



Liebeskind packs the house
at Jewish book month

Description

The Jewish Public Library welcomes the world-renowned architect-designer

By **Byron Toben**

Back in 1944, the **Montreal Jewish Public Library** (founded in 1914) instituted its annual **Jewish Book Month**. This was a reaction to the Nazi attempt to eradicate Jewish culture. The Library sought to preserve the rich literature, film, theatre, art and music of that community.

This year's book month, from **November 2 to 26**, featured 12 stimulating events.

I caught the 5th on November 6. It featured the world-renowned architect/designer **Daniel Liebeskind**. This coincided with the release of his new book, ***Edge of Order*** and attracted an estimated 500 listeners, requiring the JPL to open the dividers between its three lecture rooms and to install three overhead screens for audience members on the sides and far back.

Mr. Liebeskind, 73, was born in Poland in 1946 just after WW II ended. His parents were both Holocaust survivors. A child accordion prodigy, he was featured on Polish Television. The family emigrated to Israel and eventually to the USA. He attended the famous **Bronx High School of Science** and eventually became an architect. After a few years teaching and reaching, he finally got his first major project designing the **Berlin Jewish Museum**.



Since then, he has designed numerous major projects in countries all over the world, the most famous of which is the new rebuilt **World Trade Centre** in New York City.

His projects range from museums and towers to residential and commercial complexes. He has also devised sculptures, opera sets and even doorknobs and chess sets. Along the way, he has won numerous awards and prizes, often of a humanitarian or environmental nature.

I was particularly interested in his work on a smaller project, the **Studio Weil** in Majorca, Spain. This building was built to house the abstract expressionist paintings of my long lost friend, **Barbara Weil**, with whom I had renewed contact via email for a few years before her passing some 16 months ago.

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Many of these projects feature jagged edges and attention grabbing add-ons, which to my mind evoked somewhat the style of Toronto born architect **Frank Gehry** (now 90 and living in California).

Canadian connections

Mr. Liebeskind's works in Canada have included: in Toronto, the L Tower and Sony Centre Redevelopment and extensions and renovations to the Rom (Royal Ontario Museum); in Ottawa, the National Holocaust Monument; and in Halifax, The Wheel of Conscience, a monument in the National Immigration Museum.

In addition he is married to his Canadian partner, Nina, who is the sister of famous politician **Stephen Lewis**, so his ties here run deep.



The lecturer was introduced by Montreal architect **Gerald Soiferman**, a former president of the Jewish Public Library.

Jewish Book Month 2019 concludes with:

Monday, November 18

Transit

A 101-minute film by Christian Petzold in German and French (with English and French subtitles)

Wednesday, November 20

Je rêvais de changer le monde

Journalist Elias Levy en conversation avec Marek Halter

For more information visit jewishpubliclibrary.org

Feature image: Rachel Cohen (JPL president), Michael Crelinsten (JPL executive director), Daniel Libeskind, Gerald Soiferman (architect and JPL past president)

Images by Howard Kay

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Byron Toben, a past president of The Montreal Press Club, has been WestmountMag.ca's theatre reviewer since July 2015. Previously, he wrote for since terminated web sites Rover Arts and Charlebois Post, print weekly The Downtowner and print monthly The Senior Times. He also is an expert consultant on U.S. work permits for Canadians.



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