

OUT & ABOUT

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CULTURE, LEISURE, AND OTHER PURSUITS

MUSEUM *Sweeping* STATEMENT

A collection years in the making evokes the vibrant, millennium-long history of Poland's Jewish community.

BY KLARA GLOWCZEWSKA

MY FATHER TELLS A story of how on September 5, 1939, four days after the German invasion of Warsaw (he among them) pulled into Zamosc, where the black-caftaned, white-bearded Jewish proprietor of a wine bar served them scrambled eggs and asked for news. Hearing of Luftwaffe bombings, Germans crossing the Vistula, and refugees on the roads, he shook his head, called for a bottle of his finest Tokay, and said, "Gentlemen, do me the honor of drinking this old wine, to remember me by."

Seventy-five years after the start of World War II, during which 90 percent of Poland's 3.3 million Jews perished, the **Museum of the History of Polish Jews** has its official opening in October, on the site of the Warsaw Ghetto. Its dramatic, light-filled (and award-winning) design by Finnish architect Rainer Mahlamäki avoids similarities to the severe museums of the Holocaust. "To construct a glass building on a site of genocide is to make a statement of hope in a place of tragedy," says Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, program director of the museum's core exhibition. The eight galleries and a recreation of a 17th-century wooden synagogue memorialize in a vivid, multimedia narrative how Poland's Jewish population, once the world's largest, lived and flourished for 1,000 years. It is an unprecedented and striking act of remembrance—one that would have made the old barkeep proud. •

MOMENT OF SILENCE

The museum's dynamic entrance symbolizes the fatal chasm created by the Holocaust in the history of Polish Jews—and a bridge between past and future.

WOJCIECH KRYSKI/MUSEUM OF THE HISTORY OF POLISH JEWS