

AEJM Curatorial Education Programme 2014 Amsterdam

Report by Daniela Schmid, curator Ariel Muzicant Collection, Vienna

This year's CEP was hosted by the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam and took place from 2nd until 5th March 2014. The overall topic was Judaica of Sephardic communities, adjusted to the collections and their history as well as the curators working with them. The programme was organized by the AEJM and Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek, in cooperation with Julie-Marthe Cohen, Mirjam Knotter and Hetty Berg.

The preparation for the programme already started in the beginning of this year as we were given different assignments to prepare and to hand in. These included working on a Sephardic object from our own institution's collection, a provenance research-related matter, as well as getting familiar with manuscripts from the Ets Chaim collection.

The kick-off was a lecture by Joel Cohen about the history of the Jewish Historical Quarter in Amsterdam. A round of introduction of all participants followed. On the first day we enjoyed a lecture by Julie-Marthe Cohen and Mirjam Knotter on the museum's history. This was followed by a tour of the Portuguese Synagogue, the Ets Chaim Library and the museum.

After these important explanatory sessions we jumped into researching and exploring Sephardic objects the following day. After learning about Sephardic holdings in the participant's collections, we worked with exceptional pieces from the Portuguese Synagogue's collection. These two textiles and metal objects-related workshops gave us the unique opportunity to learn from these pieces.

On Tuesday Emile Schrijver at the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana gave us a presentation. He gave us an enthusiastic insight on Jewish manuscripts and early printed books. Another focus of this year's CEP was the discussion of provenance research and restitution issues. Presenting a quite sensitive topic, this workshop reflected different approaches regarding these questions.

On the last day we engaged in the investigation of objects from the depots of the Jewish Historical Museum Amsterdam. Extraordinary items were chosen to be researched and discussed. This session clearly emphasized the necessity to keep in mind the practical use and function of an object next to its relevance within Jewish rituals and customs. In the last afternoon we had the opportunity to meet with the participants of the Paideia-programme (The European Institute for Jewish Studies in Sweden). Together with senior experts, we reviewed particular areas of the Jewish Cultural Quarter regarding curatorial, architectural and organisational decisions.

For me as a first-time participant, the overall approach of working in pairs or small groups provided me with the opportunity to exchange with colleagues all over Europe. These discussions about different angles of research and collecting focuses, led to lively exchanges of ideas and to broadening our horizons.

One of the most important outcomes of this programme was the widening of our perspectives of history, provenance and ritual context of objects, next to focussing our awareness of Sephardic Judaica and its particular features. These sharpened thoughts will highly contribute to my daily work of cataloguing Judaica.