

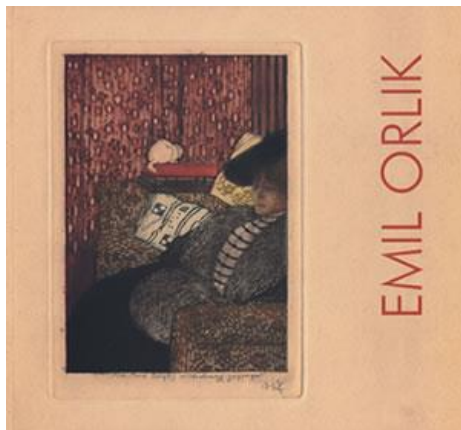
NEWSLETTER 2004/1

EMIL ORLIK – PORTRAITS OF FRIENDS AND CONTEMPORARIES

From 5 February to 11 April 2004, the Jewish Museum in Prague hosted a new exhibition at the Robert Guttmann Gallery. On display were paintings, prints and drawings by Emil Orlik, an early twentieth century Prague artist whose work has been rediscovered in recent years.

The Jewish Museum has a special connection with this artist, for he was born near its present-day office and spent his youth in the neighbourhood, an area that provided the backdrop to his first artworks. From 1899 onwards he was a member of the Vienna Sezession and became renowned for his woodcuts and portraits of famous artists, musicians, actors, poets, writers and philosophers. Through his artistic experiments and the variety of his print techniques, of which he had complete mastery, he inspired a younger generation of Prague artists to search for new means of artistic expression.

The exhibition Portraits of Friends and Contemporaries comprised almost 130 artworks. When selecting works for the show, the curator, art historian Arno



Pařík, focused mainly on the most interesting personalities from the world of art and culture and on the portraits of Orlik's artistic friends and role models. The exhibition also featured a portion of the Jewish Museum's diverse collection of Orlik works which have never before been on display. A special part of the show was a selection of works from a group of 69 Orlik drawings that were made at the Peace Conference of Brest-Litovsk in 1918. These works were kindly donated to the Museum this year by Orlik's niece, Anita Bollag of New Jersey, through Mark E. Talis-man, the President of the Project Judaica Foundation.

A catalogue-cum-monograph, written by Arno Pařík, has been published for the exhibition. As well as a detailed biography of Orlik, it contains over 200 reproductions of his drawings, woodcuts, prints and portrait paintings of such figures as Albert Einstein and Richard Strauss. The catalogue, which is in Czech and English, is available in all of the Jewish Museum's shops and can be ordered via the [website](#).



TRAVELLING EXHIBITIONS IN THE ŠUMPERK DISTRICT MUSEUM

After being shown last year at the Jewish Museum's Education and Culture Centre in Prague, at the Děčín Synagogue and at the Náchod Municipal Museum, the exhibitions Jewish Customs and

Traditions and History of the Jews in Bohemia and Moravia are now on view at the Museum of Local History in Šumperk, North Moravia. The opening show was held on 12 February.

The installation of the exhibitions in the Hollar Gallery at the Šumperk museum also includes exhibits from the museum's collections in Loštice and Mohelnice, as well as documents on local Jewish sites from the Respect and Tolerance project. This project is focused mainly on the two old Jewish communities in Úsov and Loštice on the southern outskirts of the Šumperk district. These communities survived up until the twentieth century, and their historically valuable synagogues, Jewish quarters and cemeteries have been preserved. The exhibitions are on display at the Šumperk museum until 4 April 2004.

DEPOSITING OF A MEMORIAL BOX IN THE SMÍCHOV SYNAGOGUE

The first Newsletter issue of 2003 referred to the ongoing reconstruction of the Smíchov Synagogue in Prague, as well as the discovery of a memorial document that was stored here during the building completion on 30 August 1863. Since then, the reconstruction project has made considerable progress. Building work was completed in March 2004 and the interior has been equipped to enable the storage of the Museum's archive and collection holdings. Also, the landscape design has been completed. Once the microclimatic conditions have been stabilized, the Museum's archive materials and art collection will gradually be moved to the synagogue; the transferral of materials should be completed by the end of the year. The synagogue will then begin to serve its new purpose as a repository and a place for studying documents relating to the history of Jewish communities in the Czech lands. The study and reading room are situated on the ground floor of the new extension, while the synagogue itself will remain closed to the public. There will be a specialist bookstore in the former vestibule of the synagogue.



On 3 February, a memorial copper box was deposited under the restored Ark of the synagogue. This contains a facsimile of the memorial document of 1863 and documents on the history and reconstruction of the synagogue, including project plans and photographs (both historical and recent). Also contained in the box is a memorial record on the history of the Smíchov Jewish community and its synagogue from the earliest times to the present, which has been signed by the Chairman and Secretary of the Jewish Community in Prague, the Chief Rabbi of Prague, the Director of the Jewish Museum in Prague and members of its administrative board.

ACQUISITIONS IN THE COLLECTIONS OF THE JEWISH MUSEUM IN PRAGUE

In the first few months of this year, the collection of Metal works was expanded to include a large group of silver ritual objects which were offered to the Museum for purchase. These items stem from the Moravian Slovakian borderland and from Slovakia and were previously bought from Russian soldiers by the family of the present owner shortly after the Second World War. The collection comprises a Torah crown, five Torah shields, four pairs of Torah finials, three Torah pointers, a Burial Society alms box and various silver fragments. The crown is the work of the Brno silversmith Franz Kaltenmacher and dates from 1803, which makes it one of the earliest preserved pieces by this maker in the collections of the Jewish Museum in Prague. One of the newly acquired shields is probably of Polish origin and dates from the late eighteenth century; the other four shields, and all the Torah finials, stem from various Viennese workshops and date from the mid- and late nineteenth century. One of the Torah pointers of Central European provenance has an inscription dated 1772; the other two pointers were produced in Poland c. 1850. The Burial Society alms box was made in Vienna in the last third of the nineteenth century. Together, this group constitutes the largest acquisition of its kind since 1981, when a large collection of Torah shields was purchased for the collection.



WORK COMMENCES ON THE RESTORATION OF DAMAGED INSCRIPTIONS IN THE PINKAS SYNAGOGUE

Of all the listed Jewish building in Prague, the Pinkas Synagogue was the worst affected by the floods of August 2002. The Pinkas Memorial, which contains the names of the roughly 80,000 Bohemian and Moravian victims of the Shoah within the synagogue, was reopened last October. Some inscriptions, however, could not be preserved, despite all the effort that was made. (See [Newsletter 3 and 4/2002.](#))



Last February, employees of the Mark Brož restoration firm RE spol. s r. o. started work on rewriting the destroyed inscriptions (almost 2,000 in number). Prior to this, the damaged surface was specially cleaned and disinfected, restoration repairs were carried out and the inscription surface was patinated. The choice of restoration procedure was made in consultation with art academy graduate Michaela Poková, who was involved in restoring the inscriptions in the 1990s, and Petr Justa, a specialist in the conservation and restoration of stone features. The new inscriptions should be completed by this July.

FREE ACCESS TO THE JEWISH MUSEUM IN PRAGUE FOR CHILDREN



On the last weekend of January, nine-teen Prague museums and galleries provided children with free access to their collections and exhibitions. This project, which is known as “Icy Prague” – as there is a temporary “freeze” on admission fees – also involved the Jewish Museum. The event met with a great response from the young visitors.

OBJECTS FROM THE JEWISH MUSEUM IN PRAGUE AT EXHIBITIONS ABROAD

London

“I never saw another butterfly” On 24 March, the Jewish Museum in London opened I never saw another butterfly, a special exhibition of artworks created by children in the Terezín ghetto. Among those attending the opening was Sir Nicholas Winton, who at the start of the Second World War saved the lives of several hundred Czech Jewish children by enabling them to leave for England. The Jewish Museum in Prague, which was closely involved in the preparation of the exhibition, has loaned from its collections 20 originals and 56 copies, as well as several objects (a hanukiah and a Seder tray from Terezín, one toy and two pendants). Also on display are photographs and archive materials from the



Holocaust Department Archive of the Jewish Museum in Prague - including photographs of some of the children who made the drawings, two diaries and other documents concerning life in the Terezín children’s homes. The exhibition runs until 20 June 2004.

CONCERT FOR SUPPORTERS AND ASSOCIATES OF THE MUSEUM

On 3 February, the Museum Director, Leo Pavlát, acknowledged the support of more than a hundred backers and associates of the Museum, as well as suppliers and travel agency representatives. The occasion was a concert at the Spanish Synagogue in Prague, which was given by cellist Lucie Štěpánová and mezzo-soprano Olga Štěpánová with organ accompaniment by Michele Hradecká. The guests were treated to performances of Dvořák’s Biblical Songs, Max Bruch’s Kol Nidrei and the Cello Suites by J. S. Bach and Kodály.



NEW PUBLICATIONS CD “My Heart is a Jazz Band”

Continuing in its project to release unique period recordings of Jewish musicians active on the Prague music scene before the Second World War, the Jewish Museum has just brought out a new CD of remarkable recordings of orchestras led by the hugely talented and versatile musician Dol Dauber. The title is My Heart is a Jazz Band, which is also the title of the first track. These days, Dol Dauber, whose 110th anniversary is being commemorated this year, is a legend only to the older generation. In the history of popular music, however, he remains a

shining light. This Jewish composer was also an arranger, a major interpreter of popular music, a composer of songs, operettas and film music and a jazz pioneer. Above all, however, he was an incredibly gifted violinist. During his relatively short life, however, he went through periods of fame and steep decline. Originally from Bukovina, Rumania, he used to play the violin at Jewish weddings when he was a small boy. He later studied with Professor Otakar Ševčík in Brno. Despite his classical training, he began to focus more on jazz and came to direct various salon orchestras and swing bands with which he enjoyed great success. This CD includes 23 pieces performed in 1927-38 in Berlin and Prague. The music is very broad in range and also comprises several titles composed by Dol Dauber himself, such as songs from the film *Hearth Without Fire* performed by Hana Vítová and R. A. Dvorský.



The Jewish Museum in Prague is continuing in its tradition of publishing lectures delivered as part of regular series at its Education and Culture Centre. The most recent collection of lectures is entitled *The Jewish Minority in Czechoslovakia in the 1920s*. It contains nine contributions by Czech historians and ethnologists who lectured on the given themes between October 2002 and June 2003. The collection comprehensively deals with the relationship between the pre-war Czechoslovak Republic and its Jewish minority and also corrects certain idealized views as to the absence of anti-Semitism within that society. The publication contains 131 pages, 9 of which are illustrations, and is in the Czech language. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Czech Republic provided significant financial support for this publication.

PROMINENT VISITS

A group of 20 members of the Society for the History of Czechoslovak Jews led by Rabbi Norman Patz, with Orlik's niece Anita Bollag and her husband.

Zvi Lidar - Director of the Communications and Public Affairs Division of the Keren Kayemeth Leisrael.

