

ELLIS ISLAND: Passages

Six artists arrive at New York harbor exhibit.

by P. S. Henley

Six women artists are currently presenting a novel exhibit at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum focusing on the Jewish experience in the *Goldene Medina* (the "Golden Land"). Ellis Island, the refurbished landmark in New York harbor that witnessed the arrival of hundreds of thousands of immigrants to the United States, is host to the sculptures, paintings, photographs and sounds that offer a glimpse into that experience, one that is so much a part of American-Jewish history.

THE FIRST ROOM

Beth Grossman, a resident of Oakland, California, boasts an education most people can only dream of: The Children's Theater Company in Minneapolis; the Banff School of Fine Arts in Alberta, Canada; the Statens Kunst og Handverk Skole in Oslo, Norway; the University Sains Malaysia in Penang; the University of Minnesota; the Middle School No. 1 in Tianjin, China; and New York University. This Phi Beta Kappa, Magna Cum Laude artist has been there, seen it, done it. She has been a freelance graphic designer, an artist for the La MaMa Experimental Theatre in New York City, an arts organizer in the San Francisco Bay area, and a guest artist in such places as Karg in Oldenburg, Germany. She has exhibited her work all over the States.

"Passages," the work which opens the exhibit, incorporates seven doors which symbolize her great-grandmother's odyssey from Russia to America and her life in Michigan. It also links her grandmother's experiences and her own, a relativism of heritage and a search for identity as grandmother passes to granddaughter the essence of her religion and culture.

Says Grossman, "Being able to walk through the passageways of my great-grandmother's life and heritage has given me a historical perspective on the cultural rituals and political/social realities that have shaped my identity. Each door depicts essential ele-

ments of that history, linking my experiences and beliefs to those of my great-grandmother. My door project is supposed to encourage people to continue the oral tradition by documenting their personal and collective histories."

Grossman also uses suitcases to evoke the different aspects of assimilation and acculturation—but elements in her work ensure that the Torah and the traditions are not forgotten.



Beth Grossman