

**POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews**

**MILESTONES 1993-2014**

**1993, April:** Grażyna Pawlak, director for organization and information at the Jewish Historical Institute (JHI), takes part in the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.; after returning to Poland she proposes that the Association of the JHI open a Museum of Life to present the history of Jews in Poland.

**1993, Autumn:** Former Israeli President Chaim Herzog and Ronald S. Lauder, president of the Lauder Foundation, undertake to co-chair the International Honorary Committee; soon thereafter the Com­mittee is joined by leaders of global Jewish organizations and political figures (including Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, Jan Karski and Zbigniew Brzeziński; support for the project is also expressed by Hillary Clinton, Stuart E. Eizenstat, Shevah Weiss, Gershon Zohar); the mission of the Committee is to promote the idea of the Museum, to solicit support from global organizations and coordinate activities on the international arena.

**1994:** The Association of the JHI begins working with Jeshajahu Weinberg, former director and creator of the Diaspora Museum (Beit Hatfut­sot) in Tel Aviv and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. Wein­berg and Association representatives develop general guidelines and a budget for the project.

**1994, May:** During a reception at the Polish Consulate General in New York, in the presence of over 150 eminent figures from around the world, the Museum project is inaugurated and pre­sented for the first time ever outside Poland.

**1996, May:** The board of the Association of the JHI formally appoints the Project Team for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews with Jeshajahu Weinber (chair) and Jerzy Halbersztadt (project director). The mission of the team is to develop a program for the Museum and establish relationships with individuals and institutions in Poland and abroad who could help with project implementation and managing the work.

**1996:** The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation contributes the first funds, allowing the Project Team to start work.

**1997, April:** The City of Warsaw grants a perpetual usu­fruct to the Association of the JHI for the 13,000 sq. m. land plot designated for the Mu­seum in the heart of the prewar Jewish district, in front of the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes.

**1998:** Start of archaeological works on the Museum site.

**1999:** Event Communica­tions, a UK company, is selected to design the core exhibition of the Museum; it begins work the following year.

**2000-2003:** The core exhibition Masterplan is devel­oped: key themes and exhibition elements are selected; the first subdivision into galleries for particular historical periods is made.

**2002:** Barbara Kirshenblatt--Gimblett, professor of performance studies at the Tisch School of the Arts, New York Univer­sity, a cultural anthro­pologist and researcher of modern museums, becomes a core consultant on the exhi­bition.

**2003:** The Polish government pledges a financial contribution for the construction of the Museum.

**2005, January:** Warsaw Mayor Lech Kaczyński, Culture Minister Waldemar Dąbrowski and Prof. Jerzy Tomaszewski, deputy chair of the Association of the JHI in Poland, sign an agreement establishing a joint cultural institution, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews. Jerzy Halber­sztadt becomes the first director of the Museum.

**2005, January-June:** The Association of the JHI announces an international architectural competition for the design of the Museum building. The jury shortlists 11 candidates from among 119 entries and invites them to take part in workshops and to develop a competition project. The competi­tion is won by Rainer Mahlamäki (Architects Lahdelma & Mahlamäki, Finland)

**2006:** The Association of the JHI in coopera­tion with the Museum commences educational, documentary, cultural and public programs. Among them are the Virtual Shtetl (a social media platform), The Polish Righteous – Re­calling Forgotten History and Polish Intercultural Youth Encounters (PIYE) for Polish and Israeli youth.

Program activities begin in the Ohel (“tent” in Hebrew), a place for presentations, discus­sions and artistic activities located in the area to be occupied by the Museum building.

**2007, June:** The official groundbreaking ceremony is attended by the highest government officials from Poland and other countries, including President Lech Kaczyński; former President Aleksander Kwaśniewski (1995–2005); former German President Richard von Weizsäcker (1984–1994); Tevi D. Troy, representing the U.S. president; officials of the Roman Catholic Church, including Cardinal Kazimierz Nycz, Metropoli­tan bishop of Warsaw; donors and friends of the Museum, among them EU Regional Policy Commissioner Danuta Hübner; Shevah Weiss, former speaker of the Knesset; Meir Lau, former chief rabbi of Israel; Michael Schudrich, chief rabbi of Poland.

**2007-2012:** The Association of the JHI accumulates funds from individual and institutional donors from Poland and other countries (the Capital Campaign) to develop the core exhibition. The fundraising efforts undertaken by the Association of the JHI provide sufficient sup­port for the Museum’s ongoing programming activities.

**2009, June:** Construction of the Museum officially begins.

**2011, May:** Cooperation on the de­tailed design, of the core exhibition is completed, precisely defining the exhibition’s structure and content. Cooperation with Event Communications ends at this stage.

**2011, Summer:** Reconstruction of the first element of the core ex­hibition begins: the wooden roof and ceiling of the 17th-century synagogue from Gwoździec. “Gwoździec: Re!construction”project is organized, with the participa­tion of university students from Poland, Israel and the United States. Under the supervision of an international team of historians, architects and art­ists, they jointly create one of the key exhibits of the Jewish Town gallery.

**2011, September:** Nizio Design International, a Polish company, is selected to complete the design and implement the core exhibition on the basis of the concept devel­oped by Event Communications.

**2013, April 19.:** Gala opening of the Museum’s building, with the participation of Polish government officials and guests from around the world. Cultural and educational projects are lunched: theatrical and musical stages, film series, edu­cational activities for children and families, academic lectures.

**2014, October 28.:** Grand Opening of the core exhibition of POLIN Museum.

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