



KEHILA KEDOSHA JANINA
Synagogue and Museum
280 Broome Street, New York, NY 10002

For Immediate Release

JUDY MOONELIS
Janina Project: Celestial Structures

INSTALLATION EXTENDED

Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum is a significant NYC historic landmark built in 1927 and the sole remaining Romaniote Greek Jewish congregation in the western hemisphere. A secular non-profit museum as well as a functioning synagogue, it is one of only seven enduring original synagogues on the Lower East Side where there were several hundred a century ago.

Janina Project: Celestial Structures by **Judy Moonelis** is a site-specific sculptural installation. Invited by Museum Director Marcia Haddad Ikonopoulou, Moonelis's work brings a contemporary perspective to Kehila Kedosha Janina Synagogue and Museum, public attention to its needs and the importance of its continued existence in the community. Responding to the site and its cultural history, the artist suspends cone shaped wire and mixed media sculptures from two large skylights. These works draw upon multiple references to the "heavens" including ancient celestial maps, contemporary models of the universe, Gothic vault structures and the geometric/numeric symbolism often featured in sacred spaces.

Memory, both individual and collective, is of vital importance to the people of Janina and their culture. They have unique customs and a distinct oral language (melding Greek, Hebrew, Turkish and Italian). Their community was all but decimated by the Holocaust. The museum serves as a repository for memory, a place to collect, preserve and attempt to capture that which is precious, but elusive. The process of remembering keeps Janina a living culture, allowing it to be rediscovered and appreciated in a new context.

Moonelis has created ***Memory Cones***, wire spatial drawings that fuse the conical forms of our expanding universe with the stalactite like Gothic pendant vault. Each cone is a folding net like structure composed of twelve ascending/descending six pointed stars. (Twelve refers to the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve months of the year, the twelve constellations). Suspended within the core of each cone are delicate root like forms made of fine wires whose tips are punctuated with hundreds of minute sparkling glass "jewels". These suggest the root of the brain stem, where memory is stored, branching botanicals and images of the cosmos. The "root" ends in ***Ruby Memory Cone*** are red, suggesting the heart, blood bond of common heritage as well the pomegranate seed, ancient symbol of abundance. ***Memory Cone, Blue/White*** features the national colors of both Greece and Israel, and sky/heavens. The synagogues traditional Greek memorial lanterns and the embroidered tree of life on the "parokhet" (curtain covering the Ark) were references. ***Strand 1*** and ***Strand 2*** allude to celestial/branching forms, the intricate textile and filigree work of Janina and quote visually from the "alephs"(unique birth certificates with Kabbalistic imagery).

Judy Moonelis is an established NYC artist whose credits include an international exhibition record, significant public museum collections, major artist grants, publications and visiting artist positions. This project has been supported by Becton College of Arts and Sciences, Fairleigh Dickinson University, where Moonelis currently teaches (moonelis@fdu.edu). www.fduarts.org/faculty/studioarts/moonelis/gallery

The exhibition is dedicated to the memory of Hy Genee, former president and lay leader of the synagogue for 30 years, who passed away last year.

Location: 280 Broome (off Allen); Subways: B,D/ Grand; F,J,M,Z/ Delancey; Bus M-15/ Delancey

For additional information contact Museum Director Marcia Haddad Ikonopoulou:

kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net; 212-431-1619 or 516-221-2712; www.kkjsm.org

Museum Hours: Sundays 11am-4pm and by appointment. Synagogue Services: Saturdays at 9am & holidays