

**THE MUSEUM
AND LABORATORY
OF THE JEWISH
COMICS EXPERIENCE**

JEWNCE!

**A traveling exhibit from the
Center for Jewish History
available fall 2024**

CENTER FOR JEWISH HISTORY

About the Exhibit

JewCE: The Museum and Laboratory of the Jewish Comics Experience

This dynamic exhibition, examining several areas of Jewish themes and identities in comics, celebrates the powerful fusion of Jewish culture, history, and artistic expression through the lens of comics and graphic storytelling. The exhibit comprises two sections: the *Museum* and the *Laboratory*.

The *Museum* section of the *Jewish Comics Experience* exhibition includes five micro-exhibits that capture a historic moment in Jewish comics, recognizing the roots and diversity that contribute to this art form, and examining the origins of the industry as well as the changing face of Jewish comics over the last century. The five micro-exhibits include: *The Jewish Origins of the Comic Book Industry*; *A Brief History of Yiddish Comics*; *Sephardi Identity and Memory in Comics*; *Mickey Mouse and Ashmedai: Hebrew Children's Publications at a*

Momentous Time, 1945–48; and *Jewish Comics that Fought against Fascism*. The museum features original artworks and historical artifacts and highlights the evolution of Jewish themes in comics, spanning from classic newspaper strips to contemporary graphic novels, and examines themes of identity, combatting antisemitism, the comics industry, and the changing medium.

The *Laboratory* section is an immersive experience, inviting visitors to craft identity into a character visually in hands-on play; learning the elements of sequential art; and instructing them in the use of iconography to tell stories. Picking up the tools of the form, visitors immerse themselves in the process, illustrating and coloring the walls, using magnetic comic components to lay out panels and text, and creating characters of themselves in a photo superhero booth.

Sample Floorplan

FLOORPLAN BUBBLE DIAGRAM – Gallery A – Exhibit Mapping

This gallery is intended to offer examples and background on Jewish comic book creators and the representation of Jewish identity in comic books, both historical and contemporary. Gallery A will include an Intro, five independent exhibits, and a Reading Center.

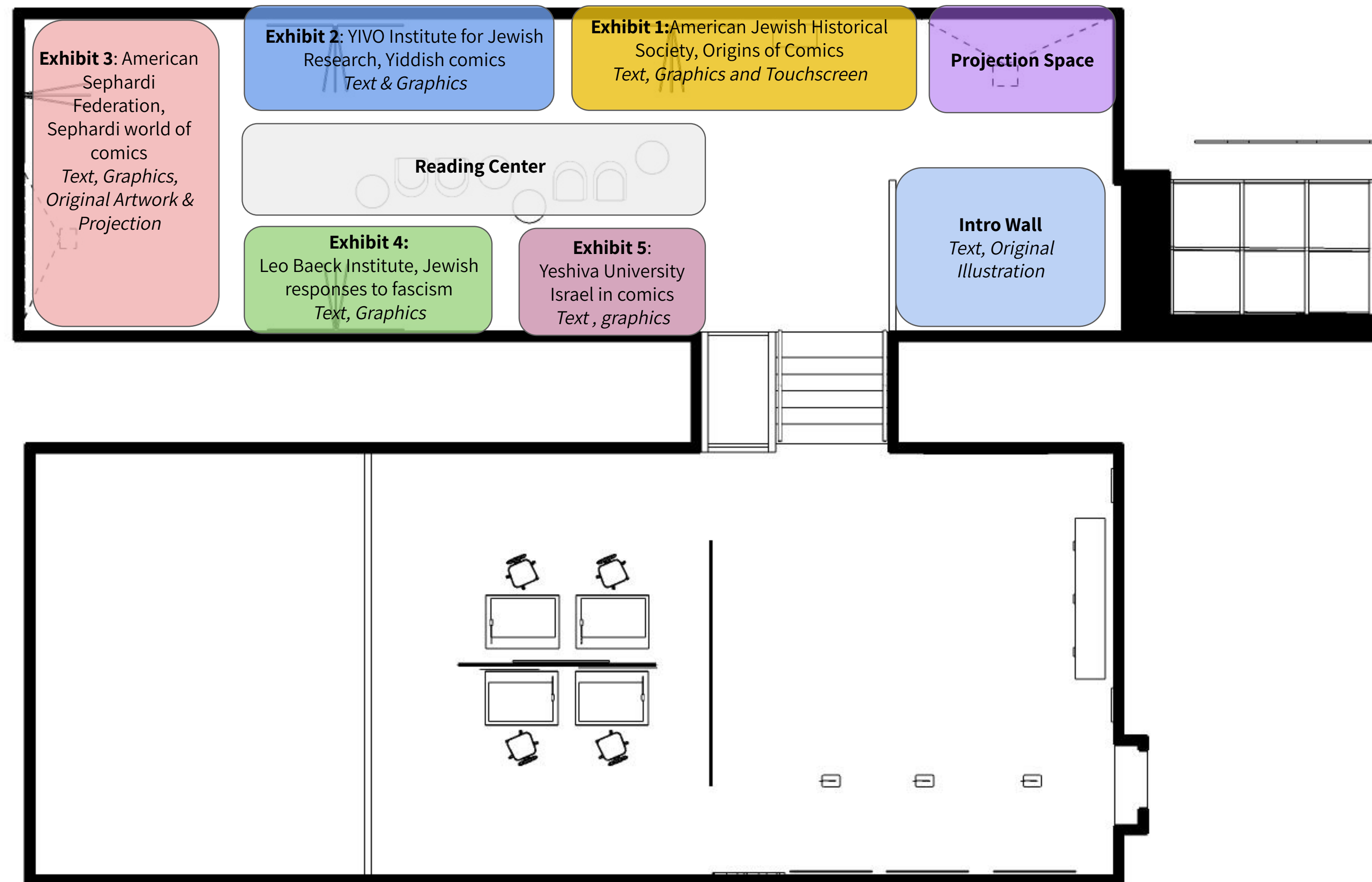


Exhibit 1: American Jewish Historical Society, origins of comics

Exhibit 2: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, Yiddish comics

Exhibit 3: American Sephardi Federation, Sephardi world of comics

Exhibit 4: Leo Baeck Institute, Jewish responses to fascism

Exhibit 5: Yeshiva University Museum, Jewish text or Israel in comics

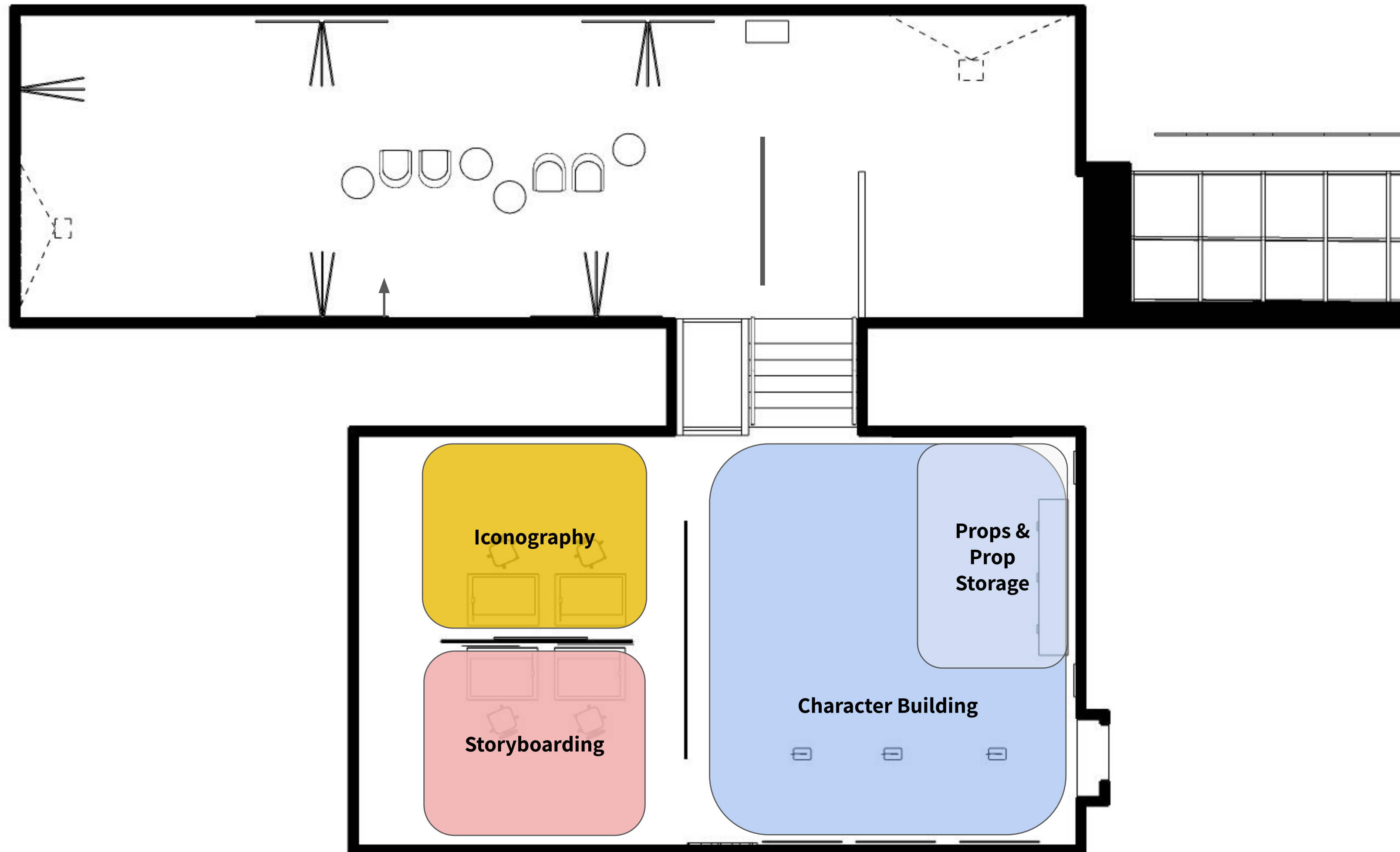
Intro Wall: Overview of exhibit as text and static imagery on wall, with large colorful illustration viewable from hallway

Projection Space: Available for all exhibits/organizations. Suggest large, colorful imagery or video (minimal text), no audio. Intended to be ambient and draw people in.

Reading Center: Centrally placed, comfortable seating, and easy access to reading materials

FLOORPLAN BUBBLE DIAGRAM – Gallery B – Exhibit Mapping

Gallery B is intended to be a hands-on experiential gallery with activities.



Storyboarding: Learning and practicing the art of narrative & storytelling through storyboarding and graphics. Include inking as an activity since its an important aspect of comics.

Character Building: Goal is to see and share yourself in the comic. Large format exhibit, visible from entry (above stairs)

Iconography: Hands on exhibit, asking the audience to express their identity through a graphic panel. Also examples of iconography of “Jewishness” in existing comics (vintage and contemporary)

Exhibition Photos

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JEWNCE!



SUPERMAN

The first superhero, Superman was the brainchild of two Jewish teenagers, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, the sons of immigrants from Eastern Europe living in Cleveland, Ohio.

Inspired by a range of influences, from pulp adventurers to Jewish figures of legend, Oppressed, as he was originally known—first appearance in 1938.

He was a grotesque propaganda figure, fighting and hunting Nazis in his comics while in the real world the U.S. government used him to promote metal drives, blood donations, paper and bond sales, to great success.



Superman covers modeled on World War I propaganda posters



Superman covers modeled on World War I propaganda posters

LBI LEO BAECK INSTITUTE - NEW YORK | BERLIN for the Study of German-Jewish History and Culture

FIGHTING FASCISM PUNCHING NAZIS WAS WHAT SUPERHEROES WERE ALL ABOUT

For all their flamboyance, superheroes came from humble beginnings — largely created by poor young second-generation American Jews in New York City in the 1930s and 1940s.

With the start of World War II, creators poured their fear, fury, and faith into their characters. They advocated for British rearmament, intervention, refugee asylum, racial tolerance, and the New Deal. But mostly, they punched Nazis.

Creators fashioned superheroes into existence like modern gods. But instead of sculpting and incanting, they were born through writing and drawing. Instead of creators of clay, they were men and women of steel.

CAPTAIN AMERICA

The greatest Nazi-smasher, Captain America, was created by two first-generation American Jews, 21-year-old Joe Simon, born Hyman Simon, and 22-year-old Jack Kirby, born Jacob Kurtzberg.

Published by the nascent Timely Comics — Marvel today — the hero punched Hitler right on the cover of his first issue, dated March 1941 but distributed December 20, 1940. This was a year before Pearl Harbor, with 93% of Americans still opposing entering the war. The German American Bund inundated Simon and Kirby with hate mail and calls, threatening to hang them from lampposts in Times Square.

When Bund gangs lurked outside the Timely offices, New York Mayor Fiorello La Guardia intervened and assigned a police guard to the lobby.

CURATORS
MAGDALENA M. WROBEL & ROY SCHWARTZ
LEO BAECK INSTITUTE

SPECIAL THANKS TO JERRY SIEGEL AND JOE SHUSTER AND TO THE LBI COLLECTION DEPARTMENT



"We were facing the Nazis, an apparently unstoppable force. And what better way to deal with an anti-Jewish superman like Hitler than with a superhero?"



"He knew what was going on over in Europe. World events gave us the perfect comic-book villain, Adolf Hitler, with his ranting, goose-stepping and ridiculous megalomania. So we decided to create the perfect hero who would be his foil."

THE HISTORY OF THE SUPERHERO

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THE HISTORY OF THE SUPERHERO



A BRIEF HISTORY OF YIDDISH COMICS

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AJHS American Jewish Historical Society

JEWISH ORIGINS OF THE COMICS INDUSTRY ARE COMICS JEWISH?

CURATOR
DANNY FINGEROTH
AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

While storytelling with pictures has been around since prehistoric times, the medium we would recognize as comic books has only existed since the early twentieth century.

Jewish writers, artists, and publishers made many significant contributions to the development of comic books. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the arrival of millions of immigrants to the United States, many of whom were Jews from Eastern Europe. Some of these immigrants and their children became the founders of comics.

Newspaper comic strips first appeared in the late nineteenth century, with Richard Outcault's *The Yellow Kid* being one of the most famous. The strip portrayed the lives of Irish immigrants in downtown Manhattan.

In 1929, the stock market crash ushered in the Great Depression, enlarging the market and audience for cheap entertainment. The dire economic conditions prompted Jewish creators to use their skills to help support their families.

During this period, "pulp" magazines — so called because their cheap paper showed bits of wood pulp — became popular. These precursors of comics featured various types of genre fiction, including Western, detective, and science fiction. Luxembourg-born Jewish immigrant Hugo Gernsback (1884-1967) coined the term "science-fiction" in his pulps, such as *Amazing Stories*.

Among the first publications we would recognize as "comic books" were compilations of newspaper strips, assembled by newspaper salesman Maxwell Ginzberg (1894-1947), who would become known as Max Gaines.



HEROES THE JEWISH ROOTS OF SUPERHEROES



THIS WAY TO NEXT GALLERY



COMICS IN THE HOLOCAUST

While Jewish comic book creators expressed themselves through fantasy, other Jewish writers and illustrators reacted more directly to the horrors of fascism, war, and the Holocaust, from political cartoons to drawings of their own experience in the camps.

The New York-based journal of German-speaking Jews, *Arbeter*, became a voice of the refugee community upon its first issue in December 1934. Starting in 1942, the journal added political cartoons to each issue. Through parody and wit, the drawings presented the changing situation on the front lines and expressed the refugees' rage at the increasingly dire news of the destruction of Jewish life in Europe.

SEBORIA RO

SEBORIA RO was a cartoonist who worked for the *Arbeter* journal. His work was characterized by a strong sense of social justice and a commitment to depicting the struggles of the Jewish community during the Holocaust.

READING LIBRARY

Reading Library is a collection of books and comics that explore the history and impact of the Holocaust. It includes titles such as *TOLEDANO*, *MARKET DRY*, and *WARD*.

WAR

WAR is a collection of political cartoons and drawings that depict the horrors of the Holocaust. It includes titles such as *WAR*, *WAR*, and *WAR*.

TOLEDANO

TOLEDANO is a collection of political cartoons and drawings that depict the horrors of the Holocaust. It includes titles such as *TOLEDANO*, *TOLEDANO*, and *TOLEDANO*.

MARKET DRY

MARKET DRY is a collection of political cartoons and drawings that depict the horrors of the Holocaust. It includes titles such as *MARKET DRY*, *MARKET DRY*, and *MARKET DRY*.

WARD

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Small informational text block on the wall.

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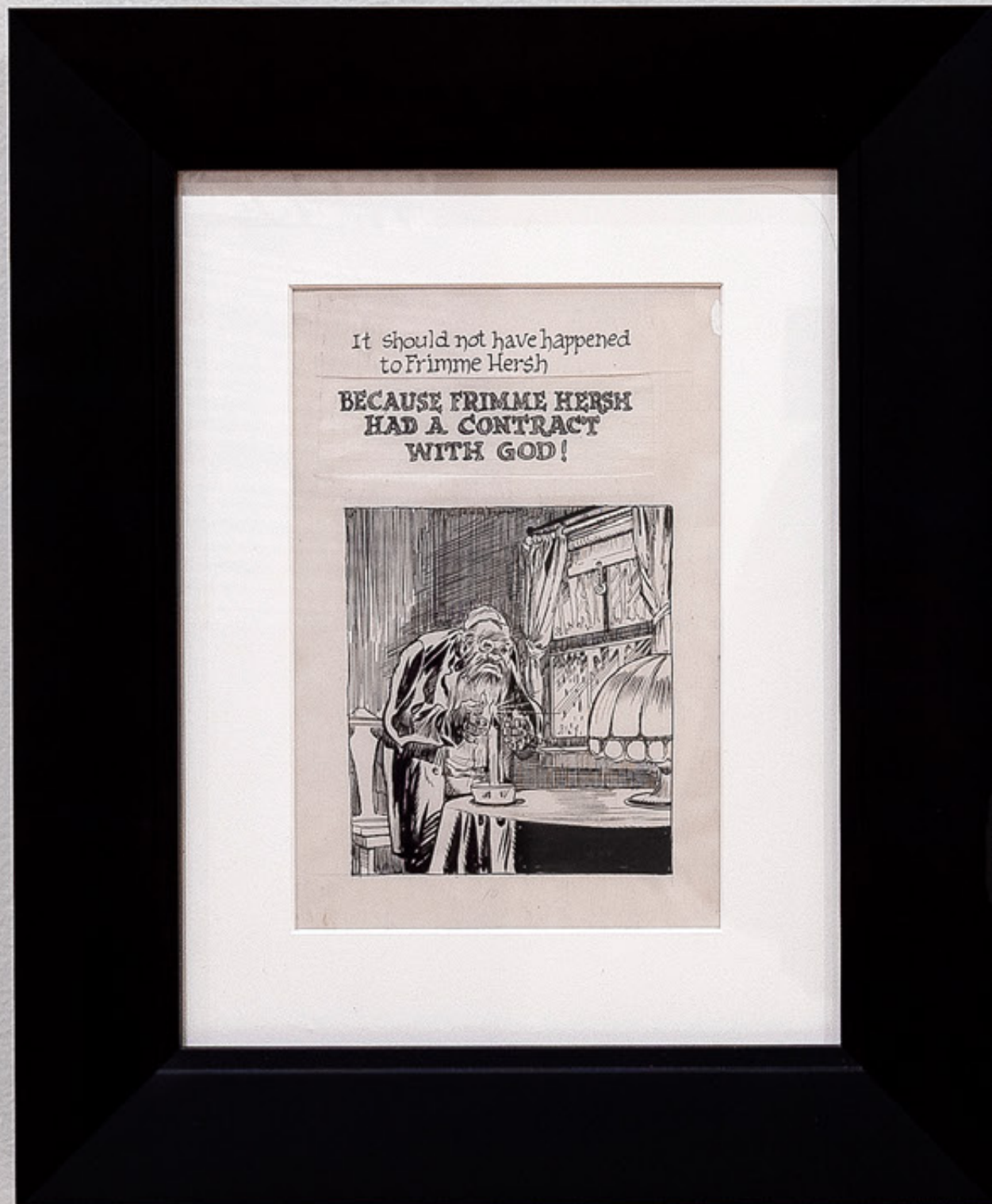


EXPLICITLY JEWISH

The Promised Land of Jewish Comics (and Graphic Novels)

Today, superhero comics—and the highly popular movies and TV shows derived from them—regularly tackle issues of ethnic and religious identity, including questions of Jewishness. Kitty Pryde and Magneto of the X-Men have joined the Thing as characters who are identified on-panel as Jewish. Spider-Man stepped on a glass at his wedding (in the 2018 film *Into the Spider-Verse*), and Ben Grimm had an adult Bar Mitzvah.

The past forty years have shown that comics can tell a wide variety of stories, including explicitly Jewish narratives. Works such as Sarah Glidden's 2016 *How to Understand Israel in Sixty Day or Less* explore difficult questions of Jewish identity. Much of the progress towards open and explicit Jewish content is due to publications like those below, which introduce Jewish themes and stories clearly and powerfully into popular culture.



Original page from *A Contract with God* by Will Eisner
From the collection of Stanley Shapiro

In the 1970s, the creation of the modern graphic novel brought a literary sensibility to the medium. Inspired by the freedom of expression enjoyed by underground cartoonists in the 1960s, *Spirit* creator Will Eisner brought the world his 1978 book, *A Contract with God*, which was among the first works to call itself a "graphic novel." It dealt with Jewishness both secular and spiritual.



MAD Magazine, Issue #1 reprint
Millennium Edition Tales Calculated to Drive You Mad, 2000

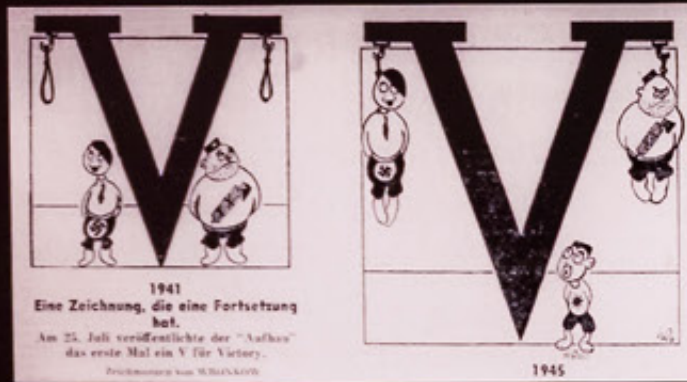
After he lost his comics line, Entertaining Comics (EC), Publisher William M. Gaines shifted his attention to his satirical publication, MAD Magazine. MAD became a phenomenon, bringing a Jewish sense of humor to a wide public. MAD's irreverent point-of-view had a profound influence on American humor in general.

Jewish comic book creators themselves through fantasy, sh writers and illustrators reacted ally to the horrors of fascism, war, locaust, from political cartoons s of their own experience ps.

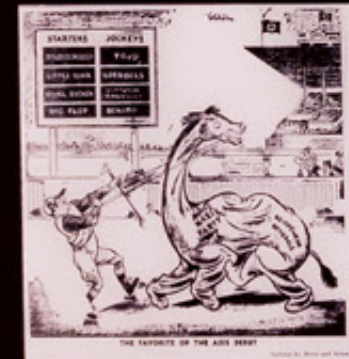
The New York-based journal of German-speaking Jews, *Aufbau*, became a voice of the refugee community soon after its first issue in December 1934. Starting in 1942, the journal added political cartoons to each issue. Through parody and wit, the drawings presented the changing situation on the front lines and expressed the refugees' rage at the increasingly dire news of the destruction of Jewish life in Europe.

1942-1945. LBI Archives

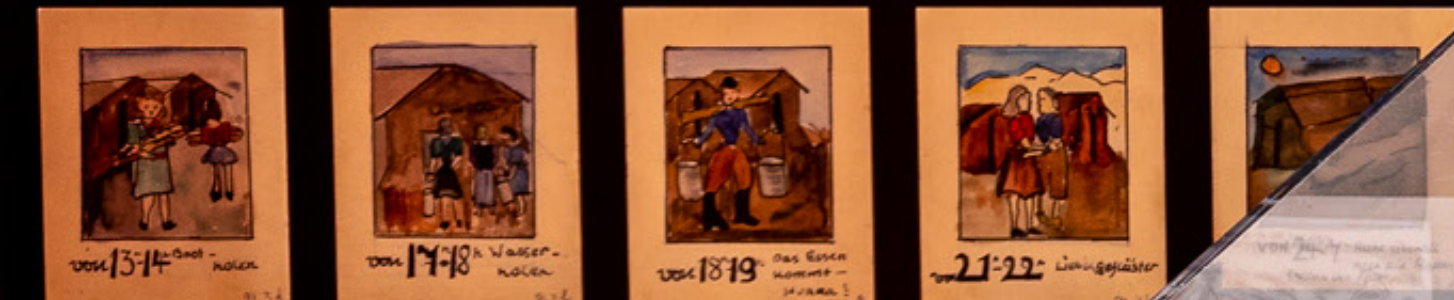
From its beginning, *Aufbau* attracted prominent German-speaking Jews like Hannah Arendt, Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann, and Stefan Zweig as contributors. The journal continued publication in New York until 2004, when it relocated to Zürich, Switzerland to become an international magazine and website for German-speaking Jews.



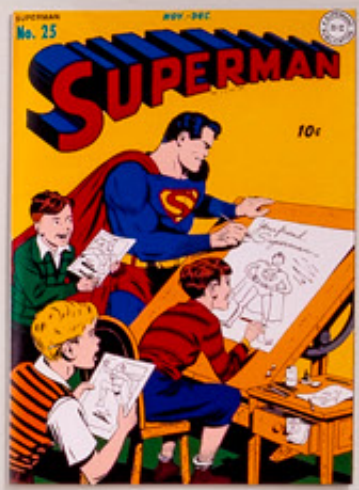
"This is the beginning of the end, although no one knows how long the end can still last." —Hannah Arendt for *Aufbau*, July 28, 1944



11



A recreation by Jay Simon of the cover for Captain America Comics #2, April 1941. Courtesy of Alan Erwin.



Captain America and fellow superheroes take the fight to the Nazis, 1941-1945. Treasury Comics (left) Courtesy of Jerry Brown.



Once you have created your new look, take a photo! It will be featured on one (or both) of our original comic book covers! If you are here with friends or family, think about how your new characters will interact. Are you a team? Rivals? Meeting for the first time? Try a few poses to begin your story!



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HISTORY

JEWISH COMICS EXPERIENCE

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COLLECTOR'S
ITEM
1st
EDITION

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JEWCE!





MAKING COMICS AND ICONOGRAPHY

The art of graphic storytelling is also the art of iconography. Icons are a form of visual vocabulary; they are images that allow creators to tell us more than a simple shape. Draw a pie and it's a pie. But draw wavy lines above that pie, and we know it's hot, that it smells good, that we want to taste it! A star of David evokes a powerful concept with a few lines, as does a cross, a smiley face, or an American flag.

Creators of Jewish characters and content often use iconography to show characters as Jewish without using words. As examples, Spider-Man steps on a glass at his wedding, and a menorah is visible in the home of Ben Grimm, the Thing. Often these glimpses of Jewish icons are all you see of a character's identity, subtly hinting at Jewishness without writing it overtly into a character.

"BY STRIPPING DOWN AN IMAGE TO ITS ESSENTIAL 'MEANING,' AN ARTIST CAN AMPLIFY THAT MEANING IN A WAY THAT REALISTIC ART CAN'T."
— SCOTT MCCLLOUD

"COMICS ARE WORDS AND PICTURES. YOU CAN DO ANYTHING WITH WORDS AND PICTURES."
— HARVEY PEKAR

"ON SOME LEVEL, IF LANGUAGE IS UNRELIABLE AND APPEARANCES ARE DECEIVING, THEN MAYBE YOU CAN SORT OF TRIANGULATE BETWEEN BOTH MODES TO GET CLOSER TO THE TRUTH."
— ALISON BECHDEL

MAKING COMICS AND ICONOGRAPHY
Use icons to build your world!

MAKING COMICS AND ICONOGRAPHY
Use icons to build your world!



STORYBOARDING/LAYING OUT

"Sequential art is the act of weaving a fabric." - Will Eisner
Storyboard layouts help comic creators make a story from a sequence of images or sketches. Layouts sometimes have text or dialogue to organize a comic's structure. Sometimes they only have images. Storyboard layouts are also often used for animation and filmmaking. Whether it's a comic book, graphic novel, or a four-panel newspaper strip format (also known as yonkoma manga in Japan), all sequential art needs images to visually tell a story. Even comic writers who don't draw use the storyboarding process!

"STORYBOARDING CAN LOOK LIKE A FEW SCRATCHES ON PAPER OR AN ALMOST COMPLETE PANEL, EITHER WAY THESE VISUAL MAPS ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE COMIC'S PROCESS." - TRACY WHITE

"COMICS ARE THE MOST EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE WAYS TO TELL STORIES, THEY ARE MINI-MOVIES WITHOUT ALL THE IN-BETWEEN FLUFF." - CHARL PERE

"WHAT THIS IS FOR IS BREAKING DOWN THE BEATS OF THE STORY FOR ME. IT'S TELLING ME THAT MY METHOD OF STORYTELLING... IS GOING TO WORK." - NEIL GAIMAN

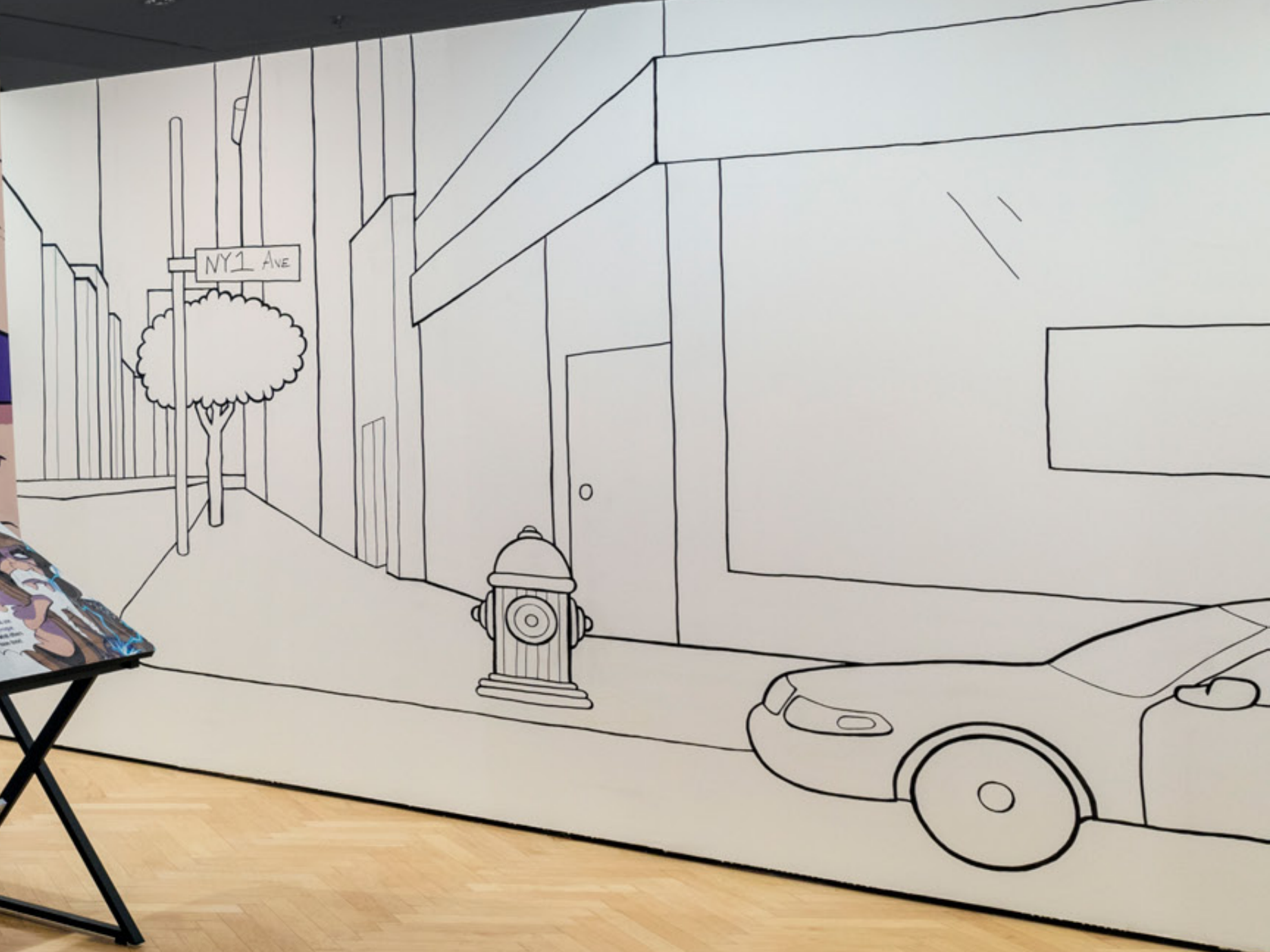


STORYBOARDING/LAYING OUT
Solve a puzzle with no wrong answers!

Take a photo of your storyboard and use the QR code to see what others have done!

STORYBOARDING/LAYING OUT
Solve a puzzle with no wrong answers!

These walls are all dry-erase, so grab a marker and get in the scene!



DESIGNING ORIGINAL CHARACTERS

"When you create a character, you don't just illustrate it, you bring it to life, for you and the world." - Fabrice Sapolsky

Creators allow the personality of their characters to emerge through their clothing, physical characteristics, and expressions. If you are designing a character with an idea of who they are, you will bring a sense of their history, personality, and identity to their visual appearance. When you create a story, think carefully about your characters' identity to help them come to life! You can base your characters on people you know (including yourself) or create them entirely out of your imagination.

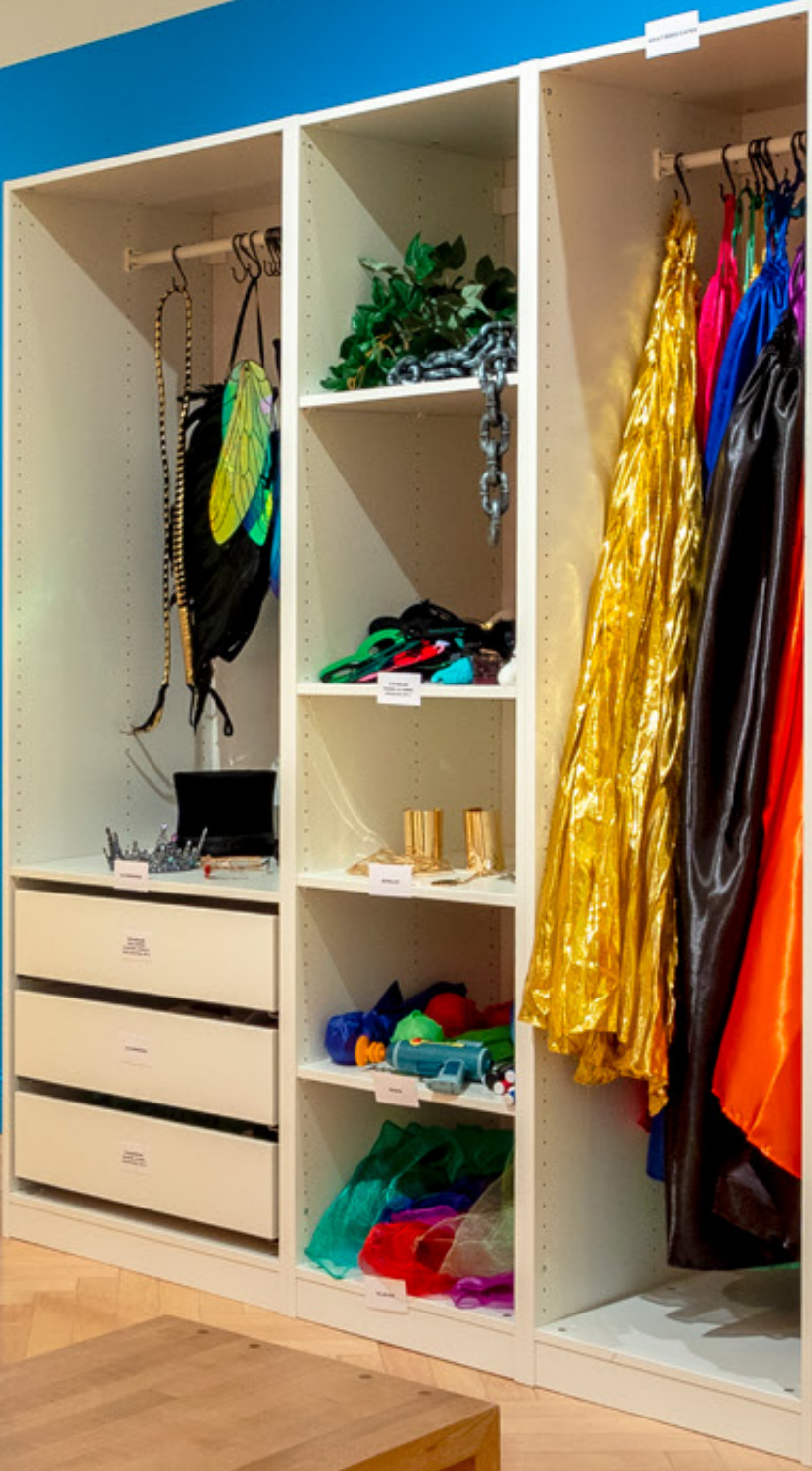


"I HIDE MY MOST PERSONAL REVELATIONS IN THE CHARACTERS WHO SEEM THE LEAST LIKE ME."
- ALISA KHATIBY

"IF YOU LOOK AT MY CHARACTERS, YOU'LL FIND ME."
- JACK KIRBY

"I CREATED JESSICA JONES BECAUSE I WAS RAISED AND I'M MARRIED TO AND AM RAISING STRONG INDEPENDENT WOMEN AND THAT'S THE WORLD I KNOW."
- BRIAN MICHAEL BENDIS

Find costume pieces and props that help you build a new character, using yourself as the canvas! Think about what each piece they are. Are you a flying hero? A crusader for the downtrodden? A villain? Are you a different version of yourself, or someone completely new?



Object List

Key objects available to travel, including:

- *Captain America* #6
- *Moon Knight* #38 p. 25 (1984)
- *Fantastic Four* vol.3 #56 p. 18, 20 (2002)
- *RAW Magazine* #2 with Maus Insert

Extended object list available upon request.



Exhibition Components

JewCE: The Museum and Laboratory of the Jewish Comics Experience

Exhibition components provided by the Center for Jewish History:

- 110 book reading library, 8 images for reproduction
- Print-ready files for wall text, wall graphics, and five 4-panel book displays for the *Museum of the Jewish Comics Experience*
- Optional print-ready files for wall text, wall graphics, banners, activity desks, and signage for the *Laboratory of the Jewish Comics Experience*
- Print-ready files for marketing and programming purposes
- Center for Jewish History courier for unpacking/packing/condition-reporting and installation
- Docent training over Zoom
- Draft press release

Borrowing venues provide:

- Climate-controlled casework for all objects, as per individual lender requirements
- Printed wall text, wall images, and panel displays
- Gallery seating as desired by borrower
- Fine arts shipping for borrowed objects
- Shipping of reading library and photo kiosks
- Any additional couriers as required by object lenders
- Secure, climate-controlled crate storage
- Wall-to-wall fine arts insurance
- Routine gallery inspection and daily object inventory completion while exhibition is on view
- CJH Courier travel, accommodations, and per diem

Size

- 2400 square feet
- Original *Museum of the Jewish Comics Experience* exhibit size: 1278 square feet
- Original *Laboratory of the Jewish Comics Experience* exhibit size: 1141 square feet

Cost

- \$10,000 for *Museum of the Jewish Comics Experience*
- \$3,000 optional add-on of *Laboratory of the Jewish Comics Experience*

Please direct all inquiries to:

Sean Naftel

Exhibition Services Manager

snaftel@cjh.org