

LACES FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF THE JEWISH MUSEUM IN PRAGUE

From 24 June–23 July, the Robert Guttmann Gallery hosted the exhibition Laces from the Collections of the Jewish Museum in Prague. The Museum's diverse textile collections represent all the known textile techniques and materials, including a number of items that are ornamented with bobbin lace in various ways.

These synagogue and ceremonial textiles, garments and accessories, which were made over the course of almost four centuries, have not been presented to the general public and specialists until this year. The Museum prepared an exhibition for the eleventh World Lace Congress in Prague, which was organised by OIDFA (Organisation Internati-onale de la Dentelle au Fuseau et # l'Aiguille). This exhibition marked the completion of a several-year research into its collection of bobbin laces, which was financially supported by the Czech Ministry of Culture.



The exhibition also featured ceremonial textiles and garments, as well as items made with a little-known technique called shpanyer arbet – regarded as the only specifically Jewish textile technique. The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue, as well as a competition for the best design and execution of the symbol of Judaism – the Star of David, which was held by the Museum and the specialist journal Krajka (Lace). Sixteen designs were

assessed and the best of these were displayed in the vestibule of the Robert Guttmann Gallery throughout the duration of the exhibition.

MEL ALEXENBERG: CYBERANGELS

From 11 August to 26 September 2004, the Museum hosted an exhibition of work by the renowned US-Israeli artist, Mel Alexenberg. Entitled *Cyberangels*, the exhibition was part of the series *Jewish Presence in Contemporary Visual Art*, which is focused on exploring the relation between contemporary visual culture and Judaism. Now in its second year, the series is held at the Museum's Robert Guttman Gallery.

One of the aims of Alexenberg's experimental curatorial project, which was conceived as an aesthetic peace plan for the Middle East, was to contribute to the debate on the position and role of minorities in the globalized media and visual art world.

Actively involving the viewer in the artwork by using modern technology, the project supported the idea of plurality in art, dialogue and a crossing of language and social barriers. The interactive gallery installation included several computer stations from which visitors could send out a message of peace in the form of a computer angel and was supplemented with prints of art computer graphics that reflect the current situation in Israel. The exhibition was held under the auspices of Arthur Avnon, the Israeli Ambassador to the Czech Republic.

Mel Alexenberg is known to the wider public as the guest curator of the legendary New York exhibition *Lights-Orot* in the year 1988. As part of the exhibition, Mel Alexenberg presented four of his own projects, one of which was the installation *Rembrandt's Light*, which incorporated the image of a computer angel taken from a Rembrandt etching. Since then, Rembrandt angels have made frequent appearances in Alexenberg's public art events. In the Prague exhibition, the Rembrandt angels, symbols of European culture, were given the role of peacemakers and mediators, disseminating across the Internet a message that calls for a paradigm shift in the way the Middle East conflict is perceived.

The exhibition included a talk by Mel Alexenberg, as well as examples of his other work. The entire project was prepared with the support of the Center for Jewish Culture and Creativity, an LA-based non-profit educational institution. The curator was Michaela Hájková.



EXHIBITION OF JEWISH SPORT IN THE DĚČÍN SYNAGOGUE

28 June saw the opening in the

Děčín Synagogue of a new permanent exhibition prepared by the Jewish Museum in Prague – The Past and Present of Jewish Sport in the Czech Republic. This focuses on the more than hundred year history of Jewish sport in Bohemian and Moravia and its revival after 1990. At the exhibition opening, a speech was given by Vladimír Poskočil, the representative of the Hakoach Sports Club, President of the Jewish Community in Děčín and former Olympic javelin thrower.

The exhibition provides a brief overview of the development of the Maccabi Association in Czechoslovakia and its various clubs in the 1920s and 30s. Special attention is paid to Hagibor of Prague, Bar Kochba of Brno and Maccabi of Moravská Ostrava, the activities of which are documented in numerous photographs of athletic and gymnastic competitions, swimming and winter sports. Rare archive photographs show prominent representatives of Jewish sport in pre-war Czechoslovakia, such as the tennis player Ladislav Hecht, the Czechoslovak swimming representative Pavel Steiner and the Czechoslovak water polo representative Kurt Epstein. Also documented are important events such as the second Maccabi Winter Games in Banská Bystrice, 1936. At that time, the Maccabi Association in Czechoslovakia comprised 82 clubs and, with more than 10,300 members, was one of the largest Jewish organisations in the country.

A separate section of the Museum's exhibition, which also received financial support from the Museum's Foundation, is on sport in the Terezín ghetto, particularly football competitions that were temporarily allowed. The final part of the exhibition provides an overview of sporting events of the Prague Jewish Community's Hakoach Sports Club. Since the club's reestablishment in 1990, most of these events have taken place in Děčín.

The documentary photographs are accompanied by pre-war sports trophies from the Museum's collections. The curator is Dr. Arno Pařík.

RESTORATION OF TOMBSTONES IN PRAGUE'S JEWISH CEMETERIES

Work is continuing on the restoration of tombstones in the two historic Jewish cemeteries in Prague which are in the care of the Museum. In the 15th–18th century Old Jewish Cemetery, restoration work is focusing on tombstones that have been selected by Museum staff after assessing their physical state and damage level. Also, many tombstones that came loose as a result of soft subsoil have been set into the ground again.

In the 17th–19th century Jewish cemetery in Fibichova Street, Prague 3, the focus of the last few years has been on the urgent preservation of a number of tombstones. This year, work began on the restoration of prominent tombstones, starting with that of Rabbi Eleazar Fleckeles (1754 – 1826). On the basis of existing photographic documentation, the tombstone was returned to its original form, including part of a missing inscription.

Restoration work in these cemeteries is part of a long-term project that is being



carried out on the basis of detailed preparations concerning restoration technology. This year's work will be completed by the end of October.



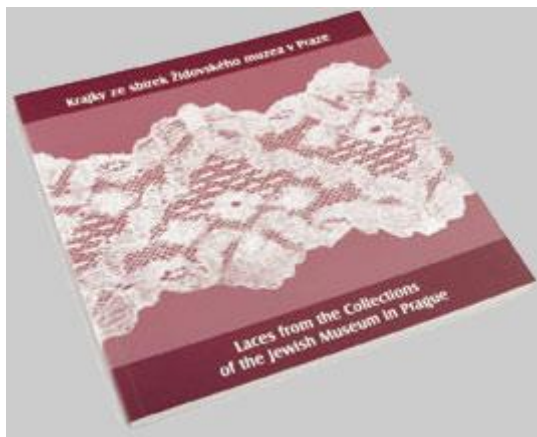
INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF THOSE INVOLVED IN THE MUSEUM'S PROJECT "NEIGHBOURS WHO DISAPPEARED"

The Neighbours who Disappeared project is organised by the Museum's Education and Culture Centre for young people aged 12–18 (For more information see Newsletters 4/2000 and 4/2001). It was launched for Czech schools in 1999 as part of the Holocaust Phenomenon conference under the auspices of the Office of the President of the Czech Republic.

Its objective is to make today's young generation aware of the fate of those who disappeared from their neighbourhoods during the Second World War. The students involved are to gather information from school and district archives, interviews, documents and, in particular, from personal meetings with Holocaust survivors and witnesses, and then to write up literary-documentary reports. On 23–26 June 2004, the Prague cinema Illusion hosted the second international meeting of those involved in the Neighbours who Disappeared project. This event was financially supported by the International Visegrad Fund and was accompanied by a series of lectures and discussions on the theme Anti-Semitism in Today's World, which was held as part of the Nine Gates Festival. Among those taking part were the famous US historians on the Holocaust Daniel Goldhagen and Deborah Lipstadt. The results of student work from 2000–2002 were featured in twelve panels of the Museum's exhibition Neighbours who Disappeared, which were installed in the cinema lobby. Other panels featured the work of high school students from Bilgoraj (Poland) Sahy (Hungary), Spišská Nová Ves (Slovakia) and of high school students from the Czech towns of Pilsen, Litomyšl, Soběslav, Libáň and Sokolov. The students looked round the Jewish Museum in Prague and took part in a discussion at the Education and Culture Centre where they described their methods of gaining information about "neighbours who disappeared" and considered other possibilities for the project. Also involved in the project presentation in Prague, apart from the Museum's Education and Culture Centre, were the Warsaw-based Centre for Citizenship Education and the Bratislava-based Milan Šimečka Foundation. Students involved in the project were presented with certificate signed by the writer Arnošt Lustig, the historian Deborah Lipstadt and the Museum director Leo Pavlát.

NEW PUBLICATION

LACES FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF THE JEWISH MUSEUM IN PRAGUE



A catalogue was published for the exhibition Laces from the Collections of the Jewish Museum in Prague, the result of a two-year research project by Museum specialist staff. Containing 70 catalogue items, it provides a cross-section of all the types of laces in the Museum's textile collection. It is divided into three sections: laces on synagogue textiles, shpanyer arbet, wedding covers and garments. As well as detailed full-colour photographs, the catalogue also contains a number of patterns and designs of historical laces dating from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth.

The catalogue has 116 pages and over 100 illustrations. It can be ordered by post from the Jewish Museum in Prague, via email sales@jewishmuseum.cz – or via our website – www.jewishmuseum.cz/shop

DOCUMENTARY FILM “THE SHORT LIFE OF ANNE FRANK”



The Museum's Education and Culture Centre has contributed to the production of the Czech version of a documentary film about Anne Frank that was made in 2003 by the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam. This half-hour film tells the story of Anne Frank and her family during the Second World War. The makers of the documentary, Gerrit Netten and Wouter van der Sluis, used archive documents, photographs from the Frank Family albums and quotations from Anne's diary. It

also includes the only film footage of Anne Frank. The film is dubbed into Czech by Boris Rösner and Sandra Vebrová. This film is shown by the Museum's Education and Culture Centre to schools as an effective educational tool for teaching about the history of the Second World War.

PROMINENT VISITS

- Luzius Wildhaber, President of the European Court of Human Rights
- Néstor Kirchner, President of Argentina
- Rabbi Joseph Kanofsky, Director of the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation in Poland, with a group of 40 students