



ה מ ר כ ז ל א מ נ ו ת י ה ו ד י ת
THE CENTER FOR JEWISH ART
THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM • האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים



Activity Update Summer 2014 – Spring 2015



*A vase with flowers in the synagogue in Boskovice, Czeck Republic.
Photo 2014 by Boris Khaimovich*

**Center for Jewish Art
Hebrew University of Jerusalem**



Digitization

The main efforts of our staff during this period were devoted to the digitization of the Center for Jewish Art collections – a project carried out in cooperation with the National Library of Israel. As mentioned in the previous updates, the archives of the CJA were recognized by the Israeli Government as a “Non-Tangible National Heritage,” worthy of being publicized in the National Library's website.

In January 2015 the Center for Jewish Art transferred to the National Library digital metadata for 30,000 scanned images. Thus, up to now, we have provided metadata for 132,000 images from the CJA's archives. About 70,000 images are already available in the Internet (web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/digitallibrary/cja/Pages/default.aspx), and the rest will be uploaded by the National Library in the next months.

The digitization project is supported by the Landmarks Program of the Israeli Prime Minister's Office, Harvard University Library, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany, and the Morris and Beverly Baker Foundation.

The Center for Jewish Art Collection

The Center for Jewish Art at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was founded by Professor Bezalel Narkiss in 1979. Today, the Center's archives and collections constitute the largest and most comprehensive body of information on Jewish art in existence, with approximately 100,000 pictures, sketches and documents. The National Library is collaborating with the Center for Jewish Art to make these materials accessible to the general public. The project is funded by the Prime Minister's Office ("Landmarks" Program), Harvard Library Judaica Division's Judaica Book Fund endowments established by David B. Keidan and the Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe. Thus far, some 72,000 items have been digitized and the entire collection will be available by 2016.



Geographic regions covered by the collection

The collection can be viewed according to the geographical origin of the items. In addition, a general search can be conducted using the search box above



Full Collection



Albania



Azerbaijan



Belarus

Fig. 1. Homepage of the Center for Jewish Art at the website of the National Library of Israel



Catalogue of Wall Paintings in European Synagogues

The Center for Jewish Art research project of wall paintings in East European Synagogues, enters now its second year.

During the first year, we developed a methodology which allows the presentation of synagogues and their wall paintings in a special computer interactive database.

The database contains a description and analysis of the wall painting programs, and individual images in 38 synagogues from Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Lithuania, Romania and one from a destroyed synagogue in Tel Aviv. Those synagogues are represented by 1,172 photographs, organized in 179 sub-sets according to architecture and the depicted subjects. The photographs and their descriptions can be searched as well as browsed according to their origin, subject, and artist.

In the framework of the project, Dr. Boris Khaimovich undertook an expedition to Moravia, Czech Republic in October 2014. We hoped to document seven synagogues in Moravia, which were reported as having wall paintings. However, we found extant wall paintings only in four of them: Boskovice, Holešov, Třebíč, and Dolni Kounice. The wall paintings in those synagogues consist of floral ornamentation and panels with sacred Hebrew texts.



Fig. 2. A unicorn and a squirrel - a fragment of the wooden ceiling in the study hall in the Holešov synagogue. Photo 2014 by Boris Khaimovich.



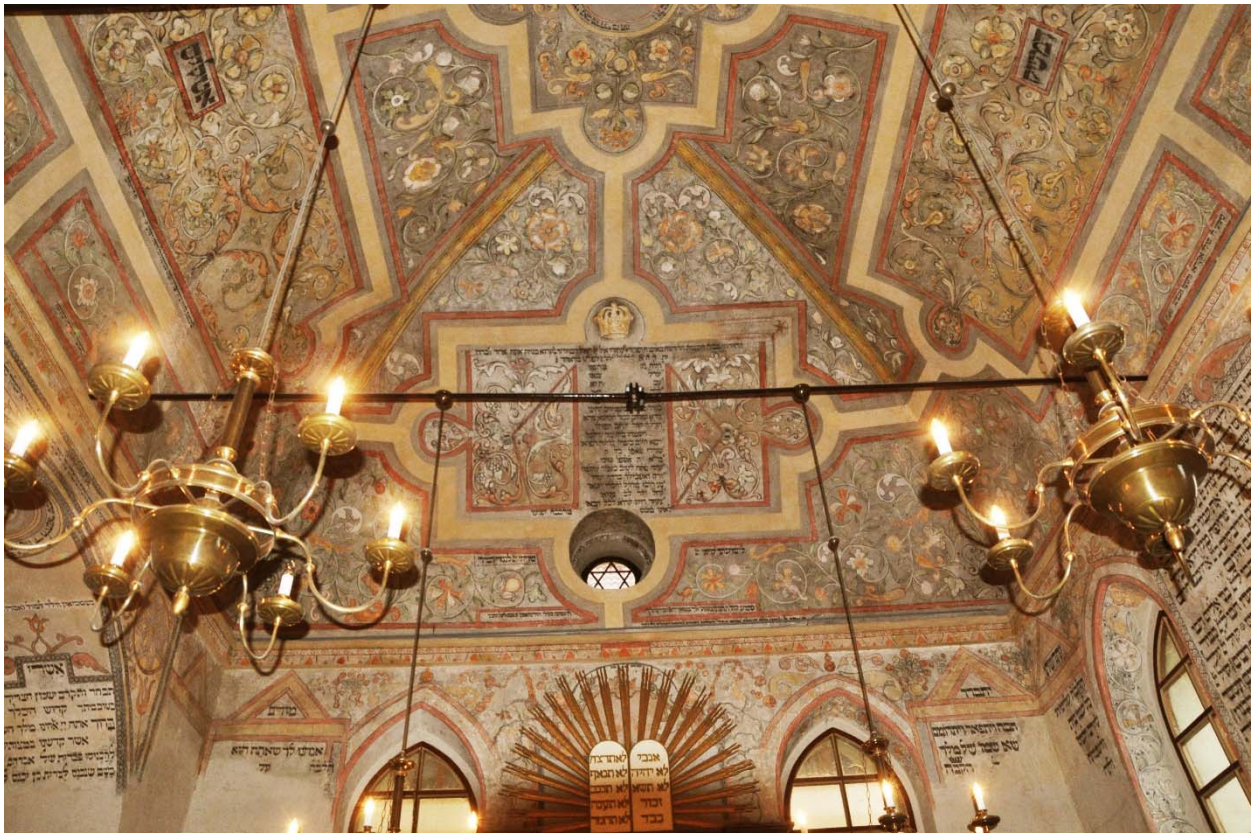
*Fig. 3. The interior of the synagogue in Holešov, view from the upper gallery.
Photo 2014 by Boris Khaimovich*

The wooden ceiling in a side room in Holešov synagogue is covered with images of symbolic animals, which were typical for wall paintings in East European wooden synagogues, few of which survived the Holocaust. For example, Fig. 2 shows a unicorn facing a squirrel – an unusual composition, probably with ironical connotations. The walls of the main hall in this synagogue are decorated with continuous ornaments and prayer texts (Fig. 3).

The prayer hall of the synagogue in Boskovice is completely covered by floral and geometrical motifs (Fig. 4), as well as by panels with sacred Hebrew texts. It seems that the number of texts is one of the richest in the world. The floral motifs in this synagogue are interlaced with traditional Jewish symbols referring to the Jerusalem Temple. The paintings are characterized by their skillful execution and delicate color scheme.

We are now preparing the second expedition of this project. In spring 2015 Dr. Khaimovich will travel to Poland in order to document wall paintings found since the last expeditions of the Center for Jewish Art to this country in 1997.

The project is planned to end in February 2016, when the catalogue of wall paintings in East European synagogues will be opened to the public at the Center's website.



*Fig. 4. Eastern wall of the prayer hall of the synagogue in Boskovic.
Photo 2014 by Boris Khaimovich*

Events

At the first day of Hanukkah, December 17, 2014, Dr. Ilia Rodov from Bar Ilan University received the Bezalel, Mordechai and Nessia Narkiss Prize for Excellence in Research on Jewish Art. The evening took place in the Umberto Nachon Museum of Italian Jewish Art in Jerusalem. The lecture of Dr. Rodov was on “Wandering in the earth and the ascension to heaven: transformation of didactical image in Jewish art.”

On February 3, 2015, the deputy director of the Center for Jewish Art, Dr. Vladimir Levin, took part in the presentation of student works of Judaica class in Bezalel Academy of Art and Design. This is a first step to the planned cooperation between the CJA and Bezalel Academy.



In March 2015, Dr. Sergey Kravtsov participated in the opening of an exhibition of Jewish Art at the Art Nouveau Museum in Riga, Latvia. In conjunction with this event, he gave lectures in the Jewish Museum, the Latvian Academy of Arts, and the Peitavas Street Synagogue in Riga (Fig. 5).

On March 18, 2015, the Center of Jewish Art, together with the Leonid Nevzlin Research Center for Russian and East European Jewry and the Center for Research on the History and Culture of Polish Jewry, organized a symposium on the new Jewish museum in Warsaw. The director of the museum, Prof. Dariusz Stola, lectured on “The Museum of the History of Polish Jews: Reconnecting with a Forgotten Past” and Prof. Israel Bartal of the Hebrew University responded with “Geopolitics and Memory: Museums, Jewish History, and the ‘Usable Past’?”



*Fig. 5. Dr. Sergey Kravtsov lecturing in the Peitavas Street Synagogue in Riga
Photo: Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Latvia*



Participation of CJA researchers in academic conferences

Prof. Aliza Cohen-Mushlin participated in an international conference “Parallel and Intersecting Themes in Literatures of Occident and Orient”, which took place in the Ilia State University in Tbilisi, Georgia at the end of September 2014. Her paper was on “The Sacrifice of Isaac in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Art.” Prof. Cohen-Mushlin also lectured at an international conference organized by the Hamburg University in October 2014, on the “Status quæstionis of research on Hebrew manuscript culture.” Her paper summed up her recent research, “The Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.”

Dr. Sergey Kravtsov gave a paper entitled “Archival Sources in the Study of Synagogue Architecture and Art,” at the workshop of the research forum “Galicia and Bukovina,” Haifa University – Central Historical Archives of Jewish People, Jerusalem, March 20, 2014. He also presented a lecture “Synagogue Architecture of Volhynia: A Search for Identities” at the Second Congress of Jewish Art in Poland – Art in Jewish Society, Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Warsaw, June 24, 2014.

Dr. Vladimir Levin participated in the Tenth Congress of the European Association for Jewish Studies in Paris in July 2014 with a paper “Synagogues in Eastern Europe: Christian Middle Ages in Jewish Modern Times?” He also took part in the International Workshop “Wear Your Nation, Wear Your Utopia?! Clothing, Fashion and Beauty in Historical Perspective,” held in the German Historical Institute in Warsaw in January 2015, where he presented a paper “‘All young women have to remove their dressy hats, bring them to the synagogue courtyard and burn them there’: Fashion and Identity in the East-European Synagogue in the 19th and early 20th century.”

Dr. Boris Khaimovich was a permanent participant of the interdisciplinary seminar “Symbol and Metaphor in Judaism, Christianity and Islam,” held in the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow, Russia, during 2014. In June 2014 he presented a paper “The Image of the Hare in Jewish Traditional Culture” at the interdisciplinary conference “‘The Philosophy of Hare’:



Unexpected Perspectives of Humanities' Research" in the Institute of Russian Literature in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Exhibitions

Dr. Sergey Kravtsov was employed as an advisor to the exhibition "The Myth of Galicia" in the International Cultural Centre, Krakow, Poland, 2014.

Dr. Boris Khaimovich served as a curator of the following exhibitions: "May you be inscribed for the New Year" in the Museum of the History of Jews in Russia and the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow; as well as "Pages from a Front Album" and "Non-Ashkenazi Jewish Communities," both in the Museum of the History of Jews in Russia, Moscow.

Recent Publications of CJA researchers

Sergey Kravtsov: "Museum: History, Project, Proposition," *Yehupets* 23 (2014): 386–90. In Ukrainian.

Vladimir Levin "The Jewish Street' in the Russian Empire before 1914," in Israel Bartal and Michael Beizer (eds.), *The History of the Jews in Russia*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2015), pp. 13-36. In Hebrew.