

Culture

MUSEUMS THEATER



Clockwise from far left: Visitors at the Museum of Innocence's opening for neighborhood residents; the museum is tucked away in a 19th-century house on a quiet street in the Cukurcuma neighborhood; Mr. Pamuk, center, at the opening; a display case, one of 83 in the four-floor museum that are organized according to the story line of the novel; the 4,213 cigarettes mounted behind Plexiglass on the ground floor.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JODI HILTON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES



Orhan Pamuk brings his novel alive

ISTANBUL

The Nobel laureate opens the quirky Museum of Innocence

BY J. MICHAEL KENNEDY

The first thing you see are the cigarette butts. There are thousands of them — 4,213 to be exact — mounted behind Plexiglass on the ground floor of the Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk's new museum, named for and based on his 2008 novel, "The Museum of Innocence."

It is a fittingly strange beginning to a tour of this quirky museum, tucked away in a 19th-century house on a quiet street in the Cukurcuma neighborhood, among junk shops that sell old brass, worn rugs and other bric-a-brac.

But it is also, like everything else on the museum's four floors, a specific reference to the novel — each cigarette has supposedly been touched by Fusun, the object of the narrator's obsessive love — and, by extension, an evocation of the bygone world in which the book is set.

"The Museum of Innocence" is about

Istanbul's upper class beginning in the 1970s, a time when Mr. Pamuk was growing up in the elite Nisantasi district. He describes the novel as a love story set in the melancholic back streets of that neighborhood and other parts of the European side of the city. But more broadly it is a chronicle of the efforts of haute-bourgeois Istanbulis to define themselves by Western values, a pursuit that continues today as Turkey as a whole takes a more Islamic turn.

Although Mr. Pamuk said the book explores the "pretensions" of upper-class Turks, who "in spite of their pro-Western attitudes are highly conservative," it is hard not to see the bricks-and-mortar Museum of Innocence as largely an act of nostalgic appreciation.

Mr. Pamuk, 59, is Turkey's best-known writer, albeit a divisive one thanks to his Western orientation. He won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2006, around the time he was being tried and acquitted for making "un-Turkish" pronouncements about the Armenian genocide. In person he gives off an aura of the kind of elitism that can come with a privileged upbringing and a successful literary career.

As the museum was preparing to open late last week, with workmen haul-

ing around ladders and a staff member stocking the gift-shop shelves with Mr. Pamuk's books, the author himself was going full tilt, giving orders and making last-minute tweaks as he walked a reporter through the displays.

He said the museum cost him about what he received for the Nobel — roughly \$1.5 million — including what he paid for the house 12 years ago, when he had the idea for the project. Then there is the amount of time he has devoted to it on and off over a dozen years: by his estimate about half a book's worth, a lot considering that his novels tend to run to 500 pages or more.

The museum's displays are organized according to the story line of "The Museum of Innocence," which opens as a wealthy, self-centered young man is making love with Fusun, a distant relative and store clerk he has met while shopping for his soon-to-be fiancée.

"And as I softly bit her ear, her earring must have come free and, for all we knew, hovered in midair before falling of its own accord," an opening line reads. Mr. Pamuk paused in front of the first of 83 display cases — there is one for each chapter of the book — and pointed to a single earring. Then he moved along to

other vitrines, talking about how items were chosen and how a few displays were still works in progress even after all these years of preparation.

"As far as I know this is the first museum based on a novel," he said. "But it's not that I wrote a novel that turned out to be successful and then I thought

"This is not Orhan Pamuk's museum. Very little of me is here, and if it is, it's hidden. It's like fiction."

of a museum. No, I conceived the novel and the museum together."

While writing the book he collected more than a thousand artifacts that reflect the story, from a tricycle to dozens of ceramic dogs, from lottery tickets to news clippings of women with black lines drawn across their eyes — once standard in Turkish newspaper coverage of women connected to scandal.

Mr. Pamuk's protagonist and narrator, Kemal Basmaçi, becomes more and more obsessed with Fusun as other aspects of his life fall apart, and eventually he begins collecting things — and steal-

ing them from Fusun's home — in what will ultimately become his life's work: the building of a museum in tribute to his onetime lover.

For a time Mr. Pamuk became Kemal, looking for pieces that reflected each chapter as he wrote it, searching the junk shops of Istanbul and other parts of the world. The collection he assembled reflected not only the plot of "The Museum of Innocence," but also Istanbul during Turkey's halting movement into the modern era.

"We remembered how the Istanbul bourgeoisie had trampled over one another to be the first to own an electric shaver, a can opener, a carving knife, and any number of strange and frightening inventions, lacerating their hands and faces as they struggled to learn how to use them," Kemal says in the book.

Such items too are in the museum, along with old clocks, film clips, soda bottles and clothes of the era.

At the top of the house Mr. Pamuk sat down on a bench in front of the bed where Kemal is meant to have slept in the last years of his life as he assembled the museum. It was a lonely-looking piece of furniture.

The Museum of Innocence opened to

a small crowd last Saturday morning, after a packed news conference on Friday at one of Istanbul's fanciest restaurants. Most of the visitors seemed to be fans of the book who wanted to match their vision with Mr. Pamuk's. There was Latife Koker, who had traveled an hour and a half by bus that morning; Renata Lapanja, who lives in Slovenia; and Erdogan Solmaz, who, like Mr. Pamuk in his youth, is an architecture student at a university in Istanbul. He said Mr. Pamuk's efforts had made this collection starkly different from others in the city, which has some of the finest museums in the world.

"This one is about people," Mr. Solmaz said. "This is much more personal and dramatic."

Personal, yes, but only to a point, Mr. Pamuk said. "This is not Orhan Pamuk's museum," he said. "Very little of me is here, and if it is, it's hidden. It's like fiction." In his view both the book and the museum are largely about sadness, and in particular the "melancholy of the period."

ONLINE: SLIDE SHOW

Photographs of Orhan Pamuk's novel museum: global.nytimes.com/arts

With big-budget religious musicals, selling Broadway to the flock

NEW YORK

Marketing firm wants to extend reach of hits like 'Book of Mormon'

BY PATRICK HEALY

Jesus is cracking jokes, sharing parables and dying for our sins in three Broadway musicals this spring, while another six shows feature religious themes that are woven through dialogue and lyrics.

But what many of these productions lack are ticket-buying multitudes who identify themselves as people of faith, a group rarely courted by Broadway producers offering the sort of focused advertising campaigns that turned movies like "The Passion of the Christ" and "The Blind Side" into unexpected hits.

Tom Allen is working to change that. A partner in Allied Faith & Family, a Hollywood marketing firm that aims to attract churchgoers to movies and now theater, Mr. Allen has spent the past 18 months breaking into the cloistered

world of Broadway.

He has worked with "Memphis," "Sister Act" and "Leap of Faith" to draw coverage from Christian news media and to create study guides for the shows — annotated with Bible passages — to leave at parish halls. He has suggested script changes to appeal to the devout. (His request that "goddamned" be cut from "Leap of Faith" was denied.) And he has displayed a preacher's touch at postshow receptions with religious theatergoers, like a recent one at Sardi's where he mingled among a dozen priests and ministers he brought to see "Leap of Faith," about a con-man evangelist whose latest scheme leads to a change of heart.

"Broadway is having its first faith moment," Mr. Allen said repeatedly to his guests, and many of them concurred. Never before, they said, had Judeo-Christian messages dominated the theater capital: overtly in "Leap of Faith," "Jesus Christ Superstar," "Sister Act" and "Godspell," and more subtly in shows with redemption themes like "Memphis," "The Lion King," "The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess," "Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark" and even the



Raúl Esparza in the musical "Leap of Faith," a potential vehicle for faith-based marketing.

profanity-laden "Book of Mormon."

Yet selling Broadway to the flock remains a tall order. A crucial part of Mr. Allen's mission — to persuade religious "influencers" to spread the word about shows — inevitably bumps up against concerns about PG-13 content. The new revival of "Superstar" includes an intense, quasi-romantic triangle among Jesus, Judas and Mary Magdalene, while "Sister Act" features sarcastic nuns and "Mormon" about two young missionaries floundering in Uganda, has a song cursing God that is wildly hilarious or deeply offensive, depending on your point of view.

At Sardi's Mr. Allen could not even win an unqualified endorsement for "Leap of Faith" from Marian West, a missionary with the Roman Catholic nonprofit group Heart's Home USA, despite her affection for the show.

"The main character's conversion as a man of faith seemed more about pleasing his new girlfriend," Ms. West said, "and I wanted that conversion to go deeper."

Mr. Allen replied, "That's for the sequel." A boyish-looking 49-year-old, he spent years on Catholic endeavors, like

an Internet site for pastoral writings, before plunging into marketing through a chance meeting with Mel Gibson as Mr. Gibson was making "The Passion of the Christ."

Hits like "The Book of Mormon" and "The Lion King" have no trouble drawing audiences, but many Broadway shows — religiously oriented and otherwise — have seats to spare, and some of their producers see marketing to the faithful as an intriguing if unproven strategy. Broadway has no industry-wide system for counting ticket buyers from specific religious groups; Mr. Allen has proposed to several shows that they offer a "faith-based discount" for tickets, to create a discount code that would allow producers to track whether religious people were reserving seats in the wake of marketing campaigns aimed at them. No one has tested the idea yet.

"Faith-based marketing is so new on Broadway that it's hard to quantify the impact, but what I do know is that we now have pretty steady numbers of faithful coming to 'Memphis,'" said Sue Frost, one of the lead producers of the *BROADWAY*, PAGE 9