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# MUSEUMS IN EUROPE: GENESIS AND PROFILE

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**Abstract:** In the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. and following 2000, a real 'boom' in founding Jewish museums throughout Europe could be observed. A lot of new institutions were established, and old ones were modernized. All this resulting from the growing urge to overcome silence over the Holocaust, to square up with the past, and to open the debate on the multiethnicity of the history of Europe. This, in turn, was favoured by the occurring phenomena: Europe's integration, the fall of the Iron Curtain, and the development of democratic civil societies.

New Jewish museums established in Europe, though inevitably making a reference to the Shoah, are not Holocaust museums as such, and they do not tell the story of the genocide. Their goal is mainly to restore the memory of the centuries of the Jewish presence in a given country, region, and town: they tell this story as part of the history of the given place, and aim at having it incorporated into the official national

history. Moreover, their mission is to show the presence and importance of the Jewish heritage in today's world, as well as to ask questions related to Jewish identity in contemporary Europe. The civilizational conflicts that arose after the relatively peaceful 1990s, outlined a new framework for the activity of Jewish museums which, interestingly, gradually go beyond the peculiar Jewish experience in order to reach a universal level. With such activities they try to promote pluralism and multicultural experience, shape inclusive attitudes, give voice to minorities, speak out against all the manifestations of discrimination and exclusion. Since these museums deal with such sensitive challenging issues, they have to well master the structure of their message on every level: that of architecture, script, exhibition layout, and accompanying programmes, thanks to which they unquestionably contribute to creating new standards and marking out new trends in today's museology as well as in museum learning.

**Keywords:** Jewish museums, new museology, narrative exhibition, Holocaust, commemoration, multiculturalism, pluralism.

The oldest Jewish museums in Europe began emerging in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first was launched in Vienna in 1896; two years later the museums in Frankfurt and Hamburg were opened; the one in Prague was initiated in 1906, in Warsaw in 1910 (the Mathias Berson Museum of Jewish Antiquities), and the one in Budapest in 1916. Next such museums were established in the inter-war period: in Berlin (1932), Lvov (1935), and in Vilnius (1935). Founded by the Jewish community, these pre-WW II museums were first and foremost addressed to its members. Although the contexts of the establishment and operation of respective institutions differed, their overall goal was to preserve and record the world of the Jewish tradition that was becoming the thing of the past, as well as to consolidate the Jewish identity in the changing world. To a degree they were also to present the Jewish culture and tradition to the non-Jewish circles.<sup>1</sup> The museums principally collected and displayed items related to the Jewish tradition, yet also works by

Jewish artists. The end to those institutions was put by the invasion of Europe by Nazi Germany and the extermination of the Jewish population, this automatically eradicating any symptoms of Jewish cultural life. The museums were wound down, while their collections were either taken over or dispersed; in some cases they were successfully hidden, taken away, or preserved in a different way.<sup>2</sup> Only few of those institutions attempted to continue their activity following WW II. Initiated and launched only by very scarce communities of those who had survived the Holocaust, such museums served as depositories of memory during the post-WW II decades of silence: they were to preserve the remnants and pay tribute to those who had perished.<sup>3</sup> In the subsequent post-WW II decades, Jewish questions remained uncomfortable topics, and were not tackled. In the countries under Communism what predominated was the Stalin heroic interpretation of the War, putting stronger emphasis on the martyrology of the local nations, with the

issue of Jews as victims of the Shoah being marginalized. Moreover, the topic of the collaboration of certain countries with Nazi Germany remained untackled. On the other side of the Iron Curtain many countries claimed to have been victims of Nazism, not really bringing up the debate over the role played by their own collaborating regimes in promoting Fascism. For this very reason the few operating Jewish museums, e.g. in Budapest, Prague, Warsaw, Amsterdam, Rome, Toledo, and Athens, were marginally active, and did not play any significant social role.

Breaking the silence around the Holocaust, which in the majority of countries consisted in settling accounts with the past and admitting participation, if only passive, of their own citizens in the Holocaust, was a very slow process. The breakthrough took place in the 1970s and 80s, finally after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989. In Poland, the debate on Jewish victims and the role of Poland not only as the war's victim, but also perpetrator of violence, developed only after the fall of Communism in the 1990s. Together with these changes there began activities meant to restore the memory and create platforms for debate on topics related to Jewish culture and its place in contemporary Europe. The initiatives that were related to minority groups, until then marginalized, were favoured by the European integration process, the development of liberal democracies in the West, and democratic transformations in the former Communist countries. Jewish topics gained momentum, they became symbol of democratic transformations and development of open civil societies. Numerous publications on Jewish issues were released, while universities launched chairs and institutes dedicated to Jewish studies.

All these developments did not only pave the way, but actually created demand for establishing Jewish museums. In the last two decades of the previous century and in the 2000s, in the majority of European countries new Jewish-related museums were founded. In the 1980s they were opened in e.g. Frankfurt (1987), Stockholm (1987), Vienna (1986). It was, however, the 1990s that were crucial: it was then that works, in many a case lasting for many years, were begun on major institutions opened to the public either just before or after 2000, these including: Museum of Jewish Art and History in Paris (1998), Jewish Museum in Berlin (initial concept: 1998, opened: 2001), Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw (initial concept: 1994, opened: 2013), Museum of Italian Judaism and the Shoah in Ferrara (2003), Danish Jewish Museum in Copenhagen (2004), Jewish Museum in Munich (2007), Oslo Jewish Museum (2008), Jewish Museum in Erfurt (2009), Museum of the Jewish People in Speyer (2010), Centre of Tolerance in Moscow (2015). Moreover, beginning as of the 1990s many museums operating by then were redesigned and transferred to new premises, acquiring in this way a new nationwide or European-wide prestige, e.g. the Jewish Museum of Greece in Athens (1993), Jewish Museum London (1995), Jewish Museum in Prague (1994), Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam (the first reorganization: 1989, subsequent renovation completed in 2007), Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archive in Budapest (2018).<sup>4</sup>

This Jewish museum boom coincided with the extension of functions and development of modern museology, putting emphasis on storytelling, message construction strategies,

and public's experience.<sup>5</sup> For various social groups new museums have become tools for communicating their vision of the world, society, history.<sup>6</sup> The contexts: social and political, proved to be particularly important in the case of Jewish museums which tackle tough controversial topics, additionally related to new Europe's challenges, such as migration and multiculturalism.

The goal of the present paper is to take a closer look at modern Jewish museums operating in Europe: to present their social mission and role in more detail, and to show how these translate into their character, premises, exhibitions, collections, and the overall programme activity.

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In Europe, Jewish museums come to existence and operate in a totally different context than outside Europe, mainly in the USA, but also in Australia and South Africa, namely in locations where the history of the Jewish Diaspora has been relatively brief, and where the main Jewish centres developed after the Shoah. There they are most generally founded by the Jewish community and with it in mind: they are to consolidate identity, secure the tradition continuity: to a large degree, they tell the story of successful migration, the migrants' culture and values in new society.<sup>7</sup> Another case can be found in Jewish museums in Israel, where they are national. As distinct from Israeli and American museums, European Jewish ones are in their majority established by non-Jews. Many are created as the result of Public-Private Partnership (PPP), at the instigation of the local Jewish community, a group of researchers, or fans of Jewish culture, supported by state or city authorities. The projects are usually implemented by a team of employers and experts who, when doing so, have a wide public in mind (residents of the city, country, international tourists), among whom only a fraction are representatives of the local Jewish community or Jewish tourists.

As much as in Jewish museums outside Europe the success of migrants is presented as if contradicting the story of the Jews in Europe, the latter perceived as the history of failure closed forever by the Holocaust, Jewish museums on the Old Continent have been founded to a degree in opposition to such a vision of history. Their establishment became a response to the growing need of breaking silence surrounding the Shoah, opening of the social debate, and of pondering over the place of Jewish history and culture in today's Europe. These museums' mission is principally to restore the memory of the centuries of the Jewish life in a given town, region, or country, and to demonstrate that despite the Shoah, this history has not ended, but contrariwise, it constitutes 'an open question' for the future.<sup>8</sup> For this reason the majority of them in their exhibitions and relevant communiqués emphasize the idea of the century-long continuity: e.g. the POLIN Museum speaks of the *thousand year history of the Jews on the Polish territory*, the Jewish Museum in Berlin speaks of *2,000 years of the history of the German Jews*; the Jewish Museum in Oslo, of *400 years of the history of Jews in Norway*. When emphasizing this long-lasting presence of Jews, the museums desire to inscribe the Jewish history into the official national narratives. Therefore, many of the new Jewish museums bear names that bestow



1. Reconstruction of the Gwoździec Synagogue in the core exhibition at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw

nationwide proportions upon them: e.g. Jewish Museum of Belgium, Danish Jewish Museum, Museum of the History of Polish Jews; or possibly relating it to the history of a town or a region, e.g. Jewish Museum Berlin or Jewish Museum of Westphalia. Historically, the displays at the those institutions reveal the Jewish history as part of the history of a given place, emphasizing the centuries of coexistence, covering both conflicts and crises, as well as peaceful coexistence and mutual influences. A representative example of the trend can be seen in the narrative of the Core Exhibition at the POLIN Museum. Its main Curator Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett describes the history presented there as *relational and shared* covering the whole range of relations: from the best to the worst; the Exhibition's protagonists are not referred to by her as *Jews from Poland*, but *Jews of Poland*, while the shown Jewish culture, as *from within the Jewish category, and Polish in particular*.<sup>9</sup>

It is noteworthy that all the Jewish museums are created in Europe partially in the context of the Shoah, and have to inevitably relate to the Holocaust. They are, however, something completely different than Holocaust museums and the martyrology ones founded on Holocaust sites, which are genocide museums, and generally not typically Jewish ones. The story of the Shoah is not merely Jewish history; it has actually stigmatized whole communities and nations. Jewish museums in Europe, as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett observes, do commemorate the Holocaust, however in a completely different way: by showing what Jewish life and culture had looked like before the Shoah.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, these museums are in a way founded in opposition to the trauma caused by the Holocaust: they are an attempt

to open up to the future, they are meant to express hope for the possibility of improvement and renewal. For many museums it is of major importance for the history before the Holocaust not to be told as a chain of events directly leading to it, but for it to avoid the martyrology, nostalgic undertones, and to be rendered in all its richness, complexity, as well as multitude of aspects, while for the present time to be shown as renewal and new life. Museums communicate it not only through their exhibitions and programmes, but also through their location or architectural form.

In view of this aspiration to 'open history', in many European Jewish museums a particularly important role is played by the post-WW II and contemporary period.<sup>11</sup> Their exhibitions and programme activity are meant to demonstrate the endurance of Jewish past and its role even today despite the Holocaust. In some cases the entire exhibition narrative is subordinated to this strategy, e.g. in the Jewish Museum Munich the *Voices, Places, Times* Exhibition is set in the present topography of the city (interactive pawns, when placed at a definite point of the city map spread on the floor, activate audiovisual presentations dedicated to the history of the given location). The Jewish Museum in Vienna has titled its new permanent exhibition 'Our City! Jewish Vienna – Then to Now!'. The museums pose questions regarding the lesson learnt from the Holocaust, the meaning of Jewish heritage to contemporary society, as well as being a Jew and Jewishness in contemporary world (the question about the contemporary sense of 'Jewishness' is particularly relevant in Europe where Jewish communities are being built anew on the rubble of the past). For example, the Core Exhibition at the POLIN Museum concludes with the presentation of

several individuals telling the viewers what it is to them being a Jew in today's Poland. It seems that the newer the museum, the more emphasis is put on formulating such questions. The departure point for the permanent exhibition at the Jewish Museum Frankfurt currently being reconstructed is to be found in contemporary problems bothering both Jewish and non-Jewish city residents: *How can exclusion be prevented? How can the family traditions, which are not shared by the majority surrounding us, be preserved?*<sup>2</sup>

The complicated, multifaceted message of European Jewish museums is reflected in the buildings which house them, and in their location. Their premises are most frequently raised on the sites where Jewish history went on for centuries. Wherever possible, they have been housed in old synagogues (e.g. Erfurt, Prague, Budapest, Toledo, Rome, Venice, Amsterdam), or in other buildings that are connected with the Jewish community, e.g. the Frankfurt Museum is located on the site of archaeological remains of the old Judengasse and on the premises of the restored Rothschild Palace; the Museum in Hohenems is housed in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century villa that once belonged to the wealthy family of industrialists, the Heimann-Rosenthals. It is particularly Western Europe, boasting more such historic brick buildings, whose devastation in World War II happened on a much smaller scale than in East-Central Europe, that features such a museum type. To illustrate this point let us mention the museum in the Synagogue in Erfurt, opened in 2009, in the oldest preserved Jewish house of prayer in Central Europe, whose fragments date back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, or the Museum in Speyer which, together with Worms and Mainz, was the cradle of the Ashkenazi Jews' culture; there the Museum has been built around three archaeological exhibitions in the places of the old synagogue, ritual bath, and the cemetery. It sometimes happens that a museum is

placed in a partially destroyed building, which turns it at the same time into a tool of commemorating the past and settling with it. As such an instance let us point to the Jewish Alsatian Museum, housed in the synagogue damaged during WW II by the Nazis, or the Berlin Centrum Judaicum located in the ruins of the New Synagogue in Oranienstrasse damaged during the Crystal Night. The frequent practice while constructing Jewish museums is to add new buildings to old architecture, which allows to emphasize the idea of 'continuity', 'repair', and of connecting the past with the present day.

Moreover, there are obviously also museums housed in edifices raised contemporarily. Some constitute architectural works of the highest rank, standing out with symbolical architecture, establishing a dialogue with history and culture. This 'Jewish architectural context' is to be found in the designs of Daniel Libeskind, mainly in the Jewish Museum Berlin launched in 2001. In the architect's concept, already the very crossing the building is meant to make the visitor personally confront the history and the Museum's message. The entrance to it and the non-display public section of the premises are located in the little Baroque palace of the former Prussian Court from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, reminding of how Jewish history is rooted in Germany's history, and of the era of the Enlightenment, revolutionary for the history of German Jews, namely the period when emancipation and reformatory ideas were born. Adjacent to this building, Libeskind-designed extremely expressive architectural structure houses the permanent exhibition, based on a zigzagging layout resembling shattered Star of David or a thunderbolt, in reality inspired by the topography of Berlin sites related to Jewish-German history. Stunning and intriguing with its metallic anti-structural façade slashed with diagonal elongated skylights, it also stirs similar emotions with so-called voids in its interiors, i.e. empty spaces arousing



2. 'Voices, Places, Times' – permanent exhibition at the Jewish Museum Munich



3. Entrance to the Jewish Museum Berlin



4. Façade fragment of the Jewish Museum Berlin



5. Garden of Exile, Jewish Museum Berlin

anxiety. Juxtaposed with the Baroque palace, the new edifice expresses the tough emotional character of German-Jewish history. As argued by the building's analysts, its form relates to the Holocaust and destruction, while at the same time expressing hope for renewal and repair.<sup>13</sup> Visitors entering the exhibition have to first go underground, as if immersing into the past and confronting it. Three passageways await them there; they symbolize three different destinies of the German Jews: the Holocaust Axis leading to the Holocaust Tower; the Exile Axis leading to the Garden of Exile; and the Continuity Axis leading to the permanent exhibition, thus paradoxically taking the visitor back into history. In order to enter it, one 'ascends' stairs, which can suggest redemption and reconciliation.<sup>14</sup> Joining an old building with a new expressionist structure, and basing the architecture on numerous historical, cultural, and literary references, was also the method Libeskind applied in the Jewish Museum of Denmark in Copenhagen, opened in 2004. The Museum is housed in a building inserted in the edifice mounted inside the old Royal Library building in Copenhagen's centre.

As the strongest emphasis of the permanent exhibition 'Space and Spatiality' is put on the history of saving the Jewish community by Danes in 1943, Libeskind selected as the departure point for his 'dense' symbolical architecture the concept of 'mitzvah', in Jewish tradition meaning 'a good deed' resulting from following God's commandments. The form, structure, and the light alike are to symbolize this human commitment.<sup>15</sup> An equally interesting example of expressive architecture, relating to the place and communicating the message of its Core Exhibition, can be seen in the POLIN Museum designed by Rainer Mahlamäki. Glazed and light-immersed cubic building symbolizing 'life', dialogues with the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes opposite, speaking of the Holocaust, as well as with the post-WW II Muranów housing estate, symbolizing the post-war silence around it. The dynamic architecture of the Museum's interior, emphasized by the monumental curved hall ripping through the whole, together with numerous passageways, bridges, and skylights, expresses the history drama, but also the concept of change, transition, and voyage from the past into the future, from

bondage to freedom; in this case, the architect resorted to the metaphor of Israel's Departure from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea.<sup>16</sup> The huge glazed window closing the back façade, overlooking a park, symbolizes hope and the building's rooting in the life of today's city.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, another widespread practise consists in placing Jewish museums at several locations. They can, for instance, include an old synagogue, a separate building housing a historical exhibition, occasionally a separate section dedicated to the Holocaust, an art gallery, a learning centre, etc. The largest such institution in Europe is to be found in the Jewish Museum in Prague, covering four historical synagogues, a ceremonial hall, and an old vast Jewish cemetery (plus an archive, gallery, library, learning and cultural activities centre). Another example of such an attitude is featured in Amsterdam; the institution's proper name is Jewish Cultural Quarter, made up of the Jewish Historical Museum (housed in 4 buildings of the former synagogue), Children's Museum (with the display showing the religious tradition), majestic Portuguese Synagogue (used for religious services), and the branch of the Holocaust Museum housed in the building where people were gathered before deportation. Additionally, the Ets Haim Library, in operation continuously from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and boasting an enormous collection of Jewish manuscripts and prints, forms part of the Museum. Interestingly, though not all the museums have such a rich 'infrastructure', Jewish ones in Europe, due to their commemorative mission, marking the traces, recapturing the forgotten past, have a tendency of entering city space and their surroundings. A unique form of such an 'opening' can be seen in the project authored by the POLIN Museum, namely the Museum on Wheels, a travelling display which together with its animators and educators travels from town to town throughout Poland, at each destination adjusting the programme accompanying the display to the location's history and specificity.

In the majority of the museums created or redesigned over the last two decades the axis is to be found in a historical narrative exhibition, telling the century-long history of Jews in a given region, emphasizing their belonging to the place and the shared destiny of the communities living alongside. What Jewish museums find extremely useful is the narrative exhibition concept, popular in new museology, in which the script is the story that the museum wishes to tell. Firstly, due to a substantial destruction of the material culture of European Jews such museums are hardly ever able to construct their display around a collection; instead, they willingly reach out for all the additional sources and media: records of spoken history, source quotes, reconstructions, or stage sets based on the references to the period. Secondly, Jewish museums predominantly want to tell stories of history. Obviously, by doing so they present an interpretation of history, thus they as if adopt some kind of a meta-historical perspective.<sup>18</sup> As Moshe Rossman, the historian co-creating the Core Exhibition at the POLIN Museum says, the exhibition at a narrative museum needs to have a meta-story that builds up above the facts, namely a bigger narrative that gives them a certain sense and meaning. At the same time, however, a well-arranged display should provide the public with the possibility to criticize the narrative and to take their own position.<sup>19</sup> As much as they differ in several elements among themselves,

in the historical displays of Jewish museums several shared metahistoric assumptions can be identified: pointing to the relations of Jewish history with a given country, region, or town; presenting history as shared by Jews and other communities living there, in which periods of cooperation and mutual influences interlaced with moments of crisis and fall; emphasising the specificity of Jewish culture developed in a given country. What also matters in the narratives of those museums is the presentation of cultural pluralism and various points of view: they show both the internal differentiation of Judaism, and means of self-defining of Jewish communities, particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as various forms of cooperation and relations between the Jews and their non-Jewish environment. Such phenomena as 'change', 'influences', and 'cross-cultural borderland' are shown as positive, yielding development and progress. In these exhibitions an important role is also played by individual stories, showing complex lives, complex identities, individual choices. Apart from historical displays, many museums also feature exhibitions dedicated to the Jewish traditions and religion: at times shown in a narrative format, at others based on an impressive collection. The displays are conceived to a great degree with the public who are not acquainted with Jewish tradition in mind; they are instructive, introducing into the intricacies of Jewish rituals, while in the case of



6. Entrance and main hall in the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews



7. POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews: view of the park side

(Fot. 1 – M. Starowieyska, MHŻP POLIN; 2 – Jüdisches Museum München; 3-5 – Nobel-Nobielski; 6 – M. Jeżyk, MHŻP POLIN; 7 – W. Kryński, MHŻP POLIN)

precious collections, they present the material wealth and Jewish artistic traditions. Sometimes located in old synagogues or on sites of archaeological remains of the buildings connected with the former Jewish communities (ritual baths, house remains, etc.), they are sometimes enriched with reconstructions and virtual presentations (e.g. the Jewish Museum Vienna boasts its branch called Judenplatz located on the site of uncovered foundations of a mediaeval synagogue, where apart from archaeological remains a computer reconstruction of the synagogue and a virtual trip through the mediaeval Jewish district have been presented). Due to a high degree of destruction of the monuments of Jewish culture, merely a small part of the Jewish museums are created on the grounds of a collection. Mention in this respect has to be made, however, of the Jewish Museum in Prague (a copious collection of synagogue artefacts and domestic utensils, textiles and metal objects, as well as visual art), Museum of Jewish Art and History in Paris (next to religious items, textiles, manuscripts, and archive records, it boasts a major art collection, e.g. works by Chagall, Modigliani, Soutine showing the role of Jews in 20<sup>th</sup>-century art), Jewish Museum Frankfurt (manuscripts and everyday objects), Jewish Museum of Rome (synagogue art), Jewish Museum of Greece in Athens, Jewish Museum Vienna (basing on the collection of the pre-war museum closed down in 1938), Old Synagogue in Erfurt (displaying the so-called Treasure of Erfurt, possibly buried during the 1349 pogrom), and Jewish Museums in Vilnius, London, and in Budapest (the latter three based on the collections of their pre-war counterparts). Contrasting with them, nevertheless, are those new Jewish museums which did not possess any collection at the stage of being founded (e.g. the POLIN Museum): these institutions carry out public programmes of collecting mementoes, and develop their collections through searches and purchases; at the same time, they

collect intangible historical heritage, particularly records of oral history. It is worth remembering that although Jewish museums are not essentially art museums, several of them: in Paris, Amsterdam, Vilnius, that of the Jewish Historical Institute (ŻIH) in Warsaw, or London's Ben Uri Gallery own impressive collections of works by Jewish artists. However, also in those of a much more historical profile art plays an important role: as expression of the material richness of former Jewish culture (synagogue art, Judaica), as expression of identity (works of modern Jewish artists), and finally as today's comment on the topics presented by the museum (contemporary art by both Jewish and non-Jewish artists).

Interestingly, regardless of the location, character of the building, or display format, all the Jewish museums put much emphasis on their current programme activity. Temporary exhibitions and other educational and cultural activities are important for the implementation of the mission of these museums which aspire to be venues of a social dialogue. This has been extremely important over the last years when together with migrations and the transformation of Europe's population as its result, the questions of multiculturalism and inter-religious dialogue have become increasingly more pressing. The new civilizational conflicts that have arisen after the relatively calmer 1990s, have demarcated new frameworks for the activity of Jewish museums, which are more and more going beyond the specifically Jewish experience onto the universal level. With their activity, they want to promote pluralism and multiculturalism, shape an inclusive civic state; they want to give the floor to minorities; they oppose different manifestations of discrimination, exclusion, and hate speech. For example, the Jewish Museum of Belgium in Brussels has recently mounted the Exhibition *Brussels Has a Safe Haven?* (13 Oct. 2017–18 March 2018), presenting various waves of immigrants coming to the city. The Exhibition posed questions as for their reasons

for abandoning their home countries, how they had been welcomed to Brussels, and how they had found their place in today's city.<sup>20</sup> In this context the fact that the London Ben Uri Gallery&Museum have changed the collection strategy, and have for the last several years been collecting not just works by Jewish artists, but also by other ones who have arrived in England as migrants, seems really symbolic.

How can thus the activity and impact of Jewish museums in Europe be summed up briefly? They have been created in response to the urgency of the times: they were the response to the social need of settling down with the past, overcoming silence around the Holocaust, and of restoring the forgotten history. They were also meant to play an active role in the process of 'repair' and 'renewal', learning a lesson from the

past, overcoming silence around the Holocaust, overcoming stereotypes, taming the word 'Jew'. Due to the fact that according to their assumptions they are to 'open history' and reach into the future, their function and mission are dynamic, and alter under new social and political circumstances. Amidst today's world tormented by subsequent crises, these museums promote the idea of civic society, and consolidate the attitude open to dialogue, diversity, multiculturalism. As they handle sensitive and tough issues, they have to master well the structure of their message on every level: display's architecture, scenarios, and arrangement, as well as the accompanying programmes, thanks to which they contribute significantly to setting new standards and demarcating new trends in today's museology and museum learning.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Więcej na temat pierwszych muzeów żydowskich: R. Piątkowska, „Skarby naszej przeszłości”. *Muzea żydowskie w Polsce*, M. Adamczyk-Garbowska, A. Markowski, A. Trzcziński, M. Wodziński (red.), „Studia Judaica” 2013, t. 16, nr 2(32), s. 3-45; na temat początków kolekcji, wystaw i muzeów żydowskich oraz ich społecznego kontekstu zob. R. Cohen, *Jewish Icons. Arts and Society in Modern Europe*, University of California Press, Oakland 1998.
- <sup>2</sup> Część zbiorów Żydowskiego Instytutu Naukowego JIWO została przewieziona do Nowego Jorku. Zbiory Muzeum Żydowskiego w Pradze ocalały na miejscu, ponieważ okupacyjne władze niemieckie utworzyły w jego miejscu w 1942 r. Centralne Muzeum Żydowskie, mające być w przyszłości egzotycznym muzeum wymarłej rasy.
- <sup>3</sup> Muzea w Pradze i Budapeszcie zostały znacjonalizowane, ich działalność była ograniczona, bez możliwości prowadzenia badań. W Paryżu w 1948 r. powstało małe muzeum żydowskie mające upamiętnić żydowskich artystów tworzących tu przed wojną. W 1948 r. w ramach utworzonego w Warszawie Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego zostało powołane muzeum, które zainicjowało swą działalność m.in. wystawą pt. „Działalność żydowskich artystów plastyków – męczenników okupacji niemieckiej w latach 1939-1945”, zob. M. Sieramska, *Muzeum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego – zbiory i działalność*, w: *Żydowski Instytut Historyczny. 50 lat działalności*, Warszawa 1996.
- <sup>4</sup> Europejskie muzea żydowskie mają od 1989 r. wspólną platformę – Association of European Jewish Museums, służącą przede wszystkim wymianie doświadczeń i współpracy między nimi, <http://www.aejm.org>
- <sup>5</sup> Na płaszczyźnie metodologicznej wyrazem tych przemian była książka *The New Museology*, P. Vergo (ed.), Reaktion Books, London 1989. Jej redaktor, Peter Vergo (jak i inni zaproszeni przez niego autorzy esejów) pisał w niej o potrzebie zmiany podejścia do muzeów i przeniesieniu uwagi z aspektów metodycznych związanych z funkcjonowaniem muzeów na aspekty związane z celami i zadaniami muzeów (P. Vergo, *Introduction, ibidem*, s. 3). W swoim esejie publikowanym w tym tomie (*Reticent object, ibidem*, s. 41-59) wezwał on muzealników do świadomego definiowania i analizowania kontekstów i założeń wystaw, oraz do świadomego poszukiwania i opanowywania środków wystawienniczych, za pomocą których te założenia mogą zostać osiągnięte.
- <sup>6</sup> P. Kowal, *Spoleczny, cywilizacyjny i polityczny kontekst polskiego boomu muzealnego*, w: *Muzeum i zmiana. Losy muzeów narracyjnych*, K. Wolska-Pabian, P. Kowal (red.), Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2019, s. 32.
- <sup>7</sup> B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Why Jewish Museums? An International Perspective*, M. Adamczyk-Garbowska, A. Markowski, A. Trzcziński, M. Wodziński (red.), „Studia Judaica” ..., s. 77-78, 81.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, s. 84.
- <sup>9</sup> B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Jak powstawała wystawa*, w: *Polin. 1000 lat historii Żydów polskich, katalog wystawy stałej Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich*, B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, A. Polonsky (red.), Warszawa 2014, s. 32.
- <sup>10</sup> B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Why Jewish museums?...*, s. 85-86 – B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett zaznacza, że jedynymi muzeami, w których Zagłada jest jednocześnie historią narodową są Muzeum Jad Vashem w Jerozolimie i Muzeum Holokaustu w Waszyngtonie.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, s. 84.
- <sup>12</sup> Informacje o nowej wystawie, której otwarcie planowane jest na koniec 2019 r., znajdują się na stronie internetowej Muzeum Żydowskiego we Frankfurcie, <https://www.juedischesmuseum.de/en/visit/detail/new-permanent-exhibition-in-the-rothschild-palais-1/>
- <sup>13</sup> A. Kamczycki, *Muzeum Libeskinda w Berlinie. Żydowski kontekst architektury*, Poznań 2015.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, s. 83-91.
- <sup>15</sup> Opis i analiza architektury budynku Muzeum Żydowskiego w Kopenhadze znajduje się na stronie internetowej muzeum, <https://jewmus.dk/en/the-danish-jewish-museum/>
- <sup>16</sup> Zob. też wywiad z Rainerem Mahlamäkim w filmie towarzyszącym wystawie „Jak zrobić muzeum”, Muzeum POLIN, 2014, dostępny na stronie internetowej, <https://www.polin.pl/wydarzenie/jak-zrobic-muzeum>
- <sup>17</sup> Więcej wypowiedzi architekta, muzealników i krytyków na temat architektury Muzeum POLIN: „Architektura” 2013, nr 03/09, „Arch” (Magazyn Architektoniczny SARP) 2013, nr 3(17), „Ark” (Finnish Architecture Review) 2014, no 4. Tekst Marcina Ferencza z „Architektury” 2013, nr 03/09 dostępny jest również na stronie NIMOZ-u, <https://architektura.nimoz.pl/2013/03/09/konstrukcja-muzeum-historii-zydow-polskich/>
- <sup>18</sup> Wg *Oxford Dictionary* metahistoria to *rozpoznanie zasad rządzących historycznymi wydarzeniami; badanie filozofii historii i historiografii, w szczególności – studiowanie struktury narracji historycznej (org. Enquiry into the principles governing historical events; the study of the philosophy of history, or of historiography; specifically the study of the structure of historical narrative)*.
- <sup>19</sup> M. Rossman, *Zdecydowanie żydowskie, wyrażnie polskie – Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich a nowa polsko-żydowska metahistoria*, M. Adamczyk-Garbowska, A. Markowski, A. Trzcziński, M. Wodziński (red.) „Studia Judaica” ... s. 50-51.
- <sup>20</sup> Informacja o wystawie na stronie internetowej muzeum, <http://www.mjb-jmb.org/expositions/expositions-passees/>



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