

Media Information, January 2026

## Everything Forgotten

Location	Jewish Museum Vienna, Museum Judenplatz Judenplatz 8, 1010 Vienna
Duration at JMW and at JM Hohenems	28 January 2026 to 6 September 2026 8 November 2026 to 18 April 2027
Opening	27 January 2026, 6:30 pm
Press Briefing	27 January 2026, 10:30 am
Opening Times	Jewish Museum Vienna, Museum Judenplatz Sunday to Thursday, 10:00 am to 6:00 pm Friday 10:00 am to 5:00 pm (summertime), to 2:00 pm (wintertime)
Press Photos	<a href="https://www.jmw.at/presse">https://www.jmw.at/presse</a>

The Jewish Museum Vienna is a museum of Wien Holding.

## Everything Forgotten

The new exhibition *Everything Forgotten*, a cooperation with the Jewish Museum Hohenems, is consciously being opened on 27 January, International Holocaust Commemoration Day. This day commemorates the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and extermination camp, a symbol of the industrial murder of Europe's Jews and of the attempt to extinguish every memory of them. From this point of departure, the exhibition explores forgetting from a cultural history and Jewish perspective and enquires into the forms of forgetting and repression that shape our society.

## The Dual Nature of Forgetting

In Hebrew, the word *lishkoach* – to forget – rhymes with the word *koach*, which can mean both power and strength. Though perhaps a coincidence, this lexical affinity points to the dual nature of forgetting. The exhibition *Everything Forgotten* examines both the power and the powerlessness of forgetting from a cultural history perspective and enquires whether forgetting only relates to loss or whether it can also be liberating.

While Judaism is mostly associated with the imperative to remember, there is also a command to forget. Can one then speak of a Jewish forgetting? And how has forgetting influenced the history of Jews?

## Power, Powerlessness, and the Erasure of Memory

The power of forgetting is used in different ways and leaves those who are forgotten powerless. Within Jewish communities, excommunication (*cherem*) is the most severe rabbinical sanction. It is meant not only to exclude the person concerned but also to extinguish all memory of them. External enemies can also be consigned to oblivion. The curse *yimach shemo* (may his name be erased) is reserved for individual enemies of the Jewish people.

## Forgetting in the Twentieth Century

Nazi extermination policy aimed not only to murder the Jewish population but also to destroy proof of the mass murder. When the concentration and extermination camps were liberated, the only evidence to survive was the material that the Nazis had not been able to destroy. After 1945, many Austrians wanted to forget the past and their part in it. This “culture of forgetting” did not change until the Waldheim affair in 1986.

## Forgetting as a Social Challenge

At a time when historical responsibility and memory are being increasingly questioned, it is important to talk about the mechanisms of forgetting and to ask what it is being suppressed and overwritten, overlooked, or deliberately erased.

The exhibition invites visitors to consider forgetting not just as the opposite of remembering but as a part of a complex confrontation with the past and the present.

### **Making Forgetting Visible**

The exhibition displays selected objects and artistic positions that serve to showcase how forgetting is produced, enforced, or made visible. Baruch de Spinoza's 1656 letter of banishment forbade any contact with or memory of the philosopher. It shows how inner-Jewish forgetting was deployed as an instrument of power. Kurt Waldheim's conscription register represents the "culture of forgetting" in the Second Republic and its "victim myth." It was not the document itself that was hidden, but rather its biographical significance: Waldheim omitted key aspects of his military service and later justified these gaps with ostensible lapses in memory. The Waldheim affair reveals how selective remembering and conscious repression shaped Austria's self-conception for decades. The film *Night and Fog* by Dani Gal reconstructs in minute detail the scattering of Adolf Eichmann's ashes in the Mediterranean. At stake here was the obliteration of all memory of Eichmann and thus also the prevention of any form of commemoration. The film makes visible how the terrible memories associated with Eichmann were not only supposed to be buried, but to be entirely annihilated. Brigitte Kowanz's light installation *Lizkor veLishkoach / Remember and Forget* superimposes the Hebrew terms "remember" and "forget" on a reflective surface. Viewers see their mirror image multiplied together with the textual image, thus allowing them to experience up close the proximity between remembering and forgetting.

The exhibition was created in cooperation with the Jewish Museum Hohenems, where it will subsequently be shown. It includes objects from both institutions, augmented by international loan objects.

<b>Curators</b>	Daniela Pscheiden (Jewish Museum Vienna) Dinah Ehrenfreund-Michler (Jewish Museum Hohenems)
<b>Exhibition Design</b>	Fuhrer, Vienna
<b>Catalog Design</b>	Fuhrer, Vienna
<b>Exhibition Organization</b>	Claudia Oriold, Christiane Rainer, Cornelia Regehr

**Exhibition Catalog** Daniela Pscheiden, Dinah Ehrenfreund-Michler (eds.): Everything Forgotten, Jewish Museum Vienna, Vienna 2025 (148 pages, softcover, Euro 24,90 ISBN: 978-3-903419-15-5)

**Entry** Tickets are valid at both locations of the Jewish Museum Vienna, Museum Judenplatz and Dorotheergasse.

**Public Relations** [info@jmw.at](mailto:info@jmw.at), [www.jmw.at](http://www.jmw.at)

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Photo and press materials on current exhibitions can be found on the website of the Jewish Museum Vienna under [www.jmw.at/presse](http://www.jmw.at/presse)

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