

**National Breast Cancer Month**

JEWISH  
**Life &  
STYLE**

SUN COUNTRY

LAS VEGAS | PHOENIX | SCOTTSDALE | TUCSON

OCTOBER  
2006

**Western Wall  
Glass Sculpture**

**A Tale of Two  
Cities Mayors**

*Jewish*

*Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon and  
Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman*



# Jeremy Langford The Western Wall Glass Sculpture Project

By Beth Ellyn Rosenthal

PHOTOS BY Max Richardson for The Western Wall Heritage Foundation



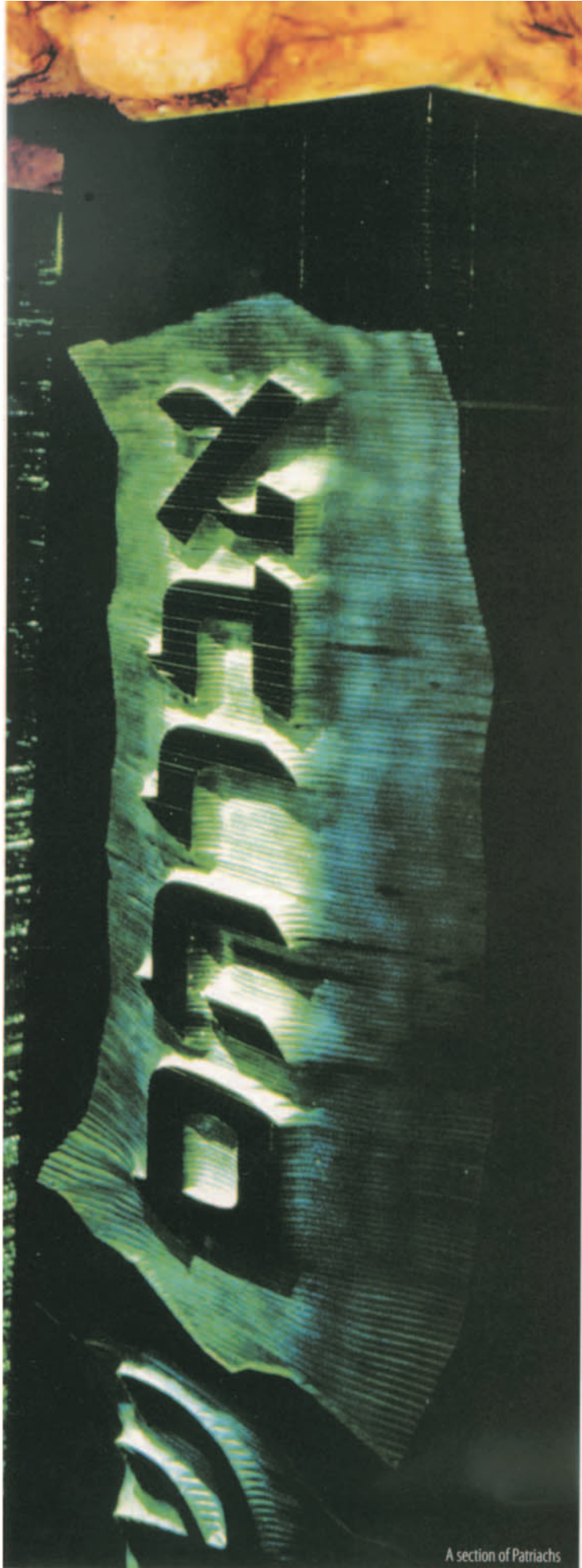
Destruction of Jerusalem, the beginning of Exile

**H**ow's this for a challenge? The Israeli government and the Western Wall Heritage Foundation asked Jeremy Langford, an Israeli-British glass artist and sculptor, to create eight glass sculptures for each of the recently excavated catacombs under the Western Wall in Jerusalem. His assignment was to present, in glass, the history of the Jewish people—from the Patriarchs to the Holocaust—at Judaism's holiest site. The resulting sculptures are a potent mix of art, history, religion, and modern events. "My work was to be part of Judaism's holiest site, adjacent to the Al Aqsa Mosque (Islam's third holiest shrine after Mecca and Medina) and close to many of the sites sacred to Christianity. The awesome responsibility of depicting this saga on this site at this time was, for me, both the ultimate dream and the ultimate challenge," reveals Langford. "I had to find an artistic language that would cut across boundaries, and to which a wide range of cultures could relate." An awesome challenge.

Eight glass sculptures were the result, each with layers of glass reflecting light rays playing off the columns. One sculpture, in particular, depicts the destruction of Jerusalem and the beginning of Jewish exile (photos on page 28-29). Broken columns of glass represent the broken civilization; the light reflecting from beneath represents the life that had not been extinguished.

"I felt the sculptures must make their own statement and express the purpose for which they were created," explains Langford. Each sculpture contains Hebrew writing. "The names of individuals from each historic period, from early Biblical times up to the present day," are carved into the sculptures, he explains. The Holocaust sculpture is a cracked glass block upon which are inscribed the names of Holocaust victims. Powerful emotionally as well as visually.

Each sculpture is huge. Just one of these monumental pieces weighs over 15 metric tons. The project was incredibly difficult both from an artistic as well as an engineering standpoint.



A section of Patriachs



Jeremy Langford, artist

Like Michelangelo must have felt after painting the Sistine Chapel at the holiest site of his religion, Langford said to himself when he completed the Western Wall project: “Where do I go next?”

The answer is Las Vegas, of course. Currently Langford is making repeated trips to the valley from his home outside Tel Aviv to work with Las Vegas homeowners and casino and city officials to bring his work to *this* desert. “Las Vegas is where it’s all happening,” he says in a crisp, British accent. “There’s a buzz, an excitement here. I know I can express myself in Las Vegas by taking glass to incredible, never before seen heights.”

He says glass is the appropriate material to reflect the importance of LVNV. “Glass is made of sand. Las Vegas grew out of the sand of the desert,” he says. Part of his artistic vision could entail embedding another facet of Las Vegas—electronic components—into his glass structures, reflecting the high tech side of the world’s entertainment capitol. “I like the juxtaposition of ancient and hyper-modern,” the artist says.

Langford says glass is “incredibly strong” when it’s installed correctly. Used to its fullest potential, glass can be a flexible medium in both structural and aesthetic terms. His stacked glass pieces have been tested to a pressure of 250 metric tons. “Not a single crack,” he says. “It doesn’t make sense to put up a beautiful sculpture that will fall to bits.”

Langford recently completed a sculpted glass wall for the Four Seasons Hotel in Miami. Fifteen hundred pieces of glass arrived safely without a single broken shard. He expects his sculptures at the Western Wall will last for thousands of years. That, of course, is a lot longer than most casino structures in Las Vegas. ■