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Super Jews. Jewish Identity in the Football Stadium

Starting on July 12, 2023 the Jewish Museum Vienna, a Wien Holding museum, is featuring the exhibition *Super Jews. Jewish Identity in the Football Stadium*. The show illuminates the previously little-known Jewish history of five prominent Viennese and European football clubs: First Vienna FC 1894, FK Austria Wien, FC Bayern Munich, Ajax Amsterdam, and Tottenham Hotspur FC. At the same time *Super Jews* explores the fan scene and illustrates how Jewish and non-Jewish supporters take up the Jewish heritage of their club in different ways. The exhibition enables visitors to experience that Jewish history is inscribed everywhere and therefore concerns us all.

Vienna as the Hub of the European Football World

Vienna was once a center of European and Jewish football. SC Hakoah achieved great success as a Zionist-influenced club in the interwar period. Other Viennese and European teams likewise have a “Jewish history” – with Jewish officials, coaches, and players who played major roles in their success. Based on the history of selected football clubs the exhibition asks what makes these clubs “Jewish” and discusses their Jewish identity.

Fan Culture and the Appropriation of Jewish Attributes

The exhibition not only examines the clubs’ histories but also focuses on the fan culture in the football stadium as a site of identity formation. The largely non-Jewish fan groups *Superjoden* (Ajax) and “Yid Army” (Tottenham) appropriate Jewish attributes to counter the antisemitic verbal abuse of rival fans. “Partisan*Rothschild” (First Vienna FC 1984) self-confidently embraces the club’s Jewish founding myth. Bayern Munich’s “Schickeria” honors the memory of Kurt Landauer while the Jewish fan group of FK Austria Wien celebrates their Jewish identity. The awareness of the Jewish history in the clubs as well as the continuation of antisemitic prejudices up to the present day are also addressed.

First Vienna FC 1894

As the oldest football club in Austria the First Vienna Football-Club 1894 is associated with the House of Rothschild through its team colors blue and yellow. Nathaniel Mayer Baron von Rothschild financially supported the founding of the club on the Hohe Warte. He and many Jewish officials shaped the club’s history, building it into a top team in the interwar period and celebrating victories at the European level.

In recent years the club and fans have begun to delve into the biographies of First Vienna FC 1894's Jewish members. The fan collective "Partisan*Rothschild" refers to the club's Jewish heritage in their naming and symbolism.

FK Austria Wien

Founded in 1911 as the Wiener Amateur-Sportverein and renamed FK Austria Wien in 1926, the football club is one of the oldest and most successful in Austria. FK Austria Wien quickly established itself as the football club of the assimilated Jewish bourgeoisie, which attracted Jewish officials and players. The term "Jew club," still used in a negative sense today, dates back to this time. President Emanuel Schwarz, who had returned from exile, and club secretary and Auschwitz survivor Norbert Lopper were chiefly responsible for modernizing the organization.

Many Jewish fans still follow the team today, but club officials have been repeatedly criticized for tolerating right-wing extremist groups such as *Unsterblich* (Immortal) in their own stands. In recent years measures were set in place to combat right-wing extremism and antisemitism in order to bring about a fundamental change across all fan groups.

FC Bayern Munich

FC Bayern Munich, founded in a Schwabing café in 1900, quickly developed from a small Bavarian team into a professionally organized club. Winning the first of its 33 German championship titles in 1932, the club also received support through the commitment of Munich Jews – prior to 1933 about ten percent of its members were Jewish.

Club president Kurt Landauer, who had to resign from office in 1933 and resumed it in the postwar period, is the linchpin of the Jewish identity of the German record-holding champions, who also maintain a large fan base in Israel. In Munich the ultra group "Schickeria München" has raised public awareness about Landauer.

Ajax Amsterdam

There is no national or international title that the top Dutch club Ajax Amsterdam, founded in 1900, has not yet won. The fact that many people perceive Ajax as a "Jewish" club is also part of its history. The first stadium in an eastern district of the city that had a high Jewish population before the Second World War and several Jewish players and officials had a profound impact on the club's history.

The club's Jewish image is mainly shaped by the hooligan group "F-Side," founded in 1976, whose members call themselves *Superjoden* (Super Jews). Rather than a reference to the club's Jewish history, this is a response to antisemitic rallying cries from opposing fans.

Tottenham Hotspur FC

Tottenham Hotspur plays in the top English football league. A Jewish community of Eastern European refugees had already established itself around 1900 in London's East End, not far from the Spurs' home pitch. As a result the club attracted a rising number of Jewish fans. When anti-Jewish sentiment increased in London during the Nazi era, the Yiddish expression "Yid" became a derogatory term for Jews and subsequently for Tottenham fans.

Defamed by opposing fans as “Yids” or “Yiddos” in the 1970s, Tottenham Hotspur fans and supporters appropriated the terms as a self-designation, responding self-confidently by calling themselves “Yids” or the “Yid Army.”

Super Jews. Jewish Identity in the Football Stadium

can be seen from July 12, 2023 to January 14, 2024 at the Jewish Museum Vienna Dorotheergasse, 11, a Wien Holding museum. Curated by Agnes Meisinger and Barbara Staudinger, and designed by Studio Nardin, the exhibition is accompanied by a self-published German/English catalog that costs € 23.90 and includes interesting essays and new insights from Michael Brenner, Alexander Juraske, Matthias Marschik, and Pavel Brunssen. 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 website at <http://www.jmw.at/en/press>. The press photos can be used without charge for reporting purposes by naming the copyright holder.

Queries

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#SuperJews

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