



# AEJM Annual Conference 2017

*The Absence of Things – Jewish Museums & the Possibilities of Limitations*

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November 19 - 22  
Toledo | Spain

# annual conference

[www.aejm.org](http://www.aejm.org)

## *The Absence of Things*

How do museums deal with historical periods from which almost no material culture remains? How does this *Absence* effect the museological and curatorial practices of Jewish museums in Europe?

### LOCATION

#### Sephardic Museum of Toledo

Calle Samuel Leví, s/n  
45002 Toledo (Spain)

#### Real Fundación de Toledo

Plaza de Victorio Macho, 2  
45002 Toledo (Spain)

#### Hotel San Juan de los Reyes

Reyes Católicos, 5  
45002 Toledo (Spain)

### CONTACTS

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# Programme

## Saturday 18 November

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19:00 Doors open  
*location: Sephardic Museum of Toledo*

19:30 – 20:30 EVENING CONCERT  
*Luna de Sefarad*

Optional event – Ana Alcaide Trio performs contemporary songs with Sephardic roots

20:30 – 21:30 RECEPTION

After the concert at the Sephardic Museum of Toledo, delegates are invited for a reception the Hotel San Juan de los Reyes

*Please note that it is required to buy a ticket for evening concert & reception in advance.*

History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo, will reflect on *The Absence of Things* in particular relation to the development of this museum, which, following the 1990s, has been faced with an urgent need to tell the region's recent troubled past without necessarily having the objects at hand to do so.

11:15 – 12:00 CONVERSATION I  
*Jewish Museums & The Absence of Things*

How does *The Absence of Things* apply to Jewish museums? In this round table talk, **Joanne Rosenthal** will explore the impact of absence on curatorial practice with **Dr Christiane Twiehaus**, Curator of MiQua – Jewish Museum in the Archaeological Quarter Cologne (DE), **Silvia Planas Marcé**, Director of the Museum of Jewish History Girona (ES), and **Tomasz Kuncewicz**, Director of the Auschwitz Jewish Center (PL).

## Sunday 19 November

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9:00 – 9:30 Conference Registration  
*location: Sephardic Museum of Toledo*

9:30 – 10:15 OFFICIAL START OF THE PROGRAMME

Welcome from **Dr Hanno Loewy**, Chairman of the AEJM, and **Dr Santiago Palomero Plaza**, Director of the Sephardic Museum of Toledo, **Miguel Suela**, General Subdirector of State Museums, the municipality of Toledo, and **Fernando Benzo**, State Secretary for Culture

10:15 – 11:15 KEYNOTE SESSION I  
*Museums & The Absence of Things*

In conversation with **Joannes Rosenthal**, Chief Curator of the Jewish Museum London (UK), **Elma Hasimbegovic**, Director of the

12:00 – 13:00 Lunch Break  
*location: Hotel San Juan de los Reyes*

13:15 – 15:30 EXCURSION PROGRAMME  
*The Three Religions of Toledo*

The Three Religions Walk will take the conference delegates on a walking tour of Toledo that will explore the religious history of the city by visiting some of its most interesting sites. The city's Jewish heritage will be seen in the Sephardic Museum and the former synagogue Santa María la Blanca. The mosque and the Muslim quarter will provide the framework for learning about Toledo during Muslim rule, and the Christian history of the city will be represented by the Christian quarter with the monastery San Juan de los Reyes and the archbishop monuments.

# Programme

## Monday 20 November

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15:30 – 16:00 Coffee Break  
*location: Hotel San Juan de los Reyes*

16:00 – 18:00 MUSEUM FOCUS I  
*Jewish Museums & The Absence of Things*

Project presentations from our museums, moderated by **Dr Michaela Feurstein-Prasser**, Curator at xhibit.at (AT)  
*location: Sephardic Museum of Toledo*

Galicia Jewish Museum (PL)  
*The Girl in the Diary*

Auschwitz Jewish Centre (PL)  
*Google Cultural Institute*

Jewish Museum of Casale Monferrato (IT)  
*Hanukkah Lamps*

Jewish Museum of Stockholm (SE)  
*Renewing the Museum*

Hetty Berg, Jewish Cultural Quarter (NL)  
*Comparative Research Amsterdam & Berlin*

18:00 End of the Day

18:30 OPTIONAL EVENTS

A. Young Professionals Event  
*location: Café Del Fin*  
Calle Taller del Moro, 1

B. Leadership Meeting  
*location: Maruxiña Lounge*  
Travesía de los Descalzos, 1

*Please note that you need a confirmation for attending these network events*

10:00 – 12:30 GROUP SESSIONS  
*1<sup>st</sup> round of parallel group sessions*

Find an overview and meeting points at end of this programme.

12:30 – 13:30 Lunch Break  
*location: Hotel San Juan de los Reyes*

13:45 – 14:00 Welcome from the Real Fundación de Toledo  
*location: Real Fundación*

14:00 – 15:30 KEYNOTE SESSION II  
*The Absence of Things – Representing Hispanojewish and Sephardic Material Culture in Spain*

In his lecture, **Dr Javier Castaño**, CSIC – Spanish National Research Council, Madrid (ES) will analyse the dominant historical discourses present in the two Jewish museums in Spain regarding to the construction of the Sephardic and/or Jewish local identities. How has an exclusively Sephardic identity been imagined and is there a role for other Jewish ethnic groups in this construction of the historical past? The speaker will also comment on present-future dilemmas confronted by Jewish museums in Spain in dealing with the absence of objects by using new technologies or exhibition strategies.

**Silvia Planas Marcé** will further explore this topic in a round table with **Dr Arturo Ruiz Taboada**, Archaeologist at Complutense University Madrid, and **Dr Ana María Bejarano**, Associate Professor Hebrew Language and Literature at University of Barcelona, and **Dr Javier Castaño**

# Programme

15:30 – 16:15 CONVERSATIONS II  
*(Re)presenting Sephardic Heritage in European Jewish Museums*

In this round table talk, **Dr Brigitte Sion**, Museum Programme Officer of the Rothschild Foundation (Hanadiv) Europe, will focus on the (re)presentation of Sephardic heritage in our museums and in particular on the relation between this particular heritage and other Jewish traditions. What happens if other traditions are dominant? How does *The Absence of Things* apply? With **Paul Salmona**, Director Museum of Jewish Art and History Paris (FR), **Nisya Isman Allovi**, Director Quincentennial Museum of Turkish Jews (TR), **Christina Meri**, Curator of the Jewish Museum of Greece (GR), and **Marcella Ansaldi**, Director Jewish Museum of Venice (IT).

16:15 – 16:45 Coffee Break

16:45 – 18:00 MUSEUM FOCUS II  
*Sephardic Heritage*

Project presentations from our museums, moderated by **Christina Meri**, Curator at the Jewish Museum of Greece (GR)

Jewish Museum of Rome (IT)  
*The Menorah. Cult, History and Myth*

Jewish Museum London (UK)  
*Sephardic Voices*

Jewish Museum of Brussels (BE)  
*Jews and Muslims, Sharing Cultures*

Nesim Bencoya (TR) and Christina Meri  
*The Izmir Project*

18:00 – 19:15 MUSEUM FOCUS III  
*New Museum Projects*

Presentations from new museum initiatives, moderated by **Eva Koppen**, Managing Director of the AEJM

Esther Mucznik (PT)  
*The Jewish Museum of Lisbon Project*

Beatriz Blay (BR)  
*Jewish Museum of São Paulo*

Dario Disegni (IT)  
*National Museum of Italian Judaism & Shoah*

Milda Jakulytė-Vasil (LT)  
*The Lost Shtetl Museum Project in Šeduva*

Dr Christiane Twiehaus (DE)  
*MiQua – Jewish Museum in the Archaeological Quarter Cologne*

19:15 End of the Day

## Tuesday 21 November

9:00 – 11:15 GROUP SESSIONS  
*2<sup>nd</sup> round of parallel group sessions*

Find an overview and meeting points at end of this programme.

11:15 – 11:45 Coffee Break  
*location: Real Fundación*

11:45 – 12:30 CONVERSATIONS III  
*The Absence of Things & North America*

**Gravity Goldberg**, Associate Programme Director Public Programmes at Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco and Member of CAJM Board of Directors (US), and **Prof. Shelley Hornstein**, Professor Architectural History and Visual Culture at York University in Toronto (CA), will explore how *The Absence of Things* applies to Jewish museums in North America.

# Programme

## Wednesday 22 November

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12:30 – 13:00 CLOSING SESSION  
End of the official programme

14:00 – 16:00 GENERAL MEETING AEJM  
This session is open for AEJM members only

### EL GRECO IN TOLEDO

Delegates who are not attending the AGM have the chance to join a guided walk of Toledo that will take the participants to some of the major sights connected with the painter El Greco. The tour with Carmen Gómez will visit the El Greco Museum, the Santo Tomé Church and Toledo Cathedral. The cathedral is ranked among the greatest Gothic structures in Europe and contains important masterpieces including a spectacular high altar and paintings by El Greco, Titian, Velasquez, Goya and Caravaggio.

### *Meeting point*

14:00 at the entrance of the El Greco Museum, Paseo del Tránsito, s/n, 45002 Toledo

### Optional Excursion Programme SEGOVIA

- 8:45 Departure from Toledo to Segovia by bus  
Meeting point: across the river at Puente de San Martín (Saint Martin's Bridge)
- 11:00 Jewish Quarter of Segovia, guided walking tour with Carmen Gómez
- 11:45 Visit to the Centro Didactico de la Judería  
Welcome by Claudia Santos, councillor of Heritage & Tourism of the city of Segovia
- 12:30 Visit to the Real Alcázar
- 13:30 Lunch break
- 14:30 Departure to Madrid

The bus will return to Madrid-Barajas Airport.  
Expected time of arrival: 17:00

# Speakers

## ELMA HASIMBEGOVIC

*Keynote Session I – Museums & The Absence of Things*

Elma Hašimbegović is an historian and museum professional, born in Sarajevo. She holds MA and MPhil in Medieval Studies from Central European University (Budapest). Since 2001 she has been working at the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, from 2013 holding the position of the Museum Director. She is actively promoting the museum as a place of constructive dialogue and dealing with the past.

## DR JAVIER CASTANO

*Keynote Session II - The Absence of Things – Representing Hispanojewish and Sephardic Material Culture in Spain*

Dr Javier Castaño is a tenured scholar in Jewish History in the Department of Jewish and Islamic Studies at the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) in Madrid. He holds a PhD in Medieval History from the University Complutense, and specializes in the study of the Jews in Hispano-medieval societies and the early modern Mediterranean Diaspora, their socio-religious identities and cultural history. He published several works on the mobility of the Jews and their cultural characterization in Hispano-medieval societies, the relations between socio-economic behavior and religious mentalities, and the objective mechanics of conversion. He has recently edited the book *¿Una Sefarad inventada?* on the controversies of interpretation of Jewish heritage in Spain and Portugal.

## DR ARTURO RUIZ TABOADA

*Keynote Session II - The Absence of Things – Representing Hispanojewish and Sephardic Material Culture in Spain*

Arturo Ruiz Taboada is Doctor in Geography and History from the Universidad Complutense of Madrid. His current line of research is focused on the archaeology of architecture, prehistoric and roman periods and medieval funerary world. He is the author of nearly 75 scientific publications and 5 books. He currently works as a professional archaeologist and associate professor at Complutense University of Madrid.

## DR ANA MARIA BEJARANO

*Keynote Session II - The Absence of Things – Representing Hispanojewish and Sephardic Material Culture in Spain*

Ana Bejarano Escanillo is Associated Professor - Senior Lecturer of Hebrew Language and Literature at the University of Barcelona, Hebrew-Spanish literary translator and coordinator of the Hebrew-Spanish literary translation courses of La Escuela de Traductores de Toledo. She has translated more than fifty works by authors such as A. B. Yehoshua, David Grossman, Zeruya Shalev, Etgar Keret, Meir Shalev, Yehudit Katzir, S. Yizhar, Raquel Bluvstein, Sayed Kashua, Batya Gur, Yehoshua Sobol, Nir Baram among others. She is the 2016 winner of the National Prize for the Best Translation (Premio Nacional a la Mejor Traducción), awarded by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of Spain (for *Gran Cabaret – A Horse walks into a bar*, by David Grossman). Her PhD dissertation was devoted to the Hebrew Medieval Poet Shelomo Ben Reuben Bonafed (1370-1448) and she has been the curator of the exhibition “Barcelona Haggadot. The Jewish Splendour of Catalan Gothic Period”, held at the Museu d’Historia de Barcelona in 2015, an exhibition that reunited for the first time in more than five centuries an extensive selection of the most splendid illuminated manuscripts of the Catalan Gothic period.

# Group Sessions

## OVERVIEW OF PARALLEL GROUP SESSIONS

*Please note that it is required to have signed up for the group sessions in advance.*

### MONDAY 20 NOVEMBER

*A: Archival Visit National Historical Archive of the Spanish Nobility at the Hospital Tavera, with Arancha Lafuente, Director of the Archive*

#### Meeting Point

9:30 – the bus leaves from Sephardic Museum of Toledo

Archivo Histórico de la Nobleza houses, preserves and disseminates archives from the Spanish nobility. The aim of this visit is to show the contents and a wide variety of documents and books, many of them painted, related to the life of people in the Castilian and Aragonian lordships. We will show documents reflecting the life of the ancient aljamas, the Jews and conversos during the middle Ages. Privileges, ceremonies of homage and other types or documents of the archives of the Dukes of Frías (Velasco), Duques de Baena (Fernandez de Córdoba) or other families like the Dukes of Infantado (the powerful Mendoza family) will be exhibited. The archive is located in the Tavera Hospital building, one of the most important Spanish civil architecture buildings of renaissance stile.

*B: Expert Talk Origin, Decline and Oblivion of the Medieval Jewish Cemetery of Toledo, by Dr Arturo Ruiz Taboada, Complutense Univerity Madrid*

#### Location

9:50 – Sephardic Museum Library

Please use the entrance at Calle Samuel Levi 2, 45002 Toledo

The Jewish presence on the Iberian Peninsula dates back to Roman times and is characterized by a centuries-long alternation of light and shadow, until their expulsion from Spain in A.D. 1492 and Portugal in A.D. 1496. There have been very few Jewish cemeteries identified in the Iberian Peninsula considering the importance that this community had throughout a long period of history. Cemeteries have always been meeting places. Different religions conceive of this space as a place of rest and transition to the afterlife and

the reflection of the social diversity of the moment. The medieval Jewish cemetery of Toledo was discovered in year 2008. It has clearly distinctive elements that characterize this cemetery from other religions, such as the funerary architecture or the depth of the pits. Arturo Ruiz Taboada will discuss the origin, decline and oblivion of this cemetery in the context of the three cultures of medieval Toledo. This session will include a visit to the Roman Circus, which was used as a cemetery during the late Middle Ages.

*C: Museum Education Best Practice & Methodology I A Museum for Everyone, with Carmen Álvarez Nogales, Sephardic Museum of Toledo, and Marta Senis Gilmartin, ONCE*

#### Location

9:50 – Sephardic Museum of Toledo, Synagogue

Please use the service entrance at Calle San Juan de Dios 13, 45002 Toledo

In 2011 the Sephardic Museum of Toledo opened a new way of including new audiences. Its permanent exhibition now display new sections of its masterworks with touch stations that allow visually impaired people to have an independent visit. The museum aims to make its exhibitions accessible to all visitors and offers several services for those who are visually impaired, hard of hearing, or deaf. The Sephardic Museum has been awarded a prize for this work by ONCE Foundation. This group session focuses on accessibility of museums and will be facilitated by Carmen Álvarez Nogales, curator of the museum, and Marta Senis Gilmartin from ONCE in Castilla La Mancha.

*D: Workshop Developing a Digital Strategy for Museums – a Toolkit for Staying Relevant, with Dr Mirjam Wenzel, Director of the Jewish Museum Frankfurt*

#### Location

9:50 – Conference Hall of the Real Fundación Toledo, Plaza de Victoria Macho SN, 45002 Toledo

Digital strategies are defining and coordinating the structures, projects and resources of museums that are willing to implement digital change. The workshop will provide the participants with a small toolkit for the development of a digital strategy that fits to every specific organisation.



# Group Sessions

*E: Talking Circle The European Days of Jewish Culture and the European Jewish Museums, with Assumpcio Hosta, General Secretary AEPJ, and Victor Sorensen, Director AEPJ*

## Location

9:50 – Small Conference Hall of the Real Fundación Toledo, Plaza de Victoria Macho SN, 45002 Toledo

The European Days of Jewish Culture is a project coordinated by the European Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Jewish Culture and Heritage (AEPJ), which will celebrate its twentieth edition next year. Last year more than 300 cities from 34 countries joined the program. Since 2016, a task force has been creating temporary exhibitions jointly with the National Library of Israel. We would very much like to share this process and experience with museum professionals. In this group session, we will have the opportunity to discuss with Jewish museums the evolution, future perspectives and projects, and above all, we will focus on the involvement and possibilities of participation among Jewish museums in Europe.

## **TUESDAY 21 NOVEMBER**

*A: Archival Visit: Archive of the Chapter of Toledo at the Cathedral, with Isidoro Castañeda, curator*

## Meeting Point

8:45 – Cathedral Archive, Calle Hombre de Palo 2, 45001 Toledo

This archival visit will focus on the manuscripts and documents preserved in the Cathedral that show the historical evolution of the Jewish community in Medieval Toledo and its following influence on the city during the modern and contemporary age. During the visit we will also see some examples from the Latin and Mozarab collections, which both consist of manuscripts that illustrate Jewish daily life in the Medieval city of Toledo. We will also look into the Blood Inquisitorial Documents (“Limpieza de sangre”) collection (1547-1855). The documents from this collection all refer to the laws and rules that excluded Jewish descendants from Ecclesiastic Cathedral privileges. Furthermore, we will visit the Library of this Archive and see some volumes of the Hebrew Manuscripts collection, which stem from Rome, as well as the Magna Multilingual Bible, which was made in the XVI Century and is one of the best

examples of the Castilian Humanism and the study of Hebrew Language in Castilla.

*B: Best Practice Community Building: Open Jewish Houses, with Anat Harel, Manager Collections & Knowledge at the Jewish Cultural Quarter Amsterdam*

## Location

9:00 – Conference Hall of El Greco Museum, Paseo del Transito SN, 45002 Toledo

Open Jewish Houses (OJH) is a commemorative programme, held yearly on the national day of WWII remembrance in the Netherlands. The programme has grown considerably since its first edition in 2012, with 14 cities and towns participating in May 2017. Nationally, it has been presented as a ‘best practice’ for projects creating new ways of commemoration. As an event now organized mostly by local volunteers, it poses specific challenges and chances for the Jewish Cultural Quarter, which still serves as the organizational ‘backbone’ of the programme. This session will explore Open Jewish Houses as a best practice example. Together with Anat Harel, we will also look into aspects such as community involvement, working with volunteers, financing and marketing and communication of OJH.

*C: Museum Education Best Practice & Methodology II: Family Education Programmes, with Lucja Koch and Anna Czerwinska of POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews*

## Location

9:00 – Small Conference Hall of the Real Fundación Toledo, Plaza de Victoria Macho SN, 45002 Toledo

POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw now offers a rich and diverse programme for families. Since the opening of the core exhibition in October 2014 the museum is observing a growing interest in programmes dedicated to families. In order to attract them to the Museum, it strived to adapt its facilities and programs to the needs and expectations of young visitors on many levels. To do this, POLIN created dedicated programmes, trained educators and docents, and adapted museum spaces. The aim of this workshop is to present family education programmes offered by POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews as well as to show in practice chosen methods and tools used in activities and projects addressed to families with children aged 4-10.

# Group Sessions

*D: Workshop: Provenance & Quovadience Research, with Dr Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek and Bernhard Purin, Director of the Jewish Museum Munich*

Location

9:00 – Conference Hall of the Real Fundación Toledo, Plaza de Victoria Macho SN, 45002 Toledo

The workshop on provenance and quovadience research of Judaica will comprise a practical and a theoretical parts. First we will look at principal research questions and methods on the basis of some selected examples. This will be followed by the theoretical part, focusing on new finding and research aids, data bases and other online publications.

*E: Talking Circle: Challenges & Opportunities, with Abigail Morris, Director of the Jewish Museum London*

Location

9:00 – Sephardic Museum Library  
Please use the entrance at Calle Samuel Levi 2, 45002 Toledo

This discussion session will focus on challenges and opportunities facing the leaders of European Jewish museums, such as fundraising, audience development and governance. Leadership of Jewish museums are invited to join an optional dinner on Sunday evening (please register separately) to informally set the agenda for Talking Circle. We will address whatever issues people want to bring to the session.