

# The Lights Fantastic

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Josh Owen's cast iron menorah for Areaware (not in the exhibition, but available in the museum shop) is simple and tactile.

As Hanukkah approaches, the menorah, or Hanukkah lamp, holds pride of place at the [Jewish Museum](#) on Fifth Avenue, which holds an annual exhibition of its favorite designs. This year, the museum decided to focus on its own menorah collection — the largest in the world — and asked the architect Daniel Libeskind to design the installation. “A Hanukkah Project: Daniel Libeskind’s Line of Fire” opens Friday and runs through Jan. 30.

Libeskind’s design, a zigzagging red base for the display of the menorahs, symbolizes the flames of lighted Hanukkah lamps, and recalls his 1988 sculpture “Line of Fire.” He has alluded to the work in later designs, and it has come to symbolize the continuity of Jewish existence even through catastrophic circumstances.

Susan Braunstein, the museum’s curator of archaeology and Judaica, said, “Daniel Libeskind came to mind to design the exhibit since he has such a strong sense of memory, place and sensitivity for history in his work.”

The 40 lamps on view run the gamut, from Karim Rashid’s ultramodern “Menorahmorph” to a Baroque repoussé piece. A menagerie of animals is incorporated into the designs, with lions, deer, eagles and peacocks making an appearance. Braunstein said she thought that they could refer to the [Pirkei Avot](#), an ancient compilation of ethical teachings, one of which states, “Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and strong as a lion, to carry out the will of your Father in Heaven.”

Some lamps used oil instead of candles; in one 19th-century Russian version, the flames erupt out of the jaws of little lions. (According to Braunstein, it was common for households to have oil lamps, while temples would usually use candles.)

A number of the exhibition’s modern menorahs are for sale at the museum’s shop, like [Richard Meier’s](#), a 1985 design that is only now being produced in a limited edition, or [Rashid’s](#). Other designs on offer (but not included in the exhibition) include a chic, [simple wrought-iron lamp](#) made for Areaware by Josh Owen, a designer and professor of industrial design at the Rochester Institute of Technology. And for a bit of sparkle, there’s [Jonathan Adler’s porcelain peacock menorah](#). “I love the lines, the restraint, the architectural quality to the form mixed with the good vibrations of the peacock.” Adler said, adding, “The gold gives it a mod holiday twinkle.”

But if you are celebrating Hanukkah on the go, you may want to purchase the [iMenorah](#), a new iPhone app. Not only does it “burn” brightly for about eight minutes; it even lets you light the candles.

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