

ANOHA

The Children's World of the
Jewish Museum Berlin

23 June 2021

ANOHA – The Children's World of the Jewish Museum Berlin will open on 27 June



A child with a polar bear on the Ark. Photo: Yves Sucksdorff. Jewish Museum Berlin.

Rediscovering the Story of Noah's Ark through Hand's-On Experience

On 27 June, the Jewish Museum Berlin will be opening ANOHA Children's World. The children's museum welcomes preschool and elementary school kids to explore, play, and try things out. ANOHA has been newly constructed inside the former wholesale flower market, across the street from the main museum building, and encompasses 2700 square meters.

ANOHA takes the Torah story of Noah's Ark as the point of departure for a journey into the future. At the center point of the Children's World are an enormous wooden Ark, 150 different animal sculptures – and the children themselves. They are invited to come on board and, with their own imaginations, bring the story of Noah's Ark back to life.

How do we want to live together on this earth? What does it take to achieve a respectful coexistence between humans, animals, and nature? ANOHA emboldens children to develop their own visions – inspired by the Jewish concept of *tikkun olam*, which calls on each of us to make the world a slightly better place.

The German Federal Commissioner of Culture and Media funded the children's museum on the basis of a resolution by the German Bundestag. "The young visitors to ANOHA Children's World experience a true playground of coexistence and enter a real school of tolerance and understanding. ANOHA exemplifies an educational project for our moment, one that offers approachable access to cultural education. This is not just about pure knowledge, but most importantly about cultivating hearts," Commissioner Prof. Monika Grütters said at the press conference.

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Children As Lead Actors

The Jewish Museum Berlin draws an unusually young crowd for a cultural history museum: one in five visitors is under the age of 20. However, the core and temporary exhibitions primarily cater towards adults and teenagers. Hetty Berg, the Director of the Jewish Museum Berlin, is pleased that the museum now offers a specific option for children and families: "The Children's World is envisioned as a place of encounter between generations, religions, and cultures, for people from Kreuzberg, Berlin, and beyond. With the opening of ANOHA, we are now offering a new place for even the youngest among us to play and learn while further strengthening our ties in our own neighborhood. This is somewhere to enter into a playful conversation about questions that affect everyone."

Dr. Ane Kleine-Engel, Head of the ANOHA Children's World at the Jewish Museum Berlin, emphasizes the innovative communication concept: "ANOHA is a building for a story: the story of Noah's Ark. We invite children to translate it into their own lives and take it a step further. They are the lead actors and actively shape what happens," says Dr. Ane Kleine-Engel.

Independent Exploration, Asking Questions: With Educational Support As Needed

The young visitors explore the exhibition for themselves. While there, educationally trained companions are at the ready at various stations. They tell the story of Noah's Ark and ponder, together with the children and their families, why it happened a certain way or what could have gone differently. They ask and answer questions about big global themes, nature, and environmental protection, talk to the visitors about peaceful coexistence, and encourage them to take active part themselves: Whoever likes can build their own boat, launch it in the special boat basin – the Great Flood Simulator – and test whether it's shipshape enough to withstand a tidal wave. Elsewhere, children can "feed" the animals and guide them aboard the Ark. And everywhere is a good place to ask questions, the more the merrier: What do unicorns have to do with the Ark? Why don't mammoths freeze? What will polar bears do when the ice melts?

The 150 animal sculptures of all sizes, including less familiar ones such as the naked mole rat and the cockroach, pique kids' curiosity simply from their unusual appearance. They were created by artists out of fire hoses, floor lamps, dice shakers, soccer balls, and other recycled everyday objects. Through play, the animals communicate different themes. For example, the fox, the spider, and the she-donkey fit into the realm of legends and folklore; the polar bear and orangutan raise awareness of endangered species, and some animals encourage the children to experience the world from their perspectives.

Please Touch! A Hands-On Museum

Fun comes first. Children can crawl through or climb on the anaconda, the world's biggest snake, sit on the elephant, or cuddle up to the sloth. Unlike a museum for adults, ANOHA has no glass showcases or do-not-cross barriers – but instead workbenches, slides, and climbing structures. Everything becomes tangible following the principle of hands-on, minds on. The centerpiece of the Children's World, designed by the US-based Olson Kundig architecture and design practice, is a seven-meter tall wooden construction, a full 28 meters in diameter. The circular structure is inspired by the more than 4,000 year old Mesopotamian story of the Ark and also resembles a spaceship. Thus, it connects the past to the future and encourages people to imagine what life might look like in the future.

A Children's Council for ANOHA

Children were involved in the new museum's development process from the very beginning. A Children's Council, which was re-appointed each school year comprising six Berlin elementary school students ages six to twelve, has met regularly at the Jewish Museum Berlin ever since the 2017–18

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school year. The young councilors are co-curators of specific exhibition areas and try out planned installations. During full-day workshops, they had the opportunity to develop and contribute their own wishes and ideas. For example, they were consulted on the name of the Children's World and approved specific elements of the exhibition.

Inspired by the pioneering vision of Noah's Ark at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles, which underscores the importance of diversity, collaboration and second chances, ANOHA — The Children's World of the Jewish Museum Berlin seeks to give the museum's youngest guests a sense of possibility.

Press images of ANOHA for attributed use are available for download at
[Press Images | Jewish Museum Berlin \(jmberlin.de\)](https://www.jmberlin.de/press-images)

The ANOHA Website with further information about the Children's Museum is located at
[ANOHA | Jewish Museum Berlin \(jmberlin.de\)](https://www.jmberlin.de/anoha)

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