

Sacred Heritage

on VIEW

**Religious and Post-Religious Museums
of the Modern Era**

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

18–20 June 2026 / Wrocław, Poland

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Sacred Heritage on View
Religious and Post-Religious Museums of the Modern Era

18–20 June 2026, Wrocław, Poland

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

18 June (Thursday)

Conference Venue:

Institute of Art History, University of Wrocław, 36 Szewska Street, Wrocław, Room 309 (Third Floor)

From 8.30 am Registration of Conference Participants

9.00–9.20 am

Welcome and Opening Remarks (Vice-Rector of the University of Wrocław Artur Błażejowski, Director of the Institute of Art History, Organisers)

9.20–10.00 am

Opening Lecture: Joanna Ślaga (Jagiellonian University Museum Collegium Maius, Cracow, Poland)

Beyond protection: museums of sacred heritage as spaces for dialogue, diversity and social responsibility.

10.00–10.20 am Coffee Break

First Session

Religious Heritage Museums in the Contemporary Era: Functions, Aims and Modes of Operation

Chair: Zvi Orgad (Bar-Ilan University, Israel)

10.20–10.40 am

Maia Wellington Gahtan (Kent State University, Florence, Italy)

The Forum on Museums and Religion

10.40–11.00 am

Donato Loia (University of Chicago Divinity School, United States)

The Museum as a Testing Ground for the Sacred

11.00–11.20 am

Sabine Berger (Sorbonne University / Centre André Chastel,
Paris, France)

*The Reassignment of the Franciscan Convent of Santiago de Chile
into a Museum of Sacred Colonial Art: Main Milestones, Collections,
and Activities*

11.20–11.40 am

Carly Sedjro Degbelo (Diocesan Religious Heritage Unit in Porto-
Novo, Benin / CY Cergy Paris University, France)

A Religious Museum of Cultural Diversity in Porto-Novo (Benin)

11.40–12.00 am Discussion

12.00 am–1.20 pm Lunch Break

Second Session

Between Synagogue and Museum: The Entangled Heritage of Judaism

Chair: Maia Wellington Gahtan (Kent State University, Florence, Italy)

1.20–1.40 pm

Zvi Orgad (Bar-Ilan University, Israel)

Musealizing Synagogue Interiors: Typologies of Display and Sacred Space Negotiation

1.40–2.00 pm

Paul Ariese (Reinwardt Academy, Amsterdam University of the Arts, the Netherlands)

Converging in Jewish Interspace: Exploring How Jewish Communities, Museum Visitors, and Heritage Professionals Engage with Amsterdam's Jewish Cultural Quarter Synagogues

2.00–2.20 pm

Tamara Kohn (Jewish Museum of Buenos Aires, Argentina / University of Jewish Studies, Budapest, Hungary)

Ritual Objects, Sacred Heritage: Histories Behind the Objects at the Jewish Museum of Buenos Aires

2.20–2.40 pm Discussion

2.40–3.20 pm Coffee Break

Third Session

Heritage of Various Religions and Denominations

Chair: Agata Kubala (University of Wrocław, Poland)

3.20–3.40 pm

Aik Sai Goh (University of Virginia, United States)

The Museumification of Sacred Heritage: Periodizing the Evolution of Buddhist Museums at Buddhist Scenic Areas in Mainland China, 1994–2024

3.40–4.00 pm

Jacolien Wubs (University College Utrecht, Utrecht University, the Netherlands)

Between Liturgy and Heritage: Present and Future Value of Historical Paraments of the Dutch Old-Catholic Church

4.00–4.20 pm

Ondřej Jakubec (Masaryk University, Brno, Czechia)

Secularization and Museum Transformations of Non-Catholic Sacred Spaces in the Czech Lands

4.20–4.40 pm

Hubert Kowalski (University of Warsaw, Poland)

Arkadiusz Cegliński (University of Warsaw, Poland)

Monika Dunajko-Ceglińska (University of Warsaw, Poland)

Ancient Temples and Tombs in the Early-Modern Landscape Residence Architecture of Warsaw: New Functions

4.40–5.00 pm Discussion and Summary of the First Day's Proceedings

6.00 pm Conference Dinner

19 June (Friday)

Conference Venue:

Archdiocesan Museum, 16 Cathedral Square, Wrocław

From 8.30 am Registration of Participants

8.50–9.00 am Welcome and Opening Remarks (Director of the Archdiocesan Museum, Father Dr. Adam Dereń, Organisers)

Fourth Session

Preserving the Sacred Despite Musealisation

Chair: Sabine Berger (Sorbonne University / Centre André Chastel, Paris, France)

9.00–9.20 am

Marek Kwaśny (University of Wrocław, Poland)

Votive Paintings in Bardo: Between the Secular and the Sacred

9.20–9.40 am

Rita Capurro (Association of Italian Ecclesiastical Museums / Museum and Treasury

of Monza Cathedral / University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy)

Religious Objects Between Museification and Use in Italian Ecclesiastical Museums

9.40–10.00 am

Rūta Giniūnaitė (Pontifical Gregorian University, Rom, Italy / Department of Cultural Heritage under Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania, Vilnius, Lithuania)

The Disused Sacred Space of Churches as a Form for the Cultural Exhibitions and the Cultural Exhibitions as a Form for the New Sacred Spaces of Disused Churches

10.00–10.20 am Discussion

10.20–10.40 am Coffee Break

Fifth Session

From the History of Religious Museums

Chair: Ondřej Jakubec (Masaryk University, Brno, Czechia)

10.40–11.00 am

Milena Woźniak-Koch (University of Gdańsk, Poland)

Museums as a Means of Integration: The Case of Mathias Bersohn's Museum of Jewish Antiquities in Warsaw (1910–1939)

11.00–11.20 am

Kamila Kłudkiewicz (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland)

Aldona Tołysz (Office of the Provincial Conservator of Monuments in Warsaw, Poland)

Religious Museums in the Second Polish Republic (1918–1939)

11.20–11.40 am

Kinga Migalska (National Museum in Kraków, Poland)

Displaced or Misplaced: Museums in Synagogues in Poland After World War II and Their Collections

11.40–12.00 am

Joanna Lubos-Kozieł (University of Wrocław, Poland)

The Diocesan Museum in Wrocław (Breslau) and Its Predecessors: The Emergence of the Concept of Catholic Diocesan Museums in Nineteenth-Century Germany

12.00–12.20 pm Discussion

12.20–2.00 pm Lunch Break

Sixth Session

History and Collections of the Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław (former Breslau)

Chair: Milena Woźniak-Koch (University of Gdańsk, Poland)

2.00–2.20 pm

Romuald Kaczmarek (University of Wrocław, Poland)

Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław (Breslau): How Were Its Collections Created?

2.20–2.40 pm

Agata Kubala (University of Wrocław, Poland)

Non-Sacred Heritage in a Religious Museum: Ancient Objects in the Collection of the Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław

2.40–3.00 pm

Artur Kolbiarz (University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland)

Andrzej Koziół (University of Wrocław, Poland / University of Ostrava, Czechia)

The Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław Rediscovered: Unknown Works by Baroque Masters from Silesia in the Museum Collection

3.00–3.30 pm Final Discussion and Summary of the Conference Proceedings

3.30–4.00 pm Coffee Break

Presentation of Selected Works from the Collection of the Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław

Chair: Agata Kubala (University of Wrocław, Poland)

4.00–4.20 pm

Romuald Kaczmarek (University of Wrocław, Poland)

Nina Misiarz (University of Wrocław, Poland)

Peter Vandenabeele (Ghent University, Belgium)

Barbara Łydźba-Kopczyńska (University of Wrocław, Poland)

Not Always Precious, Yet Always Fascinating: On Gemstones in Sacred Art

4.20–5.00 pm

Barbara Łydźba-Kopczyńska (University of Wrocław, Poland)

Agata Biernacka (University of Wrocław, Poland)

Nina Misiarz (University of Wrocław, Poland),

Magdalena Iwanicka (Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poland)

Piotr Targowski (Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poland)

Tomasz Łojewski (AGH University, Kraków, Poland)

The Painting “The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian” from the Collection of the Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław in the Light of Results of Physical and Chemical Research

5.00–6.30 pm

Guided Tour of the Museum

7.00 pm Conference Dinner

20 June (Saturday)

Sightseeing tour of Wrocław

10:00 am

Meeting at the entrance to the Archdiocesan Museum.

St John's Cathedral; the Collegiate Church of the Holy Cross; the University of Wrocław – main edifice (former Jesuit college); the Church of the Holy Name of Jesus (former Jesuit church); the White Stork Synagogue; the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Divine Providence (former Evangelical Reformed Church).

2.00 pm Lunch

Abstracts

Sacred Heritage on View

Sacred Heritage on View. Religious and Post-Religious Museums of the Modern Era - Abstracts

Paul Ariese (Reinwardt Academy, Amsterdam University of the Arts, the Netherlands)

Converging in Jewish Interspace: Exploring How Jewish Communities, Museum Visitors, and Heritage Professionals Engage with Amsterdam's Jewish Cultural Quarter Synagogues

Converging in Jewish interspace: Exploring how Jewish communities, museum visitors and heritage professionals engage with Amsterdam's Jewish Cultural Quarter synagogues Across Europe, synagogues converted into Jewish museums embody both Jewish loss and resilience. Amsterdam's Jewish Cultural Quarter exemplifies this ambiguity. Its former Ashkenazi synagogues house the Jewish Museum. The nearby Portuguese Synagogue continues to serve as a place of worship while welcoming museum visitors on weekdays. As Jewish life becomes more diverse and its visibility in the public sphere recedes amidst growing social tension, the way such heritage sites function as contact zone for Jews and non-Jews has become increasingly important. This paper first explains how members of Jewish religious communities understand the Amsterdam synagogues and their ceremonial collections within a 'Jewish religious heritage continuum'. Next, the paper discusses patterns of connection in museum visits to the synagogues, showing how visitors trace Jewish roots, histories and sights in between the exhibits of past and present Jewish life. Moreover, the paper conceptualises the emotional connection of heritage professionals to these sites, clarifying how positioning influences the way they navigate Jewish loss, a revived Jewish presence and reclamation of what Jews consider sacred. Ultimately, this paper demonstrates how the heterogeneous constellation of the heritagised synagogues shapes intergenerational, intercommunal and intercultural connections with Jewish life, while simultaneously leaving room for multiple interpretations of the sacred.

Sabine Berger (Sorbonne University / Centre André Chastel, Paris, France)

The Reassignment of the Franciscan Convent of Santiago de Chile into a Museum of Sacred Colonial Art: Main Milestones, Collections, and Activities

I propose to present the case, not unique in Latin America, of a monastery turned museum : the Franciscan convent of Santiago, Chile (16th-17th centuries/20th century), still partially occupied by a religious community, although it evolved several decades ago into a museum of sacred colonial art — painting and sculpture in particular.

Nestled in the heart of the Santiago metropolitan area, near the historic Huelén/Santa Lucía hill, the current Museo San Francisco displays collections aimed at Chileans and tourists, believers and atheists, students and researchers, encompassing nearly five centuries of religious artistic production in a colonial context.

The museum has distinguished itself for several years by its notable efforts in education, inclusivity and environmental preservation, making it a modern, appreciated and inspiring institution.

This case study, which I opened up in 2019-2020, will be updated in 2026 to include a selection of new museum activities linked to heritage promotion and education, as well as parallels with similar initiatives born in Chile and in neighboring states.

Far from being obsolete, museums of sacred colonial art constitute lively, diversified and significant museographic spaces currently experiencing, for various reasons, a great revival of interest.

**Rita Capurro (Association of Italian Ecclesiastical Museums /
Museum and Treasury of Monza Cathedral / University
of Milano-Bicocca, Italy)**

*Religious Objects Between Museification and Use in Italian
Ecclesiastical Museums*

Sacred art objects and items related to worship in Italian ecclesiastical museums represent a considerable, though not exclusive, part of the collections. These items include sacred vessels and vestments that are no longer in use, partly due to changes in liturgy, as well as paintings, statues and altar furnishings that have been removed from their original locations for various reasons. In this case, the role of museums is to ensure the preservation of the objects and their promotion as evidence of religious and artistic history and of the community. This dynamic of museification is certainly the most widespread but it is not the only one. In fact, in some cases, collections of sacred art or objects related to devotional practices have the peculiarity of being exhibited mainly in museums but, on specific occasions, also being used in liturgies or religious practices. This is the case for different objects from different periods, which share the fact that they are still a living heritage for the communities of the faithful.

This contribution presents some Italian emblematic cases of collections of this type, which include statues and processional machines, but also elements of treasures and other items. In particular attention will be drawn to the critical issues regarding conservation requirements and the challenges of representing the value linked to the life of the community of the faithful within the museum.

**Carly Sedjro Degbello (Diocesan Religious Heritage Unit
in Porto-Novo, Benin / CY Cergy Paris University, France)**

A Religious Museum of Cultural Diversity in Porto-Novo (Benin)

While diocesan museums represent artistic continuity in Europe, with their rich collections of medieval and Renaissance paintings (Fouché, 2022 / Dombergmuseum Museum of Sacred Art; Freising), the situation is different in West Africa, where these institutions are based on the legacy of missionaries. From this perspective, it is not uncommon to find non-religious objects such as bicycles or logbooks (Mgr THEVENOUD Diocesan Museum in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 2020). Objects related to indigenous religions can also be found there. So what could explain such varied acquisitions, and how does the display of objects respond to the concerns of visitors who are sometimes confused? We will analyse these concerns in light of the experiences of the Diocesan Church of Porto-Novo in Benin, which has been evangelising for 162 years. It has launched a project to create the first diocesan museum based not only on liturgical and sacred art collections but also on endogenous musical and decorative objects in a spirit of inculturation and interreligious dialogue. This future decolonial museum also aims to be a bridge for cultural dialogue, facilitating the circulation of missionary heritage objects taken from Africa in the 21st century and preserved in certain congregational museums in Europe.

Maia Wellington Gahtan (Kent State University, Florence, Italy)
The Forum on Museums and Religion

In Florence, Italy, between the years 2012 and 2020 the *Forum on museums and religion* held numerous events and four international conferences which were subsequently published in both Italian and English. The *Forum's* mission was to promote dialogue between religious authorities and museum professionals focused on religious heritage under their care—heritage that includes both active places of worship visited with “museum eyes” and/or possessing museum administrations, as well as objects withdrawn from sacred spaces into secular museum and heritage environments. The dialogue was meant to help restore legitimate context to religious heritage for a variety of publics and diffuse tension between religious and secular authorities and publics surrounding sacred objects, while at the same time working towards developing common frameworks for appreciating sacred spaces and sacred objects within museums. As the founder/lead organizer of the *Forum*, I would like to discuss my experiences planning and holding these events (particularly the international conferences published as books: *Churches, Temples, Mosques. Places of Worship or Museums?*, 2012; *Objects in Sacred Collections: The Museums of Florentine Religious Institutions and Their Public*, 2014; *Sacred Art and the Museum Exhibition*, 2019; *Religion in Museum Education*, 2020), offer a critique their outcomes, and put forth considerations as to how to move forward in the future.

**Rūta Giniūnaitė (Pontifical Gregorian University, Rom, Italy /
Department of Cultural Heritage under Ministry of Culture
of the Republic of Lithuania, Vilnius, Lithuania)**

*The Disused Sacred Space of Churches as a Form for the Cultural
Exhibitions and the Cultural Exhibitions as a Form for the New
Sacred Spaces of Disused Churches*

The history of the reuse of disused churches for the cultural functions turned around Vatican II (1962-1965). The cultural functions of disused churches began to interact with the sacred space of disused churches. From Vatican II until the first Vatican guidelines “Decommissioning and Ecclesial Reuse of Churches” (2018), various approaches to the cultural exhibitions of the sacred space of disused churches have been proposed. Moreover, many concepts of the cultural exhibitions of the sacred space of disused churches, which interacted with the sacred space and not, have been implemented in Europe. Four different contemporary temporary and permanent concepts of the cultural exhibitions (the Venice Biennale in Italy, the diocesan museum “Kolumba Art Museum” in Germany, the Chapel of the Disclosure in Belgium and the Courtyard of the Gentiles in Vatican), influenced by the absence of the sacred space of churches, will be analysed in particular. The aim of the presentation is to reflect on the tension between the theoretical and experiential approaches to the giving of a form to the cultural exhibitions from the disused sacred space of churches and then the giving of a form to new sacred spaces of disused churches from the cultural exhibitions.

Aik Sai Goh (University of Virginia, United States)

The Museumification of Sacred Heritage: Periodizing the Evolution of Buddhist Museums at Buddhist Scenic Areas in Mainland China, 1994–2024

Following the 1993 completion of the Tian Tan Buddha in Hong Kong, mainland China witnessed an unprecedented construction boom of massive Buddhist attractions comprising giant structures, museums, and other facilities enclosed in scenic areas and parks. Scholars generally attribute the phenomenon to commercial reasons and the performative imperatives of officials (Otehode and Farrelly 2025, 207–211; Chang 2016, 170). While these factors are important, this paper takes a nuanced approach by mapping the museums in more than ten projects completed in 1996–2020 to China’s political economy, and the modernization of its tourism and heritage industries. Examining these with close analyses of representative cases,¹ I argue that there are three overlapping yet distinct phases to the establishment of these museums tied to the development of a “heritage consciousness” in China (Zarrow 2020): (1) an initial phase in the 1990s where the emphasis is on building giant Buddhist statues with any accompanying museum constructed as an afterthought, (2) a second phase in the 2000s–2010s where the authorities constructed museums inside Buddhist scenic areas as secondary attractions tapping into the appeal of cultural heritage (Yan 2018), and (3) a current phase beginning in the mid-2010s where grandiose Buddhist museums are erected as standalone attractions.

¹ For the purposes of this proposal, the representative cases are tentatively the Lingshan Buddha 1 Palace in Wuxi, Jiangsu Province (established in 1997), Jiuhuashan Dayuan Buddhist Culture Park in Jiuhuashan, Anhui Province (established in 2013), and Guanyin Dharma Realm in Zhujiajian Island, Zhejiang province (established in 2020). They are selected from a non-exhaustive list of fifteen well-known projects compiled by the author.

Ondřej Jakubec (Masaryk University, Brno, Czechia)

Secularization and Museum Transformations of Non-Catholic Sacred Spaces in the Czech Lands

This paper will focus on several representative examples of non-Catholic sacred buildings from the Utraquist 15th century to other non-Catholic buildings of the 16th and 17th centuries and their secular transformations. These were already linked to the recatholization after 1620, when their sacred form and function were suppressed or transformed, but underwent interesting changes in the 19th and 20th centuries, when these buildings became museums or cultural institutions, in which their "non-Catholic cultural memory" was interestingly transformed into museums in the context of specific political and social changes.

Romuald Kaczmarek (University of Wrocław, Poland)

Nina Misiarz (University of Wrocław, Poland)

Peter Vandenabeele (Ghent University, Belgium)

Barbara Łydzba-Kopczyńska (University of Wrocław, Poland)

Not Always Precious, Yet Always Fascinating: On Gemstones in Sacred Art

The Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław holds a relatively small yet valuable collection of goldsmiths' works, comprising several dozen objects dating from the 13th to the 20th century. Only some of the works are decorated with precious and semi-precious stones or their imitations. Gemstones themselves have fascinated viewers for centuries with their rich colours, brilliance and shimmering effects. The identification of gemstones can be based on gemmological analysis; however, physicochemical methods also provide unequivocal results.

In October 2025, as part of the work of an international interdisciplinary research team composed of an art historian and chemists working in the field of cultural heritage, a selection of over a dozen such decorated

objects from the Museum's collection was examined. These included a burse, four altar crosses, two chalices and four monstrances, dating mainly from the 16th to the 18th century.

The analyses were carried out using Raman spectroscopy with a handheld Bravo spectrometer, enabling *in situ* examination of the objects. This technique made it possible to identify various types of gemstones, including garnets, emeralds, corundum, rubies, diamonds and different varieties of quartz, as well as other precious materials such as mother-of-pearl (nacre).

Romuald Kaczmarek (University of Wrocław, Poland)

Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław (Breslau): How Were Its Collections Created?

One of the oldest church museums in present-day Poland, the Wrocław Archdiocesan Museum, has nearly 5,000 objects in its inventory, collected in two main stages. In the first period, 1898-1945, the number was approximately 2,800. In the second stage, the museum's existence after 1945 within the Polish state, this number almost doubled. It should be noted that as a result of the relocation of its collections during WW II, the Museum suffered significant losses, not so much quantitative but qualitative, in its resources, particularly its medieval part. The Museum's collection is exceptionally diverse, encompassing not only objects related to the furnishings of Catholic churches, although it was intended that the newly established institution would receive works of sacred art that had been withdrawn from use and threatened with destruction. The legal basis for the transfer of works of art and crafts from churches was a decree issued by Bishop Georg Cardinal Kopp, the initiator of the Museum's establishment, who provided an institutional framework for the appeals and efforts of his predecessors. The influx of objects proceeded in a multifaceted manner. In the first stage, in addition to appointing a single priest responsible for searching for appropriate works within the diocese and submitting appropriate forms to parishes, donations gradually began to arrive from individual priests and private individuals. Tracing the accessions from 1898 to 1947 provides insight

into the extraordinary process of collection development and its character.

Kamila Kłudkiewicz (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland)

Aldona Tołysz (Office of the Provincial Conservator of Monuments in Warsaw, Poland)

Religious Museums in the Second Polish Republic (1918–1939)

The first religious museums in Poland were established during the period of partition. The largest group consisted of Roman Catholic collections, but there were also Orthodox and Jewish museums, as well as Evangelical collections. During the interwar period, Polish museums became increasingly professional and specialised, a trend that also affected religious museums, particularly those associated with the Roman Catholic Church. Alongside diocesan museums, which housed Christian art from Catholic churches, institutions of other faiths were also established, including those of the Jewish, Karaite and Armenian churches. These museums encountered various issues, primarily financial and spatial, and were developed from the ground up. Some never progressed beyond the conceptual stage, while others were short-lived and ephemeral.

In our presentation, we will address the following topics: 1) The functioning of diocesan and parish museums in the interwar period; and 2) The establishment and activities of museums of other faiths during the Second Polish Republic. Against the backdrop of a brief overview of the operation of various religious museums, we will attempt to provide a general characterisation of these types of museum in the years 1918–1939. Our focus will be on the attitude of the Polish state towards these institutions, their place in the Second Polish Republic's museum policy, how they were financed, the organisational difficulties they faced, and how they operated in comparison with other museum institutions of the time.

Artur Kolbierz (University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland)
Andrzej Kozieł (University of Wrocław, Poland / University of Ostrava, Czechia)

The Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław Rediscovered: Unknown Works by Baroque Masters from Silesia in the Museum Collection

In 2017, a thorough modernisation of the Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław began. It also included the preparation of a concept for a new permanent exhibition. This task was carried out by a team of art historians from the University of Wrocław and the University of Silesia in Katowice. However, the conceptual work was preceded by a thorough and comprehensive search of the Archdiocesan Museum's collections, which was carried out in 2018. It was the first opportunity in many years for researchers to explore the collections of this least scientifically known museum in Wrocław. The search resulted in the discovery of many previously unknown works of art in the museum's depots. Undoubtedly, one of the greatest discoveries was the finding of previously unknown works by masters of Baroque painting and sculpture in Silesia. It turned out that the Archdiocesan Museum's collection includes paintings by the most outstanding Silesian painters of that time, such as Michael Willmann, Johann Claessens, Karl Dankwart, Johann Conrad Pöhl, Felix Anton Scheffler, Jeremias Joseph Knechtel and Christoph Wilhelm Seidel. Equally spectacular were the discoveries of Baroque sculptures in Silesia, as the museum's collection revealed works by such masters as Matthäus Knote, Matthias Steinl, Thomas Weissfeldt, Johann Georg Urbansky, Georg Leonhard Weber, Johann Nepomucen Hartmann or Anton Dorasil. Thanks to these discoveries of previously unknown works, the Archdiocesan Museum has gained high-class artistic exhibits which, alongside Lucas Cranach the Elder's *Madonna under the Fir Trees*, may become the showcase of this museum, restored to the public after a thorough reconstruction.

Hubert Kowalski (University of Warsaw, Poland)
Arkadiusz Cegliński (University of Warsaw, Poland)
Monika Dunajko-Ceglińska (University of Warsaw, Poland)

*Ancient Temples and Tombs in the Early-Modern Landscape
Residence Architecture of Warsaw: New Functions*

Temples and tombs, supported by slender columns and decorated with bas-reliefs of Olympian gods, bucrania, and palmettes, have endured for centuries, extending far beyond the boundaries of ancient Greece and Rome. This type of architecture, just as in antiquity, captivates with its form and decoration, but today it is largely devoid of a sacred or funerary character. This is particularly evident in early-modern palace and garden complexes. Over the years, pavilions were built in these garden spaces intended for relaxation, as part of carefully planned residential designs. Behind the antique-style facades there were concealed meeting and banquet spaces. These structures could also function as reservoirs, kitchens, guardhouses, etc. Sometimes they were also erected as temporary decorative and entertaining structures for specific events, such as the anniversary of the coronation of Stanisław II Augustus. This paper will focus on research on early-modern garden pavilions, which directly referenced ancient architecture. Also will be presented the results of research on the sources of inspiration and the new functions assigned to "temples" or "tombs" located within the grounds of aristocratic and royal landscape residences. Examples include selected existing or nonexisting Warsaw pavilions located e.g. in Łazienki Park, Natolin, Młociny, and others.

The research involved, among other things, analyses of archival and iconographic materials, georeferencing studies using GIS tools, and geophysical surveys. The results will allow for a better understanding of the development of the functions and forms of garden pavilions on estates in Warsaw and the Masovian Voivodeship.

Agata Kubala (University of Wrocław, Poland)

Non-Sacred Heritage in a Religious Museum: Ancient Objects in the Collection of the Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław.

Archdiocesan museums are generally associated with collections of sacred art, objects of both artistic and historical value that have been withdrawn from liturgical use. The Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław possesses objects not found in most Polish institutions of this type. These are antiquities, whose presence here is the result of the collecting activities of two Wrocław metropolitans: Cardinal Adolf Bertram, who held his position in Breslau, then German, and Polish Cardinal Henryk Gulbinowicz. The purpose of this presentation is to explain the circumstances in which two Catholic hierarchs acquired "pagan" antiquities—Egyptian, Near Eastern, Greek, and Roman—of provenance, interestingly unrelated to any cult—for their collections and then transferred them to the institution they oversaw, whose mission was, after all, to amass collections of a completely different nature.

Marek Kwaśny (University of Wrocław, Poland)

Votive Paintings in Bardo: Between the Secular and the Sacred

The Museum of Sacred Art, established in the Redemptorist monastery in Bardo Śląskie, possesses an extraordinary collection of over fifty votive paintings displayed in the so-called votive chapel on the ground floor of the building. The paintings, dating from the mid-17th to the early 20th century and representing diverse artistic levels, constitute a material testimony to popular piety and the centuries-old cult of the miraculous statue of the Madonna of Bardo. Nearly all were created as thanksgiving offerings for graces received.

However, their current location and mode of display reveal their problematic museum status and provoke questions about the nature of these works: are they merely ethnographic artefacts, or can one still speak of sacred objects, given that their obvious thanksgiving function was accompanied by the donors' deep faith in their particular efficacy?

The votive chapel, arranged in a monastery corridor, resembles a storage space for works that found no place in the main exhibition. This space situates them in a zone "between" the sanctuary and the museum. On one hand, the illusion of their sacred character is maintained through their placement in a chapel and the preserved dense arrangement. On the other hand, the inclusion of inventory descriptions unequivocally incorporates them into the order of the museum collection.

Therefore, the subject of the paper will be the problematic musealisation of the votive paintings in Bardo as secular objects, though originally surrounded by a particular faith in their agentive potential and currently suspended in an ambivalent space between the sacred and the profane.

Donato Loia (University of Chicago Divinity School, United States)

The Museum as a Testing Ground for the Sacred

Abstract: In a conversation from the autumn of 1957, Theodor W. Adorno remarked: *"Nothing of theological content will persist without being transformed; every content will have to put itself to the test of migrating into the realm of the secular, the profane."* Starting from this observation, my paper offers a theoretical, philosophical, and historical reflection on the museum as a testing ground for sacred heritage.

A first interpretive reading of Adorno's statement suggests that museums participate—consciously or not—in a broader process of the historicization of the sacred, a process that reshapes the conditions under which sacred objects and meanings are experienced in modernity. This process often generates the impression that to historicize the sacred is to relativize religion, reducing the divine or other sacred authorities to one manifestation among others rather than affirming their essential or authoritative status.

As a counterpoint to this Adorno-inspired interpretation, the paper also considers an alternative view: that museums foreground points of overlap between aesthetic and religious experience, highlighting their convergence around shared modes of attention, affect, and reverence. From this perspective, museums do not historicize religious truth itself,

but rather the historical manifestations of the sacred and the conditions under which they become visible and legible.

Taken together, these interpretations reveal the museum's relationship to the sacred as deeply ambivalent. Museums can foster interfaith dialogue and pluralism while simultaneously presenting the sacred within an anthropological horizon that sacralizes human creativity—often at the expense of the truth-content of religious traditions themselves. Rather than focusing on a single case study, this paper offers a holistic reflection on how musealization preserves, transforms, and reconfigures religious meaning in modernity.

Joanna Lubos-Kozieł (University of Wrocław, Poland)

The Diocesan Museum in Breslau and Its Predecessors: The Emergence of the Concept of Catholic Diocesan Museums in Nineteenth-Century Germany

Opened to the public in 1903, the Diocesan Museum in Breslau was one of approximately a dozen such institutions established in the Catholic dioceses of Germany during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, up to the outbreak of the First World War (by “Germany” I mean the territories that became part of the unified German state in 1871). Unfortunately, Wrocław is not taken into account in publications by German scholars devoted to diocesan museums and the activities of the *Christliche Kunstvereine* – Catholic associations promoting the development of religious art, within whose circles the idea of establishing such museums first emerged. On the other hand, the German cultural context that shaped this institution has not always received sufficient attention from Polish scholars working on the Breslau/Wrocław museum. The aim of this paper is to present the Breslau museum against the background of earlier institutions of this kind founded in German dioceses and to discuss the concept of the diocesan museum that took shape at that time. The analysis will focus on the statutes of Christian art associations, articles published in Catholic journals devoted to Christian art, and the writings of August Reichensperger, one of the most important Catholic theorists of the

revival of Christian art. His attitude towards the establishment of diocesan museums was, incidentally, ambivalent, as he preferred works of Christian art to remain within church interiors so that they could continue to fulfil their proper, original liturgical and devotional functions.

Barbara Łydzba-Kopczyńska (University of Wrocław, Poland)

Agata Biernacka (University of Wrocław, Poland)

Nina Misiarz (University of Wrocław, Poland)

Magdalena Iwanicka (Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poland)

Piotr Targowski (Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poland)

Tomasz Łojewski (AGH University, Kraków, Poland)

The Painting "The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian" from the Collection of the Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław in the Light of Results of Physical and Chemical Research

The Archdiocesan Museum in Wrocław's collection includes the oil-on-linen-canvas painting The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian (170 x 107 cm), which depicts the martyrdom of St. Sebastian against a landscape background. It is an outstanding work of art. Despite this, our knowledge of it is limited. We do not know where it comes from, when it was created or who painted it. The painting will undergo comprehensive physical and chemical studies. This will help establish basic information about it. Analysis of photographs taken in UV and IR light will reveal its state of preservation, while MA-XRF scans will provide information about the pigments used. Cross-sections of the collected samples, analysed under VIS and UV light microscopes, will reveal the stratigraphy. SEM-EDS analysis will provide information about the distribution of pigment and the stratigraphy. Moreover, Raman spectroscopy can provide molecular information about the applied painting materials. Comprehensive analysis of the painting technique will be supported by an analysis of the binder using GC-MS chromatography. The results of this research will be presented in the proposed paper. Based on these results, we will attempt to identify the author of the work, when it was created and where it originated. This semi-anonymous work will regain its historical identity.

Kinga Migalska (National Museum in Kraków, Poland)

Displaced or Misplaced: Museums in Synagogues in Poland After World War II and Their Collections

Transforming places of worship into museums has both material and symbolic implications. Undoubtedly, the greatest advantage of transforming a disused religious site into a museum is securing its existence while simultaneously emphasizing its role in the heritage landscape. At the same time, the process of desacralizing a place of worship often creates a space of "difficult heritage." In the case of Polish synagogues transformed into museums, the stage of desacralization occurred long before their musealisation, but through the connection with the tragedy of the Holocaust, it created another dimension for these spaces, transforming them into places of memory, into monuments of painful history.

By briefly characterising examples of museums located and organized in synagogue buildings after World War II (including those in Kraków, Kolbuszowa, Łańcut, Nowy Sącz, Tykocin, Włodawa, Łęczna, Wrocław, Chmielnik) and analysing collections (Judaic and non-Judaic) gathered by these institutions, I intend to characterize the points of contact and areas of conflict between the historically sacral character of the buildings and the semantic load of the artefacts presented in the interiors of these buildings. Furthermore, I would like to describe the role these institutions played in reintroducing the history and culture of Polish Jews into the collective memory of Poles, especially in the 1980s and 1990s.

Zvi Orgad (Bar-Ilan University, Israel)

Musealizing Synagogue Interiors: Typologies of Display and Sacred Space Negotiation

This paper examines the musealization of sacred space through the display of synagogue interiors, focusing on the tension between secularization and the preservation of an intentional illusion of sanctity within religious and post-religious museums. It addresses the relocation and reconstruction of entire synagogues and Jewish prayer rooms in museum settings, distinguishing this practice from the conversion of former synagogues into museums in situ, and highlighting how sacred space is reframed when detached from its original ritual context.

From the early modern period up to World War II, synagogue interiors were occasionally exhibited in Christian or civic contexts as objects of confessional knowledge, ethnography, or local history. This includes the “teaching synagogue” displayed at the Dresden Zwinger (1712–1836) and later transfers of prayer rooms from Unterlimpurg, Kirchheim, and Horb to civic museums.

After 1945, a new paradigm emerged with the display of synagogue interiors within Jewish museums, including the Israel Museum’s Synagogue Route, the Solothurn prayer room at the Jewish Museum Basel, and the relocation of the historic Adas Israel Synagogue to the Capital Jewish Museum in Washington, D.C. Drawing on heritage studies, theories of sacralization and desacralization, and spatial anthropology, the paper suggests a typology of display strategies based on reconstruction, curatorial framing, and visitor access. It argues that “post-religious space” is not a fixed state of secularization, but a dynamic exhibition condition shaped by spatial design, curatorial decisions, and visitor movement, through which the presence – or absence – of sanctity is negotiated.

Milena Woźniak-Koch (University of Gdańsk, Poland)

Museums as a Means of Integration: The Case of Mathias Bersohn's Museum of Jewish Antiquities in Warsaw (1910–1939)

Mathias Bersohn (1823–1908) – banker, philanthropist, historian, collector, and above all, integrationist – is a figure who has left a lasting mark on the history of Polish-Jewish Warsaw. As part of his diverse and extensive activities, Bersohn is primarily remembered as a collector and the founder of Warsaw's first museum of Judaica – the Museum of Jewish Antiquities, established in Warsaw in 1910 with a donation from Mathias Bersohn. The museum was created on the basis of 1,221 Judaica items collected by Bersohn, which the collector donated to the Warsaw Jewish community in 1905, giving impetus to the creation of the institution named after him.

Based on a catalogue published in 1939, several sections of the museum's collection can be reconstructed: the first – archival – contained 19th-century documents of the Jewish patriciate, with materials concerning the activities of the Bersohn and Glücksberg families and the Warsaw Rabbinical School, as well as manuscripts of religious content. The museum also presented photographs, drawings, and watercolours documenting synagogues (including their interiors), which were related to Bersohn's pioneering research on the architecture of wooden synagogues in Poland. The most numerous group in this part of Bersohn's collection consisted of numismatic items (seals, medals), as well as rings and amulets. Another part of the collection consisted of religious objects: shields-pendants for rods and yads, balsam boxes, etrog boxes, Hanukkah lamps, candlesticks, crowns for Torah scrolls, etc. A separate section of the collection consisted of paroches – curtains for altar cabinets.

The case of Bersohn and his collections perfectly exemplifies the contradictions and tensions that arose as a result of assimilation. Progressive integration brought not only a rapid increase in interest in the culture of the country of residence (i.e., Polish literature and art, as well as German, French, Italian, etc.), but also made Jews aware of the importance of their own material cultural heritage and conditioned the development of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, being an important component of the process of forming Jewish national consciousness. Mathias Bersohn, with his interest in collecting Judaica, was one of the precursors of research into the history of Jews and the monuments of their material culture, and his

museum has left a lasting mark on the history of museology as a manifestation of integrationism and an important stage in the negotiation of the national identity of the generation of Warsaw Jews at the beginning of the 20th century.

Jacolien Wubs (University College Utrecht, Utrecht University, the Netherlands)

Between Liturgy and Heritage: Present and Future Value of Historical Paraments of the Dutch Old-Catholic Church

The Dutch Old-Catholic Church owns an extraordinary collection of liturgical paraments (c.1400-1900), whose artistic, cultural, and religious historical value remains undisputed. The way these physically fragile items are currently stored is untenable. A small portion of the collection is held in museum repositories, while the majority remains in churches. Preservation conditions in churches are often far from optimal, and museum storage facilities are reaching their capacity limits. As a result, the paraments occupy a liminal position: suspended between their (often dormant) role within a living liturgical tradition and an uncertain future as museum-held heritage.

This paper will first examine the historical and contemporary roles of paraments. It will then consider how different future scenarios may affect their nature and the values attributed to them, including continued or renewed liturgical use, (selective) musealisation, and deaccessioning. It will address questions as: What constitutes the ritual value of these paraments and how is that value transformed — or diminished — when they are placed in museum storage or on display? Whose sense of connection to these paraments is fostered, and whose may be compromised, if churches choose to retain and (re)use them?

The search for sustainable future scenarios for moveable church objects is informed by current circumstances including the climate crisis and secularisation.



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