

Call For Papers

**Tracing Jewish Histories:
The Long Lives of Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts, Judaica, and Architecture**



Ibn Shoshan Synagogue (now the **Church of Santa María la Blanca**), first built 1180, Toledo, Spain

Case Western Reserve University and The Courtauld Institute of Art are delighted to jointly host the two-day symposium *Tracing Jewish Histories* on **19-20 May 2025**. The call for papers is now open, and submissions are due on **27 February 2025**.

Works of art and architecture made by or for Jewish communities in the medieval period are often examined through the lenses of persecution and expulsion, or are contrasted against Christian or Muslim “styles.” This symposium seeks to expand and nuance these narratives in order to highlight how works of art and architecture can uniquely trace the history of particular Jewish communities by mapping their movements and traditions across generations and geographies. Medieval Jewish objects and spaces can also serve as loci to examine ideas related to collective memory and cultural identity. To that end, the symposium seeks to open new dialogues regarding the “afterlives” of medieval Jewish art writ large, initiating discussions regarding the ways in which works of art and architecture continued to bear witness to the richness of Jewish life and culture long after they were created.

The symposium will take place at The Courtauld Institute of Art’s Vernon Square campus on 19-20 May 2025, and will bring together scholars and museum professionals. The first day will be dedicated to the presentation of new research while the second day will feature a keynote round-table with curators from The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, the Victoria & Albert Museum, and the J. Paul Getty Museum. The second day will also include a special, curator-led visit to the Victoria & Albert Museum for speakers and chairs.

We invite submissions for 20-minute papers that investigate the trans-historic impact of art and/or architecture made by and for medieval Jewish communities. Submissions should respond to one of the following themes: manuscripts and printed books; metalwork and textiles; the architecture of secular and ritual spaces; and collecting practices.

Examples of paper topics that respond to these themes include, but are not limited to:

- the movement of Hebrew or Yiddish manuscripts and ritual objects across geographies;
- the impact of Jewish migration on production practices;
- the repurposing of Jewish books and ritual objects as well as ritual and secular spaces by non-Jewish communities both within and beyond the medieval period;
- the collecting of Hebrew manuscripts and Judaica by both Jews and non-Jews;
- the changes made to Hebrew manuscripts, ritual objects, and ritual/secular spaces by Jewish and non-Jewish communities at any point in an object or space's "life";
- the archival and museological histories associated with the collecting and displaying of Jewish objects as well as the creation of Jewish-centered arts institutions;
- and the ways Jewish objects are displayed and studied today in museum, library, and archival settings.

Please send the proposed paper's title and an abstract of no more than 200 words along with a CV to Laura Feigen (laura.feigen@courtauld.ac.uk) and Reed O'Mara (rao44@case.edu) by **27 February 2025**. Travel bursaries will be available for a few early-career scholars and those without institutional support. Funds are limited, please email the organisers to discuss further.

This symposium is made possible by the support of Case Western Reserve University and the Mellon Foundation.