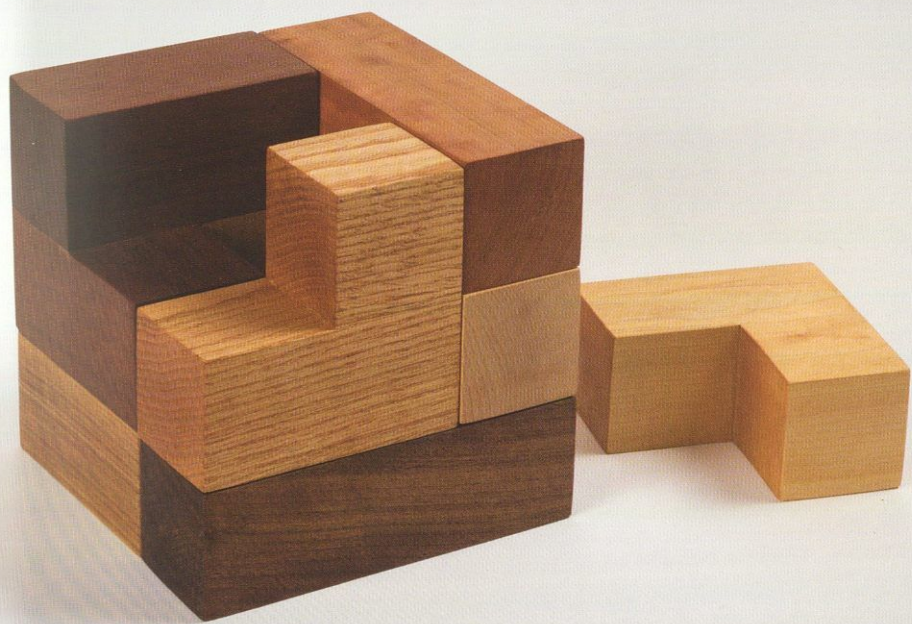
b. Cincinnati, OH, 1972

lives in Oakland, CA

MFA University of California, Davis

Variation on Soma Cube: Empty Center
Walnut, maple, cherry, ash,
red oak, ipe, basswood

Berlier's work is based on the Soma cube, a mathematical puzzle with 240 distinct solutions that was invented in 1933 by Danish designer Piet Hein. Made of seven movable pieces this variation is incomplete, lacking a center cube. While it can be arranged in multiple positions, its shape will always create an empty space to be filled.



**CONTEMPORARY
JEWISH MUSEUM**
connecting art, people, and ideas

THECJM.ORG

ISBN 978-0-991 411-1-6
90000 >



9 780991 641116