

Recent challenges of Holocaust musealisation. Museums and memorial sites as spaces for Holocaust remembrance.

**International conference – Holocaust Memorial Centre,
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Abstracts

1) Blatman, Daniel (Warsaw Ghetto Museum): *The Challenge of an Integrative Holocaust Museum. Insights from the Warsaw Ghetto Museum's Permanent Exhibition*

CV: Max and Rita Haber Professor (emeritus) in Contemporary Jewry and Holocaust Studies at the department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He is currently the chief historian of the under-construction Warsaw Ghetto Museum in Warsaw.

Abstract: Holocaust commemoration has evolved significantly since the end of World War II, with a proliferation of museums and exhibitions across Europe, the USA, and Australia. However, these memorialisations have predominantly centred on the Jewish experience, often overlooking the broader context of the tragedy. The Warsaw Ghetto Museum (WGM) introduces a new dimension to Holocaust musealisation by adopting an integrative approach that contextualises the Jewish tragedy within the wider genocidal landscape of Nazi-occupied Poland. The presentation posits that nearly 80 years post-war, it is time to reassess the narrative through an inclusive lens without equating disparate experiences.

The WGM's location and the historical significance of its edifice provide a unique vantage point for this integrative narration. By situating the Jewish ordeal within the spatial dynamics of the city, the WGM's permanent exhibition invites a recontextualised understanding of the Holocaust, reaffirming Poland's position as the nexus of the Nazi genocidal campaign. The museum's permanent exhibition underscores the need for a nuanced balance between individual and collective memories in Holocaust musealisation, paving the way for a more comprehensive historical discourse.

2) Benedik, Stefan (Head of the department for Public History at the House of Austrian History): *The Struggle for Victims' Dignity: How Holocaust Museums Establish Standards for Visual Representation and Their Reach.*

CV: Head of the department for Public History (Curating, Collecting, Conserving) at the House of Austrian History. He has been curating material and digital exhibitions at the museum since its opening in 2018.

He studied history and cultural anthropology in Graz and Prague. He has been involved in university research and teaching in Graz, Toronto, and Budapest. Additionally, he held various scholarships and awards. In 2016, he led the organizing team for the Austrian Conference on Contemporary History. His research focuses on the history of contemporary Central Europe, racism as well as visual studies.

Abstract: This contribution analyses recent trends in the use of violent imagery in online exhibitions on Nazi mass atrocities. It summarises an analysis of 87 web exhibitions by the three most influential museums on the Holocaust, revealing that these museums avoid displaying graphic images of violence. However, an analysis of the linguistic imagery produced by these exhibitions uncovers apparent dissonances. Restoring the dignity of victims and giving them a voice is a central feature

of all examples. However, online exhibitions on the Holocaust often rely on gender stereotypes and narratives of extreme violence. This contribution examines the impact of gendered concepts of power and agency and argues that they limit curators' ability to explain and analyse the pretext and events of the Holocaust.

3) Boukara, Philippe (Coordinator of Adult Education. Mémorial de la Shoah, Paris): ***What memorial for Drancy? Steps in the memorialisation of the site of a former internment camp near Paris***

CV: Historian, specialist of Contemporary French Jewry, author of numerous contributions in books, journals and conferences, he is teaching in the Collège des Bernardins and has taught in Sciences Po Paris and Nancy II University.

Abstract: The internment camp of Drancy, near Paris, has been the main transit point for the deportation of Jews from France to the Nazi death camps in the East. As soon as WWII was terminated, an important activity of memorialisation has taken place in its site: memorial days, historical exhibitions, publications, monuments, creation of a museum. These activities have involved many partners: families of the interned, associations of deportees, Resistance fighters and veterans, municipal and governmental authorities, academic and educational actors... This presentation will attempt to provide a comprehensive picture and an evaluation of these developments along the last 80 years.

4) Csósz, László (Historian and Chief Archivist at the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives, Budapest): ***Mapping the Genocide of the Roma in Hungary***

CV: Historian and chief archivist, he published widely on Jewish social history and the Holocaust.

Abstract: Mapping the Genocide of the Roma in Hungary is a transnational archival and educational project launched by the National Archives of Hungary in 2020. The project is dedicated to safeguarding the historical record of the persecution of the Roma in Hungary during World War II. The objectives include the development of a multimedia online portal featuring maps and data visualizations, a digital catalogue of archival records, teaching modules, databases, as well as additional resources and information on the topic.

The project has identified, digitised, and made accessible unexplored archival records in state archives of Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, and Ukraine. The portal also incorporates integrated databases of victims, photographs and other images, glossaries, and annotated bibliographies. Key features include thematic maps visualising the sites of wartime persecution of the Roma, including transit and labour camps, killing sites, as well as present-day memorials and other sites of memory. Furthermore, the contributors developed and integrated digital teaching modules designed mostly for secondary and higher education.

In addition to summarising the results of the project, the presentation discusses the potential how similar projects can contribute to the deeper integration of Roma perspectives in national historical narratives, public discourse, and educational practices in Central Europe.

5) Fulău, Izabela (Curator / Project manager. The "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania): ***Crafting a museum: evolution and memorialistic valorisation in a contemporary view***

CV: Bachelor of Museology and History, University of Bucharest, Romania, Certificate in Museology. Experienced museum curator with more than 15 years of experience in managing exhibitions and collections. Skilled in artefact and artwork preservation and cataloguing. Since 2021, I have been working as a specialist in museology at the "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania, Museum Compartment. Since 2023, I have been coordinating the project of the National Museum of the History of Romanian Jewry and the Holocaust.

Abstract: This communication presents a museum approach with a contemporary vision and point of view.

In September 2016, by Government Decision, the „Elie Wiesel” National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania was tasked with the organization, coordination, and creation of the National Museum of the History of the Romanian Jewry and the Holocaust. The Museum will present and promote the history, culture, and traditions of the Jewish communities in Romania and will inform the local and international audiences of this national minority’s contributions to the evolution and development of Romanian society over time. Moreover, the activity of the future institution will include a major educational component focused on Holocaust remembrance and the promotion of democratic values such as non-discrimination, and intercultural dialogue.

Usually, a museum is the reflection of its collections, but sometimes, in some particular cases, the permanent (or temporary) exhibition may not be only this. In our case, we discuss about a museum that is translating from a classic (history) museum to a modern one, adapted to the requirements of contemporaneity.

6) Hlavinka, Ján (Director of the Holocaust Documentation Centre and Senior Researcher at the Institute of History, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava) - Tomáš Goga: ***A Spatial Analysis of the Holocaust-Related Data: What Can We Analyse, See and Present?***

CV: Historian of the Holocaust working in Slovakia, and author of several monographs and papers on the Holocaust in Slovakia in 1938–1945. He is also member of the Slovak delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).

Abstract: The presentation will focus on the spatial analysis of the Holocaust-related data concerning various historical problems within the Holocaust in Slovakia (1939–1945). It will aim to present how the spatial data related to the Holocaust can be analysed using a Geographic Information System (a software used to acquire, analyse, visualize, and manage data with spatial or map representation), what results can be achieved by such analysis and how these results can be presented. The main datasets covered in the presentation are related to the so-called Aryanisation of Jewish enterprise property in Slovakia (1940–1945) the so-called First wave of deportations of Jews from Slovakia (March 1942 – October 1942). The presentation will also provide some insight into the possibilities of visualisation of such data.

7) Lénárt, András (Historian and sociologist, Budapest Holocaust Memorial Centre): ***Exhibiting digital documents in museums. The case of „Ephemeral Memory” exhibition, 2023.***

CV: Historian and sociologist, he has been working at the Budapest Holocaust Memorial Centre since 2019. His research focuses on various aspects of the Holocaust in Hungary, and its memorialisation. For example, most recently he published two book chapters, one appeared in a volume entitled “Where do we go from here? Jewish families in Hungary after WWII”, while the other is part of the edited volume called “A World-changing Story. A Handbook on the 1956 Hungarian Refugee Crisis”. He is a member of the Holocaust Photography Expert Group of EHRI. He was the co-founder of such well-known Holocaust information websites as the <http://budapest100.hu/en/>, or the <http://www.yellowstarhouses.org/>. As an editor, he also regularly contributes to the websites holokaustfoto.hu and jphotoarchive.org.

Abstract: Museums usually operate on the basis of collections, large or small, stored in warehouses. However, in the virtual digital space, there is a growing number of serious research-based collections, which also benefit from community contributions and do not necessarily have original (analogue) documents. The jphotoarchive.org online database is a project that started a few years ago and presents the photographic memories of the Hungarian Jewry, which can be found in many places, on one platform. In 2023, we wanted to bring an exhibition based on digital copies of the photos into the museum space. A difficult problem to overcome was what and how to show the dig-

itally collected material in a real exhibition space. Several curators turned us down until two young researchers and educators, both graduates of art academies, took on the task.

The photographs of the archive were presented unconventionally with the use of fictional storytelling and artificial intelligence-based image-generating technology, to explore how our relationship to memory is being transformed by the growing possibilities of photo manipulation, artificial intelligence, and the rise of fake news. What will happen to memory (and history in a broader sense) if it is shaped by AI? Can fiction – whether formed by the artist or by artificial intelligence – fill the missing gaps of untold stories, or will it just create confusion?

Reflecting on the tradition of storytelling, which is a key element in Judaism, the exhibition aims to use current technologies to bring the archival images to life, thus moving them out of their static state; to bring the partially or completely lost stories of the photographs to life with fictional stories.

8) Margalit, Liat (Ghetto Fighters House Museum): Museological dilemmas behind *“Among the Trees – the Holocaust of the Soviet Union 1941–1945”*. A new permanent exhibition at the Ghetto Fighters House Museum

CV: Chief curator at the Ghetto Fighters House Museum, specializing in historical displays. During many years of experience in the field of museums I curated permanent and temporary exhibitions dealing with a variety of historical and sociological topics. Among recent projects: Ben-Gurion Archive Exhibition Hall at Ben-Gurion Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism, The Ceasaria Harbour visitor center – Permanent Exhibition: “London in Jerusalem” – Temporary exhibition at the Tower of David Museum of the History of Jerusalem, “Finger on the Pulse” – the Story of the Rambam Hospital, 1918–2018, Haifa City Museum etc.

Abstract: The Ghetto Fighters Museum, like many of the founding Holocaust museums, needs constant updating and refreshing of its permanent exhibitions. Even though its displays were outstanding when opening and large parts are still proven relevant, the overall story which is presented by the museum always needs a fresh look and necessary adaptations to contemporary audiences. The museum, which was founded by Holocaust survivors in 1949 and was in fact the first Holocaust Museum in the world, developed over the years according to ad-hoc circumstances – not always having the privilege of an overall curatorial perspective and content decisions accordingly.

For this reason, approaching an exhibition about the Holocaust in the former Soviet Union for the Ghetto Fighters Museum, was a great challenge. On the one hand, the Museum team felt there is no proper and respectful display for this important subject. Obviously, it is a wide-ranging topic that could easily justify several museums. On the other hand, the intention was to coordinate the new exhibition in the existing permanent display while taking into account the vision of the founders which the Museum carefully continues to fulfil. Moreover, a given space was allocated for the new exhibition, dictating limitations and characterizations.

How did we therefore approach the issue from a curatorial point of view? How did we define the starting point for the story and its ending in a way that fits the museum context? What are the distinct universal topics that had to be included in it, yet how do we create a display that is unique and connected to the existing narrative of GFH Museum?

And finally, how should the contents relate to the Museum’s main target audience – youngsters? How are we relevant?

A new permanent exhibition on the Holocaust of the Soviet Union at the Ghetto Fighters Museum is an interesting case study for these Museological issues.

9) Matta, Alessandro (Direttore del Associazione Memoriale Sardo della Shoah. Ricercatore Storico): *The example of the Association for the Memorial Museum of Cagliari, an example of international local history*

CV: Engaged in the historical study of the Holocaust topic for over twenty years, graduated from the

specialization course in Holocaust Teaching at the University of Florence and in other training courses and seminars international conferences on the teaching and history of the Holocaust throughout the world. Founder of the Sardinian Shoah Memorial Association, he is a member of the Reference and Information group of the EHRI (European Holocaust Research Infrastructure) since 2021 and often collaborates with various international bodies on the Holocaust in seminars, international congresses and historical exhibitions (he was responsible for the collection of films of the exhibition "Nazi Hell, the death camps of Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka" of the Shoah Museum Foundation in Rome). In addition to the reconstruction of the destinies of the small Jewish presence in Sardinia, he deals with Cinema and the Holocaust, a topic on which he has another book in the pipeline, and he founded a film library of Jewish history in Cagliari which now has over 14,000 titles.

Abstract: Sardinia, Italy. A region that has no longer had an organized Jewish community since 1492 due to the expulsion of all Jews from Spain, which deprived Cagliari and Alghero in particular of two long-standing Jewish communities, forcing those who chose to remain to convert. In the 19th century, a small presence began to arise again, but what happened to those few families from 1938 to 1945? How did the non-Jewish population and the authorities react to the regime's anti-Semitic measures? And what role, if any, did the island's Jews have in the post-war period and in the reconstruction? And what is the connection with the Holocaust, thinking about the important case that Sardinia not occupied by the Nazis and free after 8th September 1943?

The lecture will answer to these questions that are the basis of the work of the Association for the constitution of a Shoah Memorial Museum in Sardinia, in an historical research that is conducting, from 2011, at incredible discoverers, and to the connection of Sardinia with Holocaust history in all over the Europe and North Africa (also with the Holocaust in Hungary!) in a clearly example about what a local history can be a very international history connected with all over the Holocaust places and events.

10) Schram, Laurence (Kazerne Dossin): *Kazerne Dossin: a museography based on people*

CV: Researcher at Kazerne Dossin and scientific collaborator at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB). Specialized in the history of the Holocaust in Belgium and northern France, she took part in the creation of the Jewish Museum of Deportation and Resistance (1995), the Belgian Exhibition in Auschwitz (2006) and in the creation of Kazerne Dossin Museum (2012) and Memorial (2020).

Abstract: Between 4 August 1942 and 31 July 1944, 25,000 Jewish and 350 Roma, men, women and children, were deported from the SS-Sammellager für Juden with 28 transports to Auschwitz-Birkenau. 95% of those deportees did not survive.

The Dossin barracks played a fundamental role in the "Final Solution to the Jewish question" in Belgium and North of France.

Our concept focuses on the persecutions and racial deportations of Belgium.

The Holocaust remains the central subject of our exhibition, designed on three floors relating to three themes (Mass, Anxiety, Death). Throughout our exhibition and our memorial, the emphasis is on personal stories, illustrated by archive documents. Our biggest challenge was to visualize the huge number of deportees for our public, to restore their humanity and to show that these deportees, Jews or Roma, were mostly human beings.

11) Silvennoinen, Oula (Associate professor of European History in the University of Helsinki, Finland): *Preserving a Vanishing Past – A Historian's Look into Museums and Holocaust Remembrance*

CV: Associate professor of European History in the University of Helsinki, Finland. His research interests have included the history of policing and police institutions, history of the Holocaust and antisemitism in Northern Europe, and the history of both historical and modern far right. Since the publication of his 2008 doctoral dissertation "Geheime Waffenbrüderschaft: die sicherheitspolizeiliche Zusammenarbeit zwischen Finnland und Deutschland, 1933–1944" (Darmstadt: WBG, 2010)

several of his works have been translated into other languages.

Abstract: Several years ago, I took a group of students on an excursion to see some key locations connected to the Holocaust in Estonia. One of the places we visited was what remains of the Klooga concentration camp. There isn't much to see. The area where the camp once was situated is nowadays overgrown with forest. One of my students was visibly annoyed, as she had expected to see a concentration camp, in the style of Auschwitz, with brick-laden barracks and barbed-wire fences. The silent forest nevertheless was telling a message, of another type than the one told by the hugely influential Auschwitz memorial. This presentation is a look of a professional historian of the Holocaust into the fragile nature of the past. My aim is to speak of the difficulties every historian, archivist, museum professional and educator working with Holocaust remembrance faces every day – difficulties posed by the inexorable passage of time, and the inevitable erasure of the traces of what happened, by it. Thus, museums aiming at Holocaust remembrance, preservation and education need to keep reinventing themselves to stay relevant for new generations of visitors.

12) Tanja Tuleković (Museum Advisor and Director. Public Institution "Donja Gradina Memorial Area". Republic of Srpska, Bosnia-Herzegovina): *Musealisation of Scientific Research in the "Memorial area of Donja Gradina", Republic of Srpska*

CV: Employed in the Public Institution "Donja Gradina Memorial Area" (2007–). She earned the title of museum advisor based on merit in her professional work (The Commission of Museums of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo, 2023).

She is studying the history of the Independent State of Croatia, the formation of the Jasenovac Concentration Camp and its largest execution site Donja Gradina, collecting verbal testimonies of surviving witnesses, lectures on this topic.

She is editor-in-chief of the professional-scientific magazine Topola, published by the Public Institution "Donja Gradina Memorial Area". Author of two books, and editor of three books. She published 21 scientific papers, organized 9 exhibitions and 7 memorial academies.

Participant of The Holocaust education seminar in Belgrade, Banja Luka and Donja Gradina (2010–2016) and in Jerusalem in 2014.

Abstract: The history of the Independent State of Croatia with an emphasis on the legal provisions that aimed to create an ethnically pure state, i.e. the extermination of Serbs, Jews and Roma, the establishment of the Jasenovac concentration camp, the atrocities committed there and its largest execution ground, Donja Gradina, have been scientifically researched and documented by our exhibitions.

We approach each thematic unit in an interdisciplinary manner, combine visual and textual sources, compare official reports with eyewitness reports, and by analyzing them, the visitor gets a rounded historiographical view. The connection of scientific research and technological innovations (holographic projection, interactive slider, etc.) follows the needs of the modern visitor, as well as the placement of exhibitions on our web platforms. The exhibition catalog contains scientific apparatus so that every statement and factual information is verifiable.

(In the continuation of the lecture, there will be a presentation of two exhibitions: 1. "Jasenovac concentration camp 1941–1945", authors Tanja Tuleković, museum advisor and Dejan Motl, senior curator, 2020; 2. "About some unrecorded victims of the Holocaust from the area of NDH", author Dr. Miloš M. Damjanović, 2024).

13) Tauber, Elijas (Eli): (Director, Jewish Archive, Sarajevo/Bosnia): *Why should the Holocaust Museum be in Sarajevo?*

CV: PhD in 2013 (How it was conducted Holocaust in Bosnia and Herzegovina). Charge on behalf of the UNDP as coordinator and advisor of religious communities in the implementation of transitional justice in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Author of more than 30 works from the history of the

Jews of Bosnia and Herzegovina, such: Illustrated Lexicon of Judaism, history, religion and customs (2007), When the Neighbors were Human Beings (2008), The Jewish press in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2011), Jewish surnames in the Bosnians archives documents (2013), Holocaust in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2014), Judeospanish language in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2015), The Sarajevo Purim (How Muslims saved Sarajevo Jews in 1819) (2019). Organised expositions: "Remembering the Holocaust", „Righteous of the Jewish people from Bosnia and Herzegovina". Founder of the NGO „Haggadah" for preserving Jewish culture and tradition.

Abstract: The need to establish a Holocaust Museum in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been recognized at the state, cantonal and local levels, so this Lecture defines the basic starting points for the establishment and determination of the activities of the museum, then the institutional framework for financing and the location-spatial assumptions in order to prepare the project documentation before and the final architectural solution defined all relevant modalities and factors for the establishment of the Museum.

As a living memorial to the victims of the Holocaust, the Holocaust Museum teaches the history and lessons of the Holocaust and encourages leaders and citizens to oppose hatred, prevent genocide, promote human dignity and strengthen democratic values. Today we face an alarming rise in anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial – even in those countries where the Holocaust took place – as well as genocide and threats of genocide in other parts of the world. This is happening just as we approach the time when Holocaust survivors and other eyewitnesses will no longer be alive. Most people, especially young people, don't know the basics of how monstrous human minds can be at times.

The Holocaust Museum, with its interactive contents, would certainly contribute to the critical thinking of young people, because the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina has its limitations in this regard. Protection and presentation of heritage and heritage as well as overall cultural history is an important segment functioning of local government in modern society.

Sarajevo is a cosmopolitan, multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-confessional city with almost half a millennium of tradition of coexistence Jews, together and equally with all other nations, built and incorporated themselves in Sarajevo. The most famous Haggadah – the Sarajevo Haggadah – is preserved in Sarajevo.

Sarajevo must be a city that will have a Holocaust Museum, a museum that, along with the memory of the victims of the Holocaust, will also cherish the memory of all the righteous among the peoples, of all the inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina who during the Second World War and the Nazi occupation showed courage and protected Jews. This is why the Holocaust Museum is needed in Sarajevo, good place for living with no Antisemitism.

14) Tereschchenko, Yulija (Executive Director of the Riga Ghetto and Latvian Holocaust Museum): *Rethinking Holocaust Museum. Presentation of the Riga Ghetto Museum Modernization Project.*

CV: As executive director since 2017, she actively worked for the Museum modernization project, organized conferences, exhibition and books publishing, participated in researching and curating.

Abstract: The Riga Ghetto Museum was established 13 years ago as an initiative of the NGO Shamir Association. The building was only partially heated, and coupled with constrained financial and informational resources, these challenges have necessitated a reliance on other forms of display. As a result, the museum has primarily utilized artworks and informational boards to convey the history of Latvian Jewry and the Holocaust in Latvia.

For the Museum's long-term survival, modernisation is clearly a necessity. This presents an unparalleled opportunity to rethink existing practices in commemoration and history representation, aiming to create a Holocaust Museum that resonates with the new generation.

15) Toronyi, Zsuzsanna (Director, Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives, Budapest): *The Hungarian Jewish Museum as Memory Museum*

CV: Archivist and Museum expert specialized on Judaica. Since 2015 she is the Director of the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives, where she has been working since 1994. She is an associate professor at the Cultural History department of the Rabbinical Seminary – University of Jewish Studies, Budapest, and lectures on Jewish material culture at the Jewish Studies Department of the ELTE University, Budapest as well. She is the President of the Ignaz Goldziher Scientific Research Foundation and member of the Board of Trustees of the Secular Jewish School Foundation (Lauder Yavne), and of the Jewish Digital Cultural Recovery Project Stiftung. She has curated several exhibitions, and has published and lectured about Jewish history, the collections and history of the Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives.

Abstract: Since its foundation in 1909, the collection of the Budapest Jewish Museum has grown mainly through donations from individuals, families and communities. In the process, a systematic collection of objects and documents related to the Holocaust has been built up, starting with the first anti-Jewish decrees. These also gave the museum a new role: to preserve the names and memories of the Jewish communities that perished. Subsequently, these objects radically changed the museum, which was originally intended to preserve the material culture of the Jewish people: it became a „memory-museum”, where the history of the Holocaust is a permanent and significant layer. In my presentation I will discuss the importance of provenance research and the role of Holocaust artifacts in Jewish museums, and I will try to answer the question of the role of the Jewish museum and its possibilities for sharing its tasks with museums specifically dealing with the Holocaust.