THE JEW WITH A COIN

ANALYSIS OF A CONTEMPORARY FOLKLORIC EMBLEM

Why, in contemporary Poland, do people place portraits depicting a Jew holding a coin in homes and shops?

In this lecture, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir examines images ranging from icon-like paintings to little figurines, and analyzes discussions of the phenomenon in internet chatrooms. She finds Poles anxiously debating where such portraits should be placed, how to obtain them, what key elements the painting should contain, and how to ensure that the portrait will bring good luck. She traces its lineage to medieval ideas about Jews and to widespread ideas about “house spirits.” Finally, she considers how to place this phenomenon in the context of Polish-Jewish relations in the past and today.

April 4th • 5:30 pm • Walnut Room • Indiana Memorial Union

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