

## **Jewish Museum of Hohenems – Mission statement**

The Jewish Museum of Hohenems, as a regional museum, remembers the rural Jewish community of Hohenems and its various contributions to the development of Vorarlberg and the surrounding regions. The museum also deals with the end of the community, the regional Nazi history, the expulsion or deportation of the remaining members of the community, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. Along with these fragmented lines of regional history, it is also devoted to the people and their histories and maintains a relationship with the descendants of Jewish families in Hohenems.

The main topics of Jewish history are made apparent from the point of view of various people. Topical questions of dealing with foreign cultures, religiously traditional communities and social minorities are brought into relation with historical topics. Reflection about the work of the museum and its integration into international discourse about dealing with Jewish history are of immense importance as this is a Jewish museum in a province where there is no longer any Jewish community remaining and in a Jewish quarter and house whose last Jewish inhabitants were deported and killed. The consolidation of the institution in the region and with the descendants of Jewish families is essential for the activities of the Jewish Museum of Hohenems and its continuing development.

### **The museum as a meeting point**

The Jewish museum in Hohenems considers itself as an open place of communication and learning. In participation and presentation of current debates, areas of confrontation between the past and the future arise. Apart from obligations of explanation, justification and conviction, there should always be attempts at new forms of communication and integrative and analytical forms of encounter should be developed. In regard to the way the museum sees itself, the processes of information are as important as their contents. As a result of this, it is necessary to continuously inspect these processes and take the formal and aesthetic aspects into consideration. This is the basis of the development of didactic concepts and materials for school, youth and adult education. In order to access and activate new target groups, modern media has to be applied specifically.

### **Repository museum**

The work of the museum also involves responsibility: the esteem of preserved traces of history requires it to be conveyed in modern forms of perception. The basis, source and point of reference are therefore the archives, collection, library and permanent exhibition. The resulting gaps exposed document the attempts of the Nazis to eliminate Jewish history. In awareness of these gaps and fragments the museum collects, accesses, researches and communicates Jewish history of the region by means of objects and narration. The objects and information accumulated by the museum should always enable remembrance and confrontation with one's own experience.

## Resources

The museum must maintain its uniqueness in order to develop its position in the market and avoid unilateral economical dependence. This incorporates the museum's awareness of its responsibility in handling all personnel involved and all available resources, and ensures that all projects initiated will be completed. This requires a method of functioning based upon the capabilities of the employees and the objective of effectiveness. Constant critical further development of the museum's own culture, the intensive involvement of freelance employees and the balance of feasibility should guarantee long-term assurance of these resources.

## Network

The multiple tasks of the museum can only be handled when the museum considers itself as a part of the regional, national and international network. In exchange and cooperation with scientists, regional cultural and educational institutions and also with the economy and politics, positive interaction and economical partnerships can be achieved for those who the museum can offer infrastructure, specialist knowledge and its role as mediator between various groups and positions. The required independence necessary is based on broad formal, financial and idealistic support of the institutional body and enables reaction to political and social developments within the framework of its tasks.

## Future

The growing distance of time towards the diversified life of the Jewish community as well as their expulsion and eradication at the hands of the Nazi regime and its collaborators is leading to less and less people who have experienced this era at first hand. New forms of conveyance and artistic confrontation with those who have first hand experience is becoming therefore more and more important. Humour, self-irony and the courage to fail should preserve future projects and enable new perspectives before the solidification of practised forms of remembrance occurs. As the walls of the museum haven't marked the limits of our responsibility in the past, the constructional developments in the former Jewish district of the city, the assurance of the Jewish cemetery, the discussion about the handling of the former synagogue and the Jewish school will determine the work of the museum in the years to come.

Current developments as well as newly dealt with themes should continuously influence the museum's permanent and special exhibitions. The interdisciplinary way in which the museum sees itself should become a motive for projects which exceed geographical borders.

## Production team

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