

# UPHEAVAL

## GLOBAL CONFERENCE FOR JEWISH MUSEUMS

COUNCIL OF AMERICAN JEWISH MUSEUMS

ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN JEWISH MUSEUMS

APRIL 2021



Throughout the past year of the pandemic, Jewish museums have faced unprecedented challenges and have responded. They have worked together in new configurations, have been resources for new communities, and are envisioning new ways to be museums for the present and the future.

The Council of American Jewish Museums is proud to present its first online, global conference for Jewish museums—developed in partnership with the Association of European Jewish Museums. This year, we are collectively unpacking the topic of Upheaval—recognizing that our profession has been greatly impacted by pressing issues and the crises of our times. At the same time, however, museums are creating their own upheavals—through innovation, reconfiguration, and approaches that will reshape our work for years to come.

# PROGRAM

## UPHEAVAL

**TUESDAY APRIL 20**

11:00 AM EDT

### **WELCOME**

11:10 AM EDT

### **JEWISH MUSEUMS: CONTEXT MATTERS**

For this year's program we have come together as a global community: to address common challenges and opportunities, to build a collegial community, and to articulate implications for the worldwide field of Jewish museums. While Jewish museums around the world share many mutual concerns, each one operates within its own geographic, political, and social realities. This session explores, from various angles, how context profoundly shapes the work of Jewish museums—from Tel Aviv and Sydney, to Hohenems and Washington, DC.

#### *Speakers*

**AVRIL ALBA** Consulting Scholar, Holocaust Memorial Museum–Sydney Jewish Museum

**KARA BLOND** Executive Director, Capital Jewish Museum

**HANNO LOEWY** Director, Jewish Museum Hohenems

**DAN TADMOR** CEO, ANU—Museum of the Jewish People

#### *Moderated by*

**BARBARA KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT** Ronald S. Lauder Chief Curator of the Core Exhibition, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews

12:10 PM EDT

### **KEYNOTE BY JULIA WATTS BELSER**

### **BEYOND "BACK TO NORMAL": CRISIS AND THE POLITICS OF RESTORATION IN RABBINIC STORY & CONTEMPORARY CULTURE**

Bringing feminist disability insights to ancient Jewish narrative, Julia Watts Belser argues that Jewish stories about the destruction of Jerusalem can be a powerful companion for thinking about contemporary experiences of crisis and upheaval, from climate disruption to COVID-19. This talk brings ancient Jewish sources into conversation with contemporary voices from disability communities, inviting us to consider the social, political, and spiritual stakes of how we navigate change and reimagine possibility in our own lives and communal institutions.

1 PM EDT

**BREAKOUT DISCUSSIONS**

Grab a coffee and join us for breakout discussion groups, exploring the theme of “Context Matters” from the opening session, with colleagues around the world.

2:10 PM EDT

**LIVING THE STORY: THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE OF THE COVID-ERA**

We are all living through remarkable times that also have direct implications for our work as museum professionals. What should we be collecting, whose stories are we recording for history, and how are we already interpreting the story as we live it? This session will explore different approaches to collecting and interpreting these times—from oral histories to digital-born ephemera and artworks created in response to the crisis.

*Speakers*

**BENJAMIN FILENE** Associate Director for Curatorial Affairs, National Museum of American History

**CARON SETHILL** Programme Manager–Europe, National Library of Israel

**YOTAM YAKIR** General Director, Haifa Museums

**MELISSA MARTENS YAVERBAUM** Executive Director, Council of American Jewish Museums

3:20 PM EDT

**STRATEGIC REPOSITIONING:  
MEETING THE MOMENT AND FACING NEW FUTURES**

Jewish museums across America have reached an inflection point—compelling them to respond to issues of social justice, the ongoing effects of the pandemic, and financial instability across the non-profit sector. In this session we’ll hear from American Jewish museum leaders as they strategize new directions for their institutions. We’ll explore strategic decision making, new value propositions, changing audiences, narrative shifts, new alliances, and organizational sustainability—conversations that reposition these museums for a new chapter in the post-pandemic world.

*Speakers*

**MISHA GALPERIN** CEO, National Museum of American Jewish History

**CLAUDIA GOULD** Helen Goldsmith Menschel Director, Jewish Museum

**JESSIE KORNBERG** President & CEO, Skirball Cultural Center

*Moderated by*

**MARSHA SEMMEL** Independent Consultant, US

*and*

**LORI STARR** Independent Consultant, US

## WEDNESDAY APRIL 21

11 AM EDT

### HOLOCAUST MUSEUMS AND MORAL LEADERSHIP

As museums around the world operate within new social, political, and urgent realities—what is the appropriate role for Holocaust museums? What should they interpret, for whom, and to what end? What has changed over the past year for Holocaust museums, and how has that affected their potential role? This session will look at responsibilities and opportunities for Holocaust museums, taking into account the difficulties of incorporating some of the most pressing issues of our times.

#### *Speakers*

**TALI NATES** Director, Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre

**EMILE SCHRIJVER** General Director, Jewish Cultural Quarter and Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam

**STEPHEN SMITH** Andrew J. and Erna Finci Viterbi Executive Director, USC Shoah Foundation

#### *Moderated by*

**JAMES YOUNG** Distinguished Professor Emeritus and Founding Director of the Institute for Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies, U. of Massachusetts Amherst

12:10 PM EDT

### KEYNOTE BY DARIUSZ STOLA THE PERILS OF RELEVANCE AND MEMORY WARS

In their struggle for relevance, museums face many risks. The fast rise of POLIN to popularity was followed by a clash with the populist government of Poland and the rising tide of vicious online attacks—having attracted the attention of those that wanted to control the past. It was not alone; the development of the Museum of the Second World War and the European Solidarity Center in Gdansk have had different trajectories but also exposed tensions between political projects meant to restore national pride and projects that rely on credible and critical histories. This keynote will revisit the case of POLIN Museum to illustrate how museums of Jewish history worldwide may be affected by such tensions, and what they can do about it.

1:10 PM EDT

### BREAK WITH BREAKOUT DISCUSSIONS

Bring a snack and join us for breakout discussion groups, exploring the theme of what we choose to remember, and what we choose to forget.

2:20 PM EDT

**RECONFIGURING PERFORMANCE AS CULTURAL ASSET:  
IN SESSION WITH VICTORIA HANNA**

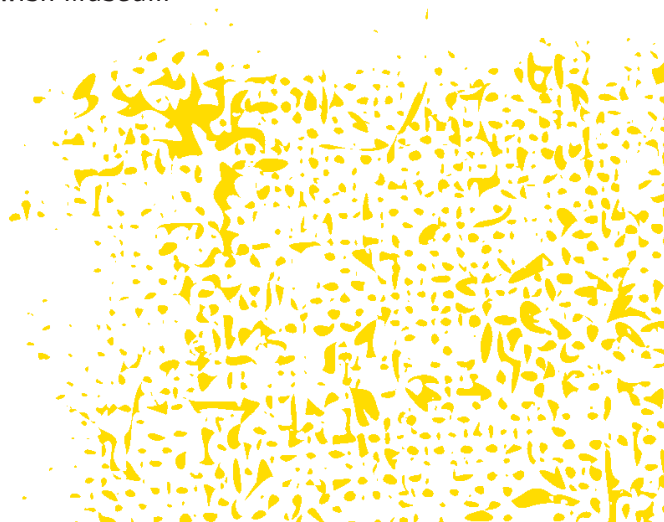
In these socially distanced times, we have learned to work in new configurations and to feature new content across time and space. This session looks at ways that performance can be re-centered as a Jewish cultural asset that draws upon and contributes to the material record of Jewish creativity. Join us in a session featuring performance and conversation with Victoria Hanna, who has created pieces that respond to Hebrew amulets, ancient texts, and the Hebrew alphabet.

*In conversation with***FRANCESCO SPAGNOLO** Curator, Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life

3:20 PM EDT

**ADVANCING INCLUSION IN JEWISH MUSEUMS**

Museums everywhere are grappling with the particular meaning of inclusion for their institutions, with special considerations per context, subject emphasis, and communities of service. For American Jewish museums, the issue of inclusion is both challenging and pressing. In this session, we will consider how to approach these issues in a concerted way: what do we want to accomplish, what might inclusion look like, and what are our special responsibilities, challenges, and opportunities? Join us as we hear from individuals advancing the work through inclusive storytelling, strategies, and action.

*Speakers***JONAH BOYARIN** Jewish Communities Liaison, New York City Commission on Human Rights**MAKEBA CLAY** Senior Diversity Fellow, American Alliance of Museums**LINDSEY NEWMAN** Co-Founder, Not Free to Desist & Director of Community Engagement, Be'chol Lashon*Moderated by***ANNE HROMADKA GREENWALD** Founder, AMH Art Advisory  
*and***JUDY MARGLES** Executive Director, Oregon Jewish Museum  
and Center for Holocaust Education



## THURSDAY APRIL 22

### 11:15 AM–1:30 PM EDT **DIRECTORS FORUM SESSION** **MONETIZING THE PRESENT: NEW MODELS**

This session—for Executive Directors and CEOs of Jewish museums—is designed to re-examine models and strategies for earned income and philanthropy, especially given lessons learned from the pandemic and the ongoing challenges that resulted. What do audiences value most in our museums, what can we deliver that is unique, and how will this help us establish a model for revitalization and sustainability?

In partnership with jMUSE

#### *Speakers*

**JAKE BARTON** Founder & Principal, Local Projects

**ALICE GREENWALD** President and Chief Executive Officer, the National September 11 Memorial & Museum

**RONALD LEOPOLD** Executive Director, Anne Frank House

**SHANA PENN** Executive Director, Taube Philanthropies

**BRIGITTE SION** Museum Program Director, Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe

**MICHELE COHN TOCCI** President, David Berg Foundation

#### *Moderated by*

**MICHAEL GLICKMAN**

## TUESDAY APRIL 27

11 AM EDT

### **HOW WE TALK ABOUT ISRAEL: A CONVERSATION BETWEEN AUTHOR MEIR SHALEV AND CAROLE ZAWATSKY**

The history and culture of Israel are essential to many of the narratives explored within Jewish museum exhibits and programs. Yet in public-facing venues, such topics are often derailed by pressures and politics. In this session, author Meir Shalev and consultant Carole Zawatsky discuss new ways to frame contemporary dialog around Israel. Shalev uses his pen to explore social inequity with a critical and keen analysis of his homeland, without diminishing his love of the land or belief in the state. This session will suggest new approaches and viewpoints to re-frame the museum exercise surrounding Israel.

12:10 PM EDT

**NEW DIRECTIONS FOR CURATORIAL PRACTICE**

All functions of Jewish museum work were rearranged by the pandemic. For curators creating exhibitions, the consequences—both short-term and long-term—are profound. As Jewish museums around the world reopen and engage audiences both digitally and in person, how will curatorial work evolve? What are the new ideas around exhibitions that could launch a renaissance for our field in the midst of uncertainty and the rethinking of priorities? In this session we'll hear from curators and innovators exploring the tensions in exhibition work: from hyper-local experiences to ones for global audiences; from shared authority to new forms of expertise; from intimate experiences to those that bring us together; and from exhibitions as cultural experiences to those that strive for social change.

*Speakers*

**ABBY LEIBMAN** President & CEO, MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

**HEIDI RABBEN** Senior Curator, Contemporary Jewish Museum

**JOANNE ROSENTHAL** Independent Curator, UK

**DIEGO ROTMAN** Head of the Department of Theatre Studies,  
Hebrew University of Jerusalem

*Moderated by*

**EMILY BILSKI** Independent Curator, Israel

1:10 PM EDT

**BREAK WITH BREAKOUT DISCUSSIONS**

Bring a snack and join us for breakout discussion groups, exploring the theme of curatorial practice and museum accountability.

2:20–3:30 PM EDT

**EMBRACING DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY**

For most museums, the pandemic dramatically disrupted the way they work—from exhibitions to research, programs, education, collecting, and workplace culture. Now that many museums are starting to reopen, what does meaningful and strategic use of digital look like, now and in the future? This session will talk about unexpected yet easy-to-access ways Jewish museums might approach virtual audiences moving forward. Who might become our longstanding online audiences, how do we approach the opportunity with purpose, and what is our special role as a culturally specific field?

*Speakers*

**DEBORAH HOWES** President, Howes Studio Inc.

**LISA SASAKI** Director, Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center  
& Interim Director, Smithsonian American Women's History Museum

*With* **ALICE RUBIN** Engagement Consultant, Council of American Jewish Museums

## WEDNESDAY APRIL 28

11 AM EDT

### PERSPECTIVES FROM GERMANY: NEW CORE EXHIBITIONS

Core exhibitions are some of the largest and most difficult displays to configure. They must speak to many audiences, remain relevant over time, and express the primary goals, values, and narratives of the museum in its environment. This session focuses on new core exhibitions at the Jewish Museum Berlin and the Jewish Museum Frankfurt, exploring how they developed new approaches for interpreting Jewish history while contending with Germany's past. What does this imply for our own Jewish museums, and for America's approach to its own fraught past and ongoing struggles with systemic racism?

*Speakers*

**MICHAL FRIEDLANDER** Curator of Judaica and Applied Arts, Jewish Museum Berlin

**MIRJAM WENZEL** Director, Jewish Museum Frankfurt

*In conversation with*

**SUSAN NEIMAN** Director, Einstein Forum

12:10 PM EDT

### ACCOUNTABILITY AND NEW MUSEUM NARRATIVES

Jewish museums are in a profound period of reflection and recalibration in regard to the stories they tell. Underlying and driving narratives are called into question—resulting in a fascinating and difficult period of re-examination. This session will explore issues that impact our narrative accountability. What have our museums purposefully remembered or forgotten? What do they highlight from the Jewish past, and what does that say for the Jewish future? How can we be accountable to very different communities, and how will we weigh our particular missions against matters that are immediately pressing and urgent?

*Speakers*

**ORIT SHAHAM GOVER** Chief Curator, ANU—Museum of the Jewish People

**LAURA ARNOLD LEIBMAN** Professor of English and Humanities, Reed College

**AMITAI MENDELSON** Curator of Israeli Art, The Israel Museum

**JAKUB NOWAKOWSKI** Director, Galicia Jewish Museum

*Moderated by*

**JEFFREY SHANDLER** Distinguished Professor of Jewish Studies, Rutgers University



1:10 PM EDT

**SPACE MAKERS & RISK TAKERS**

As a new generation of museum professionals emerges in the field, how do we make room for new talents and voices? This session will explore ways that museums can make space and encourage risk-taking to cultivate a culture of innovation in our institutions. It will pair space makers and risk takers in conversation, showing how different combinations equip us better for the fast-changing world.

*Speakers*

**JONATHAN EDELMAN** Curatorial Associate, Capital Jewish Museum

*With* **LAURA SCHIAVO** Associate Professor, The George Washington University

**ZSUZSANNA TORONYI** Director, Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives

*With* **FELICITAS HEIMANN-JELINEK** Independent Consultant, Austria

**GUGULETHU MOYO** Executive Director, Jewish History Museum/Holocaust History Center

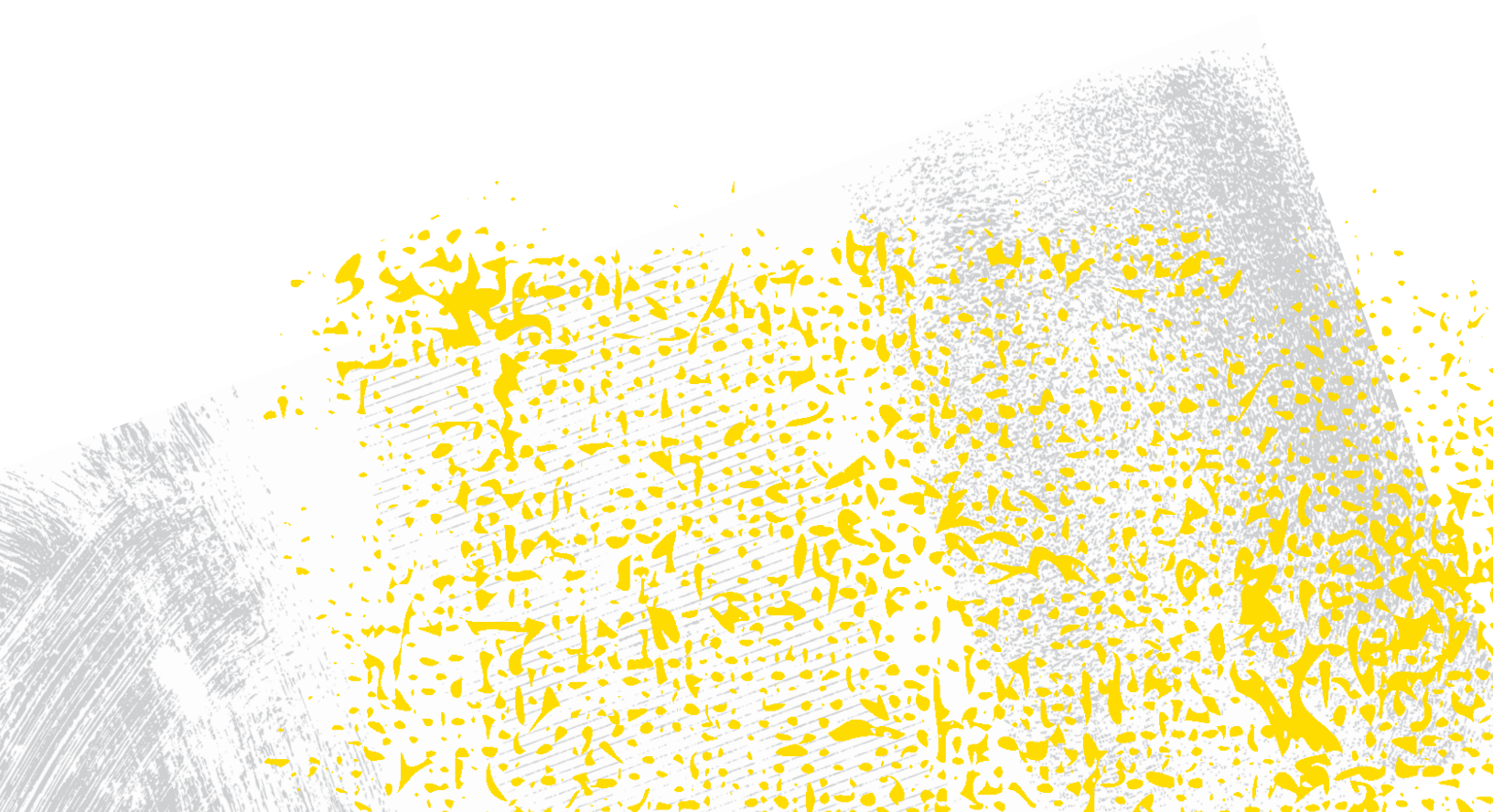
**IVY WEINGRAM** Independent Curator

*With* **GABRIEL GOLDSTEIN** Independent Curator

2:10 PM EDT

**CONCLUSION & CAJM TOWN HALL**

Join us for CAJM's annual town hall meeting—which includes acknowledgments, the CAJM board election, important announcements, and our concluding remarks on Upheaval.



## THANK YOU TO OUR CONFERENCE SUPPORTERS



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