

**Jewish Country Houses – Objects, Networks, People** is a 5-year research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council commencing in October 2019. The project is a collaboration between the Universities of Oxford, Durham and Cardiff, the National Trust, Waddesdon Manor and Strawberry Hill House (all UK), and European partners including the Centre des Monuments Nationaux (France), individual partner properties, and the European Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Jewish Culture and Heritage (AEPJ). The project has been incubated over four years with the generous support of TORCH (The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities).

The project takes country houses as a starting point for opening up a much broader intellectual agenda at the interface between Jewish history, art history and heritage culture. It is organised around two major strands: politics/philanthropy and collecting/material culture. Each will feature workshops and conferences with significant heritage sector participation. Where possible they will be organised with relevant partners: in the UK, the National Trust (co-sponsor of all collecting strand events), the Victoria & Albert Museum, and London Art Week. In Europe we are working with the Centre du Monuments Nationaux and our events will be organised in collaboration with the Musée Camondo and the Château de Champs (France), Villa Montesca (Italy), and Villa Stiassni (Czech Republic). Our new collaboration with the National Gallery (UK) aims to bring both strands together through a focus on cultural philanthropy.

### What are the project aims?

1. To establish 'Jewish' country houses – properties that were owned, built or renewed by Jews - as a focus for research, a site of European memory and a significant aspect of European Jewish heritage and material culture.
2. To challenge the nationally framed paradigms of continuity and rootedness that underpin country house studies in the UK and elsewhere in continental Europe by highlighting the parallels and connections between 'Jewish' country houses across Europe, and by developing a conception of the country house grounded not in national characteristics but in pan-European relationships.
3. To go beyond the conceptual framework that shapes existing work on Jewish elites, which focuses on their integration in the nation state and in specific urban centres, by illuminating, through a focus on their country houses, the international culture and networks of the "Jewish aristocracy" and the ways this intersected with national and imperial political, social and cultural contexts.
4. To establish what, if anything was distinctive - and by extension *Jewish* - about these properties, the tastes of their owners and the networks of dealers, decorators and designers who embellished them.
5. To bring new perspectives to bear on established disciplines such as the history of collecting, and modern Jewish history through significant publications and targeted conference activity. This will focus on the Jewish country house as an expression of familial, financial and intellectual relationships and as a repository for art collections, as well as on the equally neglected social and philanthropic role played by Jewish elites in the countryside.
6. To transform practice in the heritage sector by developing an intellectual framework and practical resources to enable heritage professionals working in Jewish country house museums in the UK and continental Europe, often with little knowledge of Jewish history, to better engage the 'Jewishness' of their properties, their often-contested history, and their heritage dissonance.

7. To enhance public awareness and understanding of the 'Jewish' dimensions of individual country houses (especially those open to the public), while remaining sensitive to contemporary concerns about antisemitism, to the continued relevance of Holocaust memory, and to the fact that many Jewish country house owners chose to downplay – or even reject – being Jewish, perhaps particularly in their country lives. Heritage theory suggests that reclaiming marginalised and submerged narratives enhances social cohesion by reducing ignorance about minority religious and ethnic groups and raising awareness of the diversity both of national heritage, and of European culture more generally. This project will contribute to the process whereby missing, rejected or 'alienated' minority perspectives are entering the heritage canon, and become part of everyone's heritage.

8. To foster relevant pan-European relationships in the heritage sector with a view to enhancing and enriching curatorial understanding and interpretation of individual properties both in the UK and in continental Europe, because Jewish country houses cannot be interpreted or understood without reference to this broader European context.

### **What are the project outcomes?**

The project will have a range of outcomes, some more geared towards specialist research outputs, whilst others will be co-designed with project partners with significant potential public benefit. Confirmed outcomes include:

1. *Jewish Country Houses* – a richly-illustrated overview of Jewish country houses, of interest to both scholarly and general readers. We would like to thank the Martin J. Gross Family Foundation for its generous support of this publication

2. Two academic monographs exploring: i) Orientalism ii) Jewish philanthropy and the country house

3. Three edited volumes: i) Jewish collectors (ii) Jewish dealers and the European art market iii) Jewish business dynasties

4. A special issue of the *Journal of the History of Collections* in 2022 dedicated to the theme of German-Jewish collectors outside of Germany. It will feature nine essays edited by Tom Stammers (Durham) and John Hilary, and will include many contributors and supporters of our project (such as Silvia Davoli, Tessa Murdoch, and Pauline Swords).

5. A pan-European heritage and research network of Jewish country houses, museums and other relevant properties. The network is being developed in collaboration with the National Trust, the Centre des Monuments Nationaux, and individual partner properties in Belgium, Italy and the Czech Republic. A website supported by the AEPJ will function as the network hub, highlighting the connections between properties and allow them to share resources – from cutting edge scholarship, through curatorial interpretation and digital innovation to more sensitive issues related to antisemitism.

6. A Jewish heritage route entitled 'Palaces, Villas and Country Houses' that forms a component part of the Jewish Cultural Route managed by the AEPJ as a Council of Europe accredited European Cultural Route. Our route is jointly managed by the Jewish Country Houses project and Waddesdon Manor.

7. A digital edition of Ferdinand de Rothschild's *Reminiscences*, produced by Waddesdon Manor.

8. A digital exhibition on "The Unexpected Jewish Past of Strawberry Hill House"

9. A new body of work by prize-winning photographer H  l  ne Binet, commissioned by urKultur, with additional funding from the Martin J. Gross Family Foundation, TORCH, Brasenose College, the Montefiore Endowment and the National Heritage Institute (Czech Republic), which will be exhibited in several locations.

10. Targeted staff and volunteer training across the National Trust and other UK properties, including a support pack with historical and antisemitism resources and a related programme of educator training organised in partnership with the Holocaust Educational Trust.

11. Two AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Awards: Colette Bellingham at Waddesdon Manor supervised by Abigail Green and Juliet Carey, exploring themes of Jewish subjectivity and material self-fashioning through photographic collections at Jewish country houses; and Isobel Muir at the National Gallery supervised by Tom Stammers and Susanna Avery-Quash on 'Jewish Collectors, Donors and Agents at the National Gallery, 1824-1936'.

12. A mobile Jewish Country Houses exhibition for small, local venues in the UK (in partnership with J-Trails).

13. A digital exhibition: 'The Lost Jewish Houses of Europe', in collaboration with Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah and the Jewish Heritage Network.

14. A copy of a dress owned by Lady Louisa de Rothschild, made by members of the Worth Park Historic Costume Group, for display at the Worth Park Visitor Centre.

### **Which historic houses are we working with?**

In the UK we are working closely with 7 National Trust properties (Ascott House, Hughenden, Monk's House, Mottisfont, Nymans, Upton House & Gardens, Waddesdon Manor), as well as Strawberry Hill House, and we are in contact with several other properties (Bletchley Park, Salomons Estate, Trent Park, and Worth Park). In France we are working with the Musée Camondo and with 2 properties administered by the Centre des Monuments Nationaux (the Château de Champs and Villa Kerylos). More recently, we have begun to work with the Château de Seneffe (Belgium), Villa Montesca (Italy), and the Villas Stiassni and Tugendhat (Czech Republic). We hope that the events we have planned will enable us to connect with new properties and to expand the JCH network further into Italy, Germany and Scandinavia.

### **How will the project be managed?**

The project is led by Professor Abigail Green (Oxford) with Dr. Tom Stammers (Durham) and Dr. Jaclyn Granick (Cardiff) as co-investigators. Dr. Silvia Davoli will be a post-doctoral researcher at Oxford, while continuing as Research Curator at Strawberry Hill House on a part-time basis. Dr. Juliet Carey, Senior Curator at Waddesdon, is also a member of the core team. The project is administered by Briony Truscott. The steering committee, which will meet three times yearly, consists of Dr. Oliver Cox (Oxford), Derek Purnell (Strawberry Hill), Professor David Rechter (Oxford), Marcus Roberts (J-Trails), Pippa Shirley (Waddesdon Manor) Claire Pascolini-Campbell (NT).

The international advisory committee, which brings together leading academics and representatives of the heritage sector, will meet at two key review points. It consists of Philippe Béval (Centre des Monuments Nationaux) Alessandra di Castro (Jewish Museum, Rome), Professor Ewald Frie (Tübingen), Professor Cyril Grange (CNRS), Assumpció Hosta (AEPJ), Professor Rebecca Kobrin (Columbia), Professor Peter Mandler (Cambridge), and Aubrey Pomerance (Jewish Museum Berlin). This committee represents an intellectual resource, and should help us to embed this initiative in different cultural contexts.

The project has become a focus for a group of affiliated researchers: Dr. Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah; Dr. Alice Legé; Dr. Luisa Levi d'Ancona Modena (Jerusalem); John Hilary. The project also supports four affiliated doctoral students: Colette Bellingham-Kennedy (Oxford), Cynthia Cheloff (Oxford), Isobel Muir (Durham) and Sietske van der Veen (Utrecht).

## Timetable of key events: Phase One

**19 December 2019 *Jewish Stories and the National Heritage*.** Conference at Polesden Lacy, bringing together curators and house managers from across the NT, and sharing perspectives on Jewish heritage in Britain from external institutions and heritage sites.

**9 – 14 September 2021 *Jewish Dealers and the European Art Market (1850-1930): Part I*.** Workshop held in partnership with the Gilbert collection at the V&A. It will examine the social and commercial connections of Jewish dealers across Europe, the hostility they encountered and their role in the development of the global art market.

**6-14 December 2021 *Jewish Dealers and the European Art Market (1850-1930): Part II*.** Hosted by the V&A, and held in association with London Art Week, this second part of our event on Jewish art dealers will feature a keynote and panels made up by academics based outside the UK.

**27 - 29 June 2022 *Jewish Collectors and Patterns of Taste (1850-1930)*.** Workshop at the Sorbonne, with visits to Musée Nissim de Camondo (Paris) and the Château de Champs. It will explore the networks and cultural horizons of Jewish collectors across Europe, examining their contribution to key artistic trends.

## Timetable of key events: Phase Two

**21-22 October 2022 *Jewish Business Dynasties 1850-1950: Family, Power, Vulnerability*.** Organised in partnership with Rebecca Kobrin (Columbia) and Chris McKenna (Global History of Capitalism, Oxford), this event will be held at Villa Montesca in Umbria, home to the liberal Jewish politician Leopoldo Franchetti and his American wife Alice Hallgarten, a key promoter of the Montessori movement. It will consider the economic, social, cultural and political role of the great international Jewish business dynasties (c.1850-1950), and the critical part they played in the making of modern capitalism in an age of rising antisemitism that culminated in genocide. It will coincide with the second Review Point.

**27-29 March 2023 *Jewish Country Houses and the Holocaust in History and Memory*.** Hosted by Villa Stiassni in the town of Brno, and involving a visit to Villa Tugendhat, a UNESCO World Heritage site, this final event will provide an opportunity to reflect on the Holocaust histories of many Jewish country houses and on subsequent developments. It will enable Brno to showcase its inspiring 'Jewish villas' heritage offer, and provide an opportunity for heritage professionals from across Europe to share experience and reflect on best practice. This event will be held in partnership with the National Heritage Institute (Czech Republic).

**Date tbc: *Jewish Country Houses – Global Networks and connections*.** Organised in partnership with affiliated researcher Dr. Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah, this workshop will interrogate the concept of the Jewish aristocracy through an exploration of the role of Sephardic, Middle Eastern and North African elites in international Jewish networks, and their trans-Atlantic dimensions. It will be held at Ramsgate.

**Summer 2024: *Concluding Event at Waddesdon and Upton, with a focus on cultural philanthropy and heritage*.**