



Dear friends of the Museum,

We are almost half way through 2017 already and we are delighted to announce that the first six months of the year were generous in terms of visitors, new exhibits, international events, meetings with inspiring personalities and ambitious plans to expand our activities. We continue with our aim to improve and become a museum that is a nice place to return to and to recommend to others. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support and tell you more about the Museum's news and future plans. We wish you a wonderful and relaxing summer and look forward to welcoming you to the Museum very soon!

All the best,

Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum team

IHRA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AT THE MUSEUM

On 22-23 March 2017 the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) held an international conference "As Mass Murder Began: Identifying and Remembering the Killing Sites of Summer–Fall 1941" at the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum (VGSJM). During the opening session of the conference IHRA representatives emphasised the importance of changing and expanding the concept of the Holocaust so that it is seen not only as something that was happening in concentration camps, but also to emphasise the mass killings by bullets and the remaining mass killing sites.



IHRA conference moments



The conference was attended by historians, museum specialists, government and NGO representatives working on the research and commemoration of mass killing sites. Among them were representatives of 15 European countries, the USA, Canada and Israel. Renowned specialists in the area of the Holocaust research gave keynote lectures, which were followed by discussions, presentations and workshops devoted to three important aspects of the conference, i.e. identification, marking, and commemoration of mass killing sites in the Baltic countries, Belarus, Ukraine and Romania.

During the conference, a lot of attention was devoted to research and remembrance of the Holocaust in Lithuania. Neringa Latvytė-Gustaitienė, head of the History Research Department at the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum and acting head of the Memorial Museum of Paneriai, together with Saulius Sarcevičius, head of the Urban Research Department at the Lithuanian Institute of History, introduced

the audience to the current research in the Paneriai mass killing site and presented the plans for the comprehensive rearrangement of the Paneriai memorial site. Diana Varnaitė, director of the Department of Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania and Ingrida Vilkienė, Education Programme Coordinator of the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania gave presentations on the commemoration and remembrance of mass killing sites which were then followed by discussions.

Current members of IHRA include governments, academics, educators and museum specialists working in the area of the Holocaust research, education and remembrance and represent 31 countries. Lithuania became a member of IHRA in 2003 and this was the first international IHRA conference to be held here. ■

UPCOMING NEW MUSEUM BRANCH: SAMUEL BAK MUSEUM

This coming November will see the opening of the Samuel Bak Museum on Naugarduko St. 10/2 in Vilnius. The museum will be a branch of the VGSJM. It is hoped that Samuel Bak and his wife will attend the opening event.

At the end of 2016, VGSJM signed a donation agreement with Samuel Bak, who currently lives in Boston, and the Pucker Gallery which represents the artist. According to the agreement, the museum will receive over 100 valuable paintings and other works by Samuel Bak as a gift. In 2011, in cooperation with the Pucker Gallery, VGSJM held an exhibition of Bak's paintings titled "Stations in Life". The exhibition was very well received.



Opening of S. Bak's painting exhibition 'Stations in Life'

Samuel Bak was born in 1933. His creative life began at the Vilna Ghetto, where an exhibition of his drawings was held when he was only nine years of age. Art critics gave very positive reviews of the young artist's works. Samuel Bak miraculously survived the war and ended up at a displaced persons' camp in Germany. In 1948, he left for Israel where he attended the Bezalel School of Art. Later Bak studied in Paris, lived in Italy and Switzerland, and finally settled down in Massachusetts, USA.

Samuel Bak's works boast their own authentic style connecting pieces of perfect renaissance figures, metaphysical surrealistic spaces, *arte povera*, a unique interpretation of Judaic-Christian iconography, deep symbolism and, what is most important, metaphors of the world that the artist lost as a child. Samuel Bak has held solo exhibitions in galleries, museums and universities all over the world, including Rome, London, Montreal, Jerusalem, etc. Unique drawings from the artist's childhood which were created in the Vilna Ghetto, are part of the VGSJM collection.

Ieva Šadzevičienė, head of the Tolerance Centre, art researcher and curator of the Samuel Bak exposition, says that it is reassuring to see this unique and highly talented artist recognised in his hometown, too.

“By opening up new spaces of the Tolerance Centre for visitors we at the same time contribute to the implementation of Samuel Bak’s personal legend. When Samuel Bak was a child, he was forced to flee his hometown from the horrors of World War II. This year – in 2017 – at the suggestion of the Museum, the artist was conferred with honorary citizenship of the City of Vilnius and the museum named after him is already underway. What a tragic life story, but finally one with a happy ending, which finds its reflection in art, too. The themes of Bak’s paintings are not purely historical. They are also topical today. In his works the artist dwells on issues common to the whole of humankind such as the good and the evil, despair and recreation of a shattered world (*Tikkun olam – Hebr.*), which we ask ourselves about every day of our life,” says the head of the Tolerance Centre.

Any financial support towards equipping the Samuel Bak Museum would be very much appreciated. For more information please contact Ieva Šadzevičienė at +370 5 262 9666 or email at ieva.sadzeviciene@jmuseum.lt. ■

HISTORIC JEWISH LIBRARY BUILDING ON THE LIST OF THE REGISTER OF CULTURAL PROPERTY

The historic building of the Jewish public library (later – the Vilna Ghetto library) at Žemaitijos St. 4 in Vilnius, has been put on the list of the Register of Cultural Property, following a decision of the First Cultural Property Evaluation Council under the Department of Cultural Heritage, at the suggestion of VGSJM. The plan is to locate the Memorial Museum of the Holocaust in Lithuania and the Vilna Ghetto Museum, which will be a branch of the VGSJM, there. Currently the library building is almost derelict and requires major repairs and reinforcement works.

Before World War II, Vilnius City Jewish Library “Mefitzei Haskalah” was situated in the building at Strašūno St. 6 (currently Žemaitijos St. 4). During the first period of Soviet occupation the library was nationalised and reorganised into library No. 5. It was there that the first *Judenrat* was operating before the Vilna Ghetto was established. Later the library ended up on the territory of the Large Vilna Ghetto and continued to function as an important cultural centre almost until the ghetto was liquidated in Sep-



Historical Jewish library building on Žemaitijos St. 4

tember 1943. In 1945, under the leadership of writers Shmerke Kaczerginski and Abraham Sutzkever who survived the Holocaust, a Jewish museum was established in the former library building; the museum was closed by the Soviet government in 1949.

The current Holocaust exhibition at VGSJM on Pamėnkalnio St. 12 is no longer big enough to receive the ever-increasing numbers of visitors and is not able to display unique exhibits, such as the plastic model of the City of Vilnius created by the ghetto inmates. The

VGSJM collection contains numerous documents on the Holocaust – diaries, photographs, posters, artwork, personal belongings, audio and video recordings – that will be presented as part of the exhibitions of the Memorial Museum of the Holocaust in Lithuania and the Vilna Ghetto Museum. The historic building situated in the territory of the former Vilna Ghetto will help convey the circumstances and development of the Holocaust in Lithuania in an authentic way.

Any support in the form of volunteering, donations or exhibits, including any financial support towards equipping the Memorial Museum of the Holocaust in Lithuania and the Vilna Ghetto Museum would be highly appreciated. For more information please contact Neringa Latvytė-Gustaitienė, head of History Research Department at the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum at +370 5 212 7083 or email at neringa0207@gmail.com. ■

MUSEUM OF LITVAK CULTURE AND IDENTITY TO OPEN IN THE FORMER JEWISH GYMNASIUM



Building that hosted Tarbut Jewish high school

The historic building located at Pylimo St. 4, which hosted the Jewish gymnasium *Tarbut*, during the interwar period, is soon to host yet another branch of the VGSJM – Museum of Litvak Culture and Identity. The mission of the future museum is to present unique educational, cultural and artistic phenomena characteristic to Jewish life in Lithuania, including the contribution of Lithuanian Jewish expatriates to global cultural and scientific progress, and to do it in an attractive and modern way.

Preparations are currently underway to renovate the building. The project “Making the historic building of the Hebrew gymnasium *Tarbut* at Pylimo St. 4 relevant again” has been put on the list of projects eligible for joint financing from the European Union structural funds and the State budget. An application has been filed with the Central Project Management Agency for respective funding needed to implement the said project.

Any support in the form of volunteering, donations or exhibits, including any financial support towards implementing this unique initiative would be highly appreciated. For more information please contact Dr Kamilė Rupeikaitė, deputy director for museum activities at the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum at +370 5 262 9544 or email at kamile.rupeikaite@jmmuseum.lt. ■

INTERESTING FACTS

Museum activities over the first six months of 2017:

Number of exhibitions opened	5
Number of events held	14
Number of educational events held	49
The VGSJM collections were supplemented with	Findings of the archaeological excavations of the Great Synagogue of Vilna
Number of visitors received	11 116
Guests received at the Museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin Gurvich, director of Museo Gurvich, • Dr Arnis Radiņš, director of the National History Museum of Latvia, • A. B. Yehoshua, Israeli writer, • Dr Jason Steinhauer, historian from USA, • Dr Carol Hoffman, president of <i>LitvakSIG</i>, with members of the Board.

PLEASE MEET THE MUSEUM TEAM!

- How long have you been working at the Museum?

I have been working at the Museum for almost 10 years now. In October 2017 it will be exactly 10 years.

- What did the Museum look like ten years ago and what does it look like now?

The Museum has changed hugely over the last ten years. When I came to work for the Museum, the most ambitious projects were joint events with foreign embassies. We had to think hard about who to invite to hold an exhibition at the Tolerance Centre so as to avoid the large hall being empty and how to establish connections with foreign museums and Litvaks living in other countries. Little by little the Tolerance Centre became known to many and now we have to think hard about how to fit in all those wishing to hold their exhibitions here. Now we can afford to select the best artworks and implement the most interesting projects. I am still learning to say “no” to artists and creative enthusiasts wishing to exhibit here. Our centre has already hosted a number of important events, such as the international conference organised by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), exhibitions presenting exhibits from the Jewish Art and History Museum and the Pompidou Centre in Paris. Today we are witnessing a historic moment, because in November this year as a result of several years of negotiations and search for sponsors, a new branch of the Museum will open at the Tolerance Centre – the Samuel Bak Museum.



Ieva Šadzevičienė, head of the VGSJM Tolerance Center

- *Please tell us about a typical day at the Museum.*

I look forward to “typical” days every week, because they are very rare. Very often I run from meeting to meeting with a visitor or two in between, therefore, there is hardly ever time to have a proper lunch (I often just take a sandwich for lunch to save time). Still, even on a typical day I find time for a cup of coffee. It guarantees a minute’s break and good mood. A more typical day starts with reading letters – usually I receive many emails from abroad (with difference in time zones) and colleagues who tend to work at night.

I usually have a meeting with our director Markas Zingeris at least once a day. He always has many ideas and plans. In addition, there are pre-planned meetings with staff from other departments to harmonise plans and discuss future events or meetings on supplementing the Museum’s collection.

I am in regular contact with the Museum’s lawyer, because there are always contracts regarding future projects or public tenders to deal with. Finally, the pleasant part – art curatorship of exhibitions: search for topics, selection of works, etc. In addition, there is on-going email communication with colleagues and partners. This is a never ending story.

- *What inspires and motivates you most at work?*

I am mostly inspired by projects or exhibitions on topics that are close to my heart. It makes the work easy. Another inspiring moment is the final implementation of a long-lasting project that has required a lot of effort and patience.

- *What is a must to see during a visit to the Museum’s Tolerance Centre? If you were asked to recommend just one exhibit or exhibition, what would it be?*

The Tolerance Centre’s main exhibition is “The Lost World” which presents exhibits from the Museum’s collection, and involves Judaica, art and authentic Jewish art exhibits. The centre also hosts a unique exposition “Rescued Lithuanian Jewish Child Tells About the Shoah”. If you only have 3 minutes to spend at the Tolerance Centre, please come up to the third floor and see our unique exhibit – a cartouche with the Ten Commandments of God from the Great Synagogue of Vilna that was fully destroyed during the post-war period.

- *What do you most like to do when you are not working? What do you do to relax after a hard day’s work?*

I am a member of the Lithuanian Dachshunds Owners’ Club and have a wonderful chocolate-coloured dachshund named Sharles, who is a Lithuanian champion and who takes up most of my free time. Neither can I imagine a day off without reading a good book in the morning. Several chapters read over a weekend serve as an inspiration for the rest of the week. And, of course, coffee :) ■

YOU CAN NOW DONATE VIA *PAYPAL*

We would like to extend our sincere thank you to all the friends and sponsors of our Museum and to inform you that from now on your donations are accepted via the [PayPal system](#), too. It is only thanks to you that we can dream of and undertake ambitious projects such as the Museum of Litvak Culture and Identity, the Memorial Museum of the Holocaust in Lithuania and the Vilna Ghetto Museum and the comprehensive rearrangement of the Paneriai Memorial based on the latest historical research outcomes. We are confident that with your help we will successfully implement our aim to preserve and present the heritage of Lithuanian Jews to present and future generations. ■

CONTACTS AND WORKING HOURS OF THE EXPOSITION SITES



TOLERANCE CENTER

Judaica. History. Art

Naugarduko St. 10/2, Vilnius
tel. 00370 5 212 0112
e-mail: muziejus@jmuseum.lt,
tolerancijos.centras@gmail.com

Working hours

I-IV: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

V: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

VI: closed

VII 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.



HOLOCAUST EXPOSITION

Pamėnkalnio St. 12, Vilnius
tel. 00370 5 262 0730
e-mail: jewishmuseum@museum.lt

Working hours

I-IV: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

V: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

VI: closed

VII: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.



MEMORIAL MUSEUM OF PANERIAI

Agrastų St. 15, Vilnius
tel. +370 699 90 384, +370 662 89 575
e-mail: neringa0207@gmail.com,
mantas.siksnianas@jmuseum.lt

Working hours

I: closed

II-VII: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Since October until May the museum is opened by appointment only.

For the latest news, visit our website jmuseum.lt and [Facebook!](#)

Rhona Gorvy

KŪRYBINĖS IŽVALGOS / CREATIVE INSIGHTS



Grafika ir skulptūra iš Pietų Afrikos
Graphics & Sculpture from South Africa

2017 06 01 – 2017 09 29


Valstybinio Vilniaus Gaono žydų muziejaus
TOLERANCIJOS CENTRAS
Naugarduko g. 10/2

We kindly invite you to visit the exhibition 'Rhona Gorvy: Creative Insights' until September 29, 2017, at our Tolerance Center.