

JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN SACRED ART FROM MEDIEVAL THROUGH EARLY MODERN TIMES PRESENTED IN DIALOGUE IN MAJOR EXHIBITION OPENING SEPTEMBER 2026

***Sacred Splendor* Features Christian Reliquaries from St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague Together with Rare Jewish Ritual Objects to Explore Artistic and Cultural Exchange across more than Six Centuries**

New York, NY, June 29, 2026—The Jewish Museum will present a major exhibition this fall that brings Jewish and Christian sacred art from medieval to early modern Europe into dialogue, illuminating complex, interconnected histories across more than six centuries. *Sacred Splendor: Jewish Ritual Art and Christian Treasures from St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague* features Christian reliquaries on loan from St. Vitus Cathedral—the most extensive presentation of this treasury ever exhibited outside Europe—together with Jewish treasures never before shown in the United States. Through a robust presentation of over 160 objects, the exhibition examines shared urban and artistic environments, and the distinct ritual and theological frameworks that shaped sacred art across Central Europe. Highlights include rarely seen medieval Jewish-owned objects from hoards buried during periods of persecution that remained hidden for centuries, as well as Jewish ceremonial works from Bohemia and the Germanic regions, among them Torah ornaments, metalwork, and manuscripts.

On view from September 18, 2026, through February 7, 2027, the exhibition also features *tehillim* [Psalms] (2018) by contemporary artist Edmund de Waal, whose work engages interculturally with history, memory, and language. *tehillim*'s spare composition of ceramic, alabaster, and gold leaf resonates powerfully with surviving fragments from medieval Jewish hoards that are also on view, engaging with the Book of Psalms as “songs and poems of exile.” Concurrently, in the Museum's new third-floor collection galleries, a series of focused contemporary installations will expand on *Sacred Splendor*'s themes. Featuring artists Hannah Altman and Afruz Amighi, whose work draws on their complex and multi-faceted cultural backgrounds, the presentation dialogues with the historical themes and materiality of the treasures on display from St. Vitus Cathedral and other sources across Europe and the United States.

“*Sacred Splendor* offers a monumental illustration of cultural exchange that demonstrates the shared aesthetics which defined sacred art for Christian and Jewish communities alike from Late Antiquity through the 19th Century,” said James S. Snyder, Helen Goldsmith Menschel Director. “We are thrilled to present stunningly crafted reliquaries from St. Vitus Cathedral together with rare Jewish treasures from the same time notably bringing the Lingenfeld, Weissenfels, and Środa Śląska hoards together for the first time in the U.S. While serving as iconic examples of Christian and Jewish ritual art, these objects also tell stories of the Jewish and Christian experiences of migration, assimilation, and resilience throughout time and across the global diaspora.”

The exhibition's narrative is anchored in the city of Prague, a religious and political capital at the crossroads of Central European trade routes that emerged as a key medieval center for the production of sacred art. King of Bohemia Charles IV refashioned the city's St. Vitus Cathedral into a Gothic marvel and endowed it with important relics, commissioning elaborate reliquaries to house them. Prague's Jewish community, well-established during this period after settling in the city centuries earlier, lived in close proximity to its Christian neighbors, developing their ritual traditions alongside one another.

"Sacred art from medieval and early modern Central Europe emerged from a shared urban world—shaped by the same trade routes, the same cities, often the same artistic workshops," said Abigail Rapoport, Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Curator of Judaica. "*Sacred Splendor* brings that world into focus through singular objects, illuminating the visual culture that gave rise to these objects—and the forms of ritual art that continue to shape religious life today."

Organized chronologically and thematically, the exhibition sheds light on the ways in which a shared built environment—including Gothic architecture and design—influenced stylistic developments across faiths, producing visual resonances between sacred objects. Since Jews were barred from joining professional guilds, Christian artisans often worked across Jewish and Christian communities. The same Christian masons built Prague's Altneuschul Synagogue and the nearby Convent of St. Agnes, from which architectural fragments will be on view. Similarly, a Christian Prayer Book and an illustrated Hebrew Bible from the workshop of the late fifteenth-century Bohemian illuminator Valentine Noh will be shown together for the first time.

Against the backdrop of this shared artistic environment, ties between Christians and Jews in Central Europe often frayed. When plague swept across Europe in the late 1340s, fear and uncertainty overwhelmed already-fragile social relations. Jews were falsely accused of poisoning water wells and causing the Black Death, which led to widespread attacks, expulsions, and the destruction of long-established Jewish communities across Central Europe. Some affluent Jewish families, facing escalating threat, hid their silver, coins, and jewelry underground, including several groups of objects showcased in the exhibition. These hoards stand in stark juxtaposition to the Christian reliquaries preserved by the church with reverence over hundreds of years.

Sacred Splendor concludes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when Jewish ritual life flourished, book production blossomed, and vibrant cultural exchange thrived. This period was marked by the construction of three new synagogues in Prague, the establishment of communal organizations—including the first modern burial society—and a robust Hebrew printing culture.

"At the heart of this exhibition is how the spiritual manifests differently in the traditions of Judaism and Christianity," said Claudia Nahson, Morris & Eva Feld Senior Curator. "While Christian reliquaries are repositories of material fragments associated with sacred figures, making the sacred visible, the spirit of



Jewish faith, embodied by its objects of ceremonial practice, is primarily rooted in the oral and textual transmission of tradition and the centrality of the Torah.”

Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by a richly illustrated catalogue authored by the exhibition co-curators, with a contribution by leading medieval art historian Jiří Fajt. The publication presents new scholarship and numerous reproductions of rarely seen works. A special section features conversations between Leon Levy Associate Curator Shira Backer and the contemporary artists whose work is included in the exhibition and the companion installation in the Museum’s collection galleries.

Public Programs and Audio Guides

Public programs offerings will focus on the connections between medieval sacred objects to the present-day artistic response. Lectures and gallery conversations will situate the works on view within their ritual and historical contexts across Jewish and Christian traditions. These will include Director’s Talks facilitated by the Museum’s Helen Goldsmith Menschel Director, James S. Snyder with artist and author Edmund de Waal, on Thursday, September 17 at 6:30 pm and Adam M. Levine, President, Director, and CEO of the Toledo Museum of Art, on Monday, December 7 at 6:30 pm.

Musical performances, organized with partners at Jerusalem Baroque Orchestra, Skylark Ensemble, and Bang on a Can, will engage both contemporary composition and historically informed repertoire. Details to be announced. Adult learning programming will be developed in collaboration with partners such as 92NY and Central Synagogue. Virtual and on-site offerings, including curators’ talks and art history and studio art classes, will also extend the exhibition’s reach, and booked tours are available for groups from all backgrounds.

Accompanying the exhibition are two interpretive guides available as part of the Jewish Museum’s digital programming on Bloomberg Connects, which is accessible both onsite and offsite from any mobile device. The general audio tour features the exhibition curators discussing a range of objects, from Christian reliquaries and Jewish ritual objects to contemporary art inspired by the exhibition’s themes. For visitors who are blind or have low vision, Verbal Description guides are available. All materials include transcriptions which can also be accessed on the Museum’s website.

Exhibition Organization and Support

Sacred Splendor: Jewish Ritual Art and Christian Treasures from St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague has been organized in collaboration with the Metropolitan Chapter of the Archdiocese of Prague. It is co-curated by Claudia Nahson, Morris & Eva Feld Senior Curator, and Abigail Rapoport, Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Curator of Judaica, in collaboration with Jiri Fajt, Curatorial Consultant, and Vladimir Kelnar, Chancellor of St. Vitus Cathedral. The presentation builds on *Fragments of Memory*, a 2024 exhibition at the Kunsthalle im Lipsiusbau in Dresden, Germany and its more recent 2026 iteration at the Prague Castle



Riding. The contemporary component of the exhibition is organized by Shira Backer, Leon Levy Associate Curator.

Sacred Splendor: Jewish Ritual Art and Treasures from St. Vitus Cathedral, Prague, is made possible by Lilly Endowment Inc.

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The exhibition is designed by Leslie Gill and Laura Lyon, Leslie Gill Architect; graphic design by Topos Graphics.

About the Jewish Museum

The Jewish Museum explores the vibrancy of Jewish world culture through art. Located on New York City's famed Museum Mile, in the landmarked Warburg Mansion, the Museum was the first institution of its kind in the United States and is among the oldest Jewish museums in the world. The Jewish Museum preserves a unique collection of more than 30,000 works of art, archaeology, and ceremonial objects, while presenting exhibitions that relate to the global Jewish experience over 3,500 years. Bridging past and present, the Jewish Museum explores cross-cultural influences and offers new insights into key narratives that shape the human experience.

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