



Dear friends of the Museum,

As we welcome the New Year 2019, please find a more exhaustive review of the most memorable moments from the recent six months of the Museum's activities, learn about the Museum's exciting statistics and meet our museology specialist Saulė Valiūnaitė, curator of the exposition of the Museum of Culture and Identity of Lithuanian Jews, an upcoming branch of the VGSJM.

Yours,

*Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum team*

## Review of Museum Events

### SEMINAR FOR TEACHERS FROM THE BALTIC COUNTRIES

On 11–13 July, Yad Vashem (Israel) and Memorial de la Shoah (France) held a seminar on the Holocaust for teachers from Latvia and Lithuania which took place at the Tolerance Centre. The participants of the three-day seminar learned about the history of the Holocaust in Lithuania and other Baltic countries and discussed challenges and opportunities related to the Holocaust education. ■

### PREMIER OF THE FILM 'THE GOOD NAZI' AND MEETING WITH THE FILM MAKERS

On 12 July, premier of the film 'The Good Nazi' (directed by Yaron Niski, 2018) and a meeting with the film makers were held at the Museum's Tolerance Centre as organised in cooperation with the Embassy of the United States of America in Vilnius. The film 'The Good Nazi' is a tribute to the amazing historical figure Major Karl Plagge, who headed the forced labour camp HKP 562. The camp operated on Subačiaus Street in Vilnius between 1943 and 1944. Its inmates repaired military vehicles. Thanks to Karl Plagge several hundred Jews condemned to death survived the Holocaust. ■



## LECTURE ON THE ART OF SAMUEL BAK



On 26 July, Dr Gary A. Phillips, expert on Samuel Bak's art, gave a lecture 'Just Is in the Art of Samuel Bak', which was held in cooperation with the Vilnius Yiddish Institute. Dr Phillips, a professor of religious studies at the Wabash College of Indiana (USA), shared his insights on the polysemantic series of paintings 'Just Is' by Samuel Bak and discussed the topic of images and symbols used by the author. ■

*Samuel Bak. Justice. 2016*

## MUSEUM HELD EVENTS DEVOTED TO THE EUROPEAN DAYS OF JEWISH CULTURE

On 9 September, events devoted to the European Days of Jewish Culture were held at the Tolerance Centre and Samuel Bak Museum, which included museum tours lead by exhibition curators, film reviews and special get-together events that attracted several hundred residents and guests of Vilnius. ■





## MUSEUM'S EXHIBITION 'VILNA GHETTO POSTERS' OPENED IN LONDON

On 20 September, exhibition 'Vilna Ghetto Posters' was opened at the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in London to commemorate the upcoming National Memorial Day of the Genocide of Lithuanian Jews. The exhibition presented eighteen unique posters from the Vilna Ghetto accompanied by excerpts from Herman Kruk's diary on various cultural events held at the Vilna Ghetto and advertised with the help of the posters selected for the exhibition. ■

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## EXHIBITION DEVOTED TO THE LITVAKS WHO SERVE AS A CONNECTION BETWEEN LITHUANIA AND ISRAEL WAS OPENED

On 27 September, photography exhibition 'Litvaks on the Streets of Israel' was opened at the Museum's Tolerance Centre. The exhibition invited its visitors to walk down a symbolic Israeli street serving as a connection between a number of streets in Israel named after famous Litvaks: spiritual and cultural leaders of the Jewish community, visionaries of the national State of Israel, including world-famous scientists and artists. ■



Liudvikas Lazaris Zamenhofas

Chaimas Sutinas

Jaša Heifecas

Icchakas Jakovas Reines

Borisas (Baruchas) Šacas

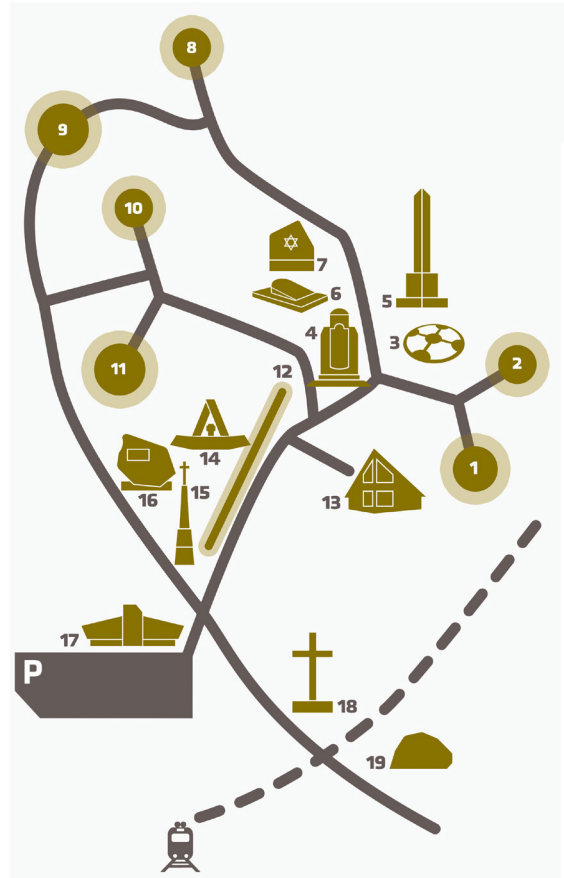
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## DISCUSSION ABOUT JEWISH THEATRE IN LITHUANIA WAS HELD

On 13 November, discussion 'Jewish Theatre in the Interwar Period, Ghettos and Nowadays' was held at the Tolerance Centre of the Museum. The panelists included theatre analyst Dr Ina Pukelytė, theatre director Gintaras Varnas, director of Lithuanian Theatre, Music and Cinema Museum Regina Lopienė and museology specialist Dr Vilma Gradinskaitė. The participants discussed the development of Yiddish and Hebrew theatres in Lithuania, including the influence that theatre had on the development of the international Jewish diaspora, including that of the independent Lithuanian culture, and the way the fate of the Jewish community is reflected in modern Lithuanian theatre. ■

# NEW EXPOSITION OPENED AT PANERIAI MEMORIAL

On 31 October, an open-air exposition was opened on the territory of the Paneriai Memorial and a new exhibition was inaugurated at the information center of the memorial. They present the complex history of Paneriai, newest research outcomes and a number of authentic objects located on the territory of the memorial, such as mass killing pits, the pit of the 'burner brigade' and memorials to commemorate the victims. The exhibition and the exposition were financed by the Government Office of the Republic of Lithuania.





## WINNERS OF ART COMPETITION FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS RECEIVED THEIR AWARDS

On 16 November, which is the International Day for Tolerance, the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum and the Association of Art Teachers held the final event of the competition 'We are Lithuania: Communities of My Region', which included a creative workshop, the award ceremony and a teleconference with Samuel Bak, an honorary citizen of Vilnius residing in the USA. ■



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## EXHIBITION OF SIMON KARCZMAR'S ARTWORK WAS OPENED

On 22 November, an exhibition of paintings and graphic art 'Simon Karczmar: from Juvenishki to Safed' was opened at the Tolerance Centre of the Museum. The opening event was attended by the artist's son Natan Karczmar who initiated the exhibition and shared the touching story of his father's life and creative endeavours. ■



## EXHIBITION 'MOMENTS. FROM THE LITHUANIAN JEWISH HISTORY' OPENED AT CLUB HEBRAICA IN SÃO PAULO AND THE JEWISH MUSEUM OF TBILISI

On 19 November, the VGSJM's exhibition 'Moments. From the Lithuanian Jewish History' was opened at Club Hebraica in São Paulo. The club boasts over 22,000 representatives of the São Paulo Jewish community among its members, many of whom are Litvaks. The event at Club Hebraica was organized on the initiative of the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Lithuania in Brazil Carlos Levenstein, who is a Litvak himself. The opening event was attended by honourable guests, such as Chairman of the Jewish National Fund Daniel (Danny) Atar and Vice-chairman Hernán Felman, who arrived from Israel to attend the event, including a number of heads of foreign consulates and Litvaks. The Consul General presented the project of the Litvak Culture and Identity Museum to the guests. The exhibition received a lot of attention both in South America where it was held and in Georgia. On the initiative of the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in Georgia, the texts presented at the exhibition were translated into the Georgian language. On 27 November, a version of the exhibition in both Georgian and English was presented at David Baazov Museum of History of the Jews of Georgia where its opening ceremony was attended by foreign ambassadors, staff of the EU representative office and other high ranking officials. ■

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## CONFERENCE ON THE HOLOCAUST EDUCATION HELD AT THE MUSEUM

On 11–12 December, a conference on the Holocaust education was held at the Tolerance Centre of the Museum. It was initiated by the European March of the Living Network and attended by several dozen of teachers from Lithuania, Austria, Belgium and Greece. The participants of the conference discussed challenges and opportunities in the field of the Holocaust education, listened to presentations by Prof Šarūnas Liekis and Dr Nerijus Šepetys, took part in creative workshops, visited expositions at the Tolerance Centre of the Museum and the Samuel Bak Museum, and had a meeting with Emanuelis Zingeris, a member of Parliament and signatory of the Lithuanian Independence Act. Partners of the event: International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of Nazi and Soviet Regimes in Lithuania and Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum. ■



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## DISCUSSION ON THE TOPIC OF VILNIUS DURING WORLD WAR I

On 13 December, a discussion 'Vilnius Between War and Peace: after 1918' was held at the Tolerance Centre of the Museum. It was devoted to the situation of Vilnius under the occupation of Kaiser Germany and covered the heritage and remembrance issues that fall under this particular period in history. The participants included historians, art and culture researchers Dr Laima Laučkaitė, Dr Tomas Balkelis, Dr Laimonas Briedis and Dr Aurimas Švedas and was moderated by the latter. After the discussion participants of the event were invited to admire the artwork by Cornelia Gurlitt, an expressionist German graphic artist who lived and worked in Vilnius during World War I. ■



## PLEASE MEET THE MUSEUM TEAM: SAULĖ VALIŪNAITĖ,

Head of exposition at the Museum of Culture and Identity  
of Lithuanian Jews (branch of VGSJM)

*- How long have you been working at the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum?*

I have been working at the Museum since 2013. For five years it was my auxiliary job. I first started working at the Department for Commemoration of Rescuers of Jews, later continued at the History Research Department and in spring 2018 it became my main job.



*- You have been researching Lithuanian Jewish history and culture for many years by now. What served as an incentive for you to go into this topic?*

It would be an overestimation to say that I have been researching Lithuanian Jewish history and culture. The topic of my Bachelor and Master studies was the secular culture of the Vilnius Jewish community of the interwar period, including its interaction with Lithuanian and Polish cultures. History and culture of the Vilnius Jewish community of the interwar period has remained close to my heart until this day. However, in order to understand the mentality of this short period in history and that of an urban community it is extremely important to get to know a broader political, cultural and religious context.

I became interested in Lithuanian Jewish history in the first year of my studies. The Holocaust raised a lot of questions in my mind. I could not understand how come that such a tragedy ever happened at all. With time I learned more and more about Lithuanian Jewish history I could not stop thinking of why such a colourful and rich part of Lithuanian history and culture as the history of our Jews was hidden from me and for twenty long years I did not know or hear anything about it.

*- What makes Lithuanian Jewish heritage important to Lithuania and the rest of the world?*

It would be rather easy to list the main achievements of Lithuanian Jews, but this is not what I consider to be the purpose of my work. Instead, it is extremely important to change the prevailing narrative of Lithuanian history, which in its essence is a Lithuanian narrative rather than a Lithuanian history. I would like Lithuanian Jewish history to finally become an integral part of Lithuanian history instead of being some interesting or even exotic part of it. This could equally be said about Jewish culture and that of any other national minority. We do not know them at all and it seems to be extremely weird. As a resident of Vilnius I am extremely proud of the fact that such people as Avraham Sutzkever or Chaim Grade used to live and work here, and that it was here in Vilnius that the YIVO institute was established. However, most of the residents of Vilnius have never heard of it in their entire lives. The history of our Jews, their cultural, scientific and other achievements and traditions should become a full-fledged part of our historic memory. I consider this to be much more important than any individual occasions to rejoice over the achievements of Lithuanian Jewish progeny.

*- You are currently working on a new branch of the VGSJM – the Museum of Culture and Identity of Lithuanian Jews. What kind of visitors are you aiming at?*

I would very much like this new museum to attract as broad a range of visitors as possible, that is families with children, students, local and foreign tourists, and even researchers. This is one of our key goals in preparing the exposition for the new museum.

*- What kind of exhibitions and experiences will the new museum offer to its visitors?*

The new museum will introduce its visitors to the phenomena that formed the Lithuanian Jewish identity: historical context, religion, education, including languages and secular culture. Part of the exposition will be devoted to Rafael Chwoles, an artist from Vilnius. However, it is still too early to speak about any particular experiences or forms. Let's keep our visitors intrigued for a while.

*- When will this ambitious project be finalised?*

We hope that the whole implementation process will be smooth and the project will be finalised in 2020.

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

In my free time I like being a mother best of all! I choose to read literature related to my job and love reading memoirs of Vilnius Jews about the interwar period. In addition, I love to learn. Currently I am enrolled in an internet course on Yiddish literature, in particular Abraham Reisen's writings, and I hope to finally finish a course on Jewish folklore.

- Thank you for the interview!



Let's keep in touch! Follow us on the museum's website [jmuseum.lt](http://jmuseum.lt) and [Facebook](#).

We kindly invite you to contribute to the establishment of the Museum of Culture and Identity of Lithuanian Jews by supporting the acquiring of exhibits, creation of short introductory films and payments for experts via [Paypal](#).

Your support is very important for us!

## FACTS AND FIGURES 2018 m.

Number of exhibitions opened at the museum	10
Number of exhibitions opened abroad	9 (Museum's exhibitions abroad were visited by more than 8,000 people)
Number of events held	29
Number of educational events held	140
Number of visitors received	34 019
The VGSJM collections were supplemented with	artwork created by Max Band and paintings by Neemiya Arbit Blatas and Lazar Krestin. The purchase was funded by the Lithuanian Council for Culture;  artistic heritage of the Savickas family which was kindly donated to the Museum by Ramunė and Raimondas Savickas.



## CONTACTS AND WORKING HOURS OF THE EXPOSITION SITES



### TOLERANCE CENTRE and SAMUEL BAK MUSEUM

Naugarduko St. 10/2, Vilnius  
tel. +370 5 262 9666  
email: muziejus@jmuseum.lt

*I-IV 10:00–18:00, V, VII 10:00–16:00, VI closed*



### HOLOCAUST EXPOSITION

Pamėnkalnio St. 12, Vilnius  
tel. +370 5 262 0730  
email: holokausto.ekspozicija@jmuseum.lt

*I-IV 9:00–17:00, V 9:00–16:00  
VI closed, VII 10:00–16:00*



### PANERIAI MEMORIAL INFORMATION CENTER

Agrastų St. 15, Vilnius  
tel. +370 699 90 384  
email: paneriumemorialas@jmuseum.lt

*I, VI closed  
II-IV 9:00–17:00  
V, VII 9:00–16:00*

*The center is closed between October and May.  
Visits only by prior appointment.*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We hereby extend our cordial gratitude to everyone who supported the Museum during 2018 and contributed financially or by donating exhibits, providing services or consultations. Our sincere thank you goes to:



William Scherl | Michael Philip Davis | Alberto J. Bird | Ilya Goldovt | Joseph Mandelbraut | William Kentridge |  
Mark Atamuk | Bryan Shill | Thomas Irmer | Dana Pomerantz-Mazurkevich | Raimondas Savickas Ir Ramunė Savickaitė-  
Meškėlienė

*Photo credit: Paulius Račiūnas and Živilė A. Juonytė.*