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### Lyrical Legacy

**Author(s):** Barbara Pash Associate Editor **Date:** June 26, 2009 **Section:** Life

He was known in his day as the pre-eminent Jewish artist. Born Moshe Shagal in 1887 in Belarus, then part of the Russian empire, Marc **Chagall** died in 1985, leaving a legacy of art in oils, stained glass and tapestries. His lyrical vision of East European Jewry captured a culture that no longer exists. **Chagall's** art is known worldwide, but until now it has not been considered particularly child-friendly. That's what makes the current exhibit at Port Discovery Children's Museum so unusual. On view through Sept. 7 at the downtown museum is "**Chagall** For Children," a hands-on exhibit. "His art is very childlike," said Michelle Winner, Port Discovery's vice president of marketing. "It resonates with children because of the bright colors, the textures. You can almost feel [the art]." Ms. Winner said the exhibit has been popular since it opened in mid-May. "Children and parents have really been enjoying it because of its many interactive components," said Ms. Winner, who brought her two daughters, ages 4 and 6, to the museum one day and "we spent a long time because there are so many things to do." The **Chagall** exhibit was created by the Kohl Children's Museum of Greater Chicago, specifically as a traveling exhibit that introduces art to young children. Developed eight years ago, the exhibit underwent a refurbishing two years ago. Since its creation, it has been touring children's museums around the country. The exhibit came to Port Discovery from the Children's Museum of Acadiana, La.

Ms. Winner said Port Discovery felt it was important to bring the exhibit to Baltimore. Many schools are cutting their art programs for budgetary reasons, and the museum believed it was a great opportunity for children to learn more about art, especially in an interactive way.

"We've never hosted an exhibit that had such an obvious [art] focus," said Ms. Winner.

Job, And More The exhibit is located on the main floor exhibit space. It was designed for children ages 2 to 8, but children of all ages can enjoy it. "It's very sophisticated yet simple," she said.

The exhibit's setup is considered unique. It is laid out like a mini art gallery. There are 14 sections, separated by partitions. Each section features a reproduction of a **Chagall** work and an accompanying hands-on activity.

Each activity is different. Each section has a telephone that will provide more information about the work in that section.

For example, the "circus" section features a larger-than-life-size reproduction of a **Chagall** painting. Children can don smocks that are in the colors of the painting. They stand against the painting and a video camera records them. "They can see themselves on screen'inside'the painting," Ms. Winner said.

A section with a replica of Chagall's Job tapestry has ribbons and an apparatus on which children can weave their own tapestries. In the American stained-glass windows section, children can create their own stained-glass pieces from colored plastic tiles.

Another section allows children to "paint" their faces with the different colors via a touch-screen computer.

Ms. Winner said that the exhibit talks about **Chagall's** Jewish heritage.

"It's in the material [related to the exhibit] and in the exhibit, that he is a Russian-born Jewish painter," she said.

Ms. Winner said that PortDiscovery usually has two to three traveling exhibits during the year. This summer, it has both the **Chagall** exhibit and an exhibit titled "Joshua's Journey: A Black Cowboy Rides the Chisum Trail." That exhibit went on view in January and also leaves the museum on Sept. 7.

The museum had to pay for the **Chagall** exhibit, but fortunately, according to Ms. Winner, two benefactors came forward to fund the cost. They are Howard S. Brown and Family and the J. S. Plank and D. M.

DiCarlo Family Foundation.

For the **Chagall** exhibit, the museum is partnering with the Jewish Museum of Maryland. JMM members get a discount on admission when they show their membership cards. This is the first of what Ms.

Winner hopes will be other partnerships with the Jewish Museum.

Port Discovery also is partnering with the Baltimore Museum of Art, which has a real **Chagall** on display.

"We feel good about bringing the **Chagall** exhibit to Baltimore," said Ms. Winner. Port Discovery is located at 34 Market Place. For information, visit [portdiscovery.org](http://portdiscovery.org) .

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