

El espejo perdido: judíos y conversos en la España medieval
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The main aim of the impressive exhibition *The Lost Mirror (El espejo perdido)*—and its accompanying publication—is to inform visitors about the reality of Jewish people whose existence marked the hegemonic thinking of the late Middle Ages. Through images, their function and meaning, the museum brings the visitor closer to the often-forgotten realities of Jews' lives. Almost eighty works are on display as the result of a collaboration with the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, which will host the exhibition between February and June of this year. The two institutions have joined forces to create this complex and multi-layered museographic discourse based on the power of images. This review discusses the exhibition and refers to its catalogue.

The exhibition is structured around a series of historical events and the creation of anti-semitic institutions (the Inquisition) that shaped the images about Jews and *conversos*. The starting point chosen is necessarily 1215, date of the Fourth Lateran Council, which accentuated the rupture between the two faiths. A timeline welcomes the visitors and acts as a script for what awaits them in the following rooms. It serves as an ideal guide for a better understanding of the narrative proposed by Joan Molina Figueras, curator of the exhibition, namely the progressive degradation of the image of the Jew.

The Angel Appearing to Zacharias (ca. 1470) by Domingo Ram shows a marvellous story that makes it the protagonist of the theme "Transfers and Exchanges". The works here demonstrate Christian artists' knowledge of Jewish rites; such as the custom of attaching a chain to the high priest during Yom Kippur to remove his corpse from the Sanctum Sanctorum in case it was necessary. The painting makes us wonder how Domingo Ram knew about this custom, which is only explained in an extremely complex Aramaic text. The exhibition gives us two possibilities: the painter was Jewish himself (or at least from a Jewish background) or the panel is the perfect example of

Christian-Jew collaboration. This room is also the ideal place to present the *Golden Haggadah (ca. 1320–1330)*, one of the sacred books of Judaism. Its presence in the Prado exhibition highlights how Christian artists also created artefacts for Jewish use, just as Jewish artists did for Christians. The clearest demonstration of shared culture is to be found in the *Collar de Les Roquetes (ca. 1350)*, a necklace with several amulets that are considered apotropaic by the different settlers of the peninsula, regardless of their religion or social class, as emphasized in Yonatan Glazar-Eytan's analysis of scenes of Jewish ritual.

One of the most interesting mental and cultural processes that took place in the Middle Ages with respect to the Jews is the change in their perception, or "From Forerunners to Blind People", as the exhibition seeks to explain. The reference to blindness is fundamental, being an attribute that will begin to accompany the iconography of the Jew, which in Iberia became popular from the fourteenth century onwards. In the accompanying catalogue Paulino Rodríguez Barral points out that Synagogue is thus configured as a "paradigm of the blindness of Judaism" and is confronted with the perfection of the Church. In addition to the blindfold, Synagogue is represented with elements that indicate her defeat, such as split spears or banners, tired expressions, old-fashioned clothes, old age, and falling attributes. This iconography is meant to show Synagogue and her followers always in opposition to those who have understood the message brought by Jesus as the Revealed truth. The majestic *Christ Blessing* by Fernando Gallego (1494-1495) offers an excellent example of this iconography. Yet, the presentation of two copies of the *Breviari d'amor* by Matfre Ermengaud de Béziers is also worth mentioning, as they allow us to understand anti-Judaism through miniature painting: Synagogue is directly related to the devil, something witnessed by the owner of this book in a very personal manner. This combination of media (panel painting, manuscript painting and sculpture)

shows perfectly how the negative message related to the Jew —and therefore Jewish people— was disseminated and reached a wide variety of audiences.

The exhibition continues with a space rightly devoted to “Anti-Judaism and Media Images”, showcasing another step further in the damnification of the Jew. The *Códice Rico* of the *Cantigas de Santa María* (ca. 1280) begins the story that fixes the image of the Jew as a deicide and desecrator of images. The stories represented in the *Corpus Christi Altarpiece* attributed to Guillem Seguer (ca. 1335-45) demonstrate that one of the most common ways of representing the Jew is as the desecrator of hosts; this scene is articulated in most of the altarpieces dedicated to the Corpus Christi festival in Aragon. Keeping in mind that what is represented in the exhibition is not beautiful, nor does it pretend to be, helps to explain the inclusion of the disturbing drawings found on the cover of the *Liber iudeorum* from Cardona (15th Century); a clear example of the progressive stereotyping to which the Jew is subjected. This notarial book, recording Jewish financial dealings with the Crown of Aragon, was decorated with caricatures that were driven not only by religious issues, but likely also by the Jew’s economic activities. It is thus possible to follow the process of creating a stigmatising iconography for the Jew.

Two of the most striking exhibition pieces are among the “Images for *Conversos*”: the monumental *Crucified Christ* by Gil de Siloé (ca. 1488-1490) and the minimal *Cristo de la cepa* (ca. 1400). Both religions addressed in the exhibition hold radically opposed ideas about images: while Christianity supports its ritual use, Judaism is against it. This issue of images is key to the codification of the followers of both faiths, being a tool evidently employed by the converts to exalt orthodoxy and silence any Judaising suspicions. The two crucifixion scenes exhibited show two very different realities: “de la cepa” is an *acheropita* image that allowed the instantaneous conversion of a Jew; while Gil de Siloé’s is the work of one of the greatest artists of the period and its function was probably that of inquisitorial publicity. Here, the visitor also gets a combined view of the *Fountain of Life* from the workshop of Jan van Eyck (ca. 1430-

1440) and the *Arragel Bible* (ca. 1422-1433). Both artworks, filled with complex meaning, are exhibited together as suggested by Felipe Pereda Espeso in the catalogue. This hypothesis certainly is food for thought for specialists, but the complex relation between the panel and the manuscript is diluted in the exhibition. A viewer unfamiliar with the subject may view the artworks as unconnected pieces.

“Inquisitional Settings” marks the end of the exhibition, with Alonso de la Espina’s *Fortalitium Fidei* (with copies from 1464 and 1480) aptly displayed. This text is considered to have established the ideology that was applied by the Inquisition, the driving force behind the process of radicalisation of anti-Semitic thought and its subsequent expulsion of Jews in 1492. The narrative follows its formative process, centred on the convent of Santo Tomás de Ávila, as well as the ways in which its activity was publicised by means of libels and legends such as the martyrdom of the Holy Child of La Guardia. This story depicted the Jew as a perpetrator of ritual infanticide and was so customary that it is celebrated in masses and processions even today. The dramatic *Saint Dominic presiding over an Auto-da-fe* by Pedro Berruguete (ca. 1491-1499) effectively closes the exhibition.

The title *El espejo perdido* is tremendously appropriate. The works chosen and their presentation in the museum clearly demonstrate how, at the end of the Middle Ages, the Jew became a mirror in which the Christian examines himself with a clear aim: to establish a definite image of oneself in opposition to the other. A mirror used by the Christian with a double function: to differentiate and thus, to recognise. Therefore, understanding the complex reality of the Jews of the period allows us to delve into the relationships between the groups that made up the living fabric of the Iberian Peninsula at the end of the medieval period. The exhibition does this brilliantly, going beyond the parameters of the visual by presenting artworks as historical sources. *The Lost Mirror* is a revealing exhibition for anyone interested in looking in the mirror of our past to obtain a clearer image of our present.