

## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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### **Ludwig Blum, "Painter of Jerusalem," on View at MOBIA Panorama from Israeli President's Residence Makes U.S. Debut**

NEW YORK, NY September 29, 2011— Panoramic views of the Holy Land, exotic images of Jerusalem's Old City, exquisite figurative paintings and archival material make up the more than 40 works on display in [\*Jerusalem and the Holy Land: The Paintings of Ludwig Blum \(1891-1974\)\*](#). First presented in London in January 2011, the acclaimed exhibition traces the career of the Czech-born Israeli topographical artist Ludwig Blum, who immigrated to Palestine in 1923 and settled in Jerusalem at the age of 32. Making its U.S. debut at [MOBIA](#) is *Jerusalem, View from the Mount of Olives* (1936), the inspiration for Blum's 1937 monumental work of the same name. On loan from the artist's daughter and family, the panorama normally hangs on the walls of the Israeli President's official residence. Organized by [Ben Uri, The London Jewish Museum of Art, The Art Museum for Everyone](#), *Jerusalem and the Holy Land* will be on view from October 28, 2011 to January 15, 2012.

The striking exhibition traces Blum's consistent representation of "the real" over half a century of painting the Holy Land and beyond. Jerusalem was "his" city and he never ceased to find inspiration in its architecture, holy places, markets, peoples and the extraordinary changes of light and shadow, which bathes its buildings each day of each season.

"Blum depicted some of the most significant events in the modern history of the Holy Land," said Dr. Ena Heller, Executive Director of MOBIA. "We are honored to partner with the Ben Uri Gallery to provide audiences with the opportunity to encounter the grandeur of Blum's work and experience his extraordinary vision firsthand."

As David Glasser, Executive Chairman of the Ben Uri Gallery commented: "Ben Uri is very proud to bring its survey of Israel and the Middle East's most distinguished 20<sup>th</sup>-century topographic artist, curated for London by Israeli scholar Dr. Dalia Manor, to an institution of the caliber and commitment to scholarship as MOBIA. I look forward to this partnership spawning much in the coming years for the benefit of our audiences on both sides of the Atlantic."

#### **Exhibition Background**

Ludwig Blum is recognized not only as a distinguished artist of the classic mold but also as the finest topographical artist of his time working in the Levant. He was classically trained; first as a young talent under David Kohn in Vienna and then, after serving in the First World War, from 1919 at the [Academy of Fine Arts in Prague](#). Blum painted during a unique period in history, being the 25 years before and after

the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. He travelled extensively and often across borders to Iran and Iraq, and his work chronicles in realistic and archival fashion the characteristics of different societies during those times. Blum's European persona and academic practice never changed in the heat and heart of this very different continent.

*Jerusalem and the Holy Land* brings together a remarkable body of Blum's work. Included are several stunning views of Jerusalem, its landscape and peoples, providing a unique historical glimpse of this majestic and holy city over half a century, alongside rare views of building sites during the construction of Tel Aviv.

Other subjects covered from his travels show scenes in Iran and Iraq in 1930; pioneering Kibbutzim settlements Kiryat Anavim, west of Jerusalem, from 1932, and Degania, on the Sea of Galilee, from 1934; the War of 1948, and farming and new industrial developments contrasting with city life in the '50s and beyond.

Blum's style and palette, his concerns with space and color, his swift brushwork and sophisticated conveying of the effects of light bring him close to the landscapes of Palestine by London-based American painter John Singer Sargent. The same can be said when comparing Blum's 1920s panoramas of Jerusalem with those of British artist David Bomberg, who similarly arrived in Jerusalem in May 1923 and painted his now celebrated series between 1923 and 1927. Given that Blum was in London in the early 1920s before immigrating to Palestine, they were both Europeans living and painting in a new and completely different city and climate, and they painted from similar viewpoints and in similar styles, it is perfectly likely they knew each other.

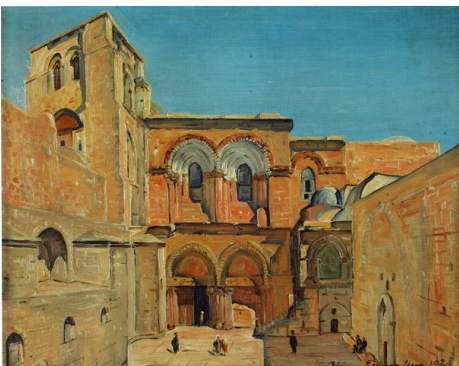
### Exhibition Highlights



***Jerusalem, View from the Mount of Olives, 1936.***

Jerusalem was Blum's major theme and panoramic views his

specialty. The "small" version (50 x 188 cm), on view at MOBIA, was the inspiration for the large-scale panorama (2 x 8 m) commissioned for the Museum of Biblical Antiquities in Brno. It has also been a fixture in the residence of the President of the State of Israel since 1991.



***Church of the Holy Sepulchre, 1928.*** Located inside the walled Old City, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was first built in the 4<sup>th</sup> century on the site of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus. The Romanesque arched façade, seen here, was built during the Crusader period and is the only outer view of the Church. The vantage point hides the receding domes much as the pilgrims and visitors see it today.



**Kibbutz Degania, 1934.** Blum’s interest in documenting the development of Palestine, and later Israel, inspired him to depict rural as well as urban backdrops. Chief among his subjects were *kibbutzim*, or rural communal settlements. The first *kibbutz*, Degania (based on the Hebrew word for “grain”), was founded in 1909, pre-dating Israel’s statehood by nearly forty years. Known as the “mother of the collectives and the kibbutzim,” Blum depicted it in this painting from 1934.

**Funding**

Organized by Ben Uri, The London Jewish Museum of Art, The Art Museum for Everyone. Major support for MOBIA’s exhibitions and programs has been provided by the American Bible Society and by Howard and Roberta Ahmanson. *Jerusalem and the Holy Land* is made possible by the David Berg Foundation and by Raquel and Aryeh Rubin. This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council. *Jerusalem and the Holy Land* is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.



**About Ben Uri, The London Jewish Museum of Art:**

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Ben Uri, founded in 1915, served as the center and provider of cultural activity to the Jewish community for the first 60 years of the museum’s proud heritage. When the ageing boundaries finally melted away and full emancipation evolved in London Ben Uri again focused on its core and original activity as an Art Gallery and custodian of one of Great Britain’s most distinctive public collections. In 2001, Ben Uri addressed the new century by repositioning itself out of the comfort of its own community into the centre of the mainstream National and International Museum and Gallery sector as 'The Art Museum for Everyone'. Ben Uri has a collection of some 1300 works including the recent purchase of masterworks by George Grosz, David Bomberg and the discovery and acquisition of Chagall's private response to the Holocaust titled 'Apocalypse en Lilas, Capriccio'.

**About the Museum of Biblical Art:**

Located near Lincoln Center at 1865 Broadway at 61st Street, the [Museum of Biblical Art](#) presents critically acclaimed art exhibitions while offering high quality, affordable arts enrichment programs to visitors of all ages. MOBIA celebrates and interprets art related to the Bible and its cultural legacy in Jewish and Christian traditions through exhibitions, education and scholarship. Past exhibitions have ranged from masters of the Italian Renaissance to the art of Marc Chagall. Admission to MOBIA's exhibitions is free for members and children under 12 and pay-what-you-wish for adults, with a suggested admission of \$7; Sundays are free. Museum hours are: Tue., Wed, Fri., Sun.: 10:00 AM-6:00 PM; Thurs: 10:00 AM-8:00 PM; Mon: Closed. Visit [www.mobia.org](http://www.mobia.org) for more information on current exhibits and public programs.