

The Unique Story of the Jewish Hospital in Breslau Commemorated in a Contemporary Exhibition

The hospital building, established in 1903 by the thriving Jewish community of Breslau—then Germany, now Poland—was innovative, modern, and community-oriented, offering free medical care to all. That was until the Nazis rose to power and the community was annihilated. A new exhibition reflects on memory and rupture.

The facade of the Jewish Hospital was preserved, while the rest of the building was demolished to make way for a luxury residential complex.

The Jewish Hospital in Breslau, now Wrocław, Poland, was inaugurated in 1903 as a state-of-the-art medical institution. "It was conceived as a modernist project designed to provide access to cutting-edge medical care for the general public, Jews and non-Jews alike, with bright, open spaces and gleaming stainless steel equipment. Treatment was free, financed by the Jewish community, which was the third-largest in Germany at the time," explains curator Dr. Smadar Sheffi, whose family hails from Breslau.

Today, the story of this advanced and modern communal building is presented at Liebling Haus. Under the title "**The Jewish Hospital**," artist Merav Shinn Ben-Alon (under the artistic direction of Shira Levy Benyamini) has processed historical photographs and adapted them uniquely to the intimate spaces of the preserved Liebling Haus in Tel Aviv.

The Jewish Hospital Exhibition at Liebling Haus

"The building was envisioned as a communal haven, featuring not only expansive treatment facilities but also a synagogue, gathering spaces, and a garden. The large Jewish community of Breslau funded it, and patients came from all backgrounds—free of charge," adds Dr. Sheffi. "During World War I, ironically, it also treated German soldiers. The hospital's golden age ended in 1938, when the Nazis took control, expelling Jewish doctors. The community was destroyed. The building's exterior suffered damage in World War II, but the interior remained largely intact. In 1970, it reopened as the Polish State Railways Workers' Hospital—another historical irony. It ceased operations in 2015, and today, the site is being converted into a luxury apartment complex, with only the facade preserved."

Fragmenting and Reassembling Memory and Commemoration

According to Dr. Sheffi, modernism—as a way of thinking, a historical era, and a cultural movement—embodies contradictions, great hopes, and bitter disappointments. Progressive movements under the banner of modernism sought to challenge past hierarchies, while totalitarian regimes used its name to erase histories and establish repressive mechanisms. The discourse remains complex, especially in the context of twentieth-century German history.

The Jewish Hospital exhibition is a site-specific installation exploring Jewish, communal, and local trauma. At its core lies visual research based on two photographic collections

documenting the site—one from the hospital's inauguration in 1903 and the other from its closure and repurposing in 2016. Shinn Ben-Alon disassembles and reconstructs these images through cutting and re-photographing. Her physical interventions in the imagery, through a variety of collage techniques, expose historical fractures. The exhibition is on view until April 19 at Idelson 29, Tel Aviv.

The exhibition space at Liebling Haus—a former residence for the Liebling family that later became the White City Center—is itself imbued with historical meaning. Designed in the International (Bauhaus) style, the building was home to individuals who fled totalitarian regimes and became refugees. The exhibition **The Jewish Hospital** originated from an open call in Poland for a show at the hospital building during the interim period between its closure and its demolition for redevelopment. At the time, Shinn Ben-Alon—whose work examines trauma, memory, and suppressed narratives through drawing, painting, and minimalist installation—applied for the exhibition but was not selected. Now, this project finds its place in Tel Aviv, marking a symbolic closure both for the artist and for descendants of the Breslau Jewish community.