



THE YEAR OF THE VILNA GAON  
& OF THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS OF LITHUANIA

2020 | 5780

9<sup>th</sup> Litvak Days in London

29 May 2020, 2:00 p.m. (BST)



© Carmine Savarase/Unsplash.com

## ZOOM WEBINAR:

### MEMORY PARKS. CONTEMPORARY ART AND THE LITVAK STORY

#### INTRODUCTION

This year marks the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the Vilna Gaon – the 18<sup>th</sup> century sage who contributed immensely to the formation of Litvak Judaism and brought the city of Vilnius fame as the ‘Jerusalem of the North’. Lithuania has dedicated 2020 to the commemoration of this anniversary, as an opportunity to discover and to promote the long and vibrant history of Lithuanian Jews. The occasion also provides us all with renewed inspiration and impetus to reflect on the importance and complexity of the Jewish legacy in Lithuanian history, culture and identity.

In the past decade, we have seen memory politics become an important discussion in Lithuania, as history reveals itself ever more clearly and hitherto unknown stories and hidden emotional traumas cascade into light. A vast pool of as-yet untapped narratives resonate with the work of various contemporary cultural practitioners.

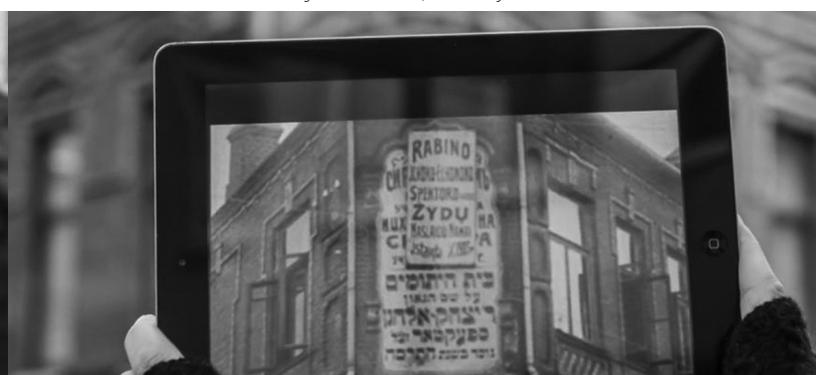
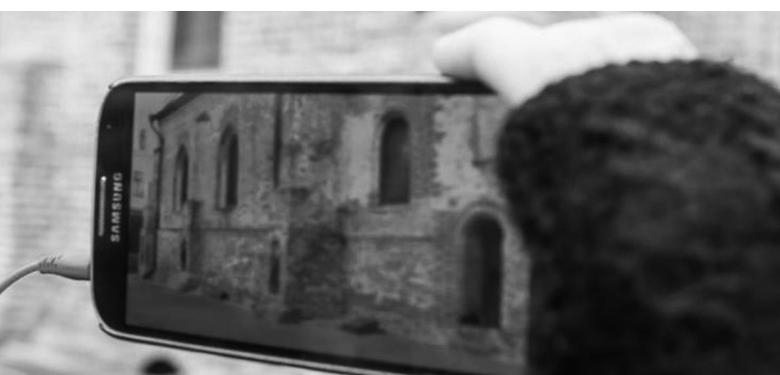
In this webinar, we will discuss how contemporary artists evoke and actualise private and public memories. What creative paths do contemporary artists take when exploring sensitive issues? Are these necessarily best explored through public art, where collective and individual experiences intersect? And if so, why?

Our webinar will take the form of a discussion between UK-based artist Jenny Kagan, Kaunas-based curator and researcher Daiva Citvarienė, curator and art director of the Folkestone Triennial Lewis Biggs, renowned Vilnius-born Paris-based artist Esther Shalev-Gerz and an intellectual and a Holocaust survivor from Lithuania Irena Veisaitė.

This event is part of the 9th Litvak Days in London, organised by the Embassy of Lithuania in the United Kingdom in partnership with the Lithuanian Cultural Attaché in the UK.

**REGISTER HERE:** <http://tiny.cc/4922oz>

© Jonas Petronis, Project "Places of Memory"/VisitKaunas/KEKS2022



## ABOUT THE SPEAKERS



Founder of Liverpool Biennial, **Lewis Biggs** was Curatorial Adviser at the Kaunas Biennial 2019, Curator of Land Art Mongolia 2018, and is Curatorial Adviser to the Public Art & Communities Involvement of the Kaunas European Capital of Culture 2022. He is also the director of Folkestone Art Triennial.



**Daiva Citvarienė** is a curator and researcher in charge of the Memory Office project, part of the wider programme of Kaunas European Capital of Culture 2022. Memory Office intends to commission contemporary artists to create new works for the occasion, including a number of Israeli artists and UK-based artist Jenny Kagan.



**Jenny Kagan** is an artist and a lighting designer with 30 years of experience in the field of theatre and art. She has created projects that deal with identity, memory and her Jewish heritage (Out of Darkness charts her parents' struggles during World War II, which very few Jews in Kaunas managed to survive). She was commissioned to create work for Kaunas Biennial 2017, and the organisers of the upcoming Memory Festival in Kaunas are planning a new large-scale collaboration with her.



**Esther Shalev-Gerz** is a Vilnius-born Paris-based internationally recognized artist. She is renowned for her creative practice, which explores questions of memory, trauma, and ethics in the contemporary world, as well as for her seminal contributions to the field of public art and her persistent investigation into the construction of history and cultural identity. She has exhibited internationally and created permanent installations in many public spaces. Find more information at [www.shalev-gerz.net](http://www.shalev-gerz.net)



An extraordinary thinker, **Dr. Irena Veisaitė**, is a respected academic, a scholar of Lithuanian theatre and human rights activist. She is also a survivor of the Holocaust. She was a lecturer at the Pedagogical Institute in Vilnius from 1953 to 1997 and has worked as the head of the Thomas Mann Cultural Centre in Nida. In 2012 she was awarded the Goethe Medal for her contributions to the cultural exchange between Germany and Lithuania. She is a long-term honorary member of the Open Lithuania Foundation and a cherished public speaker on memory, reconciliation, and mourning.



Discussion moderator, **Justė Kostikováitė** is Lithuanian Cultural Attaché in the UK. She works closely with UK arts institutions, including the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Collective Gallery, Hull City Dance, CCA Derry Londonderry, and Somerset House Studios, and collaborates with colleagues from around the world as part of the Lithuanian Culture Institute team. Her mission is to support the cultural exchange between Lithuania, the UK, and the rest of the world.



© Jenny Kagan 'Out of darkness', at the Viaduct Theatre, Dean Clough Mills, Halifax, Yorkshire