

SENER OF NORWEGIAN JEWISH CULTURE AND HISTORY

"A PART OF NORWEGIAN HISTORY"

Pre-diploma spring 2019
Arkitektur- og Designhøyskolen i Oslo
Institutt of Form, Theoty and History

Student: Lior Hobashi
Supervisor: Erik Langdalen

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1. MOTIVASJON

I am a Norwegian-Jew who has lived in Norway my entire adult life. As a result, I can relate to Norwegian society and everything that pertains to being Norwegian, developing a national sentiment and a love for the country I live in. In parallel, the Jewish part of me has been nurtured over the years and has represented a way of life that many Norwegians are not familiar with.

I have always felt that I belong to two different worlds. I have a constant need to explain to my Norwegian friends why my great-grandparents settled in Norway, how my grandfather escaped the war, I celebrate many different holidays and eat different kinds of foods.

The lack of knowledge of Jewish culture is perfectly understandable. The Norwegian Jewish minority makes up only 0.03% of Norway's population, in comparison to Norwegian Muslims who cover 23%.¹ The Jewish-section, which banned all Jews entering the country, was lifted in 1851. They were very concerned with becoming part of Norwegian society, at the same time wishing to preserve their beliefs and traditions. For example, they engaged in politics and culture, used Norwegian names for their children and even fought in the resistance movement during the Second World War.

The combination of a small population of Jews, successful integration and lack of education in schools, resulted in that Norwegians generally have poor knowledge of their Jewish population. I have been approached multiple times with; "are you a Jew? I couldn't see that." In Norway, an attitude survey conducted by the Holocaust Center in 2012 showed that 12.5% of the population had pronounced prejudice against Jews².

Jews have been living in Norway for almost 170 years³. The Jewish heritage is interwoven in Norwegian history and likewise Norwegian history is incomplete without the heritage of the Jews. Thus, I believe that awareness about this part of history needs to be improved.

During my education at AHO I have developed an interest for transformational architecture and its relevance to today's importance of sustainability. The ability to discreetly manipulate, transform and improve an already existing structure, without losing its identity or concept, is something I find fascinating. I can draw many similarities to the thematic choice of my project. I have worked for many years in The Jewish Museum of Oslo, which is located in an old synagogue. My experiences and gained knowledge through this work, has given me the ambition to choose a diploma project which captures the dissemination of Jewish culture in Norway. My project takes place in two existing buildings, one of which is the old synagogue where the Jewish Museum is today.



1 Amundsen 2017
2 Erichsen 2012
3 Enstad 2016

2. SYNOPSIS

The intention of the diploma assignment is to create a Center for Norwegian Jewish Culture and History. The purpose of the center is to make Norwegian Jewish history and culture visible to the public, in the hopes of reducing prejudice.

Located in Hausmann quarter in downtown Oslo, my two chosen buildings are of different nature. One is a typical urban block far from the 1890s (15A) that faces Calmeyers street, and the other is an underlying synagogue building (15B) from 1921. Both locations were meeting points for the Jews before the Second World War, and the residents among these buildings were the most severely affected by Jewish deportations in the Autumn of 1942. Because of this, the locations play important roles in Norwegian history.

The buildings are thought to be linked, as a center, under the same address on Calmeyers street 15. Both buildings are now owned by a private real estate company. The courtyard towards the street consists of apartments, while the synagogue is leased out to various establishments, including the Jewish Museum in Oslo, which is in desperate need of more space.

In line with the mentality of Norwegian Jews about integration, the relatively anonymous buildings on Calmeyers street appear fittingly. Simultaneously, it is important that the center is made visible so history is remembered and preserved. Another important aspect of the project will be how to solve the security issues that can often affect buildings that are associated with Jewish culture. The functionality of the project is of public nature and therefore it is desired to be seen as inviting and accessible. This may conflict with the idea of optimal security and access restriction. It is this paradox that I wish to explore with this project.

The conventional museum ideal will be challenged with its program and design. I think the traditional object-based exhibition form is outdated and unsuitable for expressing Jewish culture. The center should not to be perceived as a memorial through exhibited objects, but rather convey the history and culture, and enable it to be applied further and put in context of recent modern time.



3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Can one normalize the special, but at the same time preserve the irregular?

Norwegian-Jewish history is characterized by the tragedy. There are many monuments commemorating the dead, and there is a dedicated Holocaust center addressing the crimes of the Second World War which was completed in 2001. These represent the extraordinary events that occurred in the period of 1940-1945, for example events associated with loss and sorrow. The history of the buildings in Calmeyers Street is strongly influenced by the war, while also representing the opposite. They symbolize the joyful everyday life of the Jews in Oslo before the war.

The project will explore how architecture can articulate both the "normal" and the "special". The architecture tries to paint a story about a minority with a different history and traditions, while simultaneously emphasizing that the individuals are ordinary people.

The paradox is articulated appropriately through the art project "Stumbling Stones". Stones shaped like cobblestones in a size of 10x10cm, are cast into the sidewalk at various places Jews have lived or worked at until they were deported and killed. Each stone represents an individual and is plated with brass where the name, year of birth, year of deportation, death date and location, are all engraved¹.

In similarity with the example above, it is conceivable that people will "stumble" across this project, in the same manner as people come to discover small and unknown places during a big city holiday.



¹ Kopperud 2015

How do you camouflage something that is meant to be discovered? Can something closed be perceived as inviting and accessible?

The events of 9/11 completely changed the relationship we have today with security. Fear of terrorist attacks has subsequently affected our cities and buildings. Openness and accessibility have been replaced by security in terms of guards, fences, barricades, surveillance and other measures. In Norway, terrorism received increased attention after a terrorist attack on July 22 in 2011.

For Jewish institutions, this has been a reality ever since the Spanish Inquisition in 1492. In recent years Jewish establishments have experienced terrorist acts. Attacks on the synagogue in Oslo (2006), the Jewish school in Toulouse (2012), the Jewish Museum in Brussels (2014) and the synagogue in Copenhagen (2015) are just a few examples¹.

Practically all buildings that have a relation with Judaism today must in one way or another address this issue. The new center at Calmeyers gate will not be an exception.

The intention of the project is to be an education center and should invite people to learn. The threshold should be low for a passerby to enter, without having intended to enter in advance. Therefore, the center must be perceived as accessible from its exterior. In order to achieve this, the security issue must be used as a design parameter, and become incorporated into the project without the solutions being viewed as intimidating or exclusive.

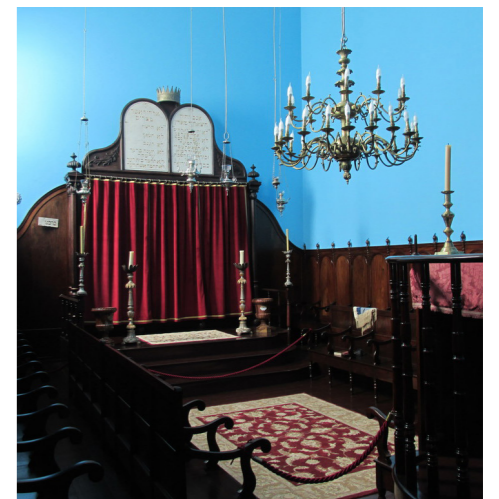
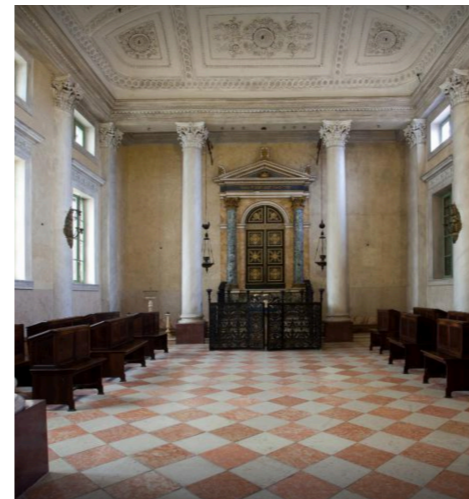
A source of inspiration for how this issue can be tackled can be found when studying ancient European synagogues originating from Italy, Spain and Portugal. As a result of the persecution of the Jews and laws prohibiting them from constructing new buildings, they were forced to convert existing buildings into synagogues. Commonly, the original design was preserved in such a way that it would not reveal the function of the building. The synagogues were often placed between two other buildings on purpose, so they were perceived as ordinary housing. This procedure created a natural protection, and only those who knew about their existence found the right façade which led into a synagogue².

A procedure like this can help solve an issue, or create a new one. The project can be perceived as "invisible" and difficult to locate for people who have never been there before. As such it is crucial to find a way that both safeguards the security and simultaneously maintains a certain visibility from the street.



Italia - Casale Monferrato, 1599

Italia - Pitigliano, 1598



Italia - Rivarolo Mantovano, 15??

Portugal - Ponta Delgada, 1821

¹ Due Enstad 2017: 10-16
² Wikipedia 2018

In what way can the classic museum ideal be challenged in a way that knowledge is better acquired?

The first public modern museum, opened in 1753, where ordinary people could acquire knowledge by studying objects in buildings that were specially adapted to their function. The objects were usually quite foreign to the visitors and originated from places and cultures that were afar from their own¹. They were displayed in grand rooms, and visitors were encouraged to wander around and observe. Since then, museums around the world have replicated this object-based form of communication.

In the 21st century, a shift occurred. Museums went from being static containers for artefacts, to being active institutions which engage in current societal affairs. Political leaders encouraged museums to get involved and comment on issues that provoke debate in today's society. By asking critical questions to established truths and shed light on societal challenges, museums contributed to positive community development, so that as many voices as possible were heard, and important themes were highlighted. Exhibitions on sensitive topics such as events during the war, poverty or mental health have assisted to reduce prejudice and increase awareness among the population. An exhibition can additionally give a much stronger impression compared to a scientific publication.².

This paradigm shift is reflected in the way new exhibitions are carried out today. Objects in glass assemblies are replaced or combined with more interactive mediation methods³. The same development can be seen in today's libraries. A library is no longer just a container for books, but an education center with a much broader program. Such a change increases much more interest and appeals to larger demographics.

My vision for The Norwegian Jewish Culture and History Center is that through its program and design, it will strive to pursue the similar development that museums and libraries have had over the last 20 years. The project is not to be regarded as a static memorial, but to actively teach visitors about Jewish history and culture in such a way that knowledge can be utilized in the context of our time. A historical connection through architecture could give an equally strong (if not stronger), impression than exhibited objects. Other forms of dissemination such as libraries, media rooms, concert and lecture halls, may also be included in the center's program.



Dom museum, Wien



Staatliche museen, Berlin



Polin museum, Warszawa



Polin museum, Warszawa

1 Store Norsk Leksikon 2018

2 Prebst et al. 2016:9

3 Jakobsen 2014

4. APPROACH

The Diploma project is a transformational project that is based on a real housing allotment and relevant program. The program has not yet been set, however the thoughts I have implemented are based on what I believe are essential in a new education center at Calmeyers street 15. Alongside this, I will consult with the museum staff at a later stage to gain an impression of what they believe a program for an education center should consist of. The lot is made up of previously existing buildings and will as such have an influence on the final outcome.

I have decided to make changes and modifications to the existing buildings on the site, even though this may conflict with the city antiquarian's wishes for conservation. Additionally, ownership issues and finances will not be decisive for the project.

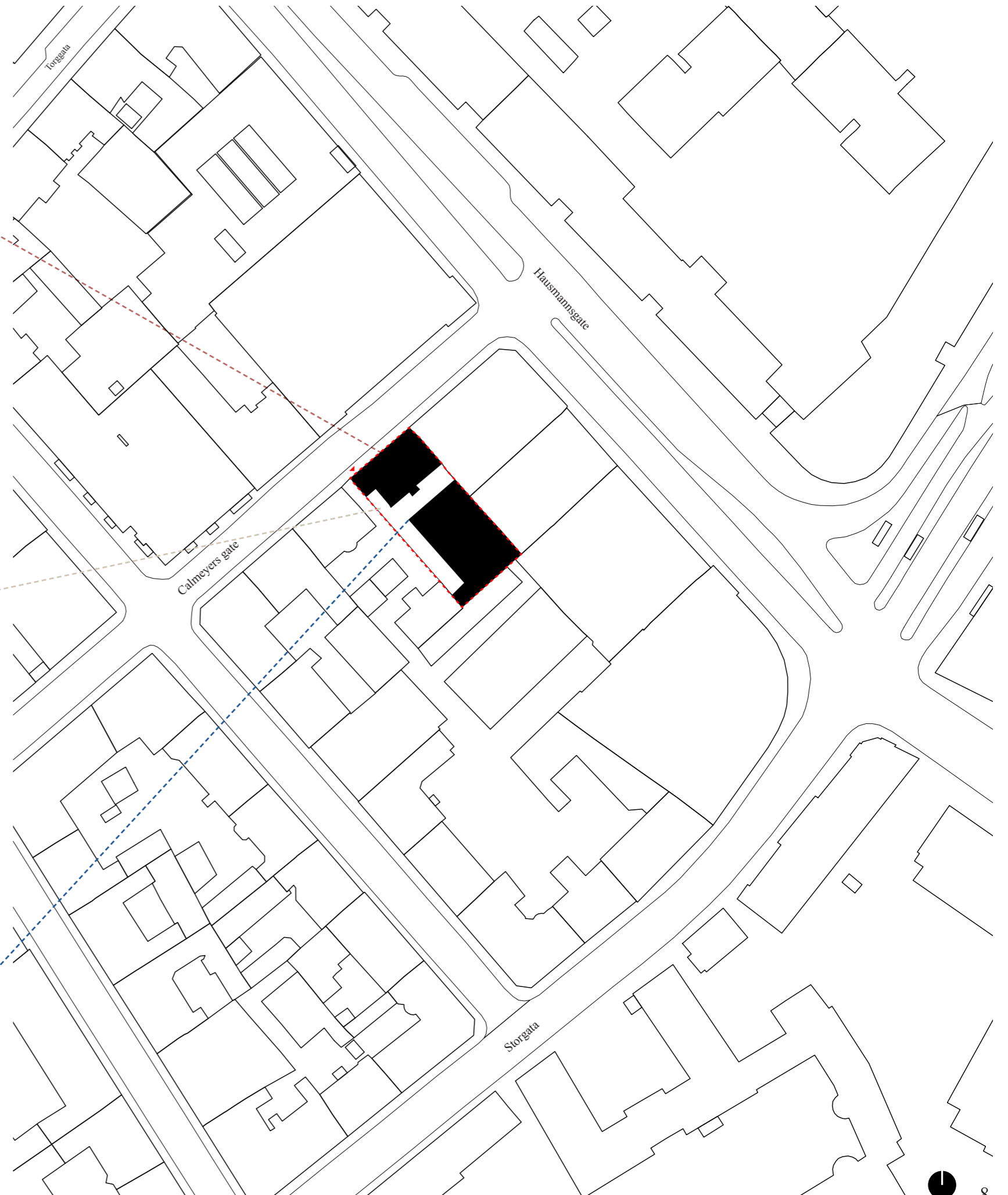
5. PROGRAM OG SITUATION

The lot I have chosen is located in the Hausmanns quarter in the center of Oslo, more specifically in Calmeyers gate. On the lot there are two existing buildings: a typical 1890s building (15 A) facing Calmeyer's gate, and an underlying synagogue building (15B) from 1921. In the courtyard facing the street, there are two different entrances. One door is in the center which leads people of 15A to residential area, and the other is a gate on the right that leads to the synagogue. The two have a shared backyard.

Today, both buildings are owned by a private real estate company. The apartment yard is still used as rental accommodation. The synagogue structure has been changed over the years, and has lost its original function and purpose as a synagogue. Whereas it used to be an open synagogue, today there are two concrete slabs that divide the building with four floors. The ground and first floor are rented by the Jewish Museum Oslo, the second floor by a music studio and the third floor consists of residential apartments.

The assignment is based on a scenario where the entire original synagogue structure, apartment building, and backyard are all at the disposal of the Jewish Museum, in order to establish a larger center. At present, the Jewish museum is reaching its limit in terms of space. Educational classes for schools, concerts and lectures are held in the exhibition rooms. Several artefacts are kept in the storage room due to space shortages and the library and administration rooms are too narrow. By looking at the buildings as a complex, it can be offered more space so that the museums functions are divided and new functions can be added. In addition, it will help clarifying the general entrance issue.

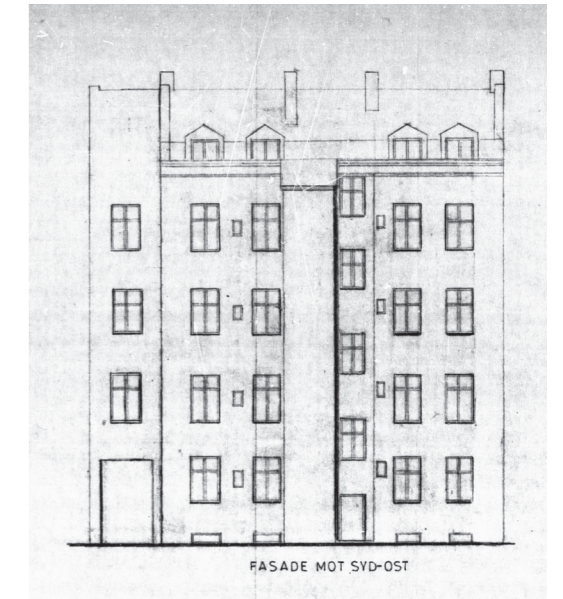
The center is considered to be a functional house. It is not planned at the level of detail in relation to exhibition and dissemination, but through an architecture that creates a relevant framework of deliverance. At the same time, it is natural to imagine that one or more apartments could be recreated as they looked before the occupants were deported. In this way, visitors can get a more authentic sense of what Jewish life was like in the Hausmann era before the war broke out.



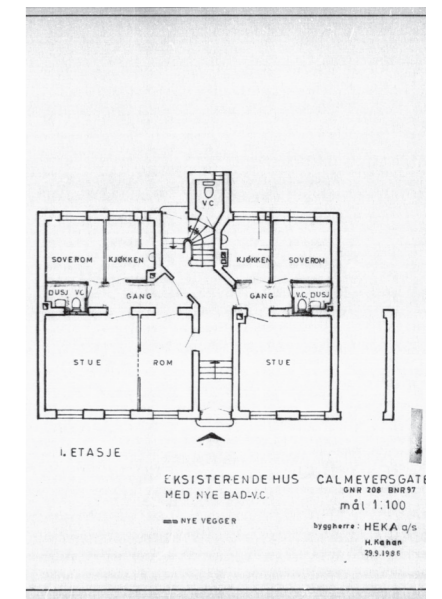
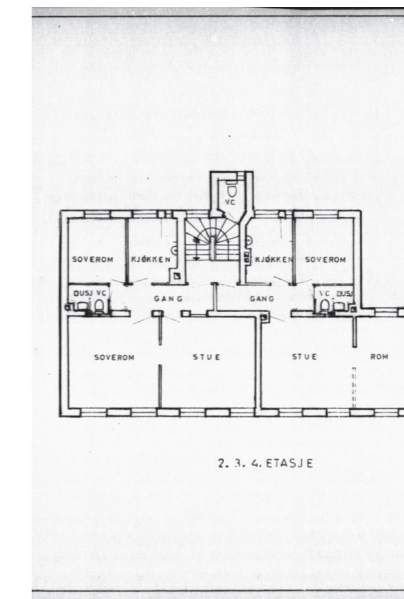
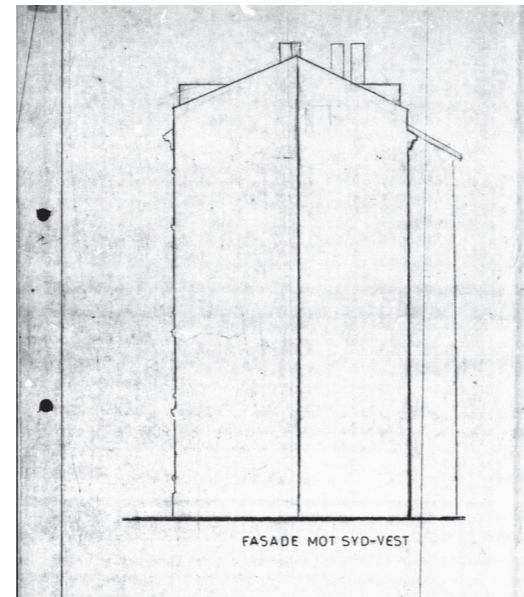
5.1. ANALYSIS OF THE BUILDINGS

Calmeyers gate 15A

The five-story apartment block from 1890 at Calmeyers gate 15A was built during an important architectural historical era in Oslo, and together with other buildings from the same area, it plays an important role in the city. Its exterior design, meaning the façade and height, suit the street and surrounding buildings and is perceived as a natural part of Oslo's urban landscape. It can be argued that, in isolation, that the building's interior architectural design has neither a special historical value for Norway or Oslo.



Calmeyers street 15A is the address in Norway where most Jews were deported from the Autumn of 1942. The historical events associated with the address are therefore of much greater significance for both Norwegian-Jews and general Norwegian history, than the building's individual design.

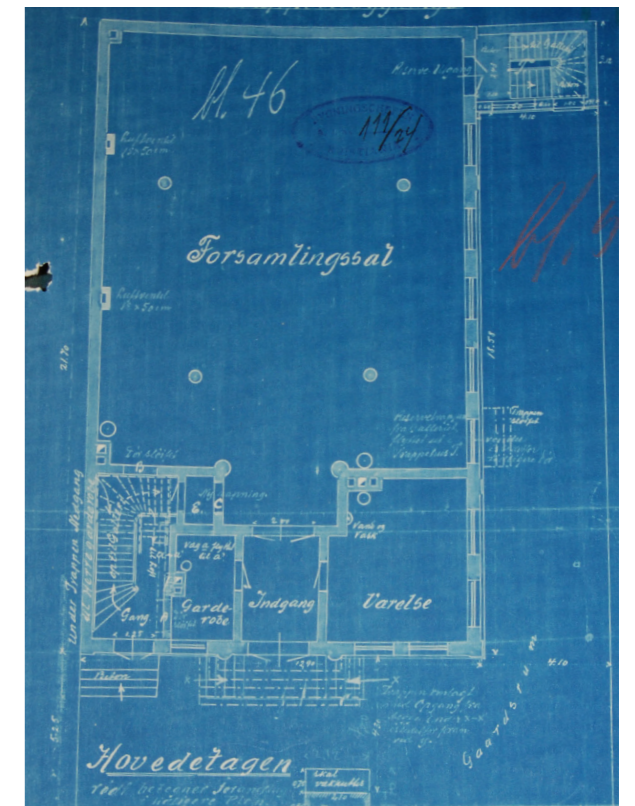
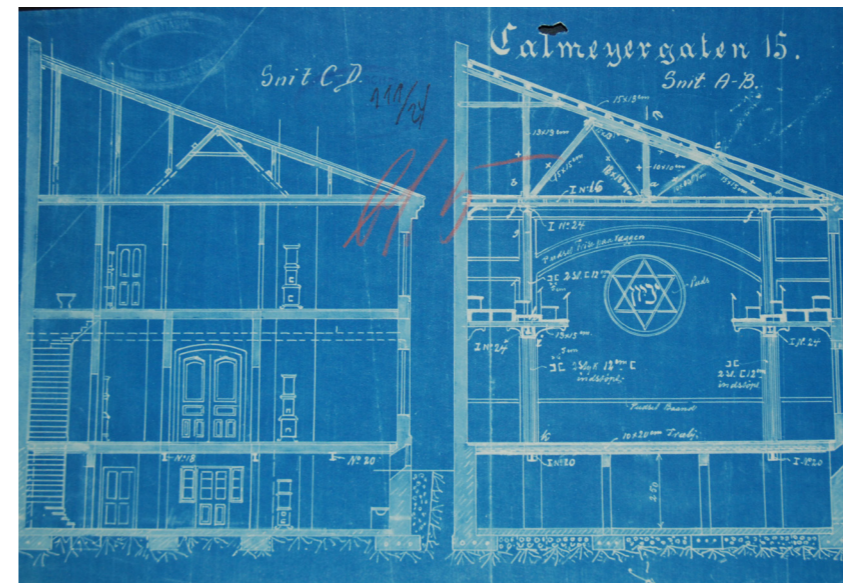


In a transformational project, I believe that as long as the façade and height are preserved, meaning that the building can still be perceived as a natural part of the urban landscape, a substantial renovation to the building's interior will not result in damaging its historical significance. On the contrary, a new interior design, highlighting the building's historical role in Norwegian-Jewish history, may help to highlight the building's importance in the city.

Calmeyers gate 15B

As with other religious buildings, synagogues also have external and internal architectural articulations that reveal their function. In my opinion the synagogue building has a much greater architectural value than Calmeyers gate 15 A. This is due to the peculiarity and rarity of the building in a Norwegian context. At the time it was built, the synagogue was one of three existing synagogues in Norway. Today, only two remain. Therefore, unlike the brickyard facing the street, making major changes to the interior and exterior of the building is less justifiable.

Since the Second World War, the synagogue has undergone extensive changes, which has given the building many historical layers. To illustrate the building's "vividness", some of the unoriginal layers must be retained, but returning to its prime should be the most natural approach. Novel architectural interventions should be small, well thought out and work in conjunction with the existing architectural expression.



5.3 JEWISH MUSEUM IN OSLO

From January 2005, the Jewish Museum in Oslo (JMO) has rented the ground floor of the former synagogue, which is now used as an exhibition hall and as an events venue. It has been important for the museum to preserve traces from the old synagogue which was essential to Jewish life during the pre-war period in Oslo. In 2010, the building's basement was rebuilt into an office space, meeting rooms, archives and library.

JMO is an independent organization that gathers, preserves, researches and distributes reliable information of Jewish life and history in Norway. The museum aspires to engage and foster curiosity about Jewish history, religion and traditions. Today, JMO has become a meeting place that unites people from all age groups and backgrounds, teaching them about Jewish culture.

JMO has been tasked with an important societal mission: to work together with schools to improve the ongoing work against anti-Semitic attitudes in our society. As part of this mission, school classes of all ages are invited to the museum to learn about Jewish culture and its history¹.

¹ Jødisk museum Oslo 2019



6. HISTORY

In 1917, part of the already existing Jewish congregation on St. Haugen split up and created a new community, the Israelite community. As early as 1918, the new congregation purchased a four-story building in Calmeyer gate (15A) with eight apartments. It had a courtyard where the community's synagogue was to be erected in the future. The courtyard across the street would house the congregation's officials.

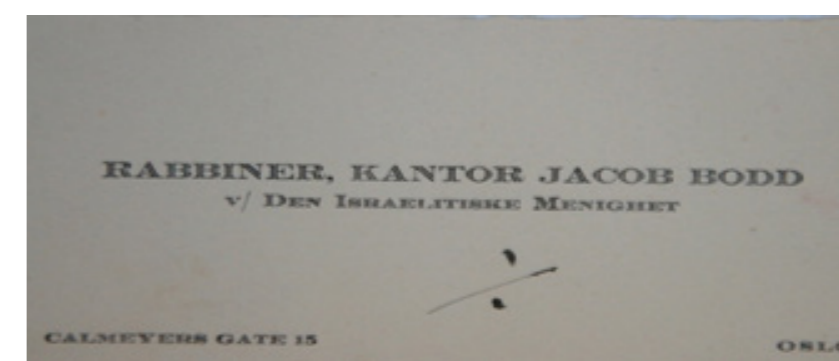
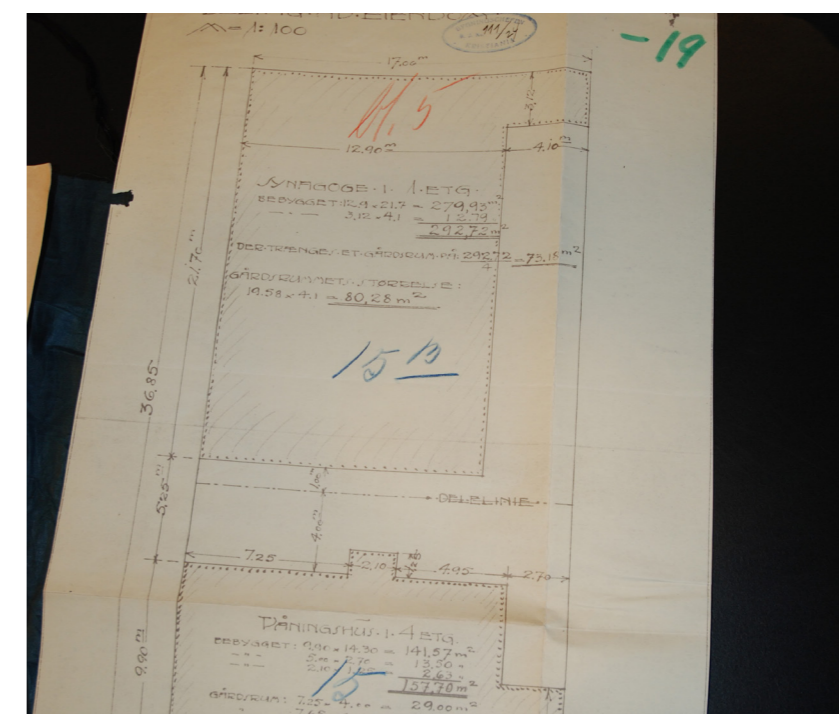
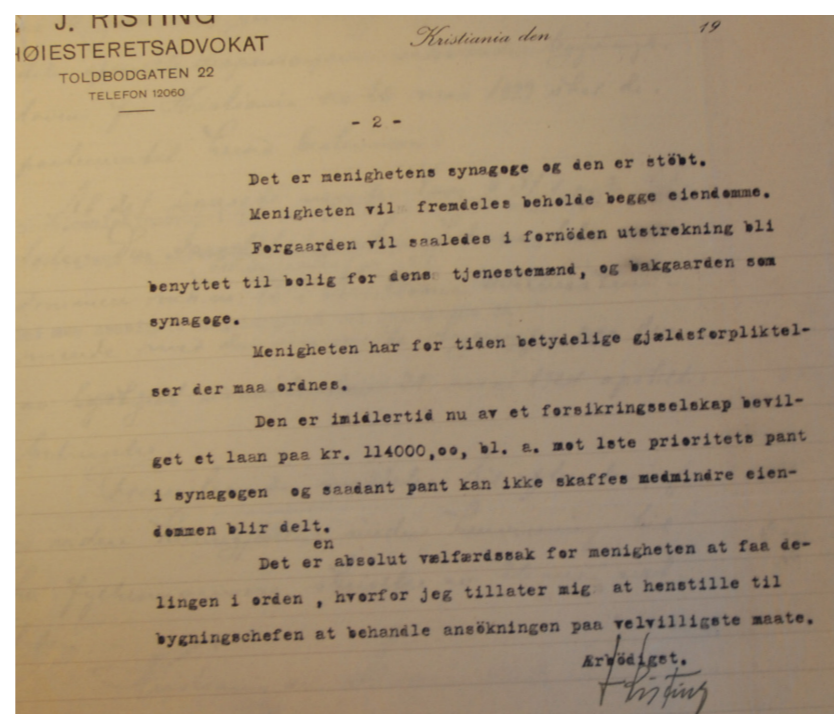
In the 1930s, several Jewish refugees came to Norway from Nazi Germany and German-occupied countries, many of whom eventually moved into Calmeyers gate 15A. In 1942, a total of 28 Jews lived in Calmeyers gate 15 A. 19 of the 28 who lived in the building, including several children, were deported and killed in Auschwitz. Calmeyers gate 15 A is the address in the country where most Jews were arrested in one place.

The purchase of the courtyard, the lot and the the synagogue became a very expensive affair. The synagogues' architect, Erik Fjeld, had to change the designs several times in order to keep costs down.

In 1920, construction of the synagogue began in the backyard. It was ready for use in 1921 and is today known as Carlmeyers gate 15 B. The synagogue was built in Orthodox tradition with separate entrances for women and men. In the main room there was room for 200 men, while the gallery could host around 100 women. The interior of the synagogue was inspired by the synagogue in Frankfurt am Main. The walls of the entrance hall were richly decorated by the architect's brother, the Kragerø painter and decorator Lars Fjeld, who also worked with Edvard Munch during his Kragerø period.

In the first decade, the synagogue had a high level of activity. It was open every day and had its own rabbi, cantor, as well as a tutor who had his own classroom. The congregation also had its own boys choir. The congregation was small and the members had little or no wealth, and in 1939 the two congregations in Oslo were merged. From 1939-1942, the synagogue on Calmeyers gate was used as the main synagogue during winter, because it was easiest to heat.

In the fall of 1942, the apartments of the Israelite congregation were confiscated and the synagogue closed as a result of the deportations. The synagogue itself was never re-used for its original purpose.¹



7. MAPPING



1. Dublin, 1917



2. Manchester, 1874



3. London, 1719



4. Bergen op Zoom, 1833



5. Schoonhoven, 1838



6. Nijmegen, 1913



7. Borculo, 1877



8. Elburg, 1855



9. Amsterdam, 1752



10. Kampen, 1847



11. Bourtagne, 1842



12. Winschoten, 1854





1. Rendsburg, 1845



2. Dornum, 1777



3. Petershagen, 1846



4. Oerlinghausen, 1894



5. Berlin, 1866



6. Issum, 1865



7. Padberg, 1790



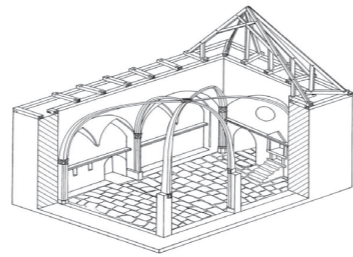
8. Wörlitz, 1789



9. Wuppertal 1865/1994



10. Marburg, 14??



11. Gröbzig, 1856



12. Nentershausen, 1810



13. Erfurt, 1100



14. Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, 1894



15. Niederzissen, 1841



16. Bad Kissingen, 1956



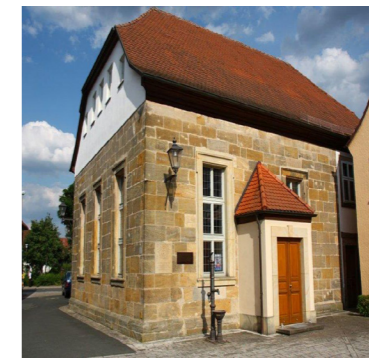
17. Groß-Umstadt, 1874



18. Rodgau-Weiskirchen, 1911(2004)



19. Memmelsdorf, 1728



20. Altenkunstadt, 1726



21. Laifersweiler, 1910



22. Laufersweiler, 1852



23. Staudernheim, 1896



24. Veitshöchheim, 1727



25. Worms, 1034, 1175, 1355, 1700



26. Fussgoenheim, 1842



27. Sennfeld (Adelsheim), 1836



28. Tüchersfeld, 1760



29. Speyer, 1104



30. Wallhausen, 1756



31. Ermreuth, 1819



32. Saarlouis, 1828



33. Homburg, 1699



34. Affaltrach (Obersulm), 1851



35. Steinbach, 1732



36. Schnaittach, 1570



37. Georgensgmünd, 1734



38. Sulzbach-Rosenberg, 1737



39. Bopfingen (Oberdorf), 1812



40. Baisingen, 1872



41. Augsburg-Kriegshaber, 1685





1. Rouen, 11??



2. Pfaffenhoffen, 1791



3. Bouxwiller, 1843



4. Hochfelden, 1841



5. Rosheim, 1836



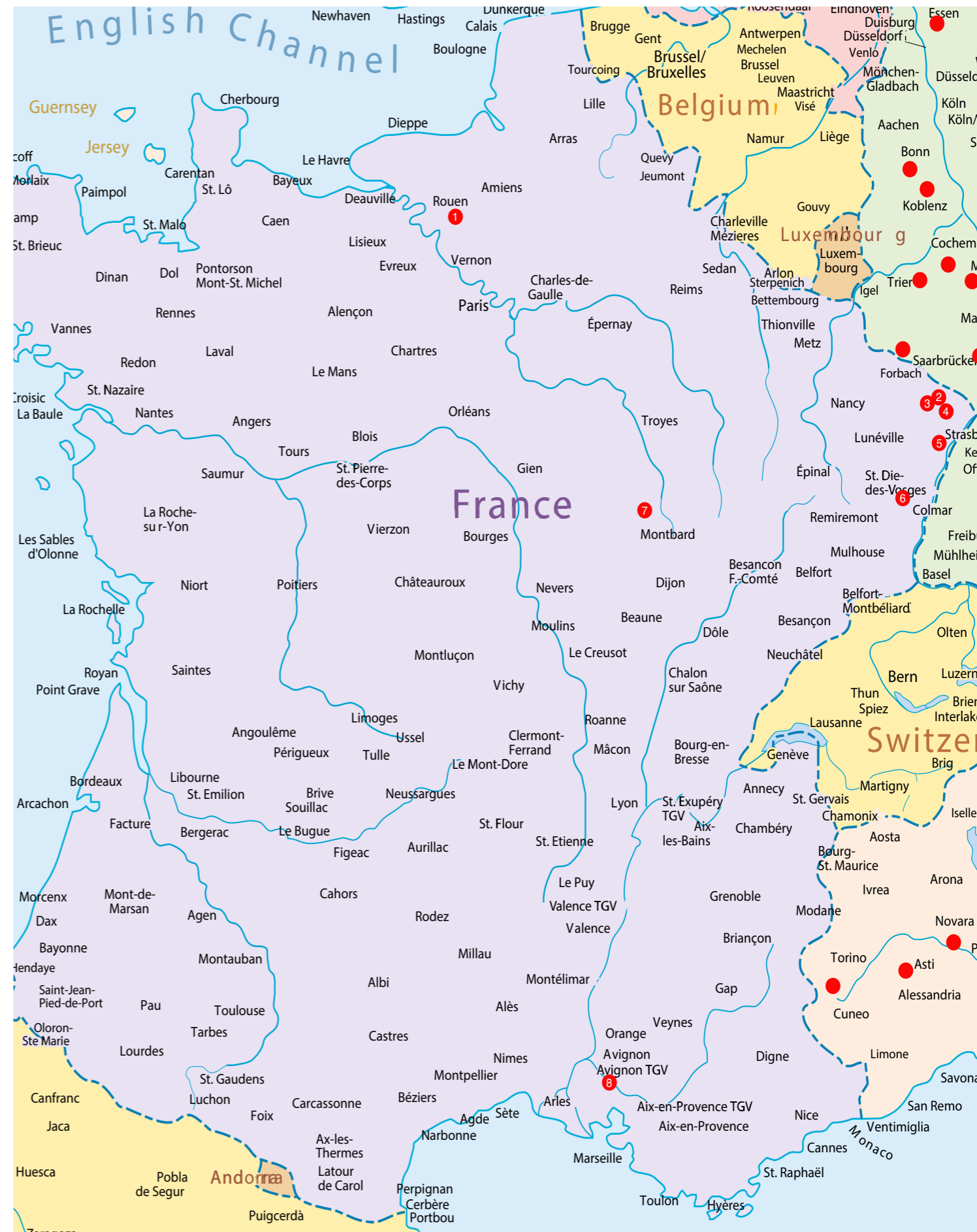
6. Bruyères, 1903



7. Chablis, 13??



8. Cavaillon, 1773





1. Besalú, 13??



2. Girona, 12??



3. Toledo, 1366



4. Córdoba, 1315



5. Úbeda, 13??



6. Tomar, 13??



7. Ponta Delgada, 1821





1. Gorizia, 1833



2. Venice, 1528



3. Casale Monferrato, 1599



4. Asti, 1786



5. Carmagnola_17??



6. Rivarolo Mantovano, 15??



7. Soragna, 18??(15??)



8. Firenze, 1882



9. Urbino, 1633.



10. Pitigliano, 1598



11. Rome, 1904



12. Pesaro, 1642



1. Ústě, 1794



2. Ghetto Prayer Hall Terezín, 18??



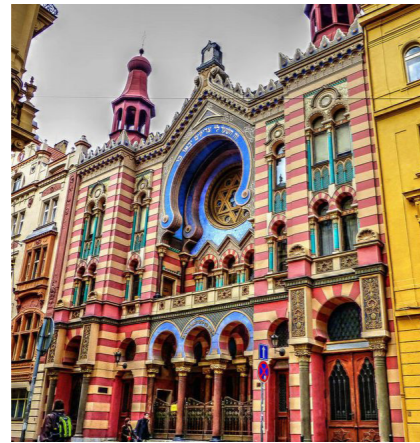
3. Dobruška, 1866



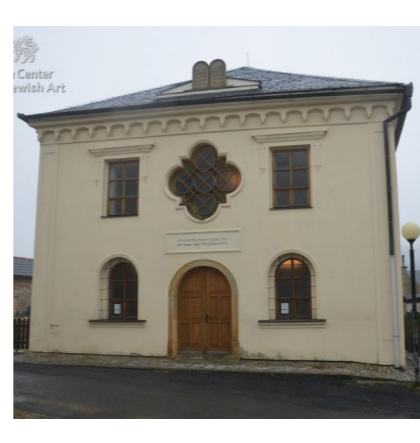
4. Kněžnou, 1782 (1830, 1898, 1913)



5. Nymburk, 1892



6. Prague, 1906



7. Úsov, 1784



8. Loštice, 1806



9. Jeníkov, 1873



10. Hlinsko, 1908



11. Kasejovice, 1762



12. Kdyně, 1863



13. Kdyně, 1827



14. Vodňany, 1852



15. Polná, 1684



16. Velké Meziříčí, 17??



17. Boskovice, 1639 (1698, 1836, 1936)



18. Hranice, 1864



19. Holešov, 1560



20. Třebíč, 1642



21. Strážnice, 1804



1. Žilina, 1927



2. Příbrník, 190?



3. Šurany, 1916



4. Bratislava, 1926



5. Stupava, 1803



6. Trnava, 1897



7. Prešov, 1898



8. Spišské, 1875



9. Trenčín; 1913



10. Wertheimer, 1834



11. Kiszvárd, 1901



12. Sopron, 1325



13. Tata, 1861



14. Buda (Budapest), 13??



15. Hősök (Budapest), 1931



16. Ferencváros (Budapest), 1924



17. Maribor, 13??



18. Zenica, 1903



19. Sarajevo, 1580(1697,1788,1794)





1. Dorohoi, 1895 (1936,1972,2014)



2. Șimleu Silvaniei, 1876



3. Iași, 1865



4. Bacău, 19??



5. Bucharest, 1910



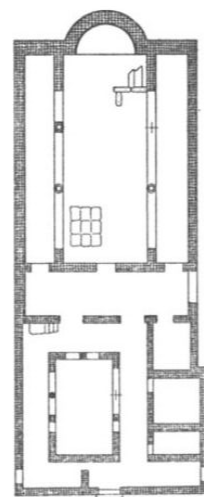
6. Pazardzhik, 1859

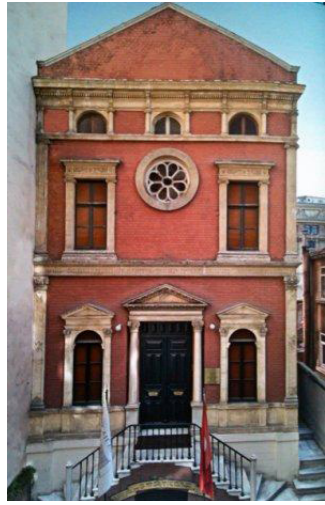


7. Sofia, 1909



8. Stobi (basilica), 275-325CE





1. Istanbul, 1823



2. Sardis, 2?? CE



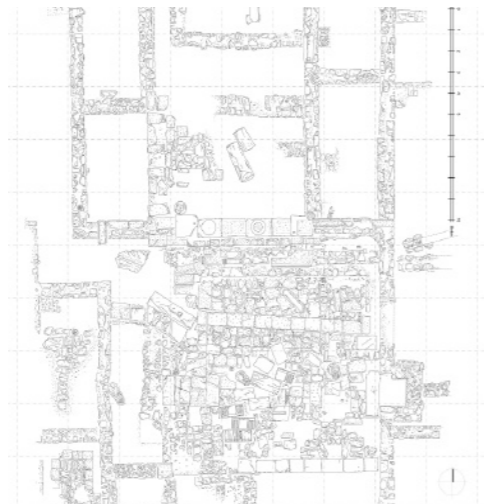
3. Izmir, 1840



5. Oncheasmos (Saranda), 4?? CE



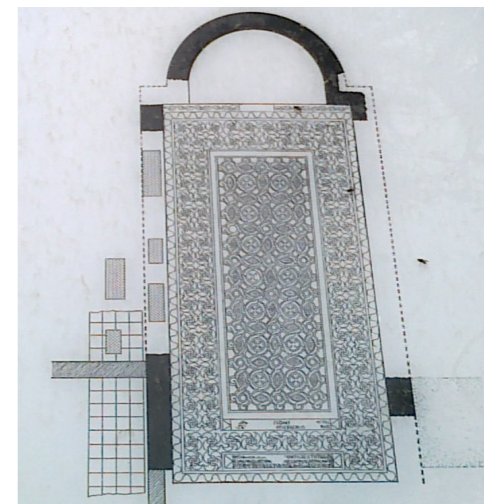
4. Priene, 4??CE.



6. Athens, 5??CE



7. Aegina, 4??BC



8. Delos, 128 BC



1. Rendsburg, 1845



2. Dornum, 17??



3. Petershagen, 1846



4. Oerlinghausen, 1894



5. Berlin, 1866



6. Issum, 1865



7. Padberg, 1790



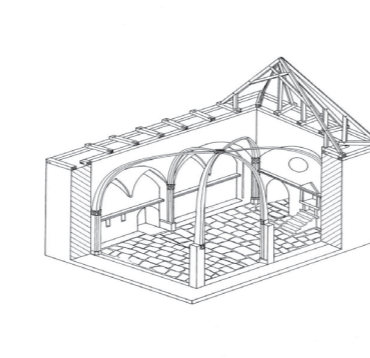
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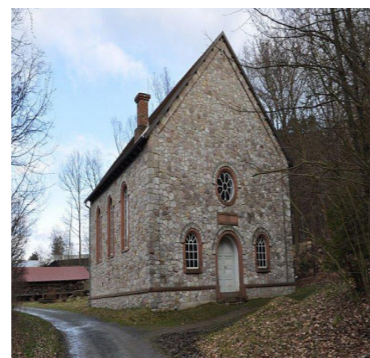
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18. Rodgau-Weiskirchen, 1911(2004)



19. Memmelsdorf, 1728



20. Altenkunstadt, 1726



21. Laufersweiler, 1910



1. Sabile, 1890



2. Joniškis, 1911



3. Kėdainiai, 1857



4. Kaunas, 1851



5. Minsk, 1831



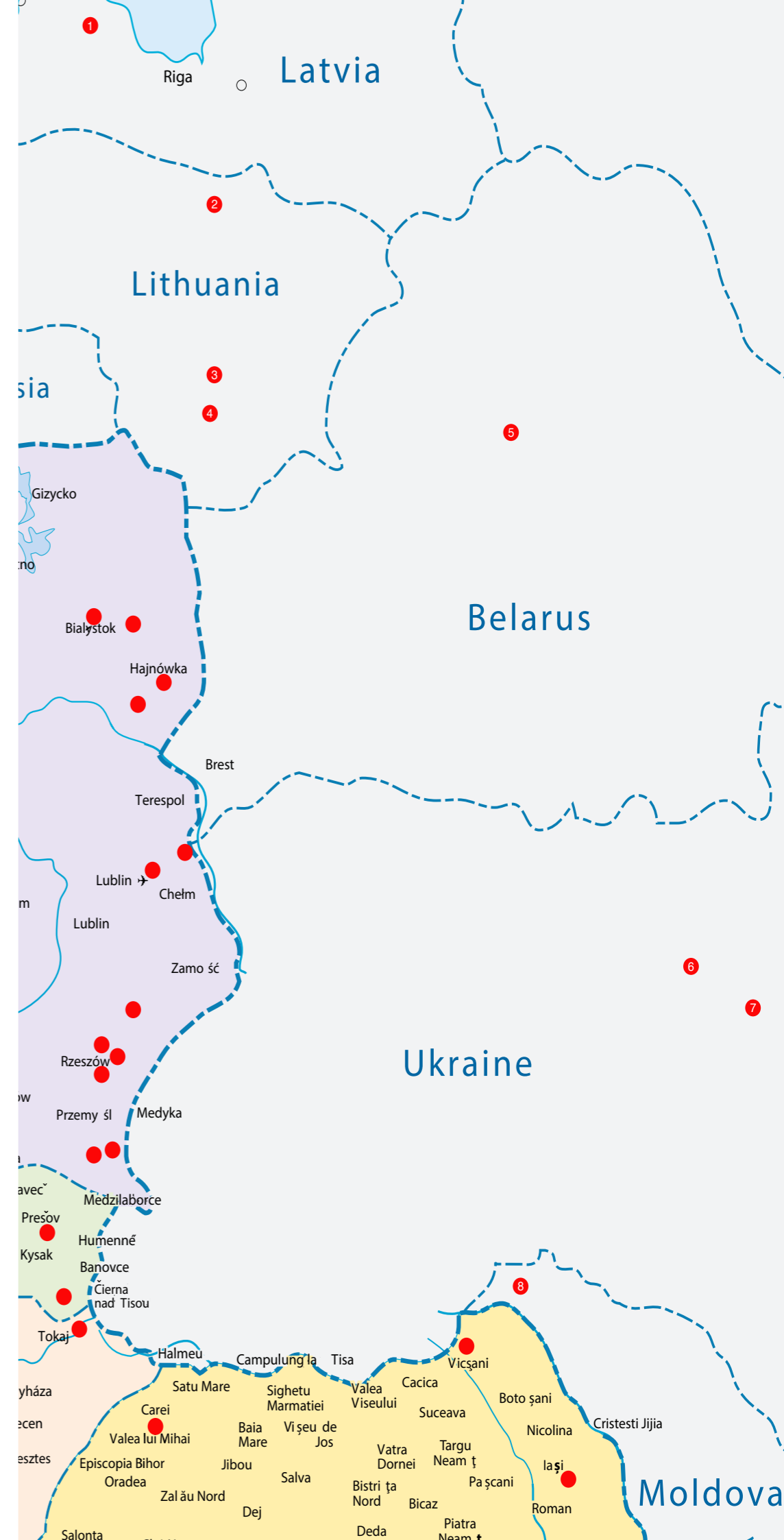
6. Pavoloch, 1900



7. Bohuslav, 1726



8. Edineț, 19??





3. Stockholm. 1795



2. Trondheim, 1925



1. Oslo, 1921



FINDINGS

Most early modern European synagogues was entered not directly from the street, but via a courtyard: both for reasons of security and to comply with laws requiring that the sound of Jewish worship not be audible by Christians.





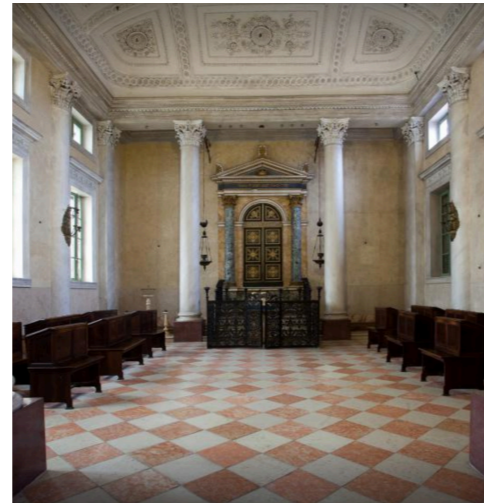
2. Venice, 1528



3. Casale Monferrato, 1599



6. Rivarolo Mantovano, 15??



9. Urbino, 1633



10. Pitigliano, 1598



12. Pesaro, 1642







4. Córdoba, 1315



5. Ubeda, 13??



6. Tomar, 13??



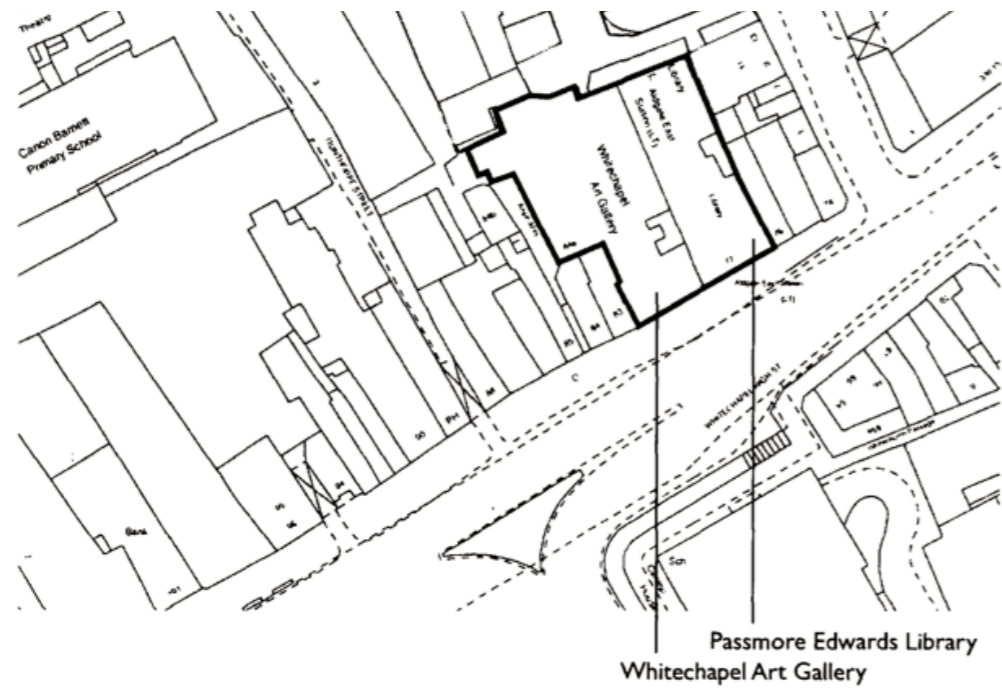
7. Ponta Delgada, 1821



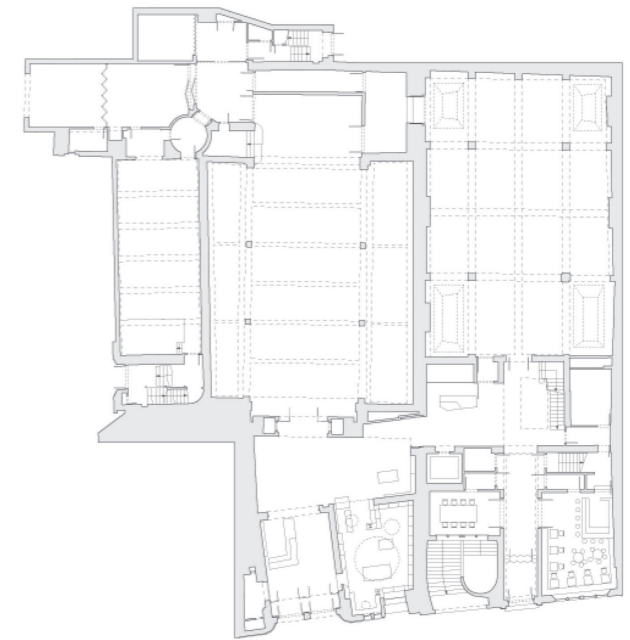
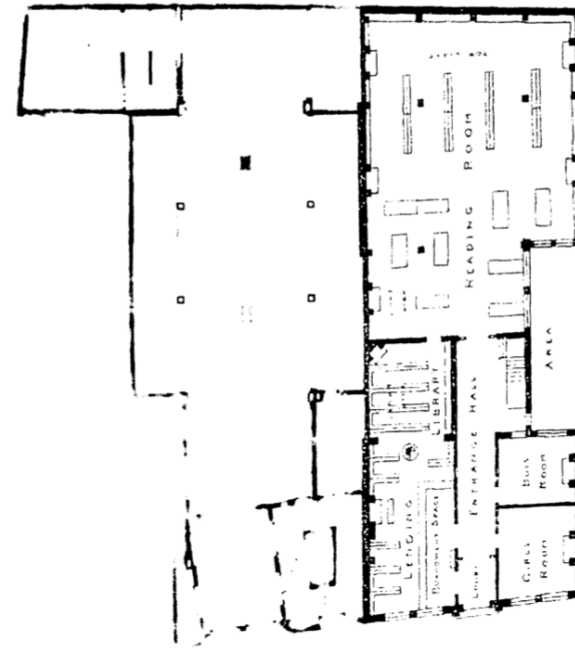
8. REFERANSER



Whitechapel Gallery (East London)



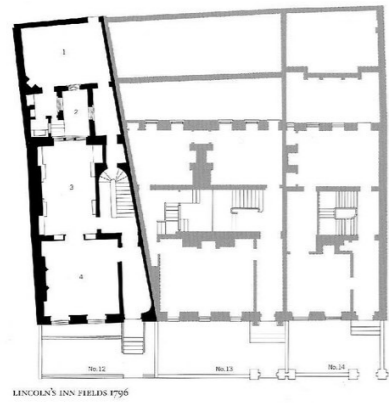
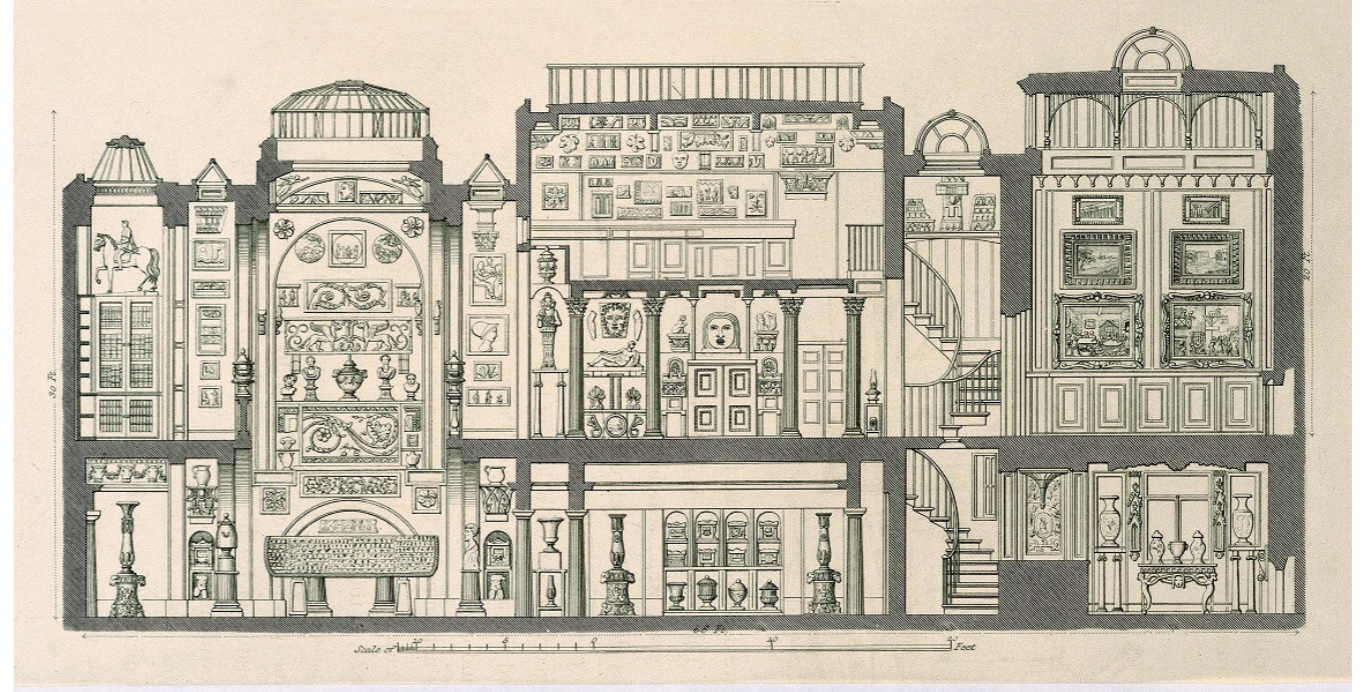
Passmore Edwards Library
Whitechapel Art Gallery



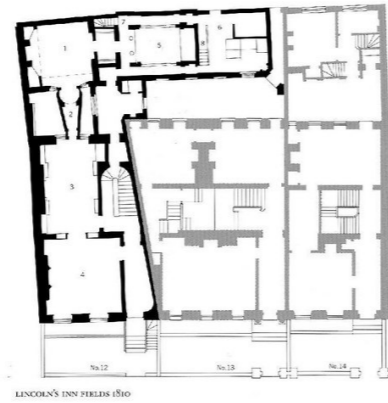
Ark. Robbrecht en Daem



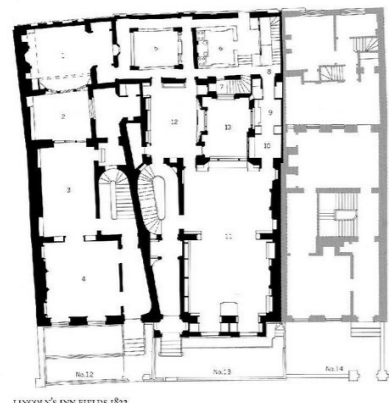
Sir John Soane's Museum (Centrale London)



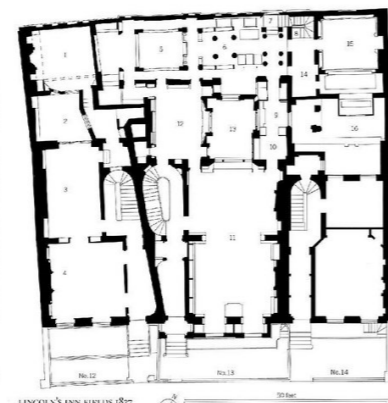
LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS 1796



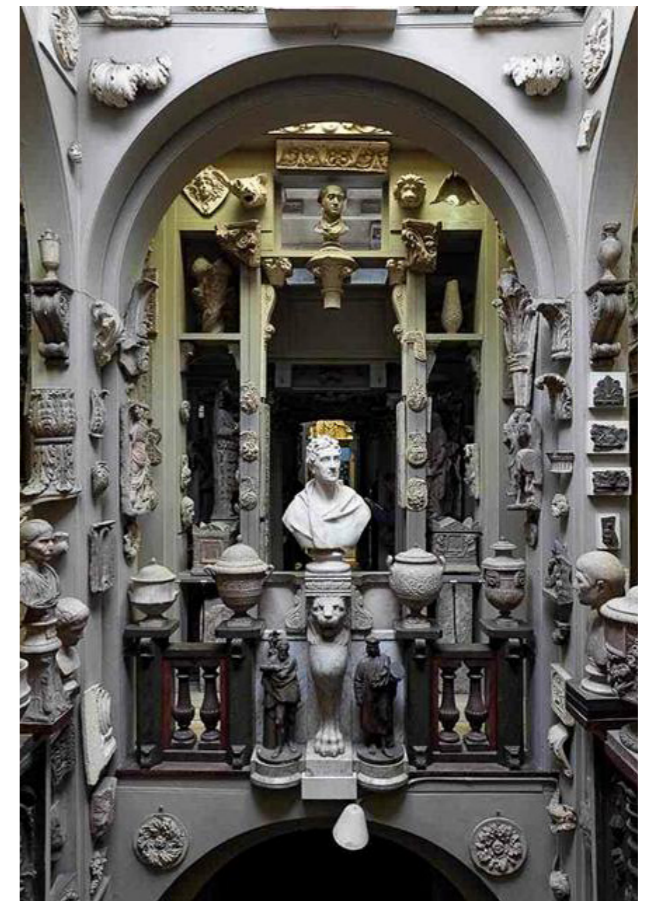
LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS 1810

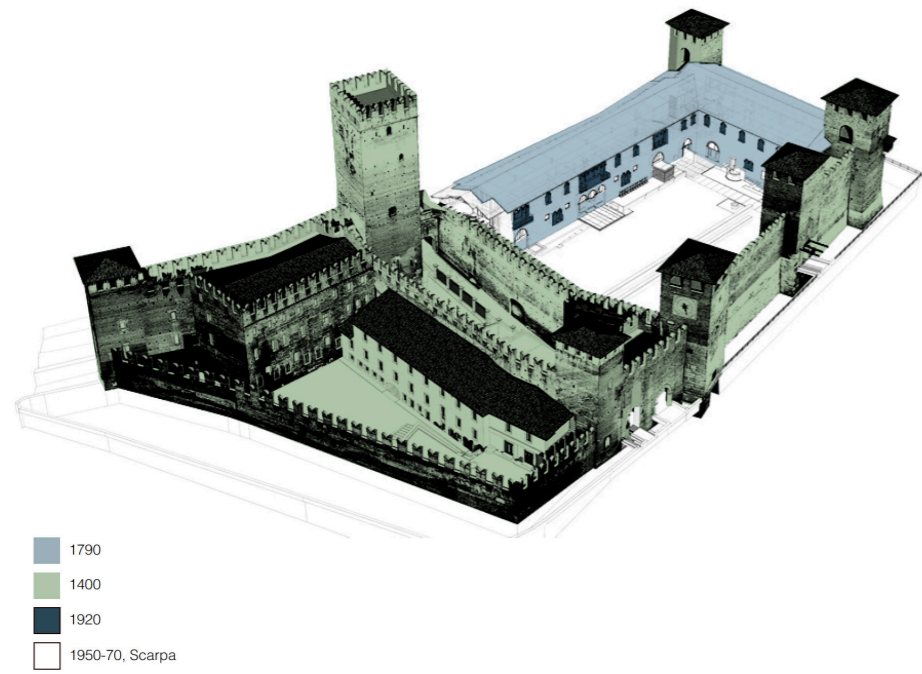


LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS 1822



LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS 1837

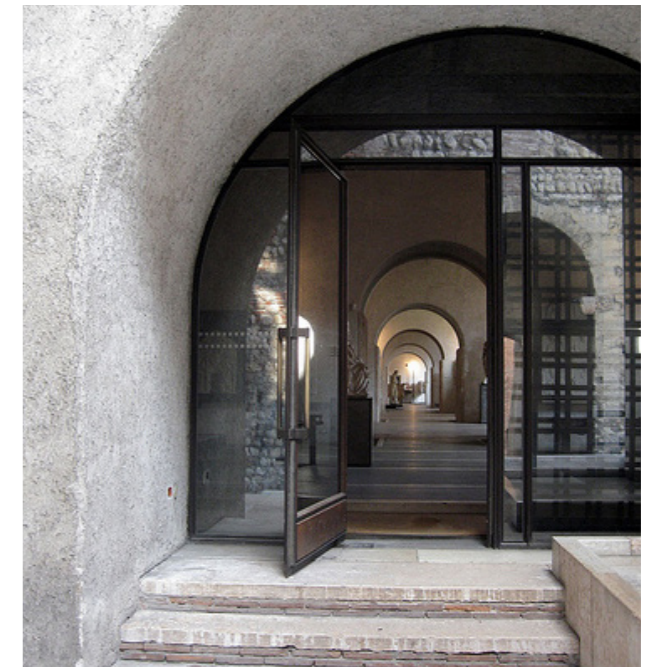




Castelvecchio (Verona)



Ark. Carlo Scarpa



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