



THE
POSTHUMOUS
LANDSCAPE:
Jewish Sites
of Memory
in Poland Today

Photographs by
David Kaufman

Guest Curator:
Evelyn Tauben

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Reuben & Helene
Dennis Museum
Beth Tzedec Congregation
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GUIDE
TO THE
EXHIBITION

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The Posthumous Landscape

give me back the memory of me
~ Jerzy Ficowski

Before the deep fissure caused by World War II, Poland was a dynamic centre of Jewish life for over 1,000 years. This exhibition presents a view of Poland today through the discerning eye of architectural photographer, David Kaufman, who finds beauty in unexpected places: intricate carving on an 18th century tombstone, detailed brickwork of a 19th century factory, verdant overgrowth in a 400-year old cemetery.

The first floor of the exhibition features photographs relating to pre-war Jewish life. Certain locations are equally connected to the resurgence of Jewish culture and community in Poland since the end of Communism. Kaufman's richly detailed images turn our attention to present-day realities and possibilities, inviting us to consider Poland anew in all its complicated, fractured, promising actuality.

The exhibition continues on the second floor with images of glorious restored synagogues and a series of cemetery pictures that Kaufman sees as "gardens of history," not markers of death. The Jewish cemeteries are monuments to a culturally, religiously and politically diverse civilization. Kaufman has also captured ways in which the country is scarred by ubiquitous remnants of the Holocaust, photographing sites with a traumatic past and locations dedicated to remembering.

Both the exhibition title and epigraph come from a moving poetry collection by Polish writer Jerzy Ficowski (1924 – 2006) about the loss and suffering of his Jewish neighbours during the Holocaust. Interlaced with grief, his words suggest to me a way to navigate a wounded terrain, both emotional and geographic. Rather than repressing Poland's darkest era, forgetting its centuries of Jewish flourishing or ignoring its nascent resuscitation, we can enter Poland's posthumous landscape. Kaufman's photographs offer us an entry point.

Evelyn Tauben
Guest Curator

Artist's Statement

My own family has no direct connection to Poland, but I had a strong Jewish upbringing and was aware from a young age of the Holocaust and its history in that country. My wife's parents were born in Poland and both of them regarded the country as a vast graveyard into which they would never set foot again. However, as I got older, like many of my contemporaries I became increasingly interested in exploring the European places where Jews lived for centuries and created a unique civilization

I have had a dual career, as a documentary film producer/director, including eighteen years at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and as a photographer, specializing in architecture-based images. For a long time I struggled to express my Jewish identity in my work. I made my first trip to Poland in 1992 for CBC's *The Fifth Estate* to make a program about hidden child survivors of the Holocaust, and two more trips a decade later to make films about the Warsaw ghetto uprising and the Lodz Ghetto. On all these occasions I was emotionally overwhelmed by both the quality and quantity of Jewish material culture, remnants of Jewish life, that I saw wherever I went in Poland.

The Jewish cemeteries in Warsaw and Lodz made an enormous impression on me. In late 2007, I travelled to Poland to begin a long term project photographing these memorial sites. Since then, I have returned to Poland six more times, visiting fourteen different Jewish cemeteries and, along the

way, photographing synagogues and other Jewish architecture, former Jewish neighbourhoods and ghettos, sites related to the Holocaust, and other artifacts of Jewish life..

Photographically, I find the subject matter emotionally engaging, challenging to depict, and often beautiful. The cemeteries especially are remarkable for the quality of the memorial art and their forested environments. But the reason I return to Poland was driven home to me last summer when my wife and I stood in a small cemetery in the town of Bochnia, lovingly maintained by a ninety-one year old man who has worked at it for more than forty years, with little or no compensation, simply out of a sense of duty to his Jewish neighbours who were either killed or left the country long ago. There are no living Jews in Bochnia today. I constantly think that more people need to be aware of the treasure that remains in this small town and many places like it throughout the country.

There are few Jews in Poland today compared to the past, and the task of preserving the artifacts of Polish Jewish life is enormous. There are Jews and other people outside of Poland dedicated to this work and, recently, many Poles have expressed a desire to protect what remains there of Jewish life, which is encouraging. I photograph there because I feel a strong connection to the heritage of Polish Jewry which has shaped our own Jewish lives in Canada and elsewhere. More than that, I hope my images touch others and inspire them to help maintain that heritage for generations.

David Kaufman



Restored Synagogue, Bobowa, 2012

The name Bobowa (or Bobov) is best known today as the original seat of the Bobover Hasidic Dynasty, founded by Shelomoh Halberstam (1847–1905) who moved in 1892 to Bobowa with his disciples from Vishnitsa, another Galician town, where he had already established himself as a Hasidic *rebbe*. The grandson of the head of the Sandz Hasidic court,

Halberstam had opened the first Hasidic *yeshiva*, diverging from Sandz practice which did not approve of *yeshiva* study. His relocation to Bobowa gave his dynasty the name it carries until today. Halberstam's son did not survive the Holocaust but his grandson moved to New York and reestablished the centre of Bobover Hasidism there.

The Jewish presence in Bobowa is thought to date back to 1732 and a synagogue was built there shortly after. In 1880, Jews numbered 481 out of Bobowa's 1,266 residents. By 1939, 60% of this small village was Jewish. Today, the synagogue is managed by the Krakow Jewish Community and was recently renovated with the support of a rabbi from New York, reopening in 2003 as a museum and a prayer space for visitors. The restored decorative stucco mural surrounding the aron kodesh (torah ark) dates to 1778 and is a treasured example of Jewish sacred art in Poland. With crowned golden lions and eagles flanking the ark and set in an elaborate network of stylized vines, flowers, and clusters of grapes, this polychrome wall painting in relief is a reminder of the detailed and exuberantly coloured design schemes that embellished Polish synagogues for centuries, enhancing the devotional experience with inspiring imagery and excerpted liturgical texts.



Restored Remuh Cemetery, Kazimierz Krakow, 2011

Often referred to as the Old Cemetery, this burial site is part of a complex connected to the Remuh Synagogue, one of three historic synagogues located along the central Szeroka Street. Built in 1553, the synagogue (a corner of which is seen on the left of this photograph) was later named after the prominent Krakow rabbi, Moshe Isserles, also known as Remuh, who

is best remembered for writing a commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch*. Religious pilgrims still regularly visit Isserles' grave in the Old Cemetery on his *yahrtzeit*.

The Remuh Cemetery, one of oldest in Europe, was in use through the middle of the 19th century. By the early 20th century, it had already fallen into neglect and was completely disfigured during World War II when used as a garbage dump. After the war, only a small number of tombstones were left standing on the ruined site, including that of Rabbi Isserles, leading to many fables regarding the miraculous nature of the rabbi and his grave. A 1959 archaeological excavation uncovered hundreds of tombstones which were righted and arranged on bases in straight rows, as seen in this image. The remaining fragments of stones were built into an intricate mosaic lining part of the cemetery wall.

The Remuh Cemetery is a marker of the long and significant Jewish presence in the area. The cemetery includes the graves of such prominent figures as the merchant Juda Leib from the influential Landau family, Izaak Jakubowicz, a merchant and banker who founded the nearby Izaak Synagogue, Natan Spira, a noted Kabbalist who was president of the Krakow Rabbinical Court, Samuel bar Meszulam, a doctor to Polish kings, and merchant and banker Israel ben Yoseph, the synagogues' founder and the father of Remuh.



**Judaica Foundation
Center for Jewish
Culture, Former Beit
Midrash (Study Hall),
Kazimierz, Krakow,
2011**

This building is located just off of the bustling Plac Nowy (New Square) in Kazimierz, the Jewish neighbourhood of Krakow. It was dedicated in 1886 as the B'nei Emuna (Sons of Faith) Prayer and Benevolent Society and served as a *beit midrash* until the onset of World War II, one of at least a dozen similar institutions in the dense Kazimierz area between the two World Wars. During and after the war, the building served many purposes, from carpentry workshop to warehouse, until being abandoned from the 1980s onward.

For many years after World War II, Kazimierz was a run down, even dangerous part of Krakow. With the fall of Communism, the area was slowly revitalized and began to reemerge as a Jewish centre, as buildings were brought back to regular use and tourism picked up. Some structures function as before, as synagogues, while others serve new purposes for a new era, such as the Judaica Foundation's Center for Jewish Culture, which opened in 1993 with renovated and modernized facilities inside this former *beit midrash*, made possible largely with financial support from the U.S. Congress. The centre hosts activities related to Jewish heritage in Poland, fostering dialogue between Poles and Jews.



**Overgrown
Gravestones, Miodowa
Street Jewish
Cemetery, Krakow,
2011**

This image reveals an almost surreal forest with a dense carpet of interweaving vines and dappled sunlight scattered across green mounds with *matsevot* (tombstones) beneath their leafy covering. Although established in 1800, the Jewish cemetery at 58 Miodowa Street is still referred to as the New Cemetery, as it was created when the Old Cemetery at the Remuh Synagogue was closed. The cemetery was founded outside of the established area of Kazimierz on land that the Jewish community purchased from Augustinian monks.

The earliest surviving stones date to the 1840s and follow a traditional style with curved tops, hand-carved Hebrew inscriptions and often with Jewish symbols. In keeping with the modernizing trend reflected in the establishment of institutions such as the progressive Tempel synagogue, German and

Polish epitaphs began appearing on gravestones in the second half of the 19th century. Examples of both styles can be seen here, in the prominent rounded stone peaking out of the greenery in the middle ground of this photograph, and further in the background in the black obelisk monument to Moshe Bochenek, or Moritz in Polish, from 1930.

The state of this overgrown section belies the fact that it is still a functioning cemetery. The questions around the ongoing maintenance of this and other Jewish cemeteries across Poland are complex and numerous. The original effort to organize this site, after World War II when many stones had been removed and taken to the nearby Plaszow camp in the area, was funded in 1957 by the Joint Distribution Committee. Today there are many organizations, municipalities and private groups, spearheaded by both Jews and non-Jews, that raise funds for and tend to Jewish cemeteries even as foliage and grasses return every season. Other cemeteries remain abandoned or heavily neglected.



Restaurant, Former Mikveh (Ritual Bath), Boznic Street, Tarnow, 2012

Tarnow is located in southern Poland, 72 kilometres east of Krakow. Its Jewish community dates back to 1330. As the city's economy burgeoned in the 19th century, Jews were central to various trades, including wood, metal, ceramic, garment manufacturing and hat production. The political and ideological orientation of the Jewish community was also diverse. While Hasidism was dominant, there were also members of the

Haskalah, the Enlightenment movement, and later in the century, of Zionism as well, eventually leading to tensions in the interwar period between the Orthodox and the secular Zionists.

The *mikveh* was built with Moorish architectural influences, in keeping with the concurrent trend of defining Jewish building stylistic features, which can also be seen in the photograph of the Tempel Synagogue interior (on the second floor). Although the restaurant's loud awning commands the view, fine details in the Oriental-style remain of ornamental carving and tile work in addition to the distinctive key-hole windows.

Just before World War II, there were 25,000 Jews in Tarnow, approximately 40 to 45% of the population. The *mikveh* (already in disrepair at the time) was the gathering site in June 1940 for the first transport to Auschwitz, not yet an extermination camp. Among the hundreds of Polish prisoners detained by the Nazis were a number of Jewish leaders who became the first Jewish prisoners of the camp.

While there is no present-day Jewish community in Tarnow, since 1996 (as in many Polish cities) there has been an annual Jewish cultural festival to remember Galician Jews, established by the city's Committee for the Renovation of Jewish Monuments. Many communities celebrate Jewish culture to reconnect to what they increasingly see as an essential aspect of Polish cultural heritage.



Brzeska Street, Former Jewish Neighbourhood, Praga, Warsaw, 2011

Located on the right bank of the Vistula River, Praga is a suburb of Warsaw. At the end of the 18th century, Jews began to settle there and by the start of the following century accounted for a quarter of the district's inhabitants, establishing a synagogue, a cemetery and *mikveh* (ritual bath) in addition to being active in the area's economy. The neighbourhood did not meet the same fate as the city proper of Warsaw, which was levelled by the German army in retaliation for the 1944 uprising of the Polish Underground Home Army.

Whereas very little authentic historic architecture remains in Warsaw, many streets in Praga retain their pre-war character. After 1945, approximately 10,000 Jews who survived the war came to Warsaw and many lived once again in the impoverished Praga area, though most left in subsequent waves of emigration in 1945–1947, 1956, and 1968. For decades, Praga remained a downtrodden, crime-ridden neighbourhood but like Krakow's Kazimierz district, Praga is gradually being gentrified, as a 2013 New York Times travel piece proclaims: “Gritty Warsaw Neighbourhood Adds to its Allure.”

David Kaufman reflects on his experiences photographing on Brzeska Street in Praga:

The buildings on this particular block were striking because of their age, their state of disrepair and especially because of the ornate ironwork on the balconies and the complex decorative concrete surrounds of the windows on the façades. The small stores and several restaurants on the street were painted in bright colours. The building down the block at 9 Brzeska Street was formerly a public school. According to the recollection of people who lived in the area, the entire student body was Jewish before the war, which is not surprising given the large size of the local Jewish community. At the time that I photographed the street, the building at #9 was the only one on the block that looked abandoned and as though it had not been renovated at all, and I didn't make a picture of it.



Museum of the City of Lodz, Former Palace of Israel Poznanski, Lodz, 2013

Unlike historic cities like Krakow or Lublin, Lodz was a boom town that exploded along with 19th century industrial growth, primarily as a centre for the textile industry. In the 1820s, it had been a modest hamlet of less than 1,000 people including 259 Jews. Barely a century later, Lodz was the second largest city in Poland with a population of 670,000. The Jewish community, also the country's second largest, made up one third of the total population.

The family of Israel Kalmanowicz Poznanski (1833 – 1900) relocated to Lodz in this period of growth, capitalizing on new opportunities for Jewish merchants. With his rapid expansion of textile enterprises first established by his father, Israel Poznanski became the most successful Jewish industrialist in Lodz.



Manufaktura Complex Façade, Former Poznanski Textile Mill, Lodz, 2012

For over 100 years, the 99 acre complex built by the Jewish textile industrialist Israel Poznanski operated like a self-contained town in the heart of Lodz. Seen here is but one façade of the enormous multi-structure facility that housed the

By 1872, Poznanski began constructing the massive textile factory (seen in part in the photograph to the right). At the same time, he conceived of a grand showpiece residence adjoining the factory property -- a modern-day palace to proclaim his standing and substantial accomplishments. Emulating the Neo-Baroque style in vogue at the time, construction on the monumental palace began in 1889. The upper balustrade is topped by a series of allegorical sculptures which include depictions of Greek gods: the goddess of wisdom, Athena, who was also known for weaving and spinning, and the god of commerce, Hermes, seen on the right

in this photograph wearing his signature winged cap. There are also sculptures of builders, workers and spinners holding objects including a ball of wool, a hammer, scissors, and a bolt of outspread cloth.

It remains unclear what became of the palace during World War I, after Poznanski's wife died in 1914. It seems to have passed through the hands of the ruling parties of the day during the two world wars and after, until 1975 when it became the site of the Museum of the City of Lodz.

Poznanski and his family left a permanent legacy in Lodz which continues to have an impact today. His descendants are now spread across the world. In fact, Israel's great-granddaughter, Alice, active as a teenager in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising and consequently interned at Bergen-Belsen, moved to Montreal via Paris after the war where she met and married Jacques Parizeau, former premiere of Quebec.

textile enterprise. The sumptuous palace and gardens of the Poznanski family (—see the photograph to the left—) were adjoined to one end of the complex by an intricate gate constructed in the same fine brickwork seen in this photograph. Across the street, several blocks of four-storey apartments were constructed as housing for the factory workers.

The Poznanski family's enterprises were an extraordinary success. By the end of the 19th century, the textile production plant had become a shareholding company. In 1900, the Joint Stock Association of Cotton Goods of Israel Poznanski employed over 6,000 workers. In addition to charting a remarkable business career, Poznanski was also an active philanthropist and civic leader, supporting many communal organizations and

contributing to the construction of both churches and synagogues of various denominations.

The family's seemingly unstoppable industrial activities were essentially halted by World War I, which cut Lodz off from its major markets in Russia. The whole city felt the impact. During WWII, both the palace and the factory were seized. The factory was used to produce textiles and military equipment for the

Nazis. After the war, Poznanski's factory was nationalized and was still operational as a textile mill into the 1990s.

The former site of the factory has been renovated into a mixed-used hub for commerce, entertainment and culture by the French development company, Apsys, who purchased the

property in 1999, reopening it in 2006 as the Manufaktura. The largest of the factory's buildings, the spinning mill, was elegantly converted into a first class hotel, whose entrance is shown in this photograph.



Wojska Polskiego Street, A Major Ghetto Thoroughfare, Baluty, Lodz, 2013

Both the city of Lodz and its Jewish community grew rapidly in the 19th century as it developed into a manufacturing centre in the textile industry. In the 1850s, Jewish entrepreneurs Isaac Blawat and Isaac Birnswaig developed housing in the village of Baluty (Balut in Yiddish), outside the city's official boundaries. From the onset it was a poor neighbourhood with-

out a sewage system or running water. In 1915, Baluty was annexed to Lodz, at which time roughly half the city's Jewish population resided there. In February 1940, under orders from Berlin, the area was converted into a ghetto and was sealed off in April.

Known as Brzezinska Street before and during World War II, Wojska Polskiego Street was one of the major thoroughfares in Baluty and thus of the ghetto. It begins at the north end of St. Mary's Assumption's Church, a central landmark of the ghetto appropriated as a warehouse during the war, and continues to the eastern boundary of the city. Many of the buildings central to ghetto administration were located along Wojska Polskiego Street and, as photographs on both floors of the exhibition indicate, a large number of them are still standing today,

generally returned to residential use.

This image gives a good sense of the character of Baluty today: non-descript, derelict buildings oblivious to the neighbourhood's traumatic past with an occasional plaque or tourist group as a reminder of its previous incarnation as the longest operating ghetto and a Jewish centre before that. Not surprisingly, Baluty remains one of the most downtrodden parts of Lodz with very poor living conditions and a reputation for street crime.



Courtyard, Wojska Polskiego Street, Baluty, Lodz, 2013

Courtyards, often set behind apartment blocks that front on the sidewalks and entered through passageways from the street, are very typical of 19th century architecture in Polish cities and especially in Lodz. Some are better defined, even landscaped public spaces with plantings and benches. However, this courtyard is typical of such spaces in the impoverished Baluty neighbourhood and reveals the neglected nature of the

whole area. Nonetheless these courtyards serve, as they once did when it was a Jewish neighbourhood, as a main gathering point for neighbours to interact, for tenants to walk their dogs, and for youth to play. Set back from the street, these were also sites during the war years where German forces would round up Jewish tenants for interrogation and transport to labour or death camps.



Aron Kodesh (Torah Ark), Restored Tempel Synagogue, Kazimierz, Krakow, 2011

The architecture reflects the aspirations and modernizing ideals of Jews in the 19th century, when grand structures were erected to rival monumental churches and to publicly express an equal standing in society. The use of the then-fashionable Moorish or Oriental style, as seen in the Tempel interior, was a way of distinguishing Jewish spaces from the Gothic style prominent in church architecture. It also asserted a link between Jews and their Middle Eastern origins. In some cases, church architecture influenced synagogue design. Here, the ornamental *aron kodesh* with white marble carvings is set in an apse-like niche.

After being used as a stable by the Nazis and with subsequent years of neglect following the war, the building was carefully restored in 1995 by the World Monuments Fund, the Municipality of Krakow, the Jewish Community of Krakow, and the Citizens' Committee for the Renovation of Krakow's Monuments.

Today several Progressive Jewish communities exist in Poland. Beit Krakow, started by a group of young adults in 2009, meets regularly for prayer and cultural programs at the nearby Galicia Jewish Museum and is led by Rabbi Tanya Segal, the first female rabbi in Poland. The striking *aron kodesh* in this photograph is also the backdrop for concerts in the annual Krakow Jewish Culture Festival, the largest of its kind internationally.

Last year the Tempel Synagogue celebrated its 150th anniversary and the continuation of Progressive Judaism in Poland. As early as 1840, Reform Jews met in a makeshift prayer space in Krakow and dedicated this elaborate synagogue in 1862. Additions were made in the 1890s and 1920s.



Radegast Memorial Complex, Site of Ghetto Deportations, Lodz, 2012

mentim Iudaicum Lodzense Foundation, a foundation dedicated to the memory of Jews of Lodz.

On the outskirts of the city, the station was used during the war for deliveries of food and supplies into the ghetto and for shipping manufactured products from Lodz's factories to other outposts of the Reich. Starting in 1941, it became the arrival point for the transports of Jews and Roma from outside of Poland destined for the Litzmannstadt (Lodz) ghetto and also the reception area for Jews gathered from the immediate surrounding region sent to the ghetto by train. Transports from Radegast to the death camps began in 1942 and continued until the ghetto was liquidated in August 1944. The ghetto in Lodz had the longest existence—four and a half years—of all the ghettos in Nazi-occupied territory.

With this image the photographer positions us as viewers at an unusual vantage point: standing on the storied train tracks at Radegast Station looking ahead at the original wooden building and loading platform. Behind the permanently moored steam engine and Deutsche Reichsbahn train cars is a concrete tunnel, part of an extensive memorial complex and museum opened in 2005 to mark the place where 200,000 people were transported from the Lodz ghetto to Chelmn0 and Auschwitz. The memorial project was initiated by the Monu-



Remains of the Ghetto, Walicow Street, Warsaw, 2013

Before the Second World War, Warsaw's Jewish community of 360,000 was the largest centre of Jewish life in Europe. Ninety percent of this community lived in the Muranow district, which was sealed off by the Nazis to form the Warsaw ghetto in November 1940. The crumbling apartment building shown in this photograph is one of the few pre-war structures remaining in Warsaw, which was completely razed by the German army in response to uprisings in the city. In May 1943, after defeating a month-long revolt in the ghetto by a coalition of Jewish resistance groups, German forces burned the ghetto to

the ground. Then, in late 1944, after German forces crushed the city-wide rebellion led by the underground Polish Home Army, Hitler ordered German troops to reduce much of the rest of the city to rubble. After the war, Warsaw was entirely rebuilt. The street plan of Muranow was altered and new buildings were actually constructed on top of the rubble, covered with soil.

David Kaufman, on discovering this ruined building in the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto:

Shocked by the state of the building, I was also taken by the beauty of its rough red brick masonry. The misshapen bricks, of all the possible colours from light orange to crimson to wine red to black, spoke of Jewish tenement life in the industrial era of the early 20th century. The condition of the building, with its wartime scars, made it possible for me to see where the Ghetto Uprising took place. The building was a remaining witness to an exceptional chapter of Jewish struggle.

Markers of Muranow's Jewish past and painful history remain. The Path of Remembrance guides visitors and locals alike around significant landmarks from the ghetto. The neighbourhood is regaining its Jewish identity as well. The state-of-the-art Museum of the History of Polish Jews opened last spring on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. The museum faces the monument commemorating the uprising and completes the memorial complex by presenting the story of how Jews lived for 1,000 years in Poland up to the present day.



View from the Guard Tower at Birkenau, Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum, Oswiecim, 2012

In 1940, after the annexation of the western part of Poland by Nazi Germany, the small Polish town of Oswiecim, 60 kilometres west of Krakow, was given a new name by the Germans, Auschwitz. A nearby Polish military garrison was converted to the Auschwitz prison camp to house the large number of Polish political prisoners arrested by the Nazis. It eventually became not only a concentration camp for forced labour but also a death camp.

Construction of Auschwitz II (also known as Auschwitz-Birkenau) began in October 1941 as part of the complex of camps that made up Auschwitz. It was the largest and contained the main facilities for extermination. As seen in this

photograph, train tracks entered directly into the camp. The infamous selection process took place immediately next to the tracks, dividing those who were to be sent directly to the gas chambers from those who were deemed suitable for forced labour or other tasks. Train transports began in 1942, bringing Jews from nearly every country in occupied Europe and from

countries allied to Germany. The transports continued to the end of the summer in 1944. Roughly one million people died at Birkenau, 90% of them Jews.

In July 1947, the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum was created through an act passed by the Polish Parliament. It was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1979. As this photograph shows, the entire site, perhaps ironically, is now a major tourist destination as well as a focal point for commemorative activities. Nearly 1.5 million people visited the Auschwitz complex in 2011 with the largest concentrations of visitors from Poland, Great Britain, Italy, Israel, Germany, France, the United States, Spain, South Korea and Czech Republic (in that order).



**Former Gypsy Internment Camp in the Ghetto,
Wojska Polskiego Street, Baluty, Lodz, 2013**

This non-descript apartment block at 82 Wojska Polskiego was the site of one of the most horrific episodes in the life of the Litzmannstadt (Lodz) ghetto. In November 1941, it became the centre of a sub-camp created within the ghetto when the Nazis transported 5,000 Roma from the border region

between Austria and Hungary, and imprisoned them in a cramped, isolated area at the edge of the ghetto's Jewish population. The new arrivals, more than half of whom were children, were kept in the most squalid conditions, with little access to food and virtually no running water. Within weeks, a typhus epidemic broke out which killed more than 700 people. Fearing that the disease would spread, the Nazis decided to liquidate the camp. On January 5, they began to deport the remaining Roma population to Chelmno and all were murdered by the end of the week. After the premises were disinfected, the area was returned to the control of the Jewish ghetto. To this day, it is not known precisely who the victims were or why they were rounded up and sent to Lodz, but there is some evidence that among them were leaders of this particular Roma community. This is one of the few well-documented episodes in the Nazi campaign to exterminate most of the Roma population of Europe.



**Former Fire Hall
Field, Site of Speeches
by *Judenrat* Head,
Chaim Rumkowski,
Zachodnia Street,
Baluty, Lodz, 2013**

As Lodz was largely undamaged during the Second World War, the city's Baluty neighbourhood still retains much of the character and many buildings of the former Jewish ghetto. This field was then part of a much larger square housing the barracks and equipment of the ghetto fire brigade. It was also a convenient space for public speeches by the Nazi-appointed head of the *Judenrat* (the ghetto's Jewish administration), Chaim Rumkowski. The building in this photograph, now an apartment house, appears in the background of many historic photos showing Rumkowski speaking to large crowds of ghetto dwellers convened on these occasions.

Rumkowski remains one of the most controversial figures in the history of the Holocaust. He pursued a plan to extend the life of the population of the ghetto by appeasing the German

occupiers, primarily by putting the Jewish labour force to work in numerous factories serving the German wartime economy. But as the war dragged on, the Nazis demanded more human sacrifices and Rumkowski was forced to deport the ghetto's so-called unproductive population, those who were not part of the labour force.

On September 4, 1942, on the site seen in this image, Rumkowski made his most infamous speech, urging families to voluntarily give up their children under the age of ten, as demanded by the Nazis, in order to save the remainder of the ghetto inhabitants. It was the start of a week in which 6,000 children were seized along with 10,000 adults, all of whom were deported to the death camp at Chelmno.



Row of Gravestones, Bracka Street Jewish Cemetery, Lodz, 2013

This photograph shows a row of classic early 20th century gravestones from the men's section of the cemetery in Lodz, the largest Jewish cemetery in Europe, established in 1892. Kaufman's highly detailed image allows us to appreciate the craftsmanship of these stones, emblematic of the era with their architectural arrangement: an upper pediment filled with symbolic and decorative images and demi-columns flanking a central panel with a personalized epitaph in Hebrew speaking to the qualities of the departed. The representation of a library designates a learned person. Shmuel Koganshuk was a descendent of Cohanim, as indicated by the carving of two hands making the priestly blessing.

The shifting tastes and trends of the time are also reflected in these stones. While most of the monuments in this photograph feature classical columns with elaborate Corinthian capitals, others maintain the arrangement of flanking columns but handled in a more paired-down modernist style. In fact, the tomb of Moshe Yoseph Schrada (second

from left) even shows the emergence of the Art Deco style, which was concurrently taking hold across 1920s Europe. The scale and materials of these stones suggest that the departed were from well-to-do families.

Other features, which can still be found on Jewish gravestones, include the letters פ"נ ("peh nun") at the top of the epitaph to denote "poh nichbar"—"here lies". At the bottom are the letters ה"נ צ"ח ("taf nun tzaddik beit heh"), an abbreviation for the phrase: "May his soul be bound up in the bond of eternal life." In Hebrew, this verse from Samuel 25:29 reads: *t'hay nafsho/ah tzrurah b'tzror hachaim*.



Jewish Cemetery, Sieniawa, 2012

David Kaufman's personal reflections on searching for the Jewish cemetery in Sieniawa:

Sieniawa is a village of just over 2,000 people in south-eastern Poland, not far from the border with Ukraine. My wife, Naomi, and I drove there in July 2012 as part of a grand tour of Galician Jewish sites, following a map through the town towards the outskirts where the last streets gave way to farmland. The map led us to a playground beyond which was a gravel road leading into the fields. The Jewish cemetery was nowhere in sight.

My wife approached a mother playing with her child and inquired about the key to the kirkut, the Polish word for Jewish cemetery. The woman immediately made two calls on her cellphone and within minutes, a forty-something man approached on a bicycle. A conversation of sorts ensued in which Naomi asked about the kirkut again and he burst out laughing. He made motions of stroking a beard with one hand, outlining a round hat with the other, and twirling non-existent payot (earlocks) with both. It was our turn to laugh. Evidently he was the cemetery caretaker and expected to see Orthodox men, not the two of us.

He then took us to the cemetery, unlocked the gate, showed us the small grounds, led us to an ohel (small mausoleum), where a local tsaddik (righteous teacher) was buried, and then left us alone, while I photographed. Photographically speaking, we had arrived at just the right time. The sky was overcast, illuminating the old gravestones with a soft, even light. The grass was visually arresting but not so high as to obscure the monuments. I worked as quickly as possible so as not to further inconvenience the caretaker. As we left through the gate, we found a basin of water and a clean towel on a bench to wash our hands and make the blessing, as is the custom on departing a Jewish cemetery.



Jewish Cemetery, Lesko, 2012

One of the oldest surviving Jewish cemeteries in Poland, the cemetery in Lesko was founded in the first half of the 16th century, around the same time that Jews began to settle in the town. It is located just a few hundred metres from the restored historic synagogue (a photograph of which is also shown on this floor).

The gravestones seen in this photograph are emblematic of those in Jewish cemeteries in this region in the 18th and early 19th century, with arched tops, large decorative pediments with symbolic motifs, and substantial inscription fields. The most prominent gravestone in this photograph depicts a hand holding a pitcher pouring water onto another hand, signifying the

tomb of someone descended from the biblical tribe of Levi. The Levites served the priestly class in the time of the Temple in Jerusalem and their duties included washing priests' hands. Other motifs seen on these stones include heraldic lions flanking the Crown of Torah, signifying a devout man versed in Jewish learning.

David Kaufman's observations on this Jewish cemetery:

The majority of gravestones are situated on the plateau of the cemetery and date from the 18th century or later. They are among the most beautifully carved examples of Jewish monumental art that I have seen in Poland and include a few rare polychrome gravestones, which still retain the vivid colour of their original painted surface. The wooded site is atmospheric and beautiful. But like many of Poland's Jewish cemeteries, the site is in precarious shape with the majority of stones partly fallen, sinking into the earth, heavily worn from the weather, and surrounded by dense vegetation.

The overgrown state of the Lesko cemetery, as revealed in this image, belies the fact that it is cared for under the supervision of The Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland together with students from the Lesko Middle School who, it would appear, can barely keep up with the persistence of nature. The Foundation has also brought groups of teenagers together from Poland, Israel and Germany to work on maintaining the grounds.

Elaborately Carved Gravestone, Old Jewish Cemetery, Lublin, 2012

This beautiful gravestone is just one example of the fine craftsmanship and detailed stonework that can be found in Jewish cemeteries across Poland. It is a testament to the rich artistic traditions that flourished for centuries in Eastern Europe and a particularly striking example of the developed Jewish symbol system that adorned tombstones, texts and synagogues, which are not as readily found in contemporary Jewish ritual space or objects.

The photographs from the Jewish cemeteries in Lesko, Krakow and Siemowit primarily feature text carved into the stone. This elaborate early 19th century example from Lublin's Old Cemetery (housing the oldest Jewish tombstone in Poland from 1541) has letters painstakingly carved out of the stone in low-relief and ornamented, as in an illuminated manuscript, with bird heads in profile extending from the upright arm of the "lamed" letters, occasionally ending in an embrace between two pointy beaks. A decorative border and the protruding lip of the top-half of the stone lend added refinement to the design



scheme, capped with a detailed scene featuring the Crown of Torah, two rampant lions with flame-like tongues and two eagles, motifs found as well in the *aron kodesh* of the Bobowa synagogue (pictured on the first floor).



**Ohel (Small Mausoleum) and Gravestones,
Okopowa Street Jewish Cemetery, Warsaw, 2011**

Covering 82 acres and founded in 1806, this still-functioning Jewish cemetery contains 250,000 graves. As the two photographs on display show, the cemetery is a dense, ethereal forest with long walkways that allow visitors to explore the site in depth. Nearly 150,000 gravesites are intact today including those of many acclaimed and influential leaders. Just a few examples illustrate why Kaufman sees this and other old cemeteries as “gardens of history” representing the spectrum of Polish-Jewish society: Neurologist Edward Flatau (d. 1932), historian Mayer Bałaban (d. 1942), Publisher of the First Polish Encyclopedia, Samuel Orgelbrand (d. 1868), merchant Ber Sonnenberg (d. 1823), a Treasurer in the Polish National Government, Henryk Wohl (d. 1907), lawyer Joseph Goldshmidt who was the father of Janusz Korczak (d. 1896), the inventor of the Esperanto language, Ludwik Zamenhof (d. 1917). Creative figures buried in the cemetery include the actress Esther Rachel Kamińska (d. 1925), researcher of Jewish folklore and author of *The Dybbuk*, S. An-sky (1863-1919), painter Aleksander Lesser (d. in 1884), and Yiddish writer I.L. Peretz (1852-1915) whose funeral was attended by over 100,000 people.

The *ohel* (literally meaning tent) of a *tsaddik* (righteous person) seen in this photograph is one example of many other mod-

est mausoleums in the cemetery to revered religious figures such as Rabbi Dov Berush Meisels (1798–1870), from a prominent line of Galician rabbis, who served as chief rabbi of Warsaw for sixteen years. As the cemetery was part of the Warsaw ghetto, thousands who died in the ghetto are buried here including the head of the ghetto’s *Judenrat*, Adam Czerniaków (1880–1942) who committed suicide rather than deport the ghetto’s children. There is a special section in the cemetery for participants in the Warsaw ghetto uprising, including Marek Edelman, who at his death in 2009 at the age of 90, was the last living leader of the uprising. He had a notable career in Poland as a cardiologist and opponent of the Communist regime.

David Kaufman describes the appeal of this and other cemeteries in Poland as photographic subjects:

The Okopowa Street Cemetery in Warsaw and the Bracka Street Cemetery in Lodz are the largest Jewish cemeteries in Europe. Many sections of these burial sites are like parks, with dense canopies of trees, and like forests where the trees and other vegetation have been allowed to grow without being cut back. One can walk through these immense graveyards for hours and encounter a constantly shifting variety of landscapes, some tended like beautiful gardens with an array of stone sculptures, some in which nature is gaining the upper hand and covering the traces of human activity, and some sections which are almost completely wild. In the Warsaw cemetery, which is more homogenous, the majority of the grounds are covered with trees of approximately the same size that appear to be about forty to sixty years old. The origin of much of this treed coverage dates back to the period after the war when the grounds were essentially abandoned for a period of decades.

As a photographer, it’s the tension between order and disorder that appeals to me: the more or less consistent rows of ornate and inscribed man-made stones permeated everywhere by the wild proliferation of greenery, from creeping vines to mature trees, that can barely be held in check. This mixture has very strong visual appeal which creates a striking context for the cultural aspects of these artifacts, to which I feel a powerful connection.



**New Walkway,
Okopowa Street
Jewish Cemetery,
Warsaw, 2011**



Holocaust Memorial at the Jewish Cemetery, Szydłowiec, 2012

anniversary of that horrific event. In this photograph, the word “Hitlerowskich” can be seen, which literally means “Hitler’s people.” Less used today, it was a formal convention for referring to Nazis in the Polish language.

This simple monument is located within the Jewish cemetery in Szydłowiec. At the start of World War II, about 7,200 Jews lived in Szydłowiec, a majority of the town’s residents. During the war, the town became the site of two ghettos which were liquidated by November 1942. This memorial is dedicated to the 16,000 Jews from Szydłowiec and the neighbouring areas who were killed in Treblinka as well as a group of 150 Jews who were murdered by the Nazis in a mass execution in the cemetery itself. The monument was installed in 1967 on the 24th

It is not uncommon to find Holocaust memorials in Jewish cemeteries across Poland, creating permanent markers in a landscape where many victims of the war had anonymous, mass burials. In some cases these memorials have been installed by the remaining Jewish community in the area, while others have been created at the initiative of families or *landsmanshaft* societies in Israel, North America or elsewhere. In the case of the memorial in this photograph, it was dedicated by the local government, the Szydłowiec township.



Lazarus Family Monument, Slezna Street Jewish Cemetery, Wrocław, 2012

ment movement, which focused on Jews’ relationship to wider European culture and to the increasing possibilities for their political status with the promise of emancipation. Indeed, in 1812, Prussian Jews, including those of Breslau, were granted emancipation and gained civic rights, which increased their integration into general German culture and society.

This photograph from one of the two extant Jewish cemeteries in Wrocław, the capital city of the Lower Silesia province in western Poland, reveals much about the history of its Jewish community and of the region. The Lazarus Family Monument dates to the 1870s, when the city was known as Breslau. Like most of Silesia, Breslau had been annexed by Prussia in the mid-18th century and became part of Germany under unification in 1871.

The Jewish cemetery on Slezna Street was established in this political and social climate in 1856. It follows the German cemetery model, and has an entirely different feel and design scheme than the Jewish cemeteries from central Poland and historic Galicia seen in other photographs in this exhibition. Architectural forms dominate, drawing on a range of influences driven by 19th century trends from Classical to Renaissance to Baroque. On the Lazarus Family monument, instead of the decorative, folk-art style symbols of Polish tombstones, there is a formal architectural style with highly refined carving and fully articulated classical columns. German inscriptions are included alongside Hebrew, whereas many other inscriptions in this cemetery are exclusively in German. Pock-marked with bullet holes, the monument also reveals the ravages of war.

Jewish settlement began in Breslau in the early part of the 13th century. By the end of the 18th century, the city had become a significant centre for the Haskalah, the Jewish Enlighten-

After World War II, Silesia was part of Soviet occupied Poland. 15,000 Jews resettled for a period in Wrocław, creating a communal infrastructure, which lasted despite the mass emigration of Jews in 1968. After the fall of Communism in 1989, Jewish communal life began to be revitalized again. Today, the Jewish cemetery on Slezna is administered by the City as The Museum of Cemetery Art. The city has a second, functioning Jewish cemetery, a restored synagogue and other Jewish institutions.



Art Gallery, Former Synagogue, Lesko, 2012

This photograph shows the exterior of the 18th century brick and stone synagogue from Lesko, a town with a present-day population of 6,000 in the south-eastern mountains of Poland. Still preserved on the waved gable of the western façade are the two tablets with the Ten Commandments and a Hebrew inscription declaring: “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven” from Genesis 28:17. The synagogue features a main hall and an annex with a vestibule and women’s balcony as well as a tower. This synagogue replaced an earlier wooden structure.

Jewish settlement began in Lesko in the first half of the 16th century. Jews were regarded as citizens and had the same rights

as Poles to engage in commerce and trades and to own land. In the 16th and 17th centuries, they were involved in many occupations: trading leather, fabrics, food products, and wine as well as money lending, textiles and clothing, metal work, even brewing. By the early 20th century, there were more than 2,300 Jews in Lesko – 61% of the residents. These numbers are typical of towns in historic Galicia before the Holocaust, which had large Jewish populations.

Today, the building hosts the Synagoga Gallery and a cultural centre. Across Poland, the restoration and preservation of former synagogues and other Jewish communal buildings are often made possible by giving them new life and new uses as multi-purpose community centres, galleries, museums or as homes to non-profit organizations. The Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland works actively with the Municipality of Lesko as well as other local NGOs and educational institutions to maintain the synagogue and the Jewish cemetery and to host activities connecting Lesko residents and students to the Jewish history of the place.



Restored Synagogue, Lancut, 2012

The Baroque synagogue in Lancut is among the best preserved and most remarkable still remaining in Central Europe. Built in the 18th century, the synagogue was saved multiple times. The Nazis attempted to burn it down but a local noble, Alfred Antoni Potocki, intervened to put out the fire. During the Communist-era, the Town National Council voted to demolish the building. The vote was revoked after an appeal by Dr. Władysław Balicki, who was also a supporter of the later renovation and conversion of the synagogue into a Jewish mu-

seum, a project initiated in 1973 by the Lancut Castle Museum. This was a rather unprecedented initiative in those days. Since 2009, it has been the property of the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland.

Substantial renovations in the 1980s and 90s brought to life the richly detailed and inventive symbolic wall paintings. The imposing central *bimah* (reading platform) structurally supports the ceiling and faces the *aron kodesh* (Torah ark) on the east wall, where a rendering of the two tablets with the Ten Commandments can be seen with the Crown of the Torah above. A different biblical scene is depicted on each of the four arched walls atop the *bimah*'s columns. Most clearly seen in this photograph is the southern side showing sanctuary implements from the Temple in Jerusalem: a *menorah* on the right and on the left, a table for the *lechem panim* (shewbread), loaves which were always present on a dedicated table as an offering to God. On the right of the western side, which is partially visible in this image, is a depiction of Adam and Eve while Cain and Abel are rendered on the left. The north surface depicts The Flood and the Sacrifice of Isaac and the eastern wall contains two symmetrical niches. The rounded arches on the surrounding walls contain texts of prayer.

Behind the Exhibition

David Kaufman is a filmmaker and photographer living in Toronto. In his photography work he focuses on architectural images and the urban landscape. He has exhibited in both solo and group shows in Toronto and Montreal. His recent exhibition of Toronto heritage streetscapes was named a must-see show of the 2013 CONTACT Photography Festival by Toronto Life, NOW Magazine and Xtra! His photographs have been featured in several publications including *Toronto: A City Becoming* edited by David Macfarlane (2008) and *Traces of the Past: Montreal's Early Synagogues* by Sara Ferdman Tauben (2011). Kaufman is also an active and established documentary filmmaker and a past producer/director for CBC's *The Fifth Estate* and *The Journal*. His latest documentary is *Song of the Lodz Ghetto* (2010), a feature-length film about the longest-lived Polish ghetto and its famous street singer, Yankele Herzscowitz. www.davidkaufmanphotography.com

Evelyn Tauben is an independent curator, producer and writer. With an MA in Art History from the Tyler School of Art, she has worked at the Koffler Centre of the Arts, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the National Museum of American History. She was a participant in the International Nahum Goldmann Fellowship in Warsaw. Evelyn is developing several artistic projects that seek to recapture a connection between her generation and their Polish-Jewish roots. She has spoken and written on this subject on CBC's *The Current*, *Shtetl on the Shortwave*, *The Jewish Tribune*, *The Forward*, and *The Canadian Jewish News*. www.evelyntauben.com

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PRINT PURCHASES:

To purchase photographic prints, and for additional information please contact Museum Curator, Dorion Liebgott, at 416-781-3514 x 232 or museum@beth-tzedec.org

RESOURCES:

For additional reading on Jewish sites and life in Poland, we recommend:

Virtual Shtetl / www.sztetl.org.pl

The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe
www.yivoencyclopedia.org

Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Warsaw
www.jewishmuseum.org.pl

Galicia Jewish Museum, Kazimierz, Krakow
www.en.galiciajewishmuseum.org

Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland
www.fodz.pl

The Dialogue Centre, Lodz / www.centrumdialogu.com

JewishGen: Reading Jewish Tombstones
www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/tombstones.html

The Taube Centre for the Renewal of Jewish Life in Poland
www.centrumtaubego.org.pl

Samuel Gruber's Jewish Art & Monuments
samgrubersjewishartmonuments.blogspot.ca

Foundation for the Documentation of Polish Cemeteries
<http://cemetery.jewish.org.pl>

