Activity Update

Spring 2016 – Spring 2017

Great Synagogue in Dubno, Ukraine. Photo 2011 by Sergey Kravtsov.

Illustration from the new book Synagogues in Ukraine: Volhynia
by Sergey R. Kravtsov and Vladimir Levin

Center for Jewish Art
Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Synagogues in Ukraine: Volhynia
by Sergey R. Kravtsov and Vladimir Levin

We are glad to announce that a new book by the Center’s researchers, Dr. Sergey R. Kravtsov and Dr. Vladimir Levin, will be published next month by the Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History and our Center for Jewish Art. This book is devoted to the history and architecture of 39 extant and 302 vanished synagogues, situated in 23 cities and towns throughout the historical region of Volhynia in northwest Ukraine. The two-volume book of 848 pages includes 1,220 photographs, measured drawings and maps.
The Bezalel Narkiss Index of Jewish Art

Just as in the previous year, the main efforts of our staff were devoted to the digitization of the collections of the Center for Jewish Art. The number of images in the Index increased by 62 thousand during this year and reached currently 255,000 (http://cja.huji.ac.il/browser.php). A small amount of the remaining photographs is being scanned now and will be uploaded in the coming months. Thus, the complete collection of the Center is available to all on the Internet.

The Bezalel Narkiss Index of Jewish Art is an iconographical database and the richest repository of material on Jewish visual heritage from 41 countries. Its official inauguration is planned during the 17th World Congress of Jewish Studies in August 2017.

The digitization of the Index is carried out in cooperation with the National Library of Israel. The project is supported by the Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe, Landmarks Program of the Israeli Prime Minister’s Office, Harvard University Library, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany, the Morris and Beverly Baker Foundation, Mrs. Josephine Urban, and Mr. William Gross.
Historic Synagogues of Europe

The joint project of the Center for Jewish Art and the Foundation for Jewish Heritage (www.foundationforjewishheritage.com) intends to provide an inventory of all the extant historical synagogues in Europe (up to the 1950s). Never before has such a listing been brought together and made publicly available.

From estimated 15,000-20,000 synagogues which once existed on the continent, only about 3,000 structures of active and former synagogues survived. The Center’s researchers are mapping all extant synagogues and rate them according to their architectural, artistic, urban and historical significance, as well as the level of risk. Thus, the project aims to promote a debate – and activity – to ensure that all endangered synagogues are acknowledged, assessed and ultimately preserved.

Map of Europe showing extant historic synagogue buildings.
A Catalogue of Wall Paintings in Central and East European Synagogues

The research project conducted by the Center for Jewish Art on wall paintings in Central and East European Synagogues has been completed, and is accessible to the public at the Center’s website: http://cja.huji.ac.il/wpc/browser.php?mode=enter.

The catalogue contains descriptions of the wall-painting programs and individual images from 215 synagogues in Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Ukraine, and Israel. Those synagogues are represented in four thousand photographs. The images and their descriptions can be browsed according to their origin, iconographical subject, and artist.

The catalogue constitutes a separate module in the Bezalel Narkiss Index of Jewish Art; all catalogue’s pictures and metadata are also available at the page of the Center for Jewish Art in the National Library of Israel.

The Catalogue was presented to the researchers in the International Workshop “Synagogue Wall Paintings: Research, Preservation, Presentation” on September 13 and 14, 2016.
Workshop “Synagogue Wall Paintings: Research, Preservation, Presentation”

The International Workshop “Synagogue Wall Paintings: Research, Preservation, Presentation” was an outstanding success. The workshop included 17 lectures by leading scholars from nine countries (Germany, Israel, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, Ukraine, and the USA). The workshop was attended by about 70 people from Israel and abroad (see photograph at the end).

CJA researchers also took part in the conference: Boris Khaimovich spoke on “The Structure and Aims of the Catalogue of Wall Painting in Central and East European Synagogues;” Dr. Sergey Kravtsov gave a paper on “The Artist’s Destiny in Jewish Collective Memory: From Traditional Society to Avant-garde;” and Dr. Vladimir Levin summarized the two-day workshop in his closing remarks.

The workshop was supported by the David Berg Foundation, New York.
Proceeding the lectures dedicated to Ursula and Kurt Schubert held in Vienna and Olomouc in January 2016, the Center for Jewish Art organized a commemorative event in Jerusalem on November 13, 2016.

It included the address by the Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Israel, Ivo Schwarz, the deputy Director of the Austrian Cultural Forum Tel Aviv, Maria Gierlinger-Landa, the chair of Art History Department in HU, Dr. Lola Kantor-Kazovsky, Prof. Elisheva Revel-Neher and Prof. Aliza Cohen-Mushlin of HU, as well as a joint presentation by Schubert’s former students, Prof. Katrin Kogman-Appel and Prof. Bernhard Dolna. Short presentations were given by Dr. Vladimir Levin of the CJA, Sarah Hönigschnabel from the Institute of Jewish Studies in the University of Vienna, and Ivana Cahova from the Kurt and Ursula Schubert Centre of Jewish Studies in Palacký University Olomouc. The event ended with the closing remarks by Eva Schubert, the daughter of Ursula and Kurt.

The event was supported by the University of Vienna, Austrian Cultural Forum Tel Aviv, and Kurt and Ursula Schubert Centre of Jewish Studies in Palacký University, Olomouc.
The Jerusalem commemorative event celebrated also the opening of the homepage of the web-based Kurt and Ursula Schubert Archives, available to all at the website of the Center for Jewish Art (http://cja.huji.ac.il/sch/browser.php?mode=main). It includes 258 Hebrew illuminated manuscripts represented by c. 8,000 photographs.

Currently we start a joint project with the Center for Austrian Studies at HU in order to provide iconographical indexing of the Archives. This project will make the Schubert Archives an indispensable source for everyone starting to work on iconography of Hebrew manuscripts.

The Schubert Archives in the CJA is also linked to the Schubert Digital Archive established at the University of Vienna (http://ks.univie.ac.at): the images from the collection of photographs illustrate the transcripts of lectures given by Ursula Schubert and now uploaded to the Internet. The official transfer of the archive from the family to the University was held in Vienna on March 20, 2017. The Center for Jewish Art was represented there by Mrs. Michal Sternthal.
Preservation and Commemoration

In the last year the Center for Jewish Art and its individual researchers were involved in several projects of preservation and restoration of Jewish heritage, and various projects commemorating the Jewish past. Besides the above-mentioned Historic Synagogues of Europe, we would like to present the reader important and positive initiatives about Jewish heritage in Ukraine, Moldova, Lithuania and Belarus.

In Ostrog, Ukraine, a Jewish activist, a building contractor and a member of the local council, Grigorii Arshinov, started reconstruction of the Great Maharsha Synagogue (built c. 1627). According to Arshinov’s statement, his laborious and costly philanthropic activity was inspired by the article of Sergey Kravtsov: “The Great Maharsha Synagogue in Ostroh: Memory and Oblivion. Have we reached the point of no return?” It was published on the site: Jewish-Heritage-Europe.eu (www.jewish-heritage-europe.eu/have-your-say/the-great-maharsha-synagogue-in-ostroh-memory-and-oblivion-have-we-reached-the-point-of-no-return). Until February 2017, Arshinov managed to fill the gaps in the synagogue’s vaults, to install the wooden trusses of the roof, to reconstruct the gables of two elevations, and to remove the Soviet-time staircase.

On September 4, 2016, Dr. Sergey Kravtsov took part as a mediator in the international workshop “Mapping Presence: Jewish Sites, Initiatives, and Experiences in Ukraine,” held at the Center for Urban History in Lviv, Ukraine. The same day, the Perpetuation Memorial, a part of The Space of Synagogues Project, was inaugurated in Lviv. Sergey Kravtsov was involved in this project since the conference of 2008, when the idea of an international competition for reconstruction of this area was proposed. Kravtsov was a member of the jury at the 2010 competition, and took part in the discussions on the working project, as well as the inauguration of the Perpetuation Memorial. Recently, this project, carried out by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and partners, has been nominated for the European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture / Mies van der Rohe Award.

In September 2016, Dr. Vladimir Levin took part in a conference devoted to the establishment of Jewish Cultural Route in Lithuania. Leading specialists in Jewish heritage issues met for a
two day meeting in Vilnius and discussed the best strategy of making Lithuanian Jewish heritage accessible to tourists.

From December 2016 the Center for Jewish Art provides historical and architectural expertise for the NKO Rashkov Rebirth (www.tkumatrashkov.com). This organization aims to preserve the ruins of the Great Synagogue in Rashkov, Transnistria, Moldova. Sergey Kravtsov and Vladimir Levin published a paper at Jewish-Heritage-Europe.eu, describing the architecture of this unique synagogue and stressing the importance of its conservation (www.jewish-heritage-europe.eu/2017/02/26/will-or-can-the-great-synagogue-in-rascov-be-conserved).

Dr. Vladimir Levin was invited to join the advisory board of a new Jewish museum in Šeduva, Lithuania. The museum will be opened in 2019, as part of a memorial complex, established by the Lost Shtetl Project (http://lostshtetl.com).
The Center for Jewish Art takes part in the archeological excavations of the Great Synagogue in Vilnius and its compound (http://www.seligman.org.il/vilna_synagogue_home.html). This project unites archeologists from the Israeli Antiquities Authority, the universities of Hartford, Wisconsin and Duquesne and Cultural Heritage Conservation Authority of Lithuania. During the 2016 excavation season, the remnants of the Jewish communal bathhouse with a mikveh adjacent to the Great Synagogue were unearthed.

Excavations of the Jewish bathhouse, adjacent to the Great Synagogue in Vilnius. Photo by Jon Seligman, 2016.

The Center for Jewish Art cooperates with the project Beshenkovichi Shtetl Memorial Restoration (www.beshmem.org). This volunteer-oriented endeavor, aims to restore the Jewish cemetery in Beshenkovichi, Belarus, as well as to mount an exhibition of the outstanding Jewish artist Solomon Yudovin in Vitebsk, and subsequently to establish a Yudovin Museum in his native town Beshenkovichi.

Solomon Yudovin, Drawing of a tombstone in Beshenkovichi. This drawing was documented by the CJA researchers in 1990.
Cooperation with Kunstkamera Museum in St. Petersburg

Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Russian Academy of Science in St. Petersburg, known as the Kunstkamera Museum, possesses a unique collection of photographs of Jews and Jewish monuments, made by Russian ethnographers in Belarus, Georgia, Uzbekistan and India in the first half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. The Center for Jewish Art signed a cooperation agreement with the Kunstkamera, which allows to upload 195 photographs to the Index of Jewish Art, presenting various aspects of Jewish visual culture in those countries. These photographs were never published or used by researchers of Jewish art and history.

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\textit{Synagogue in Cochin, India.}
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\textit{Photo A.M. Mervart, early 20\textsuperscript{th} century.}
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© Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography
Cooperation with Centropa

The Vienna-based Centropa, a Jewish historical institute dedicated to preserving 20th century Jewish family stories and photos from Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans (www.centropa.org), shared with the Center about 1,600 photographs of 14 synagogues in Romania. The photographs taken by the photographer Daniel Gruenfeld, with the support of the David Berg Foundation, were included into the Index of Jewish Art.

The Third International Congress on Jewish Architecture

The Center for Jewish Art and the Beit Tfila Research Unit for Jewish Architecture in Europe organized the Third International Congress on Jewish Architecture, devoted to the topic “Synagogue and Museum.” It took place in Braunschweig in November 2016 and attracted about 70 researchers from all over the world. Prof. Aliza Cohen-Mushlin greeted the participants of the Congress, Dr. Vladimir Levin chaired the session “The Future of Synagogues in / as Museums,” Dr. Sergey Kravtsov gave a paper “The Jewish Museum in Lviv: Genius Loci and Realpolitik,” and Dr. Borish Khaimovich spoke on “The Museum of Jewish History in Russia: Its Goals and Its Activity.”

Modern Jewish Art

At long last, the Center for Jewish Art resumes its interest in modern art. In contrast to the past, we concentrate now on modern Judaica objects and on photography. In 2015, we have documented the Rimma Bobov’s collection of Israeli Shabbat candlesticks. An exhibition of this collection will be presented at the Gershon and Judith Leiber Gallery for Jewish Art at Bar Ilan University (see Future Event section below). This year we continue with the Bezalel Project and start a new project on modern photography (see below).

The Bezalel Project

The aims of the project are to document and present the Judaica produced by the Bezalel Art School from 1906 up to this day. The documentation of about 500 works by contemporary artists who graduated from the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design has been already uploaded to the Index of Jewish Art. Among the artists are Avi Biran, Malka Cohavi, Israel Dahan, David Heinz...
Gumbel, Vered Kaminski, Yossi Mattiyahu, Arie Ofir, Amit Shur, Sari Srulovich, Iris Tutnauer, and many others.

The Center signed a cooperation agreement with the Israel Museum, which allows the documentation of the objects of the “historical Bezalel” in the Museum’s collection to be included in the Index of Jewish Art.

**We are looking for funding to continue this project, which places Israeli artists within the context of world-wide Jewish Art.**

Volunteering and Internship

We are glad to announce that Mrs. Tova Szeintuch, formerly of the National Library of Israel, volunteers at the Section for Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts at the Center. She works currently on the improvement of descriptions of Ester scrolls, documented by the CJA researchers in the past decades.

We are also glad to announce that Ms. Anna Pakosz from Budapest has an internship at the Center for Jewish Art. Anna works on a research project named “Israeli Experience of East European Born Artists,” which aims at exploring the role of dual-identity in the artworks – especially photography – of active Israeli artists born in the former Soviet Union.
Visits to the Center of Jewish Art

In May 2016, a group of architectural students from the Technical University of Braunschweig, Germany, headed by Prof. Alexander von Kienlin and Dr. Katrin Kessler, visited Jerusalem. The Center of Jewish Art and Prof. Rina Talgam organized an extensive one-day trip to the ancient synagogues in north Israel. In Jerusalem, the students were guided by Dr. Vladimir Levin through the Russian Compound and through several synagogues in the Nahlaot neighborhood. For most of them it was the first time they ever entered an active synagogue.

In June, the Mayor of Braunschweig, Ulrich Markurth, and members of the city council visited the Center for Jewish Art. The staff of the Center presented them with our current projects, and our fruitful cooperation of Beit Tfila Research Unit in the Technical University of Braunschweig.

In August 2016, the Center welcomed a visiting scholar Ksenia Surikova from St. Petersburg State University. Ksenia’s research is dedicated to the relationship between memory, commemorative practices and architecture of memory places (memorials, museums, and
monuments). Ksenia used the Center’s collections which include, inter alia, many photographs of Holocaust memorials all over Europe.

In September 2016, the Center welcomed Grigorii Shapiro, a Ph.D. student from the Southern Federal University in Rostov on Don, Russia. Grigorii’s thesis deals with architecture of synagogues in the southern regions of the Russian empire in the late 19th and early 20th century.

In September 2016 a group of students from the Higher School of Economics in Moscow visited the Center and learned about its activities. The group was headed by Prof. Oleg Budnitsky and Dr. Ludmila Novikova.

Narkiss Prize

On December 14, 2016, Prof. Rina Talgam from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem received the Bezalel, Mordechai, and Nessia Narkiss Prize for Excellence in Research on Jewish Art. The award ceremony took place in the Umberto Nachon Museum of Italian Jewish Art in Jerusalem, on the 90th anniversary of the late Prof. Bezalel Narkiss. Prof. Talgam gave the lecture “A Galilean Synagogue from the Second Temple Period and Its Relation to the Jerusalem Temple: Old Questions in the Light of New Findings.”

Events

On 19 March, 2017, architect Gary Berkovich from Chicago lectured in the Center for Jewish Art on “Jewish Traces in Russian Architecture.”

Exhibitions

Ido Noy of the Center for Jewish Art served as a curator and catalogue editor of the exhibition Hallel, Carmel, Bezaile, opened in the Rishon Le-Zion Museum. The exhibition united the history of Carmel winery with Kiddush caps produced by contemporary Israeli artists. For the exhibition catalogue see the Recent publications section below.
Sukkot Festival in Jerusalem

For the first time, the Center for Jewish Art took part in the Festival “Hatzerot Yerushalayim” (Jerusalem Courtyards), organized during the Sukkot festival of 2016. CJA’s researchers gave three public lectures in the framework of the festival: Dr. Anna Berezin spoke on the “History of Jews in Siberia,” Dr. Sergey Kravtsov lectured on “Italian Architects – Builders of Synagogues in Poland,” and Dr. Vladimir Levin spoke on “Synagogue Courtyards in Eastern Europe.”

Lectures of the CJA researchers

In addition to the lectures and papers mentioned above, eight Center’s researchers participated in scholarly conferences and lectured on different occasions in Israel, Germany, Italy, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, India, China, South Africa, and the USA.

In April 2016, Prof. Aliza Cohen-Mushlin and Dr. Vladimir Levin participated in the “Object and Script” – the first conference of the Network of Jewish Material Culture in Braunschweig, Germany. Prof. Cohen-Mushlin presented a paper “German-related Manuscripts in the Staatsbibliothek Munich” and Dr. Levin spoke on “Object and Inscription: Jewish Ritual Objects in Volhynian Synagogues.”

In April 2016, Dr. Irina Chernetsky gave a paper “The Creation of the World by Virgil Solis” at the Annual Conference of the Renaissance Society of America (RSA) in Boston, USA.

In May 2016, Dr. Vladimir Levin presented the Center for Jewish Art and its digitization project at the 31st Annual Conference and Exhibition INFO 2016, organized by TELDAN in Tel Aviv.

In May 2016, Dr. Vladimir Levin gave a public lecture “Speaking Architecture: What is Special about the Historic Synagogue in Russia” in Avi Chai House in Jerusalem.

In May 2016, Michal Sternthal spoke on “‘Burnt Scrolls and Letters Flying in the Air’: The Great Influence of the Late Dr. Mordechai Glatzer as a Man and a Scholar” in a conference commemorating Dr. Glatzer at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

In July 2016, Dr. Vladimir Levin led a tour of the Jewish Historical Seminar to Moscow and St. Petersburg and gave there a series of lectures on Jewish history and art in Russia and the USSR.

In August 2016, Dr. Vladimir Levin gave a paper “Jewish Religion in the Russian Empire: From Support to Persecution” at the Summer International Symposium “Entangled Interactions

Dr. Vladimir Levin lectures in Avi Chai House in Jerusalem, May 2016. Photo by Ido Noy.
between Religions and National Identities in the Space of the Former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth” in the Lithuanian Institute of History, Vilnius, Lithuania.

In August 2016, Dr. Sergey Kravtsov took part in the 36th IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy in Seattle, USA, and gave there two papers: “Galician Jewish Families: Histories and Legends,” and “Synagogues of Galicia as Cultural Heritage.”


In October 2016, Dr. Vladimir Levin gave a series of lectures in Vilnius University, Lithuania, on synagogues in eastern Europe.

In November 2016 Dr. Anna Berezin lectured on “Jewish Traces in Siberia” at the Ginot Ha’Ir Community Council in Jerusalem.

In November 2016, Prof. Aliza Cohen-Mushlin lectured on “The Biblical Cameos of Friedrich II” at the Congress “The Life and Deeds of Friedrich II” in the University of Palermo, Sicily, Italy.

In November 2016, Dr. Vladimir Levin delivered a keynote lecture “Jewish Heritage in the Soviet Union” at the Workshop “Heritage Studies and Socialism: Transnational Perspectives on Heritage in Eastern and Central Europe” organized by Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe at Marburg University, and the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC) at Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany.

In November 2016, Dr. Boris Khaimovich gave a paper “Jewish Museums as Historical Phenomenon” in The 10th University Convergence at the European University in St. Petersburg, Russia.
In December 2016, Prof. Aliza Cohen-Mushlin lectured on “Synagogues of Lithuania” to members of the Jewish Community in Cape Town, South Africa.

In January 2017, Dr. Sergey Kravtsov gave four lectures on the synagogue architecture of Galicia, Podolia and Volhynia at the SEFER Winter School in Moscow, Russia.

In January 2017, Prof. Aliza Cohen-Mushlin lectured on “Synagogues in India” to students in Mumbai University, India.

In January 2017, Dr. Irina Chernetsky gave a paper “The Presence of Jerusalem in Florence in the Fourteenth and the Fifteenth Centuries” at the conference of the SEFER Center for University Teaching of Jewish Civilization in Moscow, Russia.

In January 2017, Michal Sternthal gave a lecture “Hebrew Manuscripts from Italy,” sponsored by the International Relations Department of the Hebrew University, at the Nofei Yerushalayim Elderly Home in Jerusalem.

CJA researchers are constant participants of the Seminar at the Jewish Art Department in Bar Ilan University. Ido Noy delivered there a lecture “Ashkenazi Treasure Troves: Christian Material Culture in a Jewish Context;” and Dr. Sergey Kravtsov spoke on “Architecture of the Tiferet Yisrael Synagogue: Cultural and Iconographical Comparison.”

Recent publications of the CJA researchers


Sergey Kravtsov, “The Artist’s Destiny in Jewish Collective Memory: From Traditional Society to Avant-garde,” in Norma i anomalii v slavianskoj i evreiskoj kul’turnoi traditsii, ed. by
Olga Belova et al. (Moscow: SEFER and Institute of Slavic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, 2016), 243–257 (in Russian).


Future Events

29 March, 2017 – opening of the exhibition “Lights of Sabbath: Rimma Bobov’s Candlesticks Collection” at the Gershon and Judith Leiber Gallery for Jewish Art at Bar Ilan University. The exhibition is based on the documentation of Dr. Bobov’s collection, which was done by the CJA in 2015. It is curated by Dr. Susan Nashman Freiman and Ms. Lea Fish.

June 2017 – a guest lecture by Ksenia Surikova from the Institute of Philosophy of St. Petersburg State University and the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography. Ms. Surikova will speak on “Images of Memory: The Architecture of War and Memorial Museums.” It will be the third event in the lecture series on Jewish museums, organized by the Center for Jewish Art in cooperation with the Leonid Nevzlin Research Center for Russian and East European Jewry.


August 2017 – Inauguration of the Bezalel Narkiss Index of Jewish Art at the 17th World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem.

December 2017 – Bezalel, Mordechai and Nessia Narkiss Prize for Excellence in Research on Jewish Art.