

Jewish Salon Women in Berlin: A Public History; CETS 2011 Research Abroad Project



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Project Description

- ❖ Identity key themes the secondary literature in German's women's history regarding Jewish Salon Women.
- ❖ Examine the ways that scholars have tried to bring women into public history and the issues that they faced doing so.
- ❖ Recognize the importance of the historical gendering of public space.
- ❖ Examine the historic sites and monuments in Berlin and consider if women are represented proportionally to men.
- ❖ Consider the issues of access to English speakers.



Salon Life

http://www.germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/images/00023691_%20Geselligkeit%20bei%20Rahele%20Varnhagen.jpg

Jewish Salon Life

- ❖ A salon would welcome guests from different socioeconomic levels, including: the nobility, the *Bürgertum* (middle class), and the Jewish community.
- ❖ The salon was a private place for intellectuals, men and women alike, to meet and discuss art, literature, philosophy, aesthetics, and politics.
- ❖ Unique space for women's leadership in intellectual life.

Jewish Museum



The Jewish Museum – Berlin

<http://www.cs.utsa.edu/~wagner/berlin/trip/jewish2.jpg>

- ❖ The Jewish Museum was opened in September 2001. It is publically funded international center of research and education.
- ❖ The museum contains rooms that are beneficial to the understanding of Jewish Salon Women, though the information is very limited. The information is focused on women's domestic lives as opposed to their professional ones.
- ❖ In most other areas of the museum women and their accomplishments were only mentioned briefly.

Jewish Salon Women

- ❖ Jewish salon women were part of the elite during the 18th and early 19th century. The salons only lasted while there was peace and prosperity in Berlin.
- ❖ The salon allowed Jewish women to establish a venue in their homes in which they could meet in relative equality with Jews and non-Jews.
- ❖ For Jewish women, the salon allowed an escape from the normal restrictive domestic life and provided opportunities to marry noblemen and rise on the social ladder.

Henriette Herz

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/94/Henriette_Herz_by_Anna_Dorothea_Lisiewska_1778.jpg



Dorothea von Courland

<http://www.altenburgerland.de/fm/43/HerzoginKurland.Posterstein.jpg>



Interview with the Berlin Tour Company *Frauentours*

- ❖ The feminist company (women's tours) offers tours about the Jewish salon women in German.
- ❖ The tour company explained that there are plenty of artifacts for Jewish salon women to be included in museums, but they are simply forgotten or barely included.
- ❖ The company does not reach out to the international audience as it's a very small company.

Conclusions

- ❖ Although the feminist tourist company *Frauentours* in Berlin devotes a great deal of time to recounting the stories and significance of these women, they target primarily a German-speaking public, not an international audience.
- ❖ Most of the homes that housed the salons are no longer standing or simply are forgotten.
- ❖ Representations of Jewish Salon women can be found in Berlin, but one must look hard to find them. Their stories are not always front and center in representations of even the German Jewish past.
- ❖ Additional work is required to make the stories of these women more visible to an English speaking public.

Rahel Von Varnhagen

- ❖ Rahel Varnhagen was so famous in relation to salon life in Berlin, that the period (1780-1806) was named after her, "*Rahelzeit*."
- ❖ She cut her Jewish social ties, including her marriage, to become educated in mathematics, German, French, and thoroughly literate. These skills led her to become one of the greatest salon hosts.



Rahel Varnhagen

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/3/31/Rahel_Varnhagen.jpg/220px-Rahel_Varnhagen.jpg

