



In order to enable the *Research Unit* to be financially independent of state subsidies in the future, a *Society of Friends of the Bet Tfila – Research Unit for Jewish Architecture in Europe*, was established in 2003 to support these endeavours. One objective of the *Society* is to establish a non-profit foundation, the fruits of which will be used exclusively to support the work of the *Research Unit*.

It is expected that after an initial phase of four to six years, the *Research Unit* will be fully operational.



Leipzig/Germany, cemetery chapel built in 1928, destroyed in 1938: reconstruction and computer animation, exterior, interior



BET TFILA  
בית תפילה

**Bet Tfila**  
**Research Unit**  
**for Jewish**  
**Architecture in Europe**

**Forschungsstelle für jüdische**  
**Architektur in Europa**

An initiative of the Center for Jewish Art, Hebrew University of Jerusalem and of the Fachgebiet Baugeschichte, Technische Universität Braunschweig

## Objectives

The purpose of the *Bet Tfila — Research Unit for Jewish Architecture in Europe* is to document and research the sacred and secular architecture of Jewish communities in Europe with reference to its development within the cultural, historical and typological context. The *Research Unit* acts as an interdisciplinary German-Israeli entity, disseminating the results in scholarly and popular publications in order to raise the awareness



Wörlitz/Germany, documentation of the synagogue built in 1789

of the general public for the need to preserve the endangered visual culture of the Jewish people. Through this effort, a young generation of scholars will be introduced to this subject, in an effort to integrate it into the curriculum of European universities.

Since 1994, the Center for Jewish Art at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Department of Architectural History at the Technical University of Braunschweig (Brunswick) have documented and researched the architecture of extant former synagogues, ritual baths and cemetery chapels in Germany, and studied the archival material of buildings destroyed since 1938, thus making them accessible for critical comparative research.



Torah Crown, Ukraine, end of 19th century



Berezhany/Ukraine, synagogue built in 1718, before 1994



Berezhany/Ukraine, synagogue, after 1994

Endangered Jewish buildings and their imminent loss — especially in Europe, but also in North Africa, the Middle East and beyond — make the systematic research of Jewish visual culture an urgent task. Previous research in Germany indicates that even nowadays, former Jewish ritual buildings, which have lost their original function, are still being disfigured by alterations and demolished.

To save the Jewish visual heritage from oblivion and destruction, the Center for Jewish Art at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem set up the *Jerusalem Index of Jewish Art* over 20 years ago. This computerised database of Jewish visual culture comprises all periods and regions worldwide. Up to now, over 200,000 objects have been systematically measured, described and photographed in thirty-seven countries. The Index deals with all objects of Jewish art and is divided into five sections: Ancient Jewish Art, Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts, Ritual Objects and Synagogue Furnishings, Modern Jewish Art, and Architecture of Jewish Buildings. Its objective is to present the visual legacy of the Jewish culture as a multifaceted entity within the context in which it developed, thus gaining in-sight into the history and culture of Jewish communities.

In order to provide a permanent basis for the ongoing documentation and research of Jewish architecture in Europe, the Center for Jewish Art and the Department of Architectural History are establishing a joint research body entitled: *Bet Tfila – Research Unit for Jewish Architecture in Europe*.

Concurrent with the research of ritual buildings and Jewish community facilities, the *Research Unit* may also study the history and typology of the Temple, the Church and the Mosque, which are expressed in its Hebrew name, *Bet Tfila* — a house of prayer.



Documentation of ritual objects in Prague

## Activity

The main activities of the *Bet Tfila – Research Unit for Jewish Architecture in Europe* are as follows:

- Organisation and scholarly supervision of research projects, for which funds are to be raised through research-promoting institutions.
- Expanding the inventory of Jewish ritual buildings in Europe, which includes documentary recordings of construction, current and historical photos, descriptions and archival material. This will be added to the growing inventory of buildings already documented by the Center for Jewish Art.

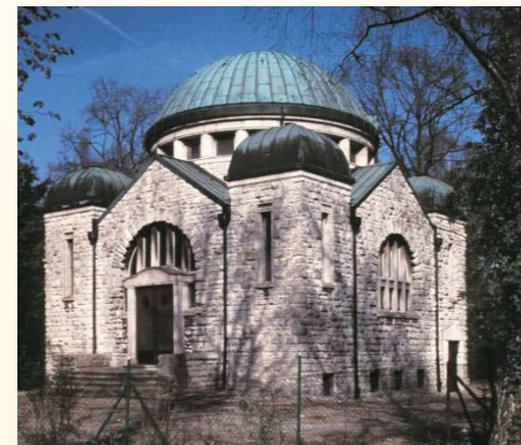
- Integrating the documentations into the section of Architecture of Jewish Monuments and Sites of the *Jerusalem Index of Jewish Art*.
- Scientific publications.
- Disseminating the documentation and research results to a broad general public through lectures, conferences and exhibitions.



*Königsberg (Kaliningrad/Russia), cemetery building erected in 1927, destroyed in 1938*

- Training and promoting a young generation of scholars through scholarships, organising interdisciplinary and international study groups and joint courses, exchanging students and lecturers and supporting doctoral candidates.

Through its international and interdisciplinary approach, the *Research Unit* will set impulses promoting research into Jewish architecture as a part of the world shaped by the monotheistic religions. In reflecting upon these themes, similarities as well as differences between cultures and ages will be clarified. These critical comparisons will thus lead to clear conclusions and a greater mutual understanding.



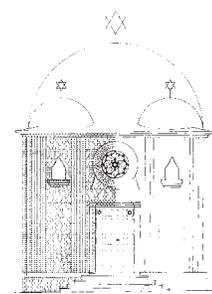
*Brunswick (Braunschweig/Germany), cemetery chapel built in 1910*



*Genthin/Germany, synagogue built in 1928, west facade: after alterations, 1998*



*Genthin, synagogue from south-west: after alterations, 1998*



*Genthin, synagogue, west facade: reconstruction of the original state from 1928*



*Genthin, synagogue, west facade: combination state of 1998 (black), original state (blue)*

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## Organisation

The *Research Unit* is located in Jerusalem, Israel and in Braunschweig, Germany each with its own study group. It pursues the above mentioned objectives and activities in close co-operation and by continuous exchange of researchers and knowledge. The Technical University of Braunschweig and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which have signed a co-operative agreement in 2000, will support the *Research Unit* by providing experienced researchers, premises and infrastructure.

In 2002, a preliminary study was conducted in order to outline the specific objectives and activities and to clarify the structure, contractual basis and financing of the *Bet Tfila — Research Unit*. This study was carried out at the request of Ms. Edelgard Bulmahn, the German Federal Minister for Education and Research.



above: Wörlitz/Germany, synagogue built in 1789, model:  
section with ritual bath below the prayer room  
below: Satanov/Ukraine, synagogue, beginning of the 17th century