

Posters pair wise Jewish voices with modern Jewish visions

By Sara Lustberg
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AGAWAM – Since 2012, the Voices & Visions poster series, curated by the PJ Library and Harold Grinspoon Foundation, has matched modern art with Jewish wisdom.

“After a very successful start to PJ Library [in 2005] and the ‘thank you’s’ pouring in,” noted Madeline Calabrese, director of Voices & Visions, “Mr. Grinspoon’s reaction was, ‘What more can I do to inspire PJ Library families about their Jewish heritage?’”

Grinspoon was inspired by the series created by the Container Corporation of America, which produced one poster a month and placed it as an ad in a magazine like Fortune, Calabrese wrote in an email. He adapted the idea of taking quotes from Jewish thinkers, writers and notables, and commissioned Jewish artists to create illustrations. “He then gifted the posters to PJ Library parents and Jewish organizations,” Calabrese noted.

In 2012, Voices & Visions debuted its “Masters Series” of 18 posters, which paired works by leading figures of contemporary art with quotes from Jewish thinkers across the ages. While initially offered as a limited release, the series remains the most popular of what would become three sets of posters. “We were excited about all 18 and eager to gift them,” Calabrese noted. “We soon realized it was too many at once, and so we now provide six at a time with each new series.”

In April 2015, the second series, “Proudly Jewish,” came out. Two months ago, the project released a set of “Frames of Mind” posters, six posters suitable for use at Passover and year round.

Each Voices & Visions poster includes a captivating and sometimes perplexing quote, many of which are particularly appropriate for the classroom. The quotes often refer to transformations, journeys, perseverance or respect.

“Quotes go through a rigorous selection process,” said Skylar Smith, a program associate. “At first, a theme is chosen, and then quote research begins with the help of graduate students, staff and advisers from outside the foundation, who all submit what they feel are strong selections for review. “From there, the staff pares down the list and recommends them to a special committee for review,” Smith added. “Once the committee has selected the finalist, the quotations are turned over to the artistic directors and in turn, to the artists.”

Many of the quotes are well known, like those from Hillel, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Herschel and the Baal Shem Tov. Others come straight from Pirkei Avot, Deuteronomy and Song of Songs.

“We want young people to connect to the creative energy of Jewish life,” said Danny Paller, the project’s web manager. “They are the creators of the next chapter of Jewish history. “I have spotted the Voices & Visions posters at religious schools like that of Temple Sinai in Brookline,” he added. “The posters are clearly designed to provoke thought and encourage discussion amongst professionals, students, children and young adults.”

Voices & Visions poster sets are available free to any Jewish organization at voices-visions.org.