

In Memoriam: Ilana Tahan, OBE, Z"l

Here at the Jewish Art and Life Wing at the Israel Museum, our relationship with Ilana Tahan was more than professional; since I met her almost exactly 20 years ago, during my research at the British Library in September 2004, we have kept in constant contact.

We met at least once a year, during one of her family visit trips to Israel, or when one of us travelled for workshops and conferences. On one of these visits, I had the pleasure of meeting Margo and her father, as well. Dr. Sarfati (who is now the Chief Curator of the Wing) and I, got to spend the day with Ilana and her lovely family, touring the renewed galleries and the exhibition of the Braginsky Collection.

Ilana was a distinguished and precise researcher, attentive to detail and always fully committed to what seemed to be her professional calling: Enhancing and presenting the outstanding collection she was in charge of and making it accessible to the public. Her passion was shared via the digitalization projects she oversaw, the exhibitions she curated, and her rich, informative, and compelling publications. Her warmth and kindness, and her mind always open to intellectual exchange, weren't an afterthought to her academic and professional excellence, but some of her most distinctive traits, which shone over all her accomplishments.

Personally, I can say, even given the gap in the stages of our respective careers when I first met her twenty years ago, she always treated me with the respect and care of a colleague, and an equal.

One of the peaks of our work together was the loan from the British Library of three important codices for the Maimonides exhibition, which ran from December 2018 to June 2019. One of these codices

was one of the manuscripts I studied for my master's, the very same one I researched with Ilana's help the very first time I met her at the BL. Working with Ilana to exhibit this codex here in Jerusalem represented, to me, everything she stood for: sharing knowledge, art, and herself in a way that only ever enhanced her enormous circles of influence—from the Jewish art student she once helped to the general public of another country. That wonderful experience of working on the installation together here in Jerusalem was also the last time I met Ilana in person.

Ilana's work and her research remain with us for posterity, and though they can never replace what we've lost, small parts of her are kept alive, forever, in those writings.

Luckily for those of us who knew her, it will be impossible to forget her shining smile and spirited gaze, her strong yet gentle personality, and the incredible energy of a woman who lived a full life, rich in meaning.

May her memory be a blessing.

Anna Nizza-Caplan

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