

Newsletter

2 2014

EXHIBITIONS IN THE ROBERT GUTTMANN GALLERY

The Story Continues: Acquisitions in the Collections of the Jewish Museum in Prague, 1994–2014 (24 April – 3 August 2014)

To mark the first twenty years of the Jewish Museum in Prague as an independent organization, it has prepared an exhibition to showcase more than 100 unique items that have become part of its collections over the last two decades. By highlighting specific artworks, manuscripts, books, archival documents, ritual objects and everyday items, the exhibition draws attention to the museum's acquisition efforts and to the history of these items, as well as telling the stories of the people who originally owned them.

Since regaining its independence in 1994 – when the state returned the collections of one of Europe's most important Jewish museums to the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic – the Jewish Museum in Prague has devoted great attention to developing its holdings. The state authorities had used the museum primarily as a tourist destination between 1950 and 1994; rather than developing the museum, their main concern was to seek ways of selling off its collections abroad. After 44 long years, filling in the gaps in the current collections became the primary task for the museum's curators.

Of the several thousand acquisitions made between 1994 and 2014, the curators have selected items that reflect the full range of the museum's collection-building activities. Visitors to the exhibition also have an opportunity to see, for the first time, a Torah



The Story Continues: Acquisitions in the Collections of the Jewish Museum in Prague, 1994–2014

curtain from Mladá Vožice, dating from the mid-19th century, which is the first ever missing piece of Judaica from Bohemia that the museum has successfully reclaimed from the USA in March of this year (for more information, see Newsletter 1/2014).

Thanks to modern technology, visitors can also see exhibits that cannot be put on direct display due to their size or technical condition. Other items of great interest can be seen in great detail or browsed through – such as an album of 33 postcards hand-painted by Eugen von Kahler in 1897-1901 and Robert Guttman's hand-made Journal of a journey to the grave of Charlotte Garrigue Masaryk, dating from 1928. Among the particularly noteworthy exhibits in the audio-visual section are unique coloured slides showing sites in Palestine from the early 20th century, and Max Bruch's performance of Kol Nidrei, Op. 47 as recorded on a piano roll by the Leipzig company F. L. Hupfeld, AG in 1922.

The exhibition was conceived and curated by Dana Veselská and Michaela Sidenberg.



Exhibition opening on 23 April 2014

The exhibition was held with the kind support of Prague City Hall and the Jewish Museum in Prague Foundation.

Robert Guttman Gallery, U Staré školy 3, Prague 1,
Open daily except for Saturdays and Jewish holidays, 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Seminar: Acquisition and De-acquisition Activities of Museums and Galleries

Organized by the Jewish Museum in Prague in co-operation with the Czech Association of Museums and Galleries, a one-day seminar for museum and gallery staff on the topic of the acquisition and de-acquisition activities of museums and galleries was held on the occasion of the exhibition *The Story Continues: Acquisitions in the Collections of the Jewish Museum in Prague, 1994–2014*. This seminar attracted great interest from the experts; the auditorium of the Jewish Museum's Department for Education and Culture was already fully booked for the event within three weeks of it being announced. On 20 June 2014, 44 museum professionals from throughout the Czech Republic came together to discuss theoretical and practical issues concerning the building of museum collections, the selection and evaluation of collection pieces, and active work on museum collections, including their refining through a process of de-acquisition. Among the most beneficial presentations, according to the participants, were *The Creation of Museum Collections – Museological Starting Points, based on Act No. 122/2000 Coll.* by PhDr. Jiří Žalman (Czech Ministry of Culture) and *What do Czech*

Museums Actually Collect? by PhDr. Jan Dolák Ph.D. (UNESCO Chair of Museology and World Heritage). Representing the Jewish Museum in Prague, Michaela Sidenberg gave a paper on the importance of provenance research in the acquisition of new artefacts and Dana Veselská summarized the results of the museum's acquisition and de-acquisition activities over the last two decades. As ensued from the subsequent discussion, the taxation of donations for museums and galleries, collection-building strategies for museums and galleries, and practical aspects of the de-acquisition process are considered to be burning issues at the present time. We expect that the proceedings of the seminar will be published by the end of the year. After the seminar, the participants were given guided tours of the *The Story Continues* exhibition by the curators, Michaela Sidenberg and Dana Veselská.



Acquisition and De-acquisition Activities of Museums and Galleries

Under preparation:

The Orient in Bohemia? Jewish Refugees during the First World War

(28 August 2014 – 1 February 2015)

The hundreds of thousands of people who ran away from their homes in the Habsburg monarchy during the First World War were the first large group of refugees in the modern history of the Bohemian lands. Poles, Ruthenians, Italians, Jews and many others fled their destroyed and occupied towns and villages out of fear of violence. Although their exodus plays almost no role in the Czech cultural memory, their fate foreshadowed the 20th century as an era of refugees. Marking the centenary of the 'Great War', this exhibition deals with the little known topic of refugees in the Bohemian lands during the First World War. The exhibition looks at the fate of Jewish refugees in Bohemia and Moravia, as seen in the broader context of refugees and refugee policy within the entire Habsburg monarchy.

GOOGLE ART PROJECT

The Jewish Museum in Prague, together with other partners, has added its digitized art collections to the Google Art Project. Throughout the world, visitors online can now take a virtual tour of the museum's rare exhibits. With this unique project, Google is helping to maintain the world heritage for future generations.

After featuring Museum Kampa and the National Gallery in Prague, Google Art Project (www.googleartproject.com) – part of the Google Cultural Institute – has expanded its online platform to include a further nine prominent museums, galleries and institutions

in the Czech Republic, including the Jewish Museum in Prague, the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, the Egon Schiele Art Centrum, the T. G. Masaryk Museum, the Václav Havel Library, the Dagmar and Václav Havel Foundation VIZE 97, the Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové, the Moravian Gallery in Brno and the Olomouc Museum of Art, which together have provided access to about 500 artworks. The online platform enables visitors to view super high-resolution images of artworks, enabling the viewer to study details of the brushwork and patina beyond that possible with the naked eye.



This Torah shield, which was made in 1784 for use in the Pinkas Synagogue in Prague, is another of the items featured in the Google Art Project.

“The Jewish Museum in Prague oversees unique collections that document the history and culture of the Jews in Bohemia and Moravia. The Google Art Project enables us to present these collections in an effective way through a selection of ritual objects from synagogues in Bohemia and Moravia, as well as artworks, books, photographs and documents. These objects illustrate religious life, artistic reflections of Jewish themes and family life, but also the Holocaust period. Providing access to this material is part of the museum’s ambitious plan to gradually make its digitized collections available online. Moreover, they will also serve as an invitation to visit our unique museum,” states Michal Frankl, the deputy director of the Jewish Museum in Prague.

REVITALIZATION OF JEWISH MONUMENTS

June 2014 saw the completion of an ambitious four-year project, entitled *Revitalization of Jewish Monuments in the Czech Republic*, also known as the *Ten Stars* project, which was announced by the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic in April 2010. Funding from the Czech Ministry of Culture’s Integrated Operational Programme and from the state budget of the Czech Republic made it possible to

prepare and successfully implement the complete restoration of 15 Jewish historical buildings in ten localities and seven regions of the Czech Republic. These include synagogues, rabbi's houses and community buildings in the former Jewish communities of Boskovice, Brandýs nad Labem, Březnice, Jičín, Krnov, Mikulov, Nová Cerekev, Pilsen, Polná and Ústěk. The result is a network of ten regional centres of Jewish history and culture as part of the unique Jewish cultural heritage in the Czech Republic.

The Jewish Museum in Prague significantly contributed to this project by providing expert advice and assistance in the historical survey and heritage restoration of individual buildings, by helping to put together exhibition scenarios, and by searching for documents and illustrations for exhibitions on historical and Jewish topics that are under preparation (museum staff: Alexandr Putík, Arno Pařík, Daniel Polakovič, Michal Frankl).

The museum's Collections Department was involved in the project mainly by selecting and providing pictorial material for the new permanent exhibitions. More than 80 digitized images of exhibits – many of which were newly digitized for the purposes of this project – are on display in exhibitions in Pilsen, Nová Cerekev, Boskovice and Jičín. Reproduction rights for the digital images of objects, archival documents and books – worth hundreds of thousands of Czech crowns – were provided free of charge by the Jewish Museum in Prague as part of the project. Numerous consultations and research assistance were also provided by the museum's textile and metal curators, who prepared the necessary documentation for loans of collection pieces that were under consideration (Mikulov, Březnice and Boskovice), although in the end the loans did not materialize for various reasons. For the exhibition in Mikulov, two of the museum's paper restoration workshop staff (Ondřej Zatloukal and Jan Slivka) made five facsimile copies of old printed books from its collections. For the exhibition in Ústěk, the museum's library provided digital images of Jewish spelling books from its collections.

The individual restored buildings and their exhibitions were officially opened to the public between 10 and 27 June 2014. Visitors now, mostly for the first time, have an opportunity to acquaint themselves at first hand with the history, life and culture of the Jewish communities in the Czech Republic. This group of more than 60 preserved synagogues, rabbi's houses, community buildings, Jewish schools and ritual spas, together with 350 Jewish cemeteries in the Czech Republic, are a unique cultural heritage that is probably without parallel in Europe.

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE MAISEL SYNAGOGUE

In our last newsletter we mentioned that building alterations will be made to the Maisel Synagogue. After more than two-years' preparation and after the completion of tenders for the aggregated parts of the work, work began on the reconstruction of the synagogue in May, on the basis of plans drawn up by architect Hynek Fetterle. The aim is to revitalize this important historical site and to install a new exhibition there – *The History of the Jews in the Bohemian Lands, 10–18 Centuries*.



Maisel Synagogue under reconstruction since April 2014

The synagogue was closed to the public in April. The previous exhibition was deinstalled and a number of related tasks were undertaken in the following weeks. The reconstruction is being carried out by specialists from various fields. Initial work included demolition of the modern floors and partitions, removal of the degraded plasterwork and repairs to the roof over the entrance area. Scaffolding was erected on the south facade for repairs to the plasterwork, windows, lock fittings and plumbing installations. Inside the building, floor ducts are being installed for the high and low voltage mains, and work is underway on the new sanitation installations. The walls and pillars will be treated for rising damp with a combination of damp proofing injection cream and electro-osmotic drying. The main contractor for completing this part of the project is the joint-stock company Konsit, which put in the best bid.

It is expected that the building work will be completed and approved in April 2015. Afterwards a new exhibition in the synagogue – *The History of the Jews in the Bohemian Lands, 10–18 Centuries* – will open to the public.



Demolition of the modern floor in the Maisel Synagogue

NOTICE OF A PLANNED CLOSURE OF PART OF THE MUSEUM'S DEPOSITORIES

On 29 March 2014, in connection with the closure of the Maisel Synagogue, a substantial part of the museum's depositories was closed for reconstruction for about 15–18 months.

During this time, the objects that are kept in these depositories will not be available for use, i.e. for taking out or depositing, loan, digitization, condition appraisal, study or research purposes, or for the provision of information that is not otherwise available in the museum's database or in other records and documents.

The closure applies to all objects in the metal collection (curated by Jaroslav Kuntoš) and part of the textile collection, in particular the oldest items, small pieces and home-made textiles (curated by Dana Veselská, PhD.). We apologize for any inconvenience caused.

TRIBUTE TO JAN KARSKI IN THE SPANISH SYNAGOGUE

On 24 April it was 100 years since the birth of Jan Koziielewski, who is better known under his *nom de guerre* Jan Karski. At the time of the German occupation of Poland in 1942, this legendary courier of the Polish government-in-exile was 'smuggled' into the Warsaw Ghetto and the Izbica Lubelska transit camp in order to observe the dire conditions there and subsequently to provide the allied governments with the first detailed report on the ongoing extermination of the Jews.

A project in tribute to Jan Karski was launched on 23 April, on the eve of the anniversary. This included an exhibition – *The World Knew* – which was prepared by the Warsaw-based Museum of Polish History and a gala concert in the Spanish Synagogue, which was held under the auspices of the Czech Minister of Culture Daniel Herman. The concert featured the rising stars of the Polish independent music scene – the singer and multi-instrumentalist Ola Bilińska and the SzaZaZe Trio – performing modern arrangements of traditional pieces, and was prepared by the Polish Institute in co-operation with the Jewish Museum in Prague.



Czech Minister of Culture Daniel Herman at the start of the concert

Under preparation:

CINEGOGUE 2014 – *The City Without Jews: Hugo Bettauer and Republika Utopie*

The City Without Jews is a 1924 Austrian film by the director, producer, actor and screenwriter Hans Karl Breslauer, based on the bestseller of the same name by the Austrian writer, journalist and adventurer Maximilian Hugo Bettauer.

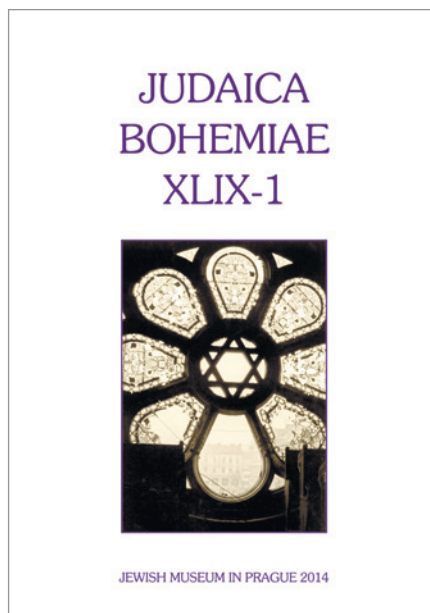
As the film has not been preserved in its entirety, its end is only intimated on the basis of propaganda material of the period. The original soundtrack, too, has not been preserved. For the film premiere at the Spanish Synagogue, the composer Petr Wajsar will be creating a new score, which will be performed by the BERG Orchestra (under the baton of Peter Vrábek) and the HI-FI band.

Spanish Synagogue, Věžeňská 1, Prague, 13 and 14 October 2014

A NEW ISSUE OF THE JOURNAL JUDAICA BOHEMIAE

A new issue of the journal *Judaica Bohemiae* (49/2014, 1) came out at the end of June 2014. This volume includes a paper by William C. McDonald analyzing the anti-Jewish song-cycle of Michel Beheim (d. 1474), which significantly contributes to an understanding of medieval anti-Jewish sentiment. The next paper, by Joseph M. Davis, deals with the concepts of family and friendship on the basis of a famous group of Yiddish letters written by Prague Jews in 1619. The third of the main papers, by Jan Machala, illustrates the troubled fate of Jewish monuments during the Second World War by exploring the example of synagogues in Central Moravia (Holešov and Kroměříž).

In the reports section, Pavel Kocman, Petr Kubín and František Trampota provide information about new archaeological research projects and finds relating to the Jews of Mikulov, Jana Šplíchalová describes the successful exhibition of the Jewish Museum in Prague *Truth and Lies: Filming in the Ghetto Terezín, 1942–1945* and P. Kocman gives an account of the workshop *Jews in the Medieval Town. Urban Space in the Middle Ages – a Place of Coexistence and Conflicts*, which was held in Prague in November 2013.



The final section of the journal contains book reviews: Iveta Cermanová assesses Martina Niedhammer's *Nur eine "Geld-Emancipation?" Loyalitäten und Lebenswelten des Prager jüdischen Großbürgertums 1800–1867* (2013) and Radek Lipovsky looks at Jana Vobecká's *Demographic Avant-Garde. Jews in Bohemia between the Enlightenment and the Shoah* (2013).

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). The texts are in English and German.

ONLINE REGISTER OF THE BIRTH, MARRIAGE AND DEATH RECORDS OF THE JEWISH RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY IN MIKULOV

The archive department of the Jewish Museum in Prague has recently provided online access to another archival source that is of interest to researchers – a register of the birth, marriage and death records of the Jewish religious community in Mikulov. This register, which was put together by Dr. Moritz Lewin in 1913, contains a list of births, marriages and deaths between 1767 and 1912, including later entries from 1913 to 1916. Partly replacing the unpreserved Mikulov birth, marriage and death registers from the latter half of the 18- and the first half of the 19- centuries, it is a unique genealogical source for the history of the Jewish population in Mikulov.

The birth, marriage and death register is available on the museum's website as part of its collections catalogue: <http://collections.jewishmuseum.cz/index.php/search/index?search=mikulov>

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF JEWISH WOMEN CONVENTION IN PRAGUE

150 Jewish women from 28 different countries convened at the Prague Intercontinental Hotel on 4–7 May 2014 for the 22-International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW) Quadrennial Convention. The topics discussed included gender equality, human trafficking and the status of women in the modern world.

A diverse range of discussions, presentations, screenings, excursions and concerts was prepared for the participants. At the convention the outgoing ICJW president Sharon Gustafson from the United States handed over the reigns to the incoming president Robyn Lenn from Australia.

This year's convention was organized by the Council of Jewish Women of the Czech Republic (CCJW). A huge success, the event was also supported by the Jewish Museum in Prague, which arranged for the participants to visit its exhibitions and to see a performance of the Feigele children's theatre group in the Spanish Synagogue.

PRAGUE MUSEUM NIGHT 2014

As usual, the Jewish Museum in Prague took part in Prague's annual Museum Night, now in its 11th year. It was held on Saturday 14 June between 10.30 p.m. and 1 a.m. Free access was provided to the exhibitions in the Klausen and Spanish synagogues, attracting up to 2,700 visitors. In addition to regular guided tours and a children's programme, the Jewish Museum provided special tours for the hard of hearing, which were particularly well received.



The Jewish Museum's exhibitions were seen by almost 2,700 visitors during Prague Museum Night

I'M HERE BECAUSE OF A SPELLING ERROR: THE STORY OF DAGMAR LIEBLOVÁ

The translator and long-time chair of the Terezín Initiative, Dagmar Lieblová, celebrated her 85th birthday on 19 May. To mark this day, the Jewish Museum's Department for Education and Culture hosted a presentation of her recently published book *Přepsali se – a tak jsem tady: příběh Dagmar Lieblové* [I'm here because of a spelling error: The Story of Dagmar Lieblová] on Wednesday 21 May as one of its evening events. The birthday celebration was attended by Dagmar Lieblová and Marek Lauerman, who wrote the book on the basis of conversations with the protagonist of the story. It was a special evening, full of intriguing reflections on Dagmar's pre-war, war-time and post-war life. The Jewish Museum in Prague would like to thank Dagmar and wish her continued good health and creative energy for the years to come.



PROMINENT VISITS

June

- American historian Deborah Esther Lipstadt



Deborah Esther Lipstadt visiting the Old Jewish Cemetery

Published by the Jewish Museum in Prague, U Staré školy 1, 110 01 Praha 1
www.jewishmuseum.cz

Identification No: 60459263

Bank accounts: Commerzbank, AG, Jugoslávská 1, 120 21 Prague 2

CZK: 10426398/6200

EUR: 1042639, IBAN: CZ60 6200 0000 0000 1042 6398

USD: 1042639, IBAN: CZ22 6200 0001 0700 1042 6398

SWIFT CODE: COBACZPXXXX

When making a donation, please state the variable
symbol (identification code) 1382002.

Czech Ministry of Culture: E16832

Editor: Hana Švolbová

Translation: Stephen Hattersley

Photos: Jewish Museum in Prague

Graphic design: Jan Jiskra

Layout: Vladimír Vašek

