

Hello again and thanks for joining us for another edition of AS IT IS.

I'm June Simms.

Coming up today, we visit a Jewish museum in Germany, where the number of Jews has grown greatly in the last 50 years. Even so, Jews make up only a small percentage of the country's population.

First up, Jim Tedder takes us to the oldest non-federal art museum in Washington, DC. Eighty-four people are completing their studies at the Corcoran College of Art and Design this spring. The students will receive degrees in Fine Art, Photography and Graphic Design, among other things. VOA's Julie Taboh spoke with several of the students during a special showing of their work. Jim Tedder has her report.

Gabriel Mellan is one of 84 students graduating from the Corcoran College of Art and Design. For his final project, he created a seven-sided sculpture called a Heptachord. It is made of sheet metal.

"And so there's varying levels of sensitivity, kind of at different heights and so you can kind of lean against it, and play it."

His project is part of a show called NEXT, created by the graduating students. Jason Tucker also presented his project at the exhibit.

"I wanted to place myself in my work somehow..."

His project deals with what it means to be gay or homosexual. For example, he took a common insult against gays, the word faggot, and turned it into a work of art.

"The root of the word comes down to 'a bundle of sticks.' So I ended up collecting my exact body weight in sticks. I wanted to take something that I've been called before, that was an epithet, and make something beautiful out of it."

While traditional art is represented, multimedia projects are more common at the exhibit. Andy Grundberg is head of undergraduate studies at the college.

"I think we're seeing an increase every year in the number of video projects that are done. We see a lot of use of digital media and other kinds of direction."

Kailyn Jackson used music and photography to demonstrate her artistic talent.

"It is an experiential project. I ask visitors of the gallery to listen to music through wireless headphones and to express themselves through different colored lights and at the end I'm recording their movements through a photographic image."

The show also has art that is based on political issues. South Korean Robert Yi has several paintings in the exhibit. One is of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

“The titles of my paintings are called Mask, Mask paintings. And it’s the idea that in society today, no matter where you are, people put on a mask. That idea is expressed in North Korea because the people of North Korea -- the citizens – will put on a face, a stern face. They’re required to act happy.”

Catherine Armour is the Corcoran's chief academic officer. She is hopeful about her students’ future.

“One of the big trends in education today is an emphasis on science and technology, but I’m very pleased to see more of an emphasis and increasing understanding of the role of creativity and understanding that problem-solving, motivation, perseverance; these are really important skills for students of this next generation.”

The Corcoran College is Washington’s only accredited college of art and design. The 84 students are graduating in May. I’m Jim Tedder.

And I’m June Simms with AS IT IS, your daily magazine show from VOA Learning English.

Nearly 180,000 German Jews were killed during the Holocaust, when the Nazi Party ruled Germany. That number represents almost all of the Jewish community in the country during the time leading up to World War Two. Since then, the number of Jews in Germany has grown. But they remain just a small percentage of the country's total population.

An exhibit at Berlin’s Jewish Museum seeks to answer commonly asked questions about Jews. Questions like are all Jews religious? What do Jews wear on their heads and why? And who can become a Jew?

In one area of the exhibit, a Jewish person sits inside a clear plastic box, which is open at the front. A Jew sits in the box every day but Saturday, the Jewish holy day. He or she answers questions from visitors to the museum.

On a recent day, Signe Rossbach, a Jew from Berlin, talked to non-Jews who were visiting. She said she wanted to take part in the display because most Germans have never met a Jew.

"I thought this was a great idea."

Germany is the largest country in the European Union. It is home to more 80 million people. But most estimates put Germany's Jewish population at less than 200 thousand.

A woman named Karen visited the museum with her husband.

"I always seem to find that Germans, my husband being one, and his family, are very undereducated when it comes to knowing who the victims at their hands in the Second World War were.

They don't really have any understanding of what a Jew is culturally."

Museum curator Michal Friedlander is Jewish. She says many young Germans see the Holocaust as ancient history -- something that no longer needs to be discussed.

"We want them to continue to remember the terrible history but perhaps there is a new way to enter into dialogue."

Historian Alexander Hasgall agrees that the box is a good idea.

"This exhibition is an experiment. It can really fail, when at the end we will see everybody's just laughing, and nothing else. But maybe it opens new ways to deal with Judaism, also taking into account that German society is evolving, and Jews are a part of this society."

However, not everyone likes the idea. Some critics say the show is degrading. Others have named it "Jew in a Box."

The exhibit continues until September.

That's AS IT IS for today, I'm June Simms. As always, thanks for sharing your day with us. We welcome you to share your ideas with us as well. Email us at special@voanews.com.

As we leave you, I'd like to mention that today, April 27th, is World Healing Day, a day to focus human consciousness on personal and global healing. The observance was inspired by research from the Global Consciousness Project. It is observed in hundreds of cities in more than seventy nations.

Keep it here for VOA World News at the beginning of every hour Universal Time.

Kelly Jean Kelly returns with more AS IT IS tomorrow. And I'll be back next week. See you then.