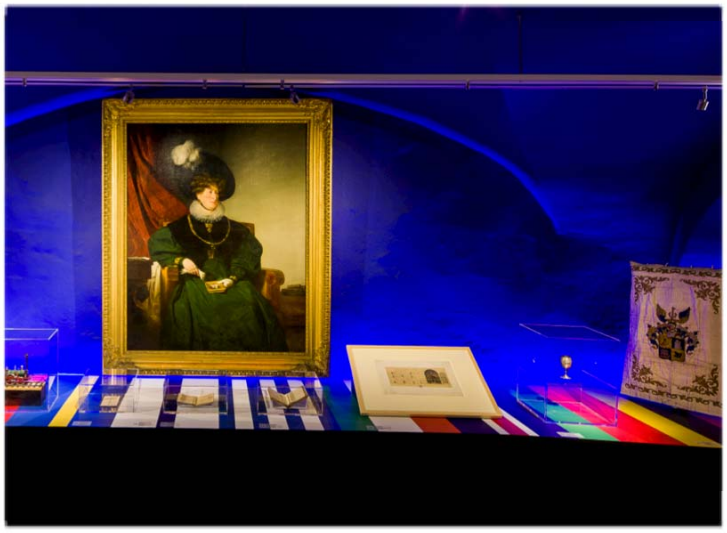
American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems

Special Report - 2014 Year in Review

We hope you will enjoy this special report celebrating the successes of the year 2014 of the Jewish Museum Hohenems. Your generous donations to this wonderful museum via the American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems help to sponsor such events and exhibits.
Thank you so very much for your continued support.
Wishing you happy holidays and a wonderful new year!
- The officers and trustees of the American Friends of the Jewish Museum Hohenems

The film The Grüninger Dossier, produced by Peter Reichenbach and his Zurich based company C-films, successfully saw its Austrian premiere in Hohenems on January 28. The event took place in the Cineplexx cinema right next to the Austrian-Swiss border that was the site of refugee dramas between 1938 and1945. The Jewish Museum Hohenems ("the Museum") helped to organize this major event, with Paul Grüninger's 92 year-old daughter, Ruth Roduner-Grüniger, present, as well as the director of the film and many of the actors. In addition, the Museum organized a six-month program of guided group tours along the border, with more than 1000 participants, most of them young students from Austria and Switzerland. Photo: C-Films



About 450 visitors came to see the opening of the Museum's exhibit "The First Europeans. Habsburg and Other Jews – A World Before 1914" on March 23, 2014. This was the most successful show the Museum has ever produced to date. When it closed its doors on October 5, 2014, many thousands of visitors had come to see this exploration of 700 years of Jewish and European history in the political, social and cultural framework of diversity of the Habsburg Empire. 700 visitors came to the "Long night of Museums" festival a day before the exhibition ended to say farewell to the precious loans from various museums and private collections from Europe and the US. Photos: Dietmar Walser

Save the Date!

Hohenems Descendants Reunion at the Jewish Museum Hohenems

July 27-30, 2017

www.afjmh.org

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The Association for the Support of the Jewish Museum Hohenems (known as the Verein) was particularly active this year. President Jutta Berger took over as Chair of the Board, succeeding Paul Rachbauer, the representative of the State of Vorarlberg. On June 14, the Verein celebrated the first ten years of Hanno Loewy serving as Director of the museum with a garden party including many friends of the Museum from all over the world. From 2004 to 2014, under Loewy's direction, the museum was able to organize exhibits that are recognized world-wide as thought-provoking and courageous. By developing its skilled staff even further, and exploring new media for documentation and international cooperation, the Museum has become a sought after partner for European projects. Annual visitor numbers over the last ten years have also increased from less than 6,000 to over 17,000, making the Museum one of the most successful cultural institutions in the region. Photo: Garden party celebrating the success of the Museum and its director.

Some Jews during the Holocaust could be saved because of the courage of "silent heroes" who helped to hide or smuggle Jews over borders. Some of them acted out of political motives, human impulse or personal affiliation, while others did it for money and their own advantage. This complex and controversial matter still needs to be carefully explored. The Jewish Museum Hohenems is part of a European-funded working group on the significance of "silent heroes" for the work of museums, memorials and local historians. This working group consists of the Foundation Castrum Peregrini in Amsterdam, the Jewish Museums in Warsaw and Amsterdam, a group of committed historians in Budapest, and the Memorial for German Resistance in Berlin. The group aims at a higher sensitivity for this subject in the presentation of history, and will be visiting sites in Amsterdam, Berlin, Budapest and Warsaw, in order to meet with experts and attend presentations. They met from June 15-17 in Hohenems. A joint website will collect information and publish it for a wide audience at the end of the project. Photo: Silent Hero-Working Group in Hohenems at the Swiss border.

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A moving event: nine Stolpersteine (tumbling blocks) in memory of those who were deported from Hohenems and murdered as Jews by the Nazis, were installed by artist Gunter Demnig from Cologne. This event was part of a European-wide memorial for the victims of Nazi politics of extermination, including more than 46,000 little cobblestones with the names of individuals engraved on the top. On June 30, Susan Rosenthal-Shimer, AFJMH Trustee, participated in the ceremony, together with the mayor of Hohenems, Richard Amann, pupils from the Hohenems middle school and many locals from the town and the region. Sue's touching words connected the past and our present, in which we still have to be sensitive about expressions of hatred and racism. We will cover this important event in more detail in the Spring 2015 issue of *In Touch*. Enclosed please find the translation of Sue Shimer's speech.

Photos: Students presenting biographies, and Stolpersteine for Clara Heimann (nee Rosenthal)

Summer Internship

Hohenems Descendants are welcome to apply for an internship at the museum in 2015! Contact Uri Taenzer for more details.

The Hohenems Summer University 2014, organized by the universities of Munich, Basel, Salzburg, Zurich and Vienna, continues to be a highlight of the year. Once again, the Museum brought together scholars from Europe, the US and Israel, with more than 40 students from various universities in German speaking countries. This year's motto, "It all runs in the family … Jewish relations," welcomed an interdisciplinary discourse on the significance of *family* for Jewish history and tradition, social experience and culture, which took place from July 6-11, 2014. Photo: Christian Herbst and Niko Hofinger offering a course on genealogy for the students, introducing the *hohenemsgenealogy* database as a tool.

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Major renovation work began on the Jewish Cemetery of Hohenems this summer. The Association for the Preservation of the Jewish Cemetery of Hohenems has been maintaining this heart of the memory of Jewish Hohenems for sixty years now. With the support of the National Fund for the Preservation for Jewish Cemeteries in Austria, a huge renovation project has begun to secure tombstones in danger of deterioration and repair the cemetery walls. A Geomagnetic Survey will seek tombstones that may be hidden below ground, as well as the possibility of space for additional graves in the future. A 3D laser scan will produce a terrain model of the cemetery. We hope descendants will join the support for this project. Photo: Reinhard Rinderer

The opening of the exhibition “Jukebox. Jewkbox! A Jewish Century on Shellac & Vinyl” on October 19, was a celebration of Jewish creativity in the world of popular culture. The gramophone, an invention of Emile Berliner, a German-Jewish immigrant to the US, became the first global medium of what later would be termed “pop music.” And the Jewish contribution to this “world-wide culture” was significant: from the inventors of the gramophone, vinyl records, stereophonic sound, and the art of record covers, to the most innovative music producers, songwriters and composers, and so many artists who turned popular songs, folk music, musicals, comedy or even punk rock into the expression of the best the 20th century was able to offer. Photo: Dietmar Walser

In late October, the Verein organized a field trip for members and Museum staff to sites of Jewish history and presence in Morocco. The grand tour spanned from Marrakesh to Casablanca, to the king’s three other residences in Rabat, Meknes and Fes, and finally to Demnate in the High Atlas. The trip gave a fascinating insight into the richness of Arab-Jewish life and culture in the past, and the attempts to revive some of it even after the mass emigration from Morocco in the 1950s, mainly to France, Israel and the Americas. Visits included the only Jewish museum in the Arab world in Casablanca, as well as some beautifully renovated (and some dilapidated) synagogues and cemeteries all over the country, and insights into everyday life in Morocco today. Photo: Hanno Loewy, Synagogue in Meknes.