

Joanne Rosenthal

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I am a freelance exhibition curator, researcher and museum consultant with extensive experience making exhibitions that negotiate sensitive subjects with nuance and intellectual rigour, whilst appealing to broad audiences. I am passionate about communicating complex ideas and narratives in accessible yet meaningful ways.

I work with museums, universities, arts and heritage organisations to research, conceptualise and produce exhibitions, particularly those dealing with 'difficult' or marginalised histories.

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Freelance curator, researcher, museum consultant (June 2018 – present)

Various clients

- **George House Trust:** Curator of *ACTING UP! 40 Years of HIV Activism* (2024-25)
- **Big Heritage:** Researcher for the new Battle of the Atlantic Museum (2024-present)
- **University of Liverpool:** Guest lecturer, Media, Culture & Everyday Life MA (2022-present)
- **University of Sheffield:** Guest lecturer, Managing Museums MSc (2021-present)
- **Jewish Museum Amsterdam:** Curator, various exhibitions (2022-present)
- **Jewish Museum Berlin:** Curator, *Sex: Jewish Positions* exhibition (2023-24)
- **Museum of London:** Research consultant for Fashion City exhibition (2023)
- **Tate Britain:** Symposium convenor for Émigré Art Archives Project (2022-23)
- **Queen Mary University of London:** Curator, *Empty Cradles* exhibition (2020-22)
- **Yiddish Book Centre, USA:** Curatorial project manager, new core exhibition (2021-22)
- **Imperial War Museum London:** Researcher, new Holocaust Galleries (2020)
- **Jewish Museum Finland project:** Consultant, new museum development (2019-22)
- **Memento Films:** Historical research consultant (2019-20)
- **Jewish Museum London:** Curator of *Jews, Money, Myth* (2019)
- **Various universities:** Research partner, *Staging Difficult Pasts*, an AHRC-funded project on how theatres and museums shape public memory (2019)

Chief Curator and Head of exhibitions (May 2016 – May 2018)

Jewish Museum London

- Senior Management Team member with strategic responsibility for exhibitions and collections
- Management of the museum's curatorial team
- Developing, curating and producing exhibitions (in-house and for international tour)
- Contracting and collaborating with exhibition designers and fit-out companies
- Financial management and reporting
- High level donor cultivation, representing the museum externally
- Tours, talks and workshops for students, groups, donors and stakeholders
- Facilitating academic/research engagement with the museum's collections

Exhibitions curator (March 2012 – May 2016)

Jewish Museum London

- Curating a busy programme of exhibitions: concept development, content research, loan negotiation, collaborating with designers and architects, project management
- Managing the museum's touring exhibitions across Europe and North America including courier trips to supervise exhibition installations
- Management of the museum's collection of ritual objects including object research and collaboration with academics and experts globally
- Supporting and advising academics and students with collection research

Museum administration manager (November 2009 – March 2012)

Jewish Museum London

- General administrative and operational management at a critical time in the museum's development, following a major HLF-funded redevelopment
- Developing and implementing new administrative systems for education and events programmes to ensure efficiency and a good visitor experience

Creative Schools project manager (December 2006 – March 2008)

Arts Council England, London

- Project management of creative learning programme in Outer London schools. Work included: budget management; financial reporting; monitoring and evaluating educational outcomes; liaising with teachers, artists and local authorities

Creative Partnerships administrator (June 2004 – December 2006)

Arts Council England, London

- Administrative and operational support for Creative Partnerships, the UK government's flagship creative learning programme which brought artists into schools across the UK

EDUCATION

2008-2009

MA Cultural Heritage Studies (Distinction)
University College London

Modules included: World Heritage and Critical Museologies, Heritage and Development, Managing Museums, Cultural Memory, Museum and Site Interpretation.

2001-2004

BA English Language and Literature (1st Class Honours)
Kings College London

Modules included: Experimental Theatre, Queer Theory, Australian Literature, American Civil Rights History

ACADEMIC FELLOWSHIPS

Visiting Research Fellow, 2020-21

Royal Central School of Speech and Drama

As part of this research fellowship, I collaborated with scholars of queer performance to share and develop my research into a family archive related to Manchester's gay scene in the 80s and 90s.

AWARDS

Museums Change Lives Award, 2019

Museums Association

A prestigious national prize from the UK Museums Association, awarded for *Jews, Money, Myth*, the exhibition I curated for Jewish Museum London.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

As freelance curator:

ACTING UP! 40 Years of HIV Activism (April – December 2025)

Manchester Central Library

I curated this exhibition for George House Trust, a Manchester-based HIV charity, as part of their 40th anniversary celebrations. *ACTING UP!* tells the story of four decades of HIV activism in Greater Manchester. It brings items from the George House Trust archives and Manchester city archives together with film footage and new oral history interviews to explore the region's proud history of HIV activism. The exhibition honours the memories of lives lost and continues the fight for a world free of HIV stigma and discrimination.

Sex: Jewish Positions (2024/25)

Jewish Museum Berlin and Jewish Museum Amsterdam

This collaborative exhibition illuminated the many, sometimes contradictory, often surprising, meanings of sex and sexuality in Judaism. Bringing contemporary art, film, photography and social media into conversation with ritual objects, illuminated manuscripts and rabbinic texts, it took visitors on a diverse and dynamic journey through centuries of Jewish attitudes and positions on sex.

Empty Cradles: Israel's Disappeared Children (September – December 2022)

Brunei Gallery, SOAS

I co-curated *Empty Cradles* with academics at Queen Mary University of London for an AHRC-funded research project exploring the 'Yemenite children affair', in which thousands of Yemenite, Middle Eastern, and Balkan children were forcibly separated from their parents by state authorities in the years before and after the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948.

Jews, Money, Myth (March – October 2019)

Jewish Museum London

This award-winning exhibition explored the complex and sometimes vexed role money has played in Jewish life throughout centuries of history.

Employed by Jewish Museum London:

Sephardi Voices: Jews from North Africa and the Middle East (June – September 2017)

Presenting testimonies of Jews from the Arab world who migrated to Britain after the establishment of the State of Israel.

Blood: Uniting and Dividing (November 2015 – February 2016, and subsequent tour to Poland)

A cultural history of Jews and blood, taking visitors on a journey through thousands of years of history, from the rituals of the Hebrew bible to 21st century genetic science.

Four Four Jew: Football, Fans and Faith (October 2013 – February 2014)

Exploring the relationship between Jews and football and the role the sport played in the integration of Jewish immigrants to England.

Asterix in Britain: Life and Work of René Goscinny (May – September 2018)

I adapted and organized the London tour of this retrospective exhibition from the Museum of Jewish History and Art in Paris, exploring the career of the co-creator of the Asterix comics.

Designs on Britain (October 2017 – April 2018)

The exhibition brought together material from public and private collections across the UK to illustrate the impact on British design of Jewish immigrants to the UK from Nazi Europe.

Shaping Ceramics: From Lucie Rie to Edmund de Waal (November 2016 – February 2017)

This exhibition explored how Jewish ceramicists fleeing Nazi Europe transformed British studio pottery.

Designing the 20th Century: Life and Work of Abram Games (September 2014 – January 2015)

A retrospective of the poster designer Abram Games, celebrating the 100th anniversary of his birth.

Elsbeth Juda: Grit and Glamour (March – July 2018)

A retrospective of the late photographer Elsbeth Juda, a Jewish émigré who brought a new modernist artistic vision to Britain from Germany.

Scots Jews: Photographs by Judah Passow (September 2016 – February 2017)

Encompassing both urban and rural, remote settings, the photographs looked at what drives and defines the community as Jews living in Scotland in the 21st century.

Dorothy Bohm: Sixties London (April – September 2016)

Born in East Prussia, Bohm was sent by her parents to safety in Britain in 1939, armed with a Leica camera gifted to her by her father. These photos captured the energy and dynamism of life in London in the '60s.

Through a Queer Lens: Portraits of LGBTQ Jews (February – April 2016)

I worked with fine art photographer Ajamu X, and trans activist Shaan Knan to develop this exhibition, the first comprehensive series of photographic portraits of LGBTQ Jews in the UK.

Click on hyperlinks for short film summaries of [Designs on Britain](#) and [Blood: Uniting and Dividing](#). Images and more information can be found [here](#). Click [here](#) for press/interviews.

ACADEMIC TEACHING

February 2025

University of Sheffield (Managing Museums and Cultural Heritage Sites MSc)
Guest lecture, *Curating Difficult Pasts*

February 2024

University of Sheffield (Managing Museums and Cultural Heritage Sites MSc)
Guest lecture, *Curating Difficult Pasts*

May 2023

University of Liverpool (Media, Culture and Everyday Life MA)
Guest lecture, *Curatorial approaches to interpreting the past*

May 2023

University of Sheffield (Managing Museums and Cultural Heritage Sites MSc)
Guest lecture, *Curating Difficult Pasts*

October 2022

Queen Mary University of London (Performance Studies BA)
Workshop, *Curatorial strategies for exhibiting celebrity*

May 2022

University of Liverpool (Media, Culture and Everyday Life MA)
Guest lecture, *Curatorial approaches to interpreting the past*

March 2022

University of Sheffield (Managing Museums and Cultural Heritage Sites MSc)
Guest lecture, *Curating Difficult Pasts*

February 2022

South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation (Outside In Curating Course)
Workshop and lecture, *The Theory and Practice of Curating*

April 2021

University of Sheffield (Managing Museums and Cultural Heritage Sites MSc)
Guest lecture, *Curating Difficult Pasts*

February 2021

Royal Central School of Speech and Drama
Workshop for PhD students, *Methodological subjectivities: Reflections on researching a queer family archive*

January 2021

University of Wrocław (Jewish Studies BA)
Online talk, *Exhibiting Difficult Narratives: Critical Jewish Museologies*

December 2020

University of Sheffield (Politics BA)
Guest lecture, *Memorialising State Violence*

CONFERENCES, LECTURES AND PUBLIC EVENTS

April 2025, Contact Theatre Manchester

Panelist in *Manchester's Queer Histories* event, by Manchester Histories and Queer Up North

November 2022, Manchester Metropolitan University

Telling Stories conference presentation, 'Challenging Hegemonic Narratives'

November 2022, University of Brighton Design Archives

Panel presentation, 'Archive as Method: new approaches to archives of creative practice'

March 2021, Jewish Museum Frankfurt

Transitions conference presentation, 'Exhibiting Antisemitism and Political Discourse'

October 2020, Imperial War Museum

Presentation to 'Second World War and Holocaust Histories' project partners, 'Commissioning Artists and Working with Community Expectations'

November 2019, Memory Park/Monument to Victims of State Terrorism, Buenos Aires

Public workshop and presentation, 'Exhibiting Absence and Loss: Objects, Narratives and Trauma on Display'

November 2019, Institute for Economic and Social Development, Buenos Aires

Public lecture: 'A Question of Blood: From the Jewish Museum London to Post-Dictatorship Argentina'

November 2017, Sephardic Museum of Toledo

Association of European Jewish Museums conference keynote conversation with Director of the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 'Jewish Museums and the Absence of Things'

March 2016, University of Leeds

Jewish Museologies and the Politics of Display conference paper, 'Whose Museum is it Anyway?: Jewish Museums as universal spaces'

November 2015, POLIN Museum of The History of Polish Jews, Warsaw

Public lecture, 'People of the Ball: Football and Jewish Identity in Britain'

PUBLICATIONS

Miriam Goldmann, Joanne Rosenthal, Titia Zoeter (2024), *Sex: Jewish Positions*, Hirmer Publishers, in English and German editions

Joanne Rosenthal (2023), 'Ten Strategies for Exhibiting Absence & Loss: Objects, Narratives and Trauma on Display', in *Staging Difficult Pasts: Transnational Memory, Theatres, and Museums*, eds. Maria Delgado, Michal Kobialka and Bryce Lease, Routledge, 259-269 [open access [here](#)]

Anthony Bale and Joanne Rosenthal (2022), 'Curating the past: blood and money in London', *Jewish Culture and History*, Volume 23, Issue 1, 3-20

Joanne Rosenthal and Marc Volovici (2019), Introduction to *Jews, Money, Myth* exhibition catalogue, Jewish Museum London, 5-9

Joanne Rosenthal (2019), 'People of the Ball: Football and British Jews' in *Jewish Lives: Sport*, Jewish Museum London, 127-136

Joanne Rosenthal (2017), 'Blood: Uniting and Dividing. An Exhibition at Jewish Museum London' in *Blood: Uniting and Dividing* exhibition catalogue, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Warsaw, 13-17

Joanne Rosenthal (2013), Introduction to *Four, Four, Jew* exhibition catalogue, Shire Publications: London, 4-9

BOARD/ADVISORY EXPERIENCE

Manchester Jewish Museum

Historians Advisory Panel (2017-2021)

Contributing to the development of the new core exhibition, for the museum's recent HLF-funded redevelopment.

Faith Museum, Bishop Auckland

Expert Advisory Panel (2016-18)

Advising on how to integrate the story of Jews in Britain into the wider museum narrative of faith in the British Isles from prehistory to the 21st century.

Association Of European Jewish Museums

Board Member (2013-2018)

Programming professional development opportunities for curators, educators and member organisations.

RECENT VOLUNTARY WORK

University of Sheffield

November 2023 - May 2024

Mentor on the Mentoring Scheme of the University's Politics & International Relations Department, providing my mentee, a final-year Politics and International Relations student, with career guidance.

City of Sanctuary Sheffield

July 2018 – April 2021

Coordinating a weekly multi-agency drop-in offering asylum seekers and refugees vital legal, financial, medical and general support and advice. During COVID-19, I worked on the 'Virtual Sanctuary', dealing with food provision, housing issues and general needs.

Sheffield Association for The Voluntary Teaching of English (SAVTE)

February 2019 – September 2019

Volunteer ESOL teacher delivering one-to-one English lessons to a refugee learner who is unable to access language classes outside of the home.