Connecting (to) Histories: Engaging with the Urban Pasts and Displaying Jewish Heritage

8th Summer School
July 10 – August 4, 2017

DR. KAROLINA SZYMANIAK

SYLLABUS

"JEWS ON DISPLAY. EXHIBITING JEWISH HISTORY AND CULTURE IN THE EAST CENTRAL EUROPEAN CONTEXT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY"

LVIV 2017
Jews on Display. Exhibiting Jewish History and Culture in the East Central European Context at the beginning of the 21st century

The course explores the ways in which Jewish history and culture are narrated and visualized in the new museum and exhibitions projects in post-communist East Central Europe, and how those museums as public institutions, and curatorial interventions contribute to establishing, (re)shaping, countering or petrifying respective national narratives, the understanding of cultural difference and prejudice. We will discuss the politics of display, and social agency of museums, possible role of museums as sites of cultural therapy and as sites of denial. We will look at the ways contemporary East Central European representations of Jewish culture are rooted in the past, asking questions about practices of othering, Jewish historical subjectivity and agency. We will discuss different ways how minority histories are included into majority context. Finally, we will ask questions how debates about complicity of East Central European societies in the Holocaust influence the way history is narrated in the new museums.

While the point of departure for discussion will be projects and debates originating in Poland, such as the POLIN Museum, the Shtetl Museum in Chmielnik, the Warsaw Uprising Museum, the Warsaw Ethnographic Museum, and the Ulma Museum of Poles Saving Jews in the WW2, as well as Erica Lehrer’s exhibition Lucky Jews, other major projects in the region, such as museums in Prague, Budapest, or Vilnius will form a context for our reflection. Participants are also encouraged to present projects originating in their respective countries/cities.

Dr. Karolina Szymaniak – Assistant Professor at the Department of Jewish Studies of University of Wroclaw, head of the Yiddish Culture Unit of the Jewish Historical Institute (currently on sabbatical), academic advisor to the Center of Yiddish Culture in Warsaw. Former editor-in-chief of “Cwiszn” – Jewish arts and literary quarterly. She was a consultant for the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, and for the Łódź Art Museum, where she is currently co-curating an exhibition. She was also part of the team working on an initial conception of the new permanent exhibition at the JHI. She has taught different courses and given invited lectures in Poland, France, Sweden, Australia, Israel, Lithuania, Ukraine and the United States.
1. The Ethnographic Jew. *Ostjuden,* the museum effect and ambi/polivalences of representation

Case study: The Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw; Moishe Vorobeichic, *Ein Ghetto im Osten*; Erica Lehrer, *Lucky Jews*


2. The Shtetl Nostalgia? – cultural construct and the problem of Jewish spaces on display

Focus-projects: Świętokrzyski Shtetl (Chmielnik, Poland); Town on the Trail of Borderland Cultures (Biłograj, Poland); Lost Shtetl: Memorial Project (Seduva, Lithuania),
Context projects: The Jewish Shtetl in Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center (Moscow, Russia), Shtetl Gallery in POLIN Museum (Warsaw, Poland)


Readings:


4. Beyond representation? Performance & video art, difficult Polish Jewish past, and perils of deconstructions

Case study: Rafał Betlejewski, I miss you Jew; Yael Bartana, The Jewish Renaissance Movement & the Polish Pavillon for the 2011 Venice Biennale; Patrycja Dołowy, Views (Widoczki)/ Memory of the City/ Memory of the Body.

Websites: widoczki.patrycjadolowy.pl

Erica Lehrer, Magdalena Waligórska, ‘Cur(at)ing History: New Genre Art Interventions and the Polish-Jewish Past’, East European Politics, Societies, and Cultures vol. 27 no. 3, August 2013.

5. Ex/inclusion/absorption. Jewish history & culture and contemporary politics of history and memory

Focus-projects: Museum of the Warsaw Uprising (Warsaw, Poland), the Ulma Museum of Poles Saving Jews in the WW2 (Markowa, Poland), The Cut (POLIN Museum Residence Project);

