

Newsletter

2/3 2013

EXHIBITIONS AT THE ROBERT GUTTMANN GALLERY

Symbols of Emancipation – Nineteenth-Century Synagogues in the Czech Lands

The exhibition *Symbols of Emancipation – Nineteenth-Century Synagogues in the Czech Lands* was on view at our Robert Guttmann Gallery until 4 August (for more information about the exhibition, see Newsletter 1/2013). Focusing on the stories behind more than two dozen synagogues in Bohemia and Moravia, this show traced the development of Jewish communities in the period when the Jewish population became an important part of the economic, cultural and social life of the Czech lands. It was seen by more than 7,500 separately paying visitors.

Truth and Lies: Filming in the Ghetto Terezín, 1942–1945

The exhibition *Truth and Lies: Filming in the Ghetto Terezín, 1942–1945* has been on view at our gallery since 29 August. This show – prepared in collaboration with the National Film Archive in Prague – charts the history behind the making of propaganda films about the Terezín ghetto on the basis of the latest findings.

The first film, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, was made in the autumn of 1942. A fictional story about the Holländer family, its purpose was to depict the transfer of people of Jewish origin to the ghetto. The film was shot and documented by a professional camera crew from Berlin, and a group of prisoners under the film producer and director Irena Dodalová were ordered to take part in the filming. The film had to be rewritten but was never actually completed.

An increasing amount of reports were reaching the public about atrocities committed against European Jews at the time. Scenery from the 'beautified' town – which had been prepared for a Red Cross visit – was to be used for a film about the 'happy' life in the ghetto. The first report, filmed by the Prague-based newsreel company Aktualita, showed the arrival of a Dutch transport in January 1944 but was soon destroyed, probably at the behest of Heinrich Himmler. Subsequent filming continued in August and September, this time with the famous German actor and director Kurt Gerron. The resulting film, *Terezín: A Documentary Film from the Jewish Settlement Area* – better known under the title *The Führer Gives the Jews a City* – was later shown in private screenings, but not until the beginning of April. Among the first viewers were Adolf Eichmann and Karl H. Frank (Secretary of State of the Protectorate). The vast majority of Terezín prisoners, including those involved in both films, had been murdered long before then.



Symbols of Emancipation
Nineteenth-Century Synagogues in the Czech Lands



Documentation of the filming process,
1942 © FilMOTEKA Narodowa, Warsaw

Visitors to the exhibition have an opportunity to see, for the first time, a montage of fragments from the 1942 film that were concealed in the ghetto by prisoners and were later identified at the National Film Archive in 2004. Previously unpublished photographs that were taken in secret during the filming in 1944 and 1945 are also on view, as well as documentary material on the filming in 1942. The exhibition also shows both of the preserved fragments of the second film made at Terezín.

The exhibition is curated by Eva Strusková (National Film Archive) and Jana Šplíchalová (Jewish Museum in Prague).

The opening of the show was accompanied by film screenings at Ponrepo Cinema. We also prepared methodological materials for teachers and work sheets for secondary school students.

A DVD has been released for the exhibition (in Czech, English and German). In addition to expert commentaries, this contains selected film clips, an edition of the most important documents and pictures, as well as a chronology of events which also details the fate of the films and their fragments after 1945.

The exhibition project was made possible with the kind support of the Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund, the City of Prague, the Czech-German Future Fund, the Foundation for Holocaust Victims (NFOH) and the Jewish Museum in Prague Foundation.

Robert Guttmann Gallery, U Staré školy 3, Prague 1,
Open daily except for Saturdays and Jewish holidays
Opening hours: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. (until 25 October), 9 a.m. – 4.30 p.m. (from 27 October)

**Guided tours with the exhibition curators: 14 November at 4.30 p.m.,
30 December at 4 p.m.**

Meeting and discussion with the exhibition curators: 18 December at 6 p.m.
(Department for Education and Culture JMP, Maiselova 15)



The unique film footage and photographs are supplemented by pictures and documents that have previously been published only in specialist journals

Under preparation

Acquisitions, 1994–2014. Items added to the collections of the Jewish Museum in Prague since its privatization in 1994 (23 April – 3 August 2014)

Refugees (27 August 2014 – January 2015)

REQUEST FOR HELP IN IDENTIFYING PEOPLE

We would like to ask visitors to help us identify people in the photos or film footage that are on view at the exhibition *Truth and Lies: Filming in the Ghetto Terezín, 1942–1945*.

If you think you have recognized yourself or one of your family or friends in any of the photos or film footage, or if you can provide more details, please contact us at terezinfilm@jewishmuseum.cz or at the address: Jewish Museum in Prague, U Staré školy 1, 110 00 Prague 1. Your help will be much appreciated.

NEWS FROM OUR DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURE

A number of interesting events have been held so far this year at our Department for Education and Culture in Prague and Brno. These include our commemoration of the anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel. A debate entitled “**Israel after 65 years**” was held in Prague on 20 May and attended by J. E. Yaakov Levy (Israeli Ambassador to the Czech Republic), Irena Kalhousová (chief analyst at the Prague Security Studies Institute) and Jan Zouplna (Oriental Institute at the Czech Academy of Sciences). We organized this event in co-operation with the Israeli Embassy in the Czech Republic.

On 23 May, our Prague office hosted a lecture by Stephen Burnett (University of Nebraska–Lincoln) on **Christian Hebraism: an improbable early modern success story**. The lecture was delivered in connection with the international conference “David Gans (1541-1613) after Four Centuries: The Legacy of an Early Modern Jewish Polymath”. Both events were held in collaboration with the Prague Centre for Jewish Studies, Charles University.

On 3 June, our Brno office hosted the Brno-born author Michel Huttarsch who read excerpts from his book **Among Germans, Czechs and Jews in Moravia in 1923–1966** and took part in a Q&A.

On 10 September, the opening of the exhibition, **Transformations of the Jewish Cemetery in Žižkov**, was held in our Prague office. On display were unique photographs of many of the no longer existing parts of the cemetery that were closed down in the 1980s to make way for the construction of a television transmitter tower. An introductory talk was held by A. Pařík, a curator at the museum.



M. Huttarsch has been living in Germany since 1966



Transformations of the Jewish Cemetery in Žižkov

On 8–15 September, our Brno office co-hosted the first annual **Weeks of Jewish Culture in Brno** with the Brno Jewish Community. This included a workshop of Israeli circle dances and two guided tours of the Jewish cemetery in Brno–Židenice. Those who came to the introductory lecture were able to see the newly reconstructed ceremonial hall, which had been closed to the public for almost two years. The guided cemetery tour focused on the lives of the notable people who are buried there.



Israeli Dance Workshop

This autumn we became involved once again in the **Crocus Project**, which is now in its fourth year and is organized by the Holocaust Education Trust of Ireland. As part of this project, schools are provided with yellow crocus bulbs for planting as a reminder of the million and a half Jewish children and thousands of other children who perished during the Shoah. In ideal conditions, crocuses come into bloom in late January or early February, around the time of International Holocaust Memorial Day (27 January).

CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS FROM TEREZÍN IN A NEW PERMANENT EXHIBITION AT THE AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU STATE MUSEUM

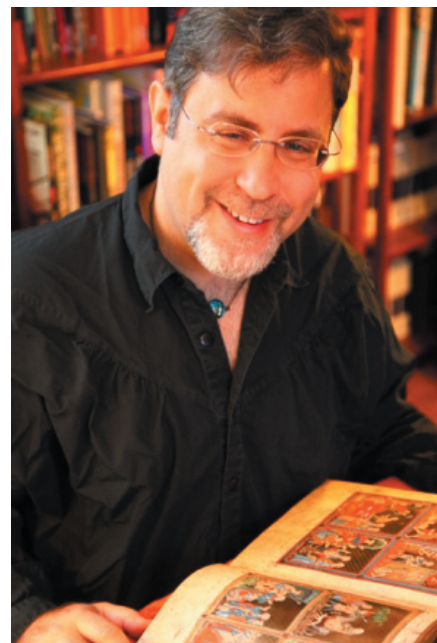
The new permanent Shoah exhibition has been opened at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Block 27 on 13 June. It has been put together in cooperation with the Yad Vashem Memorial. The Jewish Museum in Prague has significantly contributed to this exhibition by providing the curators with full access to its collection of children's drawings from Terezín (comprising 4,500 original artworks) for the section of the show entitled **Traces of Life: The World of the Children**.

The 'Traces of Life' section is dedicated to Jewish children who were murdered during the Shoah. It has been created by the acclaimed artist Michal Rovner, who said the following about the basic concept behind the show: *"One day, I was sitting at Yad Vashem looking at children's diaries and sketches from the Holocaust... After seeing some of those drawings in frames, reproductions behind glass, I suddenly realized how much power there can be in just a small detail in the margin of the page. I decided not to change, or appropriate the drawings. I believe that no artist could produce any better work on the topic of children during the Holocaust than what the children themselves had already created. I wanted their authentic voices to be heard."* With just a pencil and tracing paper, Rovner decided to copy motifs from reproductions of some of the original drawings on a scale of 1:1, directly onto the walls of the room dedicated to the children. In so doing, she has created one of the most captivating and powerful sections of the entire exhibition.

VISUAL EXEGESIS

On 18 June, the American Center Library in Prague hosted a lecture by Prof. Marc Michael Epstein who provided an in-depth look at medieval Jewish art and iconography. The title of the lecture was “Visual Exegesis: Expanding the Methodological Toolbox for the Study of Medieval Judaism”.

Marc Michael Epstein is Professor of Religion at Vassar College, New York, and an acclaimed expert on Hebrew illuminated manuscripts and visual culture. As part of the “Haggadah – an open-ended story” project in Prague last year, he presented his most recent book, *The Medieval Haggadah: Art, Narrative, and Religious Imagination*, which was selected by the London Times Literary Supplement as one of the Best Books of the Year (for more information, see Newsletter1/2012).



OURS OR FOREIGN? JEWS IN THE CZECH TWENTIETH CENTURY

The “Ours or Foreign? Czech Jews in the Twentieth Century” project, which we are carrying out in co-operation with the Terezín Initiative Institute, has entered its final stage.

In August, the **Summer School** project in Prague included a visit to the Hagibor Social Care Facility, a discussion with Shoah survivors and thematic lectures by historians.



Summer School

The weekend seminars and conferences for teachers also continued. The most highly attended of these was the **Help in Times of Injustice** conference, which was held in Ostrava on 12 September. It was moderated by the journalist Petr Brod and began with a lecture by Dr. Alena Wagnerová about Milena Jesenská and Olga Fierzová. Clips were then shown from the documentary film *Love Your Enemies* which is about Přemysl Pitter, a close colleague of Olga Fierzová's. This was followed by a Q&A with Zuzana



Participants of the “Help in Times of Injustice” conference

Skácelová, who survived the war with the help of ‘ordinary’ people, and with Luděk Eliáš, a former inmate of the Terezín ghetto and the camps at Auschwitz and Schwarzheide.

A key role in the project continues to be played by our Department for Education and Culture in Prague and Brno, which hosts workshops and seminars for students nearly every week. Our collaboration with schools as part of ‘regional centres’ has proved to be a great success.

At present, intensive preparations are being made for a major publication on the history of the Jews in the Czech twentieth century, which will be distributed to Czech schools free of charge. The entire project will culminate in a final conference, entitled **“Ours or Foreign? ‘Minorities’ and ‘Majorities’ in Education about the Czech Twentieth Century”**, which will take place in Prague in collaboration with the Czech Academy of Sciences on 6–7 December.

The “Ours or Foreign? Czech Jews in the Twentieth Century” project is co-financed by the European Social Fund and the state budget of the Czech Republic as part of the Education for Competitiveness Operational Programme.

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INVESTICE DO ROZVOJE VZDĚLÁVÁNÍ

Projekt CZ.1.07/1.1.00/14.0089 Tvorba výukových materiálů a zavádění výukových programů k dějinám Židů ve 20. století je spolufinancován Evropským sociálním fondem a státním rozpočtem České republiky.

JUDAICA BOHEMIAE 48 (2013, 1)

A new issue of the journal *Judaica Bohemiae* came out at the start of July 2013.

The first paper, by Daniel Soukup, explores the medieval host desecration legends and examines the case of the alleged conversion of Rabbi Moses of Olomouc in 1425. The second paper, by Vera Leininger, looks at the legal status of Czech Jews and the restrictions on their ownership of real estate, focusing mainly on the late 18th and the first half of the 19th century and on the famous Prizibram family of entrepreneurs in Prague. The third paper, by Michal Plavec, deals with an attractive topic of aviation history; on the basis of a large number of previously unknown archive documents, it explores the

life and career of Lilly Steinschneider (1891–1975), the first Hungarian pilot of Jewish origin and the wife of Count Johannes (Hans) Coudenhove-Kalergi, owner of the Poběžovice (Ronsperg) estate.

Published since 1965 by the Jewish Museum in Prague, *Judaica Bohemiae* focuses on Jewish history and culture in Bohemia, Moravia and the wider Central European area (the territory of the former Habsburg Monarchy).

A GIFT FOR OUR LIBRARY

In August, the acclaimed Prague-born Israeli author, journalist and translator Ruth Bondy donated a collection of Hebrew fiction to the Jewish Museum in Prague. This collection, which was part of her personal library, contains some 80 books – original Israeli literature and Hebrew translations of works by various world writers. We are very grateful for this gift, which significantly expands our collection of Israeli and world literature and enables our library users to read the books in the original language or to brush up on their Hebrew.

REVITALIZATION OF THE OLD JEWISH CEMETERY

We have prepared a project for the revitalization of the Old Jewish Cemetery, a national cultural monument with the highest level of heritage protection. Thanks to co-operation with the architectural practice *Znamení čtyř*, the National Heritage Institute and the Heritage Protection Department at Prague City Hall, we were able to launch the first of project's five phases in August. As part of this phase, the focus has been on altering certain sections of makeshift paths that are no longer suitable. Project implementation is by GEMA ART, who put in the best bid for the job. Work on this phase of the project will be completed in November.



As part of the revitalization project, the current gravel, soil and concrete will be replaced with a quality marble stone surface.

JUDAICA BOHEMIAE XLVIII-1



JEWISH MUSEUM IN PRAGUE 2013

NEWS FROM 'THE UNKNOWN' PROJECT

We have made available a new on-line version of the exhibition project *The unKnown* in our collections catalogue (at www.collections.jewishmuseum.cz). Newly acquired documents and stories have been added to the 700 portrait photographs of war-time staff at the Prague Jewish Community and their relatives. So far, more than 150 of the people in the photos have been identified so far (more than a third of the entire group).

In addition to the newly acquired materials, we have also managed to trace siblings who were separated after the war when they were adopted by two different families and lost all contact with each other. Thanks to *The unKnown* project, they were able to get together again after all these years and to meet their descendants for the first time; they are now planning another get-together this autumn. In addition, nine children have been identified in photographs during the course of the project, and interviews have been held with some of them for our collection of testimonies of Shoah witnesses and survivors.



In the new on-line exhibition project, *The unKnown*, you can also find out about the story of František Kronberger and his son Ivan.

The unKnown project was carried out in 2012–13 and was made possible thanks to the kind support of the Rothschild (Hanadiv) Foundation, the Prague Jewish Community Foundation and the Prague Jewish Museum Foundation.

EUROPEAN HERITAGE DAYS

We have once again taken part in the European Heritage Days, which took place between 7 and 15 September. The title this year was “Monuments in a New Light”. On 11 September, as part of this event, we provided free access to the Jewish cemetery in the Žižkov district of Prague. The event was accompanied by the photography exhibition “Transformations of the Jewish Cemetery in Žižkov” (see above) and a thematic lecture for its opening.

PRAGUE MUSEUM NIGHT

As usual, we took part in Prague’s annual Museum Night, now in its 10th year. Originally planned for June, it took place on 14 September. On this occasion, we provided free access to our exhibitions in the Spanish and Klausen synagogues. Guided tours were given to visitors and a children’s programme supervised by our Department for Education and Culture was held in the Klausen Synagogue. The Spanish Synagogue attracted 2,260 visitors, the Klausen 1,850.

THE JEWISH MUSEUM AMONG TOP TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC FOR 2012

According to statistics released at the end of August by CzechTourism (the official government agency responsible for promoting the Czech Republic abroad), the Jewish Museum in Prague was the Czech Republic's fourth most popular tourist destination (up from fifth in 2011) and most visited museum in 2012 – attracting a total of 553,000 visitors. With 435,000 visitors, the National Gallery is the second most visited museum/gallery and the seventh most visited tourist site in the country.

SEMINAR ON MODERN JEWISH HISTORY

In collaboration with the Institute for Contemporary History at the Czech Academy of Sciences, we have prepared a seminar with the aim of creating a platform for academic discussion about the most recent research projects dealing with the history of the Jews in the past three centuries.

Despite its focus on history, the seminar will seek to promote a multidisciplinary approach, exploring specific topics also from the perspectives of sociology, political science, religious history and art history. In addition to central European history, it will also devote attention to the history of the Jews in other territories. The format involves an introductory lecture followed by a discussion.

Under preparation:

6 November 2013, 6 p.m.

Building a state without anti-Semitism? Czech anti-Semitism between the Monarchy and the Republic

Historian Michal Frankl (Jewish Museum in Prague) will offer new perspectives on Czech and Slovak anti-Semitism at the end of the First World War and in the first years of independent Czechoslovakia.

4 December 2013, 6 p.m.

A history of decline? Rural Jews and migration to cities in Central Europe, ca. 1900

(Eine Geschichte des Niedergangs? Landjuden und die Migration in die Städte in Zentraleuropa um 1900)

Historian Ines Koeltzsch (Masaryk Institute, Czech Academy of Sciences) will be presenting his new project focusing on rural Jews in the Czech lands in the context of Central Europe. The presentation will be in German without an interpreter and the discussion will be in Czech.

The seminar takes place at our Department for Education and Culture (Maiselova 15, Prague 1).

PROMINENT VISITS

April

- Rabbi Joshua I. Spiner, Executive Vice President of the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation

May

- Author, journalist and translator Ruth Bondy

August

- Israeli Ambassador to the Czech Republic, J. E. Gary Koren
- Prof. Henry Ginsberg, Columbia University
- Mario Izovich, Joint Distribution Committee
- Participants of the Equadiff 13 mathematics conference



Israeli Ambassador to the Czech Republic,
J. E. Gary Koren, visiting the Pinkas
Synagogue

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