

This Hanukkah, Jewish Arts Collaborative’s ‘Brighter Revealed’ celebrates the miracle of inner strength

By **Dana Gerber** Globe Correspondent, Updated November 26, 2021, 3:38 p.m.



"Brighter Revealed," a large-scale lantern decorated with stained-glass-style designs, will travel throughout Greater Boston during Hanukkah. TOPHER COX

The Festival of Lights is about to get a little bit brighter.

“Brighter Revealed,” a large-scale lantern adorned with 321 stained-glass-style artworks, will travel through Greater Boston during Hanukkah. The project, commissioned by the Jewish Arts Collaborative, was created by local artists Tova Speter and Emily Bhargava — with plenty of help.

Each of the mosaic-like artworks was designed by people of all ages across the Boston area. Speter and Bhargava led workshops at eight Jewish day schools and eight other local organizations — some of them non-denominational, like the Entre Familia residential treatment program — giving people the option of eight different stencils to create their panels, which are actually pieces of transparent scratch art. Each stencil reflected different inner strengths: A light bulb for knowledge; a heart for family; a moon for quiet.

There are several nods to the Jewish holiday throughout the piece — including the eight-sided lantern structure, constructed by Newton North High School senior Manny Hutter, representing the eight candles in the menorah. It was the Hebrew concept of “ometz lev” (courage of the heart) that guided the artwork.

“The miracle of the oil lasting for eight nights when it shouldn’t have — somebody lit it,” said Speter, a Needham-based artist. “Miracles begin with individual action. So where do you get that inner strength to be motivated to be your best self, or to stand up for what you believe in?”



A Harvard College student and a resident of Hebrew SeniorLife in Brookline participated in an art workshop to create designs for "Brighter Revealed." TOVA SPETER

Despite the Jewish roots of the piece, Bhargava, who is based in Somerville, said the art is meant to be enjoyed by people of all faiths.

“I’m hoping very much that when people step inside the lantern, they’ll see themselves in it no matter what their background is,” said Bhargava.

Three visitors at a time can go inside the lantern — made mobile by the trailer it sits on — during daytime stops. At night, the piece will glow for spectators to observe from the outside. Inside “Brighter Revealed,” there will also be an audio recording, engineered by Jesse Ulrich, of about 75 of the participants voicing what brings them strength.

“The idea was really to uncover what’s hidden,” Speter said, referencing the name of the artwork. “We’ve all been isolated for so long, and so this is an opportunity to reveal a little bit of ourselves.”

“Brighter Revealed” is the fourth iteration of the “Brighter,” series developed by Speter and JArts. The first two were installations shown at the Museum of Fine Arts; last year, because of the pandemic, eight artists designed window displays throughout the area.

Though the organization didn’t yet feel ready to return to the MFA this year, they are hoping that the traveling artwork holds the potential for broader reach.

“We really want everybody to feel comfortable and connected and engaged with Jewish culture,” said Laura Mandel, executive director of JArts. “While it’s great to have things inside the walls of institutions, there’s something really powerful about the ability to connect externally.”



"Brighter Revealed" is decked out in 321 individual panels, each made by a different person in the Boston area. EMILY BHARGAVA

In the spirit of “sharing the miracle of light,” as Speter put it, “Brighter Revealed” aims to embody this with a creation and exhibition designed to be communal. And this shared experience is precisely what the artists wanted.

“The lantern is meant to be a beacon and a light that brings people together,” Bhargava said.

The lantern is slated to make 15 public stops through the area from Nov. 28 to Dec. 7; a full location list is on [JArt’s website](#). Many of the stops will be the schools and organizations that participated in making the artwork, Bhargava said. There was such a demand for the piece, Mandel said, that there will also be stops before and after the holiday.

“I love the idea of the light traveling through the city,” Bhargava said. “There’s something beautiful about the metaphor.”

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