



# 2019

## YIDDISH CIVILIZATION LECTURE SERIES

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MONDAY  
JUL 29

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### Coming of Age: Jewish Youth in Poland between the Wars

**BARBARA KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT** | *Delivered in English*

During the 1930s, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research organized three competitions for youth autobiographies. These extraordinary documents – more than 600 of them were submitted – are unique testimony to the hopes and dreams, as well as to the reality of those who were growing up in Poland at the time. Mayer Kirshenblatt, who was born in Opatów (Yiddish: Apt) in 1916, could well have been one of those autobiographers. Although he did not enter the competition, he did recall his youth much later during interviews recorded by his daughter during the last forty years of his life.

This illustrated lecture will relate the youth autobiographies written in real time, by youth who had no idea of what the future would hold, with Mayer's recollections in words and paintings many years later. The talk will include a short film about Mayer's return to his hometown and how he was received by those living there today. Finally, the talk will consider the role of the youth autobiographies and Mayer's childhood memories in POLIN Museum's Core Exhibition.

**Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett** is Chief Curator of the Core Exhibition at POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews and University Professor Emerita and Professor Emerita of Performance Studies at New York University. Her books include *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*; *Image before My Eyes: A Photographic History of Jewish Life in Poland, 1864–1939* (with Lucjan Dobroszycki); and *They Called Me Mayer July: Painted Memories of a Jewish Childhood in Poland Before the Holocaust* (with Mayer Kirshenblatt).

She was honored for lifetime achievement by the Foundation for Jewish Culture, received the Mlotek Prize for Yiddish and Yiddish Culture, and honorary doctorates from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, University of Haifa, and Indiana University. She was decorated with the Officer's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland and was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She serves on the Advisory Board for the Council of American Jewish Museums and is an adviser for Jewish museum and exhibition projects in Vienna, Berlin, Moscow, Jerusalem, Paris, Seduva, and Tirana.

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## Bibliography

### BARBARA KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT

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