

## **AEJM Curatorial Education Programme 2012**

*Report by Yael Fried, Jewish Museum Stockholm*

Coming back from a curator's training program sharpens your eyesight. Suddenly all glimmering objects, particularly silver, work like magnets and draw your attention to them. After participating in AEJM's curatorial education program at the Jewish museum in Frankfurt am Main for three days, I felt that my eyes will never be the same. Patiently guided by experts of Judaica, participants from all over Europe together learned how to examine rare pieces, and what to look for when trying to date them. Being an information officer and project developer at the Jewish Museum in Stockholm, this was quite an experience.

We were given Chanukah lamps, Torah shields and Torah binders to look at, the latter recently found in a cardboard box tucked away on a shelf deep in the Aschaffenburg museum. This proved to be an excellent learning opportunity, about textiles, about customs, about German Jewish history. The Wimpel pieces really showed how these aspects are intertwined, and what treasures might still be hidden in our museums.

The participants were from many different backgrounds; some curators, some educators, some more learned in Hebrew, some less. This proved a very good combination, as we not only learned from the experts, but also from each other. This particularly showed when we took a field trip to Mainz, where a new synagogue has been built and recently inaugurated. In the synagogue there were a few Torah ornaments that had not been registered or described anywhere. The whole group sat down in a high-ceiled room, and we put all of our efforts together to figure out who made the pieces we were holding with our white gloves. Generally we agreed, but some caused a welcomed discussion and debate.

Our last day was optional, but I am glad I stayed. We were taken to the other part of the Jewish museum, where the Judengasse was located. Still today some parts of it are visible, and seeing it gave a whole new understanding of the situation for Frankfurt's Jews during the Middle Ages, and the history of the area. The nearby cemetery proved to be an interesting meeting point of the old and new, where tombstones from the 13<sup>th</sup> Century shared space with modern day candles and handwritten notes.

The old and new was also a topic that engaged us both during the workshops and the late night dinners in local restaurants. How do we evaluate contemporary Judaica? What modern day objects are worth keeping in our collections? Can letters and diaries be considered Judaica? These discussions are likely to continue, but I will leave that topic for another conference.

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