

## Rescue of Jews during World War II in contemporary European museums

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Over the last two decades, a remarkable number of museums dedicated specifically to people who saved Jews during World War II have been established all over Europe. Further such museums are currently under construction in Italy and the Czech Republic. These museums are an expression of the growing international interest in this aspect of the history of the Holocaust. On European level, an increasing emphasis is being put on commemorating people who rescued Jews. For example, member-states of the Council of Europe signed a *Solemn tribute to the "Righteous" of Europe* in 2007, and the European Parliament established the European Day of the Righteous in 2012. Increasing interest in the topic can also be seen on national level. During the last few years, a number of European states, including Belgium, France, and Switzerland, have introduced legal regulations, established holidays, and organized official ceremonies honoring their Righteous.

The topic of Jewish rescue is not only of historical relevance, but also of high educational value. It can help to convey knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust but also to promote tolerance, human solidarity and civil courage. At the same time however, the "Righteous" can easily be misused for political purposes. Such commemorative initiatives can also be interpreted as attempts to neutralize uncomfortable debates about the participation of members of bystander societies in the murder of Jews.

The research will include the following case studies:

- 1) Sugihara House in Kaunas/Lithuania (2001)
- 2) Dimiter Peshev Museum in Kyustendil/Bulgaria (2003, refurbished 2013)
- 3) Museum Otto Weidt's Workshop for the Blind in Berlin (2006)
- 4) Silent Heroes Memorial Centre in Berlin (2008, refurbished 2018, currently under reconstruction)
- 5) The Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum in Vilna (permaent exhibition: Rescued Lithuanian Jewish Child Tells about Shoah, 2009)
- 6) *Žanis* Lipke Memorial in Riga (2012/13)
- 7) Lieu de *Mémoire* au Chambon-sur-Lignon/France (2013)
- 8) Tadeusz Pankiewicz's Pharmacy in Kraków (1983/last refurbishment 2013)
- 9) *Żabińskis'* Villa in Warsaw (2015)

- 10) The Ulma Museum of Poles Saving Jews during World War II in Markowa/Poland (2016)
- 11) Villa Emma Nonatola Foundation/Italy (exhibition „Jewish Children of Villa Emma“, 2014, currently a new museum is under construction)
- 12) Memorial of the Shoah and Oskar Schindler, Brněňe/Czech Republic (under construction)

Wóycicka will compare how the above-mentioned museums curate and present their stories. She will examine both the content and the form of the exhibitions and how these are influenced by global trends in the development of World War II and Holocaust memorial museums. She will also partly reconstruct the process of creating and negotiating the narratives of these exhibitions, the public debates around them and the wider socio-political context in which they were established.

The underlying research question is how to explain this Europe-wide "fashion" for the "Righteous"? Can it be seen as an expression of the "cosmopolitization of memory" that D. Levy and N. Sznajder foretold at the beginning of the millennium? Or maybe in this case one should refer to what S. Macdonald calls a "glocalisation" of memory, by which she means the "local reworking of global patterns"? Wóycicka's work is also meant to contribute to a deeper reflection on how to deal with the topic of Jewish rescue in an appropriate manner, a reflection which is urgently needed in Poland and other parts of Europe.

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