



ein museum der wienholding

Media Information, January 2024

Who Cares? Jewish Responses to Suffering

As of January 31, 2024, the Jewish Museum Vienna, a Wien Holding museum, is showing the exhibition *Who Cares? Jewish Responses to Suffering*. The exhibition highlights the universal challenges confronting humanity in the face of violence, disease, poverty, depression, or disaster. Suffering and hardship can affect anyone, and everyone needs help at some point. Featuring artistic explorations of the topic and historical objects, the exhibition presents people and institutions that have largely been forgotten despite their significant contributions to the common good.

Roots of Social Engagement in Judaism

The need to help is deeply rooted in Judaism and is found in the Jewish commandments of *zedakah* (charity) and *tikun olam* (heal the world). Judaism emphasizes the high value of human life and focuses not only on spiritual aspects, but also on this world. The commandment of *zedakah*, giving to those in need, aims to create a dignified and just life and obliges everyone equally. The term *tikun olam* means improving or repairing the world and has evolved from originally legal regulations for the common good to a broader social and environmental activity. It stands for any form of social commitment to making the world better, including environmental protection and sustainable behavior.

Vienna as a Center of Medical Care since the Nineteenth Century

Proceeding from the Jewish commandments, the exhibition takes a tour of Vienna as a center of medical research and a place of psychological and social care from the nineteenth century to the present day. Major achievements by male and female Viennese Jewish doctors are juxtaposed with the long-neglected stories of mothers, midwives, nurses, and social workers. The exhibition honors historical figures from Vienna's history such as Sigmund Freud, Julius Tandler, Margarete Hilferding, and Henriette Weiss, who founded or led important care institutions.

The Meaning of “Care” in National Socialism

During the National Socialist era, care work posed an enormous challenge for the Jewish population. The Nazi regime destroyed long-established structures and drastically restricted the work of Jewish doctors. The Jewish population was severely underserved not only medically, but also psychologically and socially. Despite life-threatening conditions, Jewish welfare institutions endeavored to care for the community amid this extreme situation. After the war, international Jewish aid organizations assumed responsibility for the care of the survivors. Interdenominational and supranational aspects are pointed out as lessons from the Second World War.

Global Challenges for Care

Given the urgency of global challenges such as war, terror, and the climate catastrophe, the exhibition stresses the need to overcome what divides us and recognize what unifies us as the principle in combating global misery. Even today, human empathy and solidarity remain vital for peaceful coexistence. While medical science is generally seen as the basis for healing, other areas of caring have remained hidden from public awareness to this day – yet they are the very things that hold the world together in its innermost.

Who Cares? Jewish Responses to Suffering

can be seen from January 31, 2024 to September 1, 2024 at the Jewish Museum Vienna Dorotheergasse 11, a Wien Holding museum. Curated by Caitlin Gura and Markus G. Patka, and designed by Bienenstein visuelle Kommunikation and Gerhard Veigel, the exhibition is accompanied by a German/English catalog published by Residenz Verlag that costs € 29.90 and includes interesting essays and new insights from Domagoj Akrap, Herwig Czech, Gerhard Langer, Elisabeth Malleier, Ilse Reiter-Zatloukal, Klaus Taschwer, Daniela Schmid and Liliane Weissberg, as well as the curators. The Jewish Museum Vienna, Dorotheergasse 11, 1010 Vienna, is open Sunday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The second location, Museum Judenplatz, Judenplatz 8, 1010 Vienna, is open Sunday to Thursday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (wintertime), respectively 5 p.m. (summertime).

Further information can be found at www.jmw.at or info@jmw.at.

Photos and press material for the current exhibitions are available on the Jewish Museum Vienna homepage at www.jmw.at/de/presse. The press photos can be used without charge for reporting purposes by naming the copyright holder.

Queries

Mag.^a Natascha Golan, media assistant

Tel.: +43-1-535 04 31-1519

E-Mail: natascha.golan@jmw.at

Photos and press material for the current exhibitions are available on the Jewish Museum Vienna website at www.jmw.at/de/presse.

In partnership with:



With the generous support of:



Die Presse

