



Germany: Frankfurt Jewish Museum reopens with new core exhibition, new interactive features, new Frank family center, new building annex and more

01.11.2020 | JCR

After five years of closure for revamp and reconstruction, the Jewish Museum in Frankfurt has reopened — with a totally new core exhibit, new interactive and other features that include an archival exhibit on the Frankfurt roots of Anne Frank, and a modern new “Light Building” to join the original premises, the historic Rothschild Palais.

The title of the museum’s new incarnation is “[We Are Now: Jewish Frankfurt from the Enlightenment to the Present](#).” This title stresses the exhibit’s focus on history’s connection to the present, from around 1800, through modernization, through the Shoah, through the post-WW2 period to today’s world. It continues the earlier, pre-Emancipation story told at the museum’s [Judengasse branch](#), located on the site of the one-time Jewish ghetto.

The new exhibit begins with an exploration of present-day Jewish life in Frankfurt.

A [description](#) states:

[T]hrough personal stories, it explores the re-emergence of Jewish life after the Shoah. Again and again, we pick up on current questions and present them to our visitors in interactive ways: How do we envision living together? How do we care for our traditions? What role does family memory play in our lives?

Spread out on three floors of the Rothschild Palais, the exhibit looks at the Jewish experience in Frankfurt from several perspectives and responds to a range of questions:

How did life change at the beginning of the nineteenth century, after Jews were no longer forced to live in the Judengasse? What sense of self did Jewish citizens develop during the nineteenth century? What changes did the transformation from Jewish tradition to religion bring? What consequences did National Socialist rule carry for Jews in Frankfurt?

It uses personal experience to tell the story — “personal notes and records, photographs and films, historical documents, and everyday objects” — as well as ritual objects, an extensive collection of art work, and other material.

Its section on “The Family and Everyday Life” focuses on the experience, history, and heritage of three diverse Frankfurt families: the wealthy Rothschild banking family (whose home was in the museum’s main building), the middle-class merchant family Frank, and the family of the writer Valentin Senger (1918-1997), the Frankfurt-born son of East European immigrants who survived the Shoah undetected and wrote a memoir about it.

The [Frank Family Center](#) focuses on the Frankfurt ancestry and extended family of Anne Frank, who was born in Frankfurt.

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“We used to live in Frankfurt...” These are the opening words about her family that Anne Frank wrote in her now world-famous diary. The family roots of her Frankfurt ancestors can be traced back to the 16th century. This local connection is reflected in the family collection, which offers original documentation of a cross-generational Jewish family history that is unparalleled in its wealth and breadth. The focus is on everyday life in Frankfurt, upward social mobility, and bourgeois culture around 1900. At the same time, these testimonies describe the fate of a Jewish family caught up in repression, flight, and deportation. These unique family documents offer insight into the cross-border European-Jewish cultural history that was destroyed by the National Socialists.

The new exhibit structure includes interactive stations throughout the museum and also a feature called “Museum to Go” which enables visitors to “take films, photos, and other information from the exhibition home with you and access it again on your own personalized website.”

The museum’s new “Lichtbau” (Building of Light) was designed by Staab Architekten. It is a freestanding structure that doubles the museum’s overall surface area and will be used for temporary exhibitions, lectures and symposia, a museum shop, and public cloakrooms.

The Frankfurt museum opened on November 9, 1988 — the 50th anniversary of Kristallnacht — as the first municipal Jewish Museum in Germany.

It is the second major Jewish museum in Germany to reopen this year with a totally revamped permanent exhibition. The [Berlin Jewish Museum](#) reopened in August.

The Franconia Jewish Museum in Fuerth reopened with a new exhibition and building in 2018.

[Find out more information on the Frankfurt Jewish Museum's web site](#)

Source: [Jewish Heritage Europe](#).