When you lit your first candle on Dec. 20, how much thought did you give to your menorah? Maybe it's a family heirloom, or maybe you recently purchased it online, but have you ever asked yourself what your menorah says about you, your values, and your personal style?

Loyola University Museum of Art (LUMA) is currently featuring a new exhibition called The Hanukkah Lamp: Modernist Style and the Jewish Experience based on the extensive Aaron Ha'Tell collection.

As curator Rhoda Rosen makes clear in the text she prepared for the wall panels, choosing a menorah is a hugely symbolic act with economic, political, and religious dimensions. In this exhibition, Rosen is particularly interested in the metal makers who emigrated to the Yishuv in the 1930s as a direct result of European anti-Semitism, and yet still identified with European culture and the visual aesthetic of modernism.

"I only chose the modernist pieces from the Ha'Tell collection because I wanted to take us back to the period when these designers first arrived in Israel," Rosen told me on opening night. "They all fled Nazism and many of them lost family members. They made hanukkiot from copper alloys-cheap materials-because these are things that everyone could afford. Many were sold to Holocaust survivors who didn't have much money, and this was a way of integrating this new foreign place [Israel] with their old selves [from Europe]."

To emphasize that these hanukkiot were made for personal use rather than museum display, Rosen also provides background materials. "In the Ascalon section, we have a sales catalog so you can see the actual object alongside its pictorial version. And we have drawings in the Wallersteiner section so you can see the process."

"These designers brought in their hearts a love for art," Ha-Tell added, "But they also loved Israel, so they attempted to integrate the two in their work."

The LUMA exhibition will be on display through Jan 15th. For more information, visit: www.luc.edu/luma. To read more about the Ha'Tell collection, visit: www.hanukkiot.com.

Visiting Scholars
"The Ben Ezra Geniza was the size of a glorified walk-in closet. Yet here was an entire civilization... a kind of holy junk heap... composed of hundreds of thousands of scraps of paper." So say Peter Cole and Adina Hoffman in their acclaimed new book Sacred Trash: The Lost and Found World of the Cairo Geniza. "Because of the Geniza, we can nearly hear and see-
and often almost smell and touch-the urbane world of the Arabized Jews who populated Cairo-home, in its medieval heyday, to the most prosperous Jewish community on earth... It was a mirror of the world."

Cole, a MacArthur Fellow, is the author of three books of poems, and an accomplished translator of poetry from Hebrew and Arabic into English. Hoffman is the author of a book about Musrara (a neighborhood which sits on the border between East and West Jerusalem). Together, as the founders of Ibis Editions, they are dedicated to publishing poetry and belletristic prose from across the Levant.

Cole and Hoffman will be at the University of Chicago to conduct a series of workshops beginning Jan 19. A public lecture on Monday, Jan 23, co-sponsored by Chicago Center for Jewish Studies and The Newberger Hillel Center, will be held in the Special Collections Research Center of Regenstein Library (1100 E. 57th St) from 5:30 to 7:30 PM.

For additional details, call (773) 702-7108 or visit: http://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/ccjs.

Curtain Call

West Suburban Temple Har Zion in River Forest packed their Social Hall on Dec 3 for a bravura performance by the New Budapest Orpheum Society. Joining beloved local baritone Stewart Figa on stage were mezzo-soprano Julia Bentley and musicians Dan Davis, Iordanka Kissiova, Ilya Levinson, Mark Sonksen, and Don Stille.

The "Kosher Cabaret" included comedy ("Cohen Owes Me Ninety-Seven Dollars"), romance ("My love for you will forever be deep as the night"), and tragedy ("My Warsaw, you were a beautiful Jewish city"), but reached its peak in savage irony ("I'm an Irrepressible Optimist").

The songs were selected by artistic director Philip Bohlman who told me that he found some of the original lyrics "preserved in the Viennese Censor's office!" Asked why they fascinated him, Bohlman said he wanted to "weave these songs into a history of the Jewish experience in the twentieth century." "Moreover," he said the New Budapest Orpheum Society was "committed to the music because of its beauty, wit, and poignancy."